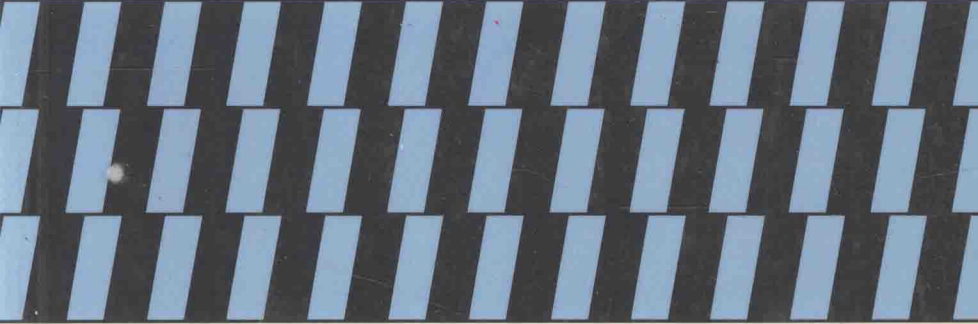


Emerging as a Teacher



*Robert V. Bullough Jr.,
J. Gary Knowles and
Nedra A. Crow*

ROUTLEDGE



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EMERGING AS A TEACHER

There is a great difference between doing a teacher's job and actually seeing oneself as a teacher, and all too often teachers in their first years after qualification are left to flounder in search of a workable identity. In this innovative study the authors chart this progress through the case histories of six teachers, involved with children between the ages of 5 and 18, in their first year in the classroom. Through a combination of interviews and extensive observation of the teachers at work, they examine those factors in the experience and context of teaching and in the preconceptions which newly qualified teachers bring to the job which help to make their growth into the role of teacher easier or more difficult.

The resulting account should give students of teaching and those in professional preparation a richer understanding of the journey upon which they have embarked and also help more experienced teachers to reflect fruitfully upon their own development. It should also give those involved in teacher education a foundation on which to build more sensitive programmes in which problems are recognized and young teachers are supported in the development of self-images that work for them.

Robert V. Bullough Jr is Professor of Educational Studies at the University of Utah, where **Nedra A. Crow** is Assistant Professor. **J. Gary Knowles** is Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan.

INVESTIGATING SCHOOLING

The aim of this series is to scrutinize those everyday aspects of schooling which have tended to be taken for granted and to treat them as objects for investigation and study. The series will include two major sorts of books: the source book in which a single author or multiple contributors look at various 'givens' in the social construction of schooling and secondly, research methods texts which show the teacher or student how she or he might continue such investigations.

PREFACE

Emerging as a Teacher was written for a variety of reasons: like other educators, we derive much of our satisfaction from our students; we feel good when our students do well. As teacher educators, we derive pleasure from having our former students develop into powerful and effective teachers. But, unfortunately, as pre-service teacher educators we rarely have had the opportunity to discover whether or not our work has borne the desired fruits. It was, therefore, in part to see how some of our former students fared as teachers that we undertook the research upon which *Emerging as a Teacher* is based. Furthermore, as we have worked to develop interesting and responsible teacher-education programmes over the past few years, we have necessarily come face to face with our own and the field's limited knowledge about teacher development. It is self-evident that the more we know about how students become teachers, and the factors that influence their development, the better able we will be to forge teacher-education programmes that are genuinely educative. We believe that *Emerging as a Teacher* will prove useful to teacher educators as they – as we – think through the complicated problems associated with teacher-education reform. We also were motivated by the desire to assist beginning teachers in their quest to forge satisfying and productive teaching roles. In this regard, over the past few years, we have found case studies to be a powerful instructional tool for helping beginning teachers to think usefully about teaching, themselves as teachers, and their professional development. Finally, we should admit that we undertook the project as a means to do something that we each enjoy thoroughly, and that is talking with teachers about teaching. We feel especially fortunate in that the six teachers whose stories are reported here, who are

PREFACE

now friends, were so willing to talk openly about their work and to let us into their lives. It is to them that *Emerging as a Teacher* is dedicated. They have taught us much for which we are grateful.

We owe additional debts of gratitude: we wish to express our appreciation to the families of the six teachers. We were acutely aware that the time spent with us was time that often would have been otherwise spent with family. Given the pressures on families in the first year of teaching, this was no small sacrifice. In addition, we appreciate the support given by Professor Ralph Reynolds, Chair of the Department of Educational Studies, that enabled us to complete the case studies. And we appreciate the helpful and occasionally long conversations we have had with our friends and colleagues, Professors Andrew Gitlin and Don Kauchak of the University of Utah, and Professor Paul Klohr of the Ohio State University. Finally, we are grateful to Professor Ivor Goodson for his early and continuing encouragement of our work.

In researching and writing *Emerging as a Teacher*, Professor Bullough is responsible for chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 while Professor Knowles is responsible for chapter 3, and Professor Crow for chapter 4.

Robert V. Bullough Jr
Salt Lake City, Utah

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SETTING THE STAGE: ORIENTATION AND ORGANIZATION

Recent reviews of the teacher-socialization literature (Crow, 1987; Knowles, 1989; Zeichner and Gore, 1989) point to several weaknesses. First, comparatively little is known about the actual process of socialization as it is experienced and takes place during pre-service training and into the first few years of teaching; second, in the quest for cause and effect relationships, much of the research has seriously oversimplified the socialization process; and third, little attention has been given to the interactive nature of socialization, particularly interaction among biography, beginning teachers' preconceptions about teaching, and the teaching context. Respecting the later point, Weinstein (1989: 53) accurately describes the situation when she states that '[teacher-educators] have paid scant attention to. . . students' past experiences or to their implicit theories of teaching and of learning to teach'. In sum, surprisingly little is known about how a person becomes a teacher, although this is essential knowledge if teacher-education reform is to produce more than window dressing.

We were acutely aware of these gaps in the literature when planning and conducting the research reported in *Emerging as a Teacher*. Nevertheless, *Emerging as a Teacher* is obviously far from being an adequate response to them; a single book could not hope to remedy the situation. Our intention is more modest, that *Emerging as a Teacher* will help illuminate the early phase of the process of becoming a teacher without omitting too much of its complexity, and that the cases and interpretations presented will usefully and accurately portray the central role the beginning teacher plays in his/her own socialization, *understood as a process of learning to participate in a social group*, and, more broadly speaking, professional development.

With these aims in mind, one of the early tasks faced was to come to an agreement on a theoretical orientation that would be responsive to the interactive and, we believed, very personal and complex nature of socialization and development, and that would enable authentic interpretations both useful and interesting to teachers and teacher-educators. The agreement that resulted drew upon insights from diverse sources, and represents an extension of earlier work undertaken in the Educational Studies Department, University of Utah (Bullough, 1988b, 1989a; Crow, 1987; Knowles, 1989). The sources included symbolic interactionism, and, mindful of Goodson's (1988) caution that symbolic interactionism has tended to emphasize situation at the expense of biography, recent work on the role of metaphor in thinking, and a rather loose conception of schema theory. Each source will be considered in turn.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Despite falling on hard times, symbolic interactionism, particularly as represented in the work of Herbert Blumer (1969), remains an extraordinarily fruitful approach to the study of social action (Hargreaves, 1986). It offers a set of premises that are compelling, representing what Hargreaves (1986: 148) deems its 'appreciative capacity', as well as a set of methodological clues that are particularly appropriate for the project at hand.

Blumer (1969) succinctly states the premises upon which symbolic interactionism rests:

The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may note in his world – physical objects, such as trees or chairs; other human beings, such as a mother or a store clerk; categories of human beings, such as friends or enemies; institutions, as a school or a government; guiding ideals, such as individual independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands or requests; and such situations as an individual encounters in his daily life. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified

through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (p. 21).

Accepting these as working premises shaped our research agenda and informed our methodological deliberations. The first premise requires that careful attention be given to meaning and meaning-making. On the surface this may appear obvious, but it is not. As Blumer observed, and as Hunt (1987) twenty years later reminds us, social science research rarely attends to the 'inside'. Instead, human behaviour is treated as a product of abstract and reified forces that, in Blumer's words, 'play upon human beings' (p. 3), constraining and directing human behaviour. Given this premise, our task was to identify research methods and establish relations that would enable us to uncover and understand the meanings central to beginning teachers as actors in ever changing situations (Blumer, 1969: 51). In turn, we would gain insights into beginning teacher socialization and development.

The second premise acknowledges that meanings arise 'in the process of interaction between people' (p. 4). They do not exist 'out there' in things – things do not impose meanings on people – nor are they inherent to humans. Hence, meanings 'as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact' have a history (p. 5); meanings are historically grounded and fluid. These characteristics of meanings are extremely important to the study of teacher socialization, underscoring the importance of attending not only to the meanings beginning teachers bring with them into teacher-education programmes, or into the first year of teaching, and how meanings change, but also to their interactional, situational (context matters!), and biographical origins.

The third premise, that meanings are used through interpretation, is extremely important to the direction of this study. One implication of this premise is that up front we had to accept that no two persons, despite sharing similar contexts, would understand those contexts – or make them meaningful – in precisely the same way; socialization and development are profoundly idiosyncratic and personal; in effect, persons socialize themselves, they are not 'socialized'. Researchers cannot, therefore, uncritically impose a preset cluster of concepts and categories to give order to the interactions and situations being studied. Ultimately, the concepts and categories that are used to

organize and present the researcher's understanding must speak sensitively to the subject's life experience and understanding. The meaning of particular events and experiences, therefore, must be illuminated by the teachers themselves and acknowledged as their own; and they alone can verify the validity of the data analysis and the interpretation that form the basis of the stories that are told. Of this, more will be said shortly.

There are additional implications of this premise that arise because of the nature of interpretation which involves an internal, generally unarticulated, conversation. This internal conversation involves two steps, according to Blumer:

First, the actor indicates to himself the things toward which he is acting; he has to point out to himself the things that have meaning. . . . Second, by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings. The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action (p. 5).

Thus, because of the internal conversation, the interpretation of meaning, and the behaviour linked to it, is always forward looking and purposeful. But, more than this, and in a way somewhat different from what Blumer asserts, through this process the person actually forms the situation of which he is a part.

Taking this premise and our expansion of it seriously required that we not only needed to identify, as best as we could, the significant objects to which the beginning teachers attended but especially to the meanings used to form the situation itself, and to the origins of those meanings. Moreover, we needed to attend to how meanings changed over time and to why they changed. Methodologically, then, part of our task has been to gather data that captured the episodic and evolving nature of meaning-making over time. Ongoing collection of descriptive accounts of how the teachers saw and thereby made their world, observations of actions taken on things, and records of how they talked about those

objects and changes in how they talked, were essential data sources.

An additional point needs to be made respecting the nature of interpretation: it is the possession of a 'self' that allows the internal conversation to take place; it is having a self that enables the individual to interpret and act on the world and, in turn, to be acted upon. As Blumer puts it,

Nothing esoteric is meant by [the term] 'self'. It means merely that a human being can be an object of his own action. Thus, he can recognize himself, for instance, as being a man, young in age, a student, in debt, trying to become a doctor, coming from an undistinguished family and so forth. In all such instances he is an object to himself; and he acts toward himself and guides himself in his actions toward others on the basis of the kind of object he is to himself (p. 12).

Our conception of self, Blumer further asserts, has its origins in seeing ourselves as others see us. This is accomplished through a process of 'role-taking', a process by which we assume the position of the other. This source of data common to us all, informs our internal conversation about the kind of person we think we are. For teachers there are many such data sources which often act toward teachers in contradictory ways which have profound importance for beginning teachers who are seeking to negotiate a teaching role, or *a set of relationships and understandings that, when taken together, define 'teacher.'* It is to students especially that teachers turn to in determining who and what they are – their 'professional identity' (Pajak, 1986: 123) – but administrators, colleagues, parents, and the 'press', among other groups, all play important parts. By interpreting the actions of these 'objects' the teacher makes them more or less meaningful and then, based upon the interpretation made, attempts to establish a more or less appropriate line of action to attain a desired end.

There are, however, multiple selves, an inner or core self, and a 'situational' self: 'much of what constitutes our 'selves' is situational, varying with context, [but] we also have a well-defended, relatively inflexible substantial self into which we incorporate the most highly prized aspects of our self-concept and the attitudes and values which are most salient to it' (Nias, 1989: 26). It is these

two selves that enter into the inner conversation noted by Blumer, an 'I' and a 'me'. In *Emerging as a Teacher* we are particularly interested in the situational self, self-as-teacher, but this self can be understood only in relationship to the inner self which is the 'core of both person and teacher' (Nias, 1989: 79).

Each of Blumer's three premises speaks to the interactive, reflexive process involved in self-formation. From the perspective of our interest, the concept of self-in-formation is pivotal. Consider: the beginning teacher enters a teaching context and tries on and tests a conception of the teacher role as a self already formed – a substantial self – but still forming. This 'teaching self', as the kind of object the teacher thinks he or she is at that moment and in situation, is composed of a cluster of meanings that are tested and adjusted reflexively in response to meanings derived from interpretations made of the actions and statements of students and others within the context by way of pursuing a desired pattern of action. This is inevitably a conflict-laden process wherein the teaching self and the meanings attached to it and the actions that flow through the interpretation of the context, reside more or less uneasily alongside definitions put forward and acted upon by others sharing the context. Through conflict, adjustment and compromise, 'new' selves – actually reconstructed selves – and situations may be formed. This is what we mean by socialization as an active process of world building rather than as a passive adaptation – after the manner of functionalism – to an institutionally defined role and pattern of relations.

METAPHORS

The meanings forming the teaching self are layered, and a goodly number of them, particularly those attached to the inner self, are tacit, unarticulated. In thinking about these characteristics of the meanings composing the teaching self and of the problem of how to access them, we have been drawn to the identification and analysis of teacher metaphors, specifically 'root' metaphors, that capture a teacher's 'core self-perception' (Ball and Goodson, 1985: 18), and that give coherence to self.

Recently interest has grown in the possibility of shedding light on teachers' self-understanding through the exploration of the metaphors and similes they employ (Hunt, 1987; Miller and Fredericks, 1988; Munby, 1986; Russell and Johnston, 1988;

Provenzo, McClosky, Kottkamp and Cohn, 1989), what Bandman earlier termed 'picture preferences' (1967: 112). Metaphors bear the images or conceptions teachers hold of themselves as teachers, their professional identity. In part this view is based upon a growing recognition that human thought is primarily metaphorical, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) eloquently describe it, and a central means by which we come to terms with our experience:

Just as in mutual understanding we constantly search out commonalities of experience when we speak with other people, so in self-understanding we are always searching for what unifies our own diverse experiences in order to give coherence to our lives. Just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in common with someone else, so we seek out *personal* metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experiences to yourself. . . . It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give new meaning to old experience. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself (pp. 232-3).

Like many of the metaphors we live by, the search for metaphors to give coherence and meaning to experience predominantly is a tacit one. The challenge faced is to 'make sense for oneself out of the experience and [the teaching] roles presented, and at times [to] find new meanings' (Provenzo, McClosky, Kottkamp and Cohn, 1989: 556). Hence, metaphors arise out of experience and give coherence to it (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 105) and therefore play a central role in self-formation as Blumer (1969) conceives of it. Furthermore, metaphors represent 'purposeful modes of expression whose truth-value functions, while not literal, do reflect accurately *how* people think about their lives' and the situations confronting them (Miller and Fredericks, 1988: 269). Thus, not only does the exploration of metaphors provide an avenue for understanding how others comprehend and construct their worlds, but, through the analysis of changes in metaphor,

changes in self-understanding can be identified, both of which are essential to gaining a reasonably complete picture of the process of becoming a teacher as it takes place over time and in context. As Russell and Johnston (1988) put it, 'Shifts in the imagery that teachers use when interpreting classroom events suggest changes in their perspectives on teaching' (p. 13); and, we would add, when root metaphors are involved, indicate changes in their conceptions of self as teacher.

Additionally, we have been drawn to the analysis of metaphor because of what appears to be a growing confusion over the institutionalized teaching role.

it would appear that the conception of teaching as a profession in its own right is unclear. This lack of clarity (meaning) in both the profession and the [educational] system may be a significant factor in the difficulty many teachers have in finding for themselves a clear role or a place in the system. The profession is unclear as to the authority, responsibility, and freedom teachers have when they teach, while the system is unclear as to what authority, responsibility, and freedom society has given it.

(Provenzo, McClosky, Kottkamp and Cohn, 1989: 569)

Teachers, it seems, are increasingly finding little help as they seek to form appropriate roles and in this process the generation of metaphors plays an important part; they form the basis of the stories that are acted out and define the situational self when first becoming a teacher. *Emerging as a teacher is, therefore, a quest for compelling and fitting metaphors that represent who beginning teachers imagine themselves to be as teachers.* Hence, given the confusion over the teacher's role, we would expect to find many teachers holding to multiple metaphors; and we would expect to find beginning teachers possessing and being possessed by vague, and sometimes even contradictory teaching metaphors and attendant images as they seek to establish a coherent and integrated professional identity that is consistent with the inner self.

Finally, a word should be said about the relationship between metaphor and practice. Clearly, while metaphors inform practice, they do not determine it. Rather, in a manner roughly similar to that suggested by Elbaz (1983) in her discussion of the function of images in teacher thinking, they inspire rather than require conformity. But, perhaps even more importantly, and consistent