

Book Review / Compte rendu

Reviewed by Ikeoluwapo B. Baruwa, Queen's University

Foundations in teacher education: A Canadian perspective. In *Canadian research in teacher education: A polygraph series* by Theodore Michael Christou & Shawn Michael Bullock. Canadian Association for Teacher Education, 2013, 165 pages, E-Book ISBN 978-0-9919197-7-2.

Theodore Michael Christou and Shawn Michael Bullock's edited collection, "Foundations in Teacher Education: A Canadian Perspective," presents a series of scholarly discussions that emphasize the importance of foundational disciplines, specifically history, philosophy, and sociology, in Canadian teacher education. This volume, originating from a 2013 pre-conference hosted by the Canadian Association of Foundations of Education (CAFE/ACFE), responds to concerns that these foundational courses are at risk of marginalization or even elimination in favour of vocationally focused training programs. The contributors collectively argue that these disciplines are not mere academic pursuits but essential tools for developing reflective, critical, and adaptable educators who are equipped to address both practical classroom challenges and broader societal and ethical questions.

In this review, I highlight the *philosophy of education* section, which emphasizes philosophical inquiry as a guiding force in teacher preparation. Rather than presenting philosophy as an abstract exercise, the authors argue that it provides an intellectual framework that enables educators to analyze their experiences, clarify values, and make informed decisions. The book portrays philosophy as a "rudder" for teachers, helping them navigate the moral and ethical complexities inherent to contemporary education (p. v). By examining this section, I seek to

underscore how philosophy offers teachers a crucial foundation for personal reflection, professional growth, and ethical decision-making.

In "Learning to Love the Questions: On the Role of Philosophy of Education in Preservice Teacher Education," Ann Chinnery argues that, despite recent shifts toward skill-based training, philosophy remains essential for good teaching. Chinnery contends that teachers must grapple with the purpose of education, the line between education and indoctrination, and the ethical dimensions of teaching. He posits that philosophy prepares teachers to foster students' growth as engaged, critical citizens and supports educators in responding to the moral dilemmas they encounter.

Chinnery also situates her argument within the historical trajectory of Canadian teacher education, noting philosophy's diminished presence in recent decades. Drawing on the work of R.S. Peters (1977), he advocates introducing philosophical content gradually, linking practical teaching experiences with abstract ideas. He proposes that teachers-in-training consider recurring questions, like the role of discipline and the educational value of play, to deepen their understanding over time. For Chinnery, a successful pre-service program would encourage teachers to continually engage with these questions, building a reflective approach crucial to effective teaching.

In “Philosophy of Education: Critical for Survival,” Michelle Forrest addresses philosophy’s broader significance, connecting it to a sense of wonder and curiosity that emerges in early childhood. Forrest critiques the devaluation of curiosity-driven research in contemporary academia, where funding agencies increasingly prioritize economic gains over intellectual inquiry. Drawing on Noddings’ (2003) ethic of care, she emphasizes that true care in teaching often demands thoughtful, challenging ethical decisions. Forrest argues that the philosophy of education has the potential to foster critical thinking, enabling teachers to navigate today’s complex educational landscape. She raises a fundamental question: how can the philosophy of education help teachers foster independent thinking in an era that prioritizes measurable outcomes?

Forrest’s chapter also explores feminist perspectives within the philosophy of education, examining how patriarchal structures influence knowledge and curriculum. She draws on the work of feminist philosophers like Jane Roland Martin (1994) to argue that educators must recognize the biases that shape educational theory and practice. This feminist critique prompts teachers to reflect on their complicity within larger systems of oppression. Forrest calls for an inclusive approach to philosophy that values intellectual curiosity and critical reflection over utilitarian goals, suggesting that teachers must resist pressures to conform to purely outcome-oriented approaches.

In “Comenius and Pansophia: A Philosophy for Education,” Philippe Maubant and Lucie Roger explore Comenius’s vision of education as a socially engaged, holistic endeavour. They contrast this with the medieval approach, which isolated learning from broader social influences. Comenius advocated an education that moves beyond the school walls, aligns with students’ interests, and emphasizes natural development. He envisioned a universal, progressive educational system that reconciles individual growth with societal needs. Comenius’s ideas, particularly his views on structuring learning stages, sensory-based learning, and reflective practices, provide a valuable perspective for modern education. Maubant and Roger suggest that Comenius’s ideas remain relevant

today, challenging educators to integrate critical thinking and inclusivity.

In “Philosophy of Education as the Politics of Praxis,” John Portelli and Christina Patricia Konecny examine the gradual decline of philosophy in Canadian teacher education programs and its consequences. Noting the field’s previous central role in encouraging critical reflection, the authors attribute its reduced presence to a misconceived notion of theory as irrelevant to practice, compounded by neoliberal values that emphasize efficiency and results. Portelli and Konecny argue that this trend erodes critical thinking, limiting teachers’ opportunities for reflection and critical questioning. They advocate a “politics of praxis,” integrating theory and practice through case studies, where teacher candidates analyze real-life classroom dilemmas. This approach emphasizes the complex realities of teaching and moves beyond formulaic instruction.

As I reflect on these perspectives, a central critique emerges: What is the fate of the philosophy of education, particularly in a milieu where humanities disciplines are increasingly seen as dispensable? Despite the arguments made in this volume, many in the educational community continue to view philosophy as an impractical discipline, a sentiment shared by other foundational fields within teacher education. This broader devaluation reflects a troubling trend that risks marginalizing essential critical disciplines.

Foundations in Teacher Education ultimately underscores the potential of philosophy to shape educators who are intellectually curious, ethically aware, and capable of fostering global citizenship within their students. Yet, the question remains: Will philosophy regain a central place within teacher education, and by extension, within the broad field of education, or will it continue to be overshadowed by fields perceived as more “practical?” This pressing issue highlights a critical gap in the volume, inviting readers to reflect on the future role of philosophy in shaping the next generation of educators.

REFERENCES

- Christou, T. M., & Bullock, S. M. (Eds.). (2013). Foundations in teacher education: A Canadian perspective (Vol. 3) [eBook]. In *Canadian research in teacher education: A polygraph series*. Canadian Association for Teacher Education/Canadian Society for the Study of Education.
- Martin, J. R. (1994). Needed: A new paradigm for liberal education. In *Changing the educational landscape: Philosophy, women and curriculum* (pp. 175–179). Routledge.
- Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.
- Peters, R. S. (1977). The place of philosophy in the training of teachers. In *Education and the education of teachers* (pp. 135–150). Routledge & Kegan Paul.