



Using Mead's Theory of Emergence as a Framework for Sociological Inquiry into Pre-Service Teacher Education

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Sociological Research Online 14(5)6
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/14/5/6.html>>
doi:10.5153/sro.1948

Received: 9 Mar 2009 Accepted: 12 Sep 2009 Published: 30 Nov 2009

Abstract

In this paper we take up Chang's (2004) challenge to apply Mead's theory of emergence in sociological inquiry. Largely overlooked by scholars, this theory is shown to prove explanatory in one field where limited solutions have been found to date. Specifically, the theory sheds light on how the theory-practice gap is created and sustained in pre-service teacher education. The argument is that under current institutional arrangements the trainee/beginning teacher encounters different and oft-times conflicting environmental, social and cultural conditions in the two 'fields of interaction' (Mead, 1934: 249) of their training program, namely, the on-campus pre-service program and the school. The argument draws on interview and focus group data collected via a study of first-year graduate teachers of an Australian pre-service teacher education program. We conclude that the Meadian mechanisms of role taking and self-regulated behaviour within the two environmental fields of interaction inhibit the trainee/beginning teacher from exercising the power of agency to implement theory learned at university in practice in the classroom. In this sense Mead's theory of emergence predicts the obduracy of the gap between theory and practice in teacher education.

Keywords: *Mead, Theory of Emergence, Field of Interaction, Role Taking, Self Regulated Behaviour, Rationality, Theory-Practice Gap, Pre-Service Teacher Education, Beginning Teacher Practice*

Introduction

1.1 In this paper, we take up Johannes Han-Yin Chang's (2004) challenge to use Mead's theory of emergence as a framework for sociological inquiry. Characterising Mead's emergence theory as "probably the greatest treasure we can unearth from his neglected or semineglected legacy," Chang (2004, p. 20) argues its potential to function as a powerful metatheoretical approach for sociologists of the conditional interactionist tradition. In this study, Mead's notion of emergence proves robust in theorising what occurs in the context of a professional field of interest to us, namely, pre-service teacher education.

1.2 That Mead's theory of emergence has been largely overlooked by scholars and remains only partially explored is due in large measure to the often fragmentary character of his writings and his failure to develop the theory systematically and explicitly (Blumer, 1969; Chang, 2004; Cook, 1993; El-Hani & Pihlström, 2002). It has been incumbent on later theorists to apply a system to his essentially unsystematised corpus. Chang's (2000, 2004, 2005) interpretation and application of Mead's theory of emergence earlier this decade exemplify the renewed interest in his work. Other contemporaries who have analysed and reconceptualised Mead's theory include Maines (2001) and Shalin (2000). A further example of the Meadian "renaissance" is the Mead Project at Brock University in Ontario, whose aim is to revitalise research on Mead's work by facilitating access to his publications. This paper adds to the re-invigoration of Mead's legacy.

Mead's theory of emergence

2.1 Mead's theory of emergence is essentially one of conditional interactionism. According to Mead, every social event or fact emerges from the interaction between an individual and his/her social or nonsocial environment. The nature of the interaction that takes place between the two is conditioned by the patterns, processes and contents of the interaction (Chang, 2004), which are in turn mediated by a number of

mechanisms such as role taking, self-regulation, rationality and symbolic and non-symbolic gestures. Also shaping the nature of the interaction are the pre-existing conditions of both the individual and of the environment in which the interaction takes place. We now explore these concepts in relation to our study

2.2 The fundamental understanding involved in Mead's theory of emergence is that when a living form of some kind interacts with its environment, some new object is likely to emerge. The research reported in this paper sees the interaction of the individual and his/her pre-service teacher education program as giving rise to a graduate teacher. Specifically, the process of becoming a teacher refers to a person who has chosen to train as a teacher (an individual) entering the pre-service teacher education program (an environment) and interacting with this environment. In teacher education programs, there are traditionally two 'fields of interaction' or Fol (Mead, 1934: 249) within the environment, the university program (Fola) and the workplace (Folb). During the interaction that takes place between the individual and these fields Mead suggests that a process of emergence occurs such that there ensues from the interaction an emergent (graduate teacher). This is consistent with his premise that 'when things get together, there then arises something that was not there before' (Mead, 1938: 641). In other words, emergence gives rise to new objects and new situations (Maines, 2001). The nature of the interaction between the individual and the environment is axiomatic in determining the nature of the emergent.

2.3 Inherent in the concept of emergence is that there are always pre-existing conditions associated with both the individual and the environment and that these conditions underlie the realisation of the interaction (Mead, 1934). For the purposes of this paper the pre-existing conditions of the individual comprise all the conditions associated with the pre-service teacher which exist before the beginning of the interaction between him/her and the undergraduate environment and which are relevant to this interaction. They can include conditions such as the individual's character, biology, social attitudes, position in society, heredity, past experience and interests (Cooley, 1909; Mead, 1934).

2.4 We further frame our research by considering two fundamental pre-existing conditions common to all individuals entering pre-service teacher education programs. These are (a) the personal attitudes and beliefs about themselves that participants bring to the program and (b) their prior socialisation into teaching. The literature has firmly established that the predispositions of prospective teachers are potent and tend to self-perpetuate during their training (Lunenberg et al., 2007; Pajares, 1992). Further, the influence of anticipatory socialisation on the individual has been shown to be powerful and often inexorable (Loewenberg Ball and Cohen, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner and Gore, 1990). What is more, the experiences of graduates in turning theory into practice are most likely influenced by factors relating to their personal attitudes and beliefs and anticipatory socialisation.

Context of the Study

3.1 The particular context of this study is teacher education based on a Bachelor of Learning Management (BLM) degree that is conceptually different to a conventional Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. A core precept of the BLM is the intent to produce a new type of educator with the potential to transform the profession in line with the BLM's core concepts. In addition, the BLM is a four-year degree, structured so that students can complete an accelerated program in three years. Pathways include secondary and vocational education, early childhood, primary, Japanese and graduate entry. The focus in this study is graduates from the primary pathway who completed the three-year accelerated program.

3.2 During this program, students undertake thirty-two courses from four knowledge domains, namely, Essential Professional Knowledge, Futures, Networks and Partnerships, and Pedagogy. Courses within these domains, particularly a number of keystone courses, include a theoretical background in instructional theory and design, and an understanding of the meta-analysis of teaching/learning, with a particular focus on the role of the teacher in achieving learning outcomes in students (Allen and Smith, 2007). Key Learning Area (KLA)- or discipline-based courses are also included in the program. Course delivery is through lectures, face-to-face tutorials and web-based instruction. In-field experiences in Teaching Schools are structured in such a way that students must demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply important knowledge learned on campus in the classroom. The program provides 111 days of in-field experience, comprising 100 days' experience in schools. Students spend progressively longer in schools each year. In their final year, they undertake a ten-week internship during which time they are granted provisional registration by the state statutory authority.

3.3 The nature of the interaction between the pre-service teacher and the teacher education program has altered since the introduction of the BLM. Previously, the BEd did not offer the option of an accelerated program and students undertook the four-year program. In addition, BLM course content is significantly different from the BEd program that was anchored in the discipline languages of educational psychology, sociology of education, school curricula and social contexts of schooling (Smith and Moore, 2006). Course delivery has not changed markedly apart from a stronger emphasis on web-based instruction. The nature and length of in-field experiences represent a significant change as the practicum-type periods in schools common to the BEd model of teacher preparation have been reconceptualised in the BLM as *portal tasks*, periods when students put into practice the concepts and theories explored on campus (Smith and Moore, 2006).

3.4 Portal tasks are situated throughout the program to target a range of standards against which students must demonstrate competence in order to proceed with their studies. They entail a structured and mentored period of theory application in real-life settings and aim to secure the theory/practice nexus considered vital in the preparation of educators (Smith and Moore, 2006). Similar arrangements apply to the ten-week internship that students undertake in their final year. A central tenet of the portal task arrangement is that all participants, students, academic staff and supervising teachers, follow 'the same script' (Smith and Moore, 2006: 21). This is achieved through partnership arrangements that include industry input into BLM course work and assessment and shared professional development (Allen and

Butler-Mader, 2007). The BLM student also spends 14% longer in schools than did his/her earlier BEd counterpart. In Meadian terms, as mentioned earlier, the program's environment comprises the two 'fields of interaction' (Mead, 1934: 249) of the university and Teaching Schools. We now discuss the interaction that takes place in relation to pre-existing conditions in emergence.

Interaction and pre-existing conditions in emergence

4.1 The pre-existing conditions associated with both the BLM and the pre-service teachers ('student teacher' hereafter) have a bearing on the end product, the graduate teacher (the emergent). However, pre-existing conditions alone do not adequately account for emergence. While necessary, they 'do not determine in its full reality that which emerges' (Mead, 1932: 16). This is for two reasons. First, the impact of pre-existing conditions on emergence must be materialised through interaction (between the student teacher and the BLM) and, second, interaction can contribute its own input to the nature of an emergent (the graduate teacher). As Chang (2004: 407) observes, 'pre-existing conditions and interaction constitute two fundamental dimensions of the interrelations between things as an organic whole in terms of which we can understand emergence.' In order to explore these dimensions, in this study we focus on two Meadian 'mechanisms' to analyse how student and beginning teachers make sense of their environment and how their understandings affect their teaching behaviour. These mechanisms are the actor's role taking and the actor's self-regulation in taking roles.

The Meadian mechanisms of role taking and the actor's self-regulation in the context of teacher education

5.1 Following Mead (1934: 141), we conceive of role taking as one of the 'specifically social expressions of intelligence' that shape the interpersonal nature of teachers' and, for that matter, many professionals' work. Role taking involves the self engaging in a reflective dialogue with itself in order to act in role. According to Mead (1934: 142), role taking by the individual is an inevitable consequence of human interaction; 'there are all sorts of selves answering to all sorts of different social interactions.' Role taking involves selecting from the number of alternatives present the ones believed to be most appropriate and then enacting them (Mead, 1934). The type and nature of role that the individual adopts are dependent on the vantage point from which the individual perceives the social and non-social environment, and the level at which the individual interacts. Role taking involves applying labels to oneself, to other people and to the context in which the interaction is taking place (Vernon, 1965). In terms of the professions, role-taking involves labelling oneself as a 'teacher', 'nurse', or 'accountant', and labelling others as 'students', 'patients' and 'clients' in the contexts of 'education', 'health-care' and 'accounting'.

5.2 Further, Mead (1934: 173) views the self as divided into the '*I*' and the '*Me*,' with the *I* representing the creative, spontaneous self and the *Me* referring to the outward, socialised aspect of the self. The *Me* is learned in interaction with others and with the environment. It includes both knowledge about that environment (including society) and a sense of who he or she is: a sense of self. The *I* is the active aspect of the self, which acts creatively but within the context of the *Me*. Both parts of the self come together during the process of role taking. Mead (1934: 186) describes the relationship in these terms:

The "*I*" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the "*Me*" is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself [*sic*] assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized "*Me*"; one who reacts towards that as an "*I*."

5.3 Reflective thinking shapes the actions of the self by enabling individuals to develop and sustain a role (Mead, 1934). Role taking is the means by which the self is able to structure and react to its own experiences, make reflexive adjustments and thus establish situational identity/ies (Mead, 1934; Reichers, 1987). Mead emphasises that individuals create and re-create roles from one situation to another and each person may do this differently. This is possible because individuals construct meaning, have selves, and relate to themselves and others in terms of shared meaning (Longmore, 1998).

5.4 The process of role taking thus involves individuals seeing themselves as others might see them and regulating their behaviour accordingly. This is what is meant by 'self-regulation.' Individuals undergoing the process of becoming teachers, for example, must experience the process of role taking in order to regulate their behaviour and develop a sense of professional identity (Mead, 1934). This involves them consciously and regularly evaluating and adjusting what they are doing when performing a task, such as lesson planning, classroom management or implementing pedagogical design. Mead's concept of the reflective self acknowledges the capacity of private thoughts to influence public actions in both implicit and explicit ways.

5.5 It will be recalled that the BLM seeks to produce a new type of educator, one who has the potential to transform the profession in alignment with the core concepts of the program. That is, the BLM attempts to graduate teachers whose *I* is dynamic and able to rise over the *Me* which traditionally responds to the individual's anticipatory socialisation and other pre-existing conditions as well as to conventional social mores in education. The literature has long established the traditional nature of teaching, confirming it as the most conservative of social institutions (Giddens, 1994; Hartwell, 1996). Thus, the beginning teacher has traditionally entered the environment of the new school where traditional practices are upheld and valued. Further, teacher socialisation literature demonstrates that the socialisation of prospective and practising teachers plays a key role in ensuring the continued transmittal of the cultural heritage (Smith and Moore, 2006). Together these factors inevitably play a role in the emergence of the graduate teacher, with the potentially dynamic *I* of the student and beginning teacher being mediated by the *Me* towards conservative and 'common' practice within the new school.

5.6 Consistent with the intent to produce a new type of educator, the BLM attempts to address the tendency of educators to conform to the cultural heritage that renders education a reactionary and obdurate

institution. The challenge of the BLM therefore is to provide an environment that sensitises the *Me* of the student teacher in such a way that the performance of his/her *I* is transformative and resistant to the social and cultural norms of traditional teaching. The *I* must provide the basis for spontaneity in action, paving the way for unpredictability and emergence in the process of becoming a teacher (Puddehpat, 2005).

5.7 As outlined above, the BLM environment consists of key features such as courses in four knowledge domains undertaken on campus and in-field experiences undertaken in schools. Together these and other features of the environment wield an influence on the development of the student teacher. However, the influence of these key features is mediated by the stance of the student teacher. The student teacher's self-regulation is pivotal. Maines (2001) is instructive on this issue. He postulates that:

The individual selects out from the world that which is situationally meaningful, or pragmatic, and adjusts to events that the world thrusts upon the individual. The adjustive responses transform the world in terms of its meaning, while simultaneously establishing the structures that condition the appearance of future events. (Maines, 2001: 47)

5.8 In the case of the student teacher, this means that he/she selects feature/s that are meaningful to him/her and adjusts his/her behaviour accordingly. This selection, however, is constrained by the determining influence of the BLM environment. As a member of the BLM collective, each student teacher shares a commitment to certain understanding and commitments. Searle (2006, as cited in D'Andrade, 2006) points out that each member of a collective or institution shares, whether he/she wants to or not, a commitment that certain things count as meaning something within that collective/institution. That is:

If individual A, as an institutional fact, is defined as a member of collective Q, and this collective is committed to P, then, as a member of Q, A is committed to P, no matter what A may feel about it. The evidence is a universal human rule, one that admits of few exceptions. We are a social species. (Searle, 2006, as cited in D'Andrade, 2006: 34)

5.9 For the BLM student/beginning teacher, how this commitment plays out in practice is a function of the strength of the preconditions discussed earlier, and interactions between the BLM on the one hand and the School on the other. Before discussing these matters, we elaborate the method used for collecting and analysing data germane to them.

Method

6.1 Data in this study were collected from a sample of first-year graduates of the BLM, all teaching in primary schools in regional Australia. A purposive sampling strategy (Sarantakos, 2005) was used to select participants and, of sixteen participants identified, fourteen agreed to participate in the study. (All have been given pseudonyms in this paper.) The number of participants enabled the study to sustain an in-depth focus on their experiences of transitioning from student to beginning teachers. Individual interviews and two focus group discussions were chosen as data gathering techniques in this study because they could help provide an authentic insight into the way the participants understand and engage with the world (Silverman, 2004). The interviews were semi-structured to facilitate the free expression of the participants' thoughts. This type of interviewing involves emphasising participants' definitions of situations, encouraging them to structure accounts of situations and enabling them to introduce their notions of relevance (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Focus groups allowed us to re-examine in a different context some of the responses that participants had given in the interviews. They also provided an opportunity to subject the individual accounts of participants to 'probing and critical collective discussion' by a group of their peers (Blumer, 1969: 52). With participant permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

6.2 Analysis of the data set was guided by procedures of coding, categorising and identifying themes as proposed by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Miles and Huberman (1994). Thus, the data were scanned for themes and relationships among these themes, and hypotheses were developed and modified on the basis of the data. This was done through hermeneutic cycles of close interpretative readings (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994) of each transcript in order to identify recurrent themes that emerged from participants' articulations about their experiences of turning theory into practice during their training (i.e. as student teachers) and upon entering the new school (i.e. as beginning teachers). The same process was repeated across transcripts to identify commonalities across all the data. This resulted in the creation of ten categories which were then grouped into three themes: workplace readiness, futures orientation and capacity to implement BLM pedagogical design. For the purposes of this paper, we draw from our interpretation of the data across these themes those data which show how participants made meaning of their situations in the two BLM fields of interaction in teacher education.

Making meaning in fields of interaction

7.1 It will be recalled that the environmental preconditions of the BLM involve two fields of interaction (Fol): the university (Fola) and the Teaching Schools (Folb). Teaching Schools set up student teachers and practising teachers ('experienced teachers' hereafter) to interact in order to devise teaching experiences for the classroom, based around pedagogical (teaching) practices. They do this through interaction in the school. While this potentially brings together the pre-existing conditions of the two Fol, it also involves pre-existing conditions of the two *Is* of the experienced teacher and the student teacher. The following data samples provide evidence of how this process unfolds in practice:

I couldn't use BLM strategies because my teacher in two of the portal tasks hadn't even heard of half the stuff we'd been taught. (Inez)

There's no way I would have gone in using the Eight Learning Management Questions^[1] and that stuff. No one knew anything about it. I talked a bit about stuff I'd learned [at uni] but

there was always so much to do and we had to keep on track. (Desley)

7.2 In these examples, neither Inez nor Desley had substantive conversations about practices learned at university in the Teaching Schools field. Their transcripts further show that, while they both mentioned some BLM practices when meeting with experienced teachers, neither pursued the issue of implementing these. They had encountered what Blumer (1969: 22) refers to as an 'obdurate effect' in the environment whereby their understanding of pedagogical practice learned at university in Fola did not match the reality of others in the Folb, the Teaching School.

7.3 Also evident in Inez' and Desley's remarks is that experienced teachers did not engage them in further conversation on the topic. The responses of the *I*s in the school context were such that the desired pre-existing conditions of the university were difficult to achieve through interaction in the Teaching Schools. The student teachers' behaviour can be explained through the regulation of their *I* by their *Me* as they started to see themselves as they believed significant others (experienced teachers) saw them, adapting their behaviour accordingly. As aspirants to the group in which experienced teachers belonged, Inez and Desley were seeking to adopt similar perspectives about what counted as pedagogical strategies in Folb. They regulated their interactional behaviour by following the practices they observed in order to become more like the other, to belong to the social group. It was their ability to define teaching situations from the same standpoint as experienced teachers that made their personal controls possible (Mead, 1934).

7.4 In turn, the responses of experienced teachers to the students' talk about BLM pedagogical practices reflect their own pre-existing conditions and sense of self as teachers. The student explanations of BLM requirements did not fit experienced teachers' preconceptions of 'teaching.' By filtering out student ideas, experienced teachers' identities as professionals who know what needs to be known about teaching were protected. That is, the cultural heritage of conservatism remained intact. The imbalance in the power arrangements between the experienced teacher and the student teacher ensured that, in this relationship, the experienced teachers' views held sway and the pre-existing conditions of the university did not wield substantial power over the meaning-making of participants (Bullough and Draper, 2004; Hargreaves, 2000).

7.5 The following comments additionally show how student teachers encountered a different frame of reference in Folb:

Being in the schools was like a different world. I didn't really think about uni. [One of my lecturers] visited during one of my portal tasks, I think it was the second one, but she didn't stay long. That was the only contact I ever had and the teachers had no idea of what I was doing at uni. I was really disappointed about that. (Fiona)

The supervising teachers I had said they had no idea about what we were doing at uni. None of them had had much contact at all with the uni, I don't think. I found it more practical to follow what my supervising teachers suggested. (Catherine)

7.6 These and the previous data highlight a differentiation between the two fields of interaction. The participants' remarks are evidence of a university-school divide. We interpret this as the theory-practice gap defined by Pfeffer and Sutton (2000), wherein key players in associated institutions hold conflicting views about best practice. Student teachers and, by extension, some experienced teachers were unable to put into practice the preferred BLM theory because the pre-existing conditions of the fields of interaction were in conflict. We now extend this notion by focusing on reproduction of the theory-practice gap in practice.

Reproduction of the theory-practice gap in practice

7.7 A key feature of our analysis is that participants, both as individuals and as part of a collective, contributed to the reproduction of the gap between theory and practice. The data illustrate this insofar as ten of fourteen participants upheld the belief that, when compared with in-field experience, much of what goes on in teacher education courses is not relevant. The claim and indications of what is meant by relevance are contained in the following comments about first-year courses:

The Futures course was a load of rot. How will that kind of thing help me to teach? I really wonder why we did it. (Anita)

That course that was out there at the university for SOSE was totally ridiculous as far as I'm concerned. We had a couple of lessons and they took us to X (name withheld) and as far as I'm concerned I got nothing out of it. Definitely a general feeling, I would say. (Anthony)

7.8 These informants' explanations of an absence of relevance can be explained through the pre-existing conditions of the individuals concerned. That is, anticipatory socialisation and prior attitudes and beliefs about the role of teacher education dictate that a restricted set of interactions should take place between participants and others in the environment (Chang, 2004). This did not include interactions such as excursions (SOSE) or studies of the implications of globalisation on the world at large (Futures). In their interactions with others, participants' judgments and perceptions were regulated by additional beliefs they had already formed about the nature and value of teacher education. Gay, for example, said she believed that 'training can only take you to a certain point' and Inez noted that:

Uni is important for all the background stuff but I *always* knew I'd learn more from being in the classroom.

7.9 Similarly, our informants made clear distinctions between the educational functions of the university and the school in their development as professionals, as exemplified in Desley's comments:

Desley: A lot of the theory was a bit out there. It would depend on the lecturer.

Interviewer: What is your concept of what theory means?

Desley: Reading and writing. Theorists. The why you do things rather than how. What we did at uni. Learning it has been useful in some ways.

Interviewer: Did you believe it was useful when you were at uni?

Desley: No, because you couldn't see it happening. It's different in schools. School tends to focus on content. Uni focuses on psychology of why rather than the content. There are different ways of teaching the lessons but, in the end, it's content.

7.10 These data associate theory with university and practice with schools. This is despite an acknowledgement by participants that the university program included both practical components and links with practice. For example, they appreciated the practical application of what they learned in KLA courses and commented on the value of being taught by teachers who 'came in' (Elizabeth) to the university environment as seconded and sessional staff. The program also entailed student teachers going out into the school environment through regular portal tasks and internship. Nevertheless, despite these acknowledged pre-existing conditions of the environment, what was strongly maintained was that the university was not about the 'practice' of teaching, which was perceived of instead as the jurisdiction of schools. Our informants reproduced and sustained the gap between the university and schools when they associated one environment with theory and the other with practice.

7.11 Taken together, in theoretical terms, the participants' data indicate that they could not be 'talked out' of what they already believed (Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1991: 103). Their pre-existing beliefs had generated a cultural expectation that there would be a theory-practice gap between the university and the school. They further acknowledged and accepted that cultural and institutional barriers between the two environments were not theirs to overcome. This interpretation is lent credence by participants' responses in the process of role-taking to the generalised other, namely, experienced teachers working in schools.

Response to the generalised other in the process of role-taking

7.12 The human response to the generalised other is not dependent on contextual proximity. The individual can define situations in the absence of other people (Shibutani, 1955), as exemplified in this study. During training, student teachers' beliefs and actions were continuously influenced and shaped by what they judged to inform the attitude of those in the school setting. That is, they reacted to their expectation of the generalised other (experienced teachers). We draw two examples from the data to provide evidence for this. In the university setting, Carl selected out from all the practices he was taught those he saw as having application in the school setting:

When it came to doing lesson planning, if I thought I could use it in the classroom then I sat up and took notice.

7.13 In interacting with one environment, the university, Carl made deliberate choices about the types of practices and activities that he believed would facilitate his orientation in another environment, the school. His decision-making was informed by his aspiration to adopt the attitudes of the generalised other in the school environment. He selected out from the university environment those things that he believed would help him gain membership in the school environment and take on the role of 'teacher' at some time in the future.

7.14 Our second example shows that expectations about the generalised other were powerful in the identity formation of some student teachers:

Some stuff [in the BLM] I couldn't see myself using as a teacher. Wasn't sure it would work. I talked to mum and my sister about things like the planning templates and they both said they'd never use them. Other things I was more interested in. (Bianca)

7.15 In eliciting the opinions of experienced teachers in her family, Bianca was searching for the attitudes of the group whose perspectives she wanted to assume. In doing so, she displayed a capability for vicarious role taking ('I couldn't see myself ...'), projecting herself into a future role defined by her expectation of what her membership of the group in the school environment would mean. In the case of both Carl and Bianca, the participants' / determined what kind of environment was relevant to them as prospective teachers.

7.16 Bianca's remarks also illustrate the breadth of the representation of the generalised other, 'experienced teacher,' for this group of participants. Her mother and sister represent the collective. Consistent with Mead's view that the generalised other comprises a range of disparate attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, participants actively sought out and referred to perspectives of a number of others. Family member teachers featured especially in the discourse of several informants as well as Bianca, such as Earl whose wife had been teaching for five years:

I would sit at the dinner table and talk to my wife and say, look, this is happening. What can I do or how can I possibly get this across? Or this child just doesn't understand it. I explained it this way and this way and she would suggest, have you tried it this way? Have you done it another way?

7.17 Similarly, Anthony's perspectives were influenced by the practices of his son's teacher in a local elementary school:

I was so impressed with what [my son] was doing for this unit on Egypt that I rang his teacher and asked him how he did it, you know, the secret of his success.

7.18 These are instances of student teachers defining objects (e.g. teacher practice) and other people (family members) from the perspective that they seek to share with them. Informants visualised their proposed lines of action from this generalised standpoint (how to teach the unit on Egypt) and anticipated the reactions of others ('wasn't sure it would work'), thus regulating their professional behaviour (Shibutani, 1955).

7.19 These data support Mead's contention that individuals relate to a number of generalised others, often simultaneously. In so doing, the participants in this study constructed more than one perspective on how to deal with the same environmental contingencies. Given that each perspective represents one pattern of interaction with the environment, the different perspectives, when implemented, generate different patterns of interaction and yield different sets of emergents (Chang, 2004). Students' interactions with significant others in the two FOL in the BLM resulted in a tussle between membership of the two different groups. Once they were caught up in the day-to-day life of the Teaching School, participants regulated their behaviour according to the environmental preconditions in that setting. This is evidence that, despite the changed pre-existing conditions of the BLM from its predecessor BEd, student teacher agency including his/her set of pre-existing conditions had power over the effects of the program structure (Chang, 2004).

7.20 At this point in the discussion we suggest that the data show that pre-existing conditions across a range of individual characteristics and institutional arrangements, in the university and the school, have a defining effect on people in the liminal period between being a 'student' and, later, a 'teacher.' The next set of data about participants' interactions in their first year of teaching in the new school adds weight to this supposition.

Interactions in the first year of teaching in the new school

8.1 In transitioning from the university into teachers in the new school environment, graduates almost immediately started searching for the perspectives and rules of the group (Mead, 1934) they had entered. In Meadian terms this process of role taking involves taking account of various things, assessing and interpreting what is noted and forging appropriate lines of conduct. The following data samples illustrate this process in the school context:

I had a really tough first week but then I started getting to know what happens in the school, what other teachers do. Things gradually got easier. I spent hours talking to the other [teachers] and had a weekly meeting with the principal who gave me lots of ideas. (Inez)

I spent so much time in the school when I began. Often most of the weekend too. I really wanted to get on top of what needed to be done. But the teachers were really supportive and gave me lots of resources to use. (Fiona)

8.2 These examples provide evidence that participants' self as beginning teacher was on the move, reaching beyond itself and beginning to turn into another (Shalin, 2000). Their social status had changed and a new set of expectations had fallen on them. This changed social status affected their teacher behaviour. While the graduate teacher can be seen as an emergent at a point in time, the process of emergence is nonetheless continual. There is never a point at which one is; rather one is always becoming or emerging into another (Mead, 1934). These individuals had begun the process of emergence as beginning teachers in a particular school environment. Notably, some data suggest a coming together and taking up of ideas from both beginning teachers and significant others (experienced teachers) in the school setting. These data reflect what Mead calls 'rationality.'

Rationality

9.1 Rationality is a multi-faceted and disequilibratory process, evident in this study in the imbalance between the levels of engagement of experienced teachers with students' ideas compared to engagement with their ideas on becoming graduates. According to participants' comments, for the most part experienced teachers showed minimal interest in their student ideas. However, once they were beginning teachers some of their practices caught experienced teachers' attention:

They were really keen to hear your opinion on some things you'd learned; they were really good at that. As with the Inspiration program that I talked about before, I'd had a little bit of dealing with that so I sat down with the Assistant Principal and said, well, this is what I've sort of learned. And the other teachers I work with, they were really keen to look at the program as well so we sat down and added this [program] to what we do. (Earl)

There was some stuff, like Google Earth, that the other [year level teachers] liked so I showed them how to use it. We use it in a couple of the second term units now. (Fiona)

9.2 These are examples of rationalised social interaction (Mead, 1934), whereby beginning teachers both controlled their actions through the behaviour of others and controlled others' actions through their own. The behaviour of these individuals can be explained through the dynamic nature of their selves and the co-evolution of their / through their mutual social interaction (Beames, 2005).

9.3 We further interpret these data as evidence that, just as our informants were evolving as professionals,

the experienced teachers with whom they interacted were also undergoing the continual process of emergence. That is, while emergent in their roles as experienced teachers, they were not a finished product. Rather, like all social beings, they were constantly evolving through their interaction with others and through their reflection on and re-interpretation of their professional selves (Blumer, 1969). Hence, beginning teachers were not interacting with a static, defined group in the new school environment, but with others whose selves, like their own, were in a constant state of flux. The environment was exercising control over the conduct of all its individual members (Mead, 1934).

9.4 The fluid, variable nature of rationality between our participants and their reference group was such that their ways of interacting and attributing meaning inevitably developed and changed. Moreover, the depth and breadth of rationality continuously evolved as our informants' involvement in and level of commitment to social interactions increased (Chang, 2004). For example, Gay and Inez made these comments about collaborative planning sessions:

It's only now that I'm starting to gain any confidence [and] I feel like I can contribute a bit more now. It's nice when the others seem really interested. (Gay)

I try to contribute to discussions although [the other teachers] know a lot more than me. It's easier than it was at the start. (Inez)

9.5 These data bear out Mead's contention that the shared perspective of the group has a temporal dimension, the nature of the perspective changing in time as different attitudes and actions are contributed to the common understanding. Meaning is continually modified through experience, changing as a result of ongoing interaction. Research literature shows that beginning teachers tend to be reluctant to promote and in many cases implement the theory of their pre-service training during their first year of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Grossman, 2008). This is attributed to their lack of confidence as novitiates and to the 'reality shock' that they face as new teachers (Department of Education Science and Training, 2002). However, beginning teachers often overcome these hurdles to the point that they are able in their second year of teaching and beyond to apply what they learned in teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2007). We posit that this occurs because the breadth and depth of role taking by beginning teachers in interaction with others gradually increases to the point where they can control others' actions through their own. That is, they see themselves as 'teachers' and this self-image is symbolically reinforced by experienced teacher acceptance.

9.6 It is therefore conceivable that our participants would return to and begin applying BLM theory at a later date, and influence others in doing so. Thus, over time, our participants could potentially play a role in influencing change in teaching practices within their social group. By its nature, a change to the fundamental attitudes of the group occurs gradually. It involves the participant bringing up the attitude of the group toward him/herself, responding to it, and through that response changing the attitude of the group (Mead, 1934). We earlier identified that our informants initially had little power over the effects of the school structure when they transitioned into the workplace. We propose, however, that as their capacity to role take increases, they may develop the capability to effect emergent transformation in classroom practice in their school.

Conclusion

10.1 We propose the following three concluding statements as a contribution to the fields of Meadian sociology and teacher education empirical research. First, the pre-existing conditions of the individual are at times inexorable, such that the graduate retains some beliefs and attitudes about teaching and the role of the teacher that are not aligned with the principles of teacher education and, in the case of this study, the BLM. Rather, actions and beliefs are informed by views of teaching from one's own schooling and life experience. Accordingly, some participants do not define BLM theory as inherent in their role as a teacher and are therefore unable and/or unwilling to turn the theory of their pre-service preparation into practice in the workplace. This is one dimension of the phenomenon commonly known as the theory-practice gap.

10.2 Second, the behaviours of our informants suggest that individuals tend to (re-) create their roles and self-regulate their actions as teachers in one way during interaction with the BLM environment and in another way in the environment of the new school. Through assuming the attitude of the generalised other during pre-service preparation, the student teacher's *Me* regulates his/her *I* in such a way that, in many instances, the individual defines BLM theory as appropriate in his/her role as a teacher and enacts the theory accordingly. In the new school environment, however, role taking sensitises the beginning teacher to a different set of 'enabling and limiting properties' (Chang, 2004: 410) from those encountered in the BLM. Most participants develop roles by selecting from this new environment that which is situationally meaningful to them; they then make adjustive responses in social interactions. Essentially, most participants do not define BLM theory as situationally meaningful in this environment and therefore, by and large, do not implement it. We suggest this is a second dimension of the broader phenomenon known as the theory-practice gap.

10.3 Third, because emergence is a continuous process, the data show that our participants continue to evolve through their interactions with others and this influences their ongoing attribution of meaning to things within the school environment. Others in the environment are also in a process of emergence and, like our participants, are constantly evolving and seeing themselves through the eyes of others. Their interactions are a dynamic, two-way arrangement. It is conceivable that as participants' involvement in and level of commitment to social interactions increases, they will develop the capacity and/or willingness to implement the BLM theory learned in their undergraduate training.

10.4 In closing, we suggest this study illustrates why it is often difficult to apply the concepts that organise individual action to the organisation of group action. The students in our sample, as they interact with

teachers and lecturers, form a 'flexible connective tissue' that maintains the group-defined definitions of teaching in the face of a range of potentially disruptive events provided by BLM precepts (Hutchins, 1995: 219). Experienced teachers show some and gradual acceptance of beginning teachers. However, this in no way constitutes a departure from the received wisdom and practices of extant teaching practice. In effect then, as Mead's theory predicts, the theory-practice gap in teacher education remains obdurate.

Notes

¹ The Eight Learning Management Questions (Lynch and Smith, 2006) are a set of sequential design based questions that form part of the BLM Learning Design. The expectation is that all BLM students master and implement the BLM Learning Design during their training and in-field experience.

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