

TAKING, PLAYING, AND MAKING THE ROLE OF SECONDARY MATHEMATICS TEACHERS

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Teachers are critical to the educative process and yet we know little about how to tap their potential. Secondary mathematics teacher education research has exposed the complexities of becoming a teacher, but provides only a few insights into the longitudinal nature of the process (Cooney, Shealy, & Arvold, 1998). Many teacher education programs now promote a deeper understanding of mathematics for teachers and students, the development of reflective teachers, and technology-enhanced learning, however little attention is given to the individuality of teachers.

The redesigned program that provided the context for the first two years of this study was aligned with the fully functioning person and reflective practitioner models of teacher education (Zeichner, 1993). In this case study, I researched the construction of the role of teacher, more specifically, the taking, playing, and making of a role that becomes a part of one's being (Mead, 1932), for each of the three participants. The taking of the role involved making a decision and accepting the responsibility for certification and securing a position. Playing the role involved imitating teacher roles. Making the role was the transformation of oneself into a teacher. I focused on the significant events that related to the actions of taking, playing, and making the role of teacher and examined commonalities and differences among the participants' experiences to better understand the process and eventually enhance program design.

The generation of data over four years incorporated surveys, artifacts, fieldnotes, interviews, and observations of meetings and teaching. Significant events included confrontations with multiple visions of teaching, a diversion focused on learning how to learn mathematics, leadership positions, management of student behavior, and goal setting. Findings suggest that "the call to teach," clear goals, self-determination, and synthesis of theory and practice were critical to the processes of these teachers' construction of the role of mathematics teacher. This study contributes to a better understanding of the psychological aspects of teaching mathematics by investigating how one constructs the role of mathematics teacher.

References

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