

Schratz, Michael; Schwarz, Johanna F.; Westfall-Greiter, Tanja

**Looking at two sides of the same coin: phenomenologically oriented vignette research and its implications for teaching and learning**

*Studia paedagogica*. 2013, vol. 18, iss. 4, pp. [57]-73

ISSN 1803-7437 (print); ISSN 2336-4521 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2013-4-4>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/129768>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

# LOOKING AT TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN: PHENOMENOLOGICALLY ORIENTED VIGNETTE RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

MICHAEL SCHRATZ, JOHANNA F. SCHWARZ,  
TANJA WESTFALL-GREITER

## **Abstract**

*This contribution provides insights into learning research conducted at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, where vignette research was developed in a grant-funded project still in progress. It has been designed to gain access to students' learning experiences in the classroom as they occur rather than measuring learning by its outcome. The authors frame the research need out of which this lived experience methodology developed and describe its theoretical foundations in phenomenology. The vignette research is illustrated by a hermeneutic phenomenological vignette reading which explores the impact that explicit and implicit ascriptions have on children's learning as well as on the pedagogical practice of the teacher. The significance of the Innsbruck Vignette Research for research into teaching and learning is presented as well as the relevance of vignette work for teaching and learning and teacher education.*

## **Keywords**

*vignette research, phenomenology, learning, lived experience, attribution, teacher education*

## The Issues and the Research

International large-scale assessments such as TIMMS or PISA have revealed that education systems in German-speaking countries do not succeed in reaching the high levels of academic achievement these countries might have expected. The publication of international comparisons has led to both greater public awareness and discourse regarding the effectiveness of schooling as well as a flurry of activity on the part of policy-makers to improve results in academic achievement. Although these international large-scale assessments provide crucial information on the effectiveness of schooling on the system level, they fail to offer deeper insights into the personal development and academic achievement in and through educational processes (*Bildungsprozesse*) of individual students. Focusing on the measurable results of learning after the complex dynamics of teaching and learning have culminated provides little if any information regarding what has led to these results.

It is not surprising that school effectiveness researchers, currently most predominantly Hattie (2008), claim that schools do not need more data from standardised testing. Based on his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement, he argues that the question of effective teaching cannot be answered without attending to the experience of learning from the perspective of educational processes and suggests that if “the teacher’s lens can be changed to seeing learning through the eyes of students, this would be an excellent beginning” (p. 252). He calls for teachers to find ways to make learning visible so they can evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching before it is too late for the learners.

The following contribution addresses the need and difficulty of accessing both teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin in research. The vignette research developed at the University of Innsbruck is presented as a viable form of research for revealing experience, in particular here the experience of learning. After introducing the foundations of understanding learning *as* experience rather than *out of* experience we present and discuss the theoretical foundations and the methodology of this form of vignette research. An example of a vignette from an Austrian school and a phenomenological reading is drawn upon to formulate implications for teaching and learning.

## Learning and Teaching: Two Sides of the Same Coin

While we would argue that, in the same way that two sides of the same coin are not visible simultaneously, it is not possible to actually see through the eyes of another, it is possible to turn the coin to see what is on any one side at any time. To do so, research must attend to what happens “*lernseits*” of instruction (Schratz, 2009), i.e., in the realm of learning beyond the view of but nonetheless inextricable from teaching. Among others Meyer-Drawe, German pedagogue and phenomenologist, has long been calling for the recognition of the teacher as a central figure in the classroom. If we grasp teaching and learning *as* experience and have a responsive understanding of what happens in the classroom, there is clearly “a need for continuing research which neither underestimates the achievement of the learner nor downplays the role of the teacher” (Meyer-Drawe, 2013, p. 18). The map is not the territory; learning theories—many of which, it could be argued, are actually teaching theories—inevitably fail to predetermine the actual experiences of teaching and learning in the classroom. To gain an understanding of what it means to *actually* teach in real life in real time, teaching cannot be dealt with abstractly, but rather must be brought onto the same plane with the unique lived experiences of individual teachers and students in the moment of actual doing (Westfall-Greiter, 2013).

Hattie (2008) emphasises the personal nature of both teaching and learning and argues that teachers “are among the most powerful influences in learning” (p. 238) considering that “[l]earning is very personal to the teacher *and* to each student” (p. 241). The inextricability of teaching and learning comes into view when they are seen as experience. As Waldenfels (2009) puts it, the success of teachers’ efforts is in the hands of others (p. 32), or in the words of Meyer-Drawe (2010), teaching culminates in the learning of others. The contingent, personal nature of teaching and learning reveals discrepancies on both sides. Since teachers can never switch to the side of the students to fully comprehend what is going on there, and vice versa, exploring the space between teaching and learning requires an appropriate research design aligned to research questions focused on this space.

A team of twelve researchers at the University of Innsbruck set out to capture learners’ experiences in the grant-funded research project “Personal Learning and Development in Diverse Classroom Communities”.<sup>1</sup> The primary interest of going beyond teaching to the experience of the learners

---

<sup>1</sup> Grant Agreement P 222230-G17 and P 225373-G16 of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

required a phenomenological orientation to what occurs in the classroom. This research approach focuses on the learning experience, with particular interest in learning in its nascent state, how the learning process is initiated and culminates. Understanding learning *as* experience (Meyer-Drawe, 2008, 2010) rather than learning as a product *out of* experience, it becomes evident that learning and teaching processes are like two sides of the same coin irrevocably intertwined and codetermining. The research objectives in this project therefore call for a reappraisal of the relation between teaching and learning in which teaching is understood as a responsive, interdependent and relational encounter (Waldenfels, 2009; Meyer-Drawe, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008) that is mindful of learning (Schatz, Schwarz & Westfall-Greiter, 2012). Teachers and students are closely entangled with each other, primarily acting in the presence of others. The events that occur and the experiences each has *in medias res* constitute what it means to teach and to learn.

Gadamer (1987) points out that we can only ever see the side of a thing that is facing us, that to change perspectives involves a circling around the thing in the knowledge that we can only ever see one side from any one perspective (p. 107). Similarly, *lernseits*—a play on *jenseits* meaning “beyond”—draws attention to the back of the coin, as it were. It calls us to recognise the uniqueness of each experience in instructional settings, where teaching and learning occur in an interdependent dynamic. This responsive understanding is at the heart of what it means to go beyond one’s teaching to others’ learning.

As a spatial metaphor, *lernseits* directs attention beyond the doing of the teacher to the doing of the learners and marks a move towards the inaccessible, casting light on the “shadowy existence” of learning (Mitgutsch, 2008, p. 263). From this perspective, teaching is in the shadow of learning without being abstracted or separated from learning. Moving beyond the scope of teaching to learning actually expands the scope of teaching. As a result, the picture of teaching and learning become more complex while the contours of “I and the other” in a classroom become clearer (Westfall-Greiter, 2013).

### A Phenomenological Orientation

As the philosophy of experience, phenomenology provides approaches which enable the development of foundational and applied research oriented to experience. The vignette research presented here is oriented to how something emerges *as* something in perception, performance, action, analysis or imagination. What is given to us is given within specific forms, within limitations (cf. Hua III, 1950) and in specific ways. The first *something* is given only in the significance of the second:

We will never arrive at safe ground behind the phenomena, we always perceive something *as* something; this something is neither there in itself nor just for us. Its different meanings stem from an idiosyncratic space of in-between. Phenomenological attention is particularly oriented to this space of in-between. (Meyer-Drawe, 1993, p. 98)

How to achieve what seems so attractive in phenomenological approaches to exploring experience in a concrete empirical project of school research has been a major challenge in our work. As Schwarz (2013) has claimed, facing the power of the given, helping the silent experience as it were to articulate its mute meaning, and attempting to return to the things themselves<sup>2</sup> is not easily done. To return to the things themselves is according to Merleau-Ponty “a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing” (2002, p. IX). A phenomenological approach is, however, easily trivialised: if it is successful, the difficulty of articulating the mute meaning of experience goes unnoticed; if the articulation is carried out carelessly it is questionable.

The *thing* in Husserl’s famous “to the things themselves” is no thing *per se* but exists in noetic-noematic correlation only (Meyer-Drawe, 2001, p. 69). We always perceive something *as* something. Noema (something), learning in the experiential dimension of student learning in our project, and noesis (perceiving as something), co-experienced student experience, must be integrated. In the multitude of traditions and receptions of Husserlian phenomenology since the 1920s, most approaches take for granted that one universal structure of experience is its intentionality; our attention is always directed to something and never innocent or neutral. How we perceive what occurs at school, be it observing, analyzing, acting, remembering, or—in our research stance—co-experiencing, strongly contributes to the emerging meaning (cf. Schwarz, 2013).

Can we thus return to the thing itself, to the learning experiences of students at school? This is perhaps the wrong question. As researchers in the field we can only access what we perceive as something, what we co-experience as something, and in the ways it articulates itself as the learning experiences of students. This we capture and use as a basis for writing the dense narratives of poignant moments of learning we call “vignettes.” As researchers we cannot simply accept everything that shows itself to us originally (in its corporeal reality, so to speak), as it presents itself, but also

<sup>2</sup> These are translations of quotes in the German original (in: Schwarz, 2013): Sich der „Wucht des Gegebenen“ stellen, der „sozusagen noch stummen Erfahrung [...] zur Aussprache ihres eignen Sinns“ (Husserl, 1950a, p. 77) verhelfen und zur Sache (des Lernens selbst) gelangen? (ibid., p. 6).

within the limitations it presents itself.<sup>3</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty (2002) these limitations are foundational for understanding and thinking since what is not given to us in a distinctive perspective is not given at all:

To return to things themselves is to turn to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (p. IXf)

Similarly, as educational researchers we have learned beforehand what school is all about; consequently, the intent to explore the experiential dimensions of student learning requires a research stance that is both naive and skeptical, aiming simultaneously at bracketing<sup>4</sup> previous understandings and theories as well as critically reflecting on the bias in our attentiveness to the given in the field. This also hints at what proves to be an unresolvable dilemma: By searching for words for the silent, the unarticulated, the corporeal, the co-experienced, we already transform it.

### **Innsbruck Vignette Research: Co-Experiencing, Crafting and Reading**

In research, vignettes are commonly known as fictive case descriptions used in surveys. In our usage as a qualitative, phenomenologically oriented research instrument, the vignette is a thick description (Geertz, 1973), a dense narrative of an event that was protocolled as it occurred. The vignette differs from the other data collection instruments used in this study in that it is produced by the researcher using data from the field. As such, vignettes are a means for the researchers to capture empirically their own experience of the experiences of students at school. They provide experiential information which can be explored in an attempt to understand the experience.

---

<sup>3</sup> Translation of German original (in Schwarz, 2013): Wir sind darauf angewiesen, „alles was sich uns [...] originär (sozusagen in der leibhaftigen Wirklichkeit) darbietet, einfach [hinzunehmen], als was es sich gibt, aber auch nur in den Schranken, in denen es sich gibt.“ (Husserl, 1950b, p. 52)

<sup>4</sup> This refers to Husserl's consistent methodological request to suspend all preconditions and previous theories when attempting to return to experience, to the life-world, to the thing itself (cf. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* (1996, p. 64).

Lived experience research as laid out by van Manen (1990) in the field of education formed the starting point for the Innsbruck Vignette Research, differing from the van Manen approach in that it is based on co-experiencing by researchers in the field (cf. Beekman, 1987) rather than on anecdotes gained through recall. In the first phase of the research project, a team of twelve researchers collected data during three field visits at 24 lower secondary schools in the 2009/10 school year. These schools were all pilot sites in the school reform *Neue Mittelschule* (NMS) which began in Austria in 2008. At each school, the researcher focused on two children in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class who were initially recommended for the study by their teachers based on their perceptions of difference in gender, ethnicity, behavior and achievement. In most cases, these students represented a challenge for the teacher<sup>5</sup>.

### Crafting Vignettes

Lippitz (2003), who has developed phenomenological research methodology for exploring childhood and pedagogical ethics, argues that it is crucial to capture experience methodologically, to reveal the structure of the experience and determine which validity criteria are relevant to the study. Referring to Koch (1994), Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001, p. 529) point out in their discussion of validity in qualitative research that a phenomenological inquiry must attend in particular to explicitness, vividness and thoroughness. Geelan (2006, p. 99) proposes that the validity of phenomenological texts be seen in their ability to initiate resonance in their readers, who are then inspired to reflect on their own practice.

As dense narratives of poignant experiential moments, vignettes function as “resonators of learning” (Schratz, Schwartz, & Westfall-Greiter, 2012, p. 31ff). The purpose of the vignette is not to reconstruct what happened, but rather to recreate the experience. First and foremost, it should initiate an experience in the reader which is as close as possible to that of the researcher’s experience of the students’ experience. This “initiator character” is inherent in phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty notes, and similar to a literary work it is the achievement of painstaking effort “by reason of the same kind

---

<sup>5</sup> We have just embarked on the second phase of the project in which researchers revisited the research sites four years later at the end of lower secondary focusing on remembered lived experience in particular; in this phase an appropriate instrument to capture memories of lived school experiences that entails a similar richness as experiential vignette research is currently being developed.



of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being” (1958, p. xxiv). In this regard, the literary quality of the vignette is unavoidable albeit unfamiliar or even foreign to much of empirical research. It is a delicate task to ensure that as much of the surplus of experience as possible is captured in writing. Researchers face the challenge of articulating in words not only the visible but also the audible and sentient in the field. This articulation entails an aesthetic sensibility in order to recreate as fully as possible an experience in all its dimensions. Researchers strive to manifest and point to the impossible plurality and excesses of life, aware that they paradoxically always see more than that which [they] see; according to Waldenfels (2002, p. 138) there is always a surplus in what we see and hear which cannot be fully articulated in its richness.

As a phenomenological text, the vignette is “a disclosure of the world, rests on itself, or rather provides its own foundation” (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, p. xxiii). The “inchoative atmosphere” of phenomenology is part and parcel of phenomenology’s task to “reveal the mystery of the world and of reason” and “not to be taken as a sign of failure” (p. xxiv). A successful vignette is one which opens to multiple readers and to multiple reading, allowing the context to emerge rather than restricting the reader’s experience to a particular theoretical framework. As a result, any one final interpretation or conclusion is obstructed.

With regard to the full research process, vignettes form an *in-between* in the continuum from raw data to data analysis, a process we refer to as *reading*. While present in the field, researchers direct their attention to the events occurring in the classrooms and attempt to sense particularly important moments by keeping open and allowing themselves to be affected by these occurrences. Rather than adopting a neutral and indifferent research stance, researchers respond to what intrudes upon their attention and capture this stream of experiential data in protocols of lived experience (van Manen, 1990), which then serve as the basis for writing vignettes.

When crafting vignettes, we apply recursive writing processes in several cycles of drafting, revising, and polishing. As a first step, research participants (students in particular, but also teachers) are invited to respond to a “raw vignette” in its first draft,<sup>6</sup> a procedure aimed at communicatively validating them. The ensuing process in the research team is vital to access the essence of the experience of the experience. In groups of at least three, the researcher

---

<sup>6</sup> All researchers were particularly stunned by a majority of utterances such as: “*That’s exactly how it was! Well expressed! Couldn’t say it better!*”

reads aloud a raw vignette and notes resonance from the group members, who engage in a delicate process of probing the use of words and phrases to capture the experience as exactly, vividly and thoroughly as possible.

It is the orchestra of gaze, movement, voice and silence that are essential but are hardest to capture in words. Rather than settle for *goes*, for example, researchers struggle for words to most vividly express how they co-experienced the students' experience. It makes a difference if a student *walks, strolls, skips* or *drags* herself from the teacher's desk back to her own. It conveys a different sensation if a student *looks, stares* or *squints* at something in the room. By a careful choice of words, researchers attempt to express the wide range of pace, tone, gesture and mimicry of lived experience in order to reveal the essential elements of space, time, relation and corporeality.

The question of how to transform the experience into words remains a basic dilemma of this research approach. Although linguistic articulation transforms the co-experienced, it is at the same time necessary to make it accessible for exploration and analysis. The orientation to resonance, explicitness, vividness and thoroughness ensures validity in this endeavor, which must be handled with rigor on the part of the researcher so as not to slip into a subjective exercise.

### Reading Vignettes

Phenomenological analysis attempts to do justice to the multitude and richness of a wide range of sensations rather than interpreting them according to one set pattern. We have come to call this process a *reading*. Phenomenologically oriented researchers engage as readers in reading vignettes and *point to* the phenomena inherent in the experience rather than *point out* definite conclusions and precise findings of analysis stemming from a set theoretical frame (cf. Finlay, 2009). It is essential to refrain from explaining and analyzing when the goal is to reveal the essential structures of a phenomenon. Bracketing is central to this analysis, but it is questionable whether or not it can be fully achieved, no matter how disciplined and rigorously the researcher attempts to do so. In the practice of vignette reading, we therefore follow Waldenfels' recommendation to attempt to extrapolate "*what reveals itself, through how it reveals itself*" (1992, p. 30). This extrapolation is a process of peeling off the different layers of dynamics and subtexts described in the vignette. While expressing something *as something* is the focus in writing vignettes, reading the vignettes requires specific sensitivity to how something reveals itself. Researchers oriented phenomenologically may approach a vignette openly and/or with a specific interest in a specific phenomenon. Currently the phenomena focused upon by individual researchers

in our research team include interruption, practice, normalisation, trust, movement, silence, discipline and attribution. The latter is the focus of the following exemplary reading.

### **A Vignette and a Reading**

The following vignette reading explores first the experience generally and then more specifically the impact of explicit and implicit attributions in teaching and learning:

Hanna is doing the math problems on the worksheet her teacher has distributed to the class. She works deftly and finishes the first tasks quickly. Like most math tasks she has encountered this year, she finds the problems easy. Today she has placed her arm between herself and her neighbor to block his view because he copies from her. Normally she wouldn't mind but yesterday the teacher praised Tom for his work. "Great, Tom! Well done!" she said. Then she had looked over Hanna's work. "And yours is correct, too!" she had said to Hanna. "Copied from Tom, did you?" (Vignette 21, Schratz, Schwarz, & Westfall-Greiter, 2012, p. 67; our translation)

This vignette captures Hanna and Tom sitting at their desk in a math lesson. The teacher is present here only in Hanna's memories of how she had commented on her achievement the day before. We primarily have Hanna's perspective and we see that she blocks Tom's view analysing her work today. Tom is only mentioned as a neighbor beyond the barrier that Hanna forms with her arm. She feels he copies from her, which she would not mind if the teacher had not praised Tom and indicated her own achievements were not due to her own effort and ability.

Hanna is working with ease. She knows what she is doing. The tasks are clear; solving the problems goes quickly. She solves one task after another, getting the work done, completing more than dealing with the math problems at hand. As usual, she finds them easy, like the others she has encountered this year. They pose little challenge for her, little surprise. Hanna is depicted as a student who knows what she is doing and works deftly and quickly. Is she longing for new challenges?

The vignette sparks questions of ethics and justice. Hanna places her arm meaningfully between her neighbor and herself, as if drawing a line between her space and his, her work and his, her math skills and his. Hanna has armed herself, using her arm as armor, as a shield protecting her work from Tom's wandering eyes. Her action can be read as an embodiment of the affront she feels from the teacher's comment the day before. She is "up in arms" at the false accusation, framed in a rhetorical question that left no room for her to

speaking, to answer, to defend herself or set the facts straight. Today her arm is her defense, her way of putting things right, establishing a boundary, a barrier dividing the common work space, separating her from Tom. She is shielding her work, keeping Tom's intrusive glances out. She is keeping her work to herself, refusing Tom admittance, her worksheet no longer open to his field of vision.

Hanna's arm reaches into the past and brings yesterday into today. Hanna has discovered what her teacher sees and does not see in her, that she has to demonstrate her ability in math in a way her teacher can recognise. She tries something new. She blocks out the one whom she is said to have copied from. In so doing, she reveals herself to those who care to notice. Hanna's arm not only marks out her private space and blocks Tom's view but it also could convey a message to her teacher. Is she seeking recognition as the mathematician that she rightly is? Does she expect the teacher to notice her arm? While Hanna encloses her space with her arm and concentrates on her task, she might also be opening up opportunities to clarify things. If the teacher were to seize the potential of the moment and be interested in the meaning of the arm she might take a fresh look at Hanna's capability in math while Tom might respect Hanna and her ownership of her work. A discussion about copying from others might appear, a question arise as to whether Tom is better at math than Hanna.

What kind of experience is it to ascribe ability or inability to someone or to have this ascribed to oneself? The transitive verb *ascribe* refers to a supposed cause, source or author. The most frequent synonyms—*attribute*, *assign*, *impute*, *credit*—indicate qualitative undertones to this basic meaning. *Attribute*, in particular, hints at a tribute that is to be paid when ascribing. Hanna's memory of the day before seems to be acute. The teacher's comment depicted her as a dishonest student, or at least one needing help. How much room did the teacher's "did you?" leave for Hanna to respond? From Hanna's point of view, it is Tom who copies from her, but he is the one who is praised by the teacher for his work while she gets little recognition for her achievements. Even worse, she is accused of dishonesty in finishing the task, springing from the teacher's apparently fixed notions of each child: Tom as the gifted math student and Hanna as the one who makes an effort but needs to copy from others in order to be successful.

Hanna is confronted with double ascriptions in this vignette. She is first depicted as the less gifted mathematician and secondly as a dishonest student. Thus, Hanna is unlikely to be given credit for her work in the teacher's estimation. The teacher's "did you?" in the vignette indicates a need for explaining Hanna's correct answers, which do not coincide with whatever fixed image of Hanna the teacher seems to have. Hanna is pigeonholed, while Tom has no need to justify his own achievements.

If a teacher ascribes (in)ability to a student, what impact does this have on the pedagogical relation? What impact does this have on how the teacher attends to the child, on how the child is acknowledged? Can ascription lead to neglect, isolation and limitation? How does it affect students' learning and teachers' teaching? There is a fine line of distinction between certainty and subjectivity. According to Husserl, ascriptions are *doxic* acts, acts of meaning, opining, thinking or believing rather than categorical statements (Husserl, 1985, p. 60; Waldenfels, 1997, p. 191). Thus, ascribed ability or inability reveals the ascriber's opinion, view, pre-assumption, pre-experience and pre-judgment more than firm evidence.

*Ascribe* is a transitive verb derived from the Latin *adscriber* meaning *to write to*. *Script* derives from the Indo-European base word *skrep*, meaning to engrave. In fact, words for *write* in most Indo-European languages originally meant to carve, scratch, cut (American Heritage Dictionary for the English Language, 2001). Both the English *to write* and the German *schreiben* originate in the basic action of chiseling letters into stones or scratching them in pelts. Waldenfels (1999, p. 34) regards the human body as an original script (*Urskript*) that archives lived experience. He understands the body as an instrument resonating with experience that in old age can be read as a map of life and therefore argues that the ascribed also stays with the ascriber, as does the inscribed and prescribed (*ibid.*, p. 50).

More often uttered than written, ascriptions are also communicated by looks and gestures. In the chapter "Detention with Umbridge" in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, we see an example of written ascription, as the evil Professor Umbridge forces Harry to do lines with a bewitched quill. "I must not tell lies!" is the line he is required to do "as long as it takes for the message to sink in" (Rowling, 2003, p. 240). Instead of ink the quill etches the text into the skin, inflicting the boy with a searing pain each time he writes. The lines "cut into his skin as though traced there by a scalpel" and as Harry stares "at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth" (*ibid.*). At three consecutive detentions Harry endures this torture, to which Umbridge's sweet voice and appearance add a sardonic tone. Only when assuring herself that "the words [were] now cut into his skin" (*ibid.*, p. 247), there as a visible brand, does Umbridge end the punishment.

This fictional scene impressively illustrates what Waldenfels implies. The ascription cuts into Harry's flesh, is etched into his skin. Underlying Harry's lines is the teacher's verdict-like assumption, "Harry Potter is a liar". By having to use the first person singular, Umbridge forces her ascription on Harry, transforming it into a self-ascription. Verdict-like structures as well as the power status of the ascriber significantly increase the impact ascriptions have on others. This is true not only for this literary example but very much

so for an institution like school with its subtle power structures. Students facing others' ascriptions do not dispose of the magic potions Harry and his magician comrades use to undo injury. Perhaps Hanna's arm is her shield against the ones uttered by her teacher and acquiescence is her potion.

While this vignette may not be an example of a learning experience related to math, Hanna's experience is probably educative regarding how she relates to her own work, her peers and her teacher in the face of being wrongly accused or judged. Verdict-like ascriptions construe Tom and Hanna as "the other", the gifted and less gifted mathematician in this vignette, as Mecheril, Schrödter, & Scherschel (2003) argue, attributing recognition along sharp lines of differentiation. There is a fundamental relation between the ascriber and the ascribed if one considers the linguistic structure of the verb, to ascribe something to someone. The teacher reveals herself as the one qualified and entitled to assess mathematical competence, compare Hanna's ability to Tom's and judge the value of their work. If it is true that the ascribed also stays with the ascriber, what impression does this ascription leave on the teacher? How does it affect her? How will it reveal itself in further actions? Will it blind her to Hanna's ability, even when it unfolds in front of her eyes? Or will she see Hanna differently and by extension Tom, too?

### **Implications for Teaching and Teacher Education**

A collection of over 70 vignettes from Phase 1 of this project has been published in German (Schratz, Schwarz, & Westfall-Greiter, 2012) and is being used as a resource in teacher education and professional development programs in the German-speaking world in an attempt to go beyond observable behavior and sensitise practitioners to the manifold experiences which occur in their own classrooms lesson for lesson.

Being mindful of learning means breaking down the myth that school is automatically a place of learning and that learning is the direct result of teaching. To the contrary, as Schratz (1993) found out in his study, learning occurs everywhere in life and the most poignant learning experiences usually occur outside of school without the presence of a teacher. In Meyer-Drawe's exhaustive theoretical work on learning as experience, learning is understood as "an idiosyncratic entanglement in a world to which we respond in that we take on its articulations" (2008, p. 16). She points out that learning cannot be fully instructed. Rather, it is an event, which is not to say that the teacher is superfluous, for the "more he or she knows about the contingent nature of learning, the more he or she will be able to exploit the opportunity of the moment" (Ibid.).

We see the classroom as a space where "pedagogical moments" (van Manen, 1991, p. 187f.) occur, rather than a place where teaching measures are

implemented. By focusing on the lived experiences of learners in the classroom, this research offers data on potentially teachable moments and reveals how learners take on the articulations of the lifeworld at school in order to point to implications for teaching. By attending to the (learning) experience of the others, teaching is suddenly in the shadow of learning without being abstracted or separated from learning, without losing touch with it, as it were. This perspective emphasises responsiveness and recognises intersubjectivity in teaching and learning processes so that ultimately teachers and researchers can gain insight into what it means to actually teach in real life in real time by making visible the impact of teaching—or lack of it—on others.

In order to assess the effectiveness of any practice in education, whether from the inside or outside, information about learning results is simply not enough. On the micro-level of the classroom, teachers need to find ways to make learning visible for themselves (Hattie 2011) so that they can discover and explore the essence of learning experiences which lie beyond the reach of their teaching. While we do not agree that a teacher can ever really see through the eyes of his or her students, vignettes can support the development of a new awareness of individual experiences occurring in the classroom if and when they resonate with readers and lead them to reflect on their own experience.

In addition to using vignettes available from outside sources, Stoll (2013) suggests encouraging teachers and students alike to generate their own, but to do so teachers need to inhabit their own and others' classrooms differently. At the newly founded School of Education at Innsbruck University we are beginning to implement vignette research in teacher education. While as a first step, student teachers are encouraged to similarly co-experience classrooms from a perspective that is mindful of learning (*Lernseits*) and write vignettes on experiential dimensions of student learning during their internships at school, a next step will be to focus on experiential dimensions of teaching. Teaching is an experience as well; apart from observing pedagogic actions of teachers from a sole didactic angle, we intend to encourage student teachers to similarly sense what it means to teach in a particular class (Schratz, & Schwarz, in press). Again, *teach* would be too limiting a word in vignettes to capture the plurality and surplus of lived experiences of teaching. How does teaching *as* experience articulate itself? It makes a difference if teachers *preach*, *hit the message home* or *nudge* students into understanding and expanding their potential. *Boiling with rage*, *stoic contemplation* or *appreciative glances* convey ranges of sensations that point to the widely neglected issue of negative emotions that teachers may feel about having to respond to the differing needs of 25 (and more) buzzing, troublesome, energetic, and revolting adolescents.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> This we owe to Käte Meyer-Drawe, who has been working on such issues for a while.

Vignette research raises the question as to what degree formalised learning at school is an actual learning experience for the learner. While being engaged, asking questions and attempting something are intuitively coherent with everyday notions of learning and recognisable in most people's experience, other activities such as checking off, testing and raising one's hand describe school activities which may or may not indicate learning. As the reading of the Hanna vignette suggests, what she learned in the situation captured by the writer of the vignette may be little new subject matter but how to defend herself from unjust accusations and obtrusive glances of peers. Sensitising teachers to learning as it occurs in their classrooms could include exploring which observable, audible or palpable occurrences might indicate that a learning experience has been initiated or is culminating.

While the Innsbruck Vignette Research is still maturing, we see this approach to lived experience research as a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning, which continues to evolve as new insights are gained. The relationship between teaching and learning is the space in which teacher effectiveness emerges and as such is critical to school research as well as to foundational research into learning. While no adult can see through the eyes of a child, phenomenologically oriented methodology such as this vignette research can shed light on this often overlooked space and the experiences that occur there. Nonetheless, it is evolving and continues to be developed at the University of Innsbruck, as is our understanding of teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin.

## References

- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. (2001). Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Beekman, T. (1987). Hand in Hand mit Sasha. In W. Lippitz & K. Meyer-Drawe (Eds.), *Kind und Welt* (pp. 11–38). Frankfurt a. Main: Athäneum.
- Finlay, L. (2009). Debating Phenomenological Research Methods. *Phenomenology and Practice*, 3(1), 6–25.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1987). *Gesammelte Werke: Band 3. Neuere Philosophie 1: Hegel-Husserl-Heidegger*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Geelan, D. (2006). *Undead Theories. Constructivism, Eclecticism and Research in Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publications.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Hattie, J. (2011). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. London: Routledge.
- Husserl, E. (1950a). *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*. Haag: Nijhoff.



- Husserl, E. (1950b). *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Haag: Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1996). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie: eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Husserl, E. (1985). *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- Koch, T. (1994). Establishing rigour in qualitative research: The decision trail. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 24(1), 174–184.
- Lippitz, W. (2003). *Differenz und Fremdheit. Phänomenologische Studien in der Erziehungswissenschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- Mecheril, P., Schrödter, M., & Scherschel, K. (2003). 'Ich möchte halt von dir wissen, wie es ist du zu sein'. Die Wiederholung der alienierenden Zuschreibung durch qualitative Forschung. In T. Badawia, F. Hamburger, & M. Hummrich (Eds.), *Wider die Ethnisierung einer Generation. Beiträge zur qualitativen Migrationsforschung* (pp. 93–110). Frankfurt am Main: IKO-für Interkulturelle Kommunikation.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1958). *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.
- Meyer-Drawe, K. (1993). 'Die Welt betrachtet die Welt' oder: Phänomenologische Notizen zum Verständnis von Kinderbildern. In H.-G. Herrlitz & Ch. Rittelmeyer (Eds.), *Exakte Phantasie. Pädagogische Erkundungen bildender Wirkungen in Kunst und Kultur* (pp. 93–104). Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Meyer-Drawe, K. (2001). *Leiblichkeit und Sozialität. Phänomenologische Beiträge zu einer pädagogischen Theorie der Inter-Subjektivität*. München: Wilhelm Fink.
- Meyer-Drawe, K. (2008). *Diskurse des Lernens*. München: Wilhelm Fink.
- Meyer-Drawe, K. (2010). Zur Erfahrung des Lernens. Eine phänomenologische Skizze. *Santalka. Filosofija*, 18(3), 6–16.
- Meyer-Drawe, K. (in print). Treffpunkte oder über die Täuschung, Schülerinnen und Schüler dort abholen zu können, wo sie sind. In E. Christof & J. F. Schwarz (Eds.), *Lernseits des Geschehens. Über das Verhältnis von Lernen, Leben und Leiten*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag.
- Mitgutsch, K. (2008). Lernen durch Erfahren: Über Bruchlinien im Vollzug des Lernens. In K. Mitgutsch, E. Sattler, K. Westphal & M. Breinbauer (Eds.), *Dem Lernen auf der Spur: Die pädagogische Perspektive* (pp. 263–277). Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Rowling, J. K. (2003). *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Schratz, M., Schwarz, J. F., & Westfall-Greiter, T. (2012). *Lernen als bildende Erfahrung: Vignetten in der Praxisforschung*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag.
- Schratz, M. (1993). Lerngeschichten als Lebensgeschichten? Sondierungsversuche aus sterreichischer Sicht. In H. Siebert, H. Griese, & O. Czerniawska (Eds.), *Lernprojekte Erwachsener* (pp. 92–140). Baltmannsweiler: Schneider.
- Schratz, M. (2009). Lernseits von Unterricht. *Lernende Schule*, 12(46–47), 16–21.
- Schwarz, J. F. (2013). 'Zu den Sachen selbst?' Potential, Grenzen und Anschlussmöglichkeiten phänomenologischer Zugänge in Forschung und Lehre in der LehrerInnenbildung. In R. Brandl, Ch. Kraler & K. Reich (Eds.), *Interinstitutionelle und interdisziplinäre Lehrerbildungsforschung* (in press). Münster: Waxmann.
- Schwarz, J. F., & Schratz, M. (in press). Hospitieren – Beobachten – Miterfahren. Die Forschungshaltung in der Innsbrucker Vignettenforschung. *Journal für LehrerInnenbildung*, 14(1).

- Stoll, L. (2013). Beyond the reach of teaching: Vignette research of learning as experience. *Symposium at the International Conference on School Effectiveness and Improvement*. Santiago. 3–6 January 2013.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2008). *The differentiated school: Making revolutionary changes in teaching and learning*. Alexandria: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.
- Waldenfels, B. (1992). *Einführung in die Phänomenologie*. Paderborn: Fink.
- Waldenfels, B. (1997). *Topographie des Fremden. Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 1*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Waldenfels, B. (1999). *Vielstimmigkeit der Rede. Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 4*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Waldenfels, B. (2002). *Bruchlinien der Erfahrung. Phänomenologie, Psychoanalyse, Phänomentechnik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Waldenfels, B. (2009). *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen*. Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp.
- Westfall-Greiter, T. (in print). Contemplating One's Way beyond Teaching: "Lernseits" as Personal Imperative: A perspective on Michael Schratz' scholarly paths to grasping teaching and learning on the occasion of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. In E. Christof & J. F. Schwarz (Eds.), *Lernseits des Geschehens. Über das Verhältnis von Lernen, Lehren und Leiten*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag.
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research* 11(4), 522–537.

## Corresponding authors

### Michael Schratz

School of Education, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
E-mail: michael.schratz@uibk.ac.at

### Johanna F. Schwarz

Center for Learning Research, Department of Teacher Education and School Research,  
University of Innsbruck, Austria  
E-mail: johanna.schwarz@uibk.ac.at

### Tanja Westfall-Greiter

National Center for Learning Schools for the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture, Vienna,  
School of Education, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
E-mail: tanja@mehrsprache.eu

