

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) and Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

Polanyi’s Personal Knowledge: A Paradigmatic Framework for the Empirical
Analysis of Tacit Knowing
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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>.