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## Role and Function of ‘Philosophy of Education’ within the Educational Sciences: a cross-national attempt

**VOLKER KRAFT**

*Hochschule Neubrandenburg, Germany*

**ABSTRACT** Disciplinary structures of education across Europe are rather different mainly due to the fact that education as an anthropological phenomenon is deeply rooted in specific cultural and national contexts. For this reason the role philosophy of education plays within the given national educational sciences is somewhat divergent and not easy to compare. In face of these difficulties the article argues for a cross-national attempt using theorems deriving from modern systems theory. From such a perspective philosophy of education can be regarded as a special ‘knowledge system’ and its function consists in re-including what has been excluded in the process of rationalisation of education; it serves, so to speak, as a special type of reflection knowledge which is as timeless as it is necessary and therefore of meta-national relevance and indispensable for the process of Europeanisation of education.

### Introduction

I would like to start my contribution with a short episode deriving from my experience as a research fellow at the University of Cambridge last year: As you can imagine, I was fascinated by the many libraries the colleges of Cambridge provide in such a wonderful way. And as you can imagine, too, I was mainly interested in the libraries of the Faculty of Education. Wandering along the bookshelves, I had a rather strange experience: whenever passing by the philosophy, psychology or sociology section, I found a lot of books I knew or had even read, but passing by the education section, I came across not a single book I knew or had ever heard about. Then I went into the Cambridge University Library, the central one and one of the biggest in the world, looking for books dealing with educational science in Germany. The result was more than poor. What does this mean? I think the answer should be the following: Disciplinary structures of educational science across Europe seem to be extremely different from each other, or, more precisely speaking, the forms of knowledge educational science is fundamentally based on are embedded in disciplinary structures that are nearly incomparable.[1] The main reason for this limiting fact derives from education itself because, as an anthropological phenomenon, it is deeply rooted in specific cultural and national contexts which are to a very large degree dependent on language. This problem even increases if we take educational sub-disciplines into consideration: ‘Philosophy of Education’, ‘La Philosophie de l’Education’ and ‘Bildungs- und Erziehungsphilosophie’, to mention only a few, are embedded in different national disciplinary structures with different historical backgrounds (Depaepe, 1993). And the role they actually play within their given contexts (in research as well as in training) certainly is different too (cf. Schriewer, 2000, pp. 72-95).

Philosophy of education in this respect undoubtedly is what can be called an ‘umbrella term’: the main function of an umbrella is to give us shelter from rain when the weather changes in order to keep our clothes dry as well as to protect our sensitive skin when the sun is hot and burning. And second, this protection can be given to more than one person: in face of a sudden shower, sometimes very different people (and sometimes whether they want to or not) find themselves crowded together under the same umbrella. In other words: as a term, philosophy of education

primarily takes care of a kind of necessary demarcation to the outer scientific world around. And in doing so, it does not at all define what should be within: philosophy of education is by no means a precise scientific registered trademark, and there is no trademark protection whatsoever.

Thinking internationally, and faced with an educational science across Europe which seems to be struck with a mighty 'evidence-based blindness', I think it is worthwhile to reflect upon possible theoretical ways to bundle up the efforts of philosophy of education mainly by clarifying the role and function it plays in cooperation with other educational sub-disciplines. My question, therefore, is: how can we cope with this problem, thinking internationally (or, more precisely, speaking: 'meta-nationally')? Far away from dogmatic aspirations of any kind, I would like to suggest and put up for discussion two different theoretical pathways in this essay. In order to 'de-nationalise' our topic, I will start with a short paragraph presenting a 'two-frame-model' of philosophy of education; my next step will refer to the language-problem; then I try to focus on 'forms of knowledge' in a disciplinary perspective, ending up with my suggestion to understand philosophy of education as a certain kind of 'reflection knowledge' which, for systematic reasons, plays an indispensable role in modern educational science.

### A 'Two-Frame-Model' of Philosophy of Education

In spite of all historical and national differences (which, due to time and space, are not to be discussed here), philosophy of education is situated between 'philosophy' on the one side and 'education' on the other. Following Audi's definition, it is a discipline which is considered as being 'concerned with virtually every aspect of the educational enterprise' (Audi, 1995, p. 583). And that means it is far away from giving a coherent picture. For some people, this field is only a series of footnotes to Plato's *Meno*, and for others it is one of the weakest subfields of both philosophy and education, disconnected from philosophy and from the broader study and practice of education – to put it briefly: neglected and of fundamental importance at the same time.

To disentangle the widespread category-related problems, I would suggest making use of two different frames of reference in order to simplify the matter. The first frame of reference can be called 'philosophical'. Inside this frame we have the great number of philosophical theories and concepts, and we may ask for the status which is ascribed to education to be treated as an anthropological phenomenon within them. In this field we will find, for example, studies such as 'the role of education in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger'. The second frame of reference can be labelled as 'educational'. Inside that frame we will find the whole mass of educational theories and empirical research concerning the manifold aspects of education (see Figure 1). Then, we could here ask for those questions (and I assume that there will be many fewer than expected) which exclusively demand for a philosophical process of reflection, problems that only can be treated philosophically.

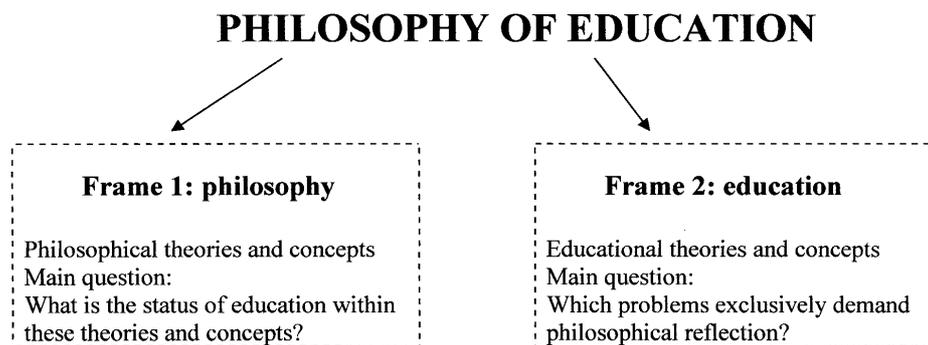


Figure 1. The two-frame model of philosophy of education.

As you probably will have noticed at once, this way of differentiating between a philosophical and an educational frame of reference reflects the outcome of a long historical development. It can be

described as a process of differentiation of knowledge. The emancipation of educational science and its efforts to become an accepted discipline must again be regarded in terms of dependence on the cultural and national conditions. In this respect, the development in France, for example, was rather different from that in Germany.[2]

Nevertheless, the scientific treatment of education requires – in whichever disciplinary form – different types of knowledge. But before dealing with this aspect, let us have a look at the language problem first.

### **Language, Grammar and Dialects of Education**

Being interested in the potential for a comparative mode for the problems of educational research in a European dimension, the basic problem is 'language', since this is the bridge over the troubled waters of educational research linking phenomenological perspectives on one side with the types and forms of knowledge leading to specific disciplinary and professional structures on the other.

On an everyday level we are able to cope with this difficulty (with varying degrees of success) in trying to speak a more or less sophisticated 'pidgin English'. In doing so, we all can experience a certain feeling of estrangement from our national contexts, and that means from the technical language and the specialist terminology we are used to use at home: 'something' is getting lost. This 'something' is as strange as it is wondrous because it indicates a loss as well as a possible profit or improvement. And it underlines the difference between an everyday life experience and the greater demands which are required at the level of science and research. To put it differently: educational sciences across Europe are all different, but they are all equal at the same time. To shed light on the ways in which they can be regarded as 'equal', we need a special theoretical pathway and/or to have to switch the level of argumentation.

The relation between things and words (or 'names', as Plato put it) is the basic problem of each science dealing with language-based phenomena – and education undoubtedly is one of them. In comparison with natural sciences, for example, educational science doesn't have a formalised technical language, though, following Heinz von Foerster, we can be proud of this fact because the natural sciences, called the 'hard' ones, are dealing with soft problems, whereas educational science, undoubtedly a soft one, has to deal with really 'hard' problems deriving from the communicative nature of its subject (cf. Wagner, Wittrock & Whistley, 1991).

Nevertheless, the problem of the relation between things and words has, as we all know, a broad, huge and mighty tradition of research of its own. It is clearly to be seen that education is not only embedded within languages and, furthermore, that it does not have a language of its own, but education, I would risk saying, *is* a language!

'Grammar', as we know right from the beginning of our early schooldays, is a system of rules stratifying a language. Traditionally the term has often been used synonymously with 'syntax', that is, the principles governing the construction of sentences from words. And it is from there that its 'prescriptive' character derives. In modern linguistics, however, 'grammar' aims to be 'descriptive' and even 'explanatory', and therefore it deals not only with syntax, phonology and phonetics, but also – and mainly - with semantics.

Since the well-known pioneering studies of Chomsky we could say that the grammar of a language has the character of a theory of a language. In other words: the 'grammar of education' aims at a theory of education. Then the grammatical structure plays the role of its theorems. The intention and aim of such kind of theory construction is to model the system of knowledge possessed by those who speak educationally. On a level of reflection, the task would then be to determine exactly of what this knowledge consists (or better, of what these forms of knowledge consist), of analysing its typical forms and of clarifying how they are linked together and applied.

This might sound rather theoretical and far away from any practical purposes, but in fact, at least in my opinion, just the contrary is the case! If education is a language in the above-mentioned sense, there must be a 'grammar' and, metaphorically speaking, words and rules determining the ways to combine these elements. To put it another way: the question of a grammar of education is the question of its logic of forms!

Education, at least in my perspective, is the unity of the difference of two incompatible processes: learning and pointing. These two are more or less sophisticated and more or less

successful, and linked together by forms of articulation. From this standpoint, the logic of educational forms consists in the 'mechanisms' (to use a Kantian expression) of articulation. And these 'mechanisms' require certain forms of knowledge. At least three can easily be differentiated: first we need a so-called operational factual knowledge (mostly in our days won by empirical research) informing us about 'how things are'; second, there is a special need for what could be called 'educational reflection knowledge' which applies a selection of factual knowledge to the special educational needs; and third, a kind of 'communicative action knowledge' is needed in order to behave professionally in the context of concrete situations.

It should be evident that these forms of knowledge can be regarded as 'inter-national' or even 'supra-national' because they are necessary in whatever national context. We could say that the language of education realises itself in certain dialects; these dialects are the national languages (cf. Dolch, 1961, pp. 163-176; Fiedler, 1999, pp. 1472-1477). Therefore each national language will give us a special view of what education is. Thinking on a European level, this has as a consequence that we should use our different national languages, those 'dialects of education', as productive and potential tools of research and means to enlarge our scientific knowledge. In which way, for example, does the Portuguese 'dialect' encode semantically basic forms of education in comparison with, let's say, the Danish one?

One way to 'de-nationalise' the role and function of philosophy of education consists, as can be seen, in using the 'language perspective' which, in the end, may lead to phenomenologically grounded forms of educational knowledge. The second pathway will end up as well with the term 'knowledge', though contextualised in a totally different way.

### **Profession, Discipline and Types of Knowledge**

In an evolutionary perspective – this is my starting point here – the main function of education is social reproduction which has at least two dimensions: conservation and change. Therefore, education can be seen as a form of social action – that is so to say, it is characterised by a strong 'action component' which, for structural reasons, again is primarily orientated to the future.

I think this outstanding peculiarity of education itself has a tremendous influence on the forms and profiles it obtains at the level of science. At the same time, this is what causes the differences between the educational disciplines in the cultural and national contexts that are dependent on the given status of historical developments. To preserve what has been proved to be good and functioning, to prepare for a future which we only can know to a rather limited extent, and to be confronted with the basic incommensurability between educating and learning presents us with, to put it cautiously, a really hard task to fulfil.

In a narrower sense, and closer to the problems of education as an academic discipline, we could say that this task seems to be a paradoxical one. Anyhow, this perspective allows us to put the question in a different way. From that point of view we are able to ask how educational science used to and does handle this paradoxicality and try to observe which strategies of de-paradoxicalization have been and are employed.

One common way to handle paradoxicalities consists of dissecting the problem into single parts and/or treating them on different levels. I would suggest regarding the differentiation between profession and discipline, professional knowledge and scientific knowledge, as the predominant strategy of educational de-paradoxicalisation (cf. Tenorth, 1994, pp 17-28). Educational science, on the other hand, can be understood as the uniting of that differentiation. And the many relations, tensions and contradictions which can be observed between those different forms of knowledge can be traced back to one of the basic characteristics of education itself. In the professional context, education is conceived as a task to fulfil, whereas in a scientific context it appears in a different light, being conceived as a problem to be solved in a way which hopes to find truth. Professions are embedded in and supported by political, legal, institutional, organisational and administrative contexts and conditions, whereas sciences exclusively refer to sciences. To analyse the development of an educational science in a given national context along this basic differentiation between profession and discipline, professional knowledge and scientific knowledge, seems, at least to me, quite productive.

**Philosophy of Education as ‘Reflection Knowledge’**

It should now be possible to come back to the problems of philosophy of education and the special role it plays within this concert of different forms of knowledge. In the above-mentioned second frame of reference called ‘educational’ we will find at first glance a lot of rather different types of knowledge. However, they can be reduced to a common denominator, as all of them are exclusively orientated to education both as a task and as a problem. Those who try to treat education as a problem can be designated as ‘scientific’. But as we all know from our daily work, ‘scientific knowledge’ is far from being homogeneous. There are empirical studies as well as theoretical ones, and within them we find a big variety as far as the methods applied or the basic theoretical assumptions made are concerned. Nevertheless, all of them have in common the fact that they are forced to exclude certain aspects in order to bring to light others as clearly and precisely as possible. But ‘excluded’ does not at all mean ‘of no importance’. Often just the contrary is the case. The question is what happens with those ‘excluded’ aspects, topics or problems? My answer is that they simply come back to the scientific discourse. For this reason, I would suggest reserving the term philosophy of education exclusively for the disciplinary form of that form of ‘comeback’.

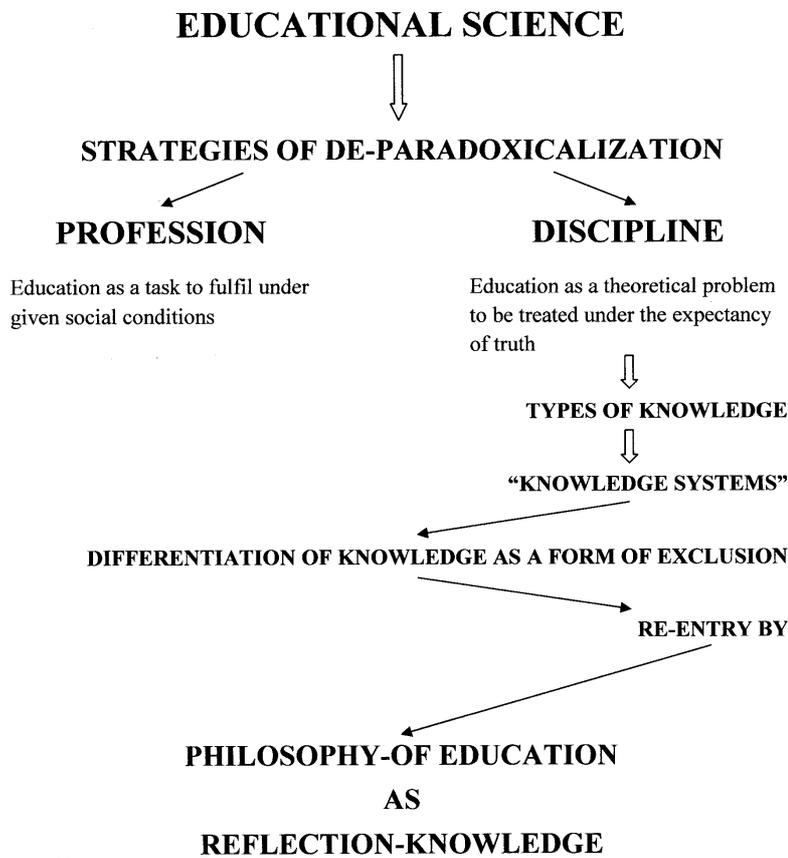


Figure 2. The role of philosophy of education.

As the historical continuity of philosophy of education (in whatsoever form of academic discipline) clearly demonstrates, a type of knowledge which (re-)includes the excluded seems to be as important as it is necessary. Obviously, there must be a basic need for the generation and discussion of the various aspects of values, aims and norms of education, for the formation of educational attitudes and convictions, for finding sense and interpretations of the world, for the inspiration of reforms as well as a neutralisation of science. In other words: in the same way in which educational science develops into a ‘normal’ social science, philosophy of education seems to

become necessarily a certain kind of an intra-disciplinary strategy of de-paradoxicalisation which allows unsolvable problems to be temporised in a special form of knowledge. From my point of view, philosophy of education should be regarded and described as a type of 'reflection knowledge', which is to say, it should be located in a certain way at the back side of scientific progress. Perhaps one could call this type of reflection 'classical' or 'timeless' because of its principally ambivalent status: at the level of social action (e.g. education policy), it can be used both for progressive and for conservative goals.

As you certainly will have noticed already, this kind of disciplinary approach to the problems of philosophy of education has a hidden or latent theoretical orientation behind it. It derives from modern systems theory. From here, we can regard science and the forms of knowledge as 'knowledge systems'. Systems tend to optimise their functionality first by demarcating themselves as sharply as possible from the outer world around them (from the other knowledge systems); and, second, by a continually increasing degree of internal differentiation. This process can be described as a form of gradual exclusion. At the end of it we can observe a tendency or even a pressure to re-include (at a different level) what has been excluded before. This phenomenon is called 're-entry'. I think that philosophy of education can be understood as such a kind of 're-entry': what has been excluded from educational research in its effort to produce 'truth' or 'sure knowledge' comes back into science, and it comes back in the form of science (see Figure 2).

To sum up, philosophy of education seems to be a traditionally approved pillar of wisdom and nowadays, in the guise of a sub-discipline, it helps the knowledge system of educational science accommodate to the complexity of the world around.

### Notes

- [1] I use the term 'science' here as a synonym for the German word *Wissenschaft* (though I know that this is not the way native speakers would apply the term).
- [2] For the situation in Germany, see Schriewer (1983); Schriewer & Keiner (1992); Reichenbach (2003); Heyting (2004).

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*Correspondence:* Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Volker Kraft, Hochschule Neubrandenburg, FB Soziale Arbeit, Beratung und Erziehung, Postfach 11 01 21, D-17041 Neubrandenburg, Germany (kraft@hs-nb.de).

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## Reply to Volker Kraft

### On Not Abandoning the Marriage of Theory and Practice

**JAMES C. CONROY**

*University of Glasgow, United Kingdom*

**ABSTRACT** It is reasonably easy to accept Kraft's claim that education is indeed a local social practice, which has emerged out of complex historical and social forces. But to do so is not to accept that there is some kind of incommensurability between the conceptual languages that emerge out of such local conditions. Indeed underlying the particular understandings/problem/challenges that emerge in particular political and cultural contexts are deep commonalities and it is part of the task of philosophy of education to make sense of these. In distinction to Kraft's proposal that we disaggregate the theoretical and the practical, so as to free up the philosophical to do its proper work, the argument presented here is that such dissociation will fail to enable philosophy to do the work of moving education forward. It will fail because it leaves the teacher bereft of the necessary intellectual resources to engage professionally in the task of education. Education is ineluctably a normative engagement and as such requires the teacher to reflect philosophically on its nature.

Let me begin this reply by thanking Volker Kraft for a stimulating and interesting essay, which attempts to address the challenge of developing an effective place for the exercise of philosophy of education across national boundaries. More than this, it attempts to flesh out what this transnational engagement might entail. Indeed, there is much that is argued and suggested here with which I agree. In fact, the more I read it the more persuasive the argument. It is certainly true that the structure and organisation of education across Europe is, in many respects, profoundly local, reflecting, as it does, the particular history and evolution of the social, cultural and political concerns that give rise to particular grounded practices. However, in trying to solve one problem – how we might treat philosophy of education as a substantial and substantive contribution to the science or study of education – he may be creating one or two others upon which I intend to touch in this reply. In any event, the observations here are more by way of extension questions to push Kraft to further explication.

First, I should like to raise some questions about the claims to the local and their language dependence in Kraft's essay. Unlike Kraft, if I were to walk into a major university in Leuven or Munich, Paris or Geneva, I would be rather surprised to see books on Scottish education, since this is unlikely to be of much interest in such settings apart from the possibility that a member of faculty in one of these institutions was a raging enthusiast in comparative education with a particular (possibly slightly pathological) interest in Scottish education. To that extent, I can agree that educational preoccupations are local. However, I am rather less convinced that this implies that the issue at stake is either one of the existence of different languages or that our politico-educational preoccupations are shaped by such a putative difference.

Of course, translation of particular localised attitudes and practices into another context is variously challenging and subtle, but it would be a mistake to see incommensurability as too determining in these matters. If we were to look at the post-war emergence of two forms of economic relations (industrial and financial), we find that continental Europe opted for the

establishment and nurturance of stable, long-term financial relations between bankers and industrialists. The common project of re-building a ravaged Europe held the twin forces of banking/investment and industry/production in a long-term partnership in what has become known as the Rhennish model of economic management. In the instantiation of such a model, the drive was to ensure the sustainability and stability of the economy through the development of long-term relationships, which in turn would produce social benefits. This can be sharply contrasted to the Anglo-Saxon (American) model, a model that emerged out of an altogether more aggressive form of capitalism that drew on a quite different discourse - that of the buccaneer entrepreneur whose mission was to conquer, tame and exploit opportunities and maximise returns. Both these models and their attendant practices are unequivocally capitalist in intent and import. However, their attendant discursive and socio-economic practices give two very different shapes to these impulses (see Alpert, 1992).

This analogy might appear as an endorsement of Kraft's position, but one has to take the narrative to the next step before too readily ceding the ground. The period of economic change, shaped by the Chicago school and driven by 1980s attachments to the philosophical and ethical mantras of liberating human social, ethical and economic capital through the regulatory force of the market, saw the gradual dissolution of substantive boundaries between the discursive and social practices of the two economic models. This would at least suggest that values/linguistic incommensurability between polities may be somewhat overworked and that, in the context of globalised communication, common patterns of concern emerge. The power of the Anglo-Saxon (American) model to feed into and off some fairly rudimentary appetites could only exist because those appetites were, in some sense, an expression of common desires.

One might ask what the connection between this example and Kraft's discussion of the work of philosophy of education might be. I want to suggest that there exist ineluctable ties between the economic and educational engagements of the liberal polity and that the kind of transference witnessed in the sphere of economic relations has had a direct effect on the practices of education across very different polities. Recent years have borne witness to the encroachment of the philosophy and practices of performativity into both educational discourse and policy across Europe (as witnessed by many of the anxieties expressed in the essays in this volume). The somewhat (I shall resist the temptation to suggest 'very') different philosophical traditions of Anglo-Saxon conceptual analysis and pragmatism and Continental phenomenology have both witnessed the fairly voracious appetite of the culture of performativity - a culture whose roots lie in the emergent dominance of the Anglo-Saxon economic model and entailments over the Rhennish. How did European education succumb so readily? Might this not be because, when one strips away the very different linguistic shape of the two philosophical traditions, common anxieties and aspirations, hopes and fears emerge? When Husserl (1967), in the 'Paris Lectures', seeks to unearth the relationship between the cogito and the cogitationes, the enterprise may be considered as radically different in import from the 'contemporary' obsession about how people learn, an obsession that appears to be genealogically derived from the kind of economic performativity manifest in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Nonetheless, there is a substantial overlap inasmuch as the phenomenological enterprise wants to know what constitutes the objects of consciousness, what the relationship is between 'knowing' and the world of appearances. This does not, at least structurally (though perhaps not with respect to intentionality), represent a very different enquiry from that increasingly anxious drive to unearth the 'Gnostic' secret of how children learn and of 'learning to learn' (a discipline for unearthing froth?).

Further, while it is important to acknowledge that Kraft clearly recognises the compelling case for evolving a common philosophical language to treat certain kinds of educational issues, its evolution depends on abstracting the doing of philosophy from the specificity of localised educational engagements. Central, then, to Kraft's thesis is the distinction between education as a practice, or, as he suggests, 'a task', and education as a site for the disclosure of certain kinds of truth - an exercise akin to scientific discovery. This distinction, he wishes to suggest, has its roots in the historical evolution of the division of labour.

While such a distinction offers a kind of heuristic convenience and is, *prima facie*, appealing most especially for those philosophers who aspire to treat educational theory as a theory of universals, I remain a little sceptical and would like to trouble this distinction. In order for the distinction to hold, it is necessary to offer a functional account of the actual practice of teaching.

Such an account, ironically, falls prey to the very performativity that I have discussed above, offering solace to those who see the act of teaching as a technical engagement – local practices for local needs. The consequences of bifurcating the entailments of philosophy in the way suggested is to leave this ‘act’ of teaching naked and exposed, and the teacher bereft of the intellectual resources to perform her task. The ‘division of labour’ thesis evinced by Kraft must, perforce, reduce teaching to a truncated or emaciated account of the art engagement of teacher with student. There is a different account of education to which, no doubt, Kraft would wish to subscribe, and which considers it not as a task or set of tasks, but as a kind of promethean encounter between student and teacher embodying attention to the world as it appears to both (Conroy, 2004). Indeed, it is here that I would wish to offer a small challenge to the claim that education plays primarily the kind of social function Kraft suggests; surely it can and/or should simultaneously play a complementary role – that of nurturing in the student a particular kind of curiosity and awe about the world; what McLaughlin (1994) referred to as ‘Intellectual Eros’. A further related issue which I think needs some unpacking is the claim to incommensurability between ‘education and learning’. When Kraft suggests that there is a basic incommensurability between these two conceits I am not quite persuaded. It is not entirely clear that the act of preserving particular features of one’s cultural inheritance (in its manifold guises) is anything but supportive of the object of preparing people for the future. Of course Arendt (1958), for example, does see that natality offers the possibility of newness and renewal, but argues that this is ever lodged in the old and already. This is not a contradiction but a creative paradox. It is true that Kraft admits a re-entry point or comeback for philosophy of education as reflection knowledge, but might we not ask whether the questions to be so treated should not form an integral part of the cultivation and professional nurture of the teacher? Is his process of de-paradoxicalisation not in danger of leaving the educator picking up residues and remainders; the disconnected flotsam and jetsam of their intellectual superiors?

Moreover, in disaggregating teaching or educating and learning, Kraft is in danger of neglecting the idea that education is indeed a journey for both student and teacher and that it is possible that both may be pointing in the same direction, at the same ‘object’, at the same time, albeit that one may predominantly assume the role of the curious and the other that of interlocutor.

It is not entirely clear that the heuristic distinction that Kraft wishes to make between the domain of philosophy and the domain of education is entirely sustainable. It would be strange indeed if the discussion around the place education inhabits in the deliberations of such as Heidegger or Plato, Rousseau or Lyotard did not directly impact on the kinds of deliberations one might wish to consider under Frame 2 – Education. It seems to me that it is precisely the division of labour suggested that gives rise to some of the claims to the weakness of philosophy. Let me take an example I have discussed elsewhere (Conroy et al, 2008) When, in ‘The Human Condition’, Hannah Arendt (1958) discusses some of her concerns about the negative impact on civil society of the Platonic dissociation of *archein* (initiation – as in architecture) from *prattein* (completion – as in practice), this might be considered an interesting meta-discussion resting contentedly on the fringes of educational concern or preoccupation. But to render matters thus is, I think, to make a mistake that compounds the perceptual problem, pointed to by Kraft, that philosophy of education is indeed a weak sub-field of both philosophy and education. If the considerable intellectual weight of some of our most significant philosophers is not to be seen as shedding light on ‘real’ problems; normative or empirical/descriptive, then it is likely to suffer increasing marginalisation. Again, if we were to attend to Arendt’s (1968) discussion of the problem of Deweyan pragmatism or Oakshott’s (Oakshott, 1971, 2004) concerns with the preservation of certain traditional engagements in contemporary society in such a way as to portray them as having no substantive implications for the actual practising teacher in the consideration of empirical questions around the place of childhood and the relationship between tradition and progress, then they are of very little import.

In these respects I remain a little unsure what is intended by suggesting that there are certain kinds of educational problems that are exclusively philosophical. My lack of surety here is rooted in a concern that this might refer to certain kinds of normative considerations of educational purpose that are frequently seen in the neo-Aristotelian work of Carr, amongst others. Carr (2000) makes much play of the independence of normative questions about purpose, which are often cast as entirely divorced from empirical considerations. While I would wish to defend the obligation

which Carr and others place upon educationalists to carefully consider normative questions, these cannot be entirely divorced from empirical questions of instantiation and certainly not from the everyday practice of the teacher. Reiterating the claim that *ought* and *is* are constitutively different and are never to be confused ignores the question which the practising teacher has to deal with on a daily basis: How do I maintain the claims of certain kinds of good in the context of widespread ignorance of what that might look like?

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*Correspondence:* James C. Conroy, Professor of Religious and Philosophical Education, School of Education, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, United Kingdom (james.conroy@glasgow.ac.uk).