One of the great things about the annual PESGB is a sense of shared concern for philosophy of education as an area of study. For students like myself this shared concern is a way into the history of philosophy of education, manifested by the main questions and figures that created its narrative. It is quite fitting then that the pre-conference graduate workshop preceding PESGB’s 50th anniversary was dedicated to reflection on the history and future(s) of our field, and its significance in educational theory and practice.

Patricia White’s talk on ‘Fifty Years of Philosophy of Education: Hot Topics and Neglected Topics’ was a fascinating and engaging session, in which we reflected on the history of our field by examining how the questions that drive philosophers of education have evolved over the years. Patricia treated us to a real historical nugget in the form of a syllabus to an MA seminar entitled: “Forms of Knowledge and the Curriculum” from 1964. Reading the syllabus, which was developed on R.S. Peters’ and Paul Hirst’s conception of philosophy of education, led us to consider the topics that we as philosophers see as under-represented in research. The future of teaching philosophy of education also raised the question of what texts should be included to train new philosophers.

The significance of philosophy of education in teacher training and education studies was also the centre of Stefaan Cuypers’s presentation about different conceptions of philosophy of education. We were sent three ‘impossible’ questions to ponder in advance: What role does, could or should philosophy of education play in relation to educational theory and practice? Which conception of educational philosophy does/could/should play such a role? Could there be and is there one paradigmatic conception of educational philosophy? Stefaan argued for a tolerance between different conceptions of philosophy of education, while reserving the ‘analytic’ paradigm a primary role, because ‘all other conceptions of philosophy of education depend on the analytic one, the latter does not depend on any of the others’. Personally, this statement made me quiver at a dystopian future in which continental philosophers will have to confine themselves to paragraph long sentences.

The fact that the Christopher Cox room was fully packed with graduate participants, as well as the lively conversation during the two presentations, are sufficient proof that as long as we argue, there is a future for philosophy of education. In the end, the workshop was abuzz with discussion about whether any of us will find a job.