



## Phenomenologically Researching the Lecturer-Student Teacher Relationship: Some Challenges Encountered

by David Giles

### Abstract

*The teacher-student relationship has long been of primary concern to educators and the focus of much educational research. While various theoretical understandings of this relationship exist, ontological understandings of the lived experiences of this relationship are not so prevalent, and there is thus a call for phenomenological studies aimed at uncovering the essential and ontological meanings of this taken for granted phenomenon. This paper reports on such a project and, in particular, some of the challenges encountered in the process of phenomenologically researching the relationship which arises in the context of teacher education between the lecturer and the student teacher.*

*The challenges of phenomenological research are both numerous and complex. These challenges relate to the intensity of the lived experience of the research itself, the meditative attunement of the researcher to the focal phenomenon, and the process of walking in a research process that is mindful of one's own historicity (Gadamer, 1960/1995). While the primary focus of this paper is on the challenges of researching the lecturer-student teacher relationship in a phenomenological way, it nevertheless reflects the unique capacity of a phenomenological approach to respect the centrality and humanity of relationship and to open understanding that affirms this.*

### The Priority of the Teacher-Student Relationship

Historically, the teacher-student relationship has remained a matter of critical import to any educational endeavour. Three centuries ago, Rousseau (1762/2007) drew attention to the importance of the relationship between a teacher and a student within an experiential approach to education which traversed formal and informal settings. In the 1800s and 1900s, Pestalozzi promoted a child-centred concern for education which gave priority to the teacher-student relationship (Heafford, 1967). Promoting this organic process of learning was said to have a transformative effect on the children, the teacher, and the teacher-student relationship (Wild, 2000). More recently,

New Zealand's Director of Education in the 1940s, Clarence Beeby, stated that teachers had a qualitative influence on their relationship with students, such that a paradigmatic shift was necessary from teachers teaching to students learning (Renwick, 1998).

Theoretical models and perspectives also point to the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Ecological models of education, for instance, show the nested influence of the child's relational environment, including the relationship that exists with significant others such as the teacher (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In similar vein, Vygotskian learning theory places the teacher in a proactive and critical role relationally with students. The teacher's

relational understandings assist the teacher to scaffold the growth of the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher's vital role as a facilitator highlights the importance and sensitivity of the teacher's way of being with the student. Constructivist approaches to education similarly show the teacher as fulfilling a critical role within the context of the teacher-student relationship. In this context, teacher and student both learn from the other through relational interactions (von Glasersfeld, 1996).

Given its central importance in the educational context, an extensive amount of educational research has focused on the teacher-student relationship. This research has assisted educators to construct theories for practice that reinforce the priority of this relationship in teaching and learning. For example, motivation is regarded as being relationally driven, the classroom climate is said to have a 'cultural' notion, and, in theorising teaching pedagogy, we have articulated roles for the teacher and student that illuminate different relational approaches to the process of education.

Some would argue that our theory-building around the teacher-student relationship has reduced understandings of the relational experience to the 'knowable' and the 'measurable', and that educators have consequently lost sight of the 'essence' of the phenomenon we call the teacher-student relationship. Palmer (1997, 1998) is one educator whose critique calls for a closer look at relational practices in education. He laments how many teachers now are actually avoiding a "live" relational encounter with their students (Palmer, 1998, p. 37).

Such critique challenges prevalent and prevailing ideologies that depict teaching as a matter of technical mastery and the teacher's role as that of a pedagogical technician. Technicist influences on teaching have Bell Hooks (2003) calling for a reconsideration of teaching practice, asking where the place of spirituality is in our educational endeavour. Ira Shor (1992), Paulo Freire (1968/1993), David Purpel (Purpel & McLaurin, 2004), Svi Shapiro (2005) and many others also lament the lost priority and understanding of the teacher-student relationship. They suggest that current educational practice is driven by banking models of education within managerialist ideologies (Barnett, 2003; Browder, 1997; Freire, 1968/1993; Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). Such ideological pressure has influenced the commodification of the curriculum such that our clients (students) are seen as purchasing packages of learning. Indeed, they do so as an expression of their individual choice in an ideological context that serves the individual. A potential

consequence of servicing individual choice is the proliferation of individualistic learning approaches, as these are seen as a means of providing quality in the form of effective and efficient forms of learning (Codd, 1999, 2005).

In the tertiary sector, increases in class size have put pressure on the relational interactions between teachers and students. Similarly, the priority given research, influenced by performance-based research funding regimes, challenges the priority and balance of the teaching-research nexus. Concern regarding present educational practice has led to increasing acknowledgement of and interest in the teacher-student relationship as a holistic experience (Beattie, 2002; Freire, 1968/1993; Hooks, 2003; Kuh, 1993; Lorenzo, 1998; Palmer, 1998). I am but one of many teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers who wish to return to a fuller appreciation of the teacher-student relationship as a phenomenon that is essential to the educational experience.

### **Phenomenologically Researching the Lecturer-Student Teacher Relationship: Some Challenges**

This paper draws upon a research project which explored the lecturer-student teacher relationship in the context of teacher education, a context within which I am a full-time senior lecturer (Giles, 2008). The research is positioned as interpretive phenomenology with a hermeneutical analysis that draws upon the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Gadamer, Levinas and Buber. Critical to phenomenological research is the notion that the researcher must attempt to "return to the things themselves" and as such to capture the "essence" of a lived experience that pre-exists all theorising about it. As Heidegger (1927/1962) states, returning to the phenomenon itself can enable an "uncovering" of taken for granted and ontological understandings of a phenomenon.

Phenomenological research thus seeks the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. For the purposes of this project, stories were gathered through conversation-type interviews where participants were asked to describe their own experiences of the focal phenomenon as fully as possible. Like many other qualitative research approaches, phenomenology seeks a thick description of the story from the participants (van Manen, 2002). Initial interpretations of each story were written and rewritten in a deepening process, the hermeneutic activity being central to the writing process which underpins hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

### **The Challenge of the Researcher's Prejudices**

The phenomenological inquiry reported here occurred

within a history of experiences and understandings of the teacher-student relationship. Heidegger (1927/1996) suggests that our “pre-understandings” have a “forehaving” and a “foreconception” of a kind that is integral to our “being-in-the-world”. Forehaving acknowledges that we are already in the midst of the world and its relationships before we decide or say anything about it (Harman, 2007). Similarly, our pre-understandings show a foreconception, which means that we are not simply carried along unthinkingly by the world that is given to us, but that we always approach that which surrounds us with a specific attitude or mood. Harman (2007) suggests that “we never fully escape this interplay between the pre-given and the interpretations we make of it, which are always unified in a shadowy, two-faced present” (p. 34). In this way, Gadamer (1960/1994) suggests, our being-in-the-world is always prejudiced, with Koch (1996) clarifying that “Prejudices are merely the conditions by which we encounter the world as we experience something” (p. 177). These prejudices include “unfounded discriminatory actions ... self-evident certainty ... ideology ... [and] pretensions of being free of all prejudice” (Diekelmann, 2005, p. 23). Similarly, inherited historical and cultural notions are located within our prejudices (Barnacle, 2001; Crotty, 1998; Schmidt, 2005). Gadamer’s concern is that we acknowledge our own possible prejudice as “the first necessary step to the retrieval of any prejudice that is naïvely covered over” (Diekelmann, 2005, p. 23). The phenomenological research approach calls for the researcher to make explicit his or her own pre-assumptions.

As the researcher, I am immersed in the world and its many relationships. I came to researching the teacher-student relationship with these experiences. These pre-understandings impact on my lived experiences with the participants and their stories. I am also very aware that I have been involved in the teacher-student relationship as a child, as a student over many years, as a primary and secondary school teacher, and as a teacher educator. I am influenced by my upbringing as one of six children as well as by my own children’s experience of schooling. I am also prejudiced by my interest in alternative forms of education as a way of reconsidering the nature and experience of the teacher-student relationship. This includes schools with special characters or schools with espoused ideological or philosophical orientations. Indeed, my experiences of the organisational culture of various educational institutions, and a master’s thesis that considered the ideological position of an alternative school (Giles, 1995), have left indelible impressions on my way of thinking about the teacher-student relationship. My experiences of the teacher-student relationship have led me to ‘feel’ the difference

between my ‘theories-of’ this phenomenon and my ‘lived experiences’ of this relationship (Giles, 2008).

As I engaged in the research inquiry, I became increasingly aware of a range of assumptions I held about the teacher-student relationship. As a means of gathering my pre-understandings and articulating these, I was interviewed by one of my supervisors prior to the study. The interview focused on my experience of the teacher-student relationship as a student, as a teacher and as a teacher educator. It was recorded and transcribed for analysis. This interview exposed the pre-understandings that were embedded in my thinking prior to the interviews. Some of these pre-understandings are summarized as follows:

*“The teacher-student relationship begins in the first class”*

I held the assumption that the teacher-student relationship was initiated in the first teaching-learning experience. The first class was the context for the start of the teacher-student relationship, with this beginning occurring for both the teacher and the student. The significance of the event thus required that the teacher give thought to *how* the first experience would take place. This planning would include the first greetings, how the classroom was organised, and the boundaries that might need to be negotiated with the students. I believed that the first class with a new group of students was a significant gathering that laid important foundations for subsequent classes. Wanting students to be actively involved in their lessons, I encouraged them to contribute to the discussions.

*“Teachers consider the teacher-student relationship more than students do”*

Another assumption revolved around the idea that the teacher was in control of both the learning experiences and the relationship. My assumption was that the teacher cared more about the relationship than the students did. As a consequence, the teacher needed to take the initiative relationally. I felt that the teacher’s greater concern for the teacher-student relationship would cause the teacher to consider the relational experiences after class more fully than the student would. Similarly, when the teacher-student relationship does not appear to matter to the teacher, it is the teacher who seems least affected by this. Teachers appear to be more resilient. I believed that the risk in the relationship fell more fully on the student.

*“The teacher-student relationship is a causal relationship”*

Another assumption related to my tendency to rely on educational psychology to explain the teacher-student

relationship and its influence on teaching-learning experiences. I tended to explain the educative process as a causal experience. My emphasis on educational psychology was reinforced by prevailing behaviourist and cognitive orientations to learning. A person's behaviour can be explained in terms of the causality between stimuli and responses, and conditioned through a range of reinforcers that change behaviour (Lefrançois, 2000). In this way, learning is defined as a change of behaviour. It is the teacher's task to control and direct a learner's behaviours towards pre-determined behavioural objectives.

While shifts in the orientation of pre-service teacher education programmes have occurred, compulsory *Learning and Teaching* courses in most teacher education programmes continue to accentuate the causal nature of the teacher-student relationship. The language of causality accordingly appears to influence existing understandings of quality, efficiency and effectiveness in education.

*"The teacher-student relationship has a 'between'"*

I also became aware of the extent to which I have viewed the teacher and student as objects within a teacher-student relationship that exists *between* these objects. While I have used the term *interaction* to describe teaching and learning experiences, most often explanations concerning these interactions focused on the "between" of relating. I recall having described the teacher-student relationship as being made up of a teacher, a student, and the relational transaction between these two objects.

*"The teacher-student relationship influences the student's 'head, heart and hands'"*

I have also held an assumption that the teacher-student relationship relates to three different spheres of the student: his or her character, knowledge and understandings, and skills – or, as Sergiovanni (1992) and Palmer (1998) have described it, a student's "head, heart and hands". I thought of the student and the teacher as a number of integrated components. I have held the view that the influence of the teacher and their shared experiences impact the student holistically.

*"In teacher education, the lecturer-student teacher relationship is increasingly task focused"*

I have always believed that the best educational practice should occur within teacher education programmes. Surely those who teach in pre-service teacher education bring with them relevant classroom experiences that are pertinent to the student teachers? While I expected to find some lecturer-student teacher relationships that were less dynamic, I did not expect to find lecturer-student teacher relationships that were

antagonistic or contentious. For me, the preparation of tomorrow's teachers is a matter of serious concern. As such, I believe that a supportive lecturer-student teacher relationship is critical (Giles, 2008). The pressure on the teacher-student relationship has increased with the breadth of information students are expected to master, while all the time they are asked to critique, challenge, and arrive at a philosophy for their own practice. In this way, the teacher-student relationship appears to be given greater theoretical consideration than actual concern for the lived experience of this relationship. Under these pressures, lecturers may not practise or role model what they preach.

*"The teacher-student relationship is influenced by the ideological context of education"*

An assumption that I have held is that the teacher-student relationship exists within a broader relational context. Previous teaching and research experiences have raised my concern with regard to the influence of the organisational culture on the teacher-student relationship. I believe that the context of the teacher-student relationship influences the expression of the relationship.

While I have found that my sense of the importance of the teacher-student relationship has remained unchanged by the research inquiry, my understanding of the *meaning* of the teacher-student relationship and the impact that this has on educational practice has been significantly transformed. The rationale for my ongoing commitment to relational education is now more readily underpinned by the ontological understandings that emerged through this study. The research experience influenced my pre-assumptions. On the one hand, I now understand that the teacher-student relationship exists as a consequence of our shared humanity. The teacher-student relationship starts prior to the first class and continues well beyond the formal interactions of a particular course.

I believed that the teacher-student relationship was of greater concern to teachers than students, and yet the findings show that both the teacher and the student are attentive to the teacher-student relationship and its movement. Each person's awareness involves a reciprocity and mutuality that is particular to the shared relationship. The research findings challenge my assumptions that derive from behaviourist and cognitivist approaches to education. For me, now, the teacher-student relationship is not a causal or linear relationship, but rather one that is "lived" ontologically in a "playful" movement and holds a sense of mystery and risk.

I now understand that the teacher-student relationship

is experienced *with* a teacher and a student rather than *from* a teacher *to* a student. While this might be the appearance of relating ontically, this is not the case ontologically. The teacher-student relationship is far more than the sum of the teacher, the student and their relationship (Giles, 2008). I now consider the teacher-student relationship as an embodied and holistic being-together-in-the-world. From this perspective, a student is not the integration of a number of parts, but a person who exists entirely and bodily alongside, and inextricably related to, others (Giles, 2008).

I had previously believed that the best educational practice occurred in teacher education programmes. This has been challenged by stories of experiences that revealed uncertainty and a lack of safety relationally. The teacher-student relationship remains essential despite the priority for academic outcomes in an increasingly technicist context (Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003).

A particular challenge for me as a phenomenological researcher is the need to sustain a concern for my own taken for granted understandings. This is extremely difficult, as my everyday experience of the world is laden with personal bias, prejudices and pre-understandings that shape the “horizons” that are in my view at any one time. Since I cannot come to grasp the mind of the participant, nor recover the past as it was, I must stand within my own historical context, the implications of which lead towards a clash of competing interpretations (Gadamer, 1960/1995; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Koch, 1995, 1996, 1999). From the inception of the research project, I kept a journal of conversations, interactions, reflections and poems on the phenomenon under inquiry. This journal did not have daily entries, but recorded and dated thoughts as they were encountered in the research process. At times, the content reflected on my own experiences of the teacher-student relationship and, on other occasions, the journal writing was a means of working with language to describe the essence of a particular story. In this way, the journal records insights gained for ongoing phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 1990).

### **The Challenge of the ‘Lived Experience’ that is Phenomenological Research**

Phenomenological research is itself a lived experience for the researcher (Giles, 2007). It proceeds in an embodied manner, like “a being-given-over to some quest” (van Manen, 1990, p. 31). The research process calls for the attention of the entire being and requires the researcher to “live the question”, if not become the question (Gadamer, 1960/1994; Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson, & Spence, 2008; van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) suggests that a

phenomenological question must “not only be made clear, understood, but also ‘lived’ by the researcher” (p. 44), to the extent that s/he is oriented towards, and “influenced” in, the search for the meaning of the phenomenon by being seriously interested in it (van Manen, 2002). This is particularly vital in the case of phenomenological research, given its essentially reflective and constantly evolving nature due to its lack of a prescribed method, call on the researcher to confront prejudices that are continually present, and purpose of exploring experience in order to evoke the hidden essence of the phenomenon (Ironside, 2005). Heidegger (1977/2003) suggests that it is in the relationship with the text that the “path” is found. As such, phenomenological researchers are dynamically engaged with the “text” of other people’s experiences of a phenomenon, while at the same time their own historicity remains in front of them.

The lived experience of the research has a great deal to do with the deepening attunement of the researcher to the construction of a research text that captures the essential meanings of a phenomenon. The research text is itself a literal creation of the research process (Koch, 1999).

Experientially unexpected were, for me, those moments when I appeared to be living out my interpretive writing. This was particularly the case while I was writing the discussion chapters. I felt very attuned to my own experiences of the theme at the same time as I was writing about it. While writing “to measure the depth of things ... [I came] to a sense of [my] own depth” (van Manen, 1990, p. 127). Moments arose in my teaching and in other informal relationships that showed the essence very clearly to me. While writing about the communicative aspect of comportment, I wrestled with some very difficult concerns within my workplace. I became mindful of how my relating appeared to influence the way I contributed. Similarly, I began to notice my internal dialogue that occurred in these moments. In this way, I was engaged with other people’s lived experiences while my historicity remained in front of me. The research experience was an exhilarating and deeply humanising experience for me (Giles, 2008). I cannot overstate the powerful influence that this research has had on my way-of-being as a teacher educator.

### **The Challenge of Using Language to Capture Essential Meanings**

In phenomenological research, the interpretive act occurs in the writing experience. The crafting of a phenomenological text occurs in experiences of writing which are complex, fluid and interwoven (Diekelmann & Ironside, 1998). While some research approaches use writing to show understanding, the

writing within phenomenological research not only shows understanding but seeks understanding. As van Manen (2006) puts it: “one does not write primarily for being understood, one writes for having understood being” (p. 721). Critically important here is the notion that it is in the act or movement of the writing that a space is created “that belongs to the unsayable” (van Manen, 2006, p. 718). The writing is as “being-in-writing”. Meanings emerge as the text and the researcher engage in a continuous, creative and hermeneutic conversation (Koch, 1999; Miller, 1996).

The phenomenological researcher is challenged to remain in an interpretive process known as hermeneutically circling (Gadamer, 1960/1995). Initial interpretations show the researcher grappling with his or her own prejudices and ‘theories-of’ a phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) describes the writing activity as vital to the hermeneutic recovering of the essence of a phenomenon. This evoking opens possibilities that are explored and provoked into being (Buchanan, 1993).

There are times when the phenomenological writing process is a real struggle. One such experience is when the words just do not seem to capture the essence of the phenomenon. It is as if the words are limiting in themselves, serving, in their worse form, a reduction of the experience in favour of a more rational account (Giles, 2008). I have found that there have been many occasions when the use of poetry appears to hold open understandings of an experience where previously the words appeared to be doing violence to the meanings within the lived experience.

The writing of such poetry was integral to the phenomenological research process. Poetry appears better suited to shaping essential meanings, holding them open for further explanation (Crotty, 1998; Heidegger, 1935/1949). Palmer (2006) suggests that poetry has the potential to both reveal and conceal the essence of our lived experiences. Indeed, van Manen (1990) suggests that the phenomenological project itself is a poeticising project.

While contemplating the always-already primordial presence of relationships, I crafted the following poem to capture the ‘always-already-mattering’ of relational experiences.

#### ***Our Between***

*When our “between” matters to you, you show it  
You seem to ignore the label of my role,  
seeing me as a person, a fellow being.  
As you do, I notice our “like-ness”, not our difference,  
We are of the same kind,  
like-with beings together in the world.*

*When our “between” is indifferent to you, you show it  
Who am I to you?  
Why will you not sustain your attention on me?  
I wonder about my place and the safety of our space  
for the time being,  
I must be attentive to messages beyond indifference.*

*When our “between” doesn’t matter to you, you show it  
I am held within a label to you,  
an “object” in your way  
You make me separate from you  
Beings that must be broken relationally  
As such, I must hide for a safer day and for safer travellers  
(Giles, 2008)*

The poem above was foundational to the writing on this essence of the phenomenon. Another poem focused on the essence of comportment within relationship. Again, the poem enabled essential understandings to be held open for further interpretive writing. The poem reads as follows:

#### ***“How” we are, “Who” we are***

*Our comportment speaks to another,  
providing glimpses of our being,  
They find us in moments,  
calling for relating.*

*Our being-in-the-world is “as comportment”,  
the “how” communicated through the body,  
each “how” is sensed and felt,  
influencing relating.*

*Good teachers comport “to”-wards their students,  
to the “person” in relationship,  
turning towards, they relate,  
impressing the relating.*

*My comportment changes our relating,  
opening, closing my way-of-being,  
the way I stand is seen and heard,  
changing our relating.*

*We are found attuning to the comportment of an-other,  
our voices showing the experiencing of relating,  
at times speaking, at times silenced,  
always voice in relating.*

*Comporting an unspoken accessible way-of-being  
others’ ways-of-being are called out and opened,  
togetherness evitable, the “how” changeable  
found in relating.*

*(Giles, 2008)*

Poems were also constructed to capture meanings across a participant’s stories. On one particular occasion, a research participant visited the school of education where I work. I had previously interviewed this person, worked with his stories and written a poem to capture the essential meanings I was seeing

across his stories. I posted this poem on the wall above my desk for ongoing contemplation. Unbeknown to me, this person visited my office and read the poem, commenting on how “deep” the poem was, and how much it resembled his own thinking about the teacher-student relationship. Van Manen (1990) suggests that a good phenomenological description, in this case the poem, recollects one’s lived experience.

### **The Challenge of Dwelling ‘in’ the Data**

Phenomenological research has been likened to an “immersion” experience in the research process. The researcher seeks to capture an illusive phenomenon of interest beneath his or her own prejudices, and to report on this in a way that shows the layering of contextual interpretations. Achieving this requires the researcher to “dwell” in the research inquiry (Gadamer, 1960/1995; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Schmidt (2005) captures the “dwelling” and intensity of the lived experience of the research itself when he describes it in terms of “spiralling through phases of enthusiastic engagement, leading to confusion, intellectualism, letting go, contemplation, phases of knowing, not knowing and occasional insight, ... keeping him forever awake, alive and connected with what matters in life” (p. 131). It is important that researchers have continuity in the interpretive process as they sensitise themselves to the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2002). In this way, the researcher’s interpretive consideration of the text does not occur in a start and stop fashion.

Similarly, phenomenological writing occurs in the tension of the researcher’s lived experiences of the phenomenon and his or her increasing awareness of his/her own prejudices (Hultgren, 1992). Sustaining a phenomenological concern for contemplative thought and interpretive writing can be personally taxing. In my case, I sustained the continuity of the research while continuing in a full-time teaching position, relocating my home several times, experiencing the deaths of my mother and sister, and changing my place of employment. Rather than allowing them to be a distraction to the research, I sought to look through these experiences, reflecting in my journal comments on the relational experiences that occurred during these times.

The interpretive hermeneutic process involves an openness to meanings of an experience as and when these emerge in thought. At times, research-related thoughts appear to find the researcher, showing themselves when the writing or interpretive activity might appear to be more passive. For me, an experience that appears to serve such contemplation is fishing. It is as if the process and silence of fishing

opens my being to what is “yet to be thought” (Heidegger, 1951/1992). The important point here is the researcher’s availability to and recognition of such thoughts as and when they occur. Heidegger (1951/1992) suggests that our everyday thinking can be likened to a walk on a forest path, in the sense that the path determines our way of moving and thinking. He suggests that this is the common everyday appearance of thinking. He contrasts the path in the forest to the moment of arriving in a forest “clearing”. It is in the clearing that we recognise the trees that have been on our path, the openness of the moment, and the possibilities that might eventuate in the unfolding experiences. Contemplative thinking, for Heidegger, happens in the clearings where the path has temporarily ended.

### **The Challenge of Unexpected Relational Experiences**

In this research journey, I encountered a number of experiences that evoked wordless understandings of the phenomenon. One particular set of unexpected experiences was meeting up with three students I had taught in the past. One of these students had been in my first primary school class twenty-three years previously. These meetings were initiated by my ex-students. At such times, I am reminded again of the transformative power of the phenomenon of my research: the teacher-student relationship and its influence on the teaching-learning experiences (Giles & Alderson, 2004). It is as if relationships live on, even while our regular face-to-face interactions are not occurring.

### **Concluding Comments**

By using a phenomenological research approach, educators can begin to appreciate the essence of a phenomenon of critical importance, such as the teacher-student relationship. In so doing, they can restore the centrality of such a phenomenon to our educational understandings. The purpose of this paper has been to share some of the challenges of phenomenologically researching the lecturer-student teacher relationship in the context of teacher education. I have found that my involvement in the research, alongside my full-time lecturing position, has challenged my pre-understandings concerning the relationship that evolves between the lecturer and the student teacher in the course of their context-specific association. Phenomenological considerations are concerned with ‘how’ we are as beings together in the teacher-student relationship; ‘how’ we are with another human being.

Equally importantly, researchers who engage in this particular approach are themselves influenced by the

entire process. Researching in a phenomenological way affords the opportunity for the researcher to deepen the nature of his or her own experiences of the phenomenon as this continues to be experienced in his or her everyday world. The findings of the research are integral to the challenges of researching

within a phenomenological tradition. Moreover, if the educational endeavour is essentially a human endeavour, then this research approach points to the transformative opportunity for educators to engage in a lived experience that lives beyond the research project.

### About the Author



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