Personal History and Teaching Metaphors:

A Self Study of Teaching as Conversation

By Robert V. Bullough, Jr.

Introduction

A few years ago I shifted my work in teacher education to place a central emphasis on the role of personal history and self development in becoming a teacher. Many factors nudged me in this direction, including recent research into teacher socialization and development, a couple of provocative graduate students who were helpfully critical of my work, and my own growing dissatisfaction with the apparently limited impact of my teaching on my students' thinking about teaching and themselves as teachers (see Bullough, 1989). My realization was that the students picked and chose what content they would respond to in the courses I taught based upon often unarticulated assumptions or "implicit theories" (Clark, 1988:6) about teaching, learning, and themselves as teachers. They embraced activities and content that confirmed their prejudices and ignored, or, more accurately, suffered through and then discounted, that which was contrary to these prejudices.

This discovery should not have been surprising. Long ago John Dewey (1916; 1929; 1938) pointed to

Robert V. Bullough, Jr., is a professor at the School of Education, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

the tendency among humans to selectively respond to events based upon their prior experience as have schema theorists generations later (Anderson, 1977). Even a cursory consideration of my own learning and development as a teacher would have revealed this tendency in <u>me</u>. Despite my own experience as a student and as a professor of teacher education, I ignored the personal and idiosyncratic nature of becoming a teacher and as a result functioned as a "teacher trainer" rather than a "teacher educator." The difference is of fundamental importance (Bullough & Gitlin, 1989; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992).

"Trainers" ignore life history and experience and instead approach the problem of learning to teach as a technical problem of controlling inputs and outputs. All students receive essentially the same "treatment." "Educators," in contrast, represent a different vision, one based upon the root meaning of educate, "educere," to lead forth or draw out. Like any other form of education, educating teachers is a matter of building upon, extending, and reconstructing past experience. Educators realize that although "treatments" may be identical, what is learned from a treatment is not.

Focus on Self

In my quest to become a teacher educator and to increase the influence of my teaching on my students' development, Dewey's concept of "teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience" (1938:111) has proven pivotal. My task as a teacher educator is to encourage my students through a variety of means to identify the assumptions—many of which are hidden—that compose their implicit theories about teaching and themselves as teachers that are embedded in their personal histories. Then, I prompt them to reconstruct these assumptions in ways that are likely to lead to increased control over future professional development. In particular, my aim is to help them to develop the kind of understanding of self as teacher that will enable them to establish a role in a school and within the community of educators that is educationally defensible and personally satisfying, congruent with a desired teaching self. This said, a caution is in order: I do not wish to suggest that I ignore skill development. Instead, I attempt to situate the development of teaching skills within the context of the struggle for "professional identity" (Pajak, 1986:123).

Program and Course Elements

The program within which I work runs for an academic year. The preservice teachers are organized into a cohort group of about 20 who proceed through a sequence of courses for which I am responsible. This is important to note because it means that I work with these students for an entire academic year. Any less time than this would most assuredly leave me with little hope for having a sustained influence. In the first term, they study curriculum and instruction with me and begin

working in the school within which they will eventually practice teach. The second and third quarters, they engage in half-day practice teaching (usually three class periods) and participate in a weekly seminar that addresses problems and issues associated with practice teaching.

I begin the year by having the preservice teachers write an "education-related life-history." Generally speaking, the purpose of the life-history is to get them to consider **how** and **what** they are thinking about teaching and themselves as teachers (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). The life-histories are shared and themes identified and discussed. The preservice teachers are then asked to analyze their life-histories to identify a personal teaching metaphor(s) that captures the essence of how they think about themselves as teachers. The metaphors embody the "dream," a visualization of self in context, that Levinson (1979) considers to be of vital importance in human development, particularly in making the transition from the adolescence into the adult world. Once identified, the teaching metaphors are explored in writing and through discussion. Throughout the year and in the seminar we return to consider the metaphors—representations of a developing teaching self—and explore how they are changing and why they are changing. Elsewhere (Bullough, 1991) I have described in some detail how I use metaphor analysis. Suffice it here to say that it has proven to be a very useful means for helping preservice teachers think about themselves as teachers and an important tool to assist them to become increasingly reflective about their actions in the classroom and their instructional aims.

Finally, while practice teaching, each preservice teacher engages in a series of action research studies that loosely follow the "spiral" suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988): A problem is identified, a plan made, implemented, tested, and reflected upon. Typically, the preservice teachers either audio or video tape themselves teaching a series of lessons to identify a problem or issue with an eye toward developing, implementing, and evaluating a plan for improvement. A related purpose of the action research projects is to encourage them to explore whether or not they are playing out their personal teaching metaphors—their "dreams"—in the classroom as they had hoped. Sometimes, through the action research projects, the preservice teachers discover that to varying degrees their metaphors do not fit classroom situations, and their thinking about self as teacher has changed as a result. Other times, metaphors prove fitting, but preservice teachers lack essential skills to realize them. It is in instances like these that efforts are directed toward acquiring the desired skills or changing the context to obtain a better fit.

Authenticity in Teaching

Working with preservice teachers through the program and in these ways, I have realized as never before the importance of authenticity in teaching, of

achieving congruence between metaphor and practice. The medium, as Marshall McLuhan used to say, is the message; and teachers and their life-histories are the medium. The challenge is no different for professors. For me, authenticity in teaching requires that I be able to articulate for my students my own teaching metaphors as they arise from my life-history and that I be actively exploring myself as teacher, just as I require that they engage in such exploration. For professors, this is a difficult but urgent challenge, especially when seen in relationship to the dehumanizing trends in American universities, as Wilshire so accurately describes them:

> The problem for professors today who are educators is that nihilism, cynicism, and mindlessness are the most rampant in the university itself. To evaluate our efforts we resort to arrays of numbers in boxes, but the numbers contact the human realities at stray points only. In the main they float detached, because we do not believe that we can discover the truth about what we ought to do and be—about what education should be. (1990:18)

In the remainder of this article I will illustrate some aspects of what I have my teacher education students do by sharing an abbreviated version of my own life-history, analyzing that story for personal teaching metaphors, and then engaging in action research to explore my own teaching in relationship to my teaching metaphors. What follows is more than just illustrative of an approach to the study of self, however; it is part of my own on-going quest for authenticity in teaching, a quest driven by my desire to integrate personal and social identities (Walker, 1991) and to discover the truth of who I am as teacher. My plea is not just that as teacher educators we ought to shift our emphasis to attend to the individual student and how he or she makes teaching (and our programs) meaningful, but also to suggest that we ought to engage in a parallel study of our own practice. In the *Merchant of Venice* (Act I, Scene II), Shakespeare put the problem rather nicely: "It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching." Ultimately the challenge for teacher educators is to become "good divines."

My Story

As a 15-year-old I wanted to be a historian of ancient history or, heaven forbid, a lawyer, not a teacher. My father was a junior high school art teacher, and being sensitive to the hardships of living on a teacher's salary and to the subtle scorn directed toward teachers by the students with whom I attended high school, I knew that teaching was not for me. Yet, just a few years later, facing the draft and the possibility of going to fight in a war that, as a high school student, I had openly opposed with the result that I was labeled by some of my fellow students a "communist," I was forced to reconsider my earlier ambitions. The draft and the Vietnam War were important forces that encouraged for some young people, me

among them, generational bonding and a rising sense of the significance of living in a way that "made a difference." Almost despite myself, and against my father's wishes, as a junior in college I applied for admission into a teacher education program thinking that through education a new social world could be constructed upon the ashes of the former world that I then thought was aflame. I would teach history, but not ancient history, and through teaching help younger people understand the world into which they were born and encourage them to become involved in the reshaping of that world.

I completed my historical studies and began taking teacher education courses. Soon I became disillusioned. The courses were of little interest, the content was deadly, but more importantly, I saw the coursework only as an impediment to my desire to work with young people. Just as I was about to drop out of the program a professor, Flo Krall, perhaps sensing my growing disillusionment, pulled me aside after class one day early in the term and asked if I would like to complete the certification requirements by working in an alternative program for high school students who were "disaffected" from school. I jumped at the offer.

Suddenly, I found myself working with Flo, and three other university preservice teachers, half days in an experimental program involving a group of about 30 public school students. We had no formal organization and no materials, just a room and 30 students with whom we were expected to do something that would get them through school and to graduation. Drawing on Paulo Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), we began exploring ways of organizing a curriculum around themes that would assist the students to develop critical consciousness. One topic flowed into another topic, and all topics arose from the concerns of the students, as we understood them: war, power, ecology, sex. With these students I felt as though I was engaging in revolutionary activity.

Happily, I failed my draft physical and shortly thereafter was hired by the school district to continue to teach in the program, which was to become a permanent offering. The program grew so that we had two groups of students, each half day, of about 30 or 35. The curriculum continued to be organized thematically, and to evolve in response to student concerns and issues. But much of my day was spent counseling students and dealing with one or another pressing problem. As the student population grew, the group changed from being composed of mostly able students who failed to connect with school in any meaningful way to include students who were trouble makers, some learning disabled, and others who were chronically truant. We became, during the two years I remained with the program, the last stop for a good many students before they were either expelled or dropped out of school. Because there were no other options, no students were turned away, which, in retrospect, was a mistake. I found myself working with social workers and parole officers, testifying in court, meeting with despairing parents, calling and nagging students in an effort to maintain contact with them and to keep them in school. But mostly, I engaged in conversation with students and tried to help them

think through their problems in useful ways; I did little formal instructing.

My second year of teaching was a good one in many respects. Perhaps half of the students came to feel intimately connected to the program and to the teachers; a caring community was formed and most graduated as a result. However, part way through the year I found myself going home at the end of the day with migraine headaches; I was emotionally and physically exhausted. Whenever the telephone rang I got a sick feeling in my stomach, knowing that there was a good chance that if I picked up the receiver I would be told about a problem of one kind or another to which I was expected to respond. One evening, for example, I received a call from a parent who was checking to see if in fact I had taken the students on a weekend outing as his son had told him. He was surprised to find me home and furious with his son. I felt betrayed. Another student was arrested for robbery and fled the state, and I ended up testifying in court on his behalf. A preservice teacher working with us was asked by a student to tell her parents that she would be sleeping at the teacher's house while, in fact, the girl was having an abortion—our birth control unit, taught behind locked doors, had not had the desired effect! The preservice teacher wanted to know what to do. And so it went. I had become totally involved in my students' lives, too involved, perhaps, and it was destroying me. I put my dreams of revolution on hold; burned out, I fled.

In the fall of 1973, I enrolled in a Ph.D. program at The Ohio State University to pursue a degree in educational foundations and curriculum. For the first two years of my graduate program I had responsibility to teach a secondary education methods course. In this role, I planned activities and presented material in ways that prevented me from getting too emotionally involved with the students. I worked hard to at least appear expert, even though I did not feel that I was expert. I taught as I had been taught in my own university course work where teaching was "telling." Teachers were distant information dispensers, and into this role I fell, and, in the process, began healing. Still, it was not until my second year at Ohio State that I made arrangements to have a telephone installed in my apartment.

Graduating, I left Ohio State and assumed a position at the University of Utah. I thought of myself as a "curriculum and foundations" person who had a reasonably good background in teaching methods. Emphatically, I did not see myself as a teacher educator, which was low status and seemed to me to be of little consequence. After all, my own teacher education had taken place outside of the university. At Utah, I taught some methods courses and courses in the social and historical foundations of education. During those first couple of years, and primarily because of occasionally teaching a small seminar where lecturing was clearly inappropriate, I got close to a few students, but very few. I saw myself essentially as an expert, a dispenser of information, and a theorist. Like many others of my generation, failed practice led me to withdraw into theory. I had no intention of getting involved in the lives of my students or of considering how they made their lives meaningful.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, and as a reflection of my theoretical interests,

I began studying Marxism with Ladd Holt and Stanley Goldstein, two colleagues and friends. Eventually, we began reading the works of Jurgen Habermas. Through this study, and sitting in on classes with Stan, I began to rethink my teaching and commitments. I was especially struck by our exploration of Habermas' "ideal speech situation," where the aim is communication without domination (Habermas, 1979). While the role of teacher brings with it institutionalized forms of domination, where power is inherently asymmetrical, I realized that in my own teaching I was not seeking communication as much as domination, a means of maintaining my distance from students and of legitimating my position as professor.

The study with Ladd and Stan was not the only factor that prompted a rethinking of my approach to teaching. Put succinctly, I had lost my passion for teaching and found too little pleasure in it. Lecturing lost its lustre; theory disconnected from practice lacked power. Pleasure in teaching, I realized, would only come by making a greater effort to connect with the students in more than superficial ways.

The final events that lead up to the development of my current thinking about teaching and myself as teacher surround my move to teacher education in the middle 1980s. This represents more than just a switch from one program emphasis to another, but rather an emotional and intellectual transformation. At Ohio State and during my first years in Utah, I fled from teacher education; and despite teaching a number of methods and curriculum courses for teachers, I kept my distance. When, in 1983, I was elected to chair secondary education, I found myself intimately involved in teacher education program development, and I liked it. Theory and practice **were** linked.

Before I became chair, the program had been reorganized into "cohorts," which meant that professors who worked in teacher education would be with the same students for a year. I found myself teaching a cohort; and a year is an insufferably long time to remain disinterested in students. Almost despite myself, I became involved in their lives as I attempted to help them gain the understanding and skills needed to begin teaching. As a result of these students, and subsequent cohorts, and of the caring relationship I have developed with them, I crossed the psychological and intellectual barrier that had separated me from teacher education and HAD led me to escape into theory.

It was my growing interest in my students' and their professional development that came as a result of working with cohorts and my concern that my program was having too little impact on that development that led me, eventually, to begin to emphasize personal history and self development within the program. It is at this point of my story that this article began.

Metaphor Identification and Analysis

This is my life-history, in abbreviated form. Usually the preservice teachers

write much longer histories. Following the sharing of their histories in class, I require that they review them to identify a personal teaching metaphor or metaphors that capture the essence of themselves as teachers, their "dream." For some students, this is a difficult assignment, and it is helpful to recommend that they close their eyes and imagine a classroom filled with students within which they are working as a way of seeing themselves as teachers. These images often are embedded in a teaching metaphor.

Returning to my education-related life-history, a small stream of metaphors drifts by, representing a visualization of myself in the world, a "dream" of myself as teacher. I shall briefly consider each metaphor leading up to my current teaching metaphor that informs my instructional and curricular decision-making.

Before teaching in the alternative program and while studying history, I used to imagine myself in a classroom teaching just as my favorite history teachers had taught: Mrs. Stewart in the 8th grade; Mrs. Bailey in the 10th; and Mr. Arvanitas in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. These were the teachers who inspired in me a love of history through their knowledge and passion for understanding. I imagined being in front of spell-bound classes as I told them the stories of human triumph and failure that had earlier inspired me. I imagined myself an expert in history; and I imagined that my students would be grateful for my willingness to share expertise: Teacher is subject matter expert; teaching is telling. Such was my naivete.

These images proved fleeting. The alternative high school students I taught would have made short work of any attempt I might have made to teach as I had formerly imagined myself teaching. In response to the context, I found myself embracing other metaphors connected to the diverse roles I was compelled and wanted to play in my quest to make a difference in the lives of my students. I responded to the situation; I did not control it, it controlled me.

The metaphors that emerged were sometimes contradictory, but always compelling. Teacher is counselor and confidant, friend and father, politician and policeman. I was all these persons, and more. It was when disciplining the students that I felt the contradictions most acutely, and felt ill at ease and out of character. I am reminded of Kierkegaard's phrase, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." I was torn, "double-minded," as the writer of Saint James phrased it (James, 4:8). Often the counselor, confidant, and friend in me ran afoul of the disciplining father and the institutionally mandated policeman. My loyalties were torn; I was many warring selves. I punished students for nonattendance and yet fully empathized with their reasons for missing school and understood their decisions often to be good ones—choosing family over school, for example. In retrospect, I see my inability to gain purity of heart as a major reason for burning out, not just my having become so heavily invested emotionally in the lives of my students. I was schizophrenic, professionally, and inauthentic.

Despite considerable shortcomings, "teacher is expert" dominated my work at Ohio State and during my first few years at the University of Utah. I was clearly not

an expert, but in the classroom I acted as though I was one, or at least tried to act like one. I fancy that at least part of the time I was a reasonably good imitation of the real thing. For the most part, teaching was telling and students were vessels awaiting to be filled with my knowledge. Drawing on a metaphor used by Freire (1970), education was a form of "banking," where knowledge is deposited in the heads of passive students.

Growing dissatisfaction with "banking" education prompted by spending a year in a cohort where I could not escape the obvious shortcomings of the "teaching is telling" metaphor, concern for lack of program impact, and study of the writings of Jurgen Habermas all prompted a reconsideration of my thinking about myself as teacher. Increasingly, I came to think of teaching in dialogical terms and then, as a result of discovering that dialogue easily becomes disputational, in conversational terms. Although there are times when I find it necessary to be a "teller" in the classroom for what I consider to be legitimate educational reasons, for the most part I now think of teaching essentially as a form of extended conversation. "Teacher is conversationalist;" and "teaching is conversation."

Conditions for Conversation

Over the past few years, these metaphors have had a profound influence on my educational decision making and my thinking about myself as teacher. Although a few writers, in addition to Habermas, have been helpful, I have approached the problem of understanding conversation as a teaching metaphor practically, not academically. While I do not consider myself a postmodernist philosophically, I have gained immeasurably from the postmodern discussion about the nature of truth as a product of communities of discourse, of reality as a "linguistic habit" (Murphy, 1989), and of power proceeding the word (Foucault, 1980; Cherryholmes, 1988). Such insights have deepened my understanding of what conditions are necessary for teaching to take a conversational form and of the situational factors that impede realization of this teaching ideal.

Briefly, for conversation to take place there must be a shared language, to which end I devote a significant amount of time in my preservice teacher education courses; there must be a topic of shared interest and concern, that is, the participants must see the conversation as worthwhile and purposeful; the "floor" must be easily accessible to all participants, and not be dominated by one or another participant; participants must feel that they can speak honestly and openly and thus the tendency to be judgmental must be suspended at least until a sufficient level of empathy and trust exists within the group so that evaluation is tempered by personal and contextual understanding; participants must be assured a central place in agenda setting, in deciding how the conversation will proceed (i.e., power must be shared); and, finally, participants understand that conversation is fluid and its outcomes often unpredictable, otherwise disappointment is inevitable. Josiah Auspitz, writ-

ing of Michael Oakeshott, beautifully captures the ideal represented by the last condition. Oakeshott, Auspitz writes, "saw conversation not as a scored recitative but as a spontaneously improvised dance in which each participant responds to the movements of the others" (1991:356).

The Problem of Power

It is important to note that when applied to the context of the classroom, each of these conditions is tempered in varying degrees by the inherent asymmetry of power between professor and preservice teacher, but also by the purposes that bring them together. Preservice teachers, like other students, rightfully expect professors to profess something, and at times this necessarily requires that the professor take the floor and dominate the discourse. But, when professors determine that such a course of action is necessary, in the spirit of maintaining the conditions needed for conversation, it is incumbent upon the professor as teacher to gain the students' consent by explaining the reasons lying behind the decision. In this way, the professor's claim to authority, in this instance authority based on expertise, is legitimate (see, Benne, 1943:34-48).

Uses of My Metaphor

As I plan my university course work, I explicitly attend to my teaching metaphor, seeking to create the conditions necessary for its implementation and to be mindful of when I must set this metaphor aside to achieve a different end. As noted, sometimes it is necessary to become a "teller," particularly when a substantial amount of information needs to be presented in a hurry.

Engaging in Action Research: A Self Study

After planning my curriculum and class begins, I find myself from time to time stopping to evaluate my instruction. Some of the conditions necessary for a rich, interesting, and worthwhile conversation to take place only emerge over time, and I monitor this progress, always hopeful but never being quite certain that a decent conversation has or will result. The process of stopping to take one's bearings and to evaluate one's classroom performance, particularly as it relates to the achievement of personal teaching metaphors, is formalized for me in action research.

Consistent with the requirements I have established for the preservice teachers who enroll in my program, I periodically use action research as a means of studying my practice, particularly as a means for exploring the relationship between my teaching metaphor and my classroom performance. I require the students to focus their study upon a class or classes that are particularly troubling or surprising. Similarly, I tend to study my teaching in classes where I am less than satisfied with what is transpiring. At this point a caveat is in order: There is an important difference between how I study my teaching and the studies done by my students who are

beginning teachers. My metaphors have settled, while my students are just beginning their quests for professional identity.

On occasion over the past few years, I have conducted "studies" of classes within which I have had difficulty, initially, at least, achieving my conversational ideal. I know myself well enough to anticipate some problems. For example, in my enthusiasm to get the students to engage with the material, I sometimes find myself dominating the floor and blocking others' attempts to access it. At such times, I am more of a monologuist than a conversationalist. It is when I sense this problem, when my actions appear to be short-circuiting the possibility of achieving the kind and quality of relationships I desire with my students, that I call upon one or another of the strategies loosely associated with action research to gather data that will enable me to gain perspective on what I am doing, and to think about ways of altering the situation.

On several occasions over many years, I have invited colleagues to observe my teaching and give me feedback, which has usually been helpful. Most recently, in a few classes I have begun to audio tape-record sessions, with student permission, seeking insight into what is transpiring and why, in the hope that I may be able to better establish the conditions needed for conversation. I have found listening to these tapes to be most helpful; particularly, they have proven to be a useful means for gathering data about who is controlling the floor, and especially the extent of my domination of it.

I begin analysis immediately after class ends by listening to the tapes and noting at 60-second intervals whether I was talking or the students, and when a student was talking which one. In addition, I note each time a student responds to a student comment without me functioning as an intermediary—a priest between humanity and God. Greater amounts of student to student interaction indicate a feeling of ownership of the "floor," interest in the topic, and some willingness to set the agenda. Control of the floor, opportunity to talk, and willingness to help set the agenda are of central interest to me in part because they function as preconditions to the other conditions for conversation, such as trust. In addition, I note the kind and quality of my responses to student comments. In this way, the degree to which I am dominating interaction and controlling the agenda becomes readily apparent.

Analyzing tapes in this way gives a baseline from which I can work and pose questions of myself and my teaching. When, as has happened, I discover that my actions are in some respects inhibiting the possibility of achieving conversational relations, I begin to form a plan that has various elements. I have met with individual students and urged them to participate more fully in class. I have written notes on student papers that emphasize the value of their ideas and urge them to share them. I have called attention to my domination and actually requested students to help keep me in check and reminded them, and me, that conversation is the aim. I have increased the amount and quality of the positive feedback I give students in class and urged them to expand upon their ideas. I have called silenced students by name,

and gently invited their participation. And, of course, I have tried in various ways to muffle myself and let the floor slip, a bit, from my grasp.

As I have implemented my plans, I continue taping and listen to the tapes and analyze them, seeking signs of improvement or failure. More than once, I have had to rethink my actions in the light of what I have found. Through monitoring my behavior in this way, and engaging in actions of these kinds, the conditions needed for conversation became more evident in the classes I have audio taped and analyzed, although I must admit there have been times when progress has been only halting, and backsliding has occurred. Still, for the most part, the process has been a useful one that has resulted in greater student involvement and the creation of better and more lively learning environments. One important additional result has been that I have felt better about my teaching. As the conditions for conversation became more evident in these classes, my role evolved and became more enjoyable, more nearly in line with who I think I am and want to be as teacher.

Sometimes, in my undergraduate courses, I engage the students with me in a less formal study and critique of my teaching. For example, this past quarter I had one of my cohort classes videotaped. Prior to making arrangements for the taping, I set aside a portion of the class so that we would have the time necessary to view the tape and discuss it. Together we analyzed how we were doing as a class and how I was performing as an instructor. Although occasionally a bit uncomfortable, sessions of this kind for the most part have been productive, useful, and interesting. And they have had the additional benefit of letting my students know I am serious about improving my practice, just as I hope they will be serious about improving their own.

Looking Backward and Ahead

It is not always possible to realize a desired personal teaching metaphor. Some contexts are hostile to some teaching metaphors and sometimes teacher/professors lack the skills necessary to make needed adjustments in the situation to achieve their "dream." It is still too easy for me to fall back on "teacher is teller." But through action research and other means I attempt to monitor my performance in the hope of more nearly achieving my ideal. In this quest, having a clearly articulated vision, as represented by my teaching metaphor, is extremely important. With it my analyses have focus and purpose.

This said, a quarter is obviously too short a period of time to build the kind of interpersonal relationships, let alone to build a fully shared language needed to sustain conversation. Once again I am reminded of the value of working with students over an extended period of time as I do when I teach a cohort group.

As I continue to explore my personal teaching metaphors and seek to improve the skills associated with achieving my personal and professional ideals, I find myself returning from time to time to my life-history for insights into who I am and

what I am becoming as teacher. It is from this story that I make my actions sensible; and changes in the story reverberate outward, affecting how I think of myself in the various roles I inhabit. With each return I discover something different and new about myself as a teacher: new truths. Just as I expect to continue to require my teacher education students to explore their own life histories and personal teaching metaphors, I expect to continue to study my own. To do so is but to recognize something that previously I ignored and that is too often forgotten in teacher education, that becoming a teacher is inevitably and always an idiosyncratic and profoundly personal affair.

For me and for my preservice teacher education students, the writing and analysis of life-histories, the identification and analysis of personal teaching metaphors, and action research have proven to be powerful means for encouraging professional development. Through their use, some of the implicit assumptions brought to teacher education by preservice teachers about teaching and about themselves as teachers have become explicit and thus vulnerable to the influence of reason (Polanyi, 1958). My students testify that the approach has helped them gain a greater measure of control over their professional development and assisted them to become more like the teachers they want to be. The same is true for me as a professor seeking to become more like the teacher I want to be. In a fairly typical remark, for example, one preservice teacher commented in an interview conducted at the end of his teacher education program that it was "that bigger vision (his metaphor) that sustains me [as a teacher]... Without that vision, without that metaphor guiding me, then I think I would be looking for strategies to accommodate [to my teaching situation]." I can only echo this student's sentiments from my own experience and urge other teacher educators to engage in the study of their practice, and the origins of that practice in life history, as we may expect our students to study their's. The personal and professional benefits of doing so may well be astonishing.

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