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(Hrsg.)

Expanding Horizons and Local Connectedness

Challenges for Qualitative Teaching Research and Development in Intercultural Contexts

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Hallitzky / Mulhanga / Spendrin / Yoshida

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Expanding Horizons and Local Connectedness: Challenges for Qualitative Teaching Research and Development in Intercultural Contexts – an Introduction

Education and teaching aim at – or may lead to – expanding horizons of individuals and groups, however, they are always bound to a specific context in which they occur, and necessarily depart from the specific situation of the subjects of education. The same applies for the research on teaching and education, and even more so to qualitative classroom research, which builds on the interest in specific cases and situations and expects therefrom an expansion of the previously achieved understanding of teaching and education.

The idea of reflecting potentials and challenges for qualitative teaching research and development in intercultural contexts departed from the methodological interest in broadening researchers' horizons, as well as from the observation of an increasing use of qualitative approaches in various international fields (e.g., Matachi & Kikuchi 2015; Ravitch & Carl 2019). This increasing use might be attributed to the potential of these methods to enable researchers to gain more differentiated insights into interactional processes of participation and engagement in the classroom: Qualitative-reconstructive methods of teaching research are characterised by the fact that they enable a very precise, context-sensitive reconstruction of interactions in the classroom (e.g., Proske & Rabenstein 2018). The Lesson Study methodology that we also refer to, furthermore represents a clearly development-orientated impetus that focuses on the learning opportunities of students, and has been adopted from the Japanese context especially in countries of the Global South. All of these approaches seem to address important pedagogical questions which are central both to the development of educational quality in post-colonial regions and to the problems of educational participation in heterogeneously constituted classrooms in industrialised countries.

At the same time, specific challenges are associated with the dissemination and application of methodologies that are traditionally tied to specific 'Western' research contexts:

Epistemological, methodological, methodical and practical research assumptions and practices are inherently bound to research traditions and contexts.

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Applying these methodologies to different cultural and international contexts without reflection on these ties can lead to irritation and alienation, especially in interactive collaboration between researchers from different research traditions (see Kinoshita in this volume for a vivid example). Furthermore, it can be assumed or should be at least taken into account, that historically grown unequal distributions of power will also be reproduced in academic discourse, particularly as differing possibilities of the acknowledgement of interpretive sovereignty.

Although the importance of a reflexive examination of the researchers' origins and cultural self-conceptions is occasionally emphasised (e.g., Baumann 2009, p. 76), qualitative teaching research and development has been mostly conducted and discussed in rather homogeneous cultural contexts, and are not sufficiently benefiting from the opportunity to reflect on precisely these positional ties, which would be inherent in international and intercultural encounters.

This potential of expanding the researchers' horizons, especially concerning how contents and method(ologie)s of research are tied to one's own (both geographical and cultural) localisation, was the core of the idea of bringing together researchers from different contexts who use qualitative methods of teaching research and development, to introduce research approaches and results to each other and to discuss some more general methodological questions, in order to go beyond the horizons of the individual methodological standpoints.

Founded by the DFG-programme 'Point Sud' we planned and organised a conference on "Qualitative Teaching Research and Development" which took place in Maputo, Mozambique, in September 2019. The funding by the DFG allowed us to invite researchers from Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa, Senegal, Mozambique, Kenya, Japan, and Germany. In this encounter of researchers from scientific spheres that are read as 'Western' (Germany and Japan) and from post-colonialist scientific cultures of the so-called Global South, perspectives on research and challenges in research should be reflected against the background of their embedding in the different regional and historically bound situations.

Hence, the conference was not only intended to present the research approaches and results of the participating academics. We have moreover structured the conference according to some (for us) central methodological questions, which can serve as crystallisation points for the contrasting and reflection of the local connectedness of the various methodological considerations and approaches:

Questions of the researchers' approach to, and their position(ing) in the field: How do researchers gain access to a specific research field (i.e., a community,

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a school or specific lessons), and how do they relate to the people in the field, moving in between the position of a 'foreign' researcher (which is essential for understanding) and the need of assuming some joint understanding (i.e., in regard on how to behave in situations like 'lessons' or 'research interviews') (i.e., Lang-Wojtasik 2002; Mulhanga 1998)? How is a researcher 'positioned' by persons in the field as to their understanding of his work, and what can one learn from being positioned in this way?

These fields of tension, especially when researchers, understandings and research fields from different cultural contexts are involved, were discussed mostly in relation to ethnographic research, concentrating on the process of data collection.

Concerns of generalisability of qualitative research, which is necessarily connected to, and founded upon, specific situations, cases and contexts (e.g., Hallitzky & Spendrin 2022) were discussed by focussing the – at the same time enabling and limiting – role of pre-understandings: What explicit theoretical and/or more implicit cultural assumptions and pre-understandings does the researcher need to make sense of an observed situation or interaction – and what kind of insights are simultaneously prevented by these preconceptions? These aspects were discussed in relation to the process of reconstructive data analysis, especially in projects that focussed classroom interactions from different cultural contexts.

In particular when researching pedagogical fields, some normative positioning in relation to (possibly different) pedagogical values, norms or aims often enters research either explicitly or implicitly (e.g., Fuchs 2019). This led to the questions on how to relate classroom research to these normativities, especially in approaches which, like the Lesson Study approach, aim at not only describing, but also developing teaching and education.

Our assumption when planning the discussions at the conference was that the positioning in relation to each of these questions is related to the researchers' place in the world which shapes his or her perspective. The idea was, that by contrasting approaches and methods from different contexts, the particularities and the implicitly taken-for-granted premises would become more visible. Thus, by expanding our horizons, we aimed to learn more about the local connectedness of both our own and others' research approaches.

This Volume is not only intended to publish the presentations held at the conference to a broader audience, but also to both widen and deepen the discussion on the contextual and methodological challenges beyond the scope of the conference. A wider perspective is taken, as we realised that most of us knew little about the very different local contexts of teaching which researchers do face – this is why we include spotlight-insights into the different educational systems and their challenges. A deeper perspective is provided

by commentary texts that not only follow up with the discussions held at the conference, but furthermore ground them in epistemological and scientific discourses.

Section 1 (Local Situations of Teaching and Research) therefore showcases reports on the different local challenges and contexts. Researchers have been encouraged to not only give some general information on the educational systems and their history, but also to exemplify specific challenges that are faced in their country. For Tanzania, *Nkanileka L. Mgonda* and *Rwegasha P. Ishemo* describe how seasonal shifting cultivation and initiation rites affect school attendance in specific community contexts, thus arguing for research and development on local levels. *Lara-Stephanie Krause-Alzaidi* gives an introduction into the complex linguistic realities at South-African schools, calling for qualitative research that sheds more light on the complex strategies that teachers have already developed to deal with linguistic diversity especially at so-called marginalised schools. *Mamadou Mbaye* and *Carla Schelle* describe the unresolved ambivalence of "enracinement et ouverture" (rooting and opening) in the Senegalese education system as a core of postcolonial realities. Taking up the question of linguistic educational policy, *Amélia E. Tocova* and *Felismina J.B. Vantitia* describe challenges of implementing the policy of Bilingual Education in Mozambique. Following the policy of teacher qualification for the integration of 'learner centred education' in Kenya, *Joyce Kinyanjui e*xplores some of the methodological problems of assessment of teaching through Lesson Study, such as reductive observation tools and the interference of teaching development with school inspection. After introducing the history and development of the Japanese education system, *Yuichi Miyamoto* and *Nariakira Yoshida* discuss problems of contemporary curriculum development and societal change exemplified on the consequences of the Fukushima catastrophe. Finally, *Matthias Martens* gives an insight into the German education system(s) and presents challenges such as inclusion and dealing with weak results in international assessments.

Section 2 to 4 of the volume address the methodological questions which were focused during the conference (see above). In each section, some methodological introductions are given before research projects and results are presented. Each of these sections concludes with a discussion paper (commentary) on the methodological question in focus.
The methodological question of the researcher in the field (section 2) is exemplified with ethnographic research. Firstly, the ethnographic approach is introduced by *Karin Bräu* and *Laura Fuhrmann*. In the following, *Félix Mulhanga* presents a reflection on an ethnographic research process in schools

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in rural Mozambique, where he faced specific challenges concerning how to make his intention as a researcher transparent to the people in the field, getting stuck in the same postcolonial entanglements that he was intending to explore. *Lara-Stephanie Krause-Alzaidi* then describes the process of accessing (or immersing herself into) the field in the sensitive terrain of a South-African township school as a "learner-researcher", and encouraging the building of trust among researchers and teachers. In the commentary article, *Matthias Martens* discusses the different insights these reflections provided on the position(ing) of the ethnographer in the field, accentuating the challenges of postcolonial contexts as well as the potential of conceptualising research as learning especially when intercultural differences are to be faced.

The methodological questions of the role of implicit or explicit cultural and theoretical backgrounds, which are very much connected to the concept of "Standortsgebundenheit" (Mannheim 1929, new edition: 2024, 28) (section 3) are discussed based on examples of videographic classroom research, using different methodical approaches of reconstructive interpretation. To give an orientation in the methodological field, this part starts with an overview of reconstructive methodologies, data collection and interpretation methods by *Karin Bräu*. *Mamadou Mbaye* and *Carla Schelle* then introduce the approach of Objective Hermeneutics, before they report their study on subject matter and addressation practices in Senegalese and German classrooms. In particular, they reflect on the limitations of comparative analysis, e.g., with regard to blind spots in the observation. In subsequence, *Johanna Leicht* gives an introduction to the specificities of reconstructive video-analysis within an interaction analysis approach. *Karla Spendrin* and *Maria Hallitzky* use this approach to reconstruct processes of individualisation and collectivisation in two very different lessons from Germany and Japan, and reflect on the implications of cultural and theoretical understandings in the interpretation process, discussing possibilities of reflecting this influence. *Matthias Martens* and *Emi Kinoshita* recur on experiences of an interpretation workshop in an intercultural setting, using the approach of the Documentary Method, reflecting on potentials and challenges of interpreting data in an intercultural setting. In the discussion paper of this section, *Yuichi Miyamoto* reflects on the contributions and discusses challenges and achievements with regard to the role of theoretical and cultural pre-understandings. Thereby he connects the methodological discussion to the philosophical context of hermeneutic epistemology and to the history and the development of the general pedagogical discourse.

In section 4, different approaches to lesson development are showcased, each contributing to the discussion on the role of (different, but inevitable) norma-

tivities in pedagogical research and development. Firstly, *Nariakira Yoshida* and *Yuichi Miyamoto* give an introduction to Lesson Study in Japan as a research framework in which researchers and teachers are tied closely to encourage teachers developing their teaching skills with enhanced pedagogical insights by collaborating with multiple stakeholders such as colleagues in a school, the board of education, or researchers at a university. Following an introduction to the history of Lesson Study and the approach in general, an example of Lesson Study at Hiroshima University is presented. *Maria Hallitzky, Emi Kinoshita* and *Karla Spendrin* report on a dialogue between a school teacher and the research team regarding the analysis and development of a literature lesson, describing teachers' and researchers' roles in the process of lesson development, and unveil different (hidden or open) normativities in the mutual observations. Lesson Observations as a measure between developmental and controlling intentions are the topic of *Joyce Kinyanjui's* discussion of the case of three counties in Kenya, pointing out the potentials and challenges of centralised teaching development programs. In the commentary paper in this section, *Mamadou Mbaye* reflects on the methodological role and challenge of normativity in pedagogical research and on the specific forms of intertwining development and research in the different approaches, highlighting the requirement to perceive teaching in all its complexity as a process that cannot be technologised.

In section 5 of the volume, we collected discussion papers on aspects of teaching research and development especially in postcolonial contexts, reflecting on the epistemological and practical power relations that continue to influence pedagogical research. *Wilson P. Nicaquela* and *Adelino I. Assane* open the discussion with a text on narratives as epistemology to research the everyday life in schools in Mozambique as well as on the difficulties of anchoring such an approach as a scientific method in a scientific discourse that relies predominantly on standardisation and reduction of complexity. Standardisation and (the need of) contextualisation of research instruments especially in postcolonial settings is also a crucial point of *Jaime Alipio's* discussion of experiences with young researchers' projects in Mozambique, culminating in the observation of a problematic social (and often also, but not only, linguistic) distance between researchers and their life-world and the fields of research, especially outside the capital areas. In the commentary article of this section, *Emi Kinoshita* discusses the challenges of international discourses in educational research, adopting auto-ethnography as a method to effectuate a trialogue between the authors of this part, which leads to insights into the constraints of mutual methodical understanding, while at the same time enabling a deeper perception of one's own and others' position(ing) in post-colonial research settings.

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The completion of this volume took quite some time – time which was taken to ensure the comprehensibility of articles as well as discussion papers through different stages of review in a complex intercultural communication process. Firstly, in the framework of mutual reviews, each paper was reviewed by other authors of the volume, in a way that aspired to obtain perspectives from different (cultural and/or disciplinary) contexts on each text. Later on, the editors' team had a second review, before the revised texts were sent to the lecturer for English language. The aim of this complex and time taking process was to ensure that the texts could be accessible and understood by a broad range of readers, explaining presupposed concepts and enabling the texts to be integrated into different discourses.

Due to the timely process, some of the descriptions of educational systems and local educational situations in Part 1 have already reached a stage of 'historical' descriptions, as changes have taken place since around 2019 or 2020, when the papers were originally written. However, local situations continue in their relevance as challenges for qualitative teaching research and development.

Reflecting the intercultural and also multilingual discussion throughout the conference and the publication process (during the conference, talks were translated alternately between English and Portuguese, the organisation team used German as a working language), we discussed if and how different languages could be used in the book, and if not, which language should be chosen. Although the choice fell on English as the language of the articles, we chose to provide at least additional abstracts in the different languages of the organisation team (Portuguese, Japanese, and German) in order to reach all contributors of the discourse, their colleagues and a broader audience – whilst we were, and still are, aware that we would not attain to represent the complete language diversity of the conference participants and possible readers. References to literature have been kept in the original language, with the only exception that names of Japanese authors had to be written in Latin letters and placed in the Latin alphabet.

As the editors, we'd like to thank the authors for their engagement as authors and reviewers – giving valuable feedback on other texts, and for the patience they had in waiting for the articles to finally be published. We'd also like to thank Lucille Scally for thorough language editing, Friedrich Koch for careful proofreading and publisher Andreas Klinkhardt for the confidential cooperation in publishing this volume. For the crucial suggestion regarding the possibility of Point Sud sponsoring international conferences, we would like to thank Christiane Feller. Special thanks also go to Dr. Emi Kinoshita, Dr. Johanna Leicht and Dr. Mamadou Mbaye for their great contribution in

terms of content and organisation to the planning and running of our conference in Maputo. We'd also like to thank Prof. Dr. Hans Saar for his indispensable help in building the network between the organisers of the conference and for his local organisational support. A sincere thank you also goes to Prof. Dr. Mamadou Diawara, founding director of the DFG funding programme Point Sud and the organisers of the Point Sud programme in Frankfurt, Dr. Marko Scholze and in Bamako, Dr. Issa Fofana. Last but not least, we would like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) for funding the conference as part of the Point Sud programme and for financing the publication through the 'Specialised Information Services for Science' (FID) programme.

The programmes Point Sud and FID enabled, and continue to enable, a multi-perspective exchange in the field of qualitative teaching research, which like educational research in the modern world in general, is nevertheless characterised by postcolonial relations and strong hierarchies of representation and signification between 'centres' and 'peripheries'. Emi Kinoshita, after analysing the entanglements of different authors in these constellations, however concludes this volume with a hopeful prospect for the continuation of an international discussion setting with conferences and workshops that bring forward voices from different directions (see Kinoshita in this volume). Or, as one conference participant put it in the conference feedback: "In this conference we managed to *do* post-coloniality without necessarily having to say it. We have listened to each other". In this sense, it was, and is, our aim to stimulate and engage in a multilateral, open dialogue on the topics and challenges of qualitative teaching research in the international field and, in doing so, to reflect as far as possible on our own unavoidable entanglements in postcolonial reality (which are also evident in this volume).

In this respect, this volume is not intended to be a conclusion, but rather a further starting point – which is why we encourage all readers to enter into dialogue and discussion with us.

Leipzig, Maputo, Hiroshima in February 2025,

Maria Hallitzky, Félix Mulhanga, Karla Spendrin, and Nariakira Yoshida

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