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The long arc of knowledge: an interview with Nicholas Burbules

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Nicholas C. Burbules is a world leader in academic journal editing and educational research. From 1992 to 2013, he was Editor of *Educational Theory*, an eminent journal in the field. During those 22 years, Burbules steered one of the leading educational journals through an amazing transition from paper to digital production, in so doing, significantly contributing to global growth and innovation in academic publishing.

An interview allows for something more than simply an exchange of information from interviewee to interviewer. Prior to this interview, I had listened to two mutual friends (Liz Jackson and Michael Peters) speak about working with Burbules during their time in Illinois. I had read a recent essay in which Burbules shared and analyses his experiences as a journal editor (Burbules, 2014), and a previously published interview with Klas Roth (2007). For this project, I was interested in finding out more from Burbules about the dispositions that form part of the identity of a journal editor. It also made sense to encourage Burbules to speak about matters he may not have written about. In July 2014, Burbules and I talked by computer video-call about reviewing, editing, and changes in academic publishing: he in Champaign, Illinois; and me in Whangarei, Aotearoa New Zealand. Our conversation is presented below.

Georgina: Thanks for making time to talk with me today. This first question is a big one: what do you see as the future of academic publishing?

Nicholas: The digital revolution in publishing has had four large impacts. The first is that people increasingly read and interact with text online, on their computer or their portable device. Many people are now removing paper journals from their offices and accessing all journal articles digitally. Reading practices have changed—we are now learning about how to mark-up or annotate a paper online, as used to be done with pen and paper. So the first and most obvious change for academic publishing is the change in reading practices. We are interacting with text digitally.

But there are also at least three other consequences that are more significant, though we didn't really anticipate them. When we were first talking about *Educational Theory* going online, we talked about it almost entirely around that first set of issues: would we reach new audiences if we were digital?

For the record as a little historical artefact, we started posting some of our articles online ourselves, on our own website, well before most other journals were going to digital versions. We saw it as a service to make some articles available that way—to provide the convenience of having digital access. This was long before we were working with Blackwell.

The second consequence is that once readers are accessing articles digitally, it is possible to collect data that were very hard to collect before. Citations, download numbers, how many people access a digital work linked to an article. All of these data collection methods are greatly facilitated with online publishing, and as a result, digital metrics like impact factors are a lot more important now—in fact, becoming too important—but part of it is the convenience of collecting the data. Once you can collect it then people want to analyse it, they want to generate numbers, then people want to use those numbers for evaluation, or policy decisions. I've written a whole paper on this topic, which I call 'the quantification of educational quality' and there are some dangers (Smeyers & Burbules, 2011). But that consequence was not fully anticipated. [I have a second article coming out on this topic, "The Changing Functions of Citation: From Knowledge Networking to Academic Cash-Value" *Paedagogica Historica* (forthcoming).]

Next, the whole movement towards open source, open access publishing, and the emergence of this parallel path for publishing and disseminating work, that doesn't go through the normal, formal journal review and editing publication process. This has exploded in some disciplines, and greatly facilitated accessing a much broader range, both from the producer side, in being able to put out a lot more work, but also for the consumer, who may not work in a university or be a journal subscriber, being able to access a much broader range of published material and ideas virtually for free. I don't think we've yet seen where that is going to go over the long term, especially as journal publishing becomes economically more and more problematic. One question is: Who pays? The reader or the author?

The fourth aspect is the globalisation of publishing – this is something I hadn't thought about. Once you start putting articles online, your audience is a global audience. I still remember when journals were seen as regional, or national, or niche publications, which had a very small printing and only reached a very small audience. Once you put something online, at least potentially, you've got a global number of people who can find and access your ideas. That has lots of implications – both on the publishing side: if we put out these articles, who are they really intended for? Are they just a house journal for a particular disciplinary society, are they intended to speak to a broader audience? I was at a recent meeting with editors of BJSE, the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, discussing what it means to put 'British' on the masthead. What does that really mean now? When once a finite number of printed copies were made, associated with a particular learned society, region, or national context, what happens when a journal like that becomes an online journal? In what sense is the identity of the journal still linked to any particular place or social context?

An anecdote about this: when I took over *Educational Theory*, the four issues each year were called 'Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall'. Then when we worked with Blackwell and the journal went online, I realised we would need to drop that designation, which had been very much part of our identity. We'd talk about 'the Summer Issue' of the journal all the time, but for folks below the Equator, you don't want to be highlighting what to them is really an irrelevant classification. Your Summer Issue isn't their Summer Issue, so you're highlighting the fact that you are a regional, geographically-located journal at a time when your audience is global. I'd never thought about that, even for our international readership in the days when the journal was paper-only, though I'd spent time in Australia and New Zealand, and certainly understood the hemispheric effect on seasons. Yet it

never occurred to me that this practice of calling our issues Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer was hemispheric-centric.

Georgina: The push for instant or faster publishing—it's coming from science and doesn't seem to apply so much to disciplines such as education—how would you describe the difference, and is science still influencing education in this way?

Nicholas: The scientific disciplines are distinct in two important ways. One—the turnaround time for knowledge is much faster, and I know scientists in many fields say, if I have to wait 18 months for my paper to be published, by the time it reaches print, it's already obsolete. Another 14 studies have already been done in the interim. So there is clearly pressure in that field to develop faster pathways to market, to put it that way. But another difference is that the conventions of scientific writing and presentation of information are much more standardised. I'm not saying there's no room for a review process, but assuming that somebody's not falsifying their data, if they've done a study in a particular way, the way in which that study is going to be written up and presented is usually pretty standardised. So the evaluation process is different. Was the methodology sound, did the person draw proper conclusions from their data, is it a significant question or issue that they're looking at—I'm not saying those are completely straightforward judgements, but they're bounded discussions, within a set of conventions that are routinized.

In our field, especially in fields like philosophy and theory of education, it's a much denser process to read and understand and evaluate scholarship. There are no conventions in terms of methods, results, analysis, conclusions, so there are many different genres of writing, many different vocabularies. The arc of knowledge is much longer in our field than it is in the scientific disciplines. We can still go back and read Plato and find really interesting, novel ideas that we never thought about before. But the evaluation conventions are not as routinized and therefore it takes longer to read and understand and evaluate work. And it's also more potentially conflicted, because those conventions and standards aren't as normalised in our field, so Person A and Person B can both read the same paper and come to diametrically opposed evaluations of whether it's good, or interesting, or original, or worthwhile. That makes our work, and reviewing and evaluating our work, a much more potentially problematic and controversial process.

Georgina: So in education, unlike in the natural sciences, scholarship quality and academic writing quality are almost synonymous. As academics we are expected to produce research at the rate of (say) three peer-reviewed publications per year, but in education, what does this sausage-making approach do for the quality of our work?

Nicholas: There are clearly dangers for education academics in this model, but also a possible benefit. To start with the dangers: we can't justify what we do in those instrumental terms. We don't produce products, patents, or inventions: we don't contribute to economic growth or development in the same way as, for example, a new metal alloy might make bridges stronger, or things like that—we're not in that line of work. It's important that we always resist that language of instrumentality, generally, in the field of education, and certainly in the field of higher education and academic study. There are a host of areas, including in the sciences, where you can't demonstrate the benefit of something, certainly not in the short term, so a physicist somewhere

might be investigating quarks or sub-atomic particles, in the most de-contextualised way possible, but over the course of ten years may produce a body of knowledge that eventually transforms the way we build computers. So there *is* an instrumental output, but it happens over the long term, because basic research of any type can't be immediately applied to a specific instrumental application. It's knowledge-building for the sake of long term value, human as well as cultural and scientific.

I certainly think that that instrumental language about some kind of cash value, if you will, to our research—the fact is, it's a threat to the sciences as well, ironically, as the more humanistic disciplines. We have to continually argue that that's not the reason why we do the research we do. Work like philosophy is aimed towards cultural and educational development that has a human value but can't be translated into simple economic development, or invention, or cash value, in some narrow sense. It's our business as philosophers to be arguing against that kind of narrow-mindedness. Going back to Socrates, that's what philosophers do. We're the gadflies who are always challenging the conventions of society, and the desires of society to normalise and standardise behaviour—that's part of our job.

Having said all that, I think there is one potential benefit for us; I've been thinking about this a great deal in the last few years—it also relates to journal editing. I think that it's not bad for us to be asked or questioned about what is the value or impact of what we do. This shouldn't be defined in narrow terms, but I do think we get a little complacent, self-indulgent even, in thinking that because something is interesting and important to us as an author, that that's all we have to worry about. And the consequence is that there is a great deal of scholarship, in our field particularly, that is a bit solipsistic—it speaks to one person or to a very small group of people. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But we are in trouble if that's the only answer we can give. It can be a helpful corrective to ask, what's the value of all this to people outside the academy? To communities who have a life, a culture and a set of concerns that can't be exactly equated with the values and criteria by which we evaluate the work we do. Those questions are refreshing and force us to question ourselves in a way that makes it harder to be complacent and solipsistic. To be honest I think it's a danger for academics of all sorts, to think that because we, or some small tribal community that we're part of, is interested in something, that that makes it important in the larger scheme of things. Not everything needs to be applied or relevant, or have cash value, but sometimes we should be asking ourselves that question about who are we writing for, and what about those marginal audiences or constituencies that don't read the journals we read, or don't speak the vocabularies that we speak. Those are fair challenges.

I'll be autobiographical: I've done a lot of collaborative work in my life, been at many tables with colleagues from a lot of different fields and disciplines, in a variety of contexts, including university governance, and I can't tell you how many times in those discussions, I have done the things that philosophers do: make distinctions, or try to clarify a concept, or tease out the value assumptions of somebody's assertion, or question the vocabulary or the framing of a question. It's what we do: it's what we dispositionally are trained to do. And many, many times, people have said 'I don't really know you very well, but I'm really glad that you're here, because these contributions have really helped to clarify the conversation.' And I've often said 'This is what philosophers do.' And then people would say something like, 'Oh, that's philosophy? Really! Maybe there's something to

philosophy after all.’ I take it as a personal point of pride that they value my participation—but I try to make a point of saying this, because when you do philosophy this way, you don’t have to justify its usefulness or value. People see it. They see that you are thinking about problems in a different way than they think—that you are trying to clarify things or tease out assumptions. Most academics—and others—find those valuable, refreshing perspectives and they’re surprised, because they think that philosophy is sitting in some isolated ivory tower, talking in multi-syllabic words about arcane matters of angels dancing on heads of pins. People don’t think of philosophy as grounded, as useful. I come from a pragmatic tradition that says philosophy needs to be useful. It’s better philosophy when it tries to be useful.

The other answer is that we are in an interdisciplinary time. Co-authorship is a foreign concept to philosophers, traditionally speaking. Philosophers don’t generally see their work in an interdisciplinary context. I think our field—not only educational scholarship, but academic work more generally—is being transformed by these collective, collaborative, inter-disciplinary projects in which philosophy, and the work of the philosopher, needs to be brought into contact with empirical scholarship, with policy work, with the work of the practitioner in various fields—in education, in medicine, and others as well. And in those interdisciplinary collaborations, philosophy gets transformed. I know colleagues who believe vehemently that empirical issues and research is irrelevant to doing philosophy. I hear this frequently. While they are entitled to their views, I think that’s very narrow-minded: the fact is that there are all sorts of ways in which the results of empirical research can inform, and challenge, and speak to philosophical debates. That doesn’t mean we all become philosophers, it doesn’t mean we all become empirical researchers. It does mean we start having different kinds of conversations about how sociology relates to philosophy, or how philosophy relates to policy studies. Or how teacher education practitioner socialisation and the craft knowledge of teaching practice relates to, and can be informed by, philosophical reflections. That’s where I think we need to be, especially in a field like philosophy of education.

The government is never going to say ‘Oh boy, we need more philosophers’. But the government does want certain things. It wants to improve learning conditions. It wants to bring more technology into the learning process; it wants high standards and ethical integrity among practitioners—there are a lot of those things that philosophers can make a contribution to. Policy debates—they will appreciate the contribution that philosophy can make, if we are at the table.

Georgina: You seem to be talking about the epistemic values or criteria of science—logic, clear thinking—is this where philosophy and science have most in common?

Nicholas: In the US now, especially in certain states and parts of the country, there is an anti-intellectual backlash against the work that schools are doing. People want to teach creationism in schools because the local community doesn’t believe in evolution for religious reasons. This is scary within the context of education because they are anti-critical thinking. I think there’s real work here for philosophers, along with scientists and people from other disciplines. We don’t want a society in which schools fail to identify and promote these epistemic values. These shouldn’t be politicised debates, and can’t be taken for granted anymore. Philosophers are in the business of asking these questions, in nuanced and balanced ways. Society needs that from us because we understand what it is to think about these issues.

Georgina: What characteristics distinguish publishable work in philosophy of education from other fields or areas of educational research?

Nicholas: To echo a couple of points we've already made: unlike many areas of educational research, there isn't a standardised format or vocabulary for how to write about research and research results in philosophy of education. So one of the ways in which our work is different is that you can't separate evaluation of ideas from the evaluation of language, writing, and the presentation of those ideas. The format of the article isn't an empty vessel into which you pour data or results. There's not 'a' rhetoric: there are multiple rhetorics. And even—depending on the theoretical orientation—some of them are even contested, or experimental, or counter-hegemonic. So the presentation and evaluation of philosophy of education has to be tolerant of the fact that there are many different genres, voices, styles, vocabularies, which are not just empty vessels for communicating ideas, but are inseparable from the substance of those ideas and arguments. And that's one of the ways our work is different, and requires review and evaluation processes that are different from the ones used by other journals. That's a big cluster of issues.

Georgina: What are advantages and disadvantages of particular facets of existing or anticipated forms of metrics, and what advice would you give an early career researcher beginning to publish in your journals, and establish career trajectories?

Nicholas: I've got some answers about this. One thing is that the discussion about academic publishing needs to be contextualised within larger issues about what's happening in higher education today. We can't separate discussion about the structure and purposes and nature of publishing from the structure and nature of the reward system that operates in universities, which is our primary audience and constituency. This is where impact factors and other metrics become important. So one can't ignore—as a scholar, as a publisher, and especially as a junior scholar, what the reward systems are that are going to determine your opportunities in your career, and even your job, the status of your job—some of those trends are pretty scary as we've already discussed. The fetishization of metrics is killing education in the same way that the exaggerated focus on test scores is hurting public schools. This is something we have to be criticizing, questioning and challenging. Nevertheless, we are part of it. A junior professor, a person who doesn't have tenure, who may bounce around between several different jobs in the course of their lifetime, has to be realistic about what those reward systems are going to be, for better or for worse.

Secondly, echoing a theme I've already made, I think people entering the field now have to be much more closely geared towards the structures of interdisciplinary collaboration that are transforming the academic business. All fields, including philosophy and philosophy of education, are going to have to be more collaborative and interdisciplinary if they are going to survive. That doesn't mean losing the disciplinary core, or identity of what we do: we can still go to conferences like PES or PESA, where we can talk to other people within that little tribe. But if those are the only people we're talking to, or writing for, we're going to be in trouble, and our field is going to be in trouble. I think there are intellectual skills, but also personal dispositions that enable folks to be more collaborative and interdisciplinary.

I tell all my advisees in my programme, ‘You’re not going to get a job like mine probably, where you have the luxury of being a philosopher of education 24 hours a day, 7 days a week’. They are going to be in departments with non-philosophers, who are going to be asking questions about the usefulness and relevance of the work they do, and they are going to have to come up with answers. And it can’t just be ‘leave me alone to do my work’. That’s not going to be good for the individual, and it’s not going to be good for the field. I think folks entering this field need to realise that the field they are going to be working in, and building, and contributing to, over the next several decades is going to look very different from how the field has been in the last several decades.

Georgina: We just don’t know what it’s going to look like, do we?

Nicholas: Well, some of you are going to be inventing it, that’s what has to happen. It has to be invented in a context that is non-solipsistic, that is realistic about the larger context of higher education. When I talk about collaborative and interdisciplinary, I don’t just mean working with colleagues in the School of Education. It may be those colleagues are in engineering, or information science, or foreign languages, or other fields outside the schools of education, because while we live within a department within a college, we also live within a university. What really is invigorating my philosophical work is the ways I’m interacting with colleagues in technology, for example, and many of those aren’t in the School of Education, they’re in other parts of the university. Folks in education have sometimes been slow to reach out and build those kinds of collaborative and interdisciplinary relationships. That has implications for publishing too, because it suggests that publishing in education journals, narrowly construed, may not be where some of our work actually reaches its rightful audience. We have to think about that.

Georgina: So we may be publishing in engineering journals, medical journals, things like that?

Nicholas: Medical journals, certainly, and technology journals. They’re educational questions—and there are a lot of journals that publish work related to educational questions, which are not necessarily the professional journals of the field of education. It’s not either/or, but...

Georgina: It’s part of that diversification, isn’t it?

Nicholas: It is part of that. I also think schools of education themselves need to be more closely aligned with larger intellectual trends in their campuses. Take engineering—I think there is a lot of work for collaborations between engineers and educators. I work with a lot of engineers, and I see constant reference and relevance for what they’re thinking about and working on, to things that we think about in the field of education, and vice versa.

Georgina: The EDG (Editorial Development Group) was started by Michael Peters as the Editor of *EPAT* for the purpose of what might be called ‘editorial education’. Do you have any thoughts about this?

Nicholas: One of the things I’ve done with the journal here, ever since I took it over, is that we had a regular meeting of what we called the ‘*Educational Theory* discussion group’. I brought papers that were being considered for the journal—it was all done anonymously, we respected the

principles of anonymous reviewing. And we made copies of the article and distributed them to a group of students and a few faculty, who would meet once every couple of weeks or so, throughout the year. I would say to them, 'OK, you are the reviewers of this paper, what do you think?' The students enormously valued this experience. These have been some of the most enjoyable educational sessions I have ever run. They have many benefits. One is: very few students have the chance to look behind the curtain of the academic publishing business, to see how journals actually operate, how review processes operate, how editors think and evaluate work. Certainly there are very rare opportunities for students to be part of that process. That is something valuable in terms of their professional development and socialisation to see and understand something that many students, and even many faculty, never get to see from the inside.

Number two, now that we've been doing this for a long time, some of those people are now themselves editors. Their apprenticeships started with us and working with the journal here, and being part of that process.

Number three, when students are reading work as a reviewer or as an editor, they are seeing the work through a different lens than the way in which they read work in a normal classroom. Clearly doctoral students are reading articles all the time, but they are not reading them with the eye of an editor, or a reviewer. So that's important. It helps them to develop better writing skills themselves, because they will look at a piece and say, you know, the middle part of this is murky, and wasn't clearly explained. This is being done as a collaborative effort, with maybe eight to twelve people in the room, and you say, well, let's talk about that, how could that argument have been made clearer, could parts have been cut out, how would you express it? So they start thinking the way an editor thinks, which is not just 'I didn't like this' or 'I didn't agree with this', but how could it have been made better? What were some of the strengths and weaknesses of the writing style or the mode of expression, and what specific feedback would I have given the author about how to improve their article? Nothing has improved my writing as much as being an editor, and seeing what works and what doesn't work in other people's writing. I think I'm a pretty good writer, I certainly have become a better writer as a result of being an editor, and I want my students to be exposed to that as well.

The fourth benefit to the students is that as prospective writers and publishers themselves someday, it's really useful for them to see what the typical submission to a journal looks like when it's first submitted. Usually they only see things when they've been reviewed, revised multiple times, edited, proofread, and approved, and they look at the final product and say 'that's really good, I don't know if I could do something that polished'. But the author couldn't do something quite that polished without the multiple steps of review and revision, and editing that we helped with, that took that initial piece of maybe flawed work and made it better. And when they see what that raw material looks like, before the many steps it goes through, it becomes much more approachable, and they start to think, 'I could do this, I could do better than this'. When we are looking at the final journal we are seeing only the top ten to 20% of what gets submitted, and it has been polished. The discussion group work de-mystifies the process and makes it much more approachable for them. So in all of these ways it is useful for students. The participation in these sessions, which are not graded, not evaluated, it's totally a voluntary thing, shows the energy and the enthusiasm. It's been popular for the entire 20 years I've been the editor.

Georgina: How would you handle reviewer comments that were too harsh, or emotively worded?

Nicholas: Let me start with what reviewing is about. Most people think the function of reviewers is to vote in and vote out which papers get to be published and which don't. I don't know if I'm typical of editors—I can only tell you how I did it. I didn't need the reviewers to tell me whether something was publishable or not. I read everything when it came in, and with a pretty high degree of reliability I could have told you, not only from my first reading, but sometimes within the first few pages on my first reading, whether something was ever going to appear in the journal, or not. I must have read more than 2000 papers in the time I was editing the journal, and became pretty good at detecting what even has the potential of turning into something good, or not. I didn't need the reviewers to tell me that.

What I needed the reviewers for is to give me, and the authors, constructive feedback on how the work could be made better. That's what I think reviewers are for. This is what we tell our reviewers: it's not a vote. I've published things reviewers didn't like, and I've rejected things reviewers did like. It's not a vote—I'm the editor, I'm deciding what gets into the journal or not. Not to exaggerate that power, but that's my responsibility. The reviewers give me feedback, and I almost always agree with their feedback, but it's not a vote. I need the reviewers to tell me, does this have potential, could it be made better? If it is work in a theoretical field I'm not as conversant with, is this good work of this particular type? Are there authors or texts this author should be familiar with, and should read, that I personally don't know about? The reviewers cover many fields and sub-disciplines and literatures—I can't possibly be familiar with all of them. So I tell my reviewers that their work is about giving me and the authors constructive feedback. And I think if you tell them that, they write their reviews in different ways. Another aspect is that some people think their function as a reviewer is to show how much smarter they are than the primary author. I understand that—when I was young I probably played into it myself. We can be a very competitive field, especially, but not only, among men. Reviewing sometimes plays into that, where it's really about ego games of reviewers, building themselves up and putting down authors. I try to advise my reviewers away from that way of writing and expressing themselves. Criticisms can be vigorous: they can be tough. I'm all for that—we're in the academic business, it's a tough business. But even criticisms need to be framed in a constructive way, because if your attitude is, 'how can this be made better?' then you're going to approach that process differently from saying 'this is a piece of crap and a waste of time'. If someone really thinks that, that's fine, they can tell me that, as the editor, but I'm not going to send that to the author. That doesn't tell the author anything useful.

Georgina: That's why there are the 'comments to author' and 'comments to editor'?

Nicholas: Yes, that's one of the functions of it. Reviewers can sometimes say things to the editor that are much blunter than is appropriate for the author, and that's fine, I welcome that. That's useful knowledge to me, that's not useful information for the author.

So, going back to the question of how I pick reviewers—I want people who have high standards, who are rigorous and demanding, but also fair-minded and respectful. There are some very smart

people in our field who I wouldn't want to have as reviewers, because they are just too insulting and snarky, and inflexible, and that's not useful to me.

Second, I want reviewers who can read work that they might disagree with, but still try to find a way to help the author make their argument better. I think people often confuse this. They confuse whether I agree with something, or whether I share a particular disciplinary or theoretical orientation, with whether it's good work of that type. I think it's a skill that I respect in my reviewers to be able to say, 'Look, I don't really work in this area—I don't really do poststructural feminist theory, or whatever it might be, but of this type, I've read work that is more convincing, and here's how this piece could be made better—of that type or genre.' To be able to read a piece internally—not uncritically, but internally, as opposed to saying, 'Well, I don't do poststructural feminist work, so I don't have anything to say about this article' is another talent I look for in my reviewers. Finally, I want people who can manage to be critical but also respectful—who are rigorous and demanding, but not insulting. Some people can, but some simply can't handle that.

Georgina: How do you set up a line of communication with your reviewers?

Nicholas: Unlike other journals we have a review panel of 40 people, who have a four-year term. Each year, ten go on, ten come off. Our reviewers are a regular pool, people who I pick: I invite them and work with them. Almost all the reviewing goes to this pool of people. So for that 4-year period, they are pretty busy. Occasionally I send things to other reviewers—especially past reviewers, or people I bring back on again after they've been off for a while. So it works because I'm selecting them, and I send them a letter outlining what I want in my review. Or sometimes I give the reviewers feedback, saying things like, 'this review was really helpful and here's why'. I am consciously educating and training the reviewers. Some journals seem to treat everybody in the field as their review panel, which means as an academic you may receive an article for review from a journal that you've never even read before. I like having a set of house reviewers who know me, and I know them. That allows me to be much more trusting of the reviewers. I wouldn't want to edit a journal where I'm sending articles out to strangers, hoping to get a good review and having to deal with whatever they sent back. The house reviewers know what I expect, and over that four-year period they get socialised into the *Ed. Theory* way we do things (**interview ends**).

Conclusion

Burbules in this interview speaks with characteristic generosity from his vast knowledge and experience of journal editing and university life. His remarks highlight the intricate interrelationships between technological advances, personal ethics and academic excellence in scholarship and publishing across the disciplines. He pinpoints both the qualitative differences between educational and scientific research publications, and the value placed on clear thinking that ensures that 'what philosophers do' has value, regardless of any changes now and in the future. Burbules encourages us as academics to seek opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration and, in the process, to practice a form of philosophy of education that is useful and relevant to academics in other disciplines, and to society at large.

For me as an early-career academic, the EDG provided my first opportunity for collegial dialogue about the business of reviewing and having one's journal articles reviewed. One learns by doing—

by submitting one's own articles, and accepting invitations from journal editors to review—but this is often a solitary undertaking, with little guidance and no discussion. How, under these circumstances, can we assess the quality of our own work as reviewers? From this interview, I gained valuable learnings, and a fundamentally different view of the purpose and ethics of reviewing. As an experienced journal editor, Burbules' perspective on submitted manuscripts is the opposite of the fault-finding approach one reads about (Comer & Schwartz, 2014) and which I had previously encountered, to some extent, in reviews of my own journal articles, and in EDG discussions.

Burbules' descriptions of the process of collaborative reviewing he led with the *Educational Theory* discussion group were interesting to compare with my experiences of co-leading collaborative reviews under the auspices of the EDG. The EDG used an online discussion forum to share manuscripts, reviews and comments within the group of ten early-career academics and doctoral students. Reviewing this way was a slow process, with limited discussion. Most of the substantive comments posted to the group highlighted flaws of the papers. The face-to-face method, where everyone sits around a table discussing a paper, clearly generates richer dialogue, yet in the absence of such opportunities, online groups such as the EDG are extremely valuable.

Burbules is a world leader and role model of a strategic approach to editorial education, necessary to secure the future of educational publishing and scholarship in times of rapid turbulent change, and as new forms of scholarship emerge in an academy transformed by neoliberalism, globalisation and cyber-reality.

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