

Waseda University Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

Mentoring Teacher Researchers; a self-study

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This submission addresses how teachers can be supported to share their knowledge. There are six sub-questions that have been used to assist understanding the process:

- What is research mentoring?
- How do I mentor teacher researchers?
- How do I represent my knowledge as a research mentor?
- How do I assist teachers to elicit, represent and disseminate their learning?
- How do I locate my practice as a research mentor with regard to others' research and demonstrate my critical engagement with their literature?
- How do I explicate my knowledge in way that might be useful in Japan?

My thesis is that research mentoring can assist schoolteachers to develop their professional values, skills, knowledge and understandings and thus can enable them to improve their practice. By learning about their strength (and weakness) as an educator they have a strong basis for ongoing professional development.

Rather than relying upon outside experts for professional development courses, teachers could support their own, their colleagues' and students' development.

This is a self-study of my professional identity as an educator. It shows how I have used my experience as teacher in schools and a lecturer in universities to develop my own theory and practice of research mentoring. The changes in my understandings are explained in the context of some of the public presentations and publications of my ideas and practice. To locate my thesis, literature about mentoring, teacher and action research and web-based technology is reviewed.

The study shows how I developed a concept of *educational* research mentoring and piloted a Master's level programme to enable teachers to become research mentors. I claim that my concept of mentoring (Fletcher; 2000) integrated with action research can be 'generative' since it enables a growth of research capacity.

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.

This submission is presented through nine inter-linked chapters. As a whole, this is my response to the broader questions posed by Hiebert, J., Gallimore, R. and Stigler, J., (2002), 'A Knowledge Base for the Teaching Profession: What Would It Look Like and How Can We get One?' in *Educational Researcher*, vol. 31, (5), pp. 3-13 and by Stenhouse, L., (1981), 'What counts as research?' in the *British*

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 educational theory) originated by Whitehead, J., (1989), 'Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind, How Do I Improve My Practice?' in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 19, (1), pp. 41-52, in favour of an approach, which does not initiate research from an identifying 'a problem'.

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.