

How do I perceive changes in educational practice across Japan engendered by action research and mentoring?

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My aim is not to do research, but to develop the education of children. I need to do research to help me improve my teaching. When I explain my practice, I can reflect on my thoughts so I can understand my children more.

Rieko Iwahama, video recorded reflections, March 2003

Abstract:

In this paper I intend to review the major changes in educational provision prior to and resulting from the reform of the Fundamental law of Education. Following the reform of this Fundamental Law of Education in 2000, I have been assisting in the development of an integrated form of action research and mentoring in the Japanese Education system. This paper is a self-study account as a professional educator of my learning and teaching during four visits to Japan where I have run workshops to encourage teachers and teacher educators to commit to practitioner research activity. My self-study of my involvement in Japan's educational development is part of my research into my own lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) as a teacher, mentor, researcher and a research mentor.

I offer my work for validation and hold myself accountable for my practice through my websites at <http://www.TeacherResearch.net> and <http://www.mentorResearch.net>

Traditionally in Japan, it has been difficult to engage teachers, especially those who have been teaching for many years, to reveal their implicit knowledge as a basis for dialogue. I have used my own experience as a mentor for initial teacher education (Fletcher, 2000) as a starting point and nurturing base to evolve new ways of engaging teachers in research. In working with my Japanese colleagues to develop new educational practices in Japan, my own learning has been profoundly influenced. It is my intention to assist Japanese colleagues in displaying and disseminating accounts of their influence in reshaping their education system through representation using web-based technologies.

My aims in writing this paper are to

- 1) enable readers to share insights into the Japanese Education System that preceded the reform of the Fundamental Law of Education in 2000 and explicate the major educational reforms and the implications of these reforms for teachers' professional development since 2000.
- 2) explain how the introduction of action research was a creative response to the government's requirement for a problem solving approach in educational activity
- 3) discuss how mentoring integrated with action research is enabling a problem solving approach to engage with and enhance the culture of group responsibility.

My method for explaining the complex interrelationships between systems learning and teachers' professional development, which is influencing and influenced by my presence relates to a living action research approach to improving practice in educational contexts.

First, I explain what I mean by an action research approach to improving practice. Next, I relate this action research approach to the education system's learning in Japan, pre and post 2000. Then I discuss how I see my own influence during my four visits to Japan on educators' practice and finally I explicate the influence of these experiences on my own.

Models of action research and evolving learning

I am borrowing Elliott's (1991) definition of an action research process as 'The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it,' (P. 69) to explicate the systematic investigation of Japan's attitudes to its education system by the national Commission for Educational Reform but the basic cycle of action research that Elliott attributes to Lewin only partially enables me to explain Japan's changing situation.

Identifying a general idea > reconnaissance > developing the first action step > implementing the first action step > evaluation > revising the general plan (Elliott, p. 69)

What is missing from the action research cycle that Lewin and Elliott present us with is the centrality of human interaction – action research becomes a process consciously applied to improving a system rather than being rooted in the human inter-actional practice that underpins the system. I find Whitehead's model of action research a more coherent explanation and approach to understanding what has been occurring in Japan.

'An action researcher begins an enquiry by asking questions of the kind 'How can I improve my work?'' (Whitehead, 1989) They then follow through a fairly systematic process, which can be expressed in the following terms:

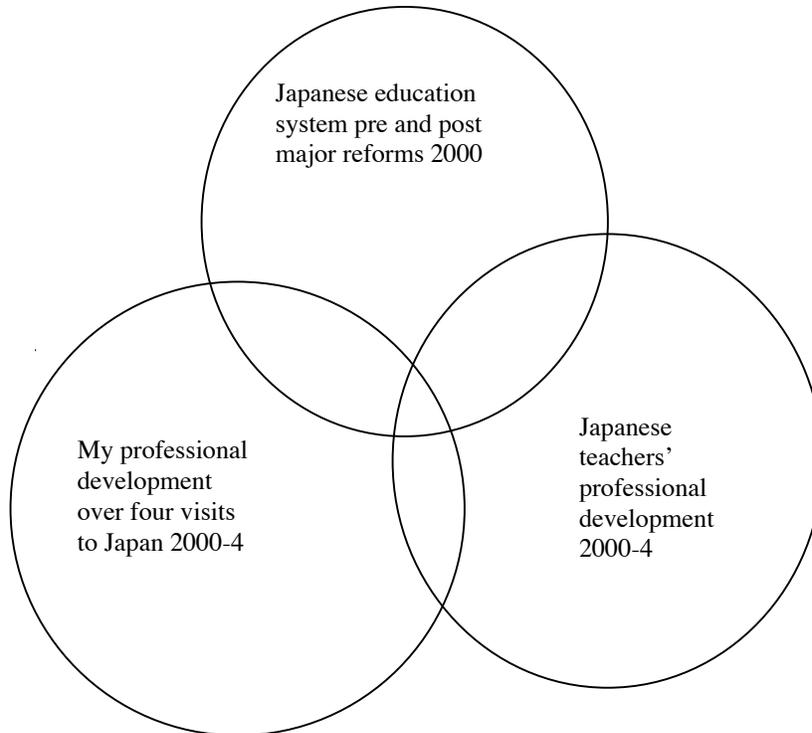
I reach a critical point in my practice
I feel the need to act
I act in a chosen direction
I monitor and evaluate my actions
I change the direction of my actions in the light of my evaluations (McNiff, 2000, p.202)

Conceptualising educational change in Japan

I have organised this paper into three interlinking action research spirals (McNiff, 2002) I have chosen to use spirals rather than circles because I want to express the open ended quality of the action research process – where learning does not end where it started ...

The first spiral represents the development of the Japanese education system. The second is the professional development of Japanese teachers and teacher educators and the third is my own development a consultant educator and professional research mentor in Japan

Viewed from above there are three interlinking circles with learning at their intersections:



These three circles (which viewed laterally, are spirals of learning) are the foci of professional development. In my presentation, I invite my audience to experience the techniques I have used to develop my own, and others learning, during visits to Japan:

Context: The Japanese Education System:

I begin my account by giving a brief history of the Japanese education system to provide the context for the work that I have undertaken since 2000. I have to say that I was largely unaware of the radical reforms that were underway until I arrived in Japan. A chance finding of a newspaper cutting alerted me to Reform of the Fundamental law of Education and helped me to understand the nature and intention of educational changes. My learning is growing each time I visit Japan and as I read the emerging accounts of research that are presented at BERA. I have learnt through observation of teachers and their students in Japan and realised the many shared educational values in our work. Several individuals in Japan have deepened my understandings of the education system and I am particularly grateful to Tadashi Asada, Takashi Ikuta, Rieko Iwahama, Eiichirio Nojima, and Kei Sawamoto for their support in enabling me to understand the process of change in educational contexts and how these impact on teachers' and students' learning.

In addition, I must pay tribute to the many teachers in Japan who have opened up their practice to my gaze during visits to schools and discussions about professional practice.

Historical Context of Japan's Education System

*Japan's school system was created by and for the global economy. It was organized in reaction to colonialism and it was based on foreign educational models. It was designed to make Japan a key player in the world's economy .. The result was a national school system admired by international corporate leaders and condemned by its detractors as antidemocratic. In contrast to foreign admirers, some Japanese critics consider their school system authoritarian, rigid and antidemocratic. By democratic Truhisa (Horio) means an education system that promotes individuality, freedom of thought, and self-motivated learning. Spring, J. (1998) *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy**

The extract above was written not long before the reform of the Fundamental Law of Education and Spring's article sees the essence of the education system as conformity;

the course of study emphasized behaviours appropriate to the workplace, including being neat, tidy, orderly, cheerful, attentive, kind and respectful. For students in lower grades, the course of study stated 'one should learn to strive to work. In the middle grades to work together in the service of others and in the higher grades, to understand the value and significance and value of work and work willingly in the service of others. P. 60

*In Japanese education, group loyalty involves conformity to the group...Classroom practices, along with the examination system, teach conformity. Beginning in the first grade, the Japanese child is taught loyalty to his **kumi** or classmates. The teacher frequently reminds **kumi** members that a student's success or failure reflects on other members of the **kumi**. **Kumi** members play and study together. Working with the **kumi**, the teacher maintains uniformity of instruction and treatment. Further group activity is encouraged by dividing classes into **hans**. **Hans** are considered forerunners of work circles in Japanese corporations. Each **han** elects a **han-cho** or leader. ... the **hancho** soon learns that he cannot stand out too much from the group, for as the Japanese saying goes, 'The nail that sticks out gets knocked down'. P. 61.*

Indicative of their importance, the five subject areas tested for high school admission are Japanese, mathematics, science, social studies and English. These are the subject considered essential for economic development and Japanese participation in the global economy. Clearly absent from this curriculum for the global economy are the intellectual tools and ideas that would foster criticism of the dominant political and economic order. P.62

Spring (1998) gives an overview of the forces influencing and being influenced in the Japanese system of education prior to the Reform of the Fundamental Law of Education. Precise details of the historical organization of the Japanese system are accessible at <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/org/formal/13.htm> accessed on 7 September 2004. MEXT is the acronym for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

The modern school system of our country began from the promulgation of the school system in 1872. In 1947 the Fundamental Law of Education and the School of Education

Law were enacted and the 6-3-3-4 system of school education was established, aiming at realizing the principle of equal opportunity for education. Upper secondary schools were first established in 1948, offering full time and part time courses, and in 1961 correspondence courses were added to the system. The new system for universities began in 1949. The junior college system was established on a provisional basis in 1950 and on a permanent basis in 1964, following an amendment to the School Education Law. Colleges of Technology were initiated in 1962 to provide lower secondary school graduates with a five-year consistent education. At first, the courses offered by these colleges were limited to engineering and mercantile marine studies, but following an amendment to the School Education Law in 1991, they are now able to offer courses in other fields, as well as advanced courses. Those pupils and students who are disabled, are properly educated at schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, and schools for the other disabled, or in special classes at elementary and lower secondary schools, depending upon the type and extent of disability. In addition, there are kindergartens for pre-school children, and specialized training colleges and other miscellaneous vocational schools, which are offering technical courses or those for various practical purposes. Also, pursuant to the amendments to the School Education Law, and other legislation in hand since 1998, the five-year secondary school can be established to enable consistent education covering teachings at both lower and upper secondary schools from FY1999.

Moves to Educational Reform in 1997

In 1997 Monbusho (Ministry of Education, Science, sports and Culture) set out an ambitious and far-reaching reform programme for the Japanese school system. There was a striking move away from uniformity in the language being used and this heralded a more creative and open attitude to gearing education to children' individual requirements:

In implementing the educational reform, we need to focus our attention on two elements. One is to educate people well for the Japanese future. The other is to give high respect for each child's individuality as well to cultivate his/her sincere respect for life and other people, sympathy, sense of justice and equity, sense of moral, sociality, creativity and inter nationality in order to encourage full demonstration of a child's ability through his/her life. Accessed at <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/news/1997/10/971002.htm>

The planned reforms included measures to reduce the spoon-fed curricular provision by teachers who were largely transmitters of pre-determined information. There was a reduction in the school week to five days, (starting in 2003) and a careful attention to providing a broader spectrum of classroom activities, including problem solving and 'helping schools develop educational activities that have room for growth so that each child can learn 'zest for living'. The closed system of education that had emerged from post-war years and determined a 'consistency' of provision was radically changing and this was signaled in the intention of Monbusho to enhance the training of new teachers. In particular, new teachers would be learning how to use emerging information technology. The focus on international communications as a way to enhance Japan's position in the global economy was being honed in the classroom 'Foreign language education will be

improved with a view to further developing communicative competence. To enhance foreign language education and international understanding, education which emphasizes the respect for various cultures and different values, the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) in which young native speakers are invited as language instructors, will be promoted.' Accessed as above at Mext.go.jp on 16/08/04

The driving force behind educational reform was the stagnation of the Japanese economy and a realization that economic growth is not sufficient to ensure a satisfied workforce:

As a result of the rapid economic recovery during the post-war period, Japan's per capita income reached that of the United States for the first time in the mid-1970s. According to the opinion polls conducted by the Prime Minister's Office, since this time large number of people have begun to place more importance on spiritual wealth than material wealth.... The recent economic downturn has created an environment in which it is very difficult for private corporations to provide support for cultural activities ... the environment surrounding cultural activities has become severe. The Japanese population has recently begun to age very rapidly; the percentage of the population that is aged will increase from 16.7% in 1999 to 32.3% in 2050. Consequently it will be necessary to heighten elderly people's consciousness of having a fulfilling life. Although the gradual aging of the population and the declining birth rate would make it easier for funds to be invested in educational cultural activities for children, the reduction in the labour force and the shrinking of the market have engendered concerns that it may seriously affect the people of the future, such as a negative effect on economic growth or a drop in vitality of local society. Accessed on 16/08/04

http://www.mext.go.jp/hakusyo/book/hpae200001/hpa200001_2_072.html

Mext (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) devised an action plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities' recognizing that

English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language. In addition, English abilities are important in linking our country with the rest of the world, obtaining the world's understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation'.

<http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm> accessed on 16/08/04

In 1997 the Ministry set out National Curriculum Standards Reform right across the school system, from kindergarten to special school provision. Perhaps the greatest shift in educational focus was away from accumulating knowledge to enabling students to create knowledge and for this to happen teachers would need to become knowledge creators too. As students were being encouraged to develop their individuality, their teachers would need to be more flexible and open and to challenge and leading educationalists looked outside to Japan and in particular to Canada and England for guidance and inspiration. Laboratory schools were linked to university education

faculties where teaching practices could be pioneered and piloted before they were introduced into the general public school system under the scrutiny of academic staff.

Wide-ranging surveys were created by the National Commission for Educational Reform, which was set up in March 2000 as a private advisory organ to the Prime Minister. These surveys were to consider educational reforms to address problems of bullying, non-attendance at school, class disruption and decrease in academic ability. Plans to provide on-going professional development for teachers in post were discussed by Mext and the idea that a school cannot exist without the support of its immediate community has been a further, profound shift in emphasis in shaping teachers' attitudes to classroom practice.

The Japanese education system's change as action research

'An action researcher begins an enquiry by asking questions of the kind 'How can I improve my work?' (Whitehead, 1989) They then follow through a fairly systematic process, which can be expressed in the following terms:

I reach a critical point in my practice

I feel the need to act

I act in a chosen direction

I monitor and evaluate my actions

I change the direction of my actions in the light of my evaluations (McNiff, 2000, p.202)

I experience a problem when some of my educational values are denied in practice

The Japanese education system was designed to enable the nation to function as a world leader but the economy was stagnating in the later years of the 20th century and there was growing concern that the curriculum in schools was not meeting all the population's needs.

I imagine a solution to the problem

Reorganization of phases across Japanese schooling to enable consistency and continuity in secondary education in particular as well as a concerted move to nurture 'zest for living' problem solving and creativity in schools with more support from the community.

I implement the imagined situation

Teachers in the Akashi laboratory school are instrumental in developing a new 'Integrated Curriculum', which will enable citizenship and zest for living as well as problem solving. Teachers share their expertise and learning and open up their work to peer review through systematic observation and evaluation of their lesson preparation, planning and delivery.

I evaluate the outcome of my actions

External 'experts' like Jack Whitehead and myself open up changes in school curriculum to critical review and individual teachers in locations in Japan (Kobe, Tokyo and Niigata) undertake enquiries through an integration of mentoring and action research.

Teachers join research enquiry groups (such as the one facilitated by Kei Sawamoto).

I reformulate my problem in the light of their evaluation

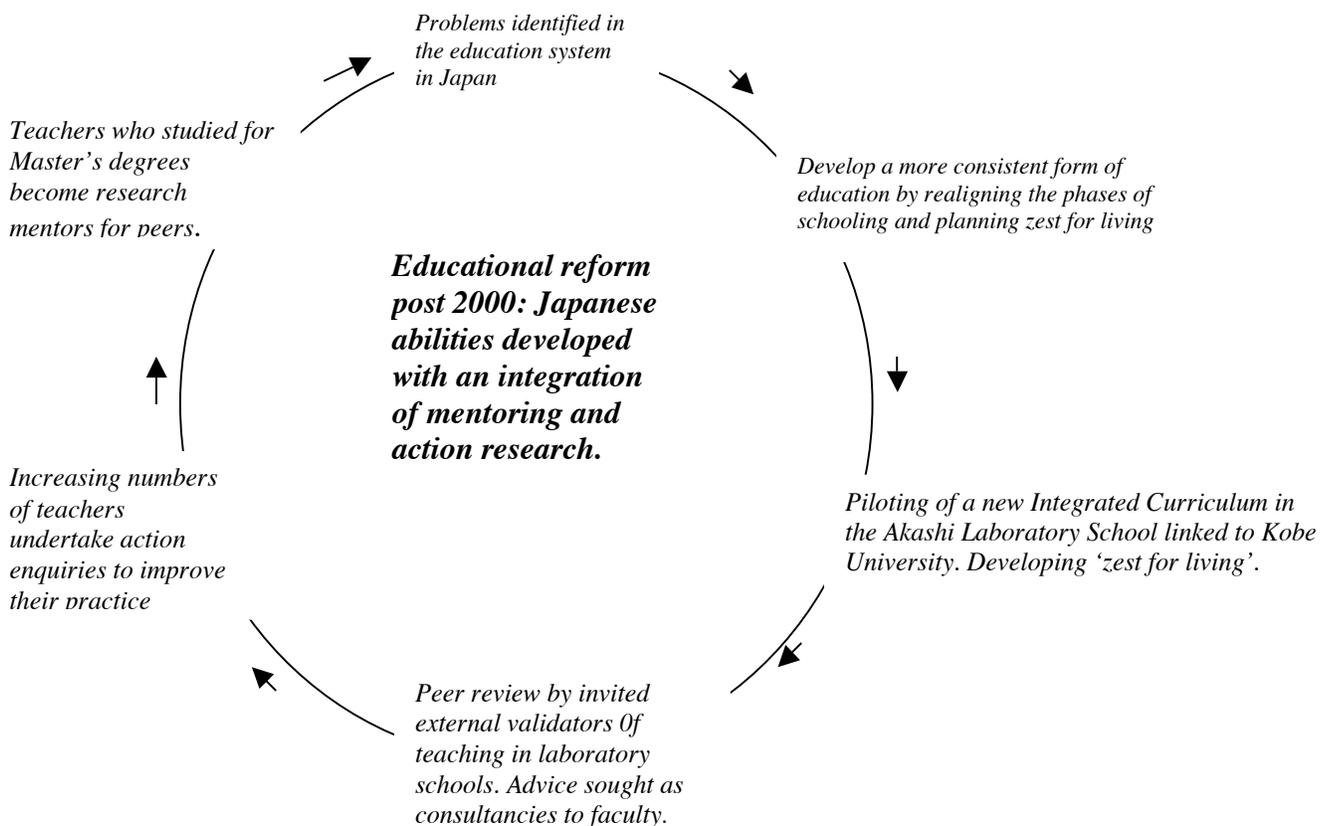
The problem in enabling teachers to respond creatively and enthusiastically to the reform of the Fundamental Law of Education is seen to reside in enthusing a teaching workforce. The question becomes How can we enable teachers to reflect on their practice in order to improve their practice? Individual teachers are offered MA level tuition in universities

(such as Rieko Iwahama at Kobe with Professor Asada) and encouraged to offer their work for validation. This includes presenting their enquiries into their practice with leading academics like Professor Ikuta and Professor Asada at international conferences. There is an on-going search for ideas to improve teaching and learning which extends to visiting England to see how schoolteacher research communities are improving learning. Visit to schools local to the University of Bath Westwood St Thomas School in Salisbury and the John Bentley School in Calne, Wiltshire have been a high priority during visits and are of interest and use to Japanese educators like Mr. Takeshi Takashi, a practising teacher undertaking an MA in action research with Professor Ikuta at Niigata University.

Education Reform in Japan as an action research process

It is the centrality of the ‘I’ talking responsibility for its own professional development that appeals to me but instead of the ‘I’ standing alone, I see educational reform in Japan reflecting group dynamics and loyalties and the ‘I’ becomes the ‘we’ of the group. Thus, *we* (the Japanese nation) represented by Monbusho and Mext experience a critical point in our development where there is a growing mismatch between the educational activities in schools and the economic needs of a nation state. The pressure to reform is heightened by a realization that a dwindling population rate and a rise in the size of the aged population means the schools system must radically change as quickly as possible. Thus we (the Japanese) reach a critical point in our practice, we feel the need to act ... If I would identify the action research approach as English with Japanese abilities ...

Reform of the Japanese education system as action research



Part Two Teachers' professional development in Japan as action research:

'An action researcher begins an enquiry by asking questions of the kind 'How can I improve my work?' (Whitehead, 1989) They then follow through a fairly systematic process, which can be expressed in the following terms:

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I change the direction of my actions in the light of my evaluations (McNiff, 2000, p.202)

The challenge I experienced as I visited Japan for the first time was to enable teachers to develop action research approaches rooted in recognition of their professional values.

The development of my educational knowledge as action research 2000-4

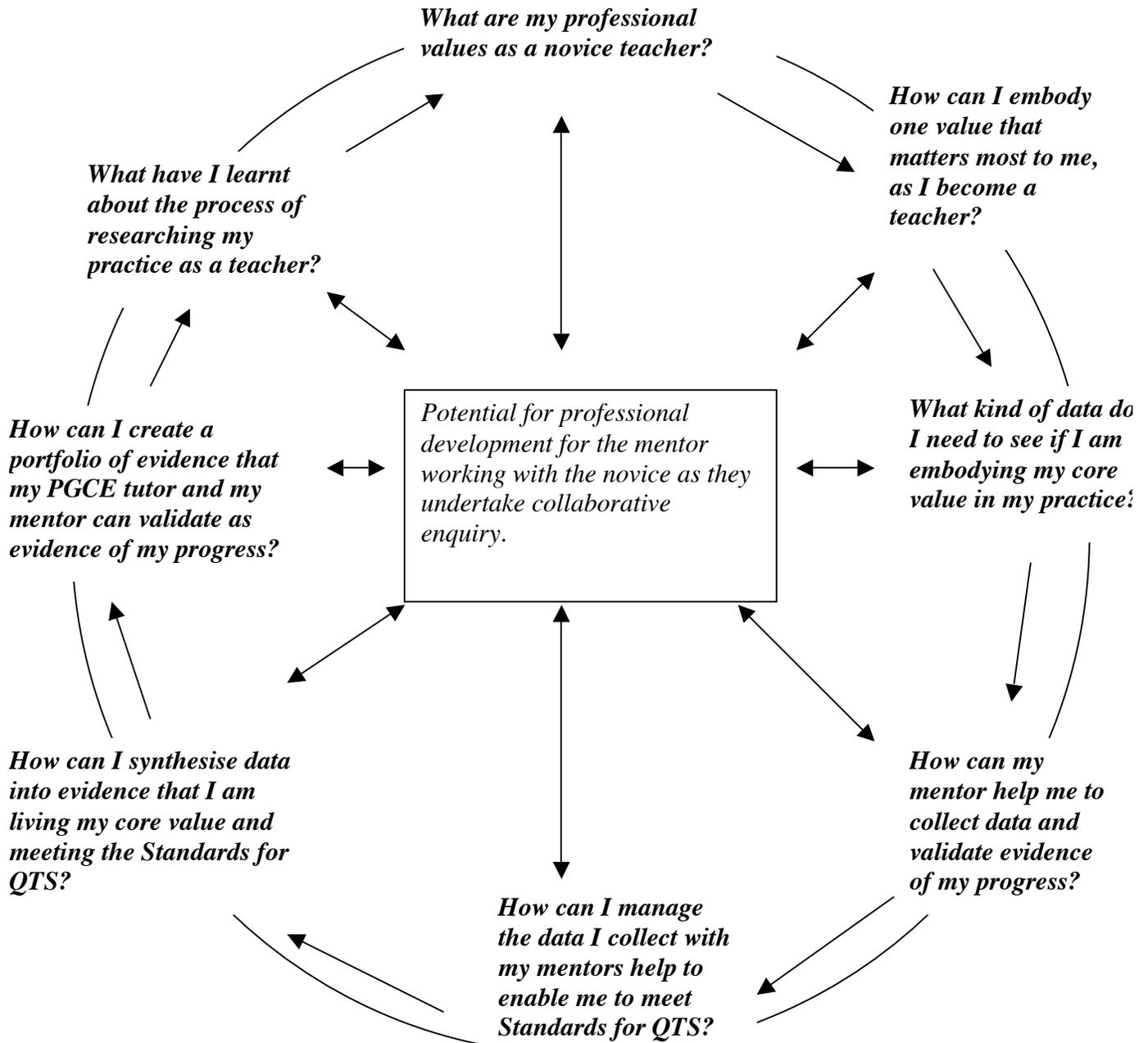
On my first visit to Kobe, I was invited to accompany Jack Whitehead who was regarded as a revered expert in action research. There was wonderful moment as Jack alerted our translator to his need to talk about the centrality of the 'I' in action research. After a slight pause our translator explained that there are no less than fifteen ways of saying 'I' in Japanese – which one did he want? Clearly getting meanings across in a different language and in a culture where community is so central to understandings might be challenging. I was to talk about mentoring and during the discussion that followed our workshop; I used videos of my mentoring to explain how I worked with novice teachers.

When I returned to Japan in 2001, I was surprised and delighted to be asked to talk about action research and mentoring. Although I knew intuitively these two processes were complementary I was as yet unable to express this integration in a succinct, meaningful way. It was as I was expressing the integration during my workshops for teachers and teacher educators that a new pathway began to emerge in my thinking and gradually I was able to define and refine my theory on a purposeful integration to improve learning.

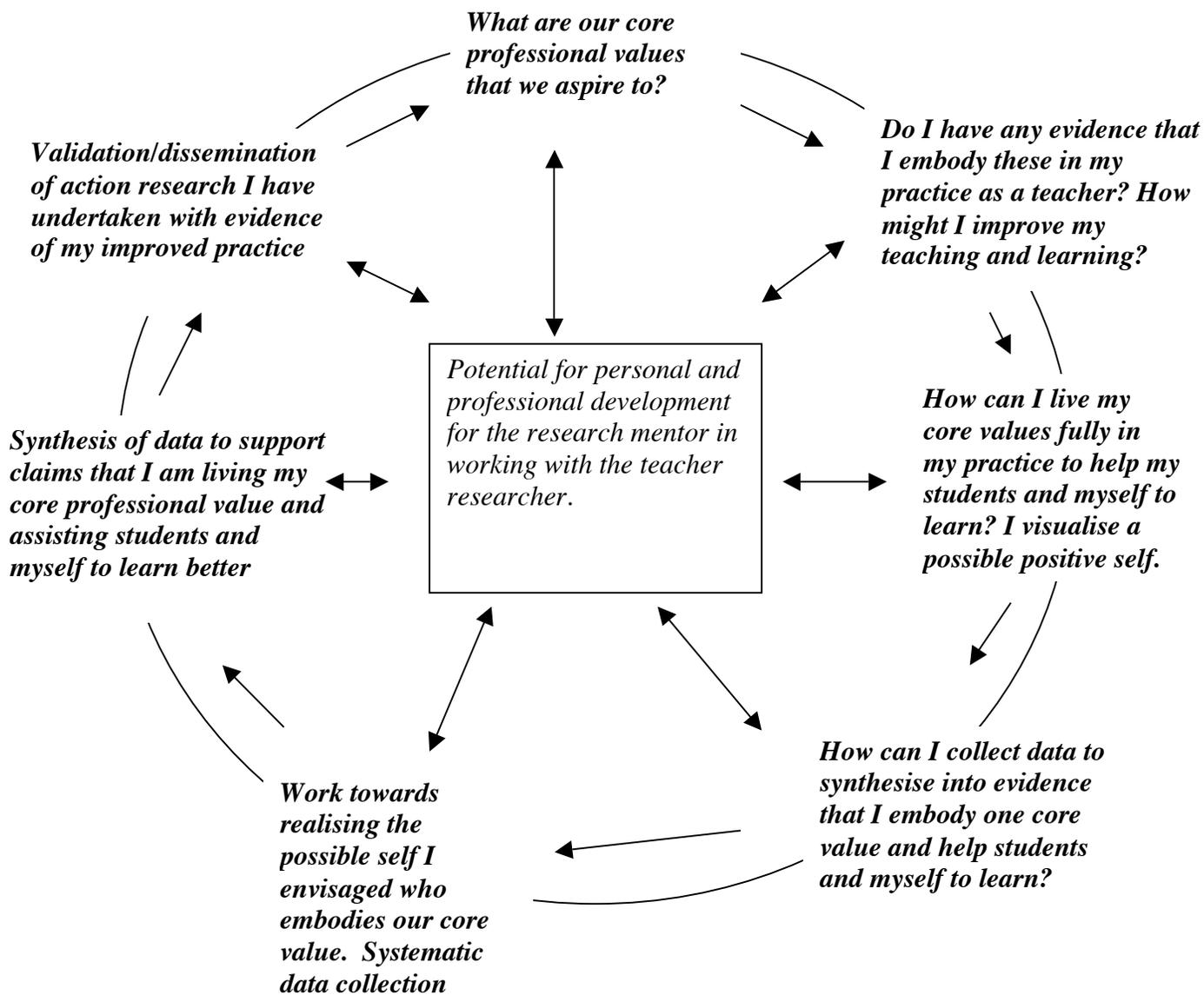
Just as in my first visit, the visits to schools attached to Kobe University assisted me in contextualizing my communication about how teaching and learning might be improved. Seeing the children in the kindergarten and the students in the elementary and high school brought home to me the centrality of focusing on students' learning in any conversations. During my third visit I was permitted to spend time in a Japanese public school. This was something that I as particularly keen to do. The laboratory schools had a selective intake and I realized from the coaching and mentoring I received from Tadashi and Rieko about the Japanese Education System, that everyday life in the public sector is different. During my fourth visit in December 2004, I was able to share the models of mentoring integrated with Jack Whitehead's approach to action research. I had evidence that this integration was an effective combination to promote and support learning through the web-based accounts of colleagues learning and their narratives of improvement at <http://www.TeacherResearch.net>

I began to broaden the spectrum of my workshops to urge a generation of research mentoring capacity in Japan. To my delight I was invited to become the ‘critical friend’ to the new action research group at the medical School, which is part of Kobe University, a few weeks later. My delight was increased by hearing how my friend Rieko Iwahama at Akashi Kindergarten has created her own action research and mentoring group in Kobe!

My model of action research integrated with mentoring (2001)



My model of collaborative self study merges from Whitehead's as I integrate mentoring (Fletcher, 2000) with self study action research (Whitehead, 1989) I have shifted the initial focus from, " I have a problem" to "What are my professional values?" If I am to encourage trainees to keep in touch with their reasons for coming into the profession, I need to help them to explicate and keep in touch with their own professional values.



*My model of the role of a research mentor working alongside a teacher researcher in co- self-study action research emerges! This is the key, I believe, to linking more traditional theoretical study **about** professional development by practitioners to enquiry based practice where practitioners and faculty **work together** to improve their own and their students' learning.*

Part 3 My learning as a consultant and research mentor in Japan 2000-4

The educational context of my visits to Japan since 2000

My account of my influence on and influence by educational interventions in Japan is located on three areas of the country. I began with a visit to Kobe, which was recovering from a devastating earthquake that had destroyed the central portion of the thriving port. The city was a scene of massive reconstruction with man made islands springing up from the bay and facing a shoreline of new rail and road communications and new building. In subsequent visits I traveled to Tokyo, where I met the colleagues who had welcomed me in Kobe as I visited Akashi's laboratory schools to experience the latest teaching reforms. During a visit by Japanese colleagues to Bath in March 2004, I was able to exchange my ideas around our values in education with Professor Ikuta and Mr. Takahashi, colleagues from Niigata University. As we talked about action research, I was delighted to see the similarity in our vision for educational growth, personally, nationally and internationally.

The influence of Japanese educators on my practice

During my visit to Kobe in 2001, I was treated to a visit to a public school where I learnt how the work of teachers was helping to heal the community after the earthquake. This sense of regeneration also struck me when I visited Tokorosawa Teachers' Centre in Tokyo. In late 2003, I assisted in running a conference for action research for teachers across the prefecture. This brought home to me how rapidly educational reform in Japan is moving for when I visited Kobe in 2000 there was concern that teachers did not have the opportunities to take responsibility for their own professional development. In Tokorosawa in December 2003, here was a school hall of teachers taking part in an action research conference led by Professor Tadashi Asada formerly of Kobe University and now Assistant Dean at Japan's prestigious private university, Waseda University, Tokyo.

Narrative:

The teacher, Mrs. Nagasaka, worked closely and attentively in her class, encouraging, hugging, teaching, gently rebuking and playing with the children. She was a master craftsman at work and I realized I had a task in front of me, to try and understand how she came to be able to move effortlessly between multiplicities as teacher, ally, friend, advocate and class manager. I knew I was in the presence of a supremely expert teacher. The calligraphy lesson got underway and I was issued with the necessary equipment. I watched in astonishment as an action research process orchestrated between the children and their teacher got underway. She asked them to place the work they had done yesterday on the blackboard at the front of the room and each child was given the opportunity to discuss how they would improve their work today. One piece of paper and one opportunity to improve only. The concentration was palpable ...

I began to watch attentively. Mrs. Nagasaka would like to know how she is improving her practice, my host Tadashi explained you me. But how could I know? I had never

seen her before. I was searching mentally for a frame in which I might assess her progress and express my opinion and I suddenly realized that Jack Whitehead had a point when he suggested using our values as criteria. I decided to see if I could produce a good piece of calligraphy in the lesson... If I, a novice, could produce a good piece of work that would validate a claim to high quality in her teaching. Under Tadashi's watchful eye and the lens of the video camera I began my calligraphy. With a little 'adjustment' (Was it cheating to fill in some strokes? I guess it was!) I produced a creditable piece of work. It was a very public event. Everyone watched me! Seemingly I had achieved what was expected and the children's attitude towards me warmed as they discussed the quality of their own work and mine. Suddenly I found tears in my eyes as the class sang for me 'Smile, smile again!' For this was Kobe, ravaged by an earthquake where so many died.

At the end of the lesson, an inquisition began. Each child had the opportunity to give feedback to the teacher on how effective he or she judged the day's teaching to have been. Had it helped learning? I was stunned by the honesty and integrity that I saw. After school, the children set about cleaning and sweeping their classroom. We made our way to the headteacher's room and I was asked to give Mrs. Nagasaka feedback on her lesson. Who was I to offer feedback on her lesson? She was the expert! I felt humbled by the experience of commenting on such expertise and I admitted this openly. I asked about the children in the class and the earthquake and how the earthquake had affected them. I learnt that many had been severely traumatized and this had resulted in an upsurge of ADHD. The link was obvious to the raucous behaviour I had seen ... but it had never crossed my mind. I complimented Mrs. Nagasaka on her teaching and she listened attentively and sensitively. I sensed I had so much to learn from her and was delighted when she said she hoped we could work together again. (Journal, December 21, 2001)

My educational experience 1973-2003

When I started teaching 1973 there was little collaborative work going on to improve learning though I was very fortunate to be in forward looking school where ideas were often exchanged. It grieves me and I know it may surprise you to hear that '*many British teachers lack a culture of collaborative professional learning by which they might work smarter.*' *The process of school improvement in a climate of external pressure to raise standards is thus severely impaired.* □Hargreaves, D. (2001) A Capital Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement' in the British Educational Research Journal, Volume 27 (4) pp. 487 - 504.

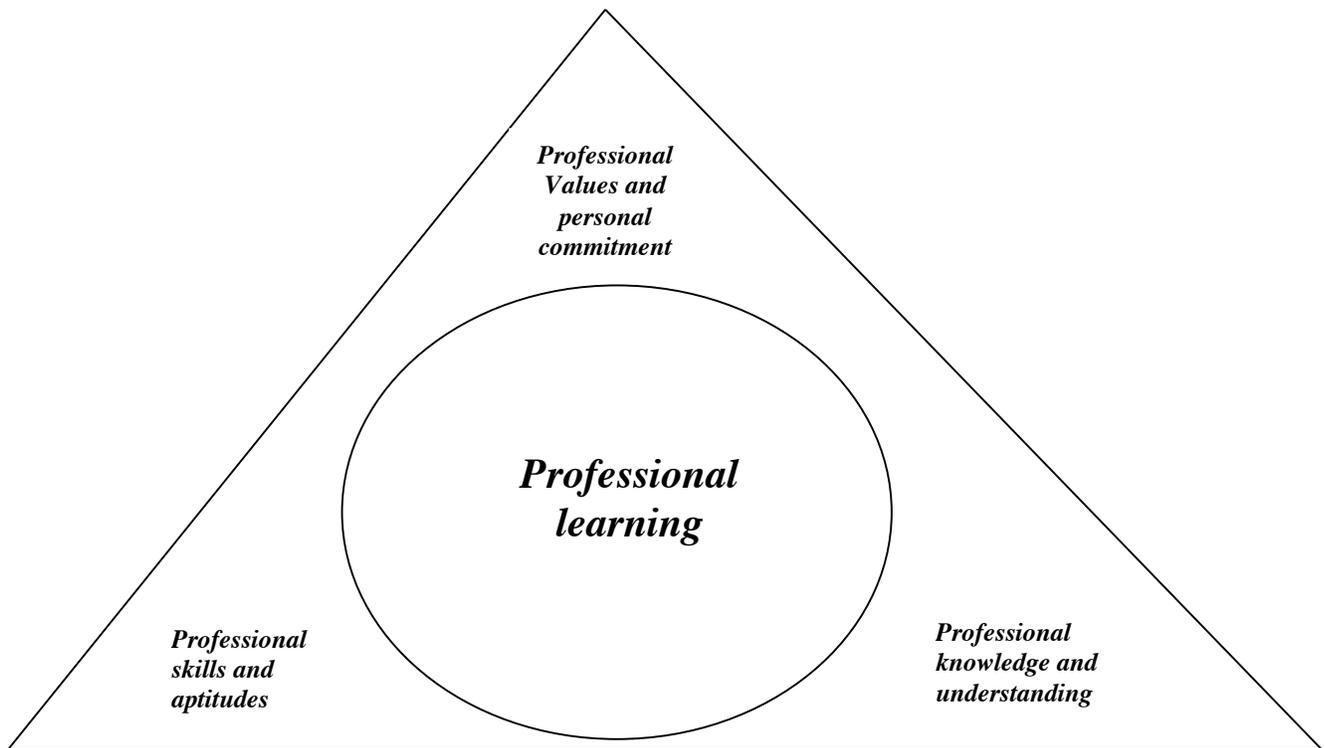
Teachers are realising that they must and can develop ways of juggling increasingly heavy workloads and sustain their intellectually practice-based development. We have a way to empower teachers to balance external demands about how and what they should teach with a sense of personal ownership in developing their individual professionalism. Research mentoring comes in a wide variety of guises and it is my conviction that its potential remains largely untapped in many Faculty programmes for the induction of new researchers. The apprenticeship model is still prevalent rather than the two-way enquiry process that I favour, which can assist in building personal and professional development

Mentoring should unblock the ways to change by building self-confidence, self-esteem and a readiness to act, as well as to engage in ongoing constructive interpersonal relationships. Mentoring is concerned with continuing personal as well as professional development and not just continuing professional development. Mentoring is not synonymous with cloning because it means developing individuals' strengths ... The mentee is as much an agent in bringing about effective mentoring as the mentor. Mentoring is about whole-school and whole HEI (Higher Education Institution) partnerships.' Fletcher, 2000, pp. 1-2

My definition of research mentoring is distinct because it focuses on self-study through co-enquiry. Both mentor and mentee are seeking to improve their work-based practice.

Mentoring as a fruitful and inspirational basis for enabling two-way learning

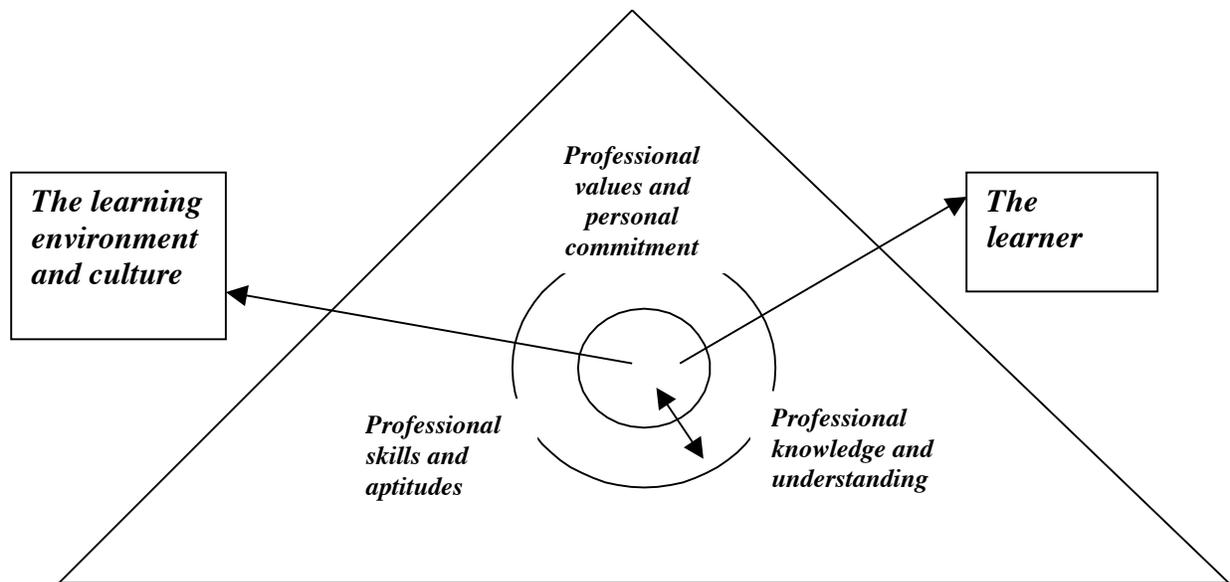
Mentoring and action research can enrich the skills, knowledge and values in our lives as professional educators. I want to start by drawing attention to a model of learning (Christie, D. et al., 2000) I use to help to improve my own practice and assist teachers in developing their own. Then I will move to examine some models of mentoring and action research that have formed the basis of the practice I am calling research mentoring



The significance of placing these aspects of professional development within a triangle is to emphasise that they are not simply lists of competences or outcomes. They are inherently linked to each other in the development of the teacher and one aspect does not exist independently of the other two. It is this interrelationship among all three, which

develops the professionalism of the teacher. The interrelationship is illustrated in the model above (A similar model can be found in the Standard for ITE in Scotland)

In the model below, I have adapted components of the triangle to contextualise learning. The learner rather than professional development is at the heart of the interrelationship of professional values and aptitudes, skills and aptitudes and knowledge and understanding. The learner influences and is influenced by the surrounding environment and culture of the surrounding context. In this model the richness of history, the spontaneous creativity of the present and promise of the future come together to enhance the learning of all who engage in their professional development as they contribute to creating new knowledge. The core value of research mentoring is the celebration that teachers and faculty are experts and together they can generate knowledge that can enhance their own and one another's learning. Traditionally the University has been regarded in England as the seat of learning and it has dictated what counts as educational knowledge. The surge of government support highlighted by the DfES Best Practice Research Scholarships scheme and the advent of teacher bursaries has meant a fundamental rethinking and valuing of knowledge created and disseminated by teachers working with research mentors from higher education. In the near future Becta (The British Educational Technology Agency – one of the leading UK government agencies) and I will be collaborating to bring together teachers' accounts of their research in a way that can be shared. Our mutual hope is that teachers not in the UK but here in every continent will be able to engage creatively with the ideas and accounts and enhance children's learning ...



Implications of the Japanese experience for my professional development

How do you get teachers to reflect? This was the challenge that Rieko Iwahama set me after my first workshop to share ideas about mentoring and action research. I was

grateful for the question because it stirred me to get to grips with understanding what I meant by 'reflection'. I had already written (2000) an extended essay review of Loughran's work but what I needed to do was to identify and analyse the process by which I assisted teachers in reflection. This reflection on my part gave rise to the article in the Wiltshire Journal that I co-wrote with Catherine Meacher, (2000) When I first presented on integrating action research and mentoring in 2002, I couldn't easily visualize the process in a conceptual form that would communicate – something I wanted to do. You can see how my visualized conception arose through models three and four where I adapt the dynamic triangle of the Standard for Initial Teacher education that evolved into Christie's (2004) for the Chartered Teacher in Scotland.

I came to realise through my work in Japan how intimately linked and interacting are the learner and the learning environment as skills, values and knowledge are developed.

In my figures representing the evolution of research mentoring, I wanted to communicate a potential for research mentoring by school-based teachers for school based teachers. Imagine my delight when Rieko Iwahama, who attended my first workshop in Kobe began to develop a group of teachers as enquirers around her, with the support and assistance of professor Tadashi Asada, now of Waseda University and formerly of Kobe. When Rieko and Tadashi visited England we toured the John Bentley School together and their perceptions enabled me to see education in this school through different eyes. I could appreciate the capabilities of the students who acted as our wise guides far more after sharing impressions and wonder at the fluency and maturity of these young people.

Perhaps the biggest leap in my comprehension and learning from my several Japanese experiences came when I was discussing how action research might be enabled in Japan with Jack Whitehead. We were told about a system of teaching review called kounai-ken (Asada, 2004) in secondary and ennai-ken in kindergartens (Iwahama and Asada 2001) and it was a sudden insight into this system that enabled me to understand how action research and mentoring might be developed as approaches to stimulate reflection and motivation among the teachers. The sessions of intense questioning that followed each of my visits to the laboratory schools in Akashi enabled me to formulate ideas thoroughly and clearly as a research mentor. I have written about my experiences in Japan at length in my thesis (2003) and in particular about how the experience of visiting Japan in 2001 enabled me to see the interplay of my educational multiplicities as teacher, mentor and researcher and then as research mentor.

As I read the documentation about the reform of the school education system on the Mext website, my mind buzzed with memories. Seeing 'zest for living' I recalled the public school where I joined in a lesson to learn Kanji as an action research process with the students who endured, and were triumphing over, the trauma of the Kobe earthquake. I experienced again the sense of community as the parents joined their small offspring at Akashi kindergarten to celebrate Christmas by sharing songs and accounts of learning. The integrated curriculum came alive for me as I felt myself transmitted back in time to my visits to the classrooms for secondary school students who were talking responsibility for assessing their own learning using journal entries for validating their improvements.

Most of all I have learnt a little about how group responsibility can grow as students feel nurtured – I recall the loving care of the teacher as a small child panicked on stage. Each child was representing their own class' achievements and so she gave her support so the child would not let down classmates despite his fear, in front of an assembled throng.

How might I contribute to the on-going development of educational practice in Japan?

Over the three years of my four visits (and I am looking forward to a fifth visit later this year) I have experienced many changes in educational emphasis that I have outlined in the history of Japan's education system. I see an increasingly emphasis on using IT in enabling in-service training for teachers pioneered at Kobe University by Tadashi Asada and colleagues from the faculty of Human Development with Nogami et al (2000)

Structured research mentoring as enquiry by mentors and mentees raises 'big educational questions'. No one educator or group of educators holds the key answer or universal truth in addressing these. By listening closely to one another in co-enquiry sustained by mentoring teachers, academics and students reach new understandings and knowledge, develop new skills and capabilities, and live educational values as they co-enquire into questions of this kind

What kind of teacher do I want to see myself becoming? I am good at

How does that enable my own and my students' learning?

Do I have an area that I wish to improve?

What might it be like to have already improved my practice?

How can I improve my practice?

Who can work with me as co enquirer?

How we collect data?

How can we synthesise this data into evidence to support our claims?

How can we validate that evidence?

My hopes for the future

Extracts from my presentations to Japanese educators: December 2003

I very much hope that we can continue to work together across the thousands of miles that geographically separate us through the medium of modern technologies. I would like us to establish video conferencing contact between the UK and Japan to share our educational knowledge. I feel indebted to Professor Sawamoto and you all here for the unique opportunity to share my ideas about research mentoring and to take back with me such vivid and inspiring memories of working with you today and during my last visit in March 2003. I hope I can persuade you to send me your responses to the questions we have explored so that teachers in other countries engage creatively with the ideas and research projects that you are developing. I hope that we can someday co-present at the International Conference for Teacher Research which is held annually in the United States and not least I hope that we might co-write about teacher research for publication

in educational journals. Next time I come to Japan I would love to see your teacher research web site representing your collaborative projects here at Tokorosawa...

Teachers representing their AR accounts on the web

<http://www.teacherresearch.net/>

Local education authorities promoting teacher research

http://education.wiltshire.gov.uk/docs/volume_4_number_3_autumn_2003.html

Brislington Training School

<http://pathways2002.uwe.ac.uk/trainingschool/>

Collections of teachers' accounts

<http://schools.gedsb.net/ar/passion/index.html>

Canada

<http://www.actionresearch.ca>

Conclusion: Action research mentoring with Japanese abilities

In my paper I have explored the perspective that I have that there are interlinking action research spirals in my conceptualization of educational changes occurring across Japan. I see the process of exploration for improving learning as being essentially threefold. First there is the evolution of a new system of education, which could be termed a 'top down' implementation of policy to improve practice. Then there is the process, which is evolving from the classroom through some universities linked to laboratory schools where teachers and teacher educators are striving to improve their practice. I see this as a bottom up movement of educational improvement, which is dynamically interrelated with changes in government policy. This learning is characterized by the research that is being offered increasingly on an international platform (Asada 2001, 2002, 2004, Asada, Yoneda and Katani, 2002, Hosokawa, 2001 and 2003, Gotoh and Ikuta, 2004, Iwahama and Asada, 2001, Kimura and Asada, 2001, Nogami et al, 2000, Otsuka et al, 1999, Nojima, 1999, Sawamoto, 2003, Yoneda, 2001). I have had the pleasure of seeing action research, enabled by mentoring begin to change the face of education in Japan. Teachers are taking more responsibility for their own professional development and I sense a 'zest for living' in the educational experiences since the Reform of the Fundamental Law of Education. As 'sensei' or teacher, I had a privileged role to be called upon to validate claims that learning is improving in schools. Increasingly as I see teachers and teachers come to England to present their work at the British Educational research Association, I feel immensely privileged to be able to learn about action research and mentoring in educational contexts that are different from my own. I value the opportunity to engage in co-enquiry into how action research and mentoring assists teachers to improve their practice. I look forward to a wider dissemination of teachers' own accounts of their learning alongside teacher educators to develop Action Research with *Japanese abilities*.

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