Mentoring Teacher Researchers; A Self-Study

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Research mentoring, by and for teachers, can provide the ‘missing link’ (Fletcher: 2003) between theory and practice, between research undertaken in universities and in schools and it can benefit both the research mentor and research mentee.

The results of my research show that research mentoring can be offered through face-to-face and also asynchronous forms of communication. It can be accessed, therefore, locally, nationally and internationally. The techniques can be used by teachers to enable their students to become researchers too. My research into using web-based templates supports my claim that teachers can be supported, through research mentoring, to elicit, represent and disseminate their learning.


The first chapter focuses on an overview of my life as an educator, as I begin my enquiry into my own lived experience (Van Manen, M., (1990), Researching Lived Experience, State University of New York Press, US).

The second chapter is an in-depth review of literature relating (internationally and nationally in the UK) to both mentoring and coaching. This is intended to assist me to locate my research into my practice as a ‘research mentor’ for teachers in schools. The third chapter, similarly, is a review of literature, here relating to teacher research. In order to explore this field, I engage critically with a number of areas including educational knowledge (rather than knowledge about education or just research in an ‘education’ context). I do so in order to help me to understand the implications of ‘educational’ knowledge for teachers as learners.

Chapter Three provides my justification for rejecting my original model of action research (i.e. living...

In Chapter Four, I examine the rationale for and the nature of the self-study form of investigation that I have used to understand how I create theory and practice as a research mentor. The originality and significance of my research mentoring as generative practice, which enables growth of a workforce of teacher research mentors within the profession of teaching is explored. In this chapter, some of the ethical implications of my practice are explored.

Chapter Five provides an insight into my practice through a case study of the school (Bitterne Park, UK) where I piloted a Master's level module that enabled teachers to research mentor their peers.

Chapter Six is a critical engagement with my publications since 1992. This study is further evidence of the unique quality of my submission, since this is the only in-depth investigation into a teacher researcher's practice, spanning (almost) twenty years. I examine how my ideas about my practice have emerged through writings that have been peer reviewed and published.

Chapter Seven is an examination of my writings and public presentations of my evolving practice as a teacher research mentor. This chapter again reveals the major influences that have shaped my theories about and my interactions with schoolteachers.

Chapter Eight is where I examine how my collaborative research with colleagues in Japan has afforded me a unique and enormously valuable opportunity to widen my insights as a practitioner researcher. I examine some of presentations and experiences as an 'outsider' researcher working in an educational context that is different from my own as a schoolteacher and latterly as a university lecturer/self employed consultant. In this chapter I explore my dreams and my hopes for the future as a research mentor.

Chapter Nine, the final chapter of my submission, is where I bring together the various themes and responses to research questions that I have explored in previous chapters. I underline that my theory and practice as an educational research mentor for teachers is in process. This is not and could not be a 'definitive' account; I offer what I know as a research mentor to others in a hopeful expectation they will develop further and better ways to enable schoolteachers to elicit, represent and disseminate their knowledge so that it is valued, as it critically engaged with.

The originality of my thesis can be defined in a number of different ways. According to Cryer, (2006), examples of 'originality' in research include:

- a new or improved product
- a new theory or reinterpretation of an existing theory
- a new or improved research tool or technique
- a new or improved model or perspective
- an in-depth study
- an exploration of a topic, area or field
- a critical analysis
- a portfolio of work based on research
- a fact or conclusion or collection of facts or conclusions

In terms of Cryer's dimensions of 'originality', my contribution of knowledge is similarly diverse. I propose a new theory and practice of mentoring in schools. It is a development of my own theory and practice of mentoring integrated with a model of action research that has not hitherto been linked to a self-study process.

My thesis is a critical analysis of my own published materials engaged with in an original context; the potential of these resources for beneficial educational influence for educators in Japan. I include examples from my own portfolio of web-based resources that I have developed since 2004 and show how I have enabled schoolteachers to elicit, represent and disseminate their learning, using my web resources as the model.

In conclusion, I evidence my claim that research mentoring provides the missing link between school-based practitioner researchers' and academics' knowledge.

References