



## From Theory to Praxis: A Call for the Reconstruction of Philosophy of Education

Erkan BOZKURT\* 

### Abstract

This article proposes a rethinking of philosophy of education that transcends the persistent divide between theory and practice. The concept of Reconstructionist Praxis, which I elaborated in detail in a recent study, is here presented in a more concise, manifesto-like form. This framework argues that philosophy of education derives its significance not merely from abstract critique, but through direct engagement in educational research, teacher formation, curriculum debates, and institutional structures. The three core dimensions of praxis—ethical-epistemic, pedagogical, and institutional—illustrate pathways for restoring the legitimacy of philosophy of education. The article exemplifies the applicability of this approach through concrete initiatives such as research partnerships in teacher education, dialogical participation in curriculum debates, and philosophical contributions to action research. Ultimately, philosophy of education is repositioned not only as an interpretive discipline, but as a praxis that accompanies and contributes to the transformation of educational life.

### Keywords

Eğitim felsefesi,  
Yeniden-yapılardırmacı  
praksis,  
Teori-pratik ayrımı,  
Epistemik sorumluluk

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\* PhD, Uşak University, Faculty of Education, Türkiye, [erkan.bozkurt@usak.edu.tr](mailto:erkan.bozkurt@usak.edu.tr)

## **1. Introduction**

Educational philosophy has long been defined by the tension between theory and practice. In academic debates, conceptual clarity and theoretical precision are often emphasized, while the concrete contexts of educational life have frequently been treated as secondary. This divide has distanced philosophy of education from pedagogical realities, from the lived experiences of teachers and students, and even from institutional decision-making processes.

In a recent study (Bozkurt, 2025), I introduced the concept of Reconstructionist Praxis (RP) as a response to this problem. As I discussed there in detail, the contemporary legitimacy of philosophy of education rests not solely on maintaining critical distance, but also on its active participation in educational research, teacher formation, and institutional structures.

The present article continues that line of inquiry. However, its aim is not to propose a new theory; rather, it seeks to highlight the capacity of educational philosophy to think with educational researchers, teachers, and policymakers, and to act together with them. Philosophy of education is not only a field that deepens theory, but also a practice that must be reconstructed within educational life through ethical responsibility and contextual engagement.

This perspective also functions as an invitation for the future of educational philosophy: a call for a mode of thought that does not remain confined to abstract debates, but instead accompanies and transforms educational research and practice in dialogue with them.

## **2. An Outline of Reconstructionist Praxis**

Reconstructionist Praxis (RP) can be defined as an orientation that grounds the legitimacy of philosophy of education not in abstract theoretical debates alone, but in ethically responsible and contextually embedded participation within educational life. This approach rejects the confinement of philosophy to the role of an external critical observer; instead, it affirms its direct involvement in educational research, pedagogical processes, and institutional structures. In this way, philosophical inquiry becomes not merely a matter of conceptual analysis, but also a practice enacted in relation to the ethical and institutional realities of education (Biesta & Säfström, 2011; Burbules & Abowitz, 2008).

The framework recently proposed takes shape across three interrelated dimensions: the ethical–epistemic dimension, which emphasizes that knowledge is always a relational and responsibility-bearing activity; the pedagogical dimension, which situates philosophy as a dialogical partnership accompanying teaching–learning processes; and the institutional

dimension, which seeks to make philosophy visible once again within structures such as faculties of education, curriculum studies, and teacher preparation programs. Considering these dimensions together repositions philosophy of education not merely as a theoretical field, but as a companion to educational research and practice (Bozkurt, 2025).

## **2.1 Ethical–Epistemic Dimension: The Responsibility of Knowledge**

Although the production of knowledge in education is often presented as a neutral or objective activity, in reality every act of knowing is embedded within particular contexts, relationships, and values. The questions of what we know, how we know it, and for whom we produce knowledge carry not only epistemological but also ethical significance. For this reason, philosophy of education should not focus solely on the coherence of concepts or the validity of methods; it must also make visible the responsibilities that knowledge entails.

This approach aligns with Biesta and Säfström's (2011) notion of epistemic responsibility. For them, to know is not only to seek truth but also to engage in an act of accountability toward others. Continuing this discussion, Biesta (2015a, 2015b, 2024) positions education not as the transmission of technical skills, but as a process in which the subject assumes responsibility in relation to the world. Thus, the ethical–epistemic dimension transforms philosophy from a discipline that merely comments from the outside into a critical interlocutor within educational research and teacher education—concerned with how research questions are formulated, what assumptions guide them, and what the results mean for different groups.

Within this framework, praxis regards the processes of producing and using knowledge as an ethical obligation. The contribution of the philosopher is to remind us that “true” knowledge and “responsible” knowledge cannot be separated, and to build bridges between research and practice with this sense of responsibility.

## **2.2 Pedagogical Dimension: Dialogical Companionship**

The second dimension of Reconstructionist Praxis highlights a vision of dialogical companionship that situates philosophy at the heart of educational life. Here, philosophical thinking is not an abstract theoretical pursuit, but a process of accompaniment and shared meaning-making within teaching–learning relationships. As Paulo Freire (1970) emphasized, education is never neutral; it either reproduces the existing order or opens a space for transformative dialogue. Accordingly, the pedagogical dimension positions the philosopher not as an external “interpreter,” but as a partner who inquires and reconstructs together with learning communities.

This approach resonates with Burbules and Abowitz's (2008) conception of situated philosophy. For them, philosophy of education comes to life not in abstract analyses, but within teacher-student relationships, the everyday interactions of curriculum, and the plurality of learning environments. Dialogue is not merely a method but a philosophical stance: it entails mutual listening, openness to multiplicity, and the co-construction of meaning (Burbules, 2002, 2018).

In this regard, Dewey's (1916) pragmatist pedagogy also provides an important foundation. For Dewey, education is not simply a matter of individual development, but a democratic process through which social experiences are shared and renewed. The pedagogical dimension of philosophy aims precisely at sustaining this democratic experience: learning is not merely the transmission of content, but the co-creation of a common life.

In sum, the pedagogical dimension does not locate philosophy outside of learning processes. On the contrary, it envisions philosophy as a companion presence within them. The task of the philosopher is not to provide the “right answers,” but to collaboratively frame the right questions; not to govern learning through abstract principles, but to nurture it as a relational and ethical space (Bozkurt, 2025).

### **2.3 Institutional Dimension: Participation within Structures**

One of the greatest challenges for philosophy of education today is the erosion of its institutional legitimacy. The reduction of course hours in faculties of education, the marginalization of philosophical contributions in research agendas, and the dominance of outcome-based understandings of education at the policy level have steadily narrowed philosophy's role (Jackson, Garrison, & Biesta, 2020; Ünder, 2008). The institutional dimension of Reconstructionist Praxis seeks to reverse this decline.

This dimension argues that the philosopher should not be merely a critic offering normative principles, but an active participant within institutional life. Restoring philosophy's visibility in curriculum committees, teacher education programs, faculty decision-making mechanisms, and in the design stages of educational research is the central aim of this dimension (Bozkurt, 2025). By emphasizing the institutional sphere rather than the political in a narrow sense, it demonstrates how philosophical contributions can permeate everyday practices and professional structures.

As Dewey (1920) emphasized in Reconstruction in Philosophy, the task of philosophy is not only to grapple with theoretical problems but to respond to “the problems of men.” Similarly, Brameld (1950) placed reconstruction in education at the very center of cultural and institutional transformation. These reminders show that philosophy has historically carried not only an intellectual but also a structural role.

Thus, the institutional dimension calls for philosophy to move beyond the stance of an external critic and to participate in the living practices of educational institutions. Philosophical thought here derives its meaning not solely from critical distance but from its capacity to co-produce, redesign, and transform at the institutional level. In this sense, praxis demands that philosophy not only debate what education ought to be, but also directly contribute to how educational institutions function and can be changed.

### **3. Concrete Pathways**

Reconstructionist Praxis (RP) is not only a theoretical proposal but also an orientation with tangible implications for educational life. The renewed relevance of philosophy depends on its active participation in diverse domains—ranging from teacher education programs to curriculum debates, from educational research to policy processes. In this context, the philosopher’s task is not to serve as an external “commentator,” but to collaborate with researchers, teachers, and students in framing questions, generating meaning, and contributing to institutional transformations (Bozkurt, 2025; Biesta & Säfström, 2011).

This section addresses three concrete pathways for RP: (1) establishing research partnerships in teacher education, (2) engaging in pedagogical dialogue within curriculum debates, and (3) accompanying action research in educational inquiry. These examples illustrate how philosophy of education can function not only as a theoretical field but also as a stakeholder and transformative partner in educational life.

#### **3.1 Research Partnerships in Teacher Education**

Teacher education programs are among the most fertile grounds for connecting philosophy with practice. Yet in many contexts, philosophy remains confined to introductory courses and excluded from the foundational discussions that shape the professional identities of teacher candidates. This marginalization reduces teacher education to the transmission of technical skills, while ethical, political, and epistemological dimensions are pushed into the background (Biesta, 2015a; Bozkurt, 2025).

RP proposes that philosophers take on the role of research partners within teacher education programs. In this approach, the philosopher is not an external evaluator of courses but an active participant in the research and practice processes of faculties of education. For instance, in action research projects, the philosopher's contribution is not limited to discussing methodological frameworks; they also illuminate the ethical foundations of research questions, the dilemmas faced by teacher candidates, and the value orientations embedded in curricula.

Such partnerships encourage teacher candidates to address not only the question of "what should be taught," but also "why" and "for whom." Philosophical engagement at this point supports teacher candidates in grounding their pedagogical decisions in ethical and social responsibility. In doing so, philosophy moves to the center of teacher education, helping to prepare future teachers not only technically but also intellectually and ethically (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970).

### **3.2 Participation in Curriculum Debates**

Curriculum is one of the most visible faces of educational systems; it determines which knowledge, which values, and which identities are prioritized. Yet curriculum debates are often conducted within the frames of technical regulation or political agendas, with philosophical inquiry relegated to the background. This tendency reduces the curriculum to mere content delivery, obscuring its ethical, cultural, and political dimensions (Apple, 1995; Biesta, 2015a).

Reconstructionist Praxis argues for the dialogical participation of philosophers in curriculum debates. The philosopher's role here is not to offer ready-made prescriptions or to impose singular truths. Rather, it is to open a meaningful space of dialogue among diverse actors—teachers, researchers, policymakers, parents—and to foster critical awareness of the values and aims embedded within the curriculum (Burbules & Abowitz, 2008; Bozkurt, 2025).

From this perspective, philosophy does not reduce curriculum to the question of "what should be taught?"; it also raises further questions: "How should it be taught?" "Whose voices are included or excluded?" and "What futures are being constructed?" In this way, curriculum becomes more than a technical program—it emerges as a process interwoven with ethical responsibility, social justice, and the search for pedagogical meaning (Dewey, 1916; Greene, 1995; hooks, 1994).

In sum, the philosopher's participation in curriculum debates is not merely an academic contribution; it is a form of praxis that builds bridges among social actors, supports pluralism, and nurtures critical dialogue.

### **3.3 Contributions to Action Research in Educational Inquiry**

Educational research has increasingly become an area focused on quantitative measurements and performative outcomes. This tendency narrows the complex pedagogical problems that arise from the lived experiences of teachers and students, reducing education to numerical indicators (Biesta, 2015a; Jackson, Garrison, & Biesta, 2020). In such a context, philosophical contributions are often limited to secondary commentary or the provision of abstract theoretical frameworks.

Reconstructionist Praxis emphasizes the participation of philosophers in educational research, particularly through action research. Because action research is grounded in ongoing feedback and iterative adjustments between teachers and researchers, it provides a natural site of involvement for philosophers as well (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Within this process, the philosopher does not merely remind participants of abstract principles; they help to continuously interrogate the questions, methodological choices, and ethical-political implications of the research.

Such involvement expands the horizon of inquiry: questions such as “For whom does this finding matter?” “Which values are revealed or concealed?” and “Who will ultimately benefit from this change?” are brought into the research cycle through philosophical companionship (Bozkurt, 2025). This approach transforms philosophy from an external critique into an internal voice—one that speaks from within the research process and accompanies its transformative potential.

In conclusion, philosophical engagement in action research makes educational inquiry not only outcome-oriented but also ethically and contextually responsible. Praxis thus takes shape as a shared process of learning and transformation, in which philosophical reflection and research practice unfold together.

### **4. Connection to the Mission of JOAPOE**

The praxis-oriented approach outlined in this article is not merely a personal theoretical proposal; it also reflects the founding vision of the *Journal of Applied Philosophy of Education* (JOAPOE). The journal seeks to counter the marginalization of philosophy of education in contemporary academic life by repositioning philosophy at the center of educational practice.

JOAPOE regards overcoming the persistent divide between theory and practice as a philosophical responsibility. In this respect, the journal aims to publish contributions that not only engage in theoretical debates but also participate meaningfully in diverse domains such as teacher education, curriculum work, educational research, and policy processes. The goal is to reframe philosophy of education not merely as an academic subdiscipline, but as a stakeholder and transformative partner in educational life (Bozkurt, 2025).

In this way, JOAPOE aspires to demonstrate that philosophy can be sustained not only as an exercise in critical distance, but also as a praxis that actively transforms educational life. This perspective constitutes the foundation for the journal's contribution to debates in philosophy of education, both nationally and internationally.

## **5. Conclusion: A Call**

This article has sought to reposition philosophy of education not as a purely theoretical endeavor, but as a praxis reshaped through ethical responsibility and contextual engagement. Overcoming the theory-practice divide requires philosophers to participate directly in educational research, teacher education, curriculum debates, and institutional structures. The three dimensions of Reconstructionist Praxis—ethical-epistemic, pedagogical, and institutional—illustrate concrete pathways for such participation.

The conclusion is clear: the future of philosophy of education lies not merely in conceptual accuracy, but in the capacity to think, act, and transform together. The meaning of philosophical inquiry emerges not when it distances itself from educational life, but when it assumes responsibility within it.

For this reason, I extend an invitation to philosophers of education, researchers, and teachers alike: to respond to this call by sustaining philosophy not only as interpretation, but as praxis that accompanies the transformation of education. Shaping educational futures is both our shared responsibility and our collective possibility.

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