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# **Lifting the publishing curtain: The editor interview project of the *EPAT* Editorial Development Group (EDG)**

*Introduction to Special Journal Issue*

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Academic publishing has undergone a vast transformation in the last decade, along with clear beneficial and harmful impacts for higher education researchers. Journals cannot ignore the value of going online, something that was viewed as daring at the turn of the twenty-first century. At the same time that higher education leaders around the world have largely accepted an ideology of continuous data-based performance evaluation systems—for universities, sub-units, departments, and individual researchers—data emerging from online publishing enables new and influential forms of comparative analysis of journals and fields. Pressure to publish for younger scholars seems forever on the rise, and not in just any peer-reviewed journal. With increased employer demand for publication and limitless space online, the labor of journal production has risen dramatically. New levels of profit are possible for savvy academics, and ‘savvy’ is now something to which doctoral candidates across fields increasingly aspire.

Journal editors have faced exciting and risky challenges during this online revolution. Though no two experiences are the same, either in the traditional or new production modes, all editors have had to make choices about new modes of publication, with financial and intellectual implications. In recent years journal editors have begun sharing their views and perspectives regarding their participation in the ongoing transformation of academic research norms (Brooks, 2012; Burbules, 2014). Meanwhile, the field of philosophy of education has been heavily and uniquely influenced by the recent decades of restructuring and reevaluation of academic knowledge and the functions of higher education institutions. Around the world, conferences in the field have normalized a role as a support group for an apparently-disadvantaged new generation of researchers, with society presidents taking on the charge to protect a field at risk of irrelevancy in a neoliberal world (Roberts, 2009). The nurturing of junior scholars has been deemed essential, by our societies and the editors of our leading journals (see, for example, Smeyers & Burbules, 2011).

The success of novices is widely recognized to correlate with their interactions and relations with mentors and other more practiced members of a field, and journal editors in philosophy of education have begun to take seriously the newly-theorized concept of *editorial education*. Nicholas Burbules (in this volume) and Thom Brooks (2012) both describe their own experiences of education through the work of journal editing. Editorial education aims to increase and pass on knowledge of a kind not measurable by metrics, to equip early career researchers and scholars with the best possible kind of foundation in perspectives and skills that are increasing in scarcity and importance today. The new kind of savvy required for professional success in higher education ideally should be co-constructed across generations of scholars who intend to take an active rather than passive role in these turbulent times (Zuboff, 2014). Online technology provides opportunities for the development of new forms and systems of open learning (Peters, Liu & Ondercin, 2011).

Such were the aims of Michael Peters when he introduced the concept of an editorial internship programme under the auspices of this journal (*EPAT*) following the December, 2012, annual conference of

the journal's owner society, the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (PESA), held in Taiwan. On the last day of the conference, Michael approached Liz regarding an idea for an organization dedicated to equipping doctoral candidates and junior academics to critically respond to the demands of contemporary and future academic publishing, from the perspective of future editors and field leaders. Liz was immediately excited by this idea.

Among those opportunities in Liz's education that sparked a lifelong, fundamental change in understanding was her work with Burbules as the editorial assistant for *Educational Theory*, as a postgraduate student, from 2005-2008. As an editorial assistant, Liz was able to see the transformation of articles from rough drafts to intimidating academic works, through the peer review process, and multi-phased intellectual negotiation and co-construction of meaning by authors, reviewers, and the journal editor. She was able to see articles from the perspective of a reviewer and editor, and to discover that no two reviewers are alike, hence problematizing the idea of there being one single standard for academic writing. She was able to connect with the larger community of the Philosophy of Education Society (PES) through the process of assisting with editing and copy-editing essays published in the *Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook*.

And Liz was able to share these rewards, in a piecemeal way, with her postgraduate student colleagues, as the postgraduate student leader of Burbules' *Educational Theory* Editorial Discussion Group. As Liz explained to Michael in 2012, this editorial group was Burbules' brainchild which enabled a larger group of students to benefit from *Educational Theory* beyond only the journal-funded assistants. This group was devoted to in-person peer review discussion and decision-making on new submissions to *Educational Theory*. Any student at the College of Education, University of Illinois could participate, by attending the group's weekly meetings, reading the paper and putting on the reviewing hat: stating the decision they would make as a reviewer or editor for *Educational Theory* and giving their justifications. Burbules would also share the wisdom from his career as the long-time editor, which served to replace intimidation and fear about the mysterious task of journal publishing, into a clearer, simpler picture of the process. Lifting the curtain, Liz and other students saw articles as they were submitted, not just upon final publication. As Burbules also discusses here, this had an impact on the way the postgraduate students saw their own work and writing, developing a new sense of internal evaluation, and making the possibility of publishing in a journal like *Educational Theory* seem more realistic than before.

Michael gained the support of the PESA Executive at their post-conference 2012 meeting in Taiwan to go ahead with the *EPAT* internship programme, and he personally invited each of the original members of the group to join—most of them PESA members who were doctoral thesis students or in their first academic jobs. Working alongside Michael, we (Liz and Georgina) became co-leaders of the *Educational Philosophy and Theory* Editorial Development Group (EDG) at the impromptu dinner meeting held during the PESA conference 2013, in Melbourne. Since then, a secret Facebook group has proved a suitable medium for our online network, which has increased to include around 20 junior academic members, spanning institutions across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to Hong Kong and Japan.

The EDG is an inclusive and exploratory network of emerging scholars devoted to cultivating, constructing, and using knowledge about journal publishing for the future, who have shared and discussed emerging perspectives on journal publishing (such as articles on this theme, or publications by journal publishers about issues such as visibility, marketing, and so on); conducted collaborative peer reviews of *EPAT* submissions; and brainstormed what we hope to gain and achieve, understand and do, as a collective empowered by Michael, along with other senior external group advisors, including Gert Biesta, Nick Burbules, and Routledge contacts.

Among the projects we discussed was the idea of actively and systematically seeking out additional editor perspectives, via framed discussions with Michael as well as with other leading journal editors in philosophy of education. As an international collective, it made sense to understand more journals in our field beyond *EPAT*, and how they interrelated with scholarly societies and publishers in relation to changes to higher education in different world regions. This idea was also fueled in part by Burbules' (2014) publication of his reflections upon leaving *Educational Theory* as its editor. We and the other EDG members

wanted to know what Michael thought, what Gert thought, and what Chris Higgins and other editors thought about the ideas raised by Burbules in this article. To what extent was Nick's experience unique—to himself, his journal, his region? Or do all editors basically face the same constraints, possibilities, and challenges around the world today? Thus began our Editor Interview Project, culminating in this special issue, wherein EDG interviewers were paired with six editors of five leading journals in philosophy of education: *Educational Theory*, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *Ethics and Education*, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, and *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, about the role of editors, their work, and visions and aspirations regarding the future of journal editing and publishing.

Though Liz and Georgina's names are given as the co-editors for this special journal issue, in truth this publication is a result of a democratic process between all the original members of EDG. Along with Michael and Susanne Brighouse (Managing Editor of *EPAT*), those EDG members participating in this project—Daniella Forster, Richard Heraud, Kirsten Locke, Christoph Teschers, and Marek Tesar—were consulted continuously by Liz and Georgina, from the stage of early conceptualization to final publication of this issue. The other Editors involved—Gert, Nick, Chris, Paul Smeyers, and Bob Davis—were also invited to give feedback and contribute their own ideas on the process, content, and texts of this interview project, to make this a powerful exercise.

The result is not merely the production of a publication of expert perspectives as sources of objective knowledge or practical know-how, but a co-construction of expert knowledge regarding: academic publishing, the use of metrics, open access models, the future of philosophy of education and higher education, and related topics (Meusel & Nagel, 2009). As discussed by Bogner and Menz (2009), the expert interview is conducted with an eye to theory-generating, rather than information-gathering. The Editors gave the interviewers substantial authority over the content and course of interviews, enabling interviewers to formulate and enact, alongside one another and the Editors, their own understandings of the curriculum and pedagogy of a contemporary editorial education. The interview transcripts here thus do not reflect social scientific data gathering of editor perspectives of knowledge alone—this would not suffice for publication in philosophy of education. Rather, they are the crystallization of a nearly two-year process of ongoing dialogue between EDG members and journal editors.

We as the EDG thus felt strongly that in their first iteration the Editors' views should be portrayed not merely as those of research subjects or participants, but as educative dialogues, ideally useful and fascinating to academics across subfields, regions, and career stages. While some questions developed by the EDG were asked across the group of participating editors, each interview also has strong elements of individual, personal interests and concerns, as frameworks for the interpretation and elaboration of overarching key themes. All Editors were asked about the state of the field, journal publishing, the work of being an editor, and the ethical implications of being involved with journal production today. Yet each interview also has its own flavor created by the interpersonal dynamics of editor and EDG interviewer as particular co-constructors of editorial knowledge and education.

Richard Heraud and Marek Tesar's interview with Michael Peters, Executive Editor of *EPAT*, discusses the history of journal production and publication in juxtaposition with Michael's own academic career. Reflecting on the past and today, Michael provides insights into what he views as the most urgent issues facing academics today in philosophy of education, illuminating his sense of the significance and need for editorial education and the EDG itself. Among the Editors in this issue, Michael particularly considers the material dimensions and power relations involved in the decision-making of editors, as gatekeepers not only of a scholarly field, but also as individuals, whose work impacts other individuals among them, for better and for worse. This interview highlights his view of the editor's role as a microphone that gives a greater voice to others, explicating the ethical import of all facets of contemporary journal publishing, from the peer review process to collaboration with scholarly societies and corporate publishers.

Paul Smeyers, Editor of *Ethics and Education*, also offers a historical view that is consciously that of a senior academic hoping to leave a positive impact, in his interview with Daniella Forster. However Paul offers a more particular perspective in his interview than Michael, highlighting the interrelations between

changes in higher education and in publishing, specifically in Europe. Paul and Daniella dialogue at length to analyze Paul's ongoing concerns (see for instance Smeyers, De Ruyter, Waghid, & Strand, 2014) regarding the importance of developing and defending standards for evaluating philosophy of education more fairly alongside other forms of educational research. Articulating the significance of philosophy of education in higher education is viewed as essential by both Daniella and Paul, as they engage in a conversation from around the world about challenges faced in Australia and Belgium alike.

Christoph Teschers interviewed Gert Biesta, then-editor of *Studies in Philosophy of Education* (taken over in 2015 by Barbara Thayer-Bacon). In this dialogue, Gert shares his experience of overseeing a journal during a time of dramatic change, and the forces and perspectives that have influenced the choices he faced during that time and the decisions he ultimately made. Though all the interviews touch on pragmatic concerns of junior academics and journal editors, Christoph and Gert's interview uniquely takes up the perspective of an early career scholar of today. Acknowledging the options, opportunities and challenges people like those of us in the EDG face, the framing given is hopeful while practical—not shying away from harsh realities but reflecting them in a different light.

A British perspective on the situation of higher education and journal publishing today is given by Bob Davis, Editor of *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, in collaboration with Kirsten Locke. Acknowledging the uniqueness of the United Kingdom's situation, Kirsten (from New Zealand) and Bob develop common ground through their discussion, jointly elaborating challenges the field of philosophy of education in particular faces and possibilities for strengthening the field. A challenging tone is detectable in dialogical process of this interview, as Kirsten and Bob continuously reframe and identify the boundaries of their arguments and perspectives, engaging in a constructive revisioning process aimed toward elucidating and meeting head-on the serious problems faced in promoting philosophy of education in a neoliberal era.

The last two interviews are with the past and current editors of *Educational Theory*, Nick Burbules and Chris Higgins. Liz's interview with Chris queries the professional and ethical role of journal editors. As a newly appointed editor, Chris is also well situated to offer a practical perspective with guidance to junior academics. In this interview, the importance of reviewers is highlighted in the ethical work of journal editing. Though each editor discusses their work with reviewers, Chris vividly portrays journal production as a world of deep interpersonal connections, of editors and authors, editors and reviewers, and reviewers and authors. Navigating relations as an ethical endeavor is a professional responsibility of journal editing, from choosing reviewers, to considering their reviews and conveying them to authors. Chris also gives advice (at Liz's request) specifically to junior scholars interested in journal editing, with a practical emphasis.

Georgina's interview with Nick Burbules references his influential 2014 reflective essay, while moving beyond it, to Nick's understanding of how globalization has impacted publishing in direct and indirect ways. Nick elaborated on his view of the importance of pluralism in the field, an issue clearly important to all of the Editors participating in this project, as shown in these interviews. For Nick, this pluralism is not just about diversity of people but also of perspectives, methods, origins, and more. Echoing the ethical role of editors addressed by each participant in this project in their own way, Nick is emphatic about increasing diversity while respecting authors and readers alike. Nick also shares his sense of what makes philosophy of education relevant in higher education today, reflecting on his professional experience broadly. For Georgina, this conversation in mid-2014 was catalytic, coinciding as it did with the challenges of setting new paths for EDG work, resulting in an editorial piece reflecting on the ethics of the online academy (Stewart, 2014).

With publication of this special issue, we of the EDG aspire to open possibilities for future collaboration on a global scale regarding editorial education in philosophy of education for the emerging generations of journal editors. Although each Editor clearly has a unique voice, perspective, and experience of the world, inside and outside their journal work, key issues are echoed across this collection that signal themes for potentially fruitful systematic exploration in the future, within an enlarged circle of philosophy of education scholars across career stages and world regions. Issues around open access; journal citations, indexes, and metrics; societal and corporate relations; the peer review process; enabling the continuation of

the field; surviving the neoliberal higher education landscape; and increasing pluralism and diversity across domains may yet be in their infancy as we imagine a journal publication landscape of the future that is as different from today's as today is from 1731 Scotland (identified in this issue as a starting point for the concept of scholarly peer review). The culmination of this project is a strategic text with unique educational values. May this special issue support the development of a dynamic editorial education for philosophy of education of the future, and open broad conversations beyond the six dialogues featured herein.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who personally contributed to this project, especially Michael Peters, Susanne Brighouse, Gert Biesta, Nick Burbules, Paul Smeyers, Chris Higgins, Bob Davis, Kirsten Locke, Richard Heraud, Marek Tesar, Christoph Teschers, and Daniella Forster. Without your generous giving of your time, energy, and perseverance, this special issue, of use to so many scholars beyond the EDG, would not be possible. Thank you for sharing your life and wisdom with us and enabling our participation in a collaborative process to envision and enact an editorial education responsive to the challenges we face as early career scholars today.

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