



On the Autonomy of Educational Studies as a Second-Level Discipline

Tomasz Leś¹

Accepted: 22 February 2022 / Published online: 28 March 2022
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature B.V. 2022

Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the disciplinary status of Educational Studies, which both in the theoretical discourse and in the practice of this area is far from unambiguous. The issue is relevant not only for theoretical reasons but also for practical and social ones. This is because the status of Educational Studies, by having a decisive impact on the very understanding and nature of studies in education, at least in part may impact changes in educational practice. Two main models of Educational Studies can be differentiated (the Anglo-American model and the Continental model), with additional variation within these models. Among the terms most commonly used in discussion of the disciplinary status of Educational Studies, frequent mention is made of the autonomy that exists in various versions (as in the Continental model) and of interdisciplinarity (as in the Anglo-American model). This article proposes a new way of understanding this status, which I call the autonomy of Educational Studies as a second-level discipline, which includes aspects of both of the previously mentioned models (with a predominance of the Continental model), yet also adds certain modifications (among other things concerning the understanding of disciplinarity). In the course of my argumentation, I will conduct a comparative analysis of both traditions, and subsequently justify the proposed thesis (making reference both to notional questions and pragmatic/scientific questions), and finally briefly indicate potential problems which may be generated by this model.

Keywords Educational philosophy · Educational studies · Philosophy of social sciences · Disciplinarity · Autonomous discipline

✉ Tomasz Leś
tomasz.les@uj.edu.pl

¹ Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Education, Jagiellonian University, 31-135 Krakow, Barorego 12, Cracow, Poland

Introduction

The discussion on the scientific and academic status of Educational Studies (ES)¹ took place mainly in the early phase of the formation of the field and later, without clear continuity, in the works of theorists and philosophers as well as empirical researchers dealing with the issue of education. Nonetheless, it has never achieved a status sufficient to formulate an unambiguous position. This state of affairs has resulted in part from: (a) historical and geopolitical circumstances which influenced the formulation of the theory and practice of ES research; (b) the fact that in the analyses of the issue mentioned there was not uncommonly a failure to take into account distinctions in traditions of conducting ES resulting from the circumstances mentioned in (a); but most of all, (c) the specific nature of education itself, that is its multidimensional character (including ethical and normative aspects), which generate different ways of understanding this notion, particularly in the context of scientific study.

This degree of variation in ways of understanding ES allow for the formulation of two models, namely those originating from Anglo-American traditions and those from Continental traditions (among others, Biesta 2011; Friesen 2019, 2020; Furlong 2013; Zogla 2018; Stephens 2009).² At the same time, it must be made clear that within these models (particularly within the Anglo-American) there is an additional element of ambiguity in the understanding and practice of ES. Despite insignificant differences in the research subject field in question (education), within each of these traditions studies on education take on a different form; certainly, there is not as high a level of unambiguity as in other fields, such as for instance psychology, sociology or philosophy.

In the most general terms, in the Anglo-American tradition, ES does not function as an autonomous scientific discipline, a discipline on its own rights, one with its own defined role in the academic structure and the consequences which this entails (such as its own departments, institutes, financing, academic degrees). The situation is different in the case of the Continental tradition, where ES is treated as an autonomous discipline along with the other social sciences. In practice, this means among other things that research on

¹ In the article, I use the term 'Educational Studies' as the name of an area of research on education both in the Anglo-American tradition and the Continental tradition. Such an approach does not highlight the important differences between these traditions, however it is justified by the fundamental similarity in these traditions, i.e. the similarity in terms of the area of study that is education. Apart from this, for pragmatic reasons, this allows for brief and collective reference and for the terminology which functions in the various traditions (e.g. educational studies, educational research, and derivative terms, occurring in various languages, from the German *Pädagogik*) to be harmonised into a single form. 'Educational Studies' here means simply research concerning education; if the term is meant to refer to a concrete tradition, then I specify so, using terms such as 'Educational Studies in the Anglo-American/Continental tradition'. Readers interested in a detailed discussion of the differences between the traditions discussed here are referred to Friesen (2019, 2020) and Biesta (2011).

² It should be stressed that such a division into traditions is a model approach, and as such it presents these in a somewhat simplified, generalised way. Additionally, not all countries on the continent of Europe can be assigned to the Continental tradition. Nevertheless, all Anglo-Saxon countries can be included in the Anglo-American tradition; „These two constructions should themselves be understood as constructed. They are, in a sense, ideal types meant to make sense of differences between the ways in which the study of education has developed in Britain and Germany (and in both cases these developments have impacted on the organisation of the academic study of education in other countries and contexts). [...] the two traditions are, to a certain degree, incommensurable as they operate on the basis of fundamentally different assumptions and ideas. This is neither to suggest that communication between the two is impossible, nor to suggest that the two traditions have developed independently from each other.” (Biesta 2011, p. 176).

education in the former tradition – in contrast to the latter – is conducted mainly by representatives of the fields of psychology, sociology, and philosophy (as in this tradition it is impossible to obtain, with certain exceptions, a degree in Educational Studies), frequently in collaboration with, for example, defined university structures and in this way take on the character of inter-/multi-/trans-disciplinary studies. These differences, as I have previously mentioned – resulting as they do from different traditions relating to the different contexts in which they originated and differing understandings of education itself – impact the somewhat differing ways of practising ES, for instance in terms of organisation of research work, scientific and academic status (basing this research in the structures of the organisation of science), and also the types of research questions posed and manner of addressing these questions.

In this article:

1. A comparative analysis of two models of the conduct of Educational Studies is undertaken, and on the basis of this
2. The thesis is presented and justified that the model based on the Continental tradition, after the implementation of the proposed modifications (in this paper referred to as Educational Studies as an autonomous second-level discipline), has certain advantages over the Anglo-American model in terms of performance of the tasks which can be set in studies on education.

A thus modified model recognises ES as an autonomous discipline despite the fact that it has been constructed on other disciplines and, due to the fact that it treats education in a more complementary fashion, it: (a) highlights additional dimensions of education which are treated in a marginal fashion in other models; (b) allows for studies of greater depth; (c) provides greater cohesion among analyses performed; (d) allows for more effective collaboration between researchers dealing with the issue; and (e) facilitates more appropriate responses to practical problems associated with educational challenges of the future.

In later parts of this article I will present a comparative characterisation of the models discussed here, indicate additional conditioning factors which involve the particular differences that occur, and subsequently present argumentation in favour of the these mentioned earlier. This thesis will refer back both to notional issues and to pragmatic and academic issues. Finally, I will present conclusions in which I indicate selected issues involving the argumentation proposed and raised by the previously conducted analyses.

Two Traditions in Educational Studies

The Anglo-American tradition discussed here, including Great Britain, the USA and Australia, in the historical sense is rooted in the thought of the first empirically oriented psychologists (such as Edward Lee Thorndike), sociologists (such as Enoch George Payne) and the philosophy of pragmatism (represented by, among others, W. James and J. Dewey) (Hammersley 2008; Lagemann 2002; Knox 1971; Bridges 2017), and was established later by such outstanding empirical researchers and theorists of educational research as J. Piaget, J. Bruner, I. Scheffler, R. S. Peters and P. Hirst. The first studies on education (conducted at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) were by definition practical in nature and led to the construction of tests and measurements applied to intelligence, personality and attitudes, which was intended to facilitate the work of teachers. The practical and

empirical nature of these studies was also suggested by philosophers dealing with the issue of education. Dewey, for example, postulated that this research should remain within the field of psychology (Knox 1971) as a separate subdiscipline known as educational psychology. At that time, an important role in the formation of ideas relating to research on education was also being played by periodicals dealing with education which began to arise at the time, such as the *American Journal of Education* (Zahler 2016) as well as educational institutions, such as the laboratory-schools initiated by Dewey, where new hypotheses were tested for their impact on increasing the effectiveness of teaching (Hildebrand 2018).

It was more or less in the mid-twentieth century that a great impact was achieved by new research trends which had previously been confined to the periphery (Lagemann 1997; Floud and Halsey 1958; Knox 1971). On the one hand, those which postulated a retreat from the practicality and social commitment of research (Floud and Halsey 1958). This was apparent among others in the sociology of education, which while remaining (as psychology did) an empirical and quantitative type of research, also expanded the spectrum of methods applied in statistical research. This change in the practical and social commitment of the research was linked with the recognition of education as “intrinsically worthy of scientific investigation by sociologists interested in problems of comparative social structure and dynamics as against matters of educational policy or human betterment” (Floud and Halsey 1958, p. 167). On the other hand, methodologies began to develop in studies on education which grew from a critique of the quantitative paradigm (primarily as a reaction to its excessive superficiality), where researchers, for example as part of action research, became practitioners of education themselves, inclined towards social change (Knox 1971). It is worth adding that this was also a period of strengthening of relations between representatives of various disciplines dealing with education, resulting in a greater interdisciplinarity in the studies conducted (Lagemann 1997).

The second half of the twentieth century in turn witnessed the development of theoretical (philosophical) research on education and the creation of a philosophy of education. This was initiated and developed by, among others, P. Hirst, I. Scheffler, D. J. O’Connor, and R. S. Peters (Siegel et al. 2018; Noddings 2015). At first, the philosophy of education, being under the influence of analytical philosophy, generated notional and non-normative analyses. Understood thus, it was also an attempt to retreat from the practical and social commitment of theoretical analyses (Carr 2003a, b). Later, over-representation of this approach was limited to the benefit, among others, of feminism, critical theory, or due to the development of a historical conception of education grounded in liberalism or progressivism. Here it is worth noting that the foremost representatives of the philosophy of education did not recognise ES as an autonomous discipline, reducing it to the role of an application of the theories of philosophy, psychology or sociology (including R. S. Peters, P. Hirst, R. Dearden) to issues related to education, strengthening the existing status quo of such research (McCulloch 2002, 2003; Bridges 2017). It should be added that concurrently with the development of a stream of research focused around psychology, sociology and philosophy, historical research also developed (as part of the history of education) (Hodysh 1970). Currently, these should also be included in the complex of disciplines which have constituted the contemporary understanding of research on education within the traditions discussed here (Bridges 2017; Knox 1971).³

³ The state of affairs in which ES is conducted in the interdisciplinary perspective outlined above which does not afford this research the status of scientific uniqueness is also illustrated by the fact that in the tradition discussed, apart from certain exceptions (for example, the Department of Education at Oxford University and at York, or the School of Education at Harvard University), academic titles are not awarded in education. This does not mean, however, that prestigious universities do not allow studies in education (as

The Continental tradition developed ES into the form of an autonomous discipline of science (for example, in Germany as *Pädagogik*). This means that, among other things, it functions as a distinct discipline with the structure of an academic discipline (mainly within the social sciences), it forms its own subject, with its own research aims and methods, it has its own departments, faculties and institutes dedicated to scientific academic work in the field, academic degrees are awarded in the field, and the subject is offered as a major at universities. This holds true – with minor variations in the degree of autonomy and scope of the subject – in France, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Lithuania, Poland, Czech and Greece, in addition to Germany (Kansanen 2006; Zogla 2018; Bridges 2017; Lagemann 2002). In a historical and substantive sense, the model discussed here comprises a continuation of the thought of the German originators of ES as a discipline, including Kant (in the work *Über Pädagogik*), and later in the works of such authors as Schleiermacher, Herbart, Humboldt, Dilthey and Nohl. In the initial stages, ES, still lacking a formalised institutional position, was most closely tied to philosophy. For Herbart, it was a part of philosophy, namely practical philosophy (Biesta 2011). In this context it was important, however, to show the necessity of conducting systematic research on teaching using, on the one hand, empirically derived theories borrowed from psychology, and on the other hand referring to ethics. Basically, the ES model initiated by these forerunners, despite the influence of the Anglo-American tradition and its empirical nature, does not differ significantly from the contemporary model occurring in those countries where ES functions as an autonomous scientific discipline. Firstly, it retains its philosophical outline (apart from the empirical one), and secondly, in line with the suggestions of Herbart, it focuses on several main subdisciplines. Nowadays, in most countries where the tradition of research on education is based on German thought, research is focused mainly on such areas (Zogla 2018; Bridges 2017) as the philosophical basis of education (*philosophical pedagogy*); the psychological and sociological foundations of education (*psychological pedagogy, social pedagogy*); the theory of teaching (*didactics*); and the history of education and the history of pedagogical thought (*historical pedagogy*).⁴

Indeterminate Status of the Disciplinary Autonomy of Educational Studies

A cursory analysis of the models of research on education will suffice to formulate two distinct versions – a Continental version based on the idea of scientific autonomy, and an Anglo-American one based on the idea of interdisciplinarity. However, a detailed analysis reveals noteworthy differences within these two models (mainly with regard

Footnote 3 (continued)

part of a Department, Faculty, or Institute of Education) with the possibility of obtaining a preliminary or Master's degree. The programme of such courses of study basically overlaps with the characteristics of ES as in the Continental tradition. Leading international periodicals have been established on the basis of the tradition discussed here, and similarly they represent a broad range of issues related to education, addressing issues which are strictly empirical, historical or even philosophical. It should be stressed, however, that there is a noticeable specialisation, as a general rule assuming one of the perspectives mentioned.

⁴ For example, in Scandinavian countries where the initial posts for professors of pedagogics appear as early as 1852 (Finland) and, next, in 1908 (Sweden), 1909 (Norway), and 1955 (Denmark), pedagogics comprises six basic subdisciplines (Kansanen 2006): philosophy of education; psychology of education; sociology of education; didactics; history of education; and comparative pedagogics.

to the latter model), as well as semantic differences regarding the notion of education which appears in the two traditions. The comments and views expressed in the following section of this article play an important role in the argumentation which is formulated in the subsequent section.

- a) The context in which the expression ‘educational studies’ is used is significant for the understanding of the notion and to a certain degree influences the way that ES is practised. Namely, in the Anglo-America tradition, ‘education’ involves mainly various forms of action which aim to develop knowledge and skills, primarily within the context of formal education. In turn, in German, the language in which the process of the formation of ES began, sparking the Continental tradition, the equivalent terms for the English-language ‘education’ are two related terms: *Bildung* and *Erziehung* (Biesta 2011; Horlacher 2004; Bleicher 2006; Guilherme 2019). The former, briefly, is associated to a greater degree with the formation of the intellect, while the latter is associated with moral development. Significantly, despite the fact that these two terms cover a scope of meaning similar to ‘education’, they are firstly not so closely linked with an environment of formal education, and secondly they have a clear ethical and normative streak; the teleological aspect of education is highlighted here. Education based on the Continental conception thus takes us beyond the realm of formal education, teaching and learning and into the realm of morality, values, ideals and social and moral norms.

The differences in the understanding of these notions in the two traditions discussed here are reflected in differences in the understanding and practice of ES. On the one hand, as in the Anglo-American tradition, described as “objective, as it is based on a particular object of study (education)” (Biesta 2011, p. 188) “the field of education is mainly understood in terms of schooling and school education” (Biesta p.180), with the leading role played by studies on methods, means and processes associated with learning and teaching (and thus with the dominance of empirical research, mainly psychological research), while on the other hand, as in the Continental tradition which at its heart (the German field of *Pädagogik*) is described as “interested, as it is based on a particular value-laden interest” (Biesta 2011, p. 188), with an additional, important role played by philosophical research associated with, among other things, ethical aspects or the aims of education (Biesta 2010; Friesen 2019, 2020; Stepkowski 2019). It would seem that the difference in the understanding of ‘education’ discussed here has played – and continues to play – a role in the fact that ES enjoys a different status in each of the two traditions. Namely, in the Continental tradition, there is a clearly visible normative meaning content to education, one which may be treated as a particular feature of education allowing it to be easily reduced to a description, which in turn may be based on non-normative social sciences (e.g. psychology and sociology). The recognition of education in terms of *Bildung* and *Erziehung* as the object of study of ES may lead to the conviction that as a notion which is partially normative with reference to the practical and teleological spheres, it possesses a certain specific nature which makes it impossible to reduce ES to other social and humanistic disciplines.

- b) The scope of the term ‘educational studies’ in the Anglo-American tradition is not clearly defined. It is customarily identified with the sum of the scopes of the fields of educational psychology, sociology, philosophy and history. However, in recent years, as in the early stages of the formation of the research area, the dominant element was the psychological approach (McCulloch 2002). Thus, ES is sometimes identified with educational psychology, occasionally leading to it being given the status of a subdiscipline

of psychology. In this understanding, educational philosophy, history and sociology remain at least partly beyond the scope of educational studies. The status of didactics is also unclear: in the Continental tradition it is a subdiscipline of ES; in the Anglo-American tradition, in contrast, it is a part of the practical psychology of education, a field comprising practical applications (rules, suggestions) of psychological theories (Kansanen 2006).

- c) In the literature of the subject, various terms are used to define the academic and scientific status of ES (Hammersley 2008; Bridges 2017; Zogla 2018; Elkind 1999; McCulloch 2002; Palaiologou 2010; Biesta 2011; Tibble 1966). In general, in line with the previously mentioned comments, these can be divided into two groups:

G1 Which does not recognise the autonomy of ES and in which, apart from the term ‘interdisciplinarity’, other related (though not identical) terms are used, including ‘transdisciplinarity’, ‘multi-disciplinarity’, ‘post-disciplinarity’, ‘second-level disciplinarity’, ‘field of research’ and ‘field of knowledge’.

G2 Which recognises the autonomy of ES, and in which the terms used to describe its status are ‘discipline’, ‘autonomous discipline’ and ‘discipline in its own right’ or, in direct reference to research on education, ‘science of education’, ‘science of pedagogy’, or by making use of the German term *Pädagogik*.

The description of ES in accordance with G1 suggests a disciplinary nature similar to such interdisciplinary fields as political science fields which are recognised as dependent fields of study established in the practice of academic structures, not so much due to the separate character of their aims, methods or research area as due to other factors, such as social and practical aspects or the pragmatics of academic organisation. Each of the terms mentioned is justified based on partially divergent conceptions of the organisation of science. Here, a further division can be proposed:

G1.1 Interdisciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity, field of research, field of knowledge, assuming a rather traditional, historically grounded approach to the division of disciplines, in which each such separate discipline has its own aims, methods and separate object of study. Seen in this light, ES at least partially fails to fulfil these conditions and for this reason cannot be assigned its own autonomy; thus, if educational studies is not a discipline, and nothing apart from disciplines may exist within the structures of the organisation of science, then educational studies must remain a part of other existing disciplines.

G1.2 Trans-disciplinarity, post-disciplinarity, second-level disciplinarity, by placing educational studies outside (above) existing disciplines, at least partially breaks with the traditional division of scientific disciplines. It has been pointed out that this does not take into account many problems which occur, mainly the social sciences and humanities which artificially introduce borders (Elkind 1999). Such limitations do not allow for a complementary approach to the subject, which remains within the area of interest of a given discipline. ES is intended to meet this condition of multidimensional studies and thus become modern and more relevant, being a comprehensive and complementary response to complex social problems. In such academic structures, ES operates within traditional divisions, yet with an unclear disciplinary status, constructed on other disciplines.

A description of ES in accordance with G2 suggests its recognition in terms of disciplinary status as similar to psychology and sociology. However, this thesis is not accepted in every interpretation of G2. Two basic subgroups of interpretation can be differentiated here:

G2.1 as a discipline is its weaker version in which, on the one hand, the academic status in the form of structures, academic degrees, etc. are recognised, yet on the other hand the autonomy of an independent methodology, set of aims, or subject area is rejected. In this version, ES is established in the academic structure, yet in a structure that is constituted by other social and humanistic disciplines;

G2.2 as a discipline in its stronger version in which ES, due to it having its own methodology, aims and research area, is autonomous, and despite the fact that it makes use of the theories of other disciplines, it is independent of them.

In the Continental tradition, G2.2 is firmly established, and in practice this is the most common form. G2.1 is, apart from infrequent occurrences, mainly formulated in the discourse about the scientific and academic status of ES. Firstly, even in the context of the Anglo-American tradition, there are scientific institutions which suggest full autonomy (universities with faculties of education which award academic degrees in this area), despite the fact that they reject the scientific autonomy of ES (in terms of separate aims, methods and research area). Secondly, in the contemporary Continental discourse, there is no shortage of voices arguing that G2.2 is inadequate, and thus that in the future ES will not be conducted in this form. The situation therefore arises in which, on the one hand, an established tradition suggests autonomy, yet on the other hand the discourse partially rejects this autonomy. In such a situation, we are left with academic autonomy but not scientific autonomy (G2.1), in contrast to full autonomy as in G2.2.

- d) The image of ES in the Continental model is made problematic for reasons including the impact on it of the Anglo-American tradition. Increasingly common reference is being made to the lack of autonomy of ES as understood in this way and to the necessity of incorporating it into the complex of other disciplines (based on the Anglo-American model), primarily those which are empirically oriented (psychology, sociology) (Winkler 2006; Biesta 2011; Benner 2005). It is argued that a transformation into another model would to a greater degree satisfy – mainly due to the use of quantitative methodology – the conditions of scientific status. Such is the situation in, among other places, Germany, where in recent decades there has appeared a distinct trend towards the conduct of ES as empirical research. This does not mean, however, the loss of its disciplinary autonomy nor does it mean that there are not clear calls for a return to a strict association with philosophy (mainly ethics and anthropology) (Friesen 2020, Biesta 2010, Benner 2005, Yosef-Hassidim 2018, Guilhermen 2019). Here it is worthwhile to add that the established tradition of subordinating research dealing with education to an autonomously understood ES has led to a state where few researchers outside the discipline undertake studies involving education. This state of affairs, if there is a retreat from the autonomy of ES in the Continental tradition, may generate the problem of the partial abandonment of research areas which had previously been studied by representatives of ES.

Similarly, voices calling for a modification of the current status of ES also appear in the Anglo-American tradition. Some theorists favour their scientific and institutional establishment, preferring consolidation (Lagemann 2002; Elkind 1999; Zogla 2018). Most often, this means that research in ES is not considered a fully autonomous discipline (G2.2); instead it is established with the status of an inter-discipline or post-discipline, in accordance with the previously discussed model of weak-version autonomy (G2.1), i.e. with its own academic structure but without full autonomy. The arguments presented in this context are various, but can be generalised as follows:

- (i) Education constitutes an important element of social practices;

- (ii) The multidimensional nature of education demands an approach which takes into account the establishment of various disciplines (social and humanistic);
- (iii) This can be achieved from the position of these disciplines.
This, however, results in, among other things, the following:
- (iv) Lack of data flow between these disciplines;
- Problems with the complementarity of the conceptual apparatus;
 - Lack of a wholistic approach to the issue;
 - Limitation of possibilities for effective impact on educational practice; therefore:
- (v) Actions should be taken to institutionalise the field of study with the rights of a discipline (as G2.1), which will lessen the risk of the occurrence of some of these problems.
- e) Despite the fact that in the substantive sense the research subjects discussed in the two traditions largely overlap (this concerns the phenomenon of education), in the practical sense (in the practice of research), there are certain noticeable differences. This means that there are practical reasons which allow for the broadening or narrowing of the scope of phenomena studied in one tradition vis-a-vis the other. This is despite the fact that in both cases, the object of scientific study resulting by definition is similar. In the context discussed here, one can speak of a partially different scope of studied phenomena. In the Anglo-American tradition, ES need not meet conditions imposed by the fact of being an autonomous scientific discipline. As a consequence, anyone can be called an educational researcher who, for instance, deals with the neurobiological correlates of the processes of learning in school conditions, or with the transmission of social inequality in education, or with the philosophical assumptions of teaching programmes, or with the historical conditions for the formation of educational institutions. Recognition of this results from the realisation that such a researcher deals with education from the perspective of a defined discipline (respectively: psychology, sociology, philosophy, and history). In the Continental context, these are often studies which extend beyond the framework of a given discipline. This means that:
- (e1) The scopes of problems treated in both ES traditions do not entirely overlap; there are issues which are treated as matters for ES in the Anglo-American tradition which are not addressed in the Continental tradition⁵;
- (e2) in the Continental model, in the case when the scientific status of ES and associated prestige is weaker than other disciplines, this may cause it to be denied the right to study issues which can at the same time be studied by other disciplines of a higher prestige and unassailable disciplinary status. Therefore, to the extent that other disciplines do not undertake such studies which are important for education from their own position, these issues remain unresearched;
- (e3) in the Continental model, ES partly remains under the influence of new theories which directly or indirectly concern education, and which occur in other disciplines, generating the problem of the effective transmission of these theories into the realm of ES (for example, the evolutionary condition of teaching, the cognitive science of education, or philosophical issues such as the problem of moral enhancement).

⁵ Some research problems undertaken in ES in the Continental tradition may be seen as crossing over into the field of, for example, psychology, and that by addressing these issues, ES is exceeding the limits of its dedicated area of study.

Educational Studies as a Second-Level Autonomous Discipline

With reference to the previously delineated typology of ES based on its disciplinary status, the subject may appear in the following variants:

- (V1) inter-/multi-disciplinary area of study (G1.1)
- (V2) trans/post/second level discipline (G1.2).
- (V3) discipline in the weak sense of the word (G2.1).
- (V4) discipline in the strong sense of the word (G2.2).

In the Anglo-American tradition, we see the subject positioned as (V1) with an insular tendency towards (V2) or (V3), while in the Continental tradition we see it positioned as (V4) with an insular tendency towards (V1), (V2) or (V3). In the context of this variety of positions regarding status – both between traditions and to a certain extent within traditions – the question can be posed as to which variant of status should be assumed by ES.⁶

In variants (V1) and (V2), ES is not established institutionally and, as follows, it is denied the status of a discipline. It may remain in academic structures in the form of the professional education of teachers, as a field of the practical application of psychology, sociology, philosophy and history. In variant (V3), it remains in academic structures on the basis of a discipline which, however, constitutes an organised form of the conduct of studies in the field of psychology, sociology, philosophy and history of education (conducted by representatives of these disciplines). In variant (V4), characteristic for the Continental tradition, the fact of its existence as an autonomous discipline is recognised, along with the consequences which follow (in terms of academic degrees, organisation and financing).

In the last case there occurs, however, the problem of the scope of potential research problems. In a natural way, this scope partly overlaps with an area which may be explored by representatives of other social and humanistic sciences. With the assumption of a traditional division of scientific disciplines, this may lead to such a severe restriction of the range of problems studied by ES that it becomes seen as a narrow and peripheral discipline.⁷ This state of affairs will only exacerbate its weak status in relation to other social and humanistic disciplines, and further restrict the research field until ES transforms into variant (V1), (V2) or (V3).

Any maintenance of ES in variant (V4) requires the de facto recognition of its multidimensional nature. By this, I understand that (a) the subject of the discipline in question, education, is multidimensional, that is, as a social phenomenon it is not dedicated to a single area of knowledge and can be phrased in both descriptive and normative terms, including in psychological, sociological, philosophical and historical terms; and (b) ES is entitled to study any of these aspects. As was previously mentioned, ES as it operates in the

⁶ In assessing the adequacy of this variant, I suggest taking into account the following criteria: (a) pragmatic – that is, the conditions, challenges, and current state of research on education; (b) definitive – that is, related to the definition requirements set before scientific disciplines; (c) objective – that is, related to the specifics of the object of research on education.

⁷ By this I mean that should ES (as it is understood in the Continental tradition) remain in this variant (W4), it may lead to a constriction of the field of research problems appropriate for it to study to the benefit of disciplines with a stronger academic status, such as psychology or sociology. In this situation, ES would have a low status vis-a-vis these disciplines, which as a result may lead to an abandonment of its autonomy; it would be difficult to identify research problems which could be addressed by ES while simultaneously not being able to be addressed by other disciplines. In terms of the organisational structure of academic institutions, to continue to maintain a discipline of marginal status, one which deals with a narrow scope of research problems, ones which moreover could be in large part taken over by other disciplines, would seem to be a proliferation of entities beyond what is necessary.

Continental tradition as an autonomous discipline in practice does not function in accord with these requirements. Its status is relatively low and it refrains from addressing certain areas – areas which it could study as they concern education⁸ – to the advantage of other disciplines (which further solidifies its position as a peripheral discipline with low prestige). Thus, in order to maintain variant (V4), changes must be made, among other things, in terms of:

- (a) The structure of organisation in the discipline itself;
- (b) The understanding of the specifics of the phenomenon of education and of other areas which fall within the scope of ES;
- (c) The understanding of a scientific discipline itself.

Therefore, variant (V4) may take on the following modified form:

(V4') recognition of ES as an autonomous discipline taking into account its multidimensional nature

In this variant, ES is understood as an autonomous second-level discipline, i.e. one which is constructed on other disciplines, and which by integrating knowledge (in the perspective of educational practice) derived from these disciplines, generates specific knowledge which is irreducible to any of these individual disciplines. This variant involves the partial rejection of the status quo which currently prevails in the Continental tradition, and thus the statement that although ES does not address (educational) issues of mental processes, or social, moral and historical conditions, it does operate within the scope of its competences. Otherwise, it would intrude into the scope of psychology, sociology, philosophy, or history. In this variant, due to its multidimensional nature and the necessity of conducting complex research, ES may conduct such research (although this requires the understanding of its formula to be modified). It becomes a theoretical and practical discipline which, due to the current and projected requirements of educational practice, creates knowledge from research based on the psychological, sociological, philosophical and historical aspects of education.

Taking into consideration the previously outlined variants of the status of pedagogics, I propose the following arguments in favour of (V4'):

- (A1) the argument of the multidimensional nature of pedagogics;
- (A2) the argument of the cognitive gap;
- (A3) the argument of the consolidation of knowledge about education;
- (A4) the argument of the erroneous separation of scientific disciplines.

Re. (A1) the argument of the multidimensional nature of pedagogics

This is an argument in favour of the thesis of the multidimensional nature of the subject matter of ES (regardless of whether it is to be an area of interdisciplinary study or an autonomous discipline); if ES is to conduct research in a complementary manner, it should do so in each of the aspects mentioned. ES understood in this way is thus a broad area of research and a discipline both in terms of the scope of study, methods applied, and research

⁸ For example, such as those previously mentioned, associated among others with questions relating to the neurobiological, psychological, philosophical, and historical conditions of the processes of learning/teaching.

problems which can be formulated within its framework, and the correct form of organisation for this is disciplinary autonomy.

The claim that the phenomenon of education is multidimensional is presumably not controversial. It can be justified by treating education as a social phenomenon which, like many others, is of necessity linked with psychological and sociological factors, as well as a host of others. It can also be seen as a theoretical construct, a second-level phenomenon, one constructed on processes of a lower order, which can be discussed using the language of, among others, psychology or sociology. If, therefore, some scientific discipline undertakes research in this area, it should take this multidimensional nature into account. This concerns not only ES, but can be generally applied to disciplines in the social sciences. To the extent that in the Anglo-American tradition ES cannot be denied its multidimensional nature, at least in the sense that it conducts research from the perspective of other disciplines (and therefore adopts a variety of perspectives), in the Continental tradition, for the reasons outlined earlier (the relatively low prestige of the discipline related to its crisis of identity), such restriction takes place. In both the former and the latter however, due to the fact that they deal with education (as a multidimensional phenomenon), there is not only (a) a descriptive and explanatory component, but also (b) a practical and normative one. The difference lies in the emphasis on description and explanation in the first case, and on practical and normative issues in the second.

The fact that the functions (a) and (b) are fulfilled indicates that regardless of its disciplinary status, ES is specific in relation to other disciplines. Every other discipline leads solely to the description and explanation of the phenomena it studies, for instance psychology does not answer questions such as how one should behave (in the ethical and normative sense), and sociology does not tell us what individual social groups should strive for. With regard to its descriptive and explanatory function, ES is similar to other social sciences, while in terms of its practicality and resulting normativeness, it is similar to philosophy (in particular to ethics). The fulfilment of both functions is one of the features which distinguish ES in relation to other disciplines when considered separately.

These aspects of practicality and normativeness in the case of ES are closely linked. If ES is to provide answers for practical questions and in this way generate practical knowledge (for example, in the form of suggestions for change in educational practice), then it must necessarily make reference to arrangements of an ethical and normative nature (Carr 2003a, b; Katz 2010; Peters 2015; Nucci 2001, O'Connor 1957).⁹ This is due to the fact that each individual practical suggestion is the consequence of another, more general philosophical and ethical norm, i.e. the result of ethical principles established within a given community. In this way, ES includes a significant philosophical and ethical element, meaning that it shares a common area with philosophy (ethics).

Additionally, in its practical function, it would appear to be the only one which attempts to answer serious questions related to educational practice, and which is expected to improve these practices. This entails not only a particular social responsibility for the field of research of ES, but also its relatively lesser research dynamics in relation to other disciplines. This practicality tied to normativeness of ES ensnares it in philosophical and ethical problems which make scientific progress impossible as it is understood in other social disciplines. This partly undermines the justification for comparisons and the reduction of ES to the previously mentioned disciplines.

⁹ In the Anglo-American tradition, normative and ethical analyses are carried out within the framework of educational theory and philosophy, as a rule treated as subdisciplines of the philosophy of education.

ES, therefore, due to the multidimensional nature of education, is difficult to isolate from its psychological, sociological, historical and philosophical-ethical context. This does not have to mean its reduction to these disciplines. On the contrary, because it realises simultaneously descriptive-explanatory functions and practical-normative functions, it can be understood as irreducible to these disciplines. It may thus be understood as a discipline which conducts research on education in its various aspects (related to description and explanation, as well as the generation of norms and values) for defined practical and normative purposes (involving the improvement of the practice of education). ES thus understood can weaken the claim that the lack of autonomy of ES arises from its lack of a defined subject area, aim, or particular approach to the research subject (McCullan 2002; Tibble 1971; Peters 1963/1980; Hirst 1983; Yosef-Hassidim 2018). The specific nature of ES may rest on the study of education, irreducible to other disciplines, for practical and normative purposes, and therefore in the value-laden interest of the objects of education. Furthermore, if we accept this thesis, it would seem that the appropriate organisational form for the conduct of such research is disciplinary autonomy, in which the multiplicity of aspects of education can be effectively addressed (by streamlining or complementarity).

This conclusion refers to the possible model of ES which is related, on the one hand, with the notion of education as a multidimensional phenomenon, and on the other hand with the fact – notwithstanding various accents in the different traditions – that both descriptive-explanatory and philosophical-ethical research is conducted. In neither of these traditions, however, is this model fully realised. In the Anglo-American tradition, there is no recognition of autonomy, while in the Continental tradition, although autonomy is recognised, in relation to the relatively low prestige of the discipline ES is seen as a peripheral discipline with aspirations to the status of psychology or sociology. For this reason, attempts to address the psychological or sociological aspects of education raise objections as the exploration of inappropriate research areas. However, for purely substantive reasons which have been outlined previously, there are reasons to characterise ES as a discipline which realises the idea of partially rejecting the artificial divisions which function within the social sciences, in line with the current trend to undertake multi-aspect studies. This conclusion should be treated as a potential characteristic of ES which, if realised, may achieve full disciplinary maturity.

Re. (A2) the argument of the cognitive gap

The argument claims that the rejection of the autonomy of ES generates the problem of an unrecognised and, as a result, unresearched area of study related to education. This position is based on the assumption that in the structure of the organisation of science, important research areas in scientific and practical-social terms should not be left unaddressed. This argument can be presented as follows:

- (i) ES as an autonomous discipline – as it is understood in the Continental tradition – is theoretical and practical in nature, meaning that it generates scientific knowledge in terms of the prospects of this knowledge for affecting educational practice;
- (ii) The reduction of ES to other disciplines causes education as a research problem to become an object of analysis from the perspective of each of the individual disciplines, thus from the perspective of psychology, sociology, history and philosophy;

- (iii) None of the disciplines listed in (ii), in line with their declared aims, can undertake studies with a practical and educational perspective;
- (iv) Therefore, the rejection of the autonomy of pedagogics (as it is understood in the Continental model) means that some important scientific and practical research areas remain undeveloped;
- (v) This, in line with our accepted assumptions, is an undesirable state of affairs; therefore:
- (vi) The desired model of ES is the model of disciplinary autonomy (as it is understood in the Continental tradition).

In this argument, it is claimed that the decision not to grant ES autonomy and to reduce it to other disciplines entails, because it abandons the practical and educational perspective, the failure to address certain research problems. These problems cannot simultaneously be the object of study of each of the individual disciplines to which ES can be reduced, as by definition they are not of a theoretical-practical nature. When trying to identify such areas which are specific to ES, we can indicate both those areas of a local nature – such as specific problems associated with educational practice occurring, for example, in a specific social group (for this reason, ES also involves an aspect of local studies) – and areas associated with research on and construction of methods of teaching, ways to resolve conflict in the educational environment, models of the functioning of the objects of education in the future (for example, with regard to new challenges, requirements, competences, etc.), as well as modification of existing and creation of new concepts of education (and of the aims associated with these).

Of course, it can be truly stated that each of these other individual disciplines can in part undertake these studies. Firstly however, each discipline will do so within the framework of its own particular perspective, without orientation towards the practical and normative aspect, and, secondly, it will do so without at least a partial interaction with other perspectives (so necessary in this type of research). Both the former and the latter are, however, possible in a situation of appropriate organisational structures such as that which can be provided by disciplinary autonomy. The lack of integration within a discipline may generate problems such as the creation of studies which are significant in terms of discovery but isolated, fruitless in terms of the possibility of applying them to educational practice (for example in the psychology and sociology of education), or problems such as the creation of a utopian vision, not based on current scientific knowledge and practical conditions for the development of educational subjects (such as in the philosophy of education). For example, it would seem that the construction of a theory and programmes for critical thinking from the position of an autonomous discipline, particularly in the context of needs related to changing environmental conditions, may be more appropriate than in the construction of such elements from the position of each individual discipline. Thanks to the integration of knowledge drawn from different disciplines for a defined aim (for example, for the preparation of the objects of education to face the challenges of the future), these studies are at a lesser risk of becoming unrealistic, utopian, or in conflict with the current state of scientific knowledge.

Biesta argues in a similar spirit (2011) for the irreducibility of the theory of education to the theories of other disciplines (as it happens in the Continental tradition). Namely, he recognises the educational perspective as specific, as one which allows for the identification of an additional aspect (in regards to the psychological, sociological, philosophical, and historical perspectives) of the study of educational reality. The existence of a theory of education (distinct from psychological or sociological theory) makes it possible to identify

(and make the subject of study) education as a comprehensive process or practice comprising individual processes and practices (each of which may individually be the appropriate area of study for a psychologist, sociologist, etc.)¹⁰

The argumentation presented above takes on particular importance in the Continental tradition. Namely, abandoning the current state in which ES finds itself (e.g. disciplinary autonomy) may produce unfavourable results as the subdisciplines which could partly take on its role in the conduct of research on education are insufficiently developed; a relatively small number of studies from this perspective are undertaken. Therefore, it would be wise to predefine the areas of study dedicated to them and significantly strengthen these by creating appropriate conditions for their development. In the situation where ES already exists as an autonomous discipline, elimination of it in order for the research problems it addresses to be taken over by psychology, sociology, history, and the philosophy of education – without a clear substantive reason and with the risk that certain significant research problems will be overlooked – would seem to be pointless. Any future direction for change, it would seem, should take into account the strengthening of that which already exists, albeit in a not fully mature form.

Re. (A3) the argument of the consolidation of knowledge about education

This argument is a development of one previously indicated, extracted from the discourse on the need for change in the Anglo-American tradition (Lagemann 2002; Elkind 1999; Zogla 2018; Palaiologou 2010). It states that there are practical and scientific reasons as to why the maintenance of the autonomy of ES is justified. This argument can be expressed as follows:

- (i) Each academic discipline has its own partially unique conceptual apparatus, paradigms, methods and aims;
- (ii) The conduct of research on education from the position of different disciplines, because these disciplines (as it was pointed out earlier) realise different aims while using different methods and a different conceptual apparatus, means that these studies are less complementary to one another, less cohesive, less comparable (than if they were conducted from the position of an autonomous discipline);
- (iii) As a result, the aforementioned problems hinder (when compared to research conducted from the position of an autonomous discipline):
 - The development, based on this research, of a relatively cohesive theory of education (among other reasons, because it would be necessary to establish the conditions for the transmission of knowledge between the disciplines, which would in turn require some criteria formulated at the metastudy level);
 - The flow of information (e.g., new scientific data) between the disciplines;

¹⁰ “I do think that the idea of asking educational question about education has some plausability. The argument for this has to do with the question how, as educational researchers, we are able to identify processes and practices of education – which is of course something we need to do before we can start studying them. How, to put it differently, can we select the education going on in a building that has the word ‘school’ on it? From the perspective of Continental construction the answer to this question is that we need to have a conception of educational in order to do so. Thus we need a theory of education that is neither psychological, sociological, historical nor philosophical, in order to identify our object of study.” (Biesta, 2011, p. 190).

- The possibility of having an impact on the sphere of the practice of education, such as in terms of any changes to this practice;

therefore:

- (iv) The adoption of a model in which ES is an autonomous discipline allows for a more appropriate approach (compared to the fragmentarisation occurring in the case when autonomy is abandoned) to the totality of phenomena associated with education, that is in a relatively comprehensive, cohesive, multifaceted way with less risk of disruption of the flow of information and with greater scope for impact on the practice of education.

In other words, the establishment of a model in which ES functions as an autonomous discipline facilitates the minimisation of problems that can occur in the study of a subject which is as multifaceted as education. This happens primarily due to a different institutional organisation of research on education, that is, one which favours the consolidation of scientific knowledge. This in turn increases the potential for impact on the sphere of the practice of education, since practical knowledge generated by an ES understood in this way (i.e., one which is applicable to the practice of education) takes into account in a relatively integrated manner the multitude of aspects (personality, social, moral) which must be addressed to effect change in practice. It should at the same time be stressed that the adoption of such a perspective does not necessarily mean a lack of academic pluralism or the necessity to construct unifying theories. It means simply that any theory generated by ES in the autonomous model would have a greater chance of accounting to a greater degree for multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of education than theories generated by independently functioning disciplines.

It is worth noting the fact that the absence of cohesion, complementarity, information flow, and the related disturbance in the transmission of knowledge generated into educational practice does not necessarily imply that the correct form for ES is exclusively the autonomy model. Palaiologou (2010), for instance, despite rejecting the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary form of ES for reasons mentioned earlier, simultaneously argues for the recognition of ES as a trans-discipline. In her opinion, this approach to the issue resolves problems occurring with other forms of organisation of ES, that is by going beyond the traditionally recognised borders between disciplines, it effectively responds to the need to combine a multiplicity of perspectives for the purposes of, for example, educational practice. However, although it is clear that ES can be understood as a field of research which extends beyond borders, the risk of the occurrence of the problems previously mentioned still remains. Namely, trans-disciplinarity, similarly to post-disciplinarity and second-level disciplinarity (without specifying the role that ES would play in the structures of these disciplines), remains a vague term, and as one which cannot be put into operation it is unable to respond to practical problems related to the need for modification of the ES formula, or alternatively responds in a vague manner by placing the subject under consideration in the realm of 'the beyond'. This means that there is no concrete response to the problem of which of the possible organisational statuses of a given research area should apply. It would seem that the rational approach, without rejecting the idea of trans-disciplinarity (i.e. the idea that ES is constructed on other disciplines), is to recognise ES as an autonomous discipline with a defined function and tasks within the structures of academic disciplines.

Re. (A4) the argument of the erroneous separation of scientific disciplines

This argument is based on the premise that the traditional, rigid division of scientific disciplines in today's world, particularly with reference to the social sciences, is inadequate. This division assumes that the condition for being a scientific discipline is the possession of a unique conceptual apparatus, a separate subject of study (or aspect of that subject), and a set of research methods. If, therefore, some area of study overlaps with the area of an already functioning discipline and, as such, does not satisfy the conditions outlined above, then it should not function as an autonomous discipline. And this is how it should be – in the opinion of some theorists – in the case of ES (McCullan 2002, Tibble 1971, Peters 1963/1980, Hirst 1983). This, however, is a position which firstly (in line with previously presented arguments) does not recognise the theoretical and practical specifics of ES, which assumes the possibility of theoretical research on education with the prospect of practical and social application. Understood in this way, ES integrates the knowledge of other disciplines for a defined purpose related to the development of the subjects of education. In doing so, it introduces a new, irreducible aspect to education research that prevents it from being reduced to other disciplines.

Secondly, it rather doubtfully assumes the adequacy of rigid criteria, ones which are in practice less and less universal, in the policies of the organisation of social disciplines. Namely, the dedicated objects of study of the social disciplines (e.g. behaviour, society, education) do not comprise isolated phenomena but rather in a natural way remain in diverse relations with other phenomena. Their isolation into the form of the objects of study of individual disciplines is in part arbitrary; some research problems in these disciplines overlap. This also concerns the issue of education, as it cannot be isolated from its individual or social context. Therefore, exploration by ES of areas involving psychology, sociology, history and philosophy need not be treated as a valid reason to deny ES its autonomy. On the contrary, this is an indication of its appropriate and complementary approach to the problem, despite its breaking of traditional barriers. Additionally, the acceptance of a rigid division may generate the problem of failure to explore controversial research areas (lying at the boundaries of various disciplines). This problem is mainly seen in the context of the Continental model, where the status of ES is lower than, for example, psychology or sociology. Disciplines with less prestige have a lesser capacity to affect the selection of research problems which lie in areas which could possibly be studied by various disciplines. This leads to the narrowing and peripheralisation of ES, which with the right dynamics of the process may lead to its reduction to other disciplines (as in the Anglo-American tradition).

The criterion of level of prestige may not seem to be reliable in this case. If we recognise the substantive criterion that social phenomena such as education do not occur in isolation, then we should either:

- (a) Abandon division in favour of accepting a broadly understood discipline of social science (the social-humanities), or
- (b) Accept its partially consensual nature, allowing various disciplines to undertake research problems which lie at the borders of these disciplines.

Variant (b) is definitely less radical than (a) and would seem to have greater chances for success. It leads to the recognition of ES as an autonomous discipline (as in variant

V4) with features of second-level disciplinarity, trans-disciplinarity, or post-disciplinarity (as in variant V2), i.e. a discipline which generates specific knowledge (theory) by integrating for a specific purpose knowledge originating in other disciplines. Basically, this a partial sanctioning of research practices which are currently common. Researchers themselves break through these barriers due to the subdisciplines which have been arising over the last decades, and which are still difficult to subordinate to the discipline to which they formally belong (such as neuropsychology or neuroethics) or in the case of the creation of academic structures for research on consciousness (cognitive science). One of the possible forms of implementing variant (b) is via the gradual emancipation of ES by its expansion, that is by allowing it to explore controversial research areas, as justified by the high level of scientific research.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to conduct an analysis of models of the practice of ES and to present an argument for the adoption of one of these models. At the same time, it is an attempt to make a voice heard in the ongoing discourse on the disciplinary status of ES. The issue is of current relevance as it concerns an issue which is significant both in theoretical and practical-social terms, namely education, and the version of the status of ES which is eventually adopted will have a decisive impact on the nature of research in this field. Thus, ES may at least in part lead not only to knowledge about the subject but may also impact educational practice.

The analysis conducted in this article suggests that at present, the status of ES has not yet been unambiguously defined; differences can be identified not only between various traditions (Continental and Anglo-American) but also within these traditions. In general, these differences mainly involve the way in which education itself is understood and the way that this understanding is applied in ES, and consequently the scope of research that is conducted in the field. Moreover, the discourse on the topic also includes threads which indicate a partial intermingling of these traditions (such as less autonomy in the first tradition and greater consolidation in the second).

In the approach I have presented her, I argue for a model (educational studies as a second-level autonomous discipline) which to a large extent coincides with the Continental model yet which also incorporates certain characteristic features of the Anglo-American model. Using these arguments, it can be stated that there are good reasons to treat ES as an autonomous theoretical and practical discipline in its own right, one which despite being constructed on the basis of other disciplines nevertheless generates a specific knowledge which cannot be expressed via these other disciplines. In such a model, ES becomes a discipline which:

- (a) Appropriately responds to the multidimensional nature of both education itself and the related necessity of conducting research from a variety of perspectives, both descriptive and practical/normative perspectives;
- (b) Avoids problems associated with the failure to address theoretically and practically significant problems related to education;

- (c) Thanks to its established academic community – minimises the problem (in relation to the model without autonomy) of a lack of complementarity, data flow, integration, and effective transmission of knowledge into the realm of educational practice.

Such a model does not find its equivalent either in the Anglo-American tradition or the Continental tradition (although it is closer to the latter). In the first case, due to the lack of autonomy and the problems that this generates, while in the second, due to its position on the periphery and weak status relative to other disciplines, which in turn derives from the rigid separation between the disciplines in the social sciences. Continuation of the existing state of ES entails the risk of deepening the lack of integration of knowledge about education (as in the Anglo-American tradition) and of furthering the marginalisation of ES and narrowing the scope of study (as in the Continental tradition), which may consequently lead to the transition of ES to the Anglo-American model. It would therefore seem justified to strive to develop not its current shape, but rather the potential shape of ES in line with the model suggested in this paper, assuming among other things a process of autonomisation via expansion.

The arguments presented here are not conclusive for the issue of the status of ES. Instead, they constitute significant reasons why the choice of disciplinary autonomy should be considered justified and why lack of autonomy should not be considered the only rational choice. This does not contradict the rationale for conducting ES in an interdisciplinary model, for example; rather it simply indicates this as one of the possible variants.

It should also be stressed that the model proposed here is not entirely free from problems. Here it is worth noting, on the one hand, certain advantages of the Anglo-American model, such as the fact that since research on education is conducted from the perspective of various disciplines, the knowledge generated by this research is already integrated with current knowledge in the supporting discipline (such as psychology, for instance) and no further conditions are required for it to be transmitted to a separate discipline (ES). On the other hand, there are issues concerning the autonomy of the ES model; namely, its practical nature to a certain extent is problematic. This makes it as a result a partially normative discipline. For if research is to be conducted involving aims associated with development of educational entities, then the discipline necessarily inherits serious ethical and metaethical problems, in particular those associated with normative disputes. For whom, by whom, and by applying what criteria are these aims to be established? The recognition of the universality of the aims of education may lead to it becoming an ideological issue while, conversely, the recognition of the relativity of these aims requires the establishment of a normative point of reference (a task which in terms of metaethics is highly problematic). One solution to this problem may be acceptance of the fact of contextuality and locality in educational practices, and in consequence recognition of a conditional normativeness, that is one whose aims are either generated in the discipline from which the research starts or by the consensus of a significant majority of researchers (for example, in the context of Western European culture, in which values such as freedom, truth, and tolerance are generally valued). On the one hand, practicality and its related normativeness are a burden for ES, on the other it highlights the particular importance and social significance of ES. As one of very few disciplines, it can undertake a rational, grounded in science (including philosophy) response to important social issues.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: The author declare that he has no conflict of interest.

References

- Benner, D. 2005. *Allgemeine Pädagogik*, Weinheim/München: Juventa, 5th ed.
- Biesta, G.J.J. 2011. Disciplines and theory in academic study of education: a comparative analysis of the Anglo-American and Continental construction of the field. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 19 (2): 175–192.
- Biesta, G.J.J. 2010. Why ‘what works’ still won’t work: from evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29: 491–503.
- Bleicher, J. 2006. Bildung. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2–3): 364–365.
- Bridges, D. 2017. *Philosophy of Educational Research Epistemology, Ethics, Politics and Quality*. Springer.
- Carr, D. 2003. *Making sense of education: An introduction to the philosophy and theory of education and teaching*. Routledge.
- Carr, W. 2003b. Educational research and its histories. In: eds. P. Sikes, J. Nixon, W. Carr, *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research. Knowledge, Inquiry and Values*. Open University Press.
- O’Connor, D.J. 1957. *Introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Elkind, D. 1999. Educational research and the science of education. *Educational Psychology Review* 11 (3): 271–187.
- Floud, J., and A.H. Halsey. 1958. The Sociology of Education: (With special reference to the development of research in Western Europe and the United States of America). *Current Sociology* 7 (3): 165–193.
- Friesen, N. 2019. Educational research in America today relentless instrumentalism and scholarly backlash. *Erziehungswissenschaft* 30 (2019): 77–83.
- Friesen, N. 2020. Education as a Geisteswissenschaft: an introduction to human science pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52 (3): 307 (Published online: 12 Jan 2020).
- Furlong, J. 2013. *Introduction, in: Education – An anatomy of the discipline: Rescuing the university project?* Abingdon. Routledge.
- Guilherme, A. 2019. *Considering AI in Education: Erziehung but Never Bildung*. In *Artificial Intelligence and Inclusive Education Perspectives on Rethinking and Reforming Education*, ed. J. Knox, Y. Wang, and M. Gallagher. Springer.
- Hammersley, M. 2008. Educational Research, In: G. McCulloch, D. Crook ed. *The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Education*, Routledge.
- Hildebrand, D., J. Dewey 2018. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/dewey/>, access: 20.XII.2021.
- Hirst, P. 1983. Educational Theory. In *Educational theory and its foundational disciplines*, ed. P. Hirst. Routledge.
- Hodysh, H.W. 1970. An analysis of history of education as an academic discipline. *Journal of Teacher Education* 22 (2): 203–209.
- Horlacher, R. 2004. Bildung – A construction of a history of philosophy of education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 23 (5): 409–426.
- Kansanen, P. 2006. Education as a discipline in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 34 (4): 271–284.
- Katz, M.S., and R.S. Peters. 2010. normative conception of education and educational aims. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (1): 97–108.
- Knox, H. (1971), *A History of Educational Research in the United States*, ERIC Clearinghouse, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED088800> (accessed: 31.05.2020).
- Lagemann, E.C. 2002. *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Education Research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lagemann, E.C. 1997. Contested terrain: A history of education research in the United States, 1890–1990. *Educational Researcher* 26 (9): 5–17.
- McCulloch, G. 2002. ‘Disciplines contributing to education’? *Educational Studies and the Disciplines, British Journal of Educational Studies* 50 (1): 100–119.

- McCulloch, G. 2003. Towards a social history of educational research, In: eds. P. Sikes, J. Nixon, W. Carr, *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research. Knowledge, Inquiry and Values*, Open University Press.
- Noddings, N. 2015. *Philosophy of Education*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Nucci, L. 2001. *Education in the Moral Domain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Palaiologou, I. 2010. The death of a discipline or the birth of a transdiscipline: Subverting question of disciplinarity within Educational Studies undergraduate courses. *Educational Studies* 36 (3): 269–282.
- Peters, R. S. 1963/1980. *Education as initiation*, In: P. Gordon ed. *The Study of Education*, Vol. 1, Woburn, London, pp. 273–299.
- Peters, R. S. (2015). *Ethics and education*. Routledge. first published 1966 by Allen & Unwin.
- Siegel, H., D.C. Phillips, E. Callan. 2018. *Philosophy of Education*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2018 Edition).
- Stephens, P. 2009. The nature of social pedagogy: An excursion in Norwegian territory. *Child & Family Social Work* 14: 343–351.
- Stepkowski, D. 2019. *School Moral Education: Does Scholastic Ethical Instruction Need Its Own 'Morality'?*. In: B. Kudlacova, A. Rajskey *Education and "Pedagogik"*. *Philosophical and Historical Reflections (Central, Southern and South-Eastern Europe)*, Bratislava: Peter Lang.
- Tibble, J.W. 1966. Introduction. In *The study of education, VII-X*, ed. J.W. Tibble. London: Routledge and Degan Paul.
- Tibble, J.W. 1971. The development of the study of education. In *An Introduction to the Study of Education*, ed. J.W. Tibble. London: Routledge and Degan Paul.
- Winkler, M. (2006). *Kritik der Pädagogik. Der Sinn der Erziehung*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Yosef-Hassidim, D. 2018. *K-12 Education as a hermeneutic Adventurous Endeavor Toward an educational way of thinking*. Routledge.
- Zahler H. 2016. *An Experiment in American Educational Philosophy*, *American Educational History Journal*, 43: 1&2.
- Zogla, I. 2018. Science of pedagogy: Theory of educational discipline and practice. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 20 (2): 31–43.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.