Scaling Narrative Studies In Bildung Didactics: Reflections on three case studies

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Abstract: In research on education the field roughly covered by the concept of Bildung has seen a wide-ranging discussion philosophically but less has been said and done from an empirical and teacher-vocational perspective (Rittelmeyer 2012, Tyson 2015a, 2015b). Bildung includes matters such as: formation of character, ethical and aesthetic knowledge/capability, capacity for wise deliberation and reflection as well as the development of personal autonomy (Rittelmeyer 2012) and is defined here in close connection with the Aristotelian phronesis or practical wisdom (Tyson 2015b) in the sense that to afford Bildung in education, from a practical standpoint, is about a teacher’s phronesis. The theoretical framework for this is phronetic social science as articulated by Flyvbjerg (2001) and Flyvbjerg et al. (2012).

The aim is to present a brief outline of narratively articulated Bildung didactics, a field of research closely related to both Bildungsgangdidaktik (Gessler 1988, Meyer 2009, Trautmann 2004) and reflective practice (Schön 1983, 1987), and then to discuss the first impressions of three multiple-case studies where the form of the inquiry has been scaled to produce a larger number of narratives.

The empirical basis for this draws on four recent studies. One is the biography of craftmaster Wolfgang B. (Tyson 2015a, 2015b) and his paradigmatic narratives of Bildung didactics as experienced over the course of his vocational education. The three other studies have, in different ways, tried to scale the initial results from the biographical study by introducing more specific Bildung didactical question in various teacher education contexts as tasks for the teacher students. One is a study reported at ECER 2015 (Pedagogical imagination and practical wisdom: the role of good narratives in teacher education and professional development) concerned with narratives of successful conflict resolution among after-school care teachers. The second is a study with vocational teacher students and their stories of vocational Bildung experiences during their own vocational training. The third is a study with students at a nursing teacher program and their stories of existential Bildung didactical events in their experience and handling of patients’ suffering and similar matters. Especially the latter two studies will be the focus of some reflection with the aim of clarifying some potentials, limitations and possibilities for VET teacher education in particular.

Keywords: Narrative; Didactics; Bildung; Phronesis

Bibliographical note: Ruhi Tyson is PhD student at Stockholm University, Department of Education. The thesis focuses on how practical knowledge in the area of Bildung and phronesis can be narratively articulated and potentials of such an approach.
Introduction
In research on education the field roughly covered by the concept of Bildung has seen a wide-ranging discussion philosophically but less has been said and done from an empirical and teacher-vocational perspective (Rittelmeyer 2012, Tyson 2015a, 2015b). Bildung includes matters such as: formation of character, ethical and aesthetic knowledge/capability, capacity for wise deliberation and reflection as well as the development of personal autonomy (Rittelmeyer 2012) and is defined here in close connection with the Aristotelian concept of phronesis or practical wisdom (Tyson 2015b) in the sense that to afford Bildung in education, from a practical standpoint, is about a teacher’s phronesis. The theoretical framework for this is phronetic social science as articulated by Flyvbjerg (2001) and Flyvbjerg et al. (2012) where the aims of social scientific research are understood in terms of contributing to phronesis, ie. wise practical action and reflection, rather than theory.

The aim here is to present a brief outline of narratively articulated Bildung didactics, a field of research closely related to both Bildungsgangdidaktik (Gessler 1988, Meyer 2009, Trautmann 2004) and reflective practice (Schön 1983, 1987), and then to discuss the first impressions of three multiple-case studies where the inquiry has been scaled to produce a larger number of narratives.

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Narratively articulated Bildung didactics: a brief outline

The approach here termed narratively articulated Bildung didactics (NBD), is a combination of the following core ideas:

1. Aspects of practical knowledge can be articulated narratively because narratives remain close to the uniqueness of experience in contrast to general, discursive statements which extrapolate from experience but do not actually relate the experience as such. Some forms of practical knowledge are difficult to cover by only relying on the general, one case is practical knowledge of how to afford Bildung since Bildung is such an elusive and personal process.

2. Didactics in the sense of what, how, when and why we teach is a form of practical knowledge that, when concerned with matters of Bildung, requires, at least in part, a narrative approach. Confusingly, didactics here can mean both reflection on didactics in the sense of teaching actions but also reflection on vocational practice in the sense of work-related actions. Where regular teachers mostly teach subjects without necessarily being professional chemists or athletes, vocational teachers tend to also be (or have been) professionally active in their respective fields. This means that their work-related actions can acquire didactical relevance because it is, after all, these that are to be taught for the most part.

3. Bildung, and in the case of these studies, vocational Bildung covers a wide range of issues that can be usefully grouped together under the headline of being intrinsic values. With
this I mean that traditional elements of Bildung such as character development, autonomy, moral and aesthetic sensibility and development as well as a sense for the interconnection of various fields of knowledge are all matters that do not conform to any extrinsic measure. Learning a skill is a paradigmatic form of something that has an extrinsic and therefore comparatively impersonal value. The main focus is on a degree of mastery established by convention. The main focus of matters with intrinsic values can only be understood as a continuous unfolding of greater richness measured in relation to the biographical totality of a person’s life trajectory. This does not mean that Bildung is a completely subjective and therefore didactically irrelevant process although it does imply that Bildung can never be fully planned for or forced upon someone against their will. What it means is that the practical didactical knowledge that a teacher can have of how to afford experiences of Bildung is a form of practical knowledge that is, at its core, aesthetic and because of this narratives of (vocational) Bildung contribute to this kind of knowledge both because it is so intimately tied to personal experience and because it is aesthetic (stories being part of aesthetically ordering experience).

Scaling the inquiry through multiple case studies

The case of Wolfgang B.: A paradigmatic beginning
The initial study, reported in full in Tyson (2015a), was an exploratory documentation of the vocational biography of my old bookbinding master Wolfgang B. and his training as an apprentice in Stuttgart in the 1950s and further education in Paris in the 60s. This study resulted in a group of narratives about his vocational teachers and his own educational activity that hinted at the potential inherent in scaling this kind of inquiry and demonstrated examples of the various ways such inquiries could be expected to contribute. In this sense the whole case was, and remains, a paradigmatic case for the development NBD. Following the completion of the initial case study an attempt has been made to explore how this kind of inquiry can be expanded. The following three multiple case studies represent the initial results.

Narratives of successful conflict resolution: The first attempt at scaling the inquiry
This initial study was in preparation already before the final publication of the first case. It resulted from an opportunity to develop a curriculum for a new fritids (after-school care grades 1-4) teacher program and I took the opportunity to make use of what I had learned thus far in the research process. Since the program is in-service and part-time most of the students already worked at a fritids and an integration of practice and education was thus significantly simplified. The educational sessions take place once a month for two days and in between the students work at fritids. The curriculum was constructed so that about 50% of the training is immediately connected with that work including, especially, the narrative reproduction of various actions undertaken during time at work. Thus the first semester saw a focus on successful conflict resolution in a fritids-environment and a collection of narratives recounting this. Some of the results have already been reported (Tyson 2015c, 2016a). There were a number of practical issues that emerged from the initial semester of the program such as participants being new to this style of working, finding it difficult to write narratives and to separate narrative from discursive writing. However, there were several narratives rich enough to be made meaningful parts of analyses. I have included one here to exemplify, previously published in Tyson (2016a).

1 Successful conflict resolution actions might seem unrelated to the idea of Bildung and the framework for understanding the narratives was couched more in the context of phronesis. However, as established briefly in the introduction, it is at least possible to view phronesis in an educational setting as related to Bildung. A teacher who is gebildet and able to afford Bildung to students could well be understood to have a developed capacity for forms of conflict resolution that enrich the lives of those involved.
### Playing War

A game that was initially fun, “Indians and cowboys,” degenerates into “real war.” A gang of first graders feels they need to fortify themselves and they arm themselves with stones, sticks and nails. The other gang consists of kids from second and third grade who still believe they are just playing. One of them comes running to fetch me. They’ve been caught by a hail of stones and one of them has gotten a larger one on the head. Another has gotten hit across the stomach with a stick. I myself end up in the line of fire like a barrier between the two camps and I gather myself and instead of barking at them angrily I find a white (luckily) handkerchief in my pocket and wave it around calling for “Peace!” The attack ceases immediately and I say: “Oh dear, many dead here! It looks really bad. We need a ceasefire.”

This brings both gangs out to the wounded and they start making peace with each other. The process isn’t without its difficulties. But with almost no help from me they manage to decide together that it’s best to stop playing war if it leads to people getting injured. The older children explain very pedagogically that it is never real war when kids play.

I don’t admonish anyone, limiting myself to asking, when the older children ask me if it’s forbidden here at fritids to play war: “What do you think?” They all come to an agreement that it is forbidden.

Later the one who threw the rock told his mother what had happened. He receives some help from me but wants to tell her himself. Mother wants to admonish. I ask her to wait. The boy begins drawing a soldier with weapons in his hands in the gravel and says: “Play war? Yes! Real war? No!” And then he crosses his picture over with two strokes. Later he tells me that the army has held military exercises for several days outside of his window and that he’s been awake during the night.

From this and the other narratives I concluded that having participants in various forms of teacher training write this kind of narrative was both feasible and could contribute valuable knowledge to both research and practice. I then tried to clarify the various ways this was possible in a further article (Tyson 2016b) arriving at the tentative result that they can be differentiated in at least five groups: enriching knowledge of vocational tasks; conceptual development and critical reflection; advancement of practice through enrichment of practitioners case-repertoires; development of ‘practice fields’ and the articulation of patterns of vocational Bildung affordances. A sixth way can be added here that intersects with the above five, namely the use of this approach in teacher education curricula. On the one hand this and the following studies can be viewed as an efficient way of gathering research data. On the other it is also meaningful to consider what this kind of inquiry can contribute directly to educational programs apart from the mentioned categories. I will return to this in the concluding discussion after introducing the other studies conducted.

### Narratives of vocational Bildung and existential Bildung: two further steps towards a broadened inquiry

Continuing the approach from the fritids-teacher program I proposed to introduce a similar narrative task in a couple of university-based programs, one for vocational teacher education and one for nursing teacher education. Both aim at educating already trained professionals to provide them with the certification to teach, mainly at the Swedish upper secondary level (ages 16-19) in the various vocational programs. The former is a catch-all course for all kinds of diverse professionals ranging from crafts through cosmetics and tourism, cooking, etc. The latter is a course for nurses and enrolled nurses (undersköterskor) preparing specifically for the care-program at the upper secondary level.

With the vocational teacher students the task was introduced as writing a didactically relevant story about a vocational Bildung experience. The introduction took about 45 minutes and a short written summary was also handed out mostly consisting of examples from the case of Wolfgang B. (both handouts are available upon request and I am happy to share any information needed to
support the introduction of this or similar approaches in teacher education. The task was made part of the course curriculum as a way of practicing making this kind of knowledge explicit and open for reflection. In the concluding course evaluation it was generally perceived as the most rewarding task of that course module. The students were also asked to make their narratives available for this research but given the opportunity to refuse and since I did not teach and grade the course there was no immediate power asymmetry affecting their decision. No one declined participation from the group of vocational teachers whereas one did from the group of nursing teachers, perhaps not surprisingly given the more sensitive subject matter explored among them.

A similar introduction was provided at the nursing teacher program with the difference that there the emphasis was on existential Bildung and successful/enriching approaches to suffering. In the following I have translated three of the narratives from that program that demonstrate the comparative breadth of approaches.

**Greta**

This event takes place at a retirement home where I still work. It is about a patient that we have had with us for two years in the wing for patients with dementia. When I saw that the patient was nearing her last hour I felt an obligation to be by her side so that she would not feel alone.

Greta is old and sick. According to the doctors she doesn’t have long to live. The only thing Greta can manage to consume is fluid. Greta is religious and appreciates worship. When I enter her room to give her some fluids I notice that Greta is very sad.

Me: Hi dear, are you sad? Is there anything I can do for you?

Greta: I didn’t think that I would be afraid of death but I am.

Me: I think it is human to feel a fear of death, I believe most people do. Would you like me to read from the Bible for you? (I hold Greta’s hands)

Greta: Yes I would really do. You are so kind and caring, you’ve always been and it would really bring me joy if you would read to me. But you aren’t Christian though?

Me: No I’m not, I’m Muslim but that doesn’t matter, just tell me which page you want me to read from or if there’s a special prayer that you want us to read together and I will gladly do so as long as it makes you feel better.

Greta: O my friend you are an angel and I already feel much better and not afraid anymore. God has sent you to me and I know that Jesus will receive me when I die and that we shall be reunited with our near and dear.

Greta and me embrace for a long while and then we read from the Bible together. Suddenly the enrolled nurse [the narrator switches from 1st to 3rd person here] notices that Greta is silent and has closed her eyes but she continues to read from the Bible and to hold Greta’s hand. Greta has passed away peacefully in that moment.

For me it was the only right thing to do to try to get the patient to feel safe and to have peace in her final moments. To ask a patient what he or she wants and what one can do for them is a matter of course since working with elderly is about the needs of patients, both physically and emotionally. Since the people in the retirement home often feel lonely it is especially important for enrolled nurses to give them a sense of dignity and the feeling that they are there for them. An important aspect is knowing about the background of patients, it makes it a lot easier to feel empathy and that capacity is central in work with people. In that moment I could relate it to my home culture where it is important that people are not left alone in such processes. People appreciate religion in these situations, death becomes more welcoming for people who are religious and I knew this patient was. Because our interaction went so well I chose to write about it. If one analyzes the event from a didactical perspective it was personal experience and the knowledge of the patient’s background and my attitude that made the encounter so positive. If I hadn’t known the patient as I did I’m not so sure it would have been as positive. But I believe people’s attitudes towards situations they end up in play a big part. To enter into different situations even if it is about death can become a positive thing if one has a humanistic way of thinking. Creating a safe environment for another person is a sign of success.
Case description
Maj lives in a service apartment and is, despite her comparatively young age of 73, severely disabled because of diabetes which, owing to reduced circulation, has forced amputation of both her legs. Maj has found it very difficult to accept this and experiences a lot of anxiety, especially at night time when she tends to lie awake pondering unjust events from her life. She keeps comparing herself to others, eg. look at her, she’s 96 and always seems so happy and content and both her legs remain, why can’t I have it that way? Maj has a large social network despite not having any children of her own with good contact to siblings and their families. She also has many friends who come to visit and they do a lot of fun activities together, theatre and concerts are often on the menu.

Dialogue 1
I: Good evening Maj, you rang the alarm for me? (friendly and inquiring)
M: Good evening to you! (Maj looks happy to see me)
I: So what was on your mind this evening? (throwing a quick glance at the alarm that beeps)
M: Nah, it wasn’t really anything, I’m sure you have lots of others waiting! (Maj seems to become a bit irritated)
I: Tell me what it was you were thinking about, I am here for you now! (Maj often likes a somewhat joking tone so I blink a little with one eye at her and nod agreeingly)
M: Well, I’ve got a bit of pain but it’ll probably pass! (Maj doesn’t seem entirely convinced judging by the tone of her voice, she shrugs her shoulders and looks in another direction)
I: But Maj, what are we gonna do about that, you shouldn’t lye here in pain?! (I approach her and take her hand)
M: Give me a pill! (Maj sounds on the verge of tears but clearly shows that she doesn’t want to say more)
I: Ok, is it an OxyNorm you want? (I look at her and she nods and I fetch the pill)
M: Thank you that was kind! But you can hurry on now! (Maj seems a bit annoyed)
I: Are you sure there wasn’t something else Maj, I have time if you want to talk!?
M: No I know you don’t, everything is in such a hurry in the evening nowadays! (Maj has an irritated tone and shows with her entire body that she wants me to leave)
I: Ok Maj I’ll go but promise me you’ll ring the alarm again if the pill doesn’t help or if you want some more company!? Perhaps you want me to look in on you again in a while? (I look at her questioningly)
M: Yeah if you have time for it you can always come back in a while but maybe I’m already sleeping then. (Maj looks sad)
I: Then that’s what I’ll do Maj, I’ll be back within an hour! (I smile a little at Maj and receive a little smile back)

Analysis of first dialogue
I my conversation with Maj I think I start with an open question when asking what’s on her mind. My mistake here is simultaneously casting a glance at the beeping alarm. Maj probably interprets my look as saying that I am stressed by it so that my gaze and my verbal communication don’t really match. This also comes to expression in her reply. In my reply to this I try to encourage her to tell me what she wanted and I try to repair my mistake from before by explaining that I am here for her now. I think what I was trying to do was a simpler form of mirroring her feeling that I wouldn’t have time for her by saying that I am here for her now. I also try to add some humour to my verbal sensitivity by nodding agreeingly and blinking at her. Maj’s bodily expression when she tells me that she is in pain shows plainly that this is perhaps not the primary cause for her ringing the alarm but that it’s the loneliness that seizes her and that she feels unwanted and in the way. When I take her hand her feelings come into conflict with each other, her wish for me to stay and
talk and her anger at not being able to take care of herself. This is when she curtly asks for a pill. Through a non-open ended question I gather that it’s a painkiller she wants and not something for her anxiety. Maj then again shows that she has experienced me as being in a hurry when she asks me to leave. Towards the end of the conversation I make another mistake by asking several questions in the same sentence but we solve this by deciding together that I will return within an hour. My smile gives her hope of talking some more later and she communicates non-verbally to me that she is comparatively happy with the arrangement.

Dialogue 2
I: Hi Maj! Still awake? (spoken softly in case she has fallen asleep)
M: Yes I am awake, I’ve been waiting for you! (sounds tired but satisfied that I’ve come back)
I: Has the pain subsided? (inquiring and friendly voice, I’ve also turned the alarm off since my colleague knows I am there)
M: Yes it feels better. But that wasn’t why I rang the alarm before! (she looks at me a bit impishly)
I: I figured Maj and that’s why I’m back now! I understood that you wanted to talk! Can I just get a chair so that I don’t have to stand? (Maj looks happy and wants me to get one of the soft chairs from the communal room)
M: Its so nice when you answer my calls because you don’t get mad when I snap, you seem to understand what I need! (Maj weeps a little while I sit down by her bed and take her hand)
I: Now tell me, Maj, what it is that weighs on you tonight? (I look her in the eyes and smile and nod encouragingly with my head)
M: My sister was here today and I am always so happy when she comes but just as sad when she leaves again! I know she has a lot to do with her family and that she visits because she feels sorry for me and that she can’t stay for very long! (She weeps a lot now, I give her a handkerchief and allow her to cry for a while before we go on talking)
I: So you think, Maj, that your sister visits just out of pity with you? (Maj looks at me and ceases to weep, she appears to be thinking)
M: Noooo, she probably visits because we’ve always gotten along so well and like each other! Actually, now that you mention it, she came for advice from ME! (Maj remembers that it actually was her sister who was unhappy today and needed her advice in a matter and that she called later that day and told Maj that she had taken the advice and that it gone well!)

Analysis of dialogue 2
I break off the conversation here because it would go on for too long otherwise! I open it with some non-open ended questions because I need to know if she is asleep and painfree. When I sat down and everything is calm I ask Maj an open question about what it is that weighs on her this night.
Throughout the whole dialogue I try to be present and to use non-verbal ques to further substantiate my presence. I do this by nodding agreeingly, smiling, looking straight into her eyes when speaking and listening to her. I also try to use encouragement when trying to get the conversation going: tell me, Maj, what weighs on you. I also confirm that I have understood that it wasn’t the pain which was her primary concern this evening.
I make attempts at paraphrasing her when I reflect her feelings regarding her sister and try to clarify them. This prompts her to reflect more deeply herself and to conclude that the facts aren’t as crass as she felt that evening. It is also possible to view this paraphrasing as a confrontational question where I redirect the center of her concern causing Maj to view the visit in a more positive way. She remembers that it was her sister who came to her for advice which worked wonders for a lonely heart. This event is based on actual occurences. Maj often experiences anxiety but when one takes the time to talk to her it subsides. Maj fell sound asleep after our talk which didn’t last more than 20 minutes.

Reflection
In working with this assignment I have really begun to understand what communication is and how important it is. When analyzing my dialogues I could see both strengths and weaknesses in myself and ... I think there is too little attention paid to the importance of communicative knowledge in everyday work. But is precisely here in the minutiae of such work that important conversations emerge and where we build our relationships. When this everyday process works and relations are strengthened we stand better prepared for the more difficult conversations and events that we all experience in life. ...

The child
In my work as midwife I once met a couple during the initial meeting in the first stages of pregnancy. Earlier in the same year they had lost a child in week 24 of the pregnancy. That child had several grave deformations that were not compatible with life outside of the womb. During our conversation we talk a lot about anxiety, worry and fear with regards to the present pregnancy. The mother weeps throughout the whole conversation and the partner is very silent and looks down on the floor. The feeling I get during this conversation is that the couple haven’t been able to deal with the loss of their unborn child. I ask the father what name the son received and they both burst out in uncontrollable weeping. The room is filled with a very heavy atmosphere and I think/worry that the visit is going to end then and there. After a long time weeping the mother looks at me and says: thank you for asking. No one has ever talked to us about our son. Our family has been completely silent, our friends haven’t mentioned him. We’ve been all alone with our mourning. We look at picture of the son that the couple have brought. They weep throughout but its character has changed. I can sense and understand that now they are crying tears more of relief and gratitude because I didn’t shrink from talking about him. During the remaining visit we spoke about the delivery and time at the hospital. The couple began giving words to their experience and to share their feelings regarding the birth of their son. A burial was not conducted owing to the age of the child. The parents also talk a lot about this. When the visit nears its end we sit together in silence for a long time. I thank them for sharing their experiences with me and tell them we will always have the big brother with us in our forthcoming conversations. We book a new visit in a weeks time to continue our conversation since the couple still has a lot left to talk of regarding their son. No councelling was offered to them after his death so I write a referral to a professional councellor as well. This encounter which I feared would end abruptly became one of the most beautiful encounters I have had during my professional life.

Discussion: potentials and limitations for VET teacher education
The three narratives presented represent not only different themes but also different narrative styles and different affordances for reflection. *Greta* in its dramatic rendition of a womans fear of death and passing is perhaps the most paradigmatic story about existential Bildung among the three. *Maj* represents a completely different narrative style and approach. It is far more detailed, oriented towards the minutiae of everyday work in homes for the elderly and also contains extensive reflective parts. Finally *The child* although in one sense being close to *Greta* in dramatic content is different in that its dramatic peak is reached through a question that for a while has the midwife questioning if she acted wisely at all. It provides the means for other kinds of reflection than *Greta* disregarding for the moment that the stories are also situated in vastly different practical contexts even if they both share death as a common subject matter. These differences serve to highlight the variety of ways this kind of practical knowledge can contribute to reflection and practice among VET teachers. The story about *Maj* and similar ones in
which a conversation is recounted and analysed not only helps the practitioner writing it to become more aware of her actions it also works as a source of reflection for other practitioners doing similar work and the accumulation of a greater number of such accounts can begin to articulate various potential courses of action and reflection to practitioners that previously were only available in the form of general statement (and really therefore not at all from a practical perspective). The story about Greta and similar ones taken together with the NBD conceptual framework hold the potential to strengthen practitioners arguments about what they do that is valuable but not easily quantifiable. They also represent a way to evaluate practice, not first and foremost on an individual level but institutionally by surfacing core values that an institution produces and making clear that although they cannot be quantified they can clearly become articulate and subject to assessment. This can potentially be empowering for practitioners in relations with management but also for management in developing a relationship to practitioners which is experienced as more sensitive to the actual values of practice. It is a story furthermore, that can function as a source for didactical reflection regarding important aspects of existential Bildung necessary for wise nursing practice. This is as relevant to work on for students in a teacher education program preparing to teach in VET programs at schools as it is as part of these programs, ie. the same narrative is equally relevant on several levels. Finally, the story about The child serves to underscore the unexpected ways in which existential Bildung experiences can occur, it and others like it can help practitioners gain confidence in asking difficult and risky questions but also to reflect on how situational judgment can be developed where decisions can be made regarding when it is best not to ask or to go about asking in roundabout ways. A greater number of stories where the whole narrative hinges on one particular question (in this case about the name of the child) could perhaps also begin to tell practitioners something about the nature of questions that serve as a relief rather than simply as a source of pain. Maybe there are similarities to such questions?

Some limits to the approach
Apart from the obvious limitation, that the NBD approach cannot cover everything and that within the general context of narrative work in teacher education there is need for more traditional case perspectives, critical incident work and stories of unsolved problems, there are some further issues. It makes a difference if a story is written in solitude or emerges through a conversation between two people. Perhaps this can be alleviated by having students conduct some of their work as interviews rather than writing, but that supposes that there is enough time and that it is a meaningful part of their educational process and not just a perspective that makes sense from the point of view of research. There are also practical matters of how comfortable students are with storytelling in general and written storytelling in particular. Not everyone finds it easy to articulate their experiences in narrative and putting them in writing adds another level of complexity. Depending on the educational background of a student group it might be necessary to add training in narrative writing (an issue that emerged after the first months of training at the fritids teacher program).

Final conclusions
Perhaps the most important result is the potential of the approach to speak to practitioners’ experience and to provide them with a conceptual structure through which aspects of their practical knowledge can be articulated. And in connection with this there is also a move to make practitioners’ private and personal knowledge public and shared. Academic teacher education is often accused of relying on educational theories that are irrelevant to practice and practitioners, and educational research is no less often accused of exploring matters which have little bearing on practice. Although these accusations may well be overstated at a closer view they are hardly without merit and the approach argued for here is a contribution to the lessening of this gulf, real or perceived. Given that it requires a comparatively brief introduction for most practitioners to grasp its relevance it appears that the conceptual framework serves both the purpose of making this kind of research explicable and of providing practitioners with a perspective on their own
knowledge which they find intuitive. Most participants in the latter two studies did the assignment and seem to have found it worthwhile which further strengthens the case for the approach although much more needs to be done in time to explore in greater detail these positive assessments of it. It seems important to stress that this is a cumulative sort of inquiry where VET teacher education modules are enriched by its inclusion while at the same time the gradual increase in the number of narratives gathered allows for deeper and wider comprehension of vocational Bildung and its didactics. This separates it somewhat from many narrative approaches to higher education (eg. McDrury & Alterio 2002, Moon 2010) where there is less emphasis on the narratives of practitioners also contributing to research, especially in a cumulative fashion. It serves as a complement to the case based approach developed at Harvard (cf. eg. Barnes, Christensen & Hansen 1994) and in connection with Shulman’s (2004, 2007) ideas of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Neither of these two, as far as I can tell, make any effort to distinguish between craft-like practical knowledge and Bildung-related practical knowledge. Shulman does write of the wisdom of practice approximating phronesis but does not go on to discuss how this could expand on PCK in a narrative sense. Given the difficulty of articulating knowledge of Bildung and phronesis in any other way than through stories this limits the practical approach that he can suggest and cuts it off from suggestions of systematic inquiry.

When it comes to how these kinds of stories can contribute to modules of didactics-training there is not much difference here from earlier approaches making use of storytelling in higher education to promote reflective practice, critical inquiry and similar matters. The critical incident method (eg. Brookfield 1990) as well as other more general work with teacher biographies and identity-development (eg. Clandinin & Connelly 2000, 1995) are especially close. To repeat myself, the main difference tends to be an absence of clearly understanding stories as cases of practical knowledge and asking those writing them to take an explicitly didactical perspective where what, how, when and why are variously outlined. Thus much that goes under the title of teacher stories amount to little else than reflections and conclusions with limited descriptions of actual actions.

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