

# What to Do? Case Studies for Teachers (William Hare and John Portelli) and What Makes A Good Teacher (William Hare)

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Volume 8, Number 1, 1994

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1073265ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073265ar>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

ISSN

0838-4517 (print)

1916-0348 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Court, D. (1994). Review of [What to Do? Case Studies for Teachers (William Hare and John Portelli) and What Makes A Good Teacher (William Hare)]. *Paideusis*, 8(1), 43–45. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073265ar>

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that most parents are so apathetic about their children's education that they would not take advantage of choice.

Holmes rejects as inequitable open-ended voucher systems with no cap on additional fees which may be charged, yet the very rich are not limited by such caps at present and many not-so-rich families pay a lot of extra money for musical, sporting, holiday, and many other experiences for their children which other parents do not and often cannot afford. Is it really inequitable to provide your own children with something better than the least conscientious or the most financially disadvantaged parents can afford? Holmes is also strongly opposed to restrictions on admission to schools, yet it seems absurd that there should be open access of, say, atheist children to religious schools, boys to girls' schools, or—a relevant Australian example—non-Aborigines to schools set up to provide a pervasive atmosphere of Aboriginal traditional culture. To be sure, not many "outsiders" want their children to attend schools defined so as to exclude them, but even to concede a universal right of admission must undermine the very foundations of such schools.

*Reviewed by Geoffrey Partington, Flinders University of South Australia*

**William Hare and John Portelli. What To Do? Case Studies For Teachers (Halifax, N.S., Fairmount Books, 1993).**

**William Hare, What Makes A Good Teacher (London, Ontario: Althouse Press, 1993).**

The purpose of *What to Do?* by Hare and Portelli is to describe how they try to engage their education students in "doing" philosophy as it relates to teaching. In the first half of the book, they explain and argue for the use of educational case studies to advance student teachers' thinking about teaching. Hare and Portelli see this as a useful extension to what they say are the usual methods of teaching undergraduate philosophy. These methods they outline as, presenting the different 'isms' (such as progressivism) and the educational prescriptions that seem to follow from these; introducing analytic philosophy and examining important educational concepts; and a combination of these two with, in addition, the introduction of different educational ideologies. Philosophy should be more than a set of artifacts, the authors assert; it should relate to the way we live our lives. Certainly beginning teachers are in need of thoughtful guidance as they struggle to learn techniques and methods and the norms of the school while remaining aligned with their own values.

Using cases to explore ways of understanding and dealing with common problems of practice is an approach long used in medicine and law, and rather recently adopted in education. One way of using cases, as Lee Shulman has done, is to see the presentation of problematic stories of practice as a way of communicating *knowledge* about teaching. Hare and Portelli feel that the presentation of cases as illustrations of expert *knowledge* of teaching may be misleading, because problems of practice do not have clearcut answers. As well, such presentation does not encourage students to be critical and to raise the important value questions that well written cases can invoke. Hare and Portelli

prefer to present cases as *opportunities* for critical analysis through group discussions. Their descriptions of how they use cases in their philosophy of education classes, and the examples of student feedback they have gotten from these classes, indicate that this "organic" approach to philosophy instruction has been quite successful.

While the book does a good job of describing and defending the use of cases in philosophy of education, the quality of the twenty-four sample cases which form the second half of the book is somewhat uneven. It seems to me that the most effective case is one in which the 'problem' is not transparent, but a natural part of the scenario. A good case should grip the reader's attention as a story, not simply act as a vehicle for the implanted issue. Of course, what grips a reader's attention will depend to a large extent on the reader, and the experience, values and concerns he or she brings to the reading and to the subsequent discussion. Perhaps because I was, and am again, a school teacher for much longer than I was an academic, I found the least engaging of the sample cases to be the ones by Professor Hare. They all involve adult interactions (perhaps because this is the nature of his own teaching practice) and, while they are well written, they feel like artificial scenarios designed to raise some particular issue such as sexual harassment in the workplace. These cases aroused only my intellect, and only to a limited extent. The cases in the latter part of the book are written by practising teachers and involve teachers interacting with children or with parents and colleagues about children. They are about children's pain and problems, and the lonely day to day struggle of teachers to make a difference. These cases aroused my interest in a much more visceral way.

This is not so much a criticism as an observation, and perhaps different readers will have different reactions. At any rate, this is an intelligent, accessible and useful little book.

*What Makes a Good Teacher*, by William Hare, offers a well-written description of and argument for the qualities that Hare claims a good teacher must possess. The qualities he names are humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgement and imagination. This is very different from the skills-oriented view of a good teacher that most student teachers are presented with.

Hare introduces the eight qualities in a chapter entitled, "Excellence: Seeking Ideals." This is a different notion of excellence than the one many educators understand. 'Excellence' in educational parlance often means promoting increased student performance, as measured by higher test scores. To Hare, excellence means the valuing of ethical ideals, and the holding by teachers of certain qualities of character. A good teacher must be a good person. This is not to denigrate the idea that teachers must be skilful and knowledgeable, but "Any skills or techniques which teachers acquire. . . need to be employed by a person who possesses certain attributes and excellences" (p. v).

Each of the eight qualities is analyzed in a separate chapter. The analyses are thoughtful and detailed, and the different stages of the arguments are carefully illustrated with educational examples.

Hare does not address the question of whether or not we can train teachers to acquire the "excellences" that he describes; rather, he argues that we should look for those qualities and select as teachers those who appear to have them.

And because educational bandwagons come and go, "we need to be less concerned with hearing allegiance paid to whatever happens to be the fashionable trend at the time" (p. 162) and more concerned with the personal, human qualities of the teacher. Hare's aim is not only to better serve students but to restore "meaning and dignity to the idea of teaching" (p. 162). How to assess the possession of important personal qualities in teaching candidates, and whether we can help people develop these qualities, is the subject for another book. This book is a refreshing reminder that in an age of high-tech, high-performance living, ethics and ideals are still the human bedrock upon which education must stand.

*Reviewed by Deborah Court, Maimonides School, Vancouver*

**John P. Portelli & Sharon Bailin (Eds.), Reason and Values: New Essays in Philosophy of Education (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1993).**

This volume is, as William Hare notes in the "Introduction," a collection of essays that represents "recent work in philosophy of education in Canada" (p. 2). In particular, the essays represent the thinking of a variety of Canadian philosophers of education on topics such as "empowerment, democracy, autonomy, critical thinking, gender, the hidden curriculum, relativism, and creativity" (p. 6) that are of interest to many of their colleagues around the world.

These concepts and related concerns are discussed from a philosophical perspective that retains an appreciation for philosophical analysis while promoting an imaginative and reflective inquiry into normative issues. As the title suggests, the concepts of reason and values played a major role in the selection of the essays. Reason, viewed broadly as publicly examinable arguments, is used to explore a broad range of value questions and to suggest positions that are, at least to the authors, more meritorious than those frequently found in educational discussions today. In their essays, the authors are less than tepid as they examine contemporary topics of interest to their peers and, to a lesser degree, to intending and practising educators. The result is a set of refreshing essays that offers no protection for any position that is not carefully considered.

The volume falls neatly, if unevenly, into five sections. The first section, composed of one chapter, provides a brief overview of the subject of philosophy of education. While traditional philosophy of education is briefly treated, the majority of the chapter is devoted to analytic philosophy of education, to criticisms of the field, and to its strengths and weaknesses. In particular, Portelli distinguishes between the stereotypical descriptions of analytic philosophy of education, the claims of earlier analytic philosophers of education, and the contributions of current analytic philosophy of education. He devotes special attention to the earlier and ongoing examination of normative questions by analytic philosophers. This essay, therefore, sets the tone and direction of the remaining chapters. Writers scrutinize a number of present-day ambiguities, assumptions, dichotomies, positions, and arguments that are found in current educational discussions. On occasions, an author appears to fall into what may be termed the analytic philosopher's conceptual abyss. That is to say, every possible meaning or significance of a concept is explicated at times regardless of whether it is