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*Studia paedagogica*. 2020, vol. 25, iss. 2, pp. [139]-159

ISSN 1803-7437 (print); ISSN 2336-4521 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2020-2-7>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/142791>

Access Date: 08. 12. 2024

Version: 20220831

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# **‘HEAD’ AND ‘HEART’ WORK: RE-APPRAISING THE PLACE OF THEORY IN THE ‘ACADEMIC DIMENSION’ OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper reflects on the needs of early career, pre-service and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in the English education system, specifically the contested place of what we term the academic dimension within their pre-service professional formation. This largely theoretical paper begins with a philosophical review of an established debate concerning the relationship between theory, research, and professional knowledge in teaching, arguing that the discussion is irreducibly normative. Hogan’s notion of teaching as “heart work” is extended to include “head work” and the case made for teachers developing a conceptual map as part of their professional formation to guide them in making good judgements in classrooms. From this, a pedagogical problem follows, in developing new approaches to engage teachers with theory given this is relatively absent in the English context. Four themes are identified from a brief review of existing studies concerned with engaging teachers in the academic dimension of pre-service teacher education which we relate to illustrative comments we have gathered informally from our own students which suggest they may appreciate the value of critical reflection on practice promoted by universities more than some policy makers in this context recognise. We conclude by suggesting ways in which one innovation in ITE in England with which we have been involved, Philosophy for Teachers (P4T), integrates the academic dimension and developing practice which relate to the four themes found in the review of existing literature, while focused on educational theory specifically. P4T fosters, we maintain, characteristically humanistic and relational reflection that is otherwise under-represented in professional formation for pre-and in-service teachers in England.*

## **Keywords**

*theory, practice, critical reflection, teacher education, England*

### **Introduction and background: the absence of theory in pre-service teacher education in England**

While recent policy changes have further undermined the role of the academic dimension of teacher education in England (Orchard & Winstanley, 2019), its relative absence should not be seen as a new phenomenon. Teacher education within schools and learning to teach on the job and from experience has long been established as a preferred *modus operandi* (see Orchard & Winstanley, 2019, for an extended discussion of this issue) in this context. While distinguished theoretical and university-based approaches to pre-service teacher formation have developed in England *ad hoc* over time, including highly regarded and academically rich undergraduate degrees in Education (combined with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)) which have developed and grown over time in the tradition of the Liberal Arts, these have remained on the margins of provision. At their most influential in the 1960s and 1970s, alumni from BA Education + QTS programmes were educated teachers capable of building, designing and developing curricula and pedagogies based on in-depth understanding of the purpose of education as well as how children develop. However, once the National Curriculum was introduced in England, via the 1988 Education Reform Act (DES, 1989), and the job of designing learning tasks transferred from classroom teachers to national teams of curriculum experts, notions of teachers as curriculum developers became obsolete. Centrally controlled national strategies for literacy and mathematics emerged, teachers became increasingly charged with delivering pre-set curricula and administering standardised tests, removing the more complex requirements of their role that demanded theoretical understanding, deskilling them (Phillips & Furlong, 2001) and reducing teachers' status.

By far the most common route now, and the one through which most teachers in England are formally prepared for service (Orchard & Winch, 2015), remains the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Typically, a thirty-six week university-led programme, resulting in QTS and an academic qualification, the PGCE was developed during the 1970s when training for secondary school teachers was first made mandatory. At the outset, PGCEs may have been conceived as a highly condensed introduction to the formal study of education relative to the fuller provision enjoyed by undergraduate students. More recently, positioned as a primarily vocational programme, this has not been its main purpose, and many pre-service teachers in England enter the profession without a significant academic background in the discipline. Conventional PGCE programmes usually offer twelve weeks of university-led activity, while the remaining twenty-four weeks are spent

on practicum, usually in two contrasting school settings. Providers work hard to combine what is best described as the academic dimension and the practical component of their programme meaningfully; at best, where partnerships are strong, these are skilfully co-ordinated by schools, universities, and other providers. Nonetheless, as the timings afforded each aspect illustrate, teachers in England are prepared for classroom practice more by doing education than thinking about it in the abstract.

Periodically, attempts have been made to develop the academic dimension of pre-service provision in England further. When Master's accreditation was introduced widely onto the PGCE in 2007, the argument was made that this would better recognise and accredit the high-quality academic work which pre-service teachers were producing, particularly in assignments. This was justified by the assumption that through critical engagement with key readings framed by the assignments set and by undertaking small-scale classroom based investigations of their own, new and beginning teachers would begin to develop professional knowledge and understanding that would help them to exercise "good" professional judgement (Orchard & Winch, 2015) during their PGCE, which they would further develop and extend as serving teachers through Master's level continuing Professional Development (CPD). This move aligned provision in England with that found in other parts of the UK (Oancea & Orchard, 2012) and where the inclusion of theory in pre-service is often better supported.

However, the new-found focus on theory applied to practice in England was swiftly challenged by a change of government and a policy drive reverting towards a more traditional, school-based approach (DfE, 2010, p. 13) to teacher training. The tone of the Carter (2015, p. 13) Review of ITE in 2015 was more conciliatory, conceding that the best pre-service programmes equipped trainee teachers to be critically reflective, combing both "an academically rigorous and highly effective introduction to the classroom." Nonetheless, it noted with concern that gaining a PGCE might be regarded by trainees as more important than gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and skewed its comments towards developing school-led ITT as an imagined best future for provision within the sector. Take Recommendation 14, for example, which states that policy makers should strengthen "a complex and sometimes confusing" admissions system for ITT by ensuring applicants appreciate that QTS is the essential component of ITT and the PGCE an optional academic qualification" (Carter, 2015, p. 14). Alternative routes into teaching have continued to proliferate since, many based around an understanding of on the job training which marginalises the academic dimension. In-service funding for teachers in England to complete their Master's as CPD has been withdrawn, moreover, so that part time home students in English

universities choosing to complete a Master's in Education—i.e., teachers—has continued to decline. This is to the detriment of the research environment in those institutions, recruitment to doctoral level professional programmes and, more crucially, to the detriment of quality in the teaching profession.

We should clarify that in raising a concern that sustained engagement with theory is largely missing from pre-service teacher education in England, we do recognise that extremely valuable professional learning takes place from experience and regard this as a rich and indispensable aspect of teachers' professional development (for an extended discussion, see Ellis & Orchard, 2014). Indeed, in places where pre-service provision is biased heavily towards theory, for example South Africa (Orchard & Davids, 2019), novice teachers may be unclear or under-confident in how they might apply their well-honed principles wisely within complex and contrasting classroom environments, particularly where the context is very different to the school which they personally attended. When privileged to meet at first hand pre-service teachers in South Africa, one may be struck by the positive qualities of deep reflection developed through this kind of system (Orchard & Davids, 2019) and the theory-rich provision exemplified by the South African system has much to teach other systems, including England. However, it is necessary to strike an appropriate balance between these two extremes, recognising what a tall order it is to develop structured knowledge and understanding of education, while simultaneously managing the complexities of applying such theory in ways that are clearly and immediately relevant to practice.

We also recognise that England is not alone in taking a theory-light approach to teacher education. In many parts of the United States of America, a focus on employment-based learning is similar to the kind being pursued by successive governments in England. In Hong Kong, the employment of unqualified teachers is commonplace in the local school system and pre-service teachers undertake a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) with a practicum of sixteen weeks, a third less teaching practice than their English counterparts (Orchard & Wan, 2019). However, these programmes fall far short of provision in those parts of the world, for example Finland, where new teachers undertake a fully funded “2–3 year masters' degree before they enter teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 2017), centring on a balanced development of the teacher's personal as well as professional competencies. A similar approach has been adopted in one part of Canada by the University of Toronto in Ontario, where “studies have found its teachers feel much better prepared for the challenges they face in the classroom” (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 299), as well as by the University of Melbourne in Australia.

### **'Head' or 'heart' work? Conceptual disagreement in the English context**

As McIntyre (1995, p. 365) recognised several decades ago, the question of “whether and in what sense there is a useful place for ‘theory’ in initial teacher education remains a source of tension and confusion” and this remains largely unresolved today (see e.g., Murray & Passy, 2014). What theory or theories—if any—teachers need to teach well is disputed by practitioners, policy makers, and within the academy; what constitutes knowledge in teaching is also widely contested. Further, there is disagreement about the subject Education, understood variously as a discipline in its own right, a field of study or an inter-disciplinary field (as suggested by Tibble (1966) – although this is not something we have scope to debate here (for an extended discussion of this issue related to teacher education in England see Furlong and Lawn [2011] and Ellis’s [2012] response). Our own preference is to think of education as an applied discipline (Lagemann, 2000), with situated activity or practice the starting point for enquiry.

A recent, sustained and influential attempt by the educational research community to defend the academic dimension in pre- and in-service teacher education in England was advanced through a formal inquiry, led by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in partnership with the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), and published both as a report in 2014, and a special edition of the Oxford Review of Education (Leat et al., 2015). Exploration of the relationship between theoretical and practical ways of knowing has a long history in philosophical writing, dating back to Plato and Aristotle and their conceptions of *epistémé* vs. *phronésis* (Korthagen, 2001), hence one commissioned paper within the inquiry articulated from a philosophical perspective the contribution of educational research to teachers’ professional learning. The paper, developed in the neo-Aristotelian tradition, adopted as its starting point Winch’s (2012) notion of the good teacher as a professional, able to judge right action in various school and classroom contexts. Winch (2012) criticises the notion of teachers as a form of “executive technician,” denuded of the opportunity to judge autonomously, required instead to implement standardised strategies devised by experts both accurately and reliably in context.

Drawing on Ryle’s distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how,” Winch (2012) maintains good teachers know about education, relating this to knowing how to act in classrooms with reference to “a well-thought-through and coherent conceptual framework,” based on knowledge of well-substantiated empirical research, theory and considered ethical principles, to arrive at decisions in the classroom context (Orchard & Winch, 2015). This is not to dismiss entirely the importance of common sense in classrooms,

of the kind envisaged when teaching is portrayed as a craft and teachers as craftworkers. However, on this line of thinking educational judgement which is informed by structured formal knowledge provides a more reliable basis for judgment than relying solely on intuitional judgements, informing good sense of the kind articulated by Gramsci (for an extended version of this argument see Winch et al., 2015).

Reflecting the state of the field of education studies in England in the early twenty-first century, within the BERA/RSA paper that account of knowledge relates overwhelmingly to empirical research findings, despite the paper itself being philosophical. Certainly, the definition of research preferred is broad and inclusive, Stenhouse's (1967) view of research as "systematically organised knowledge," which might range from small-scale classroom-based investigation to largescale randomised control trials. Nonetheless, within the inquiry the potential of engaging with theory remains under-explored, although elsewhere the same authors have been more explicitly supportive of the necessary place of developing theory in teachers' professional judgement (e.g., Oancea & Orchard, 2012; Orchard & Winch, 2015). Engaging with theory extends the conceptual map of the teacher to include the socio-cultural and political ways of knowing that which are relevant to teaching, for example enriching teachers' reflection on learning through an exploration of ideas that have stood the test of time and that are promoted in canonical writings by the likes of Piaget, Bruner and/or Vygotsky. Professional ethics courses, where these exist, make reference to ethical theories, professional knowledge concerning not only pedagogic skill in the classroom, but also "dispositions and values, of character and performance" (Tamir, 1988, p. 99) informed by expertise in pedagogy and subject content.

The task of philosophers contributing to the BERA/RSA inquiry was to develop a clear, coherent and compelling philosophical understanding; but the argument should not be interpreted as a right answer. Philosophers concern themselves with the relationship between theory, research, and professional knowledge in teaching precisely because the discussion is irreducibly normative; with alternative understandings of the theory practice relationship, critical of Winch's (2012) conception of the teacher as professional, having been advanced by other philosophers. Here we focus on Hogan's (2014) argument that teaching well is not primarily about possessing knowledge and skills at all, but rather a way of life. Indeed, he calls into question any view of teaching that is positioned as a form of work, multi-skilled or otherwise, in which the nature of the task is determined by a body of superiors to be carried out by subordinates. Memorably, in Hogan's (2003) view, teaching is "heart work," a vocation that is concerned with "being" and "relating" rather than "having" and "performing." Furthermore,

drawing on an alternative account within the same neo-Aristotelian tradition as Winch (2012), he identifies teaching as a form of social practice. This move requires an ontological and epistemological shift away from the more analytic account of teaching which Winch (2012) promotes. For Hogan (2014), knowing and understanding in teaching need constant revision, being made and re-made over and again, both over time and through the experience. This ontological shift is one which the teacher struggles to preserve and regain, Hogan (2014) explains, but which may enrich their “more mature” experiences as a practitioner.

We share Hogan’s (2014) concern that critical reflection by teachers may too easily be reduced to activity for the sake of meeting formal criteria for academic skills and learning, rather than reflection for its own sake; its commodification is not something we would wish in any way to defend. However, we do not make the same ontological shift that he does, being more wedded to philosophical reflection in the analytic tradition. On one hand, we are attracted to his notion of teaching as heart-work, agreeing that teaching is inescapably moral, informed by positive dispositions to act. Retaining a strong practitioner identity as educators, we recognise his understanding that teaching might be viewed as a way of life. At the same time, as practitioners, we are also resistant to the high (we believe unrealistic) existential expectations revealed in accounts of teaching like Hogan’s (2003), which focus on the transformative moments, or epiphanies. Our own experiences of teaching combine these emotional highs, and lows, with much that is mundane, which are as much a part of the work we know and which would exhaust one were these all to be undertaken in a state of heightened consciousness! Moreover, we are concerned that his perspective gives license to those wishing to side-line completely the contribution of universities and other academic bodies to teacher education. In short, we see teaching as work involving both the heart and the head.

If good teaching can be categorised as both head and heart work, what might the implication be for developing the academic dimension in teacher education in England? Here again, philosophers have disagreed on how this might happen. For example, Carr (2006) has questioned if teaching is something that requires formal research training at all, promoting instead the value of engaging with good literature for inspiration. We support this observation of the marginalised place of the Arts and Humanities within mainstream teacher education in England, seeing the value of engaging with reading, reflective writing in addition to, rather than instead of, engaging with research findings. Why pit sciences and Humanities against each other in a binary way? With sufficient time allocated, surely both can contribute to developing critical thinking in ways that are valuable?



The challenge for promoting head work in a context where historically this has been marginalised, we maintain, is to connect educational theory and research and classroom experience together, following Lagemann (2000) in seeing situated activity or practice as the starting point for educational enquiry. Here, further conceptual problems arise when simple binaries are used to explain their relationship in teachers' professional formation (Hordern, 2019). Hordern (2019) cautions against notions of practice taken to refer somewhat simplistically to those things which educators do in their workplace settings (e.g., teaching in schools, making judgements in the course of classroom interaction), while theory refers to knowledge produced externally to the practice by academics. Alexander (1984) offers a potential way forward here, using the term *practical theorising* to position theory as part of an intellectual process or activity not its object.

### **Engaging teachers' heads with the academic dimension**

We have reflected so far on philosophical discussion of key areas of contention in this area relevant to the context of teaching in England. Having argued that teaching involves head work, thus a need to engage with an academic dimension in professional formation, we consider next how best that might be integrated pedagogically, reviewing empirical studies which report on teachers' own perspectives and experiences of academic engagement, particularly (though not exclusively) those conducted in England. These studies highlight four significant themes from teachers' responses.

One key theme concerns the *accessibility* of the academic dimension in pre-service teacher programmes. Smith and Hodson (2010) found that trainees could articulate what theory meant to them in ways which the researchers judged to be meaningful and saw the value of it, if it was accessible and readily available to them. Similarly, John and Prior's (2003) study into English teachers' perceptions of the value of educational theory to their teaching highlighted the importance of accessibility—both in terms of structure and language—and its applicability to the classroom to the trainees they surveyed. These observations have been supported more recently by other research engagement initiatives (e.g., Williams et al., 2019).

A second underlying and linked theme is a perceived need to *interweave university and school-based learning* in ways that value both elements. John and Prior (2003) advocate building “communities” between teachers and researchers where they can “work together and improve practice”. Smith and Hodson (2010) found that a “culture of reflection” could be promoted on the school-based model of ITE they investigated, suggesting the interweaving could, but need not, be situated in a university. Smith and Hodson (2010)

argue that pre-service teachers need to be immersed in practices that develop a “culture of reflection” in which practice and engagement are bound up in an iterative relationship with one another that is embedded and integrated from the start of the PGCE and continued on throughout a teacher’s career. This creates what we have come to term a *double-helix effect* where theory and practice cannot be divorced from one another.

In molecular biology, the term double helix (popularised by Watson and Crick) refers to the structure formed within certain acids, such as DNA where the complex of molecules it comprises, its tertiary structure, arises as a consequence of its secondary structure. Even when separated, each molecular strand creates a template for the other and can be used to create another double helix. In the same way, within the structure of teachers’ professional knowledge and understanding, even if theory/practice are divided up at a later point, if they’ve been integrated from the beginning of a teacher’s career, then a teacher has the tools—or conceptual map—to replicate the theoretical strand within the practical strand.

Consistent with this analogy, Smith and Hodson (2010, p. 261) observe that pre-service teachers want theory “to be handled in a way that made more direct use of their own practical experience,” resonating with our understanding as teacher educators too. Encouraging teachers to talk to others about educational theory may help them as practitioners to think deeply about what is important to them and to make connections between these considered systems of ideas and practice in the classroom, challenging them to think “otherwise” by encountering thoughts and reflections which might not necessarily accord with their intuitive and common sense understanding. As Smith and Hodson (2010) maintain: “the majority of trainees were prepared to acknowledge that understanding ‘why’ teachers might behave as they do may have at least some value” (p. 262).

Thirdly, as Leat et al. (2015) highlight, and building on the point above, *dialogic approaches* appear to engage pre-service teachers well, in classroom environments where teachers are immersed in educational research. Supportive cultures for research engagement require projects being developed that have “meaning” for teachers, a finding supported by Procter (2015). Through such positive engagement, teachers were found to develop a “dialogic self” in which they engage with/in research in a multidimensional way, resulting in “more and different voices in the landscape of the mind” (Leat et al., 2015, p. 282). Sustaining a similar metaphor, Cain (2015) describes educational research as a “third voice” within long, focused conceptual discussions with the “potential to revolutionise teaching”.

Finally, opportunities for teachers to engage positively with academic reflection appear to be governed by “institutional and socio-political factors” (Leat et al., 2015). Without wider institutional support, it seems uncertain

that provision can promote teachers with the multi-dimensional engagement with systems of thought likely to trigger reflection on practice informed by “rich interactions of social, cultural, historical, political and personal issues to schools, classrooms and research studies” (Leat et al., 2015 p. 283).

These themes make sense to us as teacher educators and resonate with our understanding of teachers’ perceptions of the academic dimension of programmes on which we ourselves teach, gathered anecdotally from new and beginning teachers when we have sought to canvas their opinions informally, either through conversation or when reviewing evaluations of our university’s programmes. Like Campbell (2003), we are keen to engage with teachers’ opinions on this matter in our reflections but have not attempted a research report. Our concern is that while some enjoy written assignments, others might find limited meaning or pleasure in engaging with the academic dimension of the programmes we teach and seem impervious to the potential reward of interrogating education conceptually. Access to Masters’ credits through successful completion of assignments might incentivise some potentially reluctant pre-service teachers to engage with it more, but we are not convinced that this is widespread.

Reviewing teachers’ responses to a survey administered for course evaluation purposes, we were surprised to see that they were more positive than we anticipated and that more experienced classroom practitioners in particular saw value in theory as something that might enable them to “step outside of their subject area” or “reflect beyond the everyday.” However, we are aware too from our conversations with teachers how, once a trainee has completed their PGCE year, this may be the end point of their engagement with the academic dimension. After this, they become too busily focused on the daily demands of teaching to have time or space to devote to developing professionally. This is of particular concern, given John and Prior’s (2003, p. 240) observation that “theory can only make room for practice once practice has settled,” and that teachers in practice need time and space to “see the deeper purposes and meanings inherent within it.” Significantly too, given the importance to institutional support highlighted by Leat et al. (2015), those in-service teachers we know report low levels of support, if any, from their schools, should they wish to pursue a higher degree, whether time off or in contributing towards fees. Sometimes informal support through subject departments may be offered, but schools and teachers in England seem unclear on the potential benefits of academic study, indicative of established attitudes in England we identified earlier. Smith and Hodson (2010) contend that: “Trainees would be better able to articulate the meaning and impact of theory on practice if more opportunity was provided for discussion about the relevance of theory for their schools and classes” (p. 273). How then might the academic dimension of teacher education in England be handled differently?

McIntyre (1995) proposes that:

Initial teacher education should be concerned with the critical examination, development and experimental use of ideas from many sources, including both the elucidated practice of experienced teachers and also a diverse theoretical and research-based literature, i.e. with theorising about practice (pp. 366–367).

Our concern as philosophers is that the academic dimension within most pre- and in-service provision for teachers in England for understandable reasons, given how these are structured and the wider socio-political context within which they must operate, cannot reflect the breadth of reflection and experimental use of ideas which McIntyre (1995) proposes. Even at best, these are too narrowly concerned with research and research findings of a particular kind, at the expense of literature and the Arts as Carr has suggested. Substantial engagement with educational theory including, but not limited to philosophy of education, is notable for its absence. At its most impoverished, the research with which teachers are encouraged to engage is dominated by reductive, and normative, educational assumptions which align valuable academic work with data and ideas around results, attainment and pupil progress, at the expense of critical humanistic concerns, including pedagogical relationships, and professional ethics.

Such an approach inhibits critical conversations and reflection, far from promoting them. Furthermore, if nurturing a teaching profession full of creative, vibrant and enthusiastic practitioners able to act wisely and well, their engagement with educational theory must not be driven by a concern with assignment criteria, unless these can be interpreted creatively; and in ways that celebrate and affirm the qualities of educational understanding developed according to different kinds of excellence in education. This might include close to practice research, for example, as well as traditional academic criteria, flexibility which would prevent a one size fits all account of the theory/practice relationship.

Taking on board the significance of the double helix effect we have identified, the need to see theory and practice as inter-related from the outset of a teachers' pre-service professional formation, continuing on into their teaching career by being promoted through in-service provision, is well established in the teacher education research literature but divorced from the reality of practice and policy making in the English system, as we have demonstrated. New ways need to be found to engage teachers with theory that are: meaningful to them, relate to their own classroom practice and either enable them to make better sense of what they experience positively, or to question what they are doing. Additionally, a more personal approach,

along lines that Hogan recognises to be important, would see educational theory presented as being of ontological and ethical, as well as epistemological, significance. An encounter with theory should engage teachers' hearts as well as heads, such that they bring their full selves to the classroom. As Procter (2015) asserts, teachers need to adopt a value-driven engagement with theory, even if they are not able to use it daily.

Teachers we work with (including in innovative ways we will describe shortly) do seem willing to engage with theory further, particularly though not exclusively, if that includes theoretical engagement within their own curriculum subject area. Yet time available for engagement with the academic dimension, even on a PGCE in a research-intensive university in England, is limited. Furthermore, the descriptions we hear anecdotally of the context in which our former trainees go on to teach make further study seem an unrealistic prospect, except for the most committed once their pre-service formation has been completed. Once in-service, opportunities for academic learning are squeezed out by the sheer busyness of life in school as well as a lack of financial incentive. As Burstow (2014) has found, teachers in England, as elsewhere, need time for extended professional development programmes, yet these are simply not prioritised in this jurisdiction.

Finally, teachers tell us that with time and support they would be willing to undertake further study. However, they cannot see how those conditions could be brought about, given their current professional experiences, at least in the first few years of teaching. This is disappointing to say the least given, as Darling-Hammond (2017) maintains, investment in longer and richer pre-service and in-service programmes for teachers should centre on the

Balanced development of the teacher's personal and professional competencies. Particular attention is focused on building pedagogical thinking skills that enable teachers to manage the teaching process in a diagnostic manner, using research as a base and conducting action research as a guide (Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 299).

### **Engaging teachers through innovation in philosophy of education**

Our particular concern has been to make philosophy of education accessible, given the popular perception of philosophy as a remote and abstracted ivory tower activity. We have found in England (see Orchard et al., 2016, 2020) that pre-service teachers can be enabled to engage with philosophical ideas and to reflect on, potentially transform, their practice from the outset, despite it not having "settle[d]" (John & Prior, 2003) so as to create the critically important double helix style relationship between educational theory and

practice previously identified. This requires us, as others have appreciated, to interweave characteristically philosophical concerns with ethics, knowledge, existential concerns, into reflection on the practical experiences of pre-service teachers who may, or may not, have prior interest or an academic background in our discipline. Currently the main concrete starting point we have focused on has tended to be ethical and usually some kind of dilemma.

Philosophy for Teachers (P4T) developed from a series of seminars, supported consistently by the generosity of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) over at least a decade (see Orchard et al. [2020], Orchard et al. [2016], for further information). Researchers from the Centre for Research Ethics and Ethical Deliberation (CREED) and the Centre for Learner Identity studies (CLIs) at Edge Hill University (2011) identified the importance of exploring the tension around ethical issues arising in teachers' practice (Shortt et al., 2015) as an aspect of university-based teacher education. Philosophers of education trained in Philosophy for Children (P4C) argued convincingly that meaningful and productive reflection on ethical dilemmas might arise from exploring examples of incidents identified and experienced by teachers. These two factors have become the cornerstone of how P4T has developed, in partnership with pre-service teachers, education students, their tutors and philosophers of education. With continued funding from Higher Education Academy in England (HEA) and PESGB we have organised to-date three 24-hour residential workshops in England and one in South Africa, funded by the PESGB and the South African National Research Foundation.

The stated aims of the workshops have been to:

- create space and time for critical reflection away from the busyness of schools;
- create a community of practice in a residential safe-space conducive to this kind of work, where potentially confidential concerns could be aired;
- develop independence and confidence among student teachers on how to manage examples of ethically complex and potentially challenging classroom situations;
- address existential concerns which arise typically among beginning teachers when dealing with challenging behaviour by their pupils, including burnout, and sustaining motivation and a sense of moral purpose;
- offer teacher educators a form of professional development in the methods of dialogic teaching and learning, and in the value and possibilities of such engagement.

On each occasion, activities have been steered by an experienced P4C trainer, who is also a philosopher of education, and included other invited academic colleagues. The coordinator has acted as a co-enquirer, building a collaborative, reflective ethos to instil a co-operative and caring culture, grounded in mutual respect, across the group. This has functioned then as a safe space for the expression of ideas in what becomes a collective search for understanding, meaning and values – always supported by reasons. This is no mean feat to achieve in a short timespan but is essential to the P4T practice as it has emerged. This commitment to building a Community of Enquiry (CoE) able to respond to the thoughts of its members in ways that are “genuinely open-ended, critical and self-reflective” (Murriss, 2008) is central to the P4C pedagogical approach. It requires a facilitator who, in Murriss’ (2008) words, is “actively seeking opportunities to be perplexed, numbed and open to change through reflection and self-reflection.” It should be clear from this description that while the facilitator may (arguably should) be philosophically knowledgeable, a key necessary quality is for them to be enabling and attentive to the needs of others in the CoE.

Those ethical dilemmas explored in the workshops draw on participants’ own direct classroom experiences, as the following example from the P4T seminars illustrates (for a full account see Orchard et al., 2016). A pre-service teacher initially shared an experience with another participant and then with a sub-group of four participants who felt that her experience resonated with their own and was worthy of wider consideration and indeed, when shared in the CoE as a whole, the group voted to work on her narrative. The teacher recounted the experience once again herself, so that everyone could understand what had been involved.

She had been lenient with a child, she explained, who had broken a school rule. She did so, she explained, because she was sympathetic to the pupil’s circumstances, which she knew about, but the other children did not. She reported some pupils complaining vociferously that overlooking the rule-breaking was unfair, and she realised that they had interpreted this as an instance of the teacher failing to apply rules consistently. It was difficult for her to regain the confidence of the class as a result. She still believed that her actions were the right ones in the circumstances and yet she could also understand the children’s point of view. She was left feeling troubled, concerned that she could have handled the situation better and perplexed about what she could have done otherwise.

In the large group discussion, this personal classroom story led to a substantive dialogue in which the concepts of fairness, equitable treatment, and equality were discussed and examined in some depth. Questions were posed about what might be done in similar circumstances. Participants went on to explore concerns such as, “How can we treat people equally when

different responses would be helpful?" "What does it mean to be fair?" "How can compassion be squared with equity?" These discussions were thoughtful and stimulated engaged and sustained contributions, demonstrating both elements of dialogic work (Alexander, n.d.) and the power of the CoE.

In a follow-up session building on the group discussion above, key words and concepts in the questions that were raised were interrogated to find a hierarchy of the concepts being generated, since some concepts are more generalized and generalizable than others. For example, on the discussion of rules, fairness and differential treatment, an overarching theme was justice. Highlighting these complex and principal ideas is a P4C practice in which participants are able to see how their own more specific issues and questions would fit within the umbrella concept: justice in this example. Through exploring the concept and related practical concerns, clarificatory and specific further questions arose, using a P4C strategy known as concept stretching. This helped participants to think about ways forward in other situations when reflection was needed to articulate reasons for actions.

Throughout, the presence of philosophers of education was helpful in guiding clarification. Classroom practice and philosophy of education were not divorced from each other at all in this context; on the contrary, they become deeply entwined, with both the content of the discussion, and the dialogical and iterative methods used, engaging everyone present in building on their own respective experiences of practice. Theory is woven in from the outset, enabling participants to think deeply and practically when learning in this environment.

### **Final reflections**

We have demonstrated briefly how established ideas of how teachers might be engaged in the academic dimension of educational studies, and which interweave theory and practice in teachers' reflections from the outset, might be applied specifically to philosophy of education through the P4T initiative. The notion of a double helix, we maintain, is a helpful characterisation of this relationship and illustrates the pressing needs for a shift towards a "more scholarly academic community" (Hordern, 2018) in teacher education practice which at the same time retains the value and emphasis on practicum experience.

The residential dimension of the CoE approach, in particular, goes some way towards respecting Hogan's (2003) insistence that the ontology of teaching as a practice must be fundamental to any account of becoming a teacher. We recognise that this dualistic understanding of engaging both head and heart in teaching and teacher education requires further articulation;



this current paper goes some way towards identifying and justifying this need, paving the way to investigation of a new and potentially significant future chain of thought.

The four key themes identified here—accessibility, interweaving theory and practice, dialogue and environment—highlight key concerns for realising greater scholarliness in ways that honour both heart and head-focused dimensions. In terms of improving the accessibility of the academic dimension in pre-service teacher programmes, it has been difficult to make time to pursue P4T within conventional pre-service teacher education programmes, particularly outside the specialist undergraduate route. Our best attempt has been to identify what we have come to term “leaky spaces” (Orchard et al., 2016) in the architecture of pre-service provision and to use these spaces to promote the academic dimension in teacher education through P4T.

We have needed to think creatively even to justify access to these spaces, drawing attention to instrumental concerns like how we might explore new and beginning teachers’ concerns with behaviour management through P4T, how we might induct them through experiences of the community of enquiry into this pedagogical approach in the classroom. Were we to try to argue the intrinsic value of philosophy for teachers on the teacher education curriculum in our context, we do not think we would be successful. Yet by this means, with effort, access to an implicitly philosophical form of thinking opens up on the margins of conventional provision.

Ideally, we would advocate an expansion of time invested in educating teachers; for example, increasing the one-year UK PGCE programme to two years, adopting an apprenticeship model (Orchard & Winch, 2015). Time and space for critical engagement with theory and research could be incorporated from the outset, in tandem with the acquisition of the necessary practical expertise for developing professional teachers. This structure allows for a genuine interweaving of university and school-based learning in ways that value both elements, and in ways that motivate and speak to teachers. Where the political will is there, commitment to additional time for teacher development is clearly possible, as is evident in precedents which exist in other jurisdictions (Darling-Hammond, 2017) and which were signalled briefly during the short-lived Master’s in Teaching and Learning in England, as well as the Master’s in Educational Practice in Wales (Orchard & Winch, 2015).

Were such time available, the P4T approach demonstrates one way in which school experience and more traditional kinds of academic reflection connected with the educational foundation disciplines might be interwoven into pre-service teacher education provision, fostering habits of critical reflection through practices like concept stretching and refining questions (Orchard & Davids, 2019; Orchard et al., 2020). It would be expected that

apprentice teachers would routinely interrogate their practice, in relation to research, and conversely, probe the links between theoretical ideas and what they see and experience in schools, with a particular focus on the wider ethical dimensions of teaching practice in classrooms. In these circumstances the dynamics of the double helix notion of organic professional growth is evident.

However, it is far more likely in England that one-year programmes are retained as standard, with pre-service teachers' status recognised as internship, prior to apprenticeship into teaching. In this instance, some aspects of the (more theoretical) South African PGDE approach might usefully be adapted and adopted to the English context too. With a marginally reduced emphasis on practice and an increased focus on what students are reading and discussing in the university-based dimension of pre-service provision (or its equivalent), new ways need to be found that enable nascent teachers develop their emergent professional identity that interweave established abstract ideas and practical experience.

Increasingly, graduate professionals are required to be agile, possessed of skills, knowledge and practice capable of being transferred across work lives, careers and, different fields. As well as prior academic learning, new teachers need the capacity to think and engage critically with pedagogical ideas, those previous experiences and learning that have shaped their professional and student identities and where necessary be able to think otherwise. Through its dialogic approach and the promotion of the communities of enquiry, teacher educators, philosophers, and student teachers can work together to nurture such habits and dispositions.

However, a commitment to engaging new and beginning teachers in theory, based on the best that is known and practiced already, requires a policy environment in which these more unashamedly academic and scholarly pursuits can be supported. It is essential not to leave engagement with theory as an optional extra that will hopefully happen by chance in a leaky space on the margins of pre-service provision. P4T has demonstrated to us that it is pedagogically possible for teacher educators engaged in good quality scholarship to support new teachers in making sense of established and new educational ideas where this is supported. Professional learning of this kind is needed if teachers are to navigate a path through the flow of ideas, exhortations, evidence-based, experimental and exploratory suggestions that will come their way over the course of a professional lifetime. It is possible, of course, that some of these matters may be explored through conducting empirical research and Leat et al. (2015) in particular highlight the benefit to teachers of promoting teachers' capacity for critical reflection by this means. While we do not deny this observation, coming from a commitment to the value of bringing philosophical thinking to bear on educational practice,

we can see clear benefits to teachers of the conceptual map we have described to refer to when thinking through educational problems. We exhort teachers to engage critically at the level of principle, applying sound reasoning, as thinking teachers, protected from blind acceptance of the latest educational whims and crazes (Orchard & Winstanley, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have considered the role of theory in teacher education in depth to justify our concern that it is largely absent from provision in England. The capacity to understand education conceptually is certainly not a sufficient condition of good teaching but it is necessary, teaching being head work as well as heart work. Studies suggest that teachers who have been educated themselves into valuing the academic dimension through pre-service formation which is accessible, interweaves theory and practice in dialogic ways and which enjoy support from the schools and universities in which they are trained, and subsequently employed, may be aware of the benefits of engaging with theory and its impact on their practice. These more positive impressions resonate with views we have heard expressed by teachers we encounter through professional experience.

Thus, teachers in England may be more interested in what theory can offer them as developing professionals than is sometimes assumed by other practitioners, researchers and policy makers, particularly where this is connected to their curriculum area. We are confident that more innovative approaches to interweaving academic and practical reflection in teacher education, which include access to implicitly theoretical activities, like Philosophy for Teachers, really can help teachers to develop as effective and reflective practitioners. The approach encourages practical use of theoretical ideas in ways that are integrated and related, rather than dichotomised, to engage teachers' heads and hearts. We do not underestimate the challenges to those seeking to shift the balance in established patterns of teacher education provision in England. Nevertheless, we maintain that developing such a culture of professional formation is desirable, attainable and necessary as a goal for teachers at all career stages.

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