

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Becoming teachers and the value of philosophical thinking

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### **Abstract**

Becoming a teacher is not the same as learning to teach. Many students enter preservice teacher programmes with a view to obtaining the best methods in order to be the best teachers. When presented with sociological and philosophical frameworks, students often resist these in favour of more practical learning. In this chapter, I write that becoming a teacher requires a commitment to ideas and to a thinking life and that philosophy of education offers the opportunity to foster deep thinking. I use the verb thinking intentionally to denote the action present in philosophical spaces. As Noddings (2007) points out: philosophy is an activity; it is something that we *do*. A thinking life rests upon a deep engagement with ideas as well as the posing of meaningful questions about the aims and ideals of education. The chapter begins by exploring the notion of education as an idea and briefly outlines some

key enduring ideas that shape Western education. Next, I suggest some enduring questions that enable teachers to participate in education in thoughtful and critical ways. Finally, I discuss the value of a personal teaching philosophy and why it is important to develop a philosophy encompassing more than practice and in which a broad commitment to education is inherent.

### **Key words**

Initial teacher education—philosophy of education—personal teaching philosophy

### **Introduction**

Education is an idea we made up. True story. We don't often talk about education as an idea; its *givenness* in society means we tend to talk about it in concrete and taken-for-granted ways. One effect of this assumed, self-evident nature is that it limits opportunities to think about education in complex ways. Consequently, preservice teachers often come to initial teacher education with a desire and a demand for practical learning (Clark, 2004). However, all teaching, learning, and schooling practices are formed out of ideas. As educational philosopher Kieran Egan reminds us, we have the schools that we have “as a result of the ideas that we hold” (Egan, 2001, p. 940). Any meaningful study of teaching therefore requires us to encounter education as a construct, as an imprecise idea we invented rather than a fully formed object we discovered. At the heart of this chapter is the assertion that ideas matter and that they matter to teachers. In this vein, I write that becoming a teacher involves more than learning to teach. Instead, I suggest becoming a teacher involves developing a commitment to ideas and to thinking about them in robust ways. In the context of this chapter, this is referred to as philosophical thinking.

Ideas are worth examining because they signal a contested space in education. Our conceptions of education are not only multiple, but regularly sit in tension with each other (Egan, 2001). Consider, for example, two regularly stated aims of education: socialisation and autonomy. The first requires inculcation into accepted social norms and habits. The second requires the development of independent thought, including the ability to question and reject social norms. How does

education deal with competing societal needs such as these? One answer is that education can never fully resolve these tensions; all it can really do is mediate between them. So, although we may speak about education as a coherent entity, it is in fact a fragmented realm of competing and contested ideas.

Education's nebulous nature should be compelling to teachers. It suggests that education is, in a manner of speaking, "up for grabs" and that teachers play a central role in determining the meanings they give to education in their classrooms. This is a much broader conception of teaching than one which constitutes teachers primarily as skilled practitioners. The ability to engage with ideas about the wider purposes of education indicates a particular way of being and behaving in education spaces. It affords teachers a broader professional identity, positioning them as *critical* practitioners, and as significant mediators between policy and practice. I refer here to the kind of learning Barnett (2009) calls a process of "coming-to-know" (p. 429). It is not enough, he argues, to simply acquire a set of skills or even information; being educated is about developing the dispositions required for encountering knowledge.

Philosophical thinking allows preservice teachers to encounter education in complex ways and to develop a questioning and reflective stance within education. Philosophy enables systematic inquiry with its own questions, as well as its own methods for producing and evaluating knowledge. This is not to diminish the importance of effective practice. There are better ways to teach and teachers should be committed to strengthening practice, but becoming a teacher involves more than methods and skills. This chapter, then, is not an argument against practice; rather, it is an argument for expanding our conception of what it means to be a teacher. It also resists contemporary education shifts from "knowing to doing" (Barnett, 2009, p. 430), which currently inform initial teacher education. This move toward measurable competencies is reframing teaching in particular ways, emphasising the practical over the intellectual.

Approaching education via a philosophical lens encourages preservice teachers to develop certain dispositions that change who they become as teachers in profound and substantial ways. First, it enables teachers to engage with the moral and ethical aspects of education,

including those that may surface in daily classroom life. Secondly, it means that teaching is not reduced to a set of practices rendering teachers as mere technicians in the classroom. Thirdly, it means that teachers can understand the contextual underpinnings of both the policy and practices that govern their work. In New Zealand, for example, the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) has clear directives for the sorts of learners and citizens schools should be developing. As mandated education policy, it outlines the values and principles that teachers and schools are expected to model and reinforce. Becoming a teacher means thinking beyond the curriculum and wondering why the curriculum looks the way it does. What are the implications of the values and principles? What sorts of social vision does the curriculum promote? How does the curriculum construct the purposes of education? How does the curriculum shape teaching and learning?

This chapter argues for a certain type of philosophical space in initial teacher education, one that fosters philosophical questioning and thinking in sustained ways while learning to teach. What follows illustrates one possibility for doing this. It involves a process of *asking*, *examining*, and *becoming*:

1. *asking* searching questions about the aims and ideals of education;
2. *examining* philosophical responses to enduring questions in education; and
3. *becoming* a teacher who can apply philosophical questions and concepts to contemporary problems and issues in education, and whose practice can be defended against broader philosophical commitments to education.

### ***Asking: Enduring questions in education***

I have argued that ideas matter in education because education can be conceived of as a set of competing and contested ideas. But to what extent should ideas matter to teachers? At a minimum, teachers should be able to understand the reasons why they do what they do. However, there is a more pressing reason why ideas should matter to teachers. This reason is connected to the role education can play in contributing to a fairer and more just society. Egan's (2001) claim that "we have the schools that we have because of the ideas that we hold", comes

to this pointed conclusion: “If we want to improve our schools, it is the abstract and awkward realm of ideas that we must first deal with” (p. 940). That is, as we encounter educational problems, it is important to critically consider the underlying ideas and meanings actually at stake; for example, when debates about charter schools come up we understand that what we are actually doing is asking questions about the role of the state in relation to education. When we have debates about National Standards, we are asking questions about what the educated person should look like. When we have debates about curriculum we are asking questions about what knowledge is, and how we might select the best knowledge. When business and employers complain that schools are not producing work-ready youth, we are asking questions about the purposes of education. And, when we have debates about what preservice teachers need to know and be able to do, we are asking questions about what it means to teach.

If education has commitments to a greater common good, then the first point of reflection and questioning needs to be with the conceptions and meanings we hold about education. For preservice teachers, this can seem a futile task because philosophical questions often lack straightforward or singular answers. In her defence of philosophical approaches to education, Noddings (2007) asks whether we should concern ourselves with “questions that never go away” (p. 2). Her response is that philosophical questions grapple with issues present in every historical moment. Therefore, every historical moment requires an engagement with these questions, not necessarily in definitive ways, but in ways that help us clarify and understand present problems and challenges. Noddings’ point, that philosophical questions are enduring, means philosophical thinking and questioning gives us insights about education by examining how people have addressed these questions in previous or different contexts from our own.

Moreover, philosophical questions are different from other types of questions in that they allow us to address questions that cannot be answered through empirical means (Noddings, 2007). While it is not possible to answer what the purposes of education are empirically, we can examine how historical meanings about education have shaped our current conceptions of education. From a rigorously informed position, we can then begin to advance our own arguments. In this

view, philosophical thinking is an activity (Noddings, 2007) requiring active engagement from teachers. At the same time, philosophical thinking offers teachers more than just something to do; it also has the capacity to form teachers' professional identities in important ways. Greene (1977), for example, argues that to do philosophy is to "respond to actual problems and real interests, to the requirements of sense-making in a confusing world" (p. 123). All of this shifts us into a critical agency that allows us to engage with education and the broader world with a much deeper awareness.

What questions might we ask of education? As a starting point, we might begin with the following:

1. What are the aims of education?
2. What is teaching?
3. What does the educated person look like?
4. What is the best knowledge to teach?

And, because education ideals always embody human and societal ideals, it also means examining questions connected to wider society such as:

5. What kind of a society do we want to live in?
6. What kind of people do we want to be?
7. How might education enable these ideals?

One advantage of this type of questioning is that it also allows us to question normative claims made about education. Normative claims are pronouncements that assert how things ought to be. A contemporary example of a normative claim in education is that knowledge is quickly passing its use-by date and that schools should be more concerned with developing competencies and transferable skills than teaching content. This claim is made on the basis that the world is changing rapidly and we don't know what jobs will exist in the future. This is a largely uncontested claim and its assumed validity shapes contemporary discourse in powerful (and sometimes outrageous) ways. Yet we could, and should, interrogate this claim closely. For example, if we take our first question, "What are the aims of education?", we might refute this claim on the grounds that education serves a greater purpose than producing workers. If we make use of our

fourth question, “What is the best knowledge to teach?”, we might ask questions about how we ascribe value to knowledge and whether some forms of knowledge are actually in danger of soon becoming obsolete.

Normative claims abound in education and teachers should be able to address them in confident and rigorous ways. Whether you decide the claim is valid or not is not the important part, but it is knowing *why* you think it is valid (or not) that matters. This final point is critical because it suggests that becoming a teacher means being able to defend broader philosophical stances as well as everyday pedagogical choices. On similar grounds, McCann and Yaxley (2016) defend the importance of philosophical conversations in initial teacher education on the grounds that engaging in these conversations “offer[s] a critical commentary on the underpinning ideas which shape and influence the practice of schooling and education” (p. 69). Not only does this allow us to critically examine the multiple and competing narratives present in educational spaces, it also allows teachers to encounter a variety of viewpoints. A further affordance to teachers is they develop the means to infuse philosophical views in their professional practice and in their personal philosophies of teaching.

### ***Examining: Ideas matter and they matter to teachers***

A thinking life requires us to examine education in its broadest sense. This means beyond the immediacy of the classroom and beyond the ideas that underpin education systems. Philosophers have responded to enduring questions about education in a variety of ways across multiple social and historical contexts. In this section, I take three questions from the list in the previous section and consider some philosophical responses. Each account represents a very brief introduction to some key concepts in the work of educational philosophers. Other chapters in this volume offer more extensive explanations of these and other philosophical positions. These brief accounts are also used to show how different conceptions of education lead to different possibilities for how we run our schools, what young people learn, and what teaching looks like. As you read through these examples, consider the extent to which these ideas are reflected in current curriculum documents and/or education discourses.

### 1. What are the aims of education? John Dewey and education as preparation for democratic living

John Dewey (1859–1952) wrote extensively about the relationship between education and democracy (Dewey, 1916; Noddings, 2007; Pring, 2007). His writings offer a clear illustration that education ideals are always connected to broader societal and human ideals. During his lifetime, Dewey witnessed immense social change, including ongoing debate about the relationship between school and society (Pring, 2007). His work is reflective of the important issues that dominated American life at the time; individualism, community, experience, and democracy are therefore prevailing themes in his work. One central idea in his educational philosophy is his conception of democracy as participation, or what he called *associated living*:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. (Dewey, 1916, p. 87)

By this, Dewey is describing a commitment to living in intentionally connected ways. In terms of education, Dewey saw schools as microcosms of society and therefore as instrumental in developing the dispositions necessary for collaborative community life. In accordance with his view of democracy as participation, Dewey sees the role of schools as fostering openness toward diversity and diverse views.

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustments of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (Dewey, 1916, p. 99)

The above quotation demonstrates Dewey's belief that education should play a role in maintaining the delicate balance between diverse views and shared commitments in society. Dewey's own commitment to both individualism *and* community is perhaps best expressed in his notion of the social individual. Dewey claims that individuals are social beings first and argues for a socially responsible individualism. In *My Pedagogic Creed—Article 1: What Education is* (1897) he argues that



the role of education is to move individuals from a narrow, self-centred view of the world to one that is socially aware and responsible.

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. (Dewey, 1897, p. 1)

Another important idea in Dewey's conception of education is the centrality of experience (Pring, 2007). As the previous quotation illustrates, education occurs when learners are provided with appropriate experiential opportunities. Dewey's advocacy for learner-centred schools was a response to (then) traditional forms of schooling where students learned passively, individually, and under the authoritarian grasp of the teacher. Dewey argued for classrooms that resonated with students' lives, had practical applications, and provided opportunities to work in cooperative ways. The provision of suitable experiences is central to Dewey's philosophy, and for this reason Dewey saw the teacher's role as crucial to learning and growth.

From a Deweyan perspective, the aims of education are to foster the communicative dispositions for democratic living to flourish. Education should also lead to more learning and further growth. Dewey advocated for learner-centered classrooms in which learner interests were taken seriously, but this did not mean interests were pursued randomly. Rather, Dewey argued that teachers needed to play a central role in giving direction to these interests so that they led to a deeper understanding of human life in all its complexity.

## ***2. What is the best knowledge to teach? A liberal philosophy of education***

"What to teach?" is a central question in education and the issue of what should be included in school curricula persists in both policy and public discourse. Indeed, it is difficult to find someone who does *not* have an opinion about what should be taught in schools! Within a liberal philosophy of education, the main role of schooling is to develop rational autonomy (Alexander, 2008). This refers to people's ability to make their own choices in *reasoned and informed* ways. The reasoned

and informed emphasis is important because it is tied to ideas about knowledge and to *which* forms of knowledge are most likely to deliver this type of agency. Significantly, the impetus for rational, autonomous individuals rests on the premise that liberal democratic societies require citizens who can exercise personal freedom (Alexander, 2008). This has important implications for education and for knowledge. First, if the role of education is to create independently thinking and acting individuals, then education must be freely available to all citizens. Secondly, it must provide all learners access to the same curriculum (Pring, 2007). Notions of the *common school* and a *common curriculum* are associated with a liberal philosophy of education.

From a liberal education perspective, the role of education is to discipline the mind with a view to engaging with the world in critically rigorous ways. Knowledge in the form of disciplines (knowledge organised into categories such as science or history) is central to this development. R. S. Peters (1919–2011) was a philosopher who is associated with this tradition and, for Peters, education and specific forms of knowledge lead to a “desirable state of mind”.

Education, then can have no end beyond itself, its value derives from principle and standards implicit upon it. To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination, but to travel with a different view.  
(Peters, 1967, p. 15)

The kind of knowledge that Peters advocates is distinct from experience (Peters, 1967). His view of knowledge is a markedly cognitive one involving the development of conceptual frameworks and understanding. Being educated is not merely learning a collection of facts or information, but the ability to understand and make sense within a particular disciplinary stance. For this reason, Peters saw education fundamentally as an initiation into disciplines. According to Peters, this disciplinary vantage point enables the development of principled and systematic approaches to knowledge. Formal education (as distinct from experience) allows learners to engage in systematic inquiry through the acquisition of disciplinary principles and methods for testing and producing knowledge. Peters’ view of education as a *state of mind* is also suggestive of an overall orientation toward knowledge

itself. Learners not only seek to study in systematic ways but develop a commitment and a pleasure in seeking knowledge this way.

A liberal philosophy of education addresses the question of knowledge in particular ways. It privileges a cognitive view of knowledge organised into distinct disciplines. The place of these distinct knowledge forms is central to education because they enable the development of habits of mind. These habits of mind foster autonomous and informed participation in society. From this perspective, knowledge is seen as intellectual capital, and therefore access to a broad knowledge base is a fundamental aspect of democratic society. In this school of thought the best knowledge to teach is a broad disciplinary knowledge base.

### ***3. What is teaching? Paulo Freire and the teacher as ethical and political agent***

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921–1997) began his work in education by developing literacy programmes for the poorest and most dispossessed people in Brazil (Roberts, 2000). Throughout his work, Freire maintained that education was not neutral but a political act (Freire, 1997, 2005). His assertion that education has the capacity to oppress or to liberate has significant implications for teachers and teaching (Freire & Shor, 1987). For Freire, teachers can never be neutral, and he argued that teachers must always decide “in favour of whom” they are teaching (Freire & Shor, 1987). Freire saw claims of neutrality on behalf of teachers as siding with oppression (Freire, 1997). This is because education involves things such as selecting knowledge, deciding who learns what, how, and to what end. It is also a series of power relations between teachers and students, schools and communities, policy makers, the state, and the education sector. This situates the teacher at an important intersection between various contexts; inevitably, teaching means making choices.

Freire’s claim that education is not neutral but a political act locates his philosophy in a Marxist tradition (Roberts, 2000). As such, he is concerned with power relationships and how they might be sustained and reproduced in educational institutions and practices. It follows then that the pedagogy he advocates encourages students to engage in a structural analysis of society. This includes examining institutional

structures and encouraging students to identify personal problems as public issues.

A good illustration of this pedagogy is Freire's literacy work. Freire's initial literacy work in the slums of Brazil involved teaching people how to read and write at a time when only those who could read had the right to vote. In this social context, literacy—as the means to equal democratic participation—*is* justice. Freire began by identifying vocabulary that emerged from people's lives alongside pictures illustrating their material conditions. This then generated dialogue aimed at describing social reality. Here the role of education is to create political awareness among learners in order to liberate them from structures that oppress them.

Similarly, Freire's problem-posing education seeks to reconcile what Freire called the student/teacher contradiction. Freire argues that traditional forms of schooling and education simply reproduce unequal power relationships in society through a *banking* model of education (Freire, 1997). By this he is referring to the way in which students are largely passive recipients of the knowledge that teachers *give* to them. Banking education, according to Freire, is domesticating because it teaches learners to be subservient. It teaches them that unequal power relationships are an expected part of life and not to challenge authority or critique what they are given. In both literacy work and in problem-posing education the teacher plays an important role working alongside students in solidarity with them.

Freire's response to the question "What is teaching?" is that teaching is a human endeavour as opposed to a technical or practical one (Freire, 2005). Framing of teaching as a political act means that teachers must inevitably choose whether to maintain or to work against social injustice. Freire's own pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning show his own commitment to structural change through education. For teachers, Freire advocates *praxis* as a way not only to reflect critically but to commit to action in order to bring about change (1998). He identifies necessary teacher qualities as humility, love, tolerance, decisiveness, and a "patient impatience" (Freire, 2005). These qualities speak to the human element that Freire saw as an inescapable part of teaching.

## ***Becoming: Committing to a thinking life***

I have outlined the value of philosophical questioning and examined some philosophical responses to three enduring questions in education. In this final section I discuss what committing to a thinking life can mean in relation to becoming a teacher. The professional identity advocated for in this chapter is one requiring an engagement with education in its broadest sense. There are (at least) two ways this deep engagement can manifest itself in teachers' lives. One is that teachers commit to examining contemporary education puzzles and challenges using philosophical ideas and questions. The other is that teachers develop personal teaching and learning philosophies which are justified against broader commitments to education.

### ***1. Using philosophical concepts to engage with educational issues***

#### **What would Dewey say about charter schools?**

Given that Dewey thought the curriculum should have practical application and emerge from students' interests, would he think charter schools were a good idea? Charter schools are supposed to provide more choice for students by having more freedom to design purpose-built curricula to meet a variety of needs. In Auckland, one example is the Vanguard Military Academy where some traditional subjects are taught in a military-style setting. On the one hand, we could say that Dewey would welcome the innovation and the desire to meet the needs of students who are not being served by mainstream education. On the other hand, Dewey might question the school's military ethos and its ability to foster democratic dispositions in students. How would Dewey's concept of *associated living, growth, and/or experience* sit with the school? To what extent does the school foster the sorts of active participation needed for democratic living? Is his view that teachers should be guides rather than taskmasters (Pring, 2007) consistent with the school's approach? Dewey's insistence that education should engage student interest and have practical application is an argument still pertinent today. It is likely he would have much to say about charter schools. By making use of his concepts we can critically consider this kind of schooling against broader education ideals.

### **What would Freire say about shifting preservice teacher education from universities and into schools?**

Presently initial teacher education is under scrutiny and reform in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ministry of Education initiatives include new programmes such as Teach First NZ and the Master of Teaching. These new programmes have an emphasis on practice and involve extended time in schools. This focus on practice is sometimes connected to the idea that teaching should be viewed as an apprenticeship, and that on-the-job training in schools is the best way to train teachers. What position might Freire adopt in relation to shifting preservice teacher education into schools and having a stronger focus on practice? Freire maintained that it is important for teachers to work in solidarity with their students. Would extended opportunities in schools be more likely to foster better understanding of student lives and material conditions than they would from a removed university environment? Or might Freire be concerned that a shift to practice reduces teaching to methods and skills with limited opportunities to critique education policy and structures? How might his concepts of *conscientization* and/or *banking education* be useful in this analysis? What kind of preservice teacher education would be consistent with Freire's vision of teaching?

### **How might we respond to National Standards and high-stakes testing from a liberal knowledge perspective?**

New Zealand's education system is often described as a high quality but low equity system. A close analysis of PISA<sup>1</sup> data makes for concerning reading in terms of the disparity in student achievement. This has led to an intense focus on ways to close the achievement gap between different groups of students. One way in which policy has sought to do this has been to increase testing and benchmark setting, including the introduction of National Standards in 2011. One critique of this measure is that students who are struggling to meet the standards will experience a "narrower curriculum" as their teachers focus on getting them to the required literacy and numeracy standards.

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1 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is an international assessment of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds. New Zealand is one of the countries that takes part every 3 years.

A liberal philosophy of education views equal access to a broad knowledge base as a fundamental aspect of an equitable society. Inasmuch as access to a wide range of disciplinary thinking develops the capacity for critical engagement, liberal philosophers of education advocate for the centrality of knowledge in education. How might we respond to policy such as National Standards from a liberal perspective? Is it possible to defend the Standards on the grounds they ensure all students have the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics?

## ***2. Developing a personal teaching and learning philosophy***

Teaching philosophies are useful because they provide a basis for justifying practice (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). While it is possible to develop a philosophy with a focus solely on methods and skills, a broad philosophy draws links between pedagogical commitments and the wider purposes of education. This is a much wider encompassing professional identity, one that demonstrates intellectual engagement with education. Grant and Sleeter (2007) draw on Garforth's (1964, in Grant & Sleeter, 2007) work to outline the benefits of a broad teaching philosophy. A broad philosophy helps teachers to:

1. Bring new interpretations to old problems;
  2. Evaluate and think critically about traditional or sanctioned ideas;
  3. Respond in ways that are ethical;
  4. Respond in ways that are consistent with your values;
  5. Develop reflective and critical capacities, always interrogating ideas and practices rather than just accepting them as sanctioned truth.
- (Grant & Sleeter, 2007, p. 17)

This chapter represents various ideological stances connected to broader aims and commitments in society. The *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* (Ministry of Education, 2007) provides one example of a philosophy underpinned by a broader commitment to the purposes of education. It outlines a particular social vision for learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. The *NZC* is foregrounded by a mission, a vision, principles, values, and key competencies. The main stated purpose of the *NZC* is for learners to be “actively contributing and participating members of society” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). It could be argued that the *NZC* upholds participatory democracy as a desired outcome

of education. How then, might you develop a personal philosophy that encompasses these ideas? How does one teach for participatory democracy? What sorts of practices and/or curriculum choices are most likely to lead to this outcome?

## **Conclusion**

All ideas have their own geographies. They have their own contours and configurations that make education landscapes possible. Philosophical thinking allows us to navigate these landscapes and encounter education anew as rich conceptual terrain. It offers teachers “conceptual agilities” providing a much broader space for thought and action to negotiate school life (McCann & Yaxley, 2016, p. 70). Becoming a teacher is about giving meaning to education through thoughtful engagement with abstract and *awkward* ideas. Education is not static or complete, nor can empirical methods address all issues and problems associated with it. Instead we breathe life into education by constructing and reconstructing responses to enduring questions and challenges. In this sense, we might say education is an idea teachers make up on a daily basis in their classrooms. Egan (2001, p. 939) encourages us to abandon problematic conceptions of education, and “make up” new ones but this requires a robust framework to work from. Philosophical thinking provides us with this framework and enables us to address a fundamental question for classroom teachers: “What meanings will I give to education?” True story.

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## Introduction Discussion starters

1. Gómez states that becoming a teacher is not the same as learning to teach. What does she mean by this? Do you agree with her observation? Justify your response.
2. What beliefs about teaching and learning are already part of your emerging personal philosophy of teaching? Where did these ideas come from? Who has influenced your thinking?
3. What are some of the issues confronting education today that require deeper examination? How might thinking philosophically help make sense of these issues?
4. Various writers talk of teaching being a *moral* or *political* act. What do they mean by this? Can you think of examples of when, as a teacher, you might face a moral or political conundrum? How might you navigate your way through?