



FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF STORYTELLING BY TEACHERS

ANAT KAINAN

Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel

Abstract—This paper deals with forms and functions of storytelling by teachers in an Israeli comprehensive school staffroom. The main function of these stories is to present to the teachers themselves the teachers' views on teaching, and especially some features of the image of the ideal teacher. The ideal teacher believes in the important value of control. He or she should be able to establish control by being practical, and using "professional knowledge." This professional knowledge has three main sources: the teacher's own experience; his or her colleagues' experience; and his or her creativity. The stories in the staffroom create images of the ideal teacher and socialize teachers to these images.

The forms and functions of storytelling by teachers in an Israeli staffroom are described — stories that teachers tell other teachers about their work experience. Through stories, teachers show some elements of their professional culture and especially their image of the ideal teacher. Further, the ideal teacher believes in the value of classroom control and is able to establish control by being practical, and using professional knowledge. This professional knowledge has three main sources: the teachers' experience; his or her colleagues' experience; and the teachers' creativity. It is suggested that the professional culture of teachers can be better understood through an analysis of the stories they tell each other in the staffroom. As an introduction, the term story should be elaborated.

Research has been conducted about stories teachers tell to students in class (Egan, 1988; Jackson, 1987), or stories students tell about school (Delamont, 1989; Tappan & Brown, 1989). Others have focused on the "teacher's life history," which may include almost any event as part of the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, 1989). These different kinds of narratives range from myth to biography. For the purpose of the present paper, it is necessary to define the term "story" to accord with Labov's (1967) classical definition; that is a story is a system in which some experience is

passed on through verbal description. This experience is reconstructed by uttering sentences in a certain order, from a beginning to a middle to an end, in the attitudinal perspective of the narrator. These sentences describe a remarkable action from the past, and the evaluative function of the story transforms the semantic sequence into something meaningful to the narrator. Polanyi (1985) stresses that the story is told to make a point, to give some kind of message. Everything in the story is connected to the point, and things that are not connected are ignored or de-emphasized. Mainly the narrator and the audience come from a common cultural world, and so the meaning of the message is clear.

The stories in this paper can also be distinguished by the time they deal with, the natural elements they describe, the heroes they present, and their subject matter: a special personal experience at work.

The stories are presented as if they happened in the immediate past, and they do not deal with things that happened a long time ago, although it is very difficult to give a clear definition of the terms "long" and "short" in this connection. This element distinguishes these stories from biographies or life histories, although they can have some biographical elements in them.

The stories, as defined here, deal only with natural events; there are no unnatural, mystical,

or holy elements in them. They stress the small, everyday happenings of life and present only down-to-earth facts. They therefore differ from myths and legends, although a story can become a myth of a workplace (see, e.g., Deal & Kenedy, 1982). The heroes and heroines of the stories are everyday people who are associated with the school. There are no extraordinary persons in the stories; they are all part of the same group of people, and the same work place. Most of the time, the narrator is also the hero(ine) of the story. The other characters of the story are mostly students, but may also be establishment figures who display a lack of understanding, or other teachers. However, most of the stories deal with the relationship between teachers and students, rather than teacher-establishment or teacher-teacher.

The stories are always related as a personal experience—in this case, concerning work, Langelier (1989) called them work stories. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the trends of such stories (McCarl, 1987; Orr, 1987; Schwartzman, 1984). It is important to distinguish between stories that teachers tell as a part of their work and stories they tell about their work. Two criteria were applied in choosing stories for discussion in this paper: (1) stories were chosen where teachers tell their colleagues in the staffroom about their work; and (2) stories were selected that are about students, because (a) most staffroom conversations concerned students, and (b) it was assumed that students comprise the most important part of a teacher's work.

Method

The stories were collected in a standard staffroom of an Israeli comprehensive high school. The school has 1400 students, aged 14–18, and 138 teachers. It is one of a group of similar schools located in a town of medium size and has the reputation of being a fairly good, typical school with many experienced teachers. The comprehensive school system in Israel was copied from the English comprehensive school system and it is very similar.

The stories were collected as a part of a 2-year ethnographic research project dealing with an Israeli staffroom. The method was mainly ob-

servational and general conversation was written down as it occurred. This is not the most accurate method, but considering the noise level in the staffroom, it was the only one possible. The stories were later separated from the other materials according to the predetermined definition of a story.

Being an ethnographer creates a special problem. On the one hand, there are the teachers and their rights; on the other, there is the need to record data objectively. I tried to make some compromise between these two. After having received permission from the teachers' association of the school to conduct my research, I explained to the teachers the general purpose of my study without being too specific about the kind of things I was looking for. I sat in the staffroom once or twice a week (each time on a different day) for the whole day as a quiet observer, without engaging the teachers in any way. The notes were taken unobtrusively so that my role as a researcher would affect the data as little as possible. While I was there, teachers knew that they could come and demand that I erase anything they did not want to be recorded. They always had the last word. In time, most of the teachers got used to my sitting there, although some stayed away. It should be taken into account that my presence probably affected the situation to a certain extent. When I completed my paper, I presented it to the teachers and asked for their opinions. Generally they accepted what I had written. Specific remarks by them will be presented in the paper in the appropriate places.

Although no special storyteller in the school was identifiable, almost all of the teachers told stories to each other. These were sometimes only fragments, or they could not be heard in their entirety because of the general din in the room. Moreover, not all teachers come into the staffroom—the vocational education teachers, for example, had their own staffroom—others did not talk while I was there, and some spoke in voices that were too low to be heard. In spite of these several factors, 75 complete work stories told by 55 different teachers were recorded that dealt with classroom events. Some of these stories were told one at a time, but many were told consecutively in an "exchange" situation.

All the stories describe a situation in which the teacher had a terrible class or a horrible student, and how, by a certain act, (s)he suc-

ceeded in changing the situation for the better. For this paper, I have chosen some of these stories as typical examples; additional stories of a similar type have also been included to stress specific points. The stories were chosen because they have the same content, but they were also the longer or most detailed ones, or those I considered to be the most coherent. Of the 75 stories, 42 dealt with generalization, 22 with advice, 65 with competence, and 60 with creativity. The narrators were not taken into consideration when the examples were chosen and all the names in this paper are fictitious to preserve anonymity. An ethnographic, and therefore integrated, method of analyzing the stories is employed, with special attention to the forms and functions of the stories as they appeared in the staffroom.

Forms

There are two main elements of what I mean by the term “form”; the structure of the stories, and the context in which they appear. The form of the stories offers a deeper understanding of the teacher’s professional world, and specifically his image of the ideal teacher, because it yields information about some of the major concepts underlying the profession (Polanyi, 1985).

The Structure

All the stories have an overall common structure which includes two basic characters and certain plot sequences. They are very similar to Prop’s (1928) model of fables, especially in the characters and plot. Prop dealt with the structure of morphology of fables without considering their specific content. He stressed two points: the stereotypical features of the characters and the importance of the plot. He identified seven main characters who appear in every fable, each with a place of their own, and whose function is to advance the plot. The individuality of the characters is not important; they are just stereotypes, like the hero or the “bad guy.”

The plot is central to every fable. It has a common structure and predictable sequential stages of events. The structure includes: background, in which a specific act or acts prepares the moment for the beginning of the story; a problem that the hero(ine) will have to deal with; a way to solve the problem (i.e., the hero(ine)

will meet somebody who gives him or her a “magic agent,” such as a magic instrument, object, or words of power that will help solve his or her future problem); and a battle in which the hero(ine) and the bad guy will fight until the hero(ine) wins a decisive victory.

Characters

Staffroom stories revolve about a “hero(ine)” and his or her interaction with the “bad guy,” who is the reason for his or her actions. The format requires that the story end with a struggle in which the hero(ine) is victorious. For example, during a conversation in the staffroom which dealt with clever teachers, Eva, a Mathematics teacher of 25 years experience, was admiring Rebecca, saying that she was very clever indeed. Because Rebecca obviously felt uneasy, Eva tried to correct the impression she had inadvertently given by saying that even very clever teachers are not immune to failure in the class, and then went on to tell the following story:

You can always fail, you know. Here is a story of how I failed once. In my class I had a student whose mother and sister were hospitalized. There were three more children in the house and the situation was very difficult. This was a very talented boy, but the situation at home influenced him, and in addition to everything else, he was a redhead (smiling), so he had a special temperament. I did not know about the whole situation and it did not cross my mind to check. The student behaved very badly. He was noisy, and I sent him out of the class. I was angry with him. I said some rash things. Nothing helped. I just made him angry; not really angry because he was very apathetic. One day it was too much, and I invited his father. The other teachers did not tell me anything, so when the father came and told me about the situation, it was a surprise to me. I understood then that I had to change my attitude. I had insulted him in a moment of anger; I had told him something very offensive. I began a new approach with him, I took him to the side and apologized and later in the lesson I did not notice his behavior anymore, and the student became a very good student. He is now a very good student, with a great deal of potential.

In this story the heroine discovered an enemy in her class. The enemy was the troubling behavior of the student. The heroine was trying to fight, but lack of information caused failure: the student did not respond, and the enemy was still there. The heroine then tried a different approach—inviting the father to come to a conference. The father gave the necessary information and the war of the student’s “soul” began again.

This time our heroine won and the student was restored to normal behavior.

The Plot

The story Eva told has predictable sequential narrative stages:

1. The background—The description of the student and his background acts as an introduction to the story. The poor history of the family on one side and the teacher's ignorance on the other explain the conditions of the story.

2. The problem—The student is disturbing the class, and he does not learn. The teacher cannot teach and she feels responsible for the student.

3. Action—The teacher meets with the father. The father gives her information that enables the teacher to choose a better approach to the problem.

4. The fight—The teacher is fighting to win the student's attention. With her new information, she wins, and the student is restored to good behavior.

Both in Prop's model and the staffroom stories, we see the same characters. The hero(ine) and the bad guy are present, as well as other stereotypes whose function is to advance the plot, such as other teachers, parents, and students. The most interesting character in the staffroom stories is the bad guy. This is always a student or a group of students. They do not appear as complete villains, however, but as characters who are endowed with a combination of good and bad forces. The hero[ine] is fighting only the evil side of the student, and so the victory is not won by demolishing the whole student, but only by conquering the bad parts in him or her.

The plot is also very similar to Prop's model. In all staffroom stories there are the background and the problem that the hero[ine] has to solve. The teacher does not just solve a problem, however, but must also define it, and this is the first difference from Prop's model. A second difference is that, in fables, the third stage involves a magic agent that helps the hero. In the staffroom stories there is no magic agent or any other supernatural element. Teachers are presented as using their knowledge and experience and coping with problems with only their own human power. Therefore, while there is a great deal of similarity between Prop's model of the fable and staffroom stories, comparisons also reveal differences.

These differences arise from the special characteristics of teachers: their practical attitude, and their ability to use their knowledge and experience to define problems and cope with complicated situations. The stories serve to reinforce, as well as encourage, the importance of being practical, and of solving problems in a practical way.

The Context in Which the Stories Appear

Generalization. Prop's model does not take context into consideration, however, this is important to the understanding of teachers' stories. Many stories appear after a very general sentence that describes a person's own way of looking at life or teaching as a whole experience. After the generalization comes a story that is supposed to describe a case that illuminates the generalization. In some cases, the connection between the generalization and the story is not straightforward. For example: Zipi was cleaning chalk smudges from her bag, and said:

I never leave chalk in the class. Once I came to a class with two pieces of chalk and I put them by the blackboard, I turned around and they had disappeared. "Where is the chalk?" I asked. One boy got up and said; "I took it." "What do you need it for?" I asked; and he said; "To throw it, not on you, but on the other students." From that time on, I don't leave chalk in the class.

When she finished the story the others reacted by accepting the idea, saying things like: "you always have to be careful," "never let them go over your head," and a chain of stories, all of which dealt with strange things students did in class.

Here, the case of one student dictated a general mode of teacher behavior. Teachers appear to explain general points of view or attitudes with stories that are supposed to explain the reasons for them. Zipi used a single example to explain why she had to carry chalk with her all the time, dirtying her bag and clothes, because one student might throw chalk at his or her friends. The connection between the two parts—the generalization and the story—is a problematic one.

Another example is Ida's story. Ida is a very experienced teacher who has been teaching physics for more than 25 years. As she sat amongst her colleagues talking about retiring, she reflected about her life as a teacher.

Values change according to age. When I was younger, I was full of *enthusiasm*. They gave me an extremely weak class and all the teachers in the staffroom laughed about the pupils. *I took it personally. I was really hurt*, and so I worked very hard to show the class that they could succeed. I explained everything six or seven times, until all of them understood. In the end it was a wonderful class. Five years ago they gave me another class like this, but I was *too tired* to deal with them; I did not have enough *patience*.”

There was a general discussion about patience, and another teacher told another story about not being able to teach difficult classes any more. She began it by saying, “Let God forgive me, but . . .”

Here the teacher begins her story with a generalization dealing with values and the fact that values change according to age. After the generalization, comes the story, which compares two ages, or two points of her life as a teacher. But instead of dealing with values, the story deals with qualities like enthusiasm and patience, and feelings like hurt. Here again, the generalization was made with only one case: that of the weak class. Again, we have some problems with the connection between the generalization and the story.

Advice. Another context in which stories are told is problem solving: When one of the teachers says that he or she has a problem and is asking the others for help. The advice is given through a story that demonstrates a solution.

Dina was a new teacher, she suspected that one of her students was cheating in his exams, but she could not prove it and did not know what to do. She asked Lea, the head of her department and an experienced teacher, for help. Dina saw Lea coming into the room and she took her aside to talk.

Lea: You have to talk to them and not leave it in your stomach. Once I had such a case, so I invited the student to see me. I apologized for suspecting him in case he did not cheat, and then *I asked him a lot of questions about the things he was supposed to have learned for the examination.* It is true that after some time they do not remember so much, but you can get a general impression, and that is what I did. I knew then how much he really knew about the subject.

Here the generalization is about talking with students and not leaving things to fester. Lea told a story from her own experience, and how she solved the problem Dina was having. This

personal experience makes the advice better because it is not theoretical advice, but something already tried in the classroom. The story begins with a generalization that stresses the idea of talking to the students. But the point of the story is the examination of the students—not really a discussion to air a problem—more like a different way to test the student’s honesty and knowledge. Again, the generalization is made according to one case only—a student Lea had “once.” The same loose connections between the story and the generalization obtain.

What is the meaning of these loose connections between the stories and the generalizations? What do they reveal about the teacher’s knowledge and how it is connected to the features of the ideal teacher? A similar phenomenon—the mixture of generalizations and examples was found by Mardle and Walker (1980, pp. 98–124) among teachers in England. Using Shutz’s (1971) theory about commonsense knowledge to describe this phenomenon, they suggested that this is an inconsistent mixture of assumptions, prejudices, motives, facts, causes, and aims. They criticized the teacher’s role, implying that becoming a teacher creates some kind of defect in the thinking abilities, as if thinking illogically is a feature of the teaching experience. It seems as if one feature of the ideal teacher, as it is presented in staffroom stories, is having thinking problems. This sounds strange and unacceptable. Mardle and Walker point toward a very important idea, however—that of different kinds of knowledge—by suggesting that a teacher’s knowledge is different from what we call empirical/analytical knowledge.

Elbaz (1981, 1983) accepts the idea of different kinds of knowledge, but suggests a less negative approach. Instead of criticism, she stresses objective description and “seeing and understanding the situation from the teacher’s own perspective” (1983, p. 4). She defines teachers’ knowledge as “practical knowledge” which is devoted to specific situations.

According to Elbaz, this is not a better or a lesser knowledge; it is just different. She ascribes no hierarchy to different kinds of knowledge. Furthermore, she says that teachers’ practical knowledge is not just an accidental mixture, but an integration of different kinds of knowledge put together for a special need. Recently there has been a tendency to exchange the term

“practical knowledge” for the term “personal knowledge” (see, e.g., Goodson, 1992).

The term personal knowledge is based on the idea that teachers’ professional practices are embedded in wider life concerns. It stresses especially the private personal history and biography of the teacher and how it is connected to his or her professional knowledge and to what he or she is doing in the class (Middleton, 1992). Knowles (1992) presented it as two approaches to teachers’ professional knowledge: one stressing the individual teacher, and especially his or her personal life history, and the other stressing the role of the teaching experience and the importance of the contexts of teaching. This dichotomy seems a little strange since a teacher’s professional knowledge includes both. Is teaching experience not a part of personal life history?

In the next part of this paper I will use Elbaz’s descriptive approach and the term “professional knowledge” to describe how some of these sources of teachers’ professional knowledge appear in teachers’ stories, and they are part of the features of the ideal teacher. However, these theories ignore the problem of the relationship between the generalization and the special cases demonstrated in the stories recounted above.

I would like to suggest that different kinds of knowledge have different kinds of rules. Teachers’ professional knowledge is based on unique problems and the ability to solve them, which precludes the solution of one problem becoming a general rule. Generalization should be viewed as a very loose framework that may sometimes suggest a direction toward a solution. Such generalizations, although perhaps seemingly presented as laws, are just possibilities. Teachers do not mean to say that all their professional life they behave in only one way, but that, in this case, they learned something that might be useful for other situations in the future. The generalizations are therefore a kind of abstract expression.

The stories and the generalizations are part of the teacher’s professional knowledge, which is a part of the image of the ideal teacher. The stories present before the teachers the idea that the ideal teacher will use the relevant part according to situations that arise. Generalizations and examples can be presented side-by-side without the need to have a logical connection between them. Although it appears that the teachers’

stories do not offer the sort of evidence one would expect in educational research, to teachers, themselves, they appear very logical, exactly because of this loose connection. The stories present before the teachers some features of the image of the ideal teacher: the ideas of being practical and the teachers’ professional knowledge.

Functions

By dealing with the content and subject matter of staffroom stories, it is possible to show an elaboration of some more features of the image of the ideal teacher, some of the sources of the teachers’ professional knowledge, and the idea of control. In this part there are two elements of what I mean by the term function: the content of the stories and the functions of the stories. Both offer a deeper understanding of the image of the ideal teacher as presented in teachers’ staffroom stories.

Content

Many staffroom stories deal with relations between the teacher and the students. An important part of a story is a problem that arises and the teacher’s ability to solve it. Professional knowledge includes different kinds of suggestions that the teacher can use while trying to solve a problem. These suggestions come from three sources: the teacher’s own experience, other teachers in the staffroom, and the teacher’s creativity. An example that shows all three sources together is a story that was told by Zipi, who had left her job as a chemical engineer in industry to become a teacher. At the time this story was recorded, she had been teaching chemistry for 7 years.

Listen, I have a mixed ability class and I gave them an examination in chemistry. The lower students failed—they got 40%, 50%—and the higher students got higher marks. They told me (the other teachers) that it is better to do two different examinations (one for the lower level students and the other for the higher level students). So I prepared two examinations for them. When I came to class, they (the students) began to shout and to quarrel with me, saying that they do not want two separate examinations. Do you understand this? So now I do something else, I prepare an examination that is 60% easy and 40% difficult for the stronger students.

The listeners express sympathy by saying how difficult it is to work with these classes. One of them told another story about how the principal wanted her to take such a class and she refused. Another said that there is a meeting about these classes next week.

In this situation, the teacher is defining a problem and then describing three different attempts to solve it. This is a mixed ability class and the teacher has the problem of creating the right examination for this group. She decides that the problem is in the structure of the exam. She wants to give a test that will enable all the students to pass.

At the beginning, the teacher uses her own experience and tries a "regular" test. This fails because the lower level students cannot pass the exam. In the second attempt, the teacher gets advice from other teachers in the staffroom. This also fails because the students are against the idea of having two different exams. The third attempt is her own idea. She mixes the first two concepts together, creating one examination that will not offend the lower level students, who felt humiliated by the separate, less rigorous test. The new exam is also designed to take these slower students into consideration enabling them to finish at least 60% of the examination. By trial and error, using her own experience, getting advice from others, and bringing forth her own creativity, the teacher solves the problem according to her specific situation.

The function of the stories is to show the teachers from where the ideal teacher is getting his or her professional knowledge. The first source is their own experience. Only if this source fails do they turn to another source—their colleagues' experience. In both cases, the most important source of the teachers' professional knowledge is experience. However, the use of this experience is not so simple. Every case is unique; it is not just a repetition of the same experience again and again.

The images of the ideal teacher stress that teachers have to define their problem according to their knowledge of the situation and then find the right solution and adapt it to the specific situation. Sometimes an old solution fits a problem, but sometimes they have to create a new solution or to change an old solution so that it will solve the problem. This sequence has to be repeated every time a teacher is confronted by a new problem.

This process is presented as it demands creativity, a very general term that has been used to include many different things. Simon (1988) and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), in the journal *New Ideas in Psychology*, engaged in an interesting discussion about the meaning of creativity. While they both accepted the idea that it includes defining and solving problems in a new way, they differed over the extent to which this process defined it. Often creativity refers to the genius possessed by such extraordinary people as Darwin or Leonardo da Vinci. But, if we examine it, we find that there is also another, everyday creativity exhibited by ordinary people like teachers.

The stories present before the teacher the image of the ideal teacher as creative in his or her everyday work. This kind of creativity is not something earth-shaking, but is very limited, occurring in very specific situations. The image stresses the uniqueness of each class problem which forces teachers to find new solutions. Furthermore, the newness of the solutions is not being judged according to some general knowledge of solutions, but according to the experience of the teacher or the experience of his or her colleagues. If the solution is new to them it is being considered creative.

What Are the Stories About?

As mentioned before, teachers are the heroes and heroines of the stories, and the stories are presented according to the teacher's point of view. Teachers therefore always emerge as victorious. Mezada, an experienced teacher, told some of the young teachers in the staffroom:

Somebody broke a window and they (the class) did not want to say who it was. One of the students said that he was not a "snitch," and the father of another told his child not to be a "snitch," so I asked her if someone was breaking something in her house if she would not go to the police. But it did not help and they did not tell me the name of the student (who broke the window). So I decided to give a lesson about this subject and at the end I asked them to give me anonymous notes and to write in them who broke the window, and two students pointed toward him, but the others said they did not know.

The younger teachers did not appear to like the story, but did not dare to say so. After a moment of hesitation, one of them began to talk about taking her son to the doctor, and the others helped her to change the subject.

In this story, there is a conflict between the teacher and the students' norms. The teacher thinks that if someone is damaging the school property it is the students' responsibility to notify the teacher. The students think that school property is not their business and they have a very strong norm against telling the teacher about other students' actions. The teacher is in a dangerous situation; she is alone against the entire class. She solves the problem by doing two different things while using the element of timing. First, she prepares the ground by giving a lesson that will explain her attitude to the class; then, when the impression is still fresh, she breaks the class unity by demanding anonymous answers. These answers enable her to push some of the students harder and anonymity offers a way for students to avoid confrontation with their classmates. The teacher succeeds in getting the name of the guilty student and is able to punish him without a serious confrontation with the whole class.

Ricki is a French teacher. She related a problem another teacher had had. Ricki had tried to help this teacher and she told the others in the staffroom what she did.

They began to throw apples at the blackboard. It was awful, really terrible, and the teacher was standing in the class. Every time he was bending to help some student they threw another apple. So he told me and I went there and told them that I knew who was throwing the apples and if they would come to me and confess, their punishment would be easier. So in the recess these two students came and wanted to talk to me.

Other teachers expressed sympathy for the poor teacher, stressing his old age as a reason for his inability to control the class.

Ricki had to show to the students that they could not humiliate teachers, but, discussing the subject with the whole class might have given them an opportunity to complain against their teacher and to thus excuse their behavior. Ricki did not want this confrontation. She preferred to deal with two guilty students alone without the power of the whole class behind them. She used a little lie and a temptation together to discover the wrongdoers and to talk only with them. Ricki was saving some of the other teacher's pride and was continuing to control her own class as well.

A central theme in both stories is that of control. The teachers have to control the situation because that is their job; no teacher can function without controlling the students (Kounin, 1970). This is another feature of the image of the ideal teacher which they present throughout the stories: a basic necessity without which teachers cannot work. Control has two meanings in the staffroom. First, there is what Willower (1971) refers to as the simple fact that nothing can be gained in a classroom without being able to control the students. From this viewpoint, control is presented as a norm—a practical way to deal with the work.

But, there is a second way to look at control—as a value in itself. A school is a small world with a special order of things. In this order, there is a hierarchy in which teachers and students each have a special place. It is a part of this hierarchy that the teachers will control the students and their behavior. This is the right order of things—how it should be. So, control from this viewpoint is not just a norm, a practical way to do things in school, but is also a value teachers believe in. For this reason, teachers sometimes see the value of control as so paramount that other values, such as honesty, are considered less important.

The main function of these stories, therefore, is to present to the teachers a teacher's view of teaching, and especially the image of the ideal teacher. The ideal teacher believes in the important value of control. The ideal teacher should get control by using his or her professional knowledge. This professional knowledge has three main sources: the teacher's experience, the experience of colleagues, and the teacher's own creativity. The ideal teacher is seen as using all three sources to solve problems.

Conclusion

Every life experience story has two different stages: narrative event and the narrated event (Bauman, 1986). The narrated event happens in the classroom while the teacher is alone doing his or her work. There, in the class, the teacher has to define the problems and solve them. The narrative event happens in the staffroom while the teachers sit with their colleagues and tell their stories to each other. Thus it is a social situation which has a social meaning. Why are these stories

so important? What are their functions?

From the examples presented in this paper, it can be seen that what teachers tell each other in this staffroom are the features of the image of the ideal teacher. An attempt has been made to analyze some of these features as they appeared in the stories.

Telling the story is a way to create the commonly accepted, hidden norms and values of the school. Hargreaves (1984) shows how school staff create a common definition of what is considered "normal." This definition is created by giving comic, exaggerated descriptions of unwanted possibilities so as to defend and justify the teacher's own view without articulating it. The stories in this staffroom have the same function: They create the image of the ideal teacher, and through this image they maintain a consensus of the school culture. The image of the ideal teacher, its norms and values are the common creation of the teachers' stories.

It is important to note that the ideal teacher is only a fiction, because it is created through stories and not in the class. In the stories, teachers tried to represent themselves according to what they thought would be the best they could do. The teaching situation makes it impossible for the teacher to know what really happened in the class, so the fiction serves as a compass to the teachers in the staffroom.

The stories are therefore part of teacher's socialization to their group. Lacey (1977) says that the lack of formal communication between teachers has created an informal communication net which is centered in the staffroom. This net has a lot of power over the socialization of teachers in the staffroom, and the stories are an important part of this process. The hidden norms and values thus revealed in the stories can then become general without really being discussed seriously.

However, other modes of conversation also contribute to socialization in the staffroom. For example, teachers describe methods they use in their class, or "tricks" to control the students. Meetings are sometimes devoted to the presentation of new ways that one of the teachers has applied in his or her class, or gossip between the teachers about those who can or cannot "hold the class". The image of the ideal teacher in these encounters is very similar to the image appearing in the stories.

When I presented this paper to the teachers of the school, I asked them why they tell the stories and what meaning they had for the speakers and listeners. All of them thought that the things written here are correct. Some of them wanted to stress the need teachers had to get feedback about their work. They also stressed the necessity for confidence between the teller and the listeners. Telling stories in the staffroom is also an act of mutual help and mutual confidence that a group of teachers create among themselves.

The stories and the image of the ideal teacher they present are part of the teachers' professional culture as it appears in the staffroom. The image of the ideal teacher helps them to know what is expected of them and what the values and norms of the "good teacher" are. By telling stories, they create and present all this to themselves, and they reinforce it.

References

- Bauman, R. (1986). *Story performance and event*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clandinin, J., & Connelly, M. (1989). Narrative and story in practice and research. In D. Schön (Ed.), *The reflective turn: Case studies of reflective practice*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Connelly, M., & Clandinin, J. (1989). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. In E. Short (Ed.), *Forms of curriculum inquiry: Guidelines for the conduct of educational research*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1988). Motivation and creativity: Toward a synthesis of structure and energetic approaches to cognition. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 6, 159-176.
- Deal, T., & Kenedy, A. (1982). *Corporate culture*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Delamont, S. (1989). The nun in the toilet: Urban legends and educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2, 191-202.
- Egan, K. (1988). *Teaching as storytelling*. London: Routledge.
- Elbaz, F. (1981). The teacher's practical knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 1(2), 43-72.
- Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher thinking*. New York: Nichols Publishing Co., Croom Helm.
- Goodson, I. (1992). Studying teachers' lives: An emergent field of inquiry. In I. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives*. London: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, A. (1984). Contrastive rhetoric and extremist talk. In A. Hargreaves & P. Woods (Eds.), *Classrooms & staffrooms* (pp. 215-231). Milton Keynes: The Open University Press.
- Jackson, P. (1987). On the place of narrative in teaching. In D. Berliner & B. Rosenshine (Ed.), *Talk to teachers*. New York: Random House.

- Knowles, G. (1992). Model for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' biographies. In I. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers lives*. London: Routledge.
- Kounin, J. (1970). *Discipline and group management in classroom*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Laboy, W. (1967). Narrative analysis. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Lacey, C. (1977). *The socialization of teachers*. London: Methuen.
- Langellier, K. (1989). Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *9*, 243–276.
- Mardle, G., & Walker, M. (1980). Strategies and structure, some critical notes on teacher socialization. In P. Woods (Ed.), *Teacher strategies* (pp. 98–124). London: Croom Helm.
- McCarl, R. (1987). Occupational folklore. In E. Oring (Ed.), *Folk group and folklore genres* (pp. 71–89). Utah State University, Utah.
- Middleton, S. (1992). Developing a radical pedagogy. In I. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives*. London: Routledge.
- Orr, J. (1987). Sharing knowledge, celebrating identity: War stories and community memory among service technicians. In D. Middleton & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collective remembering*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Polanyi, L. (1985). *Telling the American story*. NJ: Ablex.
- Prop, V. (1928). *The morphology of the folktale* (English Trans.). Research Center in Anthropology, Indiana University.
- Schutz, A. (1971). The stranger. In The Open University (Ed.), *School and society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Schwartzman, H. (1984). Stories at work: Play in an organizational context. In E. Bruner (Ed.), *Text play and story* (pp. 80–93). The American Ethnological Society, U.S.A.
- Simon, H. (1988). Creativity and motivation: A response to Csikszentmihalyi. *New Ideas in Psychology*, *6*, 177–181.
- Tappan, M., & Brown, L. (1989). Stories told and lesson learned. *Harvard Educational Review*, *59*, 182–205.
- Willower, D. (1971). The teacher subculture. In L. Drabick (Ed.), *Interpreting education* (pp. 105–125). New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

Submitted 26 May 1993

Accepted 8 June 1994