

A model of Teacher Agency reimaged: A critical realist relational approach to personal, interpersonal and relational reflexivity and agency

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Existing theoretical approaches to teacher agency (TA) have predominantly been individualistic, processual, and performative in orientation, primarily offering descriptive accounts of what constitutes TA. As an alternative, this study aims to present an integrated explanatory model of TA and its operational definition as 'relationally emergent power'. This model and definition are explicitly grounded in critical realist relational approach (CRRRA) to explain why and how TA emerges. The research conducted theoretical analysis (retroduction) of Archer's realist social theory and Donati's critical realist relational sociology, along with empirical validation (retrodiction), and synthesis. The synthesized analysis identifies multilayered reflexivity modes—personal, interpersonal, and relational—that underpin the emergence of TA. These reflexivity modes correspond to three distinct forms of agency: personal agency, interpersonal agency, and relational (we-) agency, each demonstrating unique causal powers. Critically, this research contributes theoretically by providing an ontologically robust reconceptualization of social relations, particularly emphasizing relational reflexivity centered around the 'we-relation' as argued by Donati (2011). Practically, the study reveals generative mechanisms through which 'we-centred' relational reflexivity, distinct from 'I-centred' personal and interpersonal reflexivity, structurally reshapes TA and professional relational environments, thus critically overcoming limitations inherent in existing individualistic, processual and performative models of TA.