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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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Philosophy of Education After the Golden Years

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Philosophy of education's relevance to schooling and value to society have always been contested within the field. When reading about the state of the field, one often gets the sense that philosophy of education is losing its cache, given the prevalence of data-oriented views about research. But the solution to this crisis is often difficult to identify. In this context, this essay investigates the prevalence of "golden years" thinking in the history of philosophy of education and what it would mean to think differently and go beyond this view. It explores how philosophy of education is framed as peripheral to mainstream educational research today and why students might not choose to study it. Then I examine precarity as a common discourse in history of the field. I scrutinize whether and how we are "in danger," who "we" are, and the history of this imaginary. I conclude with reflections on moving on from these discourses in the future.

Since the modern field of philosophy of education emerged—roughly 100 years ago— members of the community have regularly defended its value (e.g., Kaminsky, 1986; Burbules, 2002a). Yet how philosophy of education can or should be relevant (or useful) to schooling in society, and why philosophy of education should be funded and prized as scholarship, have always been contested within the field rather than being areas of widespread consensus (e.g., Carroll, 1968; Bredo, 2002; Roberts, 2015). When reading about the state of the field over the years, one often gets the sense that philosophy of education is always, just now, losing its cache, seeking out new ways to attract students who seem to not appreciate it given the prevalence of empiricist and data-oriented views about research. But the solution to this crisis is often difficult to identify.

In this context, it is worth questioning whether there ever were "golden years" of philosophy of education (Burbules, 2002b). Going one step further, I also want to examine contemporary judgments about the precarity of philosophy of education and ask: How does "golden years" thinking limit understanding of philosophy of education by confining it to an imaginary of precarity—an imaginary that reduces philosophy of education to a luxury rather than an essential field within the university? What would it mean to think differently and go beyond this view?

In this essay, I begin by exploring how philosophy of education is framed to students as outside "normal" educational research (Stone, 2006) and why students as initiate scholars might not choose to study it. This relates to a broader assessment of the situation of philosophy of education. Here, I examine how current discussions echo earlier assessments. Since the field has emerged, an imaginary of precarity has haunted it. In describing the situation in terms of an imaginary, I do not mean to suggest that it is a false narrative or mythical social construction separate from some more objective view of reality. Rather, I aim to think here about what we can learn from historicizing our sense of the field and the formation of subjectivity within it, rather than looking at the situation only from within this particular moment in time (Rizvi, 2006). Thus, I reflect on how we might theoretically and practically move beyond the prevalent imaginary, toward a richer understanding. I hope this helps further thought about how to elaborate the value of philosophy of education within educational research.

In the next section, I consider how philosophy of education is understood against the broader backdrop of educational scholarship. Here I consider the following: Is philosophy of education research? Is it essential? And is it "scientistic"? Then I discuss how philosophers respond to challenges related to these questions. In the following section, I examine precarity as a common discourse in the field. I scrutinize whether and how we are "in danger," who "we" are, and the history of the imaginary. I conclude with some reflections on moving forward from these discourses that have shaped the field over time.

Philosophy as Outside the Frame

Is It Research?

Philosophy of education is typically regarded as peripheral to mainstream educational research. At the core of the educational research community are empirical scholars (Stone, 2006). In classes and textbooks, educational research is usually broken down into quantitative and qualitative kinds of research. The less tangible, the theoretical, the conceptual, and the normative aspects of scholarship are relegated to before and after "doing" research. At the start (that is, in the early stages of conducting research and in early thesis chapters), one might have a theoretical background or conceptual framework. At the end, they might be expected to have recommendations related to normative assumptions, while the assumptions themselves may never surface as such; for instance, that education should be more just, meritocratic, effective, high quality, and so on. Thus, the non-empirical, philosophical, or theoretical is peripheral.

For example, in Ary and colleagues' *Introduction to Research in Education* (2019), the second chapter, "Research Approaches in Education," begins with sections on quantitative and qualitative research. In the fifth section of the text, research methods are further broken down into experimental, ex post facto (quantitative), correlational, surveys, qualitative, action research, and mixed methods. The book notes that educational researchers may ask theoretical questions but categorises such research as "clarifying the nature of relationships between variables" or testing existing theories through quantitative methods (Ary et al., 2019, pp. 33–34). Likewise, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's (2018) *Research Methods in Education* distinguishes methodologies as qualitative, naturalistic, and ethnographic; historical and documentary; surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional, and trend studies; internet surveys; case studies; experiments, meta-analysis, systematic reviews, and research syntheses; action research; and social network software and "netography." Despite this very long and varied list, neither text mentions philosophy of education as a manner of conducting research; both discuss ethical and normative considerations as separate from the core of scholarship.

In this context, students may not encounter philosophy of education as an ongoing tradition and field. And philosophers of education within educational studies academic units can experience related misrecognition by students and peers. Students may see philosophy of education as lacking the essence of research, which is seen as data gathering and analysis. They may ask their professors who encourage them to consider philosophy of education questions such as, "Is it really research?" (Jackson, 2020). Well-meaning colleagues might frame philosophy of education as a kind of qualitative research, like text analysis. As Standish notes, some might conflate philosophical and qualitative methodologies, wrongly imagining that "philosophy is a kind of qualitative research particularly concerned with values. So it's subjective and touchy-feely, not objective and rigorous like quantitative research" (2010, p. 8).

Such situations inspire philosophers of education to elaborate and identify how what they do is distinctive from empirical research but also located within the frame of educational studies (e.g., Bredo, 2002; Stengel, 2002; Ruitenberg, 2009; Biesta, 2020). This is seen as one way to help students, among others, to better understand and recognize philosophy of education in the future. However, before going on to such responses, I want to more fully consider why students may not choose to focus on philosophy of education even after they have been more effectively exposed to it.

Is It Essential?

In the educational research contexts described above, students learn that philosophy of education is not essential to their professional academic development or success. Given their (arguably rational) economic outlook, which can be summarized along the lines of "jobs don't grow on trees," doctoral students typically do not see pursuing inessential activities as wise. Today young people experience (or learn of) a world of serious economic precarity (e.g., Jackson et al., 2022; Peters et al., 2020). I do not want to suggest that this marks their experience as dramatically different from that of other generations (although others have; see Kaminsky, 1986; Haynes, 2002; Roberts, 2015; Jackson et al., 2022). But many (if not most) young people we encounter—I work in Hong Kong but I think the same is basically true whether you are in Australia, North America, or Europe—want to hedge their bets. They have learned that dream jobs in academia (and elsewhere) are not easy to come by. They have learned that a PhD is not a winning lottery ticket without choosing the right institutions, supervisors, and fields of study.

In one sense, this is part of education for so-called lifelong learning. Young people learn that the economy changes and dictates where jobs are and what they pay, regardless of what they want or need (Jackson, 2021). Thus, education should toughen students up; build resilience and grit. Students should learn "to get on with it" and accept the situation, rather than "waste time ruminating" (Jackson, 2021). So students develop a sense of precarity as they choose fields.

In this situation, philosophy and philosophy of education appear to be luxurious areas of study perhaps out of touch with the real world and its demands. And the desire to be passionate about or committed to one's work, for example, or recognized in a community as a thoughtful contributor, are framed as possible obstacles to getting a job, in contrast to other so-called virtues of adaptability, flexibility, perseverance, and acceptance (Jackson, 2021). The following advice from Burbules reflects such a tough-love approach (2020, p. 659):

> I have taken to telling my students … if you are going into this business you have to accept four things. First, most people won't read you. Second, most who do read you won't understand you. … Third, most people who do read you and do understand you will disagree with you. And fourth, most people who do disagree with you will disagree for reasons that you find unfair. If you can't accept these things, don't go into this line of work. If you need recognition and approval to confirm the value of what you do, don't go into this line of work.

Foundational to this challenge is the competitive and performative nature of academic research. As Smeyers et al. (2014) have observed, philosophers of education are commonly compared in high-stakes research assessments and reviews (which have implications for funding academic fields) not with other philosophers of education, but with other educational scholars within their local or national context. Here, obtaining external funding and publishing in journals with high impact factors have become crucial, while these are not traditional aims or priorities of philosophers of education (Smeyers & Burbules, 2011).

Access to substantial external grants for philosophical work is relatively rare (Burbules, 2002; Smeyers & Burbules, 2011). In this case, "simple self-interest suggests that one can do better in securing research funding by working productively with colleagues in areas where support is more plentiful" (Burbules, 2002, p. 349). This leads some to shift from philosophy of education to other areas as they seek long-term academic employment (Jackson, 2023). The conflation of good research with high impact factors also discourages philosophers of education, because in small fields there are fewer opportunities for citation, while citations play a primary role in impact factors (Hardy et al., 2011). As Smeyers and Burbules thus conclude, impact factors "are shaping the kind of topics and issues scholars write about, their choices of methodology, and their choice of publication venues for their work" (2011, p. 11). They continue:

> If you tell individual authors … that impact factors will become the primary, if not even the sole, measure of their performance, then smart people will become ingenious in finding new

> ways to maximise that measure of performance—even if it comes at the expense of … overwhelming other criteria of importance and quality. (p. 13)

This situation is exacerbated by funding agencies considering citation counts and impact factors (informally or formally) in reviewing grant applications, apart from other measures of practical or scholarly significance or impact (Burbules, 2020). In this context, demands to publish more and in more "impactful" venues (i.e., journals with high impact factors) are difficult to resist or ignore.

Is It Scientistic?

The framing of philosophical (and humanistic) work as irrelevant and luxurious in comparison with empirical research is rationalized using particular conceptions of impact and related discourse suggesting that empirical research, and specifically statistical, large-scale, and quantitative research, "works," as it is considered generalizable and evidence-based, and thus of predictive value (Biesta, 2007; Jackson, 2020). Such discourse, which one might call "scientistic," is prevalent among research funders (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2006). The United States Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* emphasizes that "what works" is "a randomized controlled experiment (RCT), a quasi-experiment with matching (QED), or a regression discontinuity design (RD)" (Fendler, 2006, p. 52). However, this orientation neglects longstanding critiques of the use of inductive reasoning to suggest predictability (Fender, 2006; Phillips, 2005; Rowbottom, 2013).

Appeals to scientistic research aim to reduce complex phenomena to isolated variables that can be related to each other in predictive ways in generalizable settings. It is suggested that such research can tell people what they should do to improve education across a range of contexts. But so far this promise has not been fulfilled. For instance, in the case of class-size research, experimental design conditions do not align with most real-world contexts; thus, such work is rarely if ever generalizable (Smeyers, 2006). For similar reasons, while systematic reviews are increasingly promoted to build up generalizability by scholars not involved first-hand in experiments, these suffer from conceptual challenges when attempting to suggest (as they normally do) generalizability across contexts. When it comes to class-size research, it makes a difference whether studies are addressing, for instance, class sizes versus student-teacher ratios, or numbers of students formally enrolled versus those actually in attendance (Smeyers, 2006). Such challenges are regarded as basically manageable by those supporting the production and use of systematic reviews in decision making (Li et al., 2023), despite the epistemological and practical concerns of philosophers of education (among others) about their use and abuse (Fendler, 2006; Biesta, 2007).

For instance, given the wide diversity of classroom conditions that distinguish the real world from experimental settings, the desire for generalizability or predictive power could lead to efforts to rearrange schools to conform to experimental settings so that predicted outcomes could be obtained (Biesta, 2020). Seen from a different vantage point, when research quality is related to generalizability (particularly within assessments which also emphasize international relevance), this can discourage scholarship that aims to make a local educational impact. This enables an unnecessary binary and hierarchy between notions of international versus local impact (Bridges, 2006). Thus, this orientation burdens scholars who wish to address issues and challenges in their communities in place of conducting randomized experimental studies and systematic reviews.

Finally, the scientistic orientation ignores ethical issues in educational research about what it even means for something to "work." As Biesta (2007, p. 10) notes:

> Evidence-based practice assumes that the ends of professional action are given, and that the only relevant (professional and research) questions to be asked are about the most effective and efficient ways of achieving those ends. … [Yet] even if we were able to identify the most effective way of achieving a particular end, we might still decide not to act accordingly. A substantial amount of research evidence suggests that the most influential factors in school success are the home environment and, even more important, children's experiences in their first years. This would suggest that the most effective way to achieve success in education would be to take children away from their parents at an early age and put them in an "ideal" environment. … In the case of education … we not only need to ask whether our educational

> activities, strategies, and … interventions are desirable in themselves; we also always need to ask what are the educational effects of our actions. We may well have conclusive empirical evidence that in all cases physical punishment is the most effective way of deterring or controlling disruptive behavior. Yet, as David Carr argues, "the practice should nevertheless be avoided because it teaches children that it is appropriate or permissible … to enforce one's will or get one's own way by the exercise of violence."

Despite these challenges, conducting empirical educational research with a data base is now the norm, if not orthodoxy (Stone, 2006; Biesta, 2020). And given a sense of scarcity of academic positions, students are now strongly encouraged to "get in and get out," to not only publish but to publish in the right journals and get grants, moving quickly from receiving an orientation in a field to standing out in the job market (Stone, 2006, p. 135). This means that philosophical or theoretical considerations are framed as complementary at best and diversionary at worst. As I recently reflected (Jackson, 2020, p. 18):

> Most of my doctoral students arrive to my university with an interest in educational philosophy and theory. Yet inevitably, after a year or so … with other students, and in classes on "qualitative and qualitative research methods," they come to discuss their research plans with me, and their newly discovered need to gather data—and the more, the better. Their methodology teacher (reportedly) said nothing to them about philosophical methods. … The other students are not aware of any education students who ever received a doctorate … without gathering and analysing data, by which they mean something cold and detached, yet connected to the values and interests of particular social and political institutions. Their initial proposals adopt an apologetic tone for not relying upon quantitative methods. … They apparently learned in their courses that quantitative research can have statistical validity and reliability, while qualitative research lacks them. They develop a deficit view of theory, as not reliable, as not transparent, not valid, not replicable, not generalisable … a view of philosophy of education as deficient and lacking. … These students are not pushovers. They often have provocative observations about equity and social justice issues, and strong analysis skills. When I am the only person they know who is not gathering "cold, hard" data … they are not unwise to critically question my advice, which seems contrary to what everyone else says.

Philosophers Fight Back

Philosophers can respond by appealing to students' sense of justice and related values in light of the challenges faced within and outside academia. That is, we can encourage students to critically understand issues related to generalizability, evidence, and impact, to learn how to navigate these issues at practical, professional, and theoretical levels (Jackson, 2020). Smeyers and Burbules (2011), Roberts (2015), and Burbules (2020) have all advocated that we encourage students to push against the grain. As Smeyers and Burbules (p. 12) put it:

> A frequent response to criticisms like those posed here is that the system, though flawed, is better than nothing. … This is not how the culture of performativity works. Instead, certain kinds of technical measures and mechanisms tend to "colonise" and drive out the more qualitative and contextual (i.e., professional) judgments. … For Philosophy of Education, joining the advocates of such output-driven practice is not a favourable option.

Burbules (2020) has recommended "looking within" in relation to this issue, noting that producing philosophy of education helps us develop as intellectuals, build identity as pedagogues, vent when we have something to say, and connect and collaborate with others, even if it has little or no impact on policy, practice, or career advancement. Similarly, Roberts (2015) considers the flourishing of students as whole persons, suggesting that we can invite students to engage in real-world inquiries in thoughtful ways, driven by their values and interests.

Another response to this situation is to defend philosophy of education, to speak back to empirical research as philosophers, as I have discussed here. However, in this area, myriad voices are found that rarely sing in harmony (e.g., Burbules, 2002a, 2002b; Phillips, 2005). Within philosophy of education, the field and its significance are internally contested, with debate surrounding such issues as whether we should even encourage students to be philosophers of education when there might be few jobs. While I have alluded to some semblance of a unified front when we face the issues of so-called research excellence and "what works" as philosophers of education (issues also experienced in other humanities and arts areas), it may be more surface-level than deep in terms of how "good" work that advances the field is internally understood (e.g., Bredo, 2002; Burbules, 2002a, 2002b; Phillips, 2005). Philosophy of education has been grappling with an identity crisis throughout its modern history in relation to these issues.

"We're in Danger"

Who Are We?

Philosophers of education are no more certain (as a collective) than are our would-be students about why the field matters and what it is good at or needed for. As previously mentioned, Burbules appeals to individual and social rather than professional factors in pursuing philosophy of education. In relation, he notes that while many hope to influence policy and practice, "any such influence, especially in the policy arena, grows more out of a respect for and relationship with specific individuals than from an interest in the contributions of humanistic studies in education writ large" (2020, p. 660). In contrast, many others have argued that the potential and actual policy importance and impact of philosophy of education is clear (e.g., Marshall, 1975; de Castell & Freeman, 1978; Stengel, 2002; Snook, 2013; Griffiths, 2014). Related questions that have plagued the field include:

- the value and prevalence in the field of analytic (i.e., English or Anglo-American based, conceptual) versus continental (i.e., European-based) work (de Castell & Freeman 1978; Phillips, 1983; Bredo, 2002; Burbules, 2002a; Biesta, 2020; Gatley, 2023);
- the historical foundation(s) of the field, or when and how it started and how it can be conceived as a field (Soltis, 1971; Hirst, 1986; Kaminsky, 1986, 1988; Harris, 1988; White, 1999; Muir, 2004; Haynes, 2013; Snook, 2013; Johnston, 2019); and
- whether the field is generally succeeding and what it should do going forward (Kaminsky, 1988; Feinberg & Odeshoo, 2000; Bredo, 2002; Burbules, 2002a, 2002b; Stengel, 2002; Muir, 2004; Clark, 2005; Johnston, 2019; Jackson et al., 2022; Peters et al., 2020).

This just touches the surface of the navel-gazing that has taken place across the field's history, centering on what philosophy of education is and whether and how it can survive.

What's New?

More than perhaps anything else, a sense of precarity has marked the field over its history. As Kaminsky (1986) notes, before the 1935 founding of the John Dewey Society in the United States, the field "existed as a rather discontinuous and unsystematic group of intellectual adventures," while the "predicate of the Society was the pending economic collapse of Western society" (p. 42). This and other historical analyses depict a field at its foundations struggling to emerge in a society seen as going or gone astray (Feinberg & Odeshoo, 2000); a field struggling to know how and whether to critique or engage with education in an economically and politically precarious situation—in the United States as well as the United Kingdom (White, 1999; Muir, 2004) and Australia and New Zealand (Kaminsky, 1988; Haynes, 2013). The first essay in the first issue of *Educational Theory* warned that society was "seriously threatened by the lack of a sufficient and common outlook on life," necessitating educational research "to bring about the unity that civilization needs to survive" (Kilpatrick, 1951, p. 8). The role of Marxism in the US, and in Australia and New Zealand, was a key theme of debate then (e.g., Kaminsky, 1986; Harris, 1988; Roberts, 2015; Jackson & Peters, 2020), as was the importance of education for job skills (Feinberg & Odeshoo, 2000).

Philosophy of education was hardly universally applauded later in the twentieth century. In England, Peters complained in 1966 that when "philosophers turn their attention to the philosophy of education … they are usually appalled at what they find. For it seems to them as if fossilised deposits have been left there of a bygone era" (quoted in Muir, 1999, p. 48). In 1989, a study similarly found that most educational researchers believed "that most of what passes for educational theory is demonstrably absurd and … irredeemably second rate" (Muir, 1999, p. 52). From Australia, Haynes (2013, p. 126) writes that "since 1983, philosophy of education has only been a hobby for me. In that year the Australian federal government intervened in higher education. … Philosophy of education and other 'foundation studies' were abolished."

Given the tendency to focus on the here and now, Kaminsky (1986) recommended an "externalist" account of the field. As he suggested, *if* philosophy of education had "golden years" (e.g., Roberts, 2015), it may not be significantly related to or defined by something philosophers did (or did not do), but by larger social events:

> In the United States the expansion of facilities of education created a heretofore unnoticed demand for courses in educational philosophy. … The discipline … was forced to recruit all and sundry to staff teacher education programs during the two decades following the close of the war. The inability … to fill the demand … created post-graduate programs. … Post-graduate programs stimulated the demand for yet more philosophers of education. … Many … asked to teach … were relatively innocent of philosophy. (p. 44)

Meanwhile, others came from philosophy for the jobs in education (Kaminsky, 1988), thereby initiating early debates over rigour in the emerging field. Thus, philosophy of education was at the outset confronted by educators for being irrelevant and by philosophers for being low quality.

For nearly one hundred years people have been bemoaning the lack of appreciation for philosophy of education. Consider the following:

> The teaching of educational research … seems to concentrate largely on "methods of research." … If you want to investigate an educational problem, you must do some research on it. In order to do the research, you need a method. So find a method, the "right" method. … A basic aspect of the methods approach is the general idea that gathering data constitutes research. … The notion which seems to be held is that the purpose of research is to increase knowledge so that education, particularly school practices, can be somehow improved. This is not necessarily a wrong notion; it is, rather, an incomplete and too narrow one. … If the training now is no better, or even worse, than it was in the past, then we can expect nothing more than the perpetuation of the mythology. (Kerlinger, 1960, p. 2171)

One more example:

> After a period of about ten years during which Federal support of educational research increased … decisions in the Bureau of Research of the U. S. Office of Education have tended to put much more weight on the support of "applied" research … directed toward the solution of immediately practical problems in education. This state of affairs appears to reflect considerable confusion about the role of basic research in education and what this research may be expected to achieve. (Carroll, 1968, p. 263)

Thinking Forward

Seeing the lack of progress in philosophy of education asserting its value to educational studies, how can we learn from the past and move forward? Rizvi (2006, p. 195) notes that "it is through the collective sense of imagination that a society is created, given coherence and identity, and also subjected to social change." In this context, a social imaginary provides a collective understanding of a community, including assumptions about the nature of reality and what is good and bad. For philosophers of education, a noteworthy imaginary is that of a "golden years," characterized by growth in jobs and other forms of recognition. The present moment is taken to be more precarious, challenging, and uncertain, marked more by doubt, insecurity, and contestation. Within this imaginary, worries are expressed about the legitimacy of the field, including concerns about how to attract students and earn recognition alongside peers in education. Yet, as I have illustrated here, philosophers of education have always considered such questions as: How can we show them that we are as rigorous as the others? And how can we become more rigorous?

At the same time, in the background there are historical and political economic shifts in how people are thought about in society, and what they should do and be in relation to education and employment. These shifts augment collective imaginaries and enable us to reconsider them over time. For instance, while the once-vigorous debates of the Marxists in the field are now largely obscured from the view of philosophy of education, so too is deep appreciation for the fact that our students do not know about any economic or job market golden years, in philosophy of education or otherwise, beyond what we tell them; indeed, recalling any so-called golden years is actually hard for most of us these days. In this context, the golden years of the field may better reflect a common norm of nostalgia, of the good old days elders often recall, based in highly subjective and often self-serving forms of personal and social remembering, rather than in more objective forms of historical recollection or understanding.

Thus, golden years discourse conveys forward-looking hopes and fears more than it represents an accurate or balanced perspective on how things were before our time. And it invokes and scaffolds a sense of our special, distinctive precarity in place of wisdom about the nature of precarity as a long-term feature of the modern human condition impacting not only philosophers of education but many others around the world today. Like the rationale of students opting for "safe" statistical methods, it also reveals a rationale of philosophy of education to self-preserve and defend its social position in times that are scary and insecure in terms of higher education and society—seemingly amidst fights for civilization itself—as they have been through much (if not all) of the field's history.

In this context, from the perspective of younger academics and students, the golden years can look like part of a questionable fairy tale of grandparents passed down—"make philosophy of education great again." Here it can help to recognize and acknowledge, more truthfully, that philosophy of education was never so pure, meritorious, or mighty, within academia or society. And we can recognize and acknowledge that what counts as pure, meritorious, and mighty has changed over time—as it should. While the job market (and student market) has similarly changed over the past century, it has also significantly broadened and diversified. Few (if any) women or people of colour can be found reminiscing about the golden years of philosophy of education, or about how easy it was to get a job or get tenure fifty years ago (see, for instance, Jackson & Sojot, 2023).

In this essay, I have aimed to shift thinking about philosophy of education's place in educational research, to consider the situation externally from students' point of view and from a long-term historical view. In this context, I suggest that we practice and perform to others (i.e., students and colleagues) a more critical and connective and less partisan, internalist perspective on philosophy of education and its importance. The imaginary of the field's golden years and of today's special precarity may have some basis in reality, but from another perspective it is also self-serving. It functions to further establish philosophy of education, not to reclaim a past throne it truthfully never had. In other words, tales of the golden years and the apparently emergent, new precarity are the lopsided stories of the contemporary winners of the field's history. They are partial and subjective accounts not particularly based in any systematic review of evidence (or critical philosophical analysis).

When we look forward, debates about what is good and bad about philosophy of education and its future directions will no doubt remain the norm. How we ought to improve our position and our scholarship, within societies and globally, is essentially contested territory. Should we be more or less analytic? Should we be more relevant to school practice or seek a more autonomous position with regard to other educational studies? These points have already been debated ad nauseum, and it seems foolish to me to try to convince everyone (or even the few people who read this article) once and for all of the best direction to take. But, *more interestingly*, such extreme pluralism and diversity (and, dare I say, passion) within the field are also obscured by an imaginary that there used to be (and should again be) cohesion and consensus, in a time when things were simple and easy.

In this situation, might we collectively revision the field as an essential site of philosophical, theoretical, and conceptual pluralism, and multifaceted yet deep, community-based, conscientious deliberation? Doing this would enable us to stop trying to catch up with a past unitary status that is more fiction than fact. Identifying and critiquing the notion of our golden years and sudden precarity and replacing it with a more holistic and diverse vision, a more accurate understanding of who we are and what we face as scholars can emerge and be shared with students and others. We disagree about what makes our methods distinctive and valuable, but we neglect to recognize this deep, intense internal contestation as a rich and distinctive source of reflexivity, responsiveness, self-scrutiny, and criticality. These are strengths we continue to bring to educational scholarship regardless of our school or perspective within philosophy of education. These continue to be much-needed qualities to replace orthodoxies that continue to challenge us within the academy (particularly in educational studies) and across societies. Thus, by moving on from stale, irrelevant, self-serving imaginaries, we can inspire more creative, truthful, and critical collaboration with would-be allies and diverse students and peers. One potential starting point is to address the dominant assumption that educational research must be empirical.

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