

## When Is Philosophy of Education?

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Once again, schools of education are receiving critical scrutiny. National policy makers express skepticism about the contribution schools of education make to the preparation of teachers, leading them to fund the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence to create a route to teacher certification that will not require candidates to take any education coursework. The state of Ohio's recent funding of "charter schools of education" shows similar doubts about the performance of current education schools.

The concern is broader than teacher preparation, extending to doubts about the scholarship done by faculty in schools of education and about the programs for preparing new scholars that are operating in those schools. A recent National Research Council report calls for the schools of education that are preparing scholars to articulate what those scholars need to know and be able to do.<sup>1</sup> The Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences has provided funding for programs that offer doctoral students outside schools of education incentives to carry out studies of education.

Broad concerns about schools of education should remind philosophers of education that our field also faces questions about our contributions and about the quality of our work. We need to make the quality and value of work apparent. I will argue that a promising way to do so is to engage directly with the current discussions outside our specialty. I see discussions about teaching and teacher education as a particularly promising area. These are domains where we have a history of work, but too often philosophers of education have talked only to each other. I have argued elsewhere that many scholars in education are doing philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Philosophers of education should make common cause with these scholars.

### A LOOK BACK

Having schools of education and scholars in education under attack is nothing new. In her book, *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research*, Ellen Condliffe Lagemann describes the history of educational research in the twentieth century, pointing out that scholarship in education has been plagued by low status and by isolation both from the disciplines of social science and from educational practice.<sup>3</sup> Rita Kramer's, *Ed School Follies: The Miseducation of America's Teachers*, and Arthur Bestor's, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools*, are two of the better known examples of books castigating faculty in schools of education for the triviality of their accomplishments and the weakness of their intellectual base.<sup>4</sup>

Lack of clarity about the contribution philosophers of education can make is also nothing new. My analysis of both the current difficulties and what philosophers of education should do about them is colored by my own experience in the field. A bit of autobiography may serve to illustrate.

I came to philosophy of education without quite knowing what I was getting into. (Perhaps that's a reflection of a more general feature of my character.) I chose to pursue a doctorate in philosophy of education after idly reading some graduate catalogs for schools in California, coming across programs with that name, and thinking that they might hold something for someone with experience teaching and a background in philosophy. So, I applied to three programs, picked the one whose campus seemed most appealing, and headed west.

I arrived in 1972 to find all the regular faculty in the program had left or were on sabbatical. My initial advisor, who was still completing his degree, recommended a book to give me a sense of the field. The book was Christopher Lucas's collection, *What Is Philosophy of Education?* a collection of previously published essays from *Educational Theory*, the *Harvard Educational Review*, and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Its introduction begins,

Philosophy is in a state of crisis today. The nature of the function of philosophy has always been a philosophical problem generating controversy since the first disagreements between Socrates and Anaxagoras. 'Philosophy,' it has been said, 'is its own first problem.' So it always has been. But in the twentieth century discussion has been raised to a new pitch as a result of sharply divergent views as to what philosophy is, what it offers modern man, and what it might aspire to do. The net effect of such controversy has been to produce widespread skepticism as to the legitimacy of philosophy itself. There have always been skeptics happy to offer obituaries for philosophy, but not until this century have these critics been so numerous or so vocal.<sup>6</sup>

The titles of initial chapters of the book include, "What (If Anything) to Expect from Today's Philosophers," "American Philosophy is Dead," and "Does Philosophy Have a Future?" Somewhat surprisingly, the book as a whole is *not* a case for the dissolution of the Philosophy of Education Society so that its members could do something with a future. No, it is a textbook for philosophy of education classes for prospective teachers with some thoughts about the variety of ways such classes could be taught.

In retrospect, it is clear how the prominent themes of concern about the contribution of philosophy of education fit into a broader discourse about the limits of analytic philosophy, the erosion of confidence about the inevitability of societal progress, and even perhaps the counterculture movements and the rebellion of some youth against their parents' institutions and values. But to me at the time, I must say that this occupational self-doubt started me thinking about the ways in which my haphazardly chosen specialization could contribute something of value.

Drawing on a vein of optimism, I continued my doctoral program, mixing courses in the philosophy department (philosophy of language and logic) and wide-ranging philosophy and political theory seminars with other philosophy of education students (studying the work of Alfred Schutz, the early Karl Marx, and Emile Durkheim) with studies that built on my undergraduate work in mathematics (statistics, psychometrics). I pulled political theory, statistics, and philosophy together in work on program evaluation, working with an interdisciplinary set of faculty who were developing a theory of program evaluation as a political activity.

So, I was armed with an almost complete degree in philosophy of education, plus various bits of related knowledge and skill, ready for a faculty position in philosophy of education. But such jobs were few; I got a couple of interviews, but no position. The offer I did eventually receive was to join a new research institute, dedicated to the multidisciplinary investigation of teaching as clinical information processing. So I fell into the middle of a large, federally funded research enterprise. For the rest of my career, I have been trying to figure out how to contribute something of value. I have the sense that I have been able to draw on my training as a philosopher to contribute to many discussions with colleagues without such training. I have found that making the value of such contributions apparent has been easier when the group I am working with is already doing philosophy of education, usually without naming it as such. Rather than trying to figure out *what* philosophy of education is, I have drawn on whatever philosophical skills and knowledge I possess *when* the work of a larger education community is already philosophical. Rather than asking Lucas's question, "What is philosophy of education?" I ask, "When is philosophy of education?"

### THREE PHILOSOPHICAL ACTIVITIES

I nominate three activities as philosophical, whether or not carried out by professional philosophers, and whether or not carried out in arenas specifically dedicated to philosophy. People working in education work as philosophers when they analyze an argument, make a case for what should be done, and write about the meaning of words. Roughly speaking, these fall under the familiar philosophical rubrics of logic and the philosophy of science, ethics, and some contemporary version of analytic philosophy.

I have put these in relatively unphilosophical language to signal that scholars are doing philosophy of education when they do these things, even if the vocabulary of the moment is not philosophical. Talking about values, aims, or moral principles would make the second occasion sound more philosophical, and might even add some precision to my description, but educators are doing philosophy of education even when they do not use those words.

I see all of these as cases of philosophy as informally characterized by Thomas Nagel:

Philosophy is different from science and from mathematics. Unlike science it doesn't rely on experiments or observation, but only on thought. And unlike mathematics it has no formal methods of proof. It is done just by asking questions, arguing, trying out ideas and thinking of possible arguments against them, and wondering how our concepts really work.<sup>7</sup>

I will illustrate each of the philosophical activities with work that addresses current issues. I will show that the work makes a needed contribution, that it is recognizably philosophical, and that doing it well also involves knowledge about areas beyond what is typically discussed in philosophical journals. I will also try to show that some nonphilosopher scholars are engaged in these activities, too. Their engagement creates a time for philosophers of education to bring their special expertise into the discussion, possibly demonstrating when it is worthwhile to have philosophers around.

Note that philosophers have established these connections in other parts of the academy. Philosophers are regularly engaged in discussions in medicine, around issues such as the right to refuse treatment, the obligation for social provision of health care, and the criteria for determining whether someone has given informed consent. Philosophers are also central members of groups in cognitive science, helping to work out theories of consciousness and their relationship to findings from neurobiology. Philosophers of education might be able to make parallel connections to the broader community of educational research.

I draw my illustrations of philosophical activities from contemporary discussions about teaching and teacher education. I do that in part because this is the territory I know best. It is also an appropriate source of examples because much current educational research and policy revolves around teaching, from research on teacher preparation to the “qualified teacher” provisions of federal legislation. So much talking and writing on issues about teaching creates many occasions for philosophical work. In addition, discussions of teaching have played a central role in philosophy of education, from the Plato’s *Meno*, to the myriad analyses of the concept of teaching, to recent discussions of whether teaching is a practice.<sup>8</sup>

#### ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT

For decades, U.S. educators have been arguing about whether “teachers made a difference.” Links between this argument and decisions about where to concentrate education resources make the conclusions drawn important. If teachers do not make a difference, then lengthy teacher preparation, high teacher salaries, aggressive teacher recruitment, and support for professional development all seem like bad investments. If teachers do make a difference, as most groups are arguing these days, then that list is only a starting point for the places to devote resources if citizens want to improve education.

The argument that seems to hold sway in current discussions is drawn from the work William Sanders has done, initially in Tennessee.<sup>9</sup>

This issue has gained special salience in recent years as a result of William Sanders’...claim that “differences in [the] effectiveness of individual classroom teachers...[are] the single largest [contextual] factor affecting the academic growth of...students.” Sanders’ conclusion, of course, is sharply at odds with findings from an earlier generation of research, especially production function research showing that home and social background effects are more important than classroom and school effects in explaining variance in student achievement.<sup>10</sup>

Sanders’s analysis uses complex statistical procedures, the details of which he treats as a proprietary secret. But the general idea is fairly simple. He computes the year-to-year gain in achievement for each child in a teacher’s class, then adjusts the gain to account for differences in gain due to socioeconomic status (SES) and effects of studying in the particular school and district. The resulting adjusted gains are averaged for each class and identified as an estimate of the “value added” by that teacher. That is, a class’s increase in achievement is thought of as partly due to teacher and partly due to SES and contextual factors. Sanders’s procedure is a statistical method for separating those two so that the contribution of the teacher can be estimated.

Some philosophical work might be done to examine the significance of using “value added” as the label for this adjusted gain score. I want, however, to skip over that for the moment and move on to conclusions Sanders drew from his work. Using his statistical procedure, he found that teachers varied considerably in their estimated “value added.” Moreover, he was able to identify some teachers with high value added for several years in a row, and others with repeatedly low value added.

Based on this variation, he estimated how much more a student with high-value-added teachers would learn, compared with a student who repeatedly got low-value-added teachers.

In 1996, Sanders and Rivers (SR) released a technical report purporting to show that teacher effects accumulate over time. They report that for math tests, students taught by the least effective teachers for three consecutive years would score 52 to 54 percentile points below similar students taught by the most effective teachers for three consecutive years. This dramatic finding has garnered enormous attention from researchers, policy makers and other interested parties.<sup>11</sup>

Value-added analyses has become a frequent topic of discussion among a range of audiences. In October 2004, three national conferences were held on the topic.<sup>12</sup> The Spring 2004 issue of the *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics* was entirely devoted to the topic. Some of these discussions address technical and logistical issues with gathering data and computing scores. Questions about the basic logic of value-added analysis are also addressed. These questions, about what conclusions can be drawn from the value-added data, are questions about validity of arguments from evidence to conclusions. Trying to answer such questions is, I claim, a philosophical activity, an exercise in the logic of inference. Here is an occasion for philosophy of education.

Given a sufficient understanding of the basic statistics, philosophers might be able to bring their expertise in evaluating arguments to these discussions. One newspaper article, for example, said, “Research by former University of Tennessee professor William L. Sanders showed that having a highly effective teacher for three years in a row was a strong predictor of high student scores on state standardized tests.”<sup>13</sup> A philosopher would be quick to note the circular reasoning here, since Sanders’s criterion for calling a teacher highly effective is that their students would have high test-score gains three years in a row. Not all the errors in logic will be so obvious, but this example shows that the discussions about the chains of reasoning that start with value-added studies are occasions for philosophical work, some done by philosophers of education, some by the other participants in the discussions.

#### DELIBERATING ABOUT THE GOALS OF EDUCATION

National discussions about education seem dominated by talk of raising pupil achievement, accountability, and how to contribute to meeting the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Teacher preparation programs are asked to show how they are helping teachers raise test scores in reading and mathematics.

One of the particularly difficult problems in the design of teacher preparation is how to enable elementary school teachers to develop depth of knowledge in the

several subjects they will teach, including the core academic subjects — language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Empirical studies have shown that elementary school teachers' knowledge is typically superficial, especially in the subject areas most elementary school teachers did not like when they were in school — mathematics and science.

At a meeting I attended a few years ago, a prominent official in the U.S. Department of Education said that his resolution of this problem was to support the development of curriculum materials that required little subject-matter understanding. Although he did not use the term “teacher proof curriculum,” it was clear he had something much like that in mind. His view of teacher preparation was that it should be preparing people to be ready and able to follow the curriculum, not, as the rhetoric of many reports suggests, the preparation of a cadre of sophisticated professionals.

Arguments in favor of one set of aims rather than another are philosophical arguments. For example, Israel Scheffler argued that teacher education should aim at preparing teachers who will be models of intellectual virtues.<sup>14</sup> Maxine Greene, facing a political context resembling the current narrow definitions of achievement, called on teacher educators to prepare their students to ask fundamental questions about the purposes of education rather than looking only at developing technical skills.<sup>15</sup>

Much depends on the results of these arguments. If those who believe that teachers need know little more than how to follow a textbook prevail, teacher preparation might be shifted away from higher education to the K-12 schools, where experienced teachers could train teachers in the skills they need to follow a curriculum. That possibility is not far fetched. “Alternate routes” to teacher certification are often based in school districts, with district staff serving as the teacher trainers. If, in contrast, those who believe teachers should be models of the intellectual virtues prevail, teacher preparation might be substantially extended, so that teachers have opportunities to gain a deep understanding of each of the subjects they will teach. Initial preparation in methods of teaching might be restricted to a brief introduction, under the assumption that teachers will pick up those skills once they are in the classroom.

Nonphilosopher scholars, educators, and policy makers are making assertions about the purposes of teacher education. When they make arguments, they engage in philosophy of education. But their arguments seldom seem informed by either the prior discussions of this particular topic or the general structures of arguments about what ends to pursue. Trained philosophers of education will see strengths and weaknesses in the arguments and can identify articles and books that bring out the considerations that can be brought into the debate.

Discussions about what to do in education often gravitate toward reliance on empirical bases that seem most certain. But with that drift toward what seems like firm ground comes a narrowing of attention and an abandonment of discussions about values. This happened early in the twentieth century when, in the quest for respectability, researchers adopted methods from the new science of psychology.

While this did increase the influence of leading researchers like E.L. Thorndike, that shift focused attention on a narrow set of studies framed by an individualistic, behaviorist psychology, considering only characteristics and outcomes that could easily be quantified. Such research often appealed to teachers and administrators because it appeared to offer simple answers to practical questions. But, as Ellen Lagemann notes, the research “simply ignored the degree to which multiple factors, including subtle interactions between and among individuals, groups, cultural traditions, and social structures, all combine to influence teaching and learning.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the narrowly conceived research had little place for consideration of the deliberation about values that play such a large part in decisions about education. This narrowing of educational research may have resulted, in part, from a desire to increase the scientific quality of educational research, driven by a narrow conception of science.

The United States is once more facing a move toward reliance on a narrow set of educational research as the basis for determining goals, especially the goals of teacher education. Aims of teacher education are being debated at national meetings of educators, policy makers, and subject-matter experts. These are occasions where philosophy of education is being done. Philosophers of education should be in the thick of things.

#### WRITING ABOUT THE MEANING OF WORDS

Words, words, words. Education discourse is notorious for its use of jargon. The most troubling uses of language, however, are the uses of apparently ordinary words with subtle or not so subtle changes in meaning. In the past few years, two of the most prominent terms have been “teacher quality” (or “highly qualified teacher”) and “scientific research.”

#### TEACHER QUALITY

“Teacher quality” sounds like mother and apple pie. No one could be against it. But what is it, exactly, that is meant? It is seldom explicitly defined. The National Council on Teacher Quality, a conservative education group with board members like E.D. Hirsch and Frederick Hess, says:

Ensuring the quality of the nation’s 3.2 million teachers is an essential part of providing an excellent, equitable education to all our children. A growing body of studies provide conclusive evidence that teacher quality is the primary school-related factor affecting student achievement. Students who are assigned to very effective teachers excel quickly, while those who are assigned to the least effective teachers lag far behind and often never catch up.<sup>17</sup>

The mention of “conclusive evidence” and the comparison of “very effective” to “least effective” teachers strongly suggests that “high value added” is being equated with “quality.” In other words, a high-quality teacher is one who produces gains in student achievement. Once that is brought out, the passage sounds a little less informative, because it has a strong element of circularity. The equation of quality with production of student achievement gains also highlights the restriction of “quality” to academic achievement. Other features that parents might value, such as “caring,” “tough,” or “supportive,” are given no value in themselves, though the



door is open to including them if they were shown to lead to higher achievement. “Teacher quality” also does not include serving as a role model, contributing to the community, or communicating well with parents. Bringing out what is and is not included on a group’s use of “teacher quality” is doing philosophy of education.

The emphasis on “teacher quality,” and its association with student achievement gains, is not unique to the United States. Canadian education reports also feature “teacher quality” prominently. One recent report put “teacher quality” at the center, but extends its meaning. The connection to student achievement is evident in the following statement about the importance of teacher preparation: “The initial preparation of teachers is a critical aspect of quality, as knowledge of how students learn, teaching methods and subject content correlates positively with student outcomes.”<sup>18</sup> That is, the evidence for association of teacher preparation with teacher quality is its link to student outcomes. (Sanders’s work is prominently featured in this report.) But “teacher quality” does not just refer to producing achievement gains; it also refers to characteristics of teachers, of their teaching, and even of the classroom contexts linked to achievement gains:

Teacher quality may be explored in three broad areas. The first measure of quality is the characteristics the teacher brings to the classroom. The second measure of quality is the teaching that occurs in the classroom. The third aspect, which is extensively examined in this report, is the environmental conditions and practices that foster excellence in teaching.<sup>19</sup>

This extension of “teacher quality” from equivalence with producing achievement to characteristics associated with those gains comes through in U.S. federal legislation. The “Teacher Quality” provision of NCLB is a set of regulations that require the employment of “highly qualified teachers.” (Note the subtle shift from “teacher quality” to “highly qualified teachers.”) The logic seems to be that “highly qualified” teachers will be [high] quality teachers.

The regulations make the notion of a “highly qualified” teacher explicit. The Department of Education web site gives a short definition of “highly qualified.” “In general a ‘highly qualified teacher’ is one with full certification, a bachelor’s degree, and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching.”<sup>20</sup> The law allows states to determine what it takes to demonstrate competence in subject knowledge and teaching. For new teachers, this means taking a test. For experienced teachers, states can create systems for demonstration that allow teachers to count a wide range of things as indicators of competence, including participation in professional development, performance evaluations (such as those done by school principals as part of the school system’s personnel system), portfolios of material, and records of the achievement of their pupils.

The education press is full of commentaries on these federal definitions of “highly qualified.” The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, for example, looks at states’ specific provisions in an attempt to uncover the “operational definitions” of teacher quality. They say that “requirements for alternative route candidates vary widely....Standards for academic majors vary widely. How many hours actually makes a ‘highly qualified teacher’?” The National Council on Teacher Quality



examines the state systems for determining whether an experienced teacher is highly qualified and concludes that

when teachers are allowed to tally up conferences, committee work and mentoring from years past, [the procedure used in some states] becomes a method for proving inflated competency rather than a tool for constructively improving subject knowledge. Such plans conjure up images of teachers across the country rummaging through their attics, sorting through old papers looking for evidence that they participated in some activity worth a few highly qualified points in the distant past.<sup>21</sup>

Although it may seem a bit of a stretch, these attempts to examine what “teacher quality” and “highly qualified teacher” mean in different state and national contexts are akin to the philosophical activity of explicating the meanings of key terms. Like philosophers, these analysts are trying to uncover connections between these words and a variety of important things — actions taken by government agencies, decisions about whom to hire, and formulations of reports to parents about the teachers working with their children.

This is territory in which philosophers could fruitfully work. The differences between saying that a teacher is of high quality because he or she passed a subject-matter test and saying that a teacher is of high quality because he or she led students to learn is the material for many a philosophical disquisition. Indeed, there was a period when it seemed that philosophers of education wrote about little else.

The trick in making this territory bear fruit, however, is to make contributions that help that community see where the agreements and the fights are, rather than simply pointing out that everyone is confused, or making fine distinctions that seem petty or pedantic to those outside the professional community of philosophers of education.

#### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

A second example of discussions within the education community of the meaning of terms is the current debate about the meaning of “scientific research” in education. As legislators in Washington, D.C., were writing the laws that would create and fund a revised version of the federal agency focused on educational research, they voiced concern about the quality of such research and its dependability as a guide for improving teaching and learning in the nation’s schools. In introducing the bill that eventually was adopted, the legislator taking leadership on this bill said, “Of course, all research funded by the center would be required to meet the definition of ‘scientifically valid research.’” His comments indicated both a conviction that federally funded educational research should have dependability based on science and an intention to build a definition of scientifically valid educational research into the legislation itself. The intent was to write in a restricted definition of science, labeling as the “gold standard” (that is, the model for high-quality research) experiments that estimate effects of treatments by comparing results for groups randomly assigned to the various treatments.

Several of the professional organizations engaged with educational research successfully worked to broaden the definition written into law. That is, they were engaged in discussions about what the term “scientific research” meant and how that

meaning would be reflected in policies. Here, then, is another time when a broad education community was doing philosophical work.

The efforts to establish a meaning of “scientific research” not narrowly tied to one research design were aided by the report from a panel of experts, drawn from education (including a past president of the Philosophy of Education Society) and from fields such as physics and economics. The National Research Council (NRC) assembled this panel to answer the question of what makes for high-quality scientific research in education. Their conclusions, published in *Scientific Research in Education*, are that the principles for scientific research in education are the same as principles for all scientific research.<sup>22</sup> They discuss the “gold standard” research design, but take pains to argue that science is not identified with any particular research design. Agreement on this characterization of “scientific research” in education came through discussions, examination of varying examples, and even consulting the work of philosophers of science. (Karl Popper has a prominent place in the report.)

The definition of scientific research finally written into the legislation continues to give a central role to randomized experiments, but also allows for other research designs to be considered “scientific.” A web site sponsored by the new Institute for Education Sciences gives a brief summary of the characteristics of scientific research in education:

According to the Institute of Education Sciences, scientifically based research:

- employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; involves data analyses that are adequate to support the general findings; relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable data; makes claims of causal relationships only in random-assignment experiments or other designs (to the extent such designs substantially eliminate plausible competing explanations for the obtained results);...
- uses research designs and methods appropriate to the research question posed.<sup>23</sup>

I see the work on this report and its effect on federal educational policy as an example of the way that philosophical work, in this case about what is meant by “scientific research,” can shape national policy. The NRC panel was charged with what is in large part philosophical work. This is a case in which a philosopher of education was a part of the group, drawing on special philosophical expertise. It is a prominent example of what I am suggesting philosophers of education should attempt to do — engage with nonphilosophers as they undertake philosophical work linked to important current topics.

I do not want to leave the impression that federal policy makers are easily influenced. The U.S. Secretary of Education acknowledges that scientific research can be carried out with a variety of designs, but has established a funding priority for the entire Department of Education, saying that the Secretary “considers random assignment and quasi-experimental designs to be the most rigorous methods to address the question of project effectiveness.”<sup>24</sup> In establishing this priority, the Department received comments from almost three hundred parties on a draft of the priority. The majority of the comments argued that the Secretary’s priority construed

“scientific research” too narrowly. But these critical comments did *not* lead to any changes in the draft.

This account of the federal definition of scientific research gives hope for the contributions that philosophy of education can make, but also shows the limits in what can be expected when the consequences of analysis are politically loaded. The work on *Scientific Research in Education*, which included an analysis of the characteristics of “scientific research,” appears to have played an important role in the continuing discussions among researchers and policy makers. One narrow candidate interpretation of “scientific research” did not sweep the field. A broader interpretation is evident in discussions within research journals, and even in some of the official documents of the federal government, which early on appeared headed for a definition that went no farther than randomized field trials. A fairly narrow definition has been maintained for some research contexts, however, despite the strong efforts of many scholars to make it somewhat broader.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The world is full of current threats to schools of education. The federal government supports organizations like the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, which seeks to create a national teaching certificate based only on a computer-based examination, with no need to take any education coursework. Other alternate routes to teacher certification, many based outside universities, continue to be in the national spotlight. An influential federal official once said, “You know, if there was any piece of legislation that I could pass, it would be to blow up colleges of education.”<sup>25</sup> (The official later apologized for the remark.)

The community of scholars dedicated to philosophy of education is among those at risk. The loss of faculty positions dedicated to philosophy of education is a recurrent topic at the Philosophy of Education Society meetings. Part of the problem is being seen as marginal or irrelevant to the major issues facing education. Our critical self-scrutiny should be seen in the broader concerns about the contributions of research conducted by education scholars. My recommendation is that we try to become less marginal by looking for occasions when members of the larger community concerned with education, some of whom work in schools of education, some of whom do not, are engaged in activities that are, I assert, activities of philosophy of education. Becoming a legitimate participant in those occasions requires knowledge of when those discussions are occurring and enough understanding of the specific issues to be a credible, nonperipheral contributor.

I propose three types of occasions to look for:

- occasions where arguments are being made, particularly arguments about the connections between evidence and conclusions;
- occasions where educators are discussing the proper goals for education, especially the goals for teacher preparation; and
- occasions where people are trying to understand the meanings of key terms that figure prominently in policies and practices.

These come from my own work on teaching and teacher education; I imagine there are others.

What it will take to join these conversations? Enough understanding of the issues to get to the heart of them. That suggests coursework and collaborations outside our specialty. A topic for discussion in our community is the balance between doctoral study devoted to specialized study in philosophy of education and doctoral study that would give students enough understanding of other areas of educational scholarship that they can engage legitimately and productively. Should philosophers of education have to learn the methods of empirical research? Should they take statistics?

We are living in dangerous times. Rather than reacting by making philosophy of education a community apart, we should look instead for the times when philosophical work is being done by others in education. Those are occasions when scholars with special training could make valued contributions. When is philosophy of education? More often than you might think. Seize the moment.

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  7. Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4.
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  15. Maxine Greene, "Contexts, Connections, and Consequences: The Matter of Philosophical and Psychological Foundations," *Journal of Teacher Education* 32, no. 4 (1981): 31–37.

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18. Susan M. Phillips, *Teacher Quality in Canada* (Kelowna, British Columbia: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, 2002), 6.
19. *Ibid.*, 5.
20. See the Department of Education discussion of teacher quality at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/teachers-faq.html>
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23. See What Works Clearing House, FAQs, "What is Scientifically Based Research," [http://www.w-w-c.org/about/what\\_research.html](http://www.w-w-c.org/about/what_research.html).
24. *Federal Register*, vol. 70, no. 15, January 25, 2005, 3586.
25. Reid Lyon, paper presented at the policy forum, *Rigorous Evidence: The Key to Progress in Education? Lessons from Medicine, Welfare and Other Fields* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 84. The complete transcript of this forum is available at [http://excelgov.org/usermedia/images/uploads/PDFs/Final\\_Online\\_Version\\_-\\_November\\_18\\_Forum\\_Transcript.doc](http://excelgov.org/usermedia/images/uploads/PDFs/Final_Online_Version_-_November_18_Forum_Transcript.doc).