

CALL FOR PAPERS



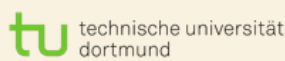
European Seminars in Philosophy of Education (ESPE)

**University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Education
Slovenia**

June 3-4, 2027

This seminar will deal with the theme:

**Knowledge, Trust and the Battle Over
Authority in Education**



Knowledge, Trust and the Battle Over Authority in Education

Across Europe and the world, the authority of knowledge in its different forms and dimensions as well as the nature of epistemic practices of generating, acquiring and conveying knowledge are currently undergoing a radical transformation. The structural transformation of the digital public sphere and the saturation of its infrastructure with AI systems, the replacement of traditional gatekeepers with new ones in the form of big tech companies as well as the contestation and denigration of scientific expertise and even the most basic epistemic standards by political actors, have created a rather confusing and complex sociopolitical and cultural atmosphere. This atmosphere is reflected in concepts that have emerged to make sense of and describe the battle over the authority of knowledge in the last decade, ranging from *post-truth* and *fake news* to *alternative facts*. While the particular problems described by these concepts are certainly not historically new, their joint appearance can be interpreted as expressions of a *Zeitgeist* that is deeply uncertain about what counts as adequate knowledge, who qualifies as legitimate epistemic authority, and which of these different authorities one has reason to trust and which not. Paradoxically, this uncertainty does not go hand in hand with a declining longing for authority. Trust withdrawn from established institutions is frequently redirected to individuals, e.g. influencers, celebrities, self-styled experts and charismatic leaders, who appear authentic and close, and who promise certainty where institutions can only offer fallible knowledge.

These developments and emerging constellations have a significant impact on educational practices and institutions; and this manifests itself as a battle over authority in education. The object of this battle is the legitimate role of different forms of knowledge in education, and it is fought out between states, parents and communities, companies and a variety of other stakeholders in societies that each claim authority over children and young people.

Human beings can only look after each other, the world and themselves when they know who they are, who they could be, and who they should be. Being introduced into the variety of forms and objects of knowledge and understanding is a central part of the education of the new generation. Knowledge is a key prerequisite for initiating new generations into the world as well as for individual autonomy and political self-determination. In this regard, for genuinely social beings, trust in epistemic authorities and the epistemic division of labour are the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge in the broadest sense as well as for orienting themselves in the world morally and politically. The battle over authority in education is hence always both an epistemic and a moral and political battle – a battle about whom to (mis-)trust and why.

The developments described above indicate a crisis of trust in established stakeholders in education, which in turn makes it increasingly difficult to make sense of the role that different forms of knowledge and epistemic practices have in and for education, how they affect pedagogical authority as well as the epistemic functions of schools. The public justification and aura of the school as an institution, for instance, seems to be weakened even more than it already was in previous decades by the multiplication of competing epistemic authorities, from online personalities to AI systems that present themselves as sources of knowledge. Similar things could be said about teachers and also parents in their role as epistemic authorities and representatives of the world.

While one result of the structural transformation of the public sphere brought about by the internet was an increasing pluralization and fragmentation of epistemic authorities, it also led to political polarization which is, among others, based on rampant forms of mistrust concerning ‘elites’ and ‘mainstream media’ cultivated in online communities that created their own ‘worlds’ structured around particular world views or themes – and, conversely, on intense trust in the figures who act as authorities within these communities.

In a world that is perceived to be constantly out of joint, stumbling from one crisis into another and facing a future that is not just uncertain, but looks bleak (not least due to climate change and wars), the nexus of trust and knowledge in education seems to stand on increasingly shaky ground. As a result, the educational construction of a world that one can trust in, which is central for the justification of any type of education, seems an increasingly difficult pedagogical and intergenerational task.

Potential Topics for Contributions Include, Among Others:

- The role and justification of different forms of knowledge and of trust in education, in and outside of schools
- The role and justification of authority in education and its relation to knowledge and trust
- Problems related to epistemic, moral and political authority in education
- The relation between power and knowledge in education
- Epistemic injustice: whose knowledge counts in education, and who is recognized as a knower?
- The relation between trust and mistrust in educational and political epistemology as well as in moral and democratic education
- The longing for authority and the rise of personal and charismatic authorities and its effect on education
- Digital public spheres, platforms and AI as new epistemic authorities and their implications for education
- Neutrality, indoctrination and controversial issues in education
- The purpose of education, the contemporary role of the teacher and challenges to teachers’ authority
- The relationship between families and educational institutions, and how institutions can support parents in dealing with the challenges of the current world
- Case studies, historical or contemporary, that reconstruct battles over authority in education and the role knowledge and trust play in them

Submissions that are ‘off topic’ may be submitted but will only be accepted if there is space in the programme.

The deadline for submissions is 22 January 2027. Submissions should be anonymized as well as sent along with your name, title and affiliation (university and department) in a separate file. Contributors will be informed whether their submissions are accepted by 1 March 2027.

Please send your submissions to:
ESPE_conference@hotmail.com

Submissions are Invited for:

1. Papers (45 minutes):

Submissions of papers must consist of a short abstract of around 150 words for the conference booklet as well as a long abstract of around 500 words for review purposes. Presentations based on the papers should be between 15 and 20 minutes long, allowing for 25-30 minutes of discussion.

2. Contributions to roundtable sessions (30 minutes):

Submissions of papers must consist of a short abstract of around 150 words for the conference booklet as well as a long abstract of around 500 words for review purposes. Contributions for roundtable sessions may include papers that are work in progress as well as posters. Contributors will have 10 minutes to present their papers or posters. After this there will be 20 minutes for discussion.

3. Symposia (90 minutes):

A symposium comprises three papers focused on a single theme. Submissions should consist of an abstract that describes the form and focus of the symposium (around 500 words, including a shorter version of 150 words for the conference booklet) as well as outlines of the three papers (no longer than 150 words each). We welcome symposia that represent perspectives from different European countries.

All submissions must be of unpublished material.

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ESPE Mission Statement

ESPE strives to provide a space for constructive discussion among philosophers of education throughout Europe. Regular (in person) seminars taking place at institutions with which members of ESPE are affiliated offer opportunities for the presentation and critical analysis of work-in-progress. Participation in ESPE is possible by invitation or after the acceptance of a submission to an open Call for Papers. ESPE aims at creating an intellectually vibrant academic community that includes diverse perspectives and is committed to avoiding class-, gender-, nation-, race-, sexuality-based or other forms of discrimination.

For further information, please visit: <https://philosophyineurope.org/>