

## Polanyi Society Zoom Sessions

**“Polanyi’s Personal Knowledge: A Paradigmatic Framework for the Empirical Analysis of Tacit Knowing”**

**Clemens Wiesner (Aarhus University, Denmark)**

**Comments: Oliver Kauffmann (Aarhus University, Denmark)**

**Tim Simpson (Morehead State University)**

**February 27, 2023**

Below are materials prepared for the Zoom session of February 27, 2023 as well as a recording of the session. The recording is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes long. Posted materials are for non-commercial use of scholars and students.

This Zoom session focused on Clemens Wiesner’s recent work using Polanyi’s ideas as a framework for empirical studies concerned with the education of teachers. Wiesner led the session and Oliver Kaufmann and Tim Simpson commented on Wiesner’s opening description (using a PowerPoint) of his project.

You will find at the bottom of this page (1) a link for a recording of the session that is on the Zoom Cloud as well (2) another link for the same recording on the Polanyi Society website. The equipment on the Zoom Cloud is likely somewhat more sophisticated (e.g., the “fast forward” is easier to operate) than that on your local machine which the recording on the Polanyi Society website will use. The Zoom Cloud recording may also be affected by traffic on the internet. The link for the Zoom Cloud recording will quit working at the point the Polanyi Society’s allocated space is exceeded or the rental agreement ends. If the Zoom Cloud link does not work, be sure to try the other link for the same recording.

**Immediately below (i.e., preceding the links for the recordings) is the original posting with information about this Zoom session and links for readings.**

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## Polanyi Society Zoom Sessions

**“Polanyi’s Personal Knowledge:  
A Paradigmatic Framework for the Empirical Analysis of Tacit Knowing”**

This 90-minute Zoom Session will include a 15-minute presentation by Clemens Wiesner (Aarhus University, Denmark) followed by two 7-minute comments by

Oliver Kauffmann (Aarhus University, Denmark) and Tim Simpson (Morehead State University), with the balance of the time devoted to open discussion.

Time: Monday, 27 February 2023 at 9 a.m. Central Standard Time. To receive the link for this session e-mail both Gus Breytspraak ([gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu](mailto:gus.breytspraak@ottawa.edu)) and Phil Mullins ([mullins@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:mullins@missouriwestern.edu)).

Polanyi's Personal Knowledge: A Paradigmatic Framework for the Empirical  
Analysis of Tacit Knowing  
Clemens Wieser ( [wie@edu.au.dk](mailto:wie@edu.au.dk) )

Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge provides a paradigmatic conceptual framework to comprehend tacit knowledge. Even though Polanyi's work is widely acclaimed in philosophy, his framework has not been used much in empirical research on tacit knowing (Wieser and Klinger 2020). To further the empirical use of Polanyi's theory, I highlight elements of his theory that have a phenomenal expression and can be recorded as observational, audio, or video data (Wieser 2016). Concerning my own field, education, I argue that Polanyi provides a highly useful framework for the empirical analysis of competence development, as already indicated by the many theoretical references to his work in the field (e.g. Schön 1983; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 2005; Winch, Oancea, and Orchard 2015). Grounded in Polanyi's theory, I argue that pedagogical competence is a particular field of professional tacit knowing, expressed in a subsidiary and focal awareness of events in pedagogical situations that initiate situated appraisal and relate events to pedagogical intentions (Polanyi 1962). The development of such pedagogical competence takes place when a pedagogue or teacher struggles to relate pedagogical intentions to ongoing events and engages in situated experimentation. For the empirical analysis of pedagogical competence, I find three of Polanyi's concepts to be particularly helpful in guiding my analysis: Subsidiary awareness, focal awareness, and appraisal (Wieser 2022). After presenting my interpretation of these concepts, I present an empirical vignette in which I analyzed how a teacher engaged in situated experimentation to resolve two opposing semantic fields in class: an intended field of interaction, which focuses on the lesson topic, and the field of student peer relations.

Recommended reading to prepare for the zoom session

Polanyi, Michael. 1962. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chapter 4: "Skills," 51-68. A primary source for this PK chapter

is [Polanyi's 1952 Sixth Series II Gifford Lecture "Skills and Connoisseurship"](#) which is online on the Polanyi Society website.  
Wieser, Clemens. 2022. [“The Development of Pedagogical Competence in Tacit Knowing: Towards a Polanyian Framework for the Empirical Analysis of Competence Development.”](#) *Tradition and Discovery* 48 (2): 22–35.

## References

- Dreyfus, Hubert L., and Stuart E. Dreyfus. 2005. “Peripheral Vision: Expertise in Real World Contexts.” *Organization Studies* 26 (5): 779–92. <https://doi.org/10/dd8sr2>.
- Schön, Donald A. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wieser, Clemens. 2016. “Teaching and Personal Educational Knowledge – Conceptual Considerations for Research on Knowledge Transformation.” *European Journal of Teacher Education* 39 (5): 588–601. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2016.1253673>.
- Wieser, Clemens, and Sabine Klinger. 2020. “Professionalisierung Mit Der Dokumentarischen Methode Erforschen: Perspektiven Für Die Analyse von Wissenstransformation.” *Jahrbuch Dokumentarische Methode Heft 2-3/2020: centrum für qualitative evaluations-und sozialforschung*. <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/70909>  
<https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.70909>
- Winch, Christopher, Alis Oancea, and Janet Orchard. 2015. “The Contribution of Educational Research to Teachers’ Professional Learning: Philosophical Under-standings.” *Oxford Review of Education* 41 (2): 202–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1017406>.

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