The Visible Learning Story
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Dear Prof. Hattie,
Dear Dean Hofmann,
Dear Prof. Zierer,
Dear colleagues,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to this celebratory occasion on behalf of the university management.

The award of an honorary doctorate is one of the highest honours that a university and a faculty can bestow. It is wonderful that the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences has decided to honour Prof. Hattie with an honorary graduation. John Hattie is arguably one of the most influential educational researchers worldwide. His impressive academic career will be the subject of the laudation following shortly.

I can, however, go ahead and say that his work has produced diverse new findings that are also being vividly discussed in public well beyond academic boundaries and have sparked a multitude of debates and further research. John Hattie has brought the teacher figure back into the focus of educational research, an approach that we also follow in Augsburg.

Teacher training plays an important role at the University of Augsburg. Our very own centre for didactic research and teaching
Distribution. I am confident that by working closely with John Hattie and other international colleagues, plenty of exciting insights will find their way in the university as well as the public sphere. I must express my heartfelt gratitude for your attention and hope you find the rest of this event inspiring.

The Centre for Teacher Training and Interdisciplinary Educational Research was founded back in 1999, and was further expanded some time ago on behalf of the university administration. It now operates under the new name of "Centre for Teacher Training and Interdisciplinary Educational Research".

Research activities were extended and consolidated as a response to the requirements for teacher training and professional handling of teaching staff, primarily with a view to a significant aspect: The question of 'successful' educational processes under the condition of increasing diversity on the side of the pedagogic clientele, until now significantly disregarded.

'Heterogeneity' became a leading research question for the expansion of the central institute, whose activities subsequently focus mainly on "Heterogeneity and Educational Success." These activities include the development of a research profile, achieving a wide gain in knowledge and the integration of research topics and objectives into youth development and into job-orientated further training of teaching staff.

With the help of an innovative approach developed by the institute, the university was recently able to successfully apply for funding under the framework of the nationwide 'teacher training quality campaign'. In this, the University of Augsburg presented itself to Bavaria and the whole of Germany as a research university with a far-reaching vision. Furthermore, an application to establish an elite study programme "Interdisciplinary Educational Research" recently cleared the first hurdle for approval.

With a view to the current global developments and the vast migration flows, our society – and in particular our schools – are facing immense challenges. I hope that our university and especially our centre for teacher training will make an important contribution.
Dear Mr. Vice President Schneider,
Dear Mr. Vice President Reif,
Dear Janet,
Dear John,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Dean of the Faculty for Philosophy and Social Sciences, I am delighted and honored to welcome you all to the Center of Arts and Music at Augsburg University. Thank you for accepting our invitation to this festive – and rare – academic event. I greet the members of the Bavarian Parliament, the representatives of the City of Augsburg and of the political parties. I greet the representatives of the ministries, the members of the university board and administration, the deans of the faculties. I greet the representatives of the churches, associations, clubs and schools. I greet all colleagues and students. Please feel personally addressed and personally named in two words: be welcome.

The application to honor John Hattie with an honorary doctorate for his outstanding achievements in the educational sciences was launched in fall 2015. The proposal was brought by my colleague Klaus Zierer, Chair for School Education at our faculty and an expert on the work of John Hattie. Right from the start, the exploratory talks showed a large and broad consensus among the colleagues. Klaus Zierer and Markus Dresel, Chair for Psychology, wrote the necessary letters, and these letters were signed by an overw-
The last honorary doctorate awarded by the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences was eleven years ago in 2005 to a Protes-
tant theologian. Nobody could know that a year later this man would be elected as President of Germany. His name: Joachim Gauck. I don’t know your plans, John. But I would like to point out that there are career opportunities for honorary doctors from our faculty.
Dear Mr. Vice President Schneider,
Dear Dean Mr. Hofmann,
Dear John,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to hold the laudatory speech on the conferral of the honorary doctoral degree of the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the University of Augsburg. I would like to mention two reasons for this honour:

First, the impact John Hattie has on education in theory and practice is enormous, and John is one of the most important, perhaps the most important, educational researcher at the moment. Second, the impact John Hattie has on my thinking, teaching and learning, on me as a researcher, a teacher and a father is enormous, too. So thank you very much for this impact, John!

I have never held a laudatory speech before in my life. And perhaps it is typical for a researcher to take a closer look at an encyclopaedia if he does not know about something. This closer look at an encyclopaedia shows me that the word “laudation” goes back to ancient times, in particular to the Latin word “laudatio,” which was used in two ways – both are interesting, and I would like to share both with you:

First, a “laudatio” was used as a “laudatio funebris,” as a speech for someone who had died. A good friend is standing in front of the grave and talking about the good things.
Second, a “laudatio” was used as a “laudatio iudicalis,” as a speech by a lawyer, standing in front of the judges, helping somebody to stay out of prison – not talking about the crime, just talking about all the good things about the criminal.

Well, John, if that’s the case I am really happy that you are still alive and not (yet) in prison.

Nowadays, a laudatory speech means something else: It is not for someone who has died or is in prison, but for someone who has earned a great honour, done a great job, is “primus inter pares,” to use some Latin words again. So a laudatory speech has the character of praise, a high commendation.

A laudatory speech usually focuses on two aspects: First on the landmarks of the person’s life and second on the landmarks of his or her work. And it should come as no surprise that both the life and work of John Hattie is outstanding. I want to start with some details about John Hattie’s life:

- Born 1950 in Timaru, New Zealand
- High School in Timaru
- In the 1970s, Bachelor in Arts, Diploma in Education, Diploma in Arts, Diploma in Teaching, Master of Arts – he earned most of these degrees in Otago
- Teacher of Music and English in Timaru – and you see: John is not only a educationalist; he is also practitioner – very important in my point of view for teacher and teaching education
- In 1981, Doctoral Thesis in Toronto, Canada
- In the next years, he held various positions: Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Visiting Professor und Professor in New Zealand, Canada, the USA und Australia
- Then an important phase: Professor of Education in Auckland, New Zealand from 2008 to 2011 – and in 2009 he published Visible Learning
- Since 2011, Professor of Education, Melbourne, Australia
- All in all, 31 years as a professor of education

These landmarks in the career of John Hattie might seem rather commonplace. But what about these facts?

- He is an editorial board or advisory board member of over 26 journals
- He is associate editor of four journals: Nature and American Educational Research Journal, British Journal of Educational Psychology and Review of Educational Research – all of them AAA journals
- He is a reviewer for 120 different journals
- He has published over 24 books and over 500 articles
- He has supervised over 193 degree theses
- He gives over 200 interviews a year (oh dear, I haven’t got a clue – I do one to two interviews or reactions to press a day – so about 200 or 300 a year).
- He has received over 55 million grants
- He has given lectures in 34 countries: over 200 on Visible Learning and over 500 conference presentations – I am not sure, John, if your wife still knows you?

Not so bad – and I think my colleagues and me together would not cover every one of these landmarks; maybe some, but for sure not all of them ...

It is therefore not surprising that John Hattie has earned some outstanding honours – over 20 awards; perhaps the most important ones are the following:
• 2011, Order of New Zealand in Queen’s Birthday Honours, for services to education
• since 2015, Laureate Professorship of the University of Melbourne – a degree which is given to researchers in fields in which no Nobel Prize is common but whose careers are comparable
• and today, the first honorary degree from a German university!

This is the academic part of John Hattie’s life – but not less worthy of mention is the private part:
• happily married to Janet Clinton for 31 years – and at this point a word of advice: Think about the “C” in John A. C. Hattie you can read on some of his publications
• three children: Joel (30), Kyle (28), Kieran (26)
• and now the proud grandpa of the five-month-old Emma

No doubt: a beautiful career both in an academic and a private sense.

And what I have just now reported is only a sort of the quintessence – the current curriculum vitae of John Hattie is 85 pages long. Really challenging! But it wouldn’t be John Hattie’s curriculum vitae if it didn’t have a kind of statistic in it. I can still remember the words he used to begin his lecture in 2013 in Oldenburg at the launch of the German version of Visible Learning: “I love numbers,” he said. And here we are:

This chart is interesting. I did the following: Every dip stands for the birth of one of John Hattie’s children – and what can you see? After finishing his family plans, John Hattie decided to become one of the world’s leading educational researchers: publishing a lot of articles and participating in nearly every conference around the globe – and then he really had his breakthrough. Or maybe after having three children John Hattie thought: Really hard life at home – loud, noisy ... Might it not be better to go to work, write some papers, and present them at conferences?

And in the year 2000, the second interesting point; the three boys were 14, 12 and 10 – coming into the most complex and challenging period of life – perhaps a good point to start again with a breakthrough: writing articles, presenting papers at conferences ...
It is not possible to talk about John Hattie’s entire oeuvre – at least 600 publications, as I mentioned before. But I want to talk a little bit about Visible Learning – the book that was John Hattie’s breakthrough, sold over 500,000 copies, was translated into more than ten languages, and which I spent six months translating together with a team of six people, going deeper and deeper into the thinking of John Hattie – published in 2013 under the title Lernen sichtbar machen. John will provide more details in his lecture later on. So I just want to put the book in a nutshell: What is Visible Learning? What is its secret? What is its message?

Visible Learning is the biggest evidence-based research synthesis ever published. More than 1000 meta-analyses were included to make the most important factors of students’ achievement visible. The numbers are as massive as the approach is innovative and necessary: John Hattie tried to bring it all together and provide answers to the big questions: What are the criteria for successful learning? What can teachers do to maximize their impact on students’ achievement? What does educational expertise look like?

While very many researchers argue that we need more studies before we can come to bigger conclusions, John argued: We have to try it now! All day and at every moment somewhere on the planet, students are learning and teachers are teaching – so we can’t wait; we have to make some decisions now!

Of course his approach is not free of mistakes – but John Hattie wouldn’t be John Hattie if he didn’t know this. The opposite is the case: John Hattie is the most critical reader of his work and always open-minded if someone raises a critical point. So he is always on the run.

What most of John’s critics ignore, or – much worse – fail to see, is that the reason why it took 15 years to write Visible Learning
is not the statistics. It is the attempt to understand the statistics, to see an underlying story in all the empirical material we have in education. And the conclusion from more than 1000 meta-analyses, over 80,000 empirical studies including over 250 million learners, is a powerful story. It is a story about passion, a story about impact:

1. Talk about learning, not about teaching!
2. Set the challenge!
3. See learning as hard work!
4. Develop positive relationships!
5. Use dialogue instead of monologue!
6. Inform all about the language of education!
7. See yourself as a change agent!
8. Give and demand feedback!
9. Regard student achievements as feedback for you about you!
10. Cooperate with other teachers!

“"You have to stand for something or you gonna fall to anything” – these words of John Mellencamp fit perfectly with the passion John Hattie tries to bring to the point. Or in another context, please take a look at this video and listen to the words of Michael Jordan:

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

This is the message of Visible Learning, this is the story: a story of passion, a story about expertise, an educational dream:

You have a dream of developing passion in learning and developing an educational system that values inviting all students to come and learn; to belong; to reinvest in their own learning.

You have a dream of an educational system that develops respect for oneself and respect for others; to have the sensitivity to collaborate with others in the pursuit of learning – no matter whether white, black, Hispanic, local, refugee, or other.

You have a dream of an educational system peopled by those who want to improve, who want to hold excellence in high regard, who want to know progress, and who know what to do when they do not know what to do.

You have a dream that teachers and school leaders will be respected and valued, both in society and in financial terms, that they will see themselves and that we will also see them as the major change agents in student learning – thus demonstrating the law and the faith we have in schools to truly make a difference in our society, and allowing individuals to exceed their own expectations. Surely the greatest civilising institution in our democracy is our schools.

You have a dream that students will be taught to have the confidence to take on challenges; to say “this is hard and I want to try,” not “this is hard and I cannot do it.” To be taught to see errors as the essence of learning – to not flinch when making a mistake, not have one’s esteem attacked when trying again, and that all in education will welcome errors as the beginning and essence of all learning.

You have a dream of getting rid of those things that do not work; of getting rid of so much stuff we try to implant in kids’ heads, of finding the balance between surface and deep transfer in a fun and joyful way that means our students want to belong, to come back and learn more. If, as Henry Levin claims, the best predictor of adult health, wealth, and happiness is not achievement at school,
but the number of years of schooling, then we must find ways to make schools inviting for students to come and learn.

And you live this dream, John. You have started the fire with your passion. You sparked the learning. And you sparked the teaching. Thank you, John, for letting us be part of your dream. Congratulations and:

Know your impact!
The enjoyment of completing a doctorate is a wonderful feeling. I learnt so much from the stunning, inspired, and passionate mentors that helped me not only to get to this stage but also to complete the thesis (“Decision criteria for assessing unidimensional”). I then started an academic career as a psychometrician, aiming to apply the best measurement process to address educational questions.

This took me in many directions – books on multi-mode factor analysis, Intelligence tests, assessing teachers for professional certification, executive information systems, formative assessment; many articles, working with the best measurement people in the world, a stint as President of the International Test Commission, leading the development of the New Zealand school assessment system (asTTle), and continuing to supervise thesis students (195 so far) and research in many areas. But a continuing interest has been why, in education, it seems everyone has a view about how to enhance achievement, every article seems to find support for some intervention, every teacher can tell why what they do works, and every politician has the answer. How come we live in a world where we know so much that works – but this is not the lived experience for so many students in so many classrooms!

Synthesising research
This observation led me on a merry chase to synthesis this re-
The hard part is working out the story underlying the [now] 250 influences. Of course, the 250 are not unique nor stand-alone; it is the overlap that matters. It took me 15+ years of debate with colleagues, searching, writing, searching for falsifiable claims, to build a set of explanations for the underlying story.

First, when all influences are graphed it turns out that almost everything we do to students can enhance their achievement. Of the few with average negative effects, most make sense: surface motivation (-.11), not being liked in class (-.19), suspension and expulsion (-.20), retention (-.32), shifting schools (-.34), depression (-.36), and boredom (-.49). The bottom line is that almost everything we do to students enhances their achievement – and therefore “What works” is a bankrupt question and should never be used to justify what one is doing. More important, the average of
Fourth, and the major story, are the six factors that underline the effects above the average. Teachers, working together, as evaluators of their impact (.93); the power of explicit success criteria (.77); developing trust in the class and thence welcoming errors as opportunities to learn (.72); maximizing feedback to teachers about their impact (.72); ensuring the right proportion of surface to deep in lessons (.71); and using the Goldilocks principles of challenge, and deliberate practice to attain these challenges – not too hard not too boring (.60). The major message is to have educators see learning through the eyes of the student, and to have the students see themselves as their own teachers.

The mindframe of educators and students
It is the mindframe of the educators and students that matter the most. How they think as they make the moment-by-moment decisions in the classroom, how they understand the criteria of success, understand how to invest energy and engage in deliberate practice, when to be surface and when to be deep (both are valuable), how to be assessment capable about their progress, when and how to reinvest into learning, and how to enjoy the thrill of success, the challenge of learning, the messages in errors, and the joy of discovering relation between ideas.
A lot of my work since the 2008 book has been exploring the implications of these major messages for teachers (Hattie, 2012); trying to understand why some seemingly important effects are so low (e.g., subject matter knowledge, class size; Hattie & Anderson, 2013), developing programs to implement in and across schools (Hattie, Masters, & Birch, 2015), telling the story specific to literacy and numeracy (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016a, b, 2017 a, b), and exploring the science of learning (Hattie & Yates, 2014). Perhaps most important is developing more research relating to the mindframes and I am so pleased to have written this work with Klaus Zierer from my new University here in Augsburg (Hattie & Zierer, 2016). There is much more to be accomplished – I am writing “Visible Learning for Parents” with Klaus and my son, implementing the Visible Learning methods into schools around the world at system, district and local levels, and continuing the research on the science of learning.
Concluding comment

When you are awarded your doctorate, there is a sense of relief – there can be no more. But today, there is more! I am so honoured to be awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Augsburg. Being so recognised by one's peers is the highest accolade, and I will treasure this degree, this auspicious occasion (and the choir was stunning and reminds me of my early years teaching music), and you, my new colleagues. I especially thank the Dean, Prof. Dr. phil. Bernhard Hofmann and your representative for your President, Prof. Dr. phil. Sabine Doering-Manteuffel for their oversight of today and for presenting this honorary doctorate.
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