



Monitoring Note 2 Austria



Virtual Professional Learning Communities and Vignettes as Evaluation Tool for Innovation

Tanja Westfall-Greiter,

National Center for Learning Schools
of the Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs



Contents

1. The Context	2
2. Rethinking the working definition of Innovation at the Center for Learning Schools	3
3. The Innovation: Prototyping Virtual PLCs	6
4. Vignettes as an Evaluation Tool.....	7
Sample Vignettes.....	9
5. Impact and Outlook.....	13
Selected Literature.....	14

1. The Context

As reported in Austria's Monitoring Note 1 for Phase 3 of the OECD's Innovative Learning Environments project, Austria participated in Level 2 of the project and trialed virtual professional learning communities (PLC) in the *Lerndesigner*-Network as an innovation. *Lerndesigners* are teacher leaders acting as change agents, a new role initiated during the pilot of the *Neue Mittelschule* (NMS) that which has since led to a mandated school reform in lower secondary. (For details, please refer to Austria's System Note and Monitoring Note 1.)

The virtual PLC innovation was driven by the following questions:

- How can *Lerndesigners* be kept up-to-date with on-going development on national and local levels in order to sustain development at their schools?
- How can they remain connected to the *Lerndesigner*-Network as a community of practice on the national level?
- How can they be encouraged to participate actively and fully in nationwide development processes?

The goal of the Austrian project was to 1) further explore the impact of digital networking on the *Lerndesigner*-Network, 2) initiate and foster online intraschool PLCs as a nationwide innovation strategy, and 3) evaluate the impact of these efforts on the community of practice. Since Monitoring Note 1 was written, activity on the NMS Platform has far exceeded expectations, in large part due to the redesign of the virtual environments in which *Lerndesigners* work. In the 2013/14 school year, 1.4 million hits were registered on the platform, which includes virtual courses, the *Online Lernatelier* Meta-Course for the *Lerndesigner*-Network and the online library for NMS development.

Currently there is an average of 1,500 active hits per week in the *Online Lernatelier*, and since the beginning of the 2014/15 school year one third of the community has actively accessed materials or postings. Based on informal surveys and feedback, it is estimated that over three-fourths of the community reads the postings they receive via email and are thus passively active in the development issues addressed in the *Lerndesigner* community. A particularly active forum topic recently was the question of how to be effective as a *Lerndesigner*. The challenges of being a change agent and teacher leader bring the community together and they provide one another with collegial support.

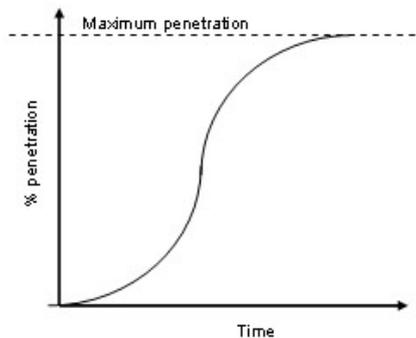
During the innovation, vignettes were piloted as an embedded evaluation tool. Initial results were presented at the ILE Coordinators' Meeting in Paris on June 20, 2014 (see Appendix). The vignette method appears to be a viable and effective evaluation tool when the question of how the learners experience the environment is important to the innovators. Through vignette-driven interviews, evaluators can conduct conversations with innovators to explore the impact of the innovation on the learners. Vignettes alone are, however, most likely not enough to provide innovators with the evidence they need to make decisions during and after a prototyping phase.

Claus Otto Scharmer's work in presencing an emerging future is a foundation of work in system development and reform at the Center for Learning Schools (CLS) in Austria. As Scharmer defines a prototype, it "explores the future by doing something small and quickly that generates feedback from all the key stakeholders and allows you to evolve the idea" (2011, pp. 3-4). The goal of prototyping is to "fail early and learn quickly" during innovation. This understanding drove the piloting of virtual PLCs. A prototype was created and rapidly adapted during the innovation.

In Monitoring Note 2 we first respond to the feedback of ILE systems analysts to Monitoring Note 1 regarding the theoretical framework for innovation, then report the results of the innovation and the piloting of vignettes as an evaluation tool.

2. Rethinking the working definition of Innovation at the Center for Learning Schools

Throughout the innovation process in the prototyping of virtual PLCs, the project team at the CLS was struggling with the definition of innovation. Before the ILE project, the CLS had only scratched the surface of what innovation means, focusing more on diffusion of innovation, in great part due to the system development work involving implementation of a new school form (see Monitoring Note 1). The focus for system developers was on ensuring that innovation is so widely adopted that it is able to sustain itself and become part of the “way we do things around here.” Drawing on Rogers’ analysis of the speed and spread of adoption, we were interested in when and how an innovation reaches critical mass within the rate of adoption. Rogers’ categories of adoptors on the classic S-curve resonated with many school principals and *Lerndesigners*: innovators, early adoptors, early majority, late majority and laggards (1962, p. 150). In the context of NMS implementation this critical mass is achieved on paper through the implementation schedule, but real adoption of the reform and the practice transformation through “3-C Orientation” (competence, criteria, complexity) as self-sustaining productive innovation drivers across the system was expected to follow the S-curve:



A recent reflection from a *Lerndesigner* illustrates these phases in the transformation of assessment practice:

Resonance from students and parents is very positive, because thanks to backwards design they know from the very beginning what is coming and exactly what I assess and what exactly I am looking for. ... There are no more surprises in assessment.

In the 12/13 school year I only worked with a few people and we tried things out (and made a lot of mistakes, which I am appalled by now). I also convinced my principal that we can only work this way and he always supported me (required professional development, required use of rubrics in all NMS classes) and since last year all NMS teachers work with the rubrics and now no one complains anymore.

It has become normality.

Now discussions are no longer about "WHY do I have to do that?", but rather "How can I go about this so that it works? Where have I made mistakes and how can I take care of them?"

Although Rogers’ S-curve seems to be evident in this personal account, it is only partly of use for the CLS. ILE systems analysts also questioned this theoretical framework in their feedback to Monitoring Note 1. As a result, the CLS began exploring the term during the 2013/14 school year. In January 2014 the CLS introduced a new approach based on James Spillane’s (2013) notion of (leadership) practice as a situated phenomenon which stretches across people and space was integrated into the work with school principals, *Lerndesigners*, teacher educators and textbook developers. The CLS proposed two hypotheses and formulated two questions for school leaders:

<p>Hypotheses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Innovations are changes in the interactions, which emerge and are enabled by new tools, routines and structures.2. The NMS creates new situations in which actors interact.	<p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What new interactions have emerged at our school because of the NMS reform? How? Which new tools, routines and structures enable these interactions?• How is leadership practice in situations at our school enabled? Hindered?
--	--

Similarly, textbook developers who are engaged in developing new instructional materials for the NMS received the following questions:

- What situations are created by a textbook?
- What tools, routines and structures are enabled by a textbook?
- How does this affect the teacher's practice? The students' practice? The parents'? The tutors'?
- What practice should be enabled for the NMS? What practice should be hindered?

While this approach to exploring innovation proved to be very helpful for actors in the system who are confronted by required changes in the school reform, the CLS was still unsatisfied with this working definition because it is too loose to describe the practitioner-driven innovation we want to foster. In an attempt to find common denominators among published work regarding innovation which may or may not be on the radar of mainstream education research, the CLS explored sources produced by non-governmental organisations, foundations and private industry. This milieu is generally unfamiliar to education researchers and may even be judged inferior because it has not been exposed to their rigorous criteria and peer review. Yet it is in this milieu that the educational innovation discourse is taking place, both in the ILE and beyond.

Up to this point, the terms environment, milieu, system and ecosystem have been used and the spectrum of innovation from incremental change to transformation has been addressed by key thinkers in the field of innovation. This range seems to be an inevitable way of addressing the situatedness of innovation. If we frame innovation in professional practice as Hargreaves does, we can address the situatedness of practice. Hargreaves notes that transformation "is a big word, one that implies a profound change grounded in some radical (or discontinuous) innovation, not just incremental innovation" (2003, p. 26). He analyses the innovations by mapping them out on a scale and relating them to what teachers do and their impact on professional practices. Incremental innovation is a minor change close to existing practice, radical is defined a major change far from existing practice.

Building on James Spillane's work in the practice of leadership (2013), we see that 1) each situation is unique and non-recurring, 2) it is the situation that defines whether or not the activity is innovative, and 3) innovation is manifested in the change of tools, routines, structures and people. In this regard, it can be argued that teaching is a complex activity in which teachers innovate daily in that they respond to unique situations with situated, one-time solutions in the classroom.

This poses a problem for the CLS, which could and should serve as a steward of the emergent. Innovation must therefore be defined in such a way that it is something other than responsive teaching, e.g. as a conscious, planned change in tools, routines, people. As a result, the CLS is currently working with the following definition of innovation to see if it is viable for system, school and instructional development.

Innovation in its verbal sense is an **act of "going into the new"** on the part of **practitioners**. They do this by realising via prototypes a previously unknown, conscious, planned change in tools, routines, structures and/or people in response to apparently intractable problems. The change permanently affects which situations are enabled and hindered in the environment, thereby changing the experience and practice of all involved.

Practitioner-led educational innovation in the microcosm should be:

- **Unknown** in the accessible domain of public and professional knowledge
- **Untried** in the context of the innovation
- **Connected to an intention** of defensible professional and public value
- **Informed** regarding what is already out there
- **Conscious**
- **Rapid, rough and risky**
- **Evaluated** in relation to intention and impact
- **Made public**

System-wide innovation may be known in the accessible domain of public and professional knowledge but is new to the macrocosm. This includes knowledge gained from school effectiveness research as well as knowledge from other scientific disciplines and domains in society. To avoid thinking in vertical levels, we have chosen to think of micro- and macrocosms, i.e. wholes in wholes. Each learning environment is a microcosm within a larger microcosm (e.g. a classroom community within a school community), each of these in turn is part of greater macrocosm (e.g. schools within a district or region and regions with a national system). To make the transfer from microcosm to macrocosm, the criteria of **relevance**, **viability** and **scalability** after prototyping and evaluation in the microcosm support decision-making regarding spread in the larger system. The degree to which these innovations (“seeds for systemic change”) have an impact on the macrocosm depends on the degree to which they are linked with macro-level leadership and “co-evolving” (Scharmer 2007) is initiated and sustained.

There are several open questions regarding this understanding of innovation:

- Is an innovation an innovation when in hindsight it has spread rapidly and was adapted? What does that mean for identifying possible innovations in the microcosms?
- Is resistance, including extreme forms such as ridicule and violent opposition, a possible indicator of transformation in the micro- and/or macrocosm?
- Do qualitative and ethical aspects need to be taken into consideration regarding application and impact (misuse and abuse), and if so, how and when?
- How does system-wide spread work with innovations developed by informed practitioners if not all users have reached their level of professionalism? What knowledge, understandings and skills are necessary for the innovation to spread and have impact?
- When does an innovation stop being an innovation and becomes the norm?

3. The Innovation: Prototyping Virtual PLCs

The “intractable problem” addressed with the prototyping of virtual PLCs was the need for keeping busy teacher leaders connected to a nationwide community of practice and encouraging teacher leaders to participate actively and fully in nationwide development activities. This last need was a matter of self-interest, the need of the system to involve practitioners in development and to foster innovation. With a restricted budget, limited technical resources and a broad spectrum on ICT skills among the *Lerndesigners*, a solution compatible with the NMS Moodle platform and average technical resources available to most teachers was needed. The innovation was using Big Blue Button, a Moodle plug-in, as a cost-effective and viable solution for enabling virtual PLCs on the NMS platform.

To prepare for the prototyping of virtual PLCs, the virtual environment was redesigned to make it more navigable, user-friendly and manageable. In addition, the *Lerndesigners* in the *Online Lernatelier* responded to a survey regarding how, when and why they use it, what they perceive to need most for their work at their schools and their levels of interest regarding intraschool virtual PLCs. The following topics for PLC work were identified:

- Teacher Leadership
- Differentiated Instruction
- Assessment
- Competence Orientation

Virtual PLCs across generations were initiated in the summer semester of 2014. *Lerndesigners* signed up for the topics and protocols were developed for a series of 4 PLCs. Group size was limited to seven participants, so that two PLCs for the topic of assessment emerged. The groups could request external materials for their independent study from the CLS. Virtual spaces in the form of Moodle courses outfitted with the “BigBlueButton” Plug-In were created for each PLC and a vignette writer was assigned to each space.

Organisational challenges:

- Registering for or requesting a virtual room for intra-school PLC work requires clear and simple processes.
- Initial start-up benefits from external help, both in establishing communication among the members and in providing technical support for new users. Busy teachers from different schools with different timetables may have difficulty finding appointments for their virtual meetings.

Technical challenges:

- The BigBlueButton Plug-In does not operate smoothly, depending on the technical resources of the individual participant. The benefit of having a single virtual space with all needed infrastructure (virtual meeting room, forum, resources) does not necessarily outweigh the technical restrictions of this Moodle solution.
- The digital skills of teachers may vary widely, posing challenges for virtual communication.
- Online meetings slow down conversation, which for some was a hindrance and for others an advantage.

The vignettes captured during the prototyping reveal the virtual PLC work as powerful for adult learning. They reveal palpable moments of silence when a group generated new knowledge or insights, as well as intensive knowledge sharing and calibrating practice. The natural diversity of the groups allowed for collegial coaching. Critical moments accompanied by strong emotions were also captured. Occasionally, members were disappointed by colleagues' lack of professionalism; ideally, they became role models for others. Equally important, the benefits and challenges regarding the technical solution were captured as experiences: participants frustrated by broken audio connections, coping with restricted communication in the virtual environment and challenges faced by those in the facilitator role.

The results of a post-prototype survey were clearly positive; the participants valued the PLC work despite technical difficulties and felt that it supported them in their professional development. Based on the request of the participants, the virtual spaces remain open so that they can continue to meet together. These spaces are not monitored by the CLS in any way; whether or not they are used depends on the PLC members. Some of the assessment PLC group members continued their development work over the summer and met face-to-face.

The prototyping was successful in that the CLS established processes and technical solutions for "Virtual PLC On Demand." *Lerndesigners* can request a PLC room at any time, as well as support from the CLS for exploring their questions. When issues emerge in the forums in the *Online Lernatelier*, CLS staff sometimes recommends that a group form a PLC and offer their support. This integration of virtual PLC work is just becoming established, in the transition phase from prototype to standard.

4. Vignettes as an Evaluation Tool

The focus of evaluation was participants' experience regarding the technology itself and their learning in alignment with the question, How do the learners experience the learning trajectory of the environment? To explore how *Lerndesigners* experience the learning trajectory of online PLC-work, we adapted and applied the vignette methodology as an evaluation tool for innovative learning environments. The vignette methodology was initially developed to conduct foundational research into the experience of learning in a nation-wide grant-funded research project at the University of Innsbruck (Schratz et al 2012). The research was presented for the first time to an international audience at the ICSEI Conference 2013 in Chile. In the symposium, Michael Schratz, Tanja Westfall-Greiter and Johanna F. Schwarz presented and explored the methodology with discussants Lorna Earl and Louise Stoll. The question of how lifeworld can be sensitively researched to gain insights into adult learning raised by Earl during the symposium was of particular relevance to the *Lerndesigner*-Network in Level 2 of ILE Phase 3. As Lorna Earl noted at the symposium, innovation is highly contextualized, small-scale and messy. The need to understand what is going on in an innovation is essential, as is understanding its impact – in particular before it is scaled up or spread. High-quality tools are needed for this endeavour.

Vignette writers, all CLS staff members, were assigned to each virtual PLC and co-experienced in the innovation, i.e. in the virtual PLC meetings, protocolling their experiences of the experiences of the participants. They then captured the experience in writing by drafting vignettes and sending them to the subjects for validation. The revised vignettes were polished in writing workshops in the vignette writer team and finalised.

The vignettes were coded according to PLC, vignette number and date. For example, “TLS1 V3 20140512” refers to the PLC on Teacher Leadership, Session 1, Vignette 3 in the session and the session date. Names are changed to ensure the actors are anonymous. Each PLC is assigned a letter and names are derived from the letter, e.g. “A” generates names such as Anne, Adele, Andy. This strategy for anonymising was taken directly from the research methodology at the University of Innsbruck.

The prototyping of vignettes as an evaluation tool for innovation has shown that vignettes are an appropriate method for accessing and capturing learners’ experience. It is however an expensive evaluation tool; One hour of co-experiencing results in two to three vignettes and each vignette requires approx. five work hours. In addition, vignette writers must be trained in advance. This cost is however defensible in relation to the type and quality of data. In this case, vignettes provided not only rich data on the innovation but also on other innovations in the broader context.

Vignettes as an embedded tool can help innovators adapt the innovation while it is happening; in this trial the CLS was able to quickly respond to factors hindering the innovation, including technical solutions and support as well as providing support related to the topics PLCs were dealing with. In addition, vignettes reveal participants’ innovations in the innovations. Several incidents of proactivity on the part of the participants to solve problems as they occurred in the innovation were captured in the vignettes; in other words, the participants were innovators in the innovation and their solutions were helpful in optimizing virtual PLC work for the future. One such example is the use of alternative virtual meetings spaces and Skype when the BigBlueButton Plug-In did not work for all the PLC members.

Like any research project which is driven by questions constructed by the researchers, innovators’ evaluation questions (in this case the learning experiences and technological issues) direct the attention of and influence the co-experiencing of the vignette writers. The greatest strength of vignettes as an evaluation tool is that they provide multiple perspectives from inside the innovation and constitute a narrative of events over time.

Nonetheless, vignettes alone are not enough; post-pilot feedback from participants in the form of a simple survey about the overall experience was also necessary in this project (but relatively cheap) to ensure that data on the impact of the innovation on all participants was captured. The questionnaire contained ten questions, most of which were related to technical details to assess the technology solution in relation to users’ digital skills. Two questions focused on learning – to what degree the PLC fostered professional learning and whether or not the participants would participate again. Two-thirds of the participants would join a virtual PLC again, provided that the technical problems were resolved or at least reduced. The information gained through the questionnaire has helped the technical support member of the team to improve the virtual environment and support participants before the start of the PLCs to ensure they have adequate digital skills and digital technology conditions for participating with ease.

Regarding the method, there was initially concern that it would be difficult for vignette writers to co-experience in a virtual environment, where the perception of body language and facial expressions are highly restricted. In one session, where the audio also failed, the vignette writer was reduced to capturing experiences based on chat entries. Surprisingly, the vignettes were confirmed in the validation process; apparently the pathic elements of human communication can be sensed with very little information. In this case, the intensity and speed of chat entries, the use of capital letters and symbols in the entries as well as the degree to which mechanics were ignored during the heat of discussion were all indicators of the emotionality and passion of the participants.

Vignette writers need (and want) training in the method, in particular in how to co-experience in the field and protocol this experience as it occurs. Acute perception, openness and writing ability are important skills for this evaluation method. Some vignette writers in this pilot noted that they also needed support to “get the vignette right” because they tended to be analytical and interpret abstractly what was occurring,

often due to old habits of classroom observation and teacher evaluation. Vignettes should capture the experience as vividly as possible but not provide analysis, so that they remain open to the interpretation of the innovators themselves. Coaching throughout the process proved important to ensure that vignettes were focused on capturing and re-creating the experience rather than explaining or drawing conclusions.

The validation of vignettes with the participants is useful but not absolutely necessary; it is itself an intervention for the participant and participants might reconstruct the experience rather than support the vignette writer in recreating what was protocolled. Nonetheless, vignette writers found the validation helpful, particularly regarding choice of words to capture the emotionality of the moment. The following is an example:

Dear Helga,

Re: Vignette 1: well captured. You mirror the situation at my school and my position perfectly. Please use „furious“ rather than „frustrated“.

Further, innovators – in this case the CLS as the initiator of virtual PLCs – need know-how to synthesize the data in vignettes. Vignette-driven conversations with innovators are key for ensuring that the vignettes are a valuable source of data for evaluation. Based on the work of Michael Kahlhammer (2012), the CLS is continuing to develop vignette driven conversations for evaluators and innovators to work with vignettes as an embedded tool. Evaluators, who may be internal or external or the vignette writers themselves, lead conversations with innovators to facilitate insights and decisions both during and post-prototyping. These conversations are driven by the vignettes and the success criteria related to the “intractable problem” laid out by the innovators for prototyping. Questions include:

- What strikes you in this vignette?
- Where do you sense resonance? Irritation?
- What does the vignette reveal in regards to the intention of the innovation?
- What does this mean for the innovation?

An alternative to vignette-driven interviews is also vignette readings done by evaluators. In this case, evaluators would provide written readings of the vignette(s) focused on the evaluation questions posed by the innovators and provide these as interim reports to the innovators.

The CLS has identified several open questions regarding vignettes as evaluation tool:

- What is the best method mix for an adequate and accurate evaluation?
- Is there a (more) cost-effective way to access learning experiences? How can vignette evaluation be streamlined without sacrificing quality?
- Who should synthesize data? When? How?
- What do innovators need to work with the vignettes as sources of data? Would guided conversations with the vignette writers be useful? Would readings from the vignette writers be a further source of useful data?
- If the evaluation questions direct the attention of vignette writers, what do the vignette writers perceive? What do they overlook?

Sample Vignettes

The following vignettes are samples from the pilot. Vignettes are thick descriptions of experiences captured through co-experiencing. As such, they reveal the richness and complexity of each of the experiences. Emotions related to coping with challenges and technology) as well as reflexions on teachers’ own practice are revealed. The question of what is being evaluated through the vignettes depends on the evaluation questions of the innovators. In this case, the question for rapid innovation was focused on the technical functioning of virtual PLCs. However, insights can also be gained regarding innovations being undertaken by *Lerndesigners* and transformation processes in the micro- and macrocosms involved in the reform context in which the innovation is embedded. This “surplus” in the vignettes is the result of the “surplus” in experience resulting from the phenomenological approach underlying vignette evaluation.

We never thought about it

Linda, Leyla and Lucy are having a lively discussion about Marzano's scales and Webb's Depths of Knowledge model. Laura, who hasn't yet worked with the tools, is listening in attentively. "I've been off a few times with my selection of a task," says Lucy, "Afterwards you realise that, but mistakes happen." "Inventing them myself is a real challenge for me and it's hard work," pipes in Leyla. "Yes, we're not used to thinking about scales. We didn't used to question that," replies Lucy. After a pause Leyla says, "Now we're discovering what was missing with all the examples and what we never bothered with. We never required students to think, that's what I realise." "Exactly, and with listening and reading skills we went at it strategically, we never thought about it," says Lucy. "That's the truth," she adds after a brief pause. "Yes, that's the truth," reinforces Leyla. There is silence. Each seems to be trying to catch up with her own thoughts. In her function as facilitator Laura gently interrupts the hush in the room: "Yes, is there anything else?" (LB1 HV4 20140602)

Quite hard work

This time everyone has found their way into the virtual classroom and all of the microphones work. Tara greets everyone and asks them to mute their microphones. She got this tip from the introduction to Big Blue Button and is passing it on the others. Tara wants to begin with clarifying what Teacher Leadership means for each of the colleagues. After she asks the group the question, she leans back and waits. A certain insecurity with the new, unfamiliar medium fills the room. The technical support person suggests to Tara that she call on each by name to respond. Tara sits up straight again and says, "That's a good idea, I'll take over activating the microphones." The way has been cleared for discussion with a minimum of background noise. Tara takes on the facilitator role with bravo and summarises each of the contributions in the chat window while each speaks. The insecurity seems to have disappeared. "Quite hard work," she says at the end, "leading a discussion, keeping an eye on each person and the microphones and at the same time making notes isn't easy." (TLS1 V2 20140512)

I can't hear you

Once again Karoline can't hear anything! Why isn't this thing working? This technology is so frustrating. She can see Kathrin, the facilitator, but she can't hear anything. The vignette writer enters the room just as Karoline is taking a deep breath and enters into the chat box: „Nice to see you, but I can't hear you!" There is a long wait in the silence. Two minutes later, which feels like 10 minutes, the vignette writer types in the chat box, „Karoline, I see that you can't hear anything. Is that right?" There really is someone out there! Karoline types, „Unfortunately I can't even hear you today." Tips for setting up the audio on her computer appear in the chat box, but that doesn't help at all. "Checked everything, everything on! But I can't hear you." Long minutes of waiting. Where is everybody? Are they doing the session using audio? After three long minutes, a message comes again from the vignette writer. "Dear Karoline, this is just a bummer! So we'll type in the essential ideas hear in the chat!!!!" Thank God! Full of relief, Karoline types her response quickly. "Okay, sorry!" (KO V1 20140519)

Wrestling with competence

Finally it gets going! The facilitator enters the questions the group had agreed upon for this session in the chat box. Karoline starts to type in the chat box right away. After all, she did her „homework" and read the recommended literature and thought through the ideas. Vonken's ideas about competence resonated with her. She sends the part one of her text, because her contribution would be too long otherwise. "My definition of competence at the moment is Vonken's: Competence and acting are closely related and that one can learn to deal with complex actions. That every human being is basically able to act competently..." and types on to complete her full chain of thought. In the meantime, a colleague enters a short message. Finally the last part from Karolina appears in the chat box: "...that one can support the development of competent action." Yikes! So many typing mistakes in the first text block! It doesn't matter – what counts is the exchange. The facilitator probes. "Karolina, so you think that everyone can act competently?" While Karolina responds, the facilitator tries to find common denominators in the entries. Then Karolina's response appears in the chat box: "Yes, I believe that if someone has the intention of acting, then he has o/wants to act, depending on his current knowledge, his experiences and his understandings." Another colleague wants to know whether Karolina thinks that every competence is

complex. Hmm. Is every competence complex or not? What would Vonken say? She types: “What Vonken with his definition of competence made me think about was his assumption that competence itself can’t be trained, but rather that in situations one creates opportunities for competence to develop.” A long pause. Is everyone speechless again? And then a flood of entries appear. One colleague asks a question about another aspect. It is so wonderful to see this discourse. Whether the others have read the literature as well? Karolina is excited about her definition, but at the same time she has the feeling that she is the only one who prepared for the session. (KO 20140519 V2)

Anne wants answers

Anne is furious. Everyone else in the PLC is reporting that although “teacher leadership” isn’t part of their school vocabulary, the role of teacher leaders is nonetheless central. Neither is true for her school. Her principal delegates responsibilities when there is need. There is even constant fluctuation in their School Development Team! How did she become a *Lerndesigner*? She just happened to be in the principal’s office when the form arrived to register a *Lerndesigner* and got the job. She wants to know if teacher leaders also have authority so they can, for example, call team meetings. And she also wants to know what benefits others see in their teacher leader roles and who would put themselves through all of that under the given circumstances. Actually she’s not really thinking about teacher leaders in general; she’s really thinking about herself at her school. Anne is growing impatient. She wants answers to the question of what processes are necessary to introduce teacher leaders in a school. (TLS1 V3 20140512)

5. Impact and Outlook

As mentioned earlier, the Virtual PLC prototype has been modified and optimized and is currently in the transition from prototype to standard. The goal in the current school year is to integrate virtual PLC work in the *Lerndesigner* community as a part of the “way we do things around here.”

Because of who was involved in the PLCs (teacher leaders/change agents) and the issues they addressed, the resulting collection of vignettes has become a valuable source for system development beyond the evaluation of the innovation. Not only do the vignettes reveal how the participants were experiencing the virtual PLC work but also how the school reform and their roles as teacher leaders affect them and their schools. As a result, some vignettes have been provided to the Ministry as evidence of barriers to change and successful change strategies occurring through the work of change agents. Insights gained into development processes regarding assessment may become important in the near future, as plans are currently in the pipeline to reform assessment policy. It is important to note that this secondary use of the vignette data is only possible if and when the vignettes are anonymised and the identities of participants in the PLCs are protected.

Vignette evaluation is part of a curriculum innovation project in the current school year as part of IMST (Innovation in Math, Science and Technology), an organisation in the Austrian system focused on fostering innovation in the classroom. A further project is being considered on the district level, with the goal of training vignette writers who then provide vignettes to schools for self-evaluation related to their school development plans required by the School Quality (SQA) initiative recently mandated. An international symposium regarding vignettes as research, evaluation and mentoring tool is being planned for June 2015 at the University of Innsbruck.

Finally, participation in ILE Phase 3 has been very fruitful for the CLS. The access to experts on innovation and evaluation and networking with other countries that ILE enabled has made a significant contribution to the development of the CLS and its projects.

Selected Literature

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria, Australia,
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/innovatehere.aspx?Redirect=1>
- DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Solution Tree.
- DuFour, R. (2002). The Learning-Centered Principal. In: *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 59/8, p. 12-15.
- Earl, L. & Timperley, H. (2014). Evaluative Thinking for Successful Educational Innovation: Paper for the OECD ILE Project presented at the ILE-Coordinators' Meeting in Paris on June 20th, 2014.
- Hannon, V. (2007). 'Next Practice' in Education: A Disciplined Approach to Innovation, London: Innovation Unit. URL:
<http://www.innovationunit.org/sites/default/files/Next%20Practice%20in%20Education.pdf>
- Hannon, V. (2013). Leadership for System Transformation. Keynote at the Barcelona International Conference on Learning Leadership, Barcelona, Spain, December 2-5, 2013.
- Hannon, Patton & Temperley, 2011, "Developing an Innovation Ecosystem for Education", p. 18, URL:
www.innovationunit.org/sites/default/files/Developing%20an%20Innovation%20Ecosystem%20for%20Education_Cisco-IU_1.pdf
- Hargreaves, D.H. (2003) Education Epidemic: Transforming secondary schools through innovation networks.. London: DEMOS. URL: <http://demos.co.uk/files/educationepidemic.pdf>
- Jackson, D. & Temperley, J. (2007). From professional learning community to networked learning community. In: Stoll, L. & Seashore Louis, K. (Eds.) *Professional Learning Communities: Divergence, Depth and Dilemmas*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. pp. 45-61.
- Kahlhammer, M. (2012.) „Mittendrin, statt nur dabei“. Vignetten als Klangschalen des Lernens zur Professionalisierung im Rahmen von Lernateliers. *Erziehung und Unterricht*. 9/10. pp. 902-907.
- Kahlhammer, M. (2012a.) „Mittendrin, statt nur dabei“. Vignetten als Klangschalen des Lernens zur Professionalisierung im Rahmen von Lernateliers. *Erziehung und Unterricht*. 9/10. pp. 902-907.
- Kahlhammer, M. (2012b). *Lernateliers als professionelle lerngemeinschaften: Die wahrnehmungen und einschätzungen der beteiligten lerndesigner zur eigenen, gemeinsamen und systemischen professionalisierung im rahmen von lernateliers der entwicklungsbegleitung der neuen mittelschule* (Master thesis). Pädagogische Hochschule St. Gallen.
- Lave, J & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher. A Sociological Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lyn, L. (1997) Innovation And The Public Interest in Altshuler & Behn, D. (eds) Innovation Challenges, Opportunities, and Dilemmas in American Government: Brookings Institute.
- Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Dept of Education,
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/about/definition.html>
- Scharmer, C. O. (2011). Leading from the Emerging Future: Minds for Change – Future of Global Development. Keynote at Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin, November 13, 2011.
- Schley, W., Schratz, M., Hofbauer, C. & Westfall-Greiter, T. (2009). Das Konzept der NMS-Entwicklungsbegleitung als Transformationsprozess. *Erziehung und Unterricht* 7/8, pp. 686-696.
- Schratz M, Schwarz, J.F. & Westfall-Greiter, T. (2012). *Lernen als bildende Erfahrung: Vignetten in der Praxisforschung*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag.

- Schratz M, Schwarz, J.F. & Westfall-Greiter, T. (2012). *Lernen als bildende Erfahrung: Vignetten in der Praxisforschung*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag.
- Spillane, J.P. (2005). Distributed Leadership. *The Educational Forum*. 69 (2), pp. 143-150-
- Spillane, J.P. (2013). Distributed Leadership. Keynote at the Barcelona International Conference on Learning Leadership, Barcelona, Spain, December 2-5, 2013.
- Tye, B. B. & Tye, K.A. (1992). *Global Education: A Study of School Change*, (State University of New York Press.
- Westfall-Greiter, T. & Hofbauer, C. (2010). Shared Leadership setzt Teacher Leaders voraus: Lerndesigner/innen im Feld der Neuen Mittelschule. *Journal für Schulentwicklung*, 4, pp. 8-14.
- Williamson, B. & Payton, S. (2009). *Curriculum and Teaching Innovation: Transforming Classroom Practice and Personalisation*, Bristol: Futurelab, URL:
http://www2.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/handbooks/curriculum_and_teaching_innovation2.pdf