

Institution: University of Sheffield		
Unit of Assessment: D-30 Philosophy		
Title of case study: Reform and innovation in education policy and practice to promote epistemic, civic, and social virtues		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Josh Forstenzer	Lecturer in Philosophy	2015–present
Angela Hobbs	Professor for the Public Understanding of Philosophy	2012–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research by Forstenzer and Hobbs has resulted in the development of teacher training activities nationally and internationally. It has also influenced policymakers, particularly impacting on high-level debate regarding the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the European Parliament Culture and Education Committee, and the successful campaigns to save and reform Philosophy A-Level and create a Philosophy Certificate. In their academic roles at Sheffield, they work through the Centre for Engaged Philosophy and are also advisers to the World Economic Forum Global Future Council for Values, Ethics and Innovation (Hobbs) and to Magid Magid MEP (Forstenzer). They have shown that civic values and democratic engagement are fostered by an educational focus on well-being and the virtues, rather than a limited metrics approach. They have shown that practising philosophy with young people and fostering a cooperative pedagogic approach across different levels and settings of education develops critical and creative thinking which benefits learners, teachers and wider society.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The idea that the principal purpose of education is to prepare young people to become productive economic agents has been at the centre of successive waves of reform in the United Kingdom. This conception of education is narrowly economic, tying pedagogic activities to the pursuit of metrics-based results. Instead, Forstenzer and Hobbs’s research shows that educational reform would be better directed through a renewed focus on well-being by fostering associated intellectual, imaginative, and social virtues, thereby drawing on the traditions of ancient Greek philosophy and of pragmatism. A central part of this project has been to research the best methods for instilling the epistemic virtues that are central to combating fake news and ‘alternative facts’, both now endemic and damaging, thereby enabling intelligent democratic engagement and bolstering civic agency.</p> <p>Forstenzer and Hobbs’s underpinning research focuses on three core steps to address the challenges set out above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a philosophical critique of a narrowly metrics-driven agenda in education policy; • the development of imaginative reforms which fulfil the educational goals of flourishing and civic agency; 		

- the development of concrete pedagogic activities to enrich curricula, classrooms, and informal educational settings.

Thus, this research aims to renew society's conception of education around the task of developing epistemic, civic and social virtues to promote individual and communal flourishing.

Research findings

(1) Metrics-driven education leads to the development of epistemic vices: Forstenzer [R1 and R2] developed a critique of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), a metrics-driven reform in English higher education. He argues that it fosters epistemic insensibility (i.e. the vice of failing to desire, consume and enjoy epistemic goods) because it treats teaching quality as a mere reflection of student satisfaction, retention and graduate employment. Instead, he contends, the appropriate goal for excellent teaching is to foster a pedagogic setting that is cooperative rather than competitive and leads to the development of epistemic, civic, and social virtues.

(2) Philosophy as a pedagogic practice offers an alternative model of educational engagement centred on the virtues: Drawing on ancient Greek philosophy, Hobbs's research [R3] argues that practising philosophy with children and young people is an important part of the 'good life', both as an enjoyable activity in itself and because it is conducive to the development of a conception of the flourishing life and its associated virtues. She shows that an early introduction to philosophy in schools helps develop the cognitive skills required to analyse evidence and understand concepts, as well as construct and critically assess arguments. Together, these provide the basis for forming opinions based on robust evidence and good reason. Forstenzer shows that this method can be adapted to tertiary and informal education settings [R4].

(3) Distinctive philosophical pedagogic practices lead to the development of epistemic and civic virtues required for democratic social cooperation: Forstenzer draws on Dewey's work [R4, R5, R6] to show that this more cooperative conception of education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, as well as in informal settings ought to embrace democratic commitments known as 'the 4Cs': 'caring', 'collaborative', 'critical' and 'creative' pedagogic interactions developed by Matthew Lipman (the founder of 'Philosophy for Children'). Forstenzer and Hobbs argue that philosophical discussions help foster the social virtues of open-mindedness and empathy, imaginative creativity, and the suppleness needed to envision different ways of living, which enable the learner to form their own conception of a good life.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** Forstenzer, J. (2018). The Teaching Excellence Framework, Epistemic Insensibility and the Question of Purpose, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 52(3), 548-574
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12319>
- R2.** Forstenzer, J. (2016). *The Teaching Excellence Framework: What's The Purpose?* Green Paper for the Crick Centre. <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/127959/1/TEF-Whats-the-Purpose-booklet-Josh-Forstenzer%281%29.pdf>
- R3.** Hobbs, A. (2018). Philosophy and the Good Life. *Journal of Philosophy in Schools*, 5(1), 20-37. <http://doi.org/10.21913/jps.v5i1.1482>
- R4.** Gatley, J., Woodhouse, E., & Forstenzer, J. (2020). Youth Philosophy Conferences and the Development of Adolescent Social Skills: A Case Study, *Precollege Philosophy and Public Practice*, 2, 107-125. <https://doi.org/10.5840/p4202032611>

- R5.** Forstenzer, J. (2016). A Democratic Ideal for Troubled Times: John Dewey, Civic Action, and Peaceful Conflict Resolution, *Journal of Human Rights and Peace Studies*, 2(2), 2-29. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/HRPS/article/view/164031/118843>
- R6.** Forstenzer, J. (2019). *Deweyan Experimentalism and the Problem of Method in Political Philosophy*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 9781138479906. Available from HEI by request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Influencing education policy debate

Forstenzer's research [R1, R2, R5, R6] has had an impact across the higher education sector, encouraging and stimulating debate about **TEF principles**. Two advisors to Vice-Chancellors, elected student representatives of Bradford, Sheffield Hallam, Sheffield and Brunel University Students' Unions, and senior officials in the National Union of Students (representing 7 million students) drew on his analysis to develop arguments against the TEF and wider marketisation of higher education. The University of Sheffield included his research as part of its official response to the government consultation on the 2015 Higher Education Green Paper, while the British Philosophical Association and the Political Studies Association drew on it to construct their formal responses. Members of both Houses of Parliament consulted with Forstenzer and drew on his work to articulate opposition to different aspects of the same bill. Lord David Blunkett stated that Forstenzer's work '*had a direct impact on an opposition amendment to the bill*' in the Lords [S1]. Sheffield MP, Paul Blomfield, further explained that Forstenzer's '*argument that teaching quality should be disconnected from the issue of raising home undergraduate fees helped inform my contribution to the [Business Innovation and Skills] Select Committee and the HERA 2017 Bill Committee in which I pressed for the link between the proposed TEF and tuition fees to be severed*' [S2]. The final Select Committee report [S3] incorporated Forstenzer's critique of a narrowly metrics driven TEF [R1], enabling the Committee to argue in favour of a more sophisticated system [S2], the necessity of which was recently accepted by the government.

Sir Keith Burnett, former Vice-Chancellor at Sheffield and member of Universities UK, also notes that Forstenzer's research '*provided strong arguments which were compelling across the sector and heard by government*'. He adds that '*the case Dr Forstenzer made from the beginning about the TEF failing to be meaningfully about teaching became a widely accepted critique of the early formulations of this major new education policy*' [S4].

More recently, the NUS President 2019-20, Zamzam Ibrahim, and her chief of staff '*drew inspiration from Dr Forstenzer's humanistic approach to understanding the central stakes of Higher Education as a moral rather than a strictly economic matter*' [S5], and this enabled the NUS to articulate principles and develop arguments for instituting a **National Education Service**.

Beyond the UK higher education sector, Forstenzer's work has had policy impact through the terms of reference of the **European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education**, with Magid Magid MEP saying that '*Dr Forstenzer's advice and assistance influenced my work profoundly, helping me take on the well-sought after Creative Europe dossier [...] through which I was able to advocate to the committee the use of experiential cultural and pedagogic interventions to bolster civic virtues, democratic norms, resist racism and instil a culture of welcome across Europe through cultural and educational interventions*: [S6].

Making the case for philosophy in schools

When the AQA exam board threatened to abolish the A-level in Philosophy, Hobbs drew on her research [R3] to work directly with AQA and played a major role in both successfully campaigning to save it and in influencing the syllabus reform to broaden the subject matter and

diversify its sources. Alison Wood, AQA Chair of Examiners for the Philosophy A-level, states that Hobbs “...made a very major contribution to safeguarding the existence of AS/A-level Philosophy, ensuring that the AS/A-level properly represents the richness and diversity of philosophy as an academic discipline and supporting its development as a subject in the 16-19 curriculum”. She specifically noted that Hobbs’s research [R3] “helped me to see a way forward for the development of AS/A-level Philosophy” [S7], mentioning virtue ethics in particular. With the Philosophy in Education Project (PEP), Hobbs also helped articulate the principles and the case for the recently introduced **School Certificate in Philosophy**, and she strengthened plans for a new GCSE [S8].

Emma Worley, joint CEO of the **Philosophy Foundation**, confirmed that Hobbs’s work “has helped us argue for philosophy in schools, particularly in our approach to government’ and her argument was ‘used by us to show the importance of both the content and system of doing philosophy in schools...to help teach critical thinking and analysis in schools” [S9]. With Hobbs as their Honorary Patron, the Philosophy Foundation’s interventions have been able to affect a 40% improvement rate in children’s key skills in three of the most deprived London boroughs. It has provided training for 1,500 teachers, 1,400 philosophers through university training programmes, and 300 individual philosophers [S9]. Taking the campaign beyond the United Kingdom, Hobbs was invited to work directly within the **World Economic Forum** to influence high level decision-makers and persuade them to increase philosophy provision in schools. [Text removed for publication].

This work on changing educational practice was supplemented with Forstenzer’s and Hobbs’ **media profile**. Articles in *The Conversation*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, *The Irish Examiner*, the *Yorkshire Post*, *Frie Skoler* (Danish education journal), and many radio interviews, including on the *Today* programme and the BBC world service reached a combined global audience of over 220 million people [S10].

Impact on educational practice and training

There has also been direct impact on **teachers and schools**. At a national level, as a result of the Philosophy in Schools conference organised by Forstenzer and Hobbs in 2019, 62% of teacher attendees reported making changes to their teaching. These included modelling philosophical techniques to support better discussion and using philosophy to address contemporary global and political crises [S11]. Working with Sheffield schools, Forstenzer organised pupil conferences in 2017, 2018, and 2019, with over 500 pupils attending philosophical activities in Sheffield and its vicinity during that time. Students reported positive changes in terms of self-confidence and interest in philosophy [R4]. Data published in a peer-reviewed publication (n=71) showed that 69% of student participants reported an increase in their confidence in explaining their ideas to others (which is a marker of improvement in social and communication skills), and that 54.3% reported that an increase in their tendency to try to understand other people’s perspective (which is a marker of empathy) [S11]. Teachers working on this programme have reflected that these activities impacted upon their work. One has written: “As a result, I have adapted my curriculum design and pedagogic goals over the years, reflecting a strong focus on facilitating philosophical discussion (rather than just didactically teaching content) and encouraging critical, creative and caring thinking” [S12].

Both Forstenzer and Hobbs have also influenced **training practices and pedagogical materials at all levels**. Hobbs has worked closely with the Philosophy Foundation on their multi-award-winning publication *The Philosophy Shop*. She helped them to situate their material within an overall framework of flourishing, to enrich their deployment of ancient Greek sources. Hobbs’s contribution to the book is described by Emma Worley as “provoking great interest and engagement” when used in the primary and secondary classroom [S9]. Hobbs’s work has also led to values being placed at the beginning of the School Improvement Plan for Maple Cross JMI

and Nursery School, summarised by the then Headteacher as “*in essence, a value-led plan aimed at promoting flourishing for all*” [S12].

As a result of his profile as an expert on the Community of Philosophical Enquiry, Forstenzer was invited to deliver **pedagogic training courses for sixth form and higher education teachers** and facilitators in eight institutions (including Harvard and Tufts Universities, the University of Bologna, and the Golinelli Foundation) in the USA, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and the UK [S13]. This led to the project for which Forstenzer was awarded a Newton Advanced Fellowship. Using his research-based training method of the ‘community of inquiry’ [R5, R6] he delivered training to 13 **Thai Higher Education practitioners** across nine universities, resulting in profound changes in curriculum and pedagogic outcomes in a challenging democratic context. Practitioners following the training reported: “*I found myself listening to students more instead of focusing on getting the content across*” and “*the students also gave feedback that they have a more reflective understanding of the topic being discussed. This reflectivity also showed in their writing work*” [S14].

Forstenzer has also worked with numerous **leaders and trainers** from organisations as diverse as the UK Labour Party, the UK Green Party, the National Union of Students, large Silicon Valley tech companies, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and Black Lives Matter. He helped them to understand the role of education in democratic participation and supported them to implement training techniques for staff and students developed by Forstenzer on the basis of his work on democratic pedagogy [R5, R6] [S15].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1. Testimonial letter from The Rt. Hon. the Lord Blunkett
- S2. Testimonial letter from Paul Blomfield, MP.
- S3. Written evidence from Forstenzer for the TEF submission to the BIS Select Committee inquiry ‘Assessing Quality in Higher Education’ and final BIS Select Committee Report.
- S4. Testimonial letter from Sir Keith Burnett, former Vice Chancellor, University of Sheffield.
- S5. Testimonial letter from Zamzam Ibrahim, President, National Union of Students (2019-20).
- S6. Testimonial letter from Magid Magid, MEP.
- S7. Testimonial letter from Alison Wood, Chair of Examiners for AS/A-level Philosophy, AQA.
- S8. Testimonial letter from John Taylor, Director of the Philosophy in Education Project and Assistant Head of Cranleigh School.
- S9. Testimonial letter from Emma Worley, Co-CEO at The Philosophy Foundation.
- S10. Collated media data for Forstenzer and Hobbs.
- S11. Feedback from the Philosophy in Schools conference and the Pursuit of Knowledge conference.
- S12. Testimonial letters from Chris Steadman-South, Head of RE and Philosophy, Silverdale School and Duncan Roberts, then Headteacher, Maple Cross JMI and Nursery School.
- S13. Testimonial letters from those taking part in training led by Forstenzer from Harvard University, University of Crete, University of Bologna.
- S14. Impact on Thai teachers report.
- S15. Testimonial letters from activists and members of the Labour Party, Green Party, Black Lives Matter movement, NUS, Student’s Unions at University of Sussex, Sheffield Hallam University, Quadmark.