

A History of the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society, 1950-2023

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Origins of the Society

The Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society is rooted in three other organizations: the Progressive Education Association, the John Dewey Society, and the Philosophy of Education Society. The Progressive Education Association, founded shortly after World War I, promoted innovation in American schools. By 1935, a global economic depression led a number of leading educational theorists to create the John Dewey Society to promote educators to respond to American economic conditions. These radical social theorists included George Counts and Harold Rugg at Teachers College in Columbia. By 1941, the changing political scene, ushered in by the war in Europe and Asia, prompted philosophers of education to form a more academically rigorous and less politically committed society of scholars. This society came to be known as the Philosophy of Education Society.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, a chief dispute among society members involved philosophy of education becoming a respectable part of the curriculum in schools of education. With Dewey's influence, philosophy of education earned respect at Columbia as well as some larger universities like the University of Illinois and Ohio State

University. From the time of its inception, membership in the Philosophy of Education Society was restricted to those who worked and published primarily in the field. Application for membership required the recommendations of current members. This process was intended to filter out faculty in teacher education programs who only occasionally taught a course that included philosophy. Even from its beginning, the society struggled with how to include those with an interest in philosophy of education who did not qualify for full membership. It is likely that the idea of creating regional societies with more inclusive membership crossed the minds of early leadership.

Meanwhile, World War II intervened, restricting travel to professional meetings so that the founding of regional philosophy of education societies did not happen until after the conclusion of the war. Though sources are unclear, the Mid- Atlantic States Philosophy of Education Society (MASPES) likely was the first to exist, led by Dewey associates at Teachers College Columbia, including William Heard Kilpatrick, John L. Childs, and R. Bruce Raup. MASPES dates its founding from 1946.

The founding dates for OVPES appear more obscure. Clint Collins notes that the only source he located prior to his own first attendance in 1961 comes from Philip G. Smith's papers left behind at his death. Smith, described by Collins as the society's most honored member, began graduate study at Ohio State in 1950, and provided memorabilia from OVPES meetings beginning in 1952. In addition, in the minutes of the 1969 meeting of OVPES, A. Stafford Clayton included a tribute to the recently deceased

Stanley Ballinger, his colleague at Indiana University, that reads in part, "He was a member of the society [OVPEs] since 1950 and was therefore one of the early participants." It is likely, then, that OVPEs began meeting circa 1950.

When Rob Sherman, at the University of Florida, undertook a history of the Southeastern Philosophy of Education Society, he found no records for 1950 through 1971. He dated the society's beginning to 1948, and the first president of the society presided at their meeting in 1950 in Gainesville, Florida. This meeting, hosted by retired Ohio State faculty member Boyd Bode, received welcoming letters from John Dewey, Kilpatrick, Bruce Raup, and H. Gordon Hullfish, Bode's former colleague at Ohio State. A 90-year-old John Dewey sent a message that read "work to keep open the channels of communication to prevent curtains of class interest or national interest, or any other, from shutting out light and preventing freedom of inquiry and expression."

It is possible that similar welcomes greeted OVPEs, since Hullfish was likely the first president of OVPEs in 1951. This is found in a tribute to him published in *Educational Theory* in 1963, the year after his death. It is possible that his official title may have been "chairman," rather than "president." Ralph Pounds, who as secretary of the society throughout the 1950s, prepared programs and notes on business meetings, and identified the head of meetings between 1952 and 1955.

According to Pound's notes, he described OVPEs's region as consisting of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The University of Illinois became part of the

Midwestern PES region, leaving Ohio State the dominant program in the Ohio Valley. Stafford Clayton from Indiana University, a student of Bruce Raup at Columbia, became chair of the society for the 1952 meeting, and subsequent meetings had chairmen, including Max Carmichael, Forest Shoemaker, and Dean Howard H. Long from Ball State University, Ohio University, and Central State College respectively.

Because H. H. Long came from a predominantly black college, his role as chairman led to controversy. In the society's early years, it became conventional for the Vice Chairmen to become chairman for the next year. Long was Vice Chairman in 1954, but the nominating committee proposed Stanley Ballinger for chairman in 1955. Evidently, a discussion followed, and Ballinger withdrew his name and substituted Long's name. This established a precedent of succession, which subsequently became the pattern.

By 1958, Ballinger became the first person officially listed as president of the society in 1958 (unless Hullfish, in 1951, had the title). The 1958 meeting proved lively- the topic: accreditation of schools of education, a topic dear to philosophers of education seeking a role in undergraduate teacher education. The author of NCATE's charter, Howard Bowers, addressed OVPES, and defended the absence of philosophy from teacher education programs. Harry Broudy, from the University of Illinois, responded, explaining why programs without philosophy became teacher *training*, rather than teacher *education*. Years later, during an OVPES business meeting, Broudy

was proposed as an honorary member, but the move was shot down as "unprecedented." OVPES has no honorary members, or perhaps the whole membership counts as honorary, since it now spans the country.

Changes in the 1960s-1970s

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s the meetings of OVPES appear to have always taken place at a single location: Teachers College, the University of Cincinnati. Credit for that probably goes to Ralph Pounds, the society's secretary throughout the 1950s, and its president in 1962. In those years the society needed no treasurer, since the University of Cincinnati, and the Dean of its Teachers College, Carter V. Good, covered all expenses. Members paid no dues. Their only cost was their hotel stay, which in the early years amounted to less than ten dollars a night. The jewel of those meetings became the principal meeting room, the Annie Laws drawing room at UC, a place so suggestive of an 18th Century drawing room that one expected to hear a salon orchestra playing Mozart on entering. Clint Collins found no tribute to Ralph Pounds, but noted that, if anyone deserves honor for OVPES, it is he.

Collins' mentor, Phil Smith, became president in his first year at Indiana University (1961). The second listing of the region covered by OVPES in its business meetings, included in its purview the four earlier mentioned states as well as Tennessee and Western Pennsylvania. The latter two inclusions likely came from two faculty members

who were colleagues at Western Reserve University in the early 1950s: Robert E. Mason and Phil Smith. Mason, president of OVPES in 1959, moved to the University of Pittsburgh, and Phil Smith taught at the University of Tennessee before he came to Indiana University in 1961.

The 1961 meeting contained a Friday afternoon session devoted to papers by graduate students. Graduate student presentations were encouraged by the society early on in its history, and probably constituted a reason for creating regional societies connected to PES. The most memorable paper at that meeting came from David Angus, a graduate student at Ohio State who went on to a distinguished career at the University of Michigan. The Friday evening session contained a talk by a local school administrator defending merit pay for teachers.

In the 1950s H. Gordon Hullfish was highly influential in the society, as the likely first chair or president in 1951, and a keynote speaker in 1954. He likely played a role in the visit of a Japanese scholar, Yoni Mori, to the meeting in 1959. Mori reported on formation of a philosophy of education society in Japan, before either Britain or Australia had such societies. Hullfish probably influenced the formation of the society since he, with a group of American progressive educators, visited Japan in 1948, and 1949, in hopes of establishing democratic schools there in the wake of World War II.

Hullfish missed the meeting in 1961 due to illness. That same year, Phil Smith, his student and co-author of a then recently published book, *Reflective Thinking: The*

Method of Education, was president. Hullfish died the following year. In 1963, *Educational Theory*, which began publication in 1950, devoted an entire quarterly issue to a tribute to Hullfish. Contributions came from former students Phil Smith, Harry Armogida, then teaching at Miami University, and Ernest Bayles from the University of Kansas.

Hullfish's students noted that, in addition to OVPES, Hullfish, throughout the 1950s, served as president of PES, the John Dewey Society, and the final president of the Progressive Education Association in 1955 when it dissolved, declaring its mission completed. The 1962 OVPES conference bore a dedication to Hullfish. Its only other conference so dedicated was to his student, Phil Smith, in 1990, in the first anniversary of his death.

Ernest Bayles' son, Lewis, followed his father into philosophy of education, joining the faculty at Indiana University in the 1960s. He participated in two unusual events at OVPES. He became the president for the 1965 meeting, and, for the first time, the society met away from Cincinnati, choosing the Campbell House hotel in Lexington, Kentucky, for its meeting place. Bayles came to the meeting room for the presidential address Friday evening, to have George Maccia, chair of the session, announce that Bayles had lost his copy of his address. According to Clint Collins, the members of the society pitched in to search for it. It wasn't found, and philosophers of education,

showing they have nothing to talk about until someone gives a paper, slowly drifted from the room.

Bayles left Indiana about a year later and joined the faculty at the University of Cincinnati. This occasioned a second unusual event for OVPES. At the business meeting of the 1969 session, Staff Clayton introduced a resolution to censure the University of Cincinnati for its dismissal of Lew Bayles without cause, which passed. After that, the society said goodbye forever to what Collins referred to as its Garden of Eden, the Annie Law's drawing room.

Two significant attempts in the 1960s to strengthen the society came from presidents George Maccia in 1963 and Francis Villemain in 1964. Maccia surveyed colleges of education in the region to learn which had courses that included philosophy and who taught such courses. This prompted the society to expand its mailing list. Villemain, then at the University of Toledo, researched other regionals with two possible suggestions: a newsletter and constitutions. Both ideas were eventually adopted by OVPES, but not until years later.

Villemain became editor of the journal *Studies in Philosophy and Education* and obtained OVPES as a sponsoring organization at a cost of \$25 per year. By then, the society had minimal dues. One of the most significant innovations for OVPES in the 1960s came with the first publication of the proceedings, beginning with the 1968 meeting. Richard Stephens at Indiana State University became the first editor. He

solicited funds from his institution. The 1968 meeting took place in downtown Cincinnati, at the Netherlands Hilton Hotel. The hotel had a parking garage attached, a relief from the parking problems experienced on Fridays at the University of Cincinnati. The conference also had a theme, "the relation of philosophy of education to social processes." Stephens proved an effective editor. He had the journal copyrighted, included a summary of the conference, the minutes of the business session, the treasurer's report, and an extensive membership list of the society. Stephens also edited the proceedings for the 1969 and 1970 meetings. Clint Collins took over for the 1971 proceedings. In the editor's forward he wrote, "The conference broke precedent with the past by taking on aspects of a retreat. The Bergamo Center in the rolling countryside outside Dayton, Ohio, supplied all meals, lodging, meeting rooms and partying facilities." At the instigation of OVPES president David Denton, the society made its first trip to Bergamo. It did not return until 1999.

The 1972 meeting saw another change from precedent: scheduling of concurrent sessions, likely the result of increased submissions now that papers would appear in print. Throughout the early years of OVPES, the meetings had occurred on the first weekend in November occasionally beginning on Halloween. That became the preferred meeting date for the newly formed American Educational Studies Association, producing some conflicts for OVPES members.

The break from precedent on the date of OVPES meetings began in 1973, meeting one week later than usual. The following four years OVPES met two weeks later, in mid-November. Cincinnati remained the dominant meeting place, but the society met in Columbus in 1966, Louisville in 1976, Pittsburgh in 1977, Lexington again in 1980, and Bloomington, Indiana, in 1981.

In 1974, Richard Pratte, as OVPES president, offered a resolution recognizing the death of Everett Kircher, whom he lauded as "giving long and meritorious service" to the society "over a period of three decades," presumably, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. From 1972 to 1979 the editorship of the proceedings returned to Indiana State University in the capable hands of John Carter and William Brownson. Another significant shift occurred for the 1976 edition: a change in both title and cover design. The title became *Philosophical Studies in Education*, and the cover design, by Laura Snider of Indiana State, on slick paper, resembled a rendering of Stonehenge in black and white. 1976 also saw the first publication of a society newsletter under the guidance of that year's president, Fred Schultz of the University of Akron. The 1980 proceedings, edited by Dennis Senchuk and published by Indiana University's School of Education, were indexed in Photosphere's Index, and microfiche copies became available through ERIC. Back copies to 1968 were available through University Microfilms International. The 1981 OVPES meeting took place at the Indiana University Memorial Union, and president John Carter led a salute to Phil Smith in his retirement from IU. A picture of

Phil Smith appeared in the proceedings, the only edition of the society's journal to contain someone's picture. The 1981 meeting also had the distinction of being, to date, the only meeting of the society to have occurred in December (the 4th and 5th).

The 1980s and 1990s

During the 1981 meeting, Eleanor Roemer became president-elect, but by 1983 she had left the field to begin law school, and her place as president went to Keith Raitz, at the University of Louisville (only the second occasion on which someone failed to succeed to the presidency). Clint Collins characterized the 1984 meeting as tense and angry. Henry Giroux, then at Miami University, gave an invited address at the Friday evening session, responded to by Richard LaBrecque. Giroux left the meeting, enraged at the critique, but Richard Quantz, his colleague at Miami, acting as associate editor, managed to secure Giroux's paper for the proceedings. At the business session, Dick LaBrecque moved that the society accept the invitation of the AESA to meet jointly with them in Pittsburgh in 1986. After much discussion on how the society might maintain its identity at such a meeting, the motion carried.

For the only time in its history, the proceedings of the 1987 and 1988 appear in a single volume. The business session at the 1989 meeting supported a resolution giving the president of the society the right to select the site of the meeting at which they preside. The resolution also instructed presidents to avoid conflict with the meetings of

AESA. The meeting also added a requirement that submissions for the program include a disk version.

In 1990, John Carter moved that the year's proceedings bare a dedication to Phil Smith on the first anniversary of his death. At that meeting, Gerald Reagan moved that the society's long-standing pattern of an invited speaker be titled "The Phil Smith Lecture," and that the endowment fund that Phil had initially proposed be used to defray the expenses of invited speakers. Reagan also proposed that the society join the Council of Learned Societies, contributing one-hundred dollars per year. The motion carried.

The 1992 meeting was once again held concurrently with AESA in Pittsburgh. The 1992 business session formally passed John Carter's motion to instruct program committees to include a Phil Smith Memorial Lecture. The first announced Smith lecture took place at the meeting in 1994, held on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. Joanne Pagano of Colgate University, who served at the time as national president of PES, delivered the Phil Smith lecture. The proceedings of the 1995 meeting of the society caused some confusion by being identified on the spine and cover as the 1996 proceedings. The Phil Smith lecture that year again was delivered by the national society's president, in this instance Betty Sichel.

The business session at the 1996 meeting approved further changes in the society's journal in 1997. The title became *Philosophical Studies in Education: The*

Journal of the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society. Two-page proposals to the program committee replaced full papers, for the purpose of setting up the program. The authors then had to submit their final papers for publication to the editor of the journal. The editorial board, consisting of the program committee together with the editors, decided which papers to publish, each paper having undergone blind review by three readers. The meeting instructed the secretary/treasurer to request e-mail addresses, and Terry O'Conner agreed to begin a website for the society.

In 1997, the society began negotiations with the CaddoGap press for publication of the society's journal. The journal for that year contained neither a copy of the program for the meeting, nor notes on the business session, a treasurer's report, nor a list of the membership. This became the pattern for future editions, presumably to emphasize its primary function as a source of refereed publication, and less a report on the doings of the society.

For the first time, the society's journal in 1998 had a volume number on the cover, volume 30. While 29 previous volumes had appeared, one volume contained two years of the proceedings, so volume 30 contained the 31st year of published proceedings.

The meeting in 1998 in Lexington, Kentucky produced a minor crisis exposing the society's lack of a constitution or bylaws. The president for that year, Eugenie Potter from the University of Pittsburgh, did not know of the established practice of appointing

a three-person nominating committee. Instead, she consulted with another member and nominated a president-elect who declined the nomination. A last-minute substitution drafted a very recent member of the society, a result later challenged by significant numbers of society members.

Deron Boyles, as president, ably stepped into the breach, appointing a new nominating committee so that another election could occur. Boyles also sought to learn of the possible existence of a constitution or bylaws for the society by contacting John Carter, a member since 1968. Carter said that no such document existed. Boyles therefore appointed a committee to draw up a constitution. It seems the society had long operated as a non-profit organization for tax purposes but, without a constitution, had operated illegally.

The by-laws committee, chaired by John Carter, reported to the 1999 meeting; the first of a series of meetings held at the Bergamo conference center that continued until 2017. The constitution and bylaws for the society finally gained approval at the meeting in 2000. The 2001 meeting exposed serious concerns about the state of the society's journal. Members complained that it did not assist their applications for tenure and promotion because of its appearance. A journal committee was appointed that eventually resulted in Haithe Anderson, at Bowling Green State University, taking the editorship. She and her associates produced a professional looking publication, complete with an ISSN number. To further distance the journal from the older

proceedings, it bore the date of its publication year, not the year of the meeting: papers presented to the 2002 meeting appeared in the 2003 edition of the journal. The 2001 meeting also began exploration of the possibility of "publishing" the journal online.

2001-Present: Changes in The Twenty-First Century

While OVPES was generally an all-male society for much of its existence, by the 1990s and throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, the society saw increased female membership as well as female leadership, which continues to grow with the contributions of scholars such as Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Amy Shuffleton, and Jessica Heybach who, in addition to serving as society leaders, have also recruited other women into the society.

As we moved through the second decade of the twenty-first century, new tensions arose in the society. 2017 was a significant year in the society's history. That year OVPES left the Bergamo Center as the new president, Kevin Gary of Valparaiso University, pushed for the society to meet at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois. After serving as OVPES president in 2017, Gary became the president of the Philosophy of Education Society of North America (PESNA), which changed its name to the North American Association of Philosophy and Education (NAAPE) in 2018. His university biography reads "Dr. Gary is one of the founding executives of the North American Association for Philosophy and Education (NAAPE), launched in 2018." NAAPE

meets at the end of October, the time OVPES used to meet, and just a month after OVPES currently meets. After Gary turned over the OVPES presidency to Jessica Heybach for 2018, he founded NAAPE, which is currently held each year at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. Gary no longer attends OVPES, which, he maintained, was not rigorous enough.

Because NAAPE and OVPES occur so close to one another, many former OVPES members chose to switch their membership to NAAPE, and no longer attend OVPES. This was not a passive process, as, for example, NAAPE offered Vic Joshi of Columbia a board position if he committed to attending NAAPE rather than attending OVPES. Currently, there is a rivalry between NAAPE and OVPES due to Gary's political maneuvers. Additionally, further conflict stirred at the 2023 OVPES meeting, when it was revealed that the current president of PES advertised NAAPE in the members' bulletin.

After Gary left OVPES in 2018, Jessica Heybach became the president of the society and, under her leadership, the society chose to begin meeting at the Season's Lodge in Nashville, Indiana. According to the 2017 meeting minutes, Bergamo and the University of St. Mary of the Lake were considered. Nashville is far from much of the current OVPES membership. Many members fly into Indiana, and the Season's Lodge is over an hour from the airport. This is where the society has continued to meet through 2023, though there has been some talk of possibly moving to a new location. Currently, the society struggles financially, and membership continues to fluctuate in recent years.

Thematic Consistencies

Throughout the history of the society, there have been challenges and debates that remain consistent over time. As Clint Collins pointed out, the formation of the society itself is grounded in perennial issues that affect philosophers of education. First, what is the role of philosophy in education research and teacher preparation, and then, what role do professional societies play in creating spaces for meaningful philosophical discourse? The first- the role of philosophy in education research and teacher preparation- was interestingly evident in early OVPES meetings. Philosophy of education was not readily accepted as respectable when discussions of the formation of early societies began. These groups began to shift their focus from being more politically motivated to encouraging academic rigor. Debates over the rigor of philosophical research in favor of other forms of educational research are ongoing.

Other debates that date from the founding of the society involve the role that philosophy of education plays in teacher preparation. The 1958 OVPES meeting saw NCATE defend the lack of philosophy in teacher education programs. This defense was met with philosophers of education arguing that the absence of philosophy in teacher preparation programs marked the divide between teacher training versus teacher education. It seemed, to these philosophers of education, that philosophy and education were inextricable, and to remove it from teacher preparation programs would

leave new teachers unprepared. Again, as we know, the importance of philosophy in teacher preparation programs is still debated.

Finally, we also see the perpetual question of how to maintain rigor and exclusivity, but to also retain society membership, especially for a regional society. Questions of inclusivity were introduced at the founding of OVPES, with the membership originally being restricted only to those who regularly taught courses that incorporated philosophy into their curriculum. These tensions, along with the tensions felt between regional and national societies continue to this day, as is made evident by the disagreements between NAAPE, PES, and OVPES.

Final Thoughts from Clint Collins

As I approach the end of four decades of association with OVPES, it remains the group whose professional meetings I have most enjoyed attending. I hope my brief survey conveys how much I have seen the society change, but in all its manifestations it has proven a welcoming place. I take heart that a regional society devoted to philosophy of education can still flourish in the face of many cultural trends that minimize the value of such efforts.

Someday soon our society will make no use of paper at all, and the trees will remain standing to absorb our carbon dioxide. Philosophy of education offers endless amounts of hope for our collective future.

-Clinton Collins September 2008