Beyond the Reach of Teaching and Measurement: Methodology and Initial Findings of the Innsbruck Vignette Research

Más allá de la enseñanza y la medición: la metodología y las primeras conclusiones de la investigación con viñetas de la Universidad de Innsbruck

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

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Abstract

This contribution provides insights into the learning research being conducted at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, where the "Innsbruck Vignette Research" was developed. The research methodology, findings and potentials were presented to a broad international audience for the first time at the ICSEI Conference 2013 in Santiago, Chile. The vignette research was developed in a grant-funded project still in progress and is designed to gain access to students' learning experiences in the classroom as they occur. The authors frame the research need out of which the methodology developed and describe the theoretical foundations of this particular form of qualitative phenomenologically grounded methodology. The vignette research is illustrated by a vignette reading. The significance of the Innsbruck Vignette Research for research into teaching and learning is presented, as well as the extended development of the "vignette-driven interview" as a research method. Finally, the relevance of vignette work for teacher education and system development is discussed, including its application thus far in teacher qualification programs and professional learning communities in a nationwide school network of teacher leaders.

Keywords: vignette research, phenomenology, learning, lived experience

Post to:
Michael Schratz
School of Education, University of Innsbruck
Innrain 52 A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria
Email: michael.schratz@uibk.ac.at

Resumen

Esta investigación contribuye al entendimiento del estudio sobre aprendizaje que está realizando la Universidad de Innsbruck en Austria, donde se llevó a cabo la „Investigación con viñetas de Innsbruck". La metodología, hallazgos y proyecciones de la investigación fueron presentados por primera vez a un gran público internacional en el Congreso ICSEI 2013 (Congreso Internacional para la Efectividad y el Mejoramiento Escolar) en Santiago de Chile. La investigación con viñeta se ideó como parte de un proyecto subvencionado que aún sigue en proceso y que se ha diseñado para adquirir un mayor entendimiento sobre las experiencias de aprendizaje de los alumnos en la escuela, a medida que ocurren. Los autores explican la justificación de la investigación a partir de la cual se creó la metodología del estudio y además describen las bases teóricas de esta forma particular de metodología cualitativa fenomenológica. Se dan ejemplos de la investigación con viñetas mediante la lectura de viñetas. Se presenta la importancia de la investigación con viñetas de Innsbruck para el estudio de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, así como la contribución adicional de la „entrevista por viñetas" como un método de investigación. Finalmente, se analiza la relevancia del trabajo con viñetas en la formación de profesores y en el progreso del sistema educacional, donde se incluye su aplicación actual en los programas de formación de profesores y en las comunidades de aprendizaje profesional, a lo largo de una red escolar de profesores líderes a nivel nacional.

Palabras clave: investigación con viñetas, fenomenología, aprendizaje, experiencia vivida

Today's school effectiveness efforts are largely driven by measurements of learning outcomes both on national and international levels, most predominantly through standardized tests such as TIMSS or PISA. Ideally, such testing provides data not only on the actual learning outcomes measured but also the impact of the school and system regarding socioeconomic factors. This information should stimulate school improvement efforts by providing a body of evidence which informs strategically focused measures with a view towards creating better learning outcomes. In this evidence-informed management approach in which school quality is articulated in test scores, a common response is fear if schools fail to reach achievement goals, particularly when reward and punishment schemes and a mental model of uniformity underlie system monitoring. As Biesta (2012) observes, "we can see schools and school systems transforming themselves into the definition of education that 'counts' in systems like PISA, the result of it being that more and more schools and school systems begin to become the same" (p. 10).

With the focus on testing for system monitoring purposes it is easy to overlook the inadequacy of such measurements for yielding insights relevant to the day-to-day work of teachers in the classroom. Further, because large-scale international and national measurements are taken after teaching and learning have occurred, they can contribute little to the development of practical solutions for improving quality in the classroom, where the teacher's actions and interventions influence the type and quality of learning experience that leads to those measurable learning outcomes. Even on the classroom level, summative assessments of learning provide little information for improving quality, because planned teaching and learning processes have already culminated and come to closure. Such information comes too late for the teacher to act responsively and proactively. The emphasis on measurable outcomes tends to ignore learning in its nascent state, as the process is set in motion and culminates; what happens in learning processes is rarely the focus of attention, a trend which can even lead to a distorted understanding of what learning is:

> Learning itself comes predominantly into view in the form of results, as in long-term neuronal connections from a neuroscientific perspective or in the building of memory within the framework of cognition theory and its assumptions. The process itself withdraws from our attention both life-worldly and scientifically (Meyer-Drawe, 2010, p. 9).

Mitgutsch (2008) reveals the structures of the learning experience and points to learning as a phenomenon which leads a "shadowy existence" (p. 263). If we understand learning as experience (Meyer-Drawe, 2008, 2010) rather than learning as a product out of experience, we see that learning and teaching processes are irrevocably intertwined and codetermining (Schratz, 2009; Schratz, Schwarz, & Westfall-Greiter, 2012). Similarly, Hattie (2011) emphasizes the invisible nature of learning and the OECD's current "Innovative Learning Environments" (Istance, 2013; OECD, 2012) project poses the

essential question for evaluating innovation: "What do the learners experience in this learning trajectory?" Such questions direct attention to the learning experience, a subject par excellence for phenomenology (Meyer-Drawe, 2008).

A phenomenological approach

As the philosophy of experience, phenomenology is the foundation of the lived experience research laid out by van Manen (1990) in North America, which is conducted in the fields of psychology, medicine and education, where the question of a particular experience is the research focus. The Innsbruck Vignette Research discussed in this contribution is a phenomenological approach to empirical school research which attempts to capture the experiences of students in school as they occur in an effort to shed light on learning as it is set in motion and culminates. To gain understanding of the complexities of what occurs in the classroom an approach is needed that "captures and records the voices of the lived experience … goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances … presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of the social relationship that joins to one another (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). 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. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle point out in their discussion of validity in qualitative research that a phenomenological inquiry must attend in particular to explicitness, vividness and thoroughness (2001, p. 529). Decisions throughout the research process, from design to fieldwork to interpretation must be congruent with the research question. Geelen 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 (2006, p. 99). Bracketing is central to any phenomenological analysis; as Waldenfels recommends, researchers should honor the uniqueness of their own and others' experience while simultaneously consciously ignoring it as they attempt to extrapolate "what reveals itself, through how it reveals itself" (1992, p. 30).

The research methodology presented here was developed in Phase 1 of the grant-funded research project "Personal Learning and Development in Diverse Classroom Communities"[1], which was linked to the Austrian school reform pilot Neue Mittelschule ("New Secondary School" [NMS]) initiated in 2008 by the Minister of Education[2]. The initial study (Phase 1) aimed at capturing the experiences of students in everyday school life in order to explore phenomena of learning as constitutive of personal educational processes and thereby draw learning out of its shadowy existence. Suspending the common assumption that learning takes place at school (one goes to school, ergo one learns), the inquiry of the larger project in which this study is embedded is driven by the following questions: What happens at school? What is the nature of students' specific experiences at school? What is the educative impact of a specific experience? Can it be called a learning experience, and, if so, how does the learning experience reveal itself?

The researchers[3] specifically studied diverse classroom communities at 24 NMS sites across Austria by collecting data in grade 5 classrooms at three time points during the 2009/10 school year (October 2009, January 2010, May 2010). Each researcher spent two days in the field during each visit to obtain data, attending to two students recommended by the teachers with the agreement of the students and their guardians. A mix of qualitative data collection instruments was used to gain multi-perspective insights into students' experiences: protocols of lived experience (van Manen, 1990); conversations with the students, their guardians and their teachers; student focus group discussions (Bohnsack 2004; Morgan 1998); photo documentation by the students and document analysis of learning products selected by the students and their teachers. In addition, researchers kept reflective journals to document their own experiences, responses and inferences while in the field.

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[1]   Grant Agreement P 222230-G17 of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).
[2]   The reform pilot was a response to the negative impacts of tracking lower secondary students in grade 5, most predominantly the discriminatory practices which restrict access to higher education for a significant number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Tracking occurred in two ways: two different school forms for the lower secondary level (the 8-year academic-track Gymnasium and the 4-year Hauptschule) as well as tracking of three levels or streams in the Hauptschule. The NMS reform pilot was open to both school forms and suspended all tracking, with the explicit goal of raising academic achievement to ensure access to higher education for a greater number of students. The NMS has since become a mandated school reform for all Hauptschule, but policymakers failed to achieve a single middle school for all and two school forms still remain in the system at the lower secondary level. Gymnasium schools can opt in under the NMS legislation.
[3]   Eleven doctoral students and a post doc at the School of Education at Innsbruck University were involved in the field research as part of Phase 1.

Developing methods for co-experiencing and protocoling lived experiences was essential in light of the inquiry goals of this study. Obtaining experiential data of students in the classroom was a prerequisite for exploring the educative (learning) experiences at school. In light of the dilemma that the researcher can never experience the experience of others, it is clear that no methodology can fully achieve this goal. We argue, however, that through co-experiencing and protocoling it is possible to capture experiential data and that this "inter-experience" is the closest a researcher can come to others' experience. In his social phenomenology Laing (1967) described the entangled nature of "inter-experience" as the relation between my experience of you (i.e. "you-as-I-experience-you") and your experience ("me-as-you-experience-me") (pp. 15-16). While my experience is invisible to you and vice versa,

> I cannot avoid trying to understand your experience because although I do not experience your experience, […] yet I experience you as experiencing. […] I experience myself as experienced by you. And I experience you as experiencing yourself as experienced by me. And so on. The study of the experience of others is based on the inferences I make, from my experience of you experiencing me, about how you are experiencing me experiencing you experiencing me… (Laing, 1967, p. 16).

Attempting to capture (learning) experiences in statu nascendi means that both learners and researchers are affected by the experience in the midst of the event. While school is happening to the students, the experience of a student is happening to the researcher. Neither can reflect on it as it occurs. Rather, learning as an event is something that one undergoes, and in the throes of experience it is impossible to simultaneously be participant and observer. Nonetheless the researcher has a particular stance in the field which directs his or her attention. In line with the research goals and theoretical-philosophical foundations of this research project, researchers take on a phenomenological stance in which they bracket assumptions, theories and understandings and remain open to being affected by others' experience. They go beyond observation and rely on their own sensing, specifically attending to pathic elements such as facial and bodily expressions and tone of voice or silence, which they record in protocols as a stream of experiential data (van Manen, 2002). This experiential data is the primary source for writing the experience in a phenomenological text.

Vignettes as experiential information

This phenomenological text we call a "vignette". 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) 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 participatively, that is engaged and unindifferently, 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.

While van Manen's (1990) anecdotes are based on recall, our vignettes stem from researchers co-experiencing in the midst of the pedagogic situation, in medias res. The vignette provides unavoidably mediated access to a fundamentally alien perspective —that of the student— to allow the experience to come into view. When Bakhtin (1993) claims that an event "can be described only participatively" (p. 32) he is pointing to the necessity of being engaged in or "unindifferent" to the event itself. This creates a dilemma for researchers when the expectation of the scientific community is to maintain objectivity, often manifested as indifference, in order for research to be acknowledged as legitimate and sound science. Yet, following Bakhtin's argumentation, objectification will not lead to the insights of what it means to be a learner, to actually act as a learner:

> … neither theoretical cognition nor aesthetic intuition can provide an approach to the once-occurrent real Being of an event, for there is no unity and no interpenetration between the content/sense (a product) and the act (an actual historical performance) in consequence of the essential and fundamental abstracting-from-myself qua participant in the course of establishing meaning and seeing (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 18).

This abstracting-from-oneself necessarily transforms the experience. Van Manen (1990) addresses the reflective nature of all descriptions as transformations, noting that even "life captured directly on magnetic or light-sensitive tape is already transformed at the moment it is captured … [the experiences] have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence" (p. 54). The vignette faces challenges similar to all

research relying on human recall or recollection, whether qualitative or quantitative. Researchers must therefore be mindful of both their protocolling as well as their writing as an act of transformation. It goes unsaid that capturing experiences for purposes of research is a complex task, in particular when children are involved. "The impossibility of seeing with the eyes of a child or adolescent forces us to expose ourselves to the alien" (Meyer-Drawe, 2010, p. 11). Learner utterances such as "Argh!", "This is so hard!", or "I get it!" are audible and thus traceable articulations of student learning and understanding, but much of experiential articulation, like knowledge (Polanyi, 1962), is not and cannot be verbalized. Teachers know and recognize these non-verbal articulations —their own excitement when students beam with accomplishment or move fluidly while working with full concentration, as well as their own discomfort when they notice slouched shoulders, grimaces and fidgeting.

It is this full experience beyond the verbal which vignettes attempt to convey. 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 experience is the authority, and the "inchoative atmosphere" of phenomenology is "not to be taken as a sign of failure" but rather is part and parcel of phenomenology's task to "reveal the mystery of the world and of reason" (p. xxiv). When crafting vignettes, researchers strive to recreate rather than reconstruct the lived (school) experience of students. Because writing is an individual process, the writing process for vignettes cannot be standardized. The vignettes do, however, undergo critical processes for assessing their quality according to vividness, wholeness and authenticity. Vividness (Burns & Grove, 1997, 2009) refers to the power of the vignette to relay an experience as immediately and palpably as possible. Wholeness refers to the dramaturgy of the full experience and its ability to serve as its own foundation. Authenticity refers to the recognizability of the experience for the reader, the resting upon itself of the experience, which is indicated by the reader's "phenomenological nod". Van Manen (1990) cites a lecture by Prof. Buytendijk in Utrecht when discussing the term "phenomenological nod", attributing it to him. To our knowledge there is no publication which can be cited; the term is often falsely attributed to van Manen in citations.

Oriented to the protocol of experiential data, researchers condense data including, where relevant, data from conversations and focus groups to depict the experience as vividly, fully and authentically as possible. Drafts are communicatively validated with research participants when possible and always with other researchers in a dialogic process with the goal of getting as close to the experience as possible. We have employed several methods for this process, including deep reading with line-by-line questions and reader response methods, but open probing oriented to vividness, wholeness and authenticity, in which questions regarding actions, word choice, dramaturgy and verbal articulations of the non-verbal are posed, has proven the most effective.

The vignette in our research is most accurately understood as a form of literary non-fiction in which 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" (Waldenfels 2002, p. 70). The crux of vignette research is that the researchers withhold from predicating the text with knowledge of the context so that the context inherent in the experience can come forth from within. In this way, vignettes open to multiple readers and to multiple readings. This self-contextualization of the experience obstructs any one final interpretation or conclusion, so that the reader is compelled to engage again and again in dialog with what is there.

It is a delicate task to ensure that as much of the surplus of experience as possible is captured in writing. In this regard, the literary quality of the vignette is unavoidable albeit unfamiliar or even alien to much of empirical research. Researchers from other traditions or methodologies are tempted to associate the methodology with what is familiar, such as reconstructive and narrative approaches, but this can be misleading. The purpose of the vignette is less to reconstruct than to evoke in the reader an experience that is as close as possible to that of the researcher's experience of the experience of the students experiencing school. This "initiatory character" is inherent in phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty (1958) notes, and similar to a literary work is the achievement of painstaking effort "by reason of the same kind 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" (p. xxiv).

Reading the vignette

Once vignettes have been crafted, they become the focus of phenomenologically oriented explication, a process which we refer to as "vignette reading." As Finlay (2009), drawing on Gadamer (1975), emphasizes, an appropriate interpretation of data in the phenomenological tradition is one which "points to" phenomena of experience rather than "points out" findings of analysis (p. 11). In reading a vignette, researchers neither operationalize nor categorize what is revealed. Rather, they engage in the experience as readers, holding back from analyzing and explaining in order to uncover, peel off and add layers of understanding to what is given. We offer here a vignette and a brief reading as an example of this practice.

Vignette 42

It is the math lesson and the teacher is engaged in explaining the task in detail. Dominik turns his face to her. Minutes later he turns to his neighbour Daniel and whispers something to him. Both laugh softly. They open their books, lay one of them in the middle of the desk they share together and begin to work in their notebooks. "Don't forget the heading and the date. Make sure that you write the number of the task in your notebooks!" While the teacher continues to give instructions for copying the task into their notebooks, Dominik and Daniel have already begun to work. They laugh often. Then suddenly there is a faltering, they are tripped up by a math problem. Something is not right with their calculation. The boys confer. They shake their heads. Dominik's hand goes up. The teacher is explaining to another student once again how to do the work properly. Dominik holds his hand in the air, all the while discussing alternatives with Daniel. "That's how it could work!" Both boys work through the solution in Dominik's notebook. Dominik lowers his hand. Soon they are in agreement: That must be correct! They both nod and give one another a high-five. Daniel sets to copying the problem into his own notebook.

Daniel and Dominik are in math class. Their teacher is giving instructions and seems concerned with completeness and neatness. Is she responding to what she discovered the last time she corrected them? Is the information incomplete, the work messy? Daniel and Dominik do not seem to feel addressed by the details coming from their teacher. Dominik has turned his face to her, but is he really listening? The boys seem eager to get started and begin before she has finished speaking. They work together, sharing a textbook between them, doing the tasks together in one notebook. An intimate space emerges around the boys' desk. They laugh often as they work through the problems. Is it the math that is fun or is it the working together or both? It feels like a familiar routine, this working together on math problems at school.

The work goes smoothly. The boys know how to solve the problems and work along without ado, until the flow is interrupted. They get stuck, falter. Something is wrong. The problem is not working, their solution is met with resistance. They seem to be seriously tripped up because Dominik raises his hand, signalling to the teacher occupied elsewhere that they need help. But the boys do not let that stop them. They do not wait but continue discussing, apparently seeking solutions. Then the breakthrough comes: It could work like this! They try out their idea. Dominik lowers his hand. They are no longer in need of help. Will their idea work? Have they found the solution? Apparently, because the result seems right, it must be correct. They celebrate their accomplishment, giving one another a high-five, mutually congratulating one another for working it out. Then Daniel copies their work into his notebook, evidence of his own effort in its rightful place.

Is the teacher aware of this working together? Does she approve of it? Encourage it? The appearance of the notebooks and how students present their work is important to her. What about the work itself? She does not seem concerned about the boys working together and they seem to be ideal partners. There is familiarity and playfulness, both with one another and the situation. They laugh as they work, having fun, but still working seriously. Have they learned something through the sticky problem? Have they gained new mathematical insight by overcoming the initial resistance to their first solution?

It is impossible to know if this experience is a learning experience for the boys. Experts can also get stuck, find a solution and move on. What does come to light, however, is what occurs beyond the reach of the teacher's teaching. The boys' whispers and laughter, their struggle and triumph seem to escape the teacher's attention, while she is occupied with organizational matters and responding to the needs of other students. Yet they are aware of her presence and signal their need for help when no solution is in sight. What keeps them engaged in their own seeking? They could just wait for their teacher to respond to Dominik's hand and come to their desk, but they do not. The boys stay with the challenge posed by the problem. What solutions do they consider? How many attempts do they make before they are successful? Were they successful? What mathematical knowledge allows them to judge their work as correct?

Implications

Perhaps the previous vignette and reading are disappointing or disillusioning for the reader expecting powerful examples of students learning in school. We therefore begin our discussion of implications for teacher education and further research with a vignette of our own experience in the research team, as we worked with the first vignettes:

Vignette, no number

At a research meeting after the first field phase the researchers struggle to articulate the phenomena of learning in the data they have just obtained. Nadine reads one of her vignettes to the group and announces that here learning reveals itself as having fun. Josef blurts out indignantly, "Where is learning here and what does it have to do with fun?" Everyone is irritated. A fierce discussion unfolds around the question of what learning is. "Repeating what has been learned," suggests Ingrid. "Listening to the teacher?" Anne thinks aloud. "Filling in worksheets," adds Birgit somewhat ironically. Peter continues the list: "Paying attention and working with concentration." Finally Tanja asks no one in particular, "Is that learning, and if it is, what kind of learning?" A dismayed silence fills the room. Michael breaks it. "If we rigorously orient ourselves to the child's learning, we shouldn't impose adult understandings on their experiences. We have to listen in a differentiated manner —and clarify our own understanding of what learning is," he says, closing the discussion for now.

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. On the contrary, as Lippitz (Personal communication, October 1, 2009) observed in an email to a member of the research team, 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" (Meyer-Drawe, 2008, p. 16).

We see the classroom as a space where "pedagogical moments" (van Manen, 1991, p. 187) 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 it being abstracted or separated from learning, without losing touch with it, as it were. This perspective emphasizes responsivity and recognizes 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 the others.

The question as to how learners experience the learning trajectory of an environment posed by the OECD (Istance, 2013) is part of an emerging pattern echoing Michael Schratz's attempt to steer attention to learning by coining "lernseits" in the German-speaking world, Hattie's (2008) plea for making the invisible visible through self-evaluation and Tomlinson's (2008) call to "disaggregate 'the student'" in the context of differentiated instruction. 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. In addition to using vignettes available from outside sources, Stoll (Schratz, Schwarz, Westfall-Greiter, Earl, & 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. As Laing argues, the "relation between experience and behaviour is the stone that the builders will reject to their peril. Without it the whole structure of our theory and practice must collapse" (1967, p. 17).

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 sensitize practitioners to the manifold experiences which occur in their own classrooms lesson for

lesson. Stoll (Schratz, Schwarz, Westfall-Greiter, Earl, & Stoll, 2013) sees the potential of the vignette for stimulating conversations about teaching and learning, challenging assumptions and helping teachers to create knowledge in the context of professional learning communities. To do so, we have created processes for practitioners to work with vignettes (Schratz, Schwarz, & Westfall-Greiter, 2012) stemming from our system development work with NMS teachers. One such process designed for professional learning community work focuses on differentiating notions of learning:

Reading 1: "Learning as …"

1. Read the vignette and attend to how it resonates with you. What is happening? What kind of experience emerges? How does the atmosphere feel? What resonance or irritation do you sense?
2. With the group, address the question: How does learning appear in this vignette? Stay as close to the experience of the learner(s) as possible and attempt to analyze the facets of learning. Complete "Learning as …" with verbs, to differentiate among them.
3. Dialogue: What do these insights into students' experiences mean for my practice? How can we further differentiate our understanding of learning?

We have documented the results of this process in our own work with some 600 teachers and the result is a register (Table 1) currently containing over 100 verbs differentiating among the many facets of learning experience at school.

Table 1
Register "Learning as…"

checking off	finishing	copying
working alone	acquiring behaviours	seeking recognition
seeking acceptance	trying	applying
working	avoiding work	procrastinating
directing one's attention	raising one's hand	correcting
revising	executing instructions	filling in/completing
trying out	following instructions	being focused/engaged
making effort	observing	being involved
illustrating something	discussing	sticking with it
gaining insight	developing	experiencing
being successful	recognizing	explaining
testing/proving something	making mistakes	asking questions
following trains of thought	working against the clock	acting/taking action
showing	helping others	seeking help
questioning something	building identity	informing
challenging something	pausing / reflecting	going down the wrong track
being irritated	struggling	competing
checking	correcting	fulfilling tasks
achieving	performing	reading
solving	finding solutions	talking with others
being frustrated	dealing with frustration	participating
being courageous	imitating	echoing
feeling irritated	structuring	pursuing perfection
trying out	seeking advice	struggling for insight
failing	gaining momentum	belittling oneself
adapting	engaging in something	challenging oneself
measuring oneself	positioning oneself	assessing oneself
encouraging oneself	becoming aware of oneself	overcoming oneself
expressing oneself	correcting oneself	exchanging
proving oneself	concentrating	carving out space for oneself
playing	following rules	sensing
being amazed	being quiet/still	sensing coherence
finding strategies	applying strategies	training
doing	practicing	using instructions
checking over	comparing	dealing with set-backs
communicating something negative	understanding	trying/attempting something
despairing	perceiving	judging / assessing
vying for something	undergoing something	repeating
wanting to	showing	using time
listening	testing	

This list raises the question as to what degree formalized learning at school is an actual learning experience for the learner. While being engaged, asking questions or attempting something are intuitively coherent with everyday notions of learning and recognizable 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. Sensitizing teachers to learning as it occurs in their classrooms could include a critical examination of the register to determine which observable, audible or palpable occurrences might indicate that a learning experience has been initiated or is culminating.

As Earl (Schratz, Schwarz, Westfall-Greiter, Earl, & Stoll, 2013) points out, in a time of innovation there is a need to first describe what occurs in innovations and examine their impact before making decisions on the system level about spread and speed of an innovation. As an advisor to the OECD's Innovative Learning Environments, she emphasizes the contextual nature of innovation in education and how it is small-scale and messy. The vignette model is in her view a viable alternative for describing without judging, enabling teachers to explore what they think they understand and reveal layers of meaning they cannot see while in the grips of teaching. In this regard, we are currently experimenting with vignettes as an evaluation tool both for external evaluation and assessment of innovation as well as for internal self-evaluation on the part of the teacher. Austria's contribution to the third phase of the OECD's Innovative Learning Environments project (Westfall-Greiter, 2013) will be to use vignettes as an evaluation tool. Practitioners trained in protocolling lived experience and vignette writing will participate in professional learning communities and capture experiences in order to gain insight into adult learning in this context.

Insofar as the vignette research evolved over three years in Phase 1 of the grant-funded project, there are still several aspects needing refinement. Co-experiencing and protocolling are methodologies which require training and we are just now gaining insights into these processes with the expansion of the vignette research at two partner institutions. In addition, vignettes have already been applied as a research tool for exploring adult learning by Kahlhammer (2012), who has developed a vignette-driven interview. Following the Innsbruck methodology, vignettes of participants' experiences in a nationwide qualification program for teacher leaders were written and explicated in readings, but they were also used as the basis for interviews with program developers. These interviews were conducted with two interviewees and driven solely by vignettes. Rather than asking prepared questions oriented to predetermined issues, the researcher presented a vignette and facilitated the discussion between the interviewees, who were oriented to the actual experiences of participants rather than preconceived notions of what should occur in the qualification program. A dynamic of "to the things themselves" was set in motion and the interviews yielded data regarding adult learning, leadership and system development which would not have been revealed if prepared questions about the program had been used. In their feedback after the interview, interviewees claimed they had gained new insights from the discussion.

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 contingency 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.

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