

Discussion on Reflection-in-Action: Accumulating Practice and Writing Research Papers

Mayuko HORIMOTO

Global COE Program
“Science of Human Development for Restructuring the ‘Gap-Widening Society’”
Ochanomizu University

Discussion on Reflection-in-Action: Accumulating Practice and Writing Research Papers

Mayuko HORIMOTO
Ochanomizu University

Abstract

This paper discusses practical research approaches in graduate schools for adult graduate students. For this purpose, the author explains her role as a learning coach, a role that was established through accumulating practice and writing research papers. The author also refers to her reflections on her practice, which involved working as an instructor for senior manager training at an electric appliance manufacturer. The relationship between the author's role frame as a learning coach and her reflection-in-action was examined in this case, as the author dealt with problematic situations in her practice through that role frame. It has been clarified that practitioners (e.g., the author) attempt to handle problems in practice on the axis of overall personal belief and the value of the practitioner (role frame) through reflection-in-action. Moreover, the author dealt with problematic situations when meeting with coworkers through reflection-in-action. The author also commented on this reflection in the process of writing papers and holding discussions with her peers at the graduate school. This enabled her to reexamine her role frame and to develop her competence as a learning coach. Self-regulation and limits on reflection-in-action also can be examined from this case example. The author learned that practitioners' self-limiting reflection due to organizational and structural relationships involved in practice may prevent them, even subconsciously, from grasping a problem in a new framework.

Key words: Reflective Practice, Professional Development, Reflection-in-Action, Corporate Training, Action Learning

Introduction

In recent years, the number of adult graduate students in Japan has reached approximately one-fifth of the total number of graduate students¹. The lifelong employment system has collapsed and the training and development of adults has become the responsibility of the individual rather than the organization. Although entrusting the selection of learning opportunities for training and development to the individual allows for proactive training and development, this action requires self-responsibility. Thus, there is also concern over the widening gap in society between training or development opportunities and learning content. It would therefore be fair to say that in order for graduate schools to provide effective learning opportunities for adults, there is a pressing need for them to examine their educational methods and content.

The author, who is an adult graduate student, has reviewed research papers summarizing the practice of providing undergraduate thesis guidance to fourth-year students during the three years in which she was enrolled in a doctoral program at graduate school, as well

as her practice as an instructor and facilitator in a training company. The objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between the role frame of the author as a learning coach, which was constructed during an overlap of practice and research paper writing, and the reflection-in-action put into practice in a training program for senior managers undertaken by the author at an electronics equipment manufacturer. An examination of the effect of the cycle of practice and research paper writing on the professional development process of the author as a practitioner is thought to be meaningful for examining the method of research in practice in graduate schools for adults.

Donald A. Schön described "role frames" as "The role frames within which they set their tasks and through which they bound their institutional settings" (1983, 270); Cranton defined a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values about education, not as a role frame but as "theories of practice" (1992, 208). In both, practitioners explained that role frames or theories of practice are used subconsciously; therefore, in this paper, I consider the role frame to be the "a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values about learning support" based on the combined definitions of Schön and Cranton. The elements

that affect and limit reflection-in-action based on role frames are thereby examined by focusing on the opportunities for reflecting on the role frame as a learning coach, the ways in which this role frame is used, and how it affects the response to and handling of problems that occur in practice.

Donald A. Schön described the role frame of practitioners in the patterns and constraints of reflection-in-action as follows: “Because the role frame remains relatively constant from situation to situation, it is bound to the scope of practice and provides a reference that allows a practitioner to build a cumulative repertoire of exemplars, facts, and descriptions” (2007, 274). Reflecting on the construction and reconstruction processes of the author’s role frame and clarifying the changes in that role frame during practice, the process by which this affected problem resolution actions is thought to be significant for the clarification of the learning process of reflective practice.

Section 1 of this paper discusses the process by which the role frame “learning coach” was constructed during the cycle of practice and research paper writing during the doctoral course (three years). Section 2 discusses the contribution of the role frame constructed in Section 1 to the process of learning to overcome the problems of participants who were not seriously striving to learn during training, during practice as a training instructor in a training program for senior managers at an electronics equipment manufacturer; it then discusses the process of learning to reconstruct the role frame. Based on this concept, the nature of the successful results and issues resulting from overlapping practice as a learning coach and writing research papers in a doctoral course is discussed, and challenges to be investigated in the future are described.

1. Construction Process of a Role Frame as a Learning Coach: Cycle of Practice and Writing Research Papers

(1) Research paper about reflecting on being a learning coach as an undergraduate thesis tutor

When I initially enrolled in a doctoral program, I believed that the roles required of a doctoral-level graduate student were the following: (1) research and write an academic paper; (2) assist and guide the learning of undergraduate and master’s degree students; and (3) contribute to organizational issues within the laboratory and university. In particular, role (2) requires the doctoral students to become learning coaches and experience the cycle of practice and reflection, thereby deepening their own research questions (Miwa, 2007, 5), as they are positioned in an important role in the life-long learning lab. Participation in seminars and laboratories was not approached in a passive manner;

rather, these required an attitude of proactive construction of a learning environment. I understood my own role as involving more than just presenting and inspecting my own practice in the seminar; I was also required to undergo a reflection on my own practice in other situations (such as conference presentations or writing research papers), and to provide learning assistance to undergraduate and master’s level students based on this premise. In particular, my position as an undergraduate thesis tutor provided an opportunity for me to gain a new understanding of my own research theme, and in my second year as an undergraduate thesis tutor, I collectively reflected on my experience with my fellow tutors and summarized this experience in a paper. I set my initial goals as an undergraduate thesis tutor as follows.

I strived to continuously observe the learning process during the process of fourth-year students writing their undergraduate theses, to read chapters that the students had written, and to ask questions regarding points that the author did not understand with as little bias as possible. During this time, I constantly strived to reframe if I was pushing my own opinion or if I was asking the questions once accepting the opinions of the fourth-year students. I wanted to be committed to encouraging their writing and took the approach of feeling like a cheer squad supporting from behind (Horimoto, 2007 a, 35).

Nevertheless, during the process of assisting fourth-year students, I was not always able to play the envisaged role as a tutor. As the deadline for submitting the undergraduate theses grew nearer, it became difficult to devote to “the role of continuously providing assistance by repeatedly asking about problem setting and prompting the student to think” (Horimoto, 2007 a, 35) while staying close to the fourth-year students who had not yet-in October-determined a thesis topic and were panicking. There were even situations in which I noticed my own impatience, when I carelessly mentioned the December deadline. I reflected on the ideal learning coach/undergraduate thesis tutor as follows.

This year, although I attempted being an undergraduate thesis tutor by clarifying my awareness of my role as my own learning coach, I came to understand the need to always be aware of my role as a coach during my interactions with the learners and to correct my role while providing learning support, even if I had initially clarified my role based on the circumstances, opinions, and undergraduate thesis schedule of the learner. I therefore came to understand that this process of correction

was not something that could be incorporated in advance, but that was implemented by reflecting on those experiences on an as-needed basis (Horimoto, 2007 a, 36).

When I began serving as an undergraduate thesis tutor, the learners who participated in my training (which focused on corporate managers) were mainly men in their 30s to 50s, while my students were women in their 20s. I was thus concerned about the usefulness of my own experience as a learning coach, and subconsciously had the idea that my coaching style and learning assistance might differ depending on age and gender; however, a role frame of “asking questions by fully accepting the circumstances or opinions of the learners without having any prejudices, and always being aware of the role as a coach during interactions with the learners and correcting my role while proceeding with learning assistance” was constructed through repeated opportunities to reflect on practice as an undergraduate thesis tutor and collectively reflect with fellow tutors on that experience, which included writing research papers. These activities resulted in my recognition that this role frame contained commonalities that transcended age and gender.

(2) Practice research paper as the subject of an action learning coach education course

The task of periodically writing research papers regarding training in the company was even more difficult than I initially anticipated. Although I was engaged in practice as an independent HRD consultant in a relatively free position, once I embarked on a particular training session, I was required to focus on learning coaching for this training for two to three months. The problem was that I was so busy conducting training and communicating with the clients that I was barely able to take the time to thoroughly reflect on my own practice and summarize this in a research paper. Although I initially thought, upon enrolling, that it would be easy to write two research papers in a year (each paper consisted of 17 to 18 A 4 pages), I struggled to write only one paper in the second year. I could only manage to write because I made a presentation once a year at the Japan Society for the Study of Adult and Community Education and had to submit a research paper to a research journal; however, in the summer of the second year, I told my supervising professor, Dr. Miwa, that because I was busy, I would not be able to submit to the research journal to which I had submitted papers for several consecutive years. Dr. Miwa asked, “Why are you considering not submitting this year?” and since I was unable to find any satisfactory answer to this question, I thought that continuing to write, in any case, would lead to an improvement in my academic research

paper writing and practice. I finally did complete the research paper. It was difficult to write while practicing, both in terms of time and physical health; I also think that, at that time, I did not reframe the point of writing research papers during research and practice. In other words, determining research questions (research paper theme) related to the practice at some point, while performing the practice required me to critically reflect on my own experience, which I needed to avoid when possible. I think that attempting to avoid a critical self-examination was the result of being in a physically difficult condition and wanting psychological relief; however, the research paper reflected on my own practice despite the pain (Horimoto, 2007 b) and the undertaking of practice was an opportunity for me to review my relationship with it.

This research paper examines the learning process in which Mr. E's awareness of his own problems changed during his experience as a learning coach, both in training and the workplace. Mr. E (a senior manager at an electronics manufacturer) participated in the action learning coach training course in which I was involved as an instructor.

Mr. E was the senior manager in charge of HRD at a major electronics manufacturer and was also responsible for planning and implementing middle and senior management development. He also conducted training sessions as an instructor. This time, his reason for participating in the action learning education course was that he wanted to implement a training program that would enable participation in relatively proactive group learning by introducing the concept of action learning to the training of middle and senior managers that he planned and conducted by having the managers bring problems in which they were involved during daily work into the training. Furthermore, Mr. E himself felt that the style of an action learning coach would be effective for his own management and leadership style as a training instructor and as a workplace manager (Horimoto, 2007 b, 23).

Mr. E wanted more to guide his subordinates through the issues suggested in the course than to grow personally as a learning coach; however, during the process of practicing the issues in the workplace, he was dissatisfied because he was unable to conduct group discussions as he had envisioned, and his subordinates did not actively participate. He experienced the process of reframing his own problems by repeatedly using trial and error. The following is an analysis of the process of Mr. E's reframing of his leadership problems:

Reframing the problem of whether there exists a problem in one's own leadership by communicating with colleagues and writing during participation in training.

By reflecting on his practice experience of advance from fellow course participants, reports on the feeling of suggested books, and his own personal experience, Mr. E began to think that the reason why he was unable to conduct the discussion as he desired arose from his own leadership. In group learning, he realized that the reason why a reflective opportunity for prompting proactive participation was not formed was not because there was a problem with the participants, but because he brought his own viewpoint as an evaluator, a senior manager, into the discussion, and looked down from a higher position within the autonomous group. On April 28, he reflected his own previous leadership as follows: "I am strongly conscious of the fact that I tend to turn my attention to problem solving and to neglect creating a 'space' for both the team condition and learning" (Horimoto, 2007 b, 25).

It is possible to state that Mr. E came to look at his new challenges as a learning coach by beginning to understand the state of the problem from a different angle. He did so by reflecting on the fellow course participants, the course instructor, and his own awareness of the problem based on reporting and describing his own practice. The learning process by which Mr. E changed his awareness of the problem-through advice, communication with fellow students, and giving descriptions within the course while practicing in the workplace-started to resemble my own learning process, which included reframing problem awareness by reflecting on the experience of writing research papers during the doctoral course, as well as by further reflection with Dr. Miwa and colleagues of the life-long learning lab via those research papers. There was thus some overlap in terms of my own professional development as a learning coach and that of Mr. E: he reflected carefully on an opportunity outside of his workplace to influence the practice at his workplace, while I reflected on my practice as a learning coach at graduate school seminars and in writing research papers. In a similar style as the thinking of Mr. E when he initially participated in the course, I focused on the knowledge obtained through participation in seminars and seminar camps while at graduate school, and applied it to my practice as a learning coach. This included obtaining new teaching content and teaching methods (icebreaking activities) and researching papers. I had a strong desire to apply this knowledge immediately in my courses, and put off reflecting on the value and

thoughts related to my own practice; however, during the process of writing an assigned research paper, I gradually realized the importance of reflecting on my own personal beliefs and values. Although I feel that writing research papers as an opportunity to reflect on practice is a personal task, it is thought that my role frame was reconstructed via the opportunity to reflect on my own practice, both alone and with other people through communication with Dr. Miwa, as well as feedback from referees during journal submission, communication with laboratory colleagues at seminar camps and in other situations, and when writing research papers.

My personal role frame as a learning coach in practice (education within a company) was initially the abstract frame of "strive to ask learners questions with as little bias as possible, and constantly strive to reframe myself in regard to asking questions, such that they are receptive of the opinions of the learners and do not push my own opinions, like a cheerleading squad supporting from behind.", This was changed, however, into the concrete frame of "be able to progress in practice while correcting my beliefs and values as a learning coach, by asking questions that are completely receptive and without bias toward the circumstances or opinions of the learners, and by constantly being aware of my existence as a coach within communication within learners, as well as by discussing my work with colleagues who have some kind of common goal." This frame was based on the cycle of practice and writing research papers over two and a half years.

2. Focusing on Two Reflection-in-Action Processes: Reconstruction of the Role Frame through Practice

Although I was able to reconstruct my role frame as a learning coach in the field of corporate training-through my role as an undergraduate thesis tutor, a learning coach education course at a training company, and research paper writing-my practice in handling problems while using this role frame was carried out in the third year of my doctoral program (the training program for senior managers at an electronics manufacturer conducted was from November 2007 to January 2008). I will now focus on examining the learning process of handling problems that arose at the workplace while I was using this role frame.

This practice was a training program for senior managers held at an electronics manufacturing firm and was conducted from November 2007 to January 2008. In this training, I was the coordinator responsible for planning discussions in small groups using the concept of action learning (Part Two: organizational management).

During the planning and operation of the second part (organizational management) of this training, I served as the facilitator: someone who fills the role of promoting adjustment during discussions with the participant involving problems and searching for the problems (Cranton 1992, 94). I also coached the self-directed learning of the participant (manager)². The HRD manager of the manufacturer set the following goals for this training: (1) to create networks through discussion among managers in the same situation; (2) to uncover the problems and issues that they wanted to address; and (3) to consider the method of leadership that involves actively listening to what other people say and being able to ask reflective questions, thereby reframing the managers' leadership and problem-solving skills.

(1) Practice: Overview of Training

(Part Two: Organizational Management Training)

- 1) Course name: Electronics Manufacturer: Training Program for Senior Managers (Part Two: Organizational Management Training)
- 2) Participants: Managers (sixty-five people)
- 3) Staff: Coordinator (Author), facilitators (two to four people), HRD managers (three to five people)
- 4) Place: Training facility associated with the company within the city
- 5) Overview of training
 - Training over two days and one night, held four times. Managers were able to select the two days

that suit their schedule.

- 6) Overview of Part Two: Organizational Management Training
 - Dates conducted and number of participants
 - Small group discussion in which each group comprises five or six members with as much variety and as little work connection as possible.
 - Action learning methods were used for the discussion procedure; the problem presenter changed every hour. The problem presenter shared a problem that they were currently experiencing in the organization or HRM and clarified the problem by answering the group members' questions.
 - Facilitators were responsible for time management and the construction of a learning environment that allowed the asking of questions based on the concept of action learning.

(2) Small Group Discussion with Facilitators

The small group discussions with facilitators were conducted according to the concept of action learning. Action learning is a group learning method that has been used by R. Revans of Cambridge University in England in the fields of management education and higher education since the 1940s. It is a discussion mechanism in which problems are presented in a small group and questions are asked while reframing the problem in the group. M. Marquardt (2004) of George Washington University in the USA employed action learning methods, such as leadership education and

Table 1 Dates of training and number of participants

First time	Fri. November 30 to Sat. December 1, 2007	15 people
Second time	Fri. December 7 to Sat. December 8, 2007	10 people
Third time	Fri. December 14 to Sat. December 15, 2007	18 people
Fourth time	Fri. January 11 to Sat. January 12, 2008	22 people

Table 2 Overview of two-day training program schedule

Day 1		Day 2	
AM 9:00–12:00	<Part One> Risk management training	AM 8:30–8:50	<Part Two> continued Reflection of the previous day
		9:00-12:00	Small group discussion: 3 times Reflection within groups
PM 13:00–14:00	Risk management training continued	PM 13:00–13:30	Reflection by entire class
14:00–15:00	<Part Two> Organizational management training	13:40–15:00	<Part Three> Consider one's own leadership image
15:00–17:30	Self-introduction and orientation Small group discussion: 2 times	15:00–16:00	Management executive lecture
17:30–18:00	Overall reflection	16:00–17:00	Reception with executives
18:15–20:00	Reception		

team building, in in-company education systems. He defined action learning-which focused on discussion centering on reflection through questioning-as “a group learning method for performing leadership education, team building, and organizational development while reflecting on practice.” The facilitators responsible for making it possible for participants to ask reflective questions are called learning coaches. Marquardt regarded the role of learning coaches as “constructing an environment where reflective question asking is possible within a discussion in order to assist group learning rather than to solve the problem itself.” In this training, I added the role of action learning coach to the role as program coordinator, and also assisted learning activities in order to allow reflective questioning within the environment of the discussions (overall orientation and reflection time).

(3) Role of the Program Coordinator

The training curriculum was created in cooperation with the HRD manager. Furthermore, I was responsible for explaining to the participants how the small group discussion would proceed and using action learning in the training orientation (approximately 30 minutes). I served as a facilitator for reflection time participated in by all participants in the final 30 minutes of the first day, for orientation on the afternoon of the second day (15 minutes), as well as for reflection participated in by all participants at the end of Part Two. I was also responsible for chairing a meeting between the HRD manager and each group facilitator after the end of training on the first and second days.

(4) Case Example Impressive to the Program Coordinator (Author)

The practice case example introduced below is a case example from the first day’s small group discussion to the orientation on the second day of training; these were held on the 7th and 8th of December 2007. A questionnaire (online, which could be filled in within one week after finishing) about this training was conducted after the two days of training were complete. The overall evaluation from the participants was always highly satisfactory, and as a whole, the client (HRD manager) positively evaluated this training as favorably accepted by the participants. In particular, the Part Two organizational management training received high ratings, and it seemed that the students positively participated in it. Under these circumstances, the case example described below is the case of Mr. A, a business manager whose case was of the most concern among all four training courses.

(5) Reflections in a Journal at the End of the Training (beginning of February 2008)

My belief is that as a program coordinator, I again recognized a way in which to resolve my own personal problem, where even if I have tried to play the role of supporting the self-directed learning of learners along with planning and managing a program, when I am faced with a confusing problem, I am prompted to direct the other-oriented learning of “the instructor must control this situation” (Cranton, 1992, 67). I recognized that when I attempt to handle a problem during action, my subconscious role frame appears. Careful thinking about what caused this to happen is probably a key to making practice more useful. Furthermore, if the HRD manager had not made any comments, I would not have reflected on my actions and would not have realized that they differed from my beliefs. On the other hand, I again realized that the content of reflection could be changed greatly by the presence of other people, as suggested by the comments of the HRD manager. In addition, every day I had opportunities to reflect on the framework relating to ideal learning coaching and providing training, which I took on as a personal belief during paper writing and lab seminars. I feel that this made it possible for me to quickly correct my response to a situation that I regarded as a problem based on the comments of the HRD manager.

(6) Reflection Due to Presentation at the Communities of Practices and Reflection (beginning of March, 2008)

I reported on this practice at a round table meeting at the University of Fukui two and a half months after case example³. The round table participants included six other people besides myself: three university teachers, two junior high school teachers, and one primary school teacher. I was afraid that the participants would be unfamiliar with in-company training, so I strived to explain words and content in a manner that was easy to understand.

I received questions after the explanation. Although there were many questions regarding the training content, the comments of the primary school teacher left a particularly strong impression. the teacher said, “As a teacher, because the ability to calmly spend time in discussion learning becomes diverted by the daily bustle and the significance is lost, I understand the fact that training that emphasizes the ability to listen and question is conducted even in companies, and have once again gained confidence in what I am doing.” This comment again confirmed that there is no age limit for learning how to listen and ask questions; it also made me happy because I had been able to find a link between the world of school education and the world of in-company education.

Table 3 Circumstances and author's reflection-in-action

Schedule	Participants' circumstances	Reflection-in-action of author
Orientation (first day, 2:30 to 3:00 pm)	Initially started with 10 participants with the dull atmosphere. The self-introductions finished quickly; people only said their name and gave an introduction to the department to which they belonged. (Moved into classrooms, divided into 2 small groups, and moved to small rooms)	The small number of people resulted in a tired atmosphere. Although I tried asking participants questions to elicit conversation in a normal manner, and asked them in a soothing way so that the participants might participate actively in the discussions, the atmosphere did not improve much, and start the small group discussion.
Discussion with each group (first day, 3:00 to 5:30 pm)	The author observed the discussion of the problem involving the manager (Mr. A) of Group 1. Mr. A presented the problem of the development and promotion of subordinates. From the start, Mr. A often replied evasively when asked questions by the members, fidgeted with his mobile phone, and was not able to calm down. When I asked about the facilitator's feelings about the discussion afterwards, I was indifferently told, "Although I think it was because a problem that had not been thought about deeply had been presented, in truth, this discussion was not useful for me."	Although everyone discussed Mr. A's problem seriously and asked questions in a serious manner, Mr. A appeared to be a rude person. I felt that he completely failed to understand the purpose of the training. During the overall reflection, I was consumed by thinking about how best to explain the situation to Mr. A and get him to think again about the purpose of the training.
(The two sessions ended and the two groups returned to the large classroom) Overall reflection (first day, 5:30 to 6:00 pm)	The second session ended and the participants were slightly tired. Since there were only 10 participants, I asked each of them about their feelings regarding the group discussions. Mr. A apologized in front of everyone, saying, "Sorry about the fact that I talked about a problem that I myself had not thought deeply about and could not answer questions in a satisfactory manner."	Mr. A's apology increased my confusion and I focused my attention on him. As a result, the didactic talk about the point of the training and "what it should be" exceeded the scheduled time. There was a kind of somberness in the atmosphere, and immediately after we finished, I was consumed with thinking about how to begin the orientation the next morning.
Facilitators meeting (6:30 to 7:30 pm) Participants: program coordinator, two facilitators, and HRD manager	Facilitator X of the group to which Mr. A belonged described his feelings as follows: "I thought deeply about Mr. A's response. Although I evaluated him as a non-proactive person participating with some kind of distant attitude, his attitude changed little by little during the second discussion." The HRD manager joined the meeting in the middle, and made a comment relating to my response during the overall reflection. It was pointed out in a harsh tone that "Ms. Horimoto made too many comments in today's overall reflection, with many comments about wanting the participants to do this and that, and what it should be. I do not think this is training that respects spontaneous realization by the participants, which is the goal of the training."	The comments from facilitator X gave coherence to the idea that Mr. A was a person who was not seriously participating in the training and that there was no point in worrying about it. Nevertheless, the realization that my own belief had been wrong, as pointed out by the HRD manager, came as a shock. At the same time, the question changed to "why does Mr. A have this attitude?" and a general direction for the next morning's orientation came to me when this question arose.
Orientation (second day, 8:45 to 9:00 am)	Based on the previous day's meeting, I tried to elicit conversation and invited several of the participants to again reflect on the discussion of the previous day. During this, Mr. A made the comment, "I thought thoroughly last night. I tried to think again of ways of grasping an awareness of my own problem." He then seriously explained some ways of approaching his own problem.	Mr. A had proactively grasped the point of this training, and as he spoke I relaxed a little. It was good that I listened well in order to accept what the participants were thinking, and in what circumstances, when given leeway, instead of me telling them how I personally thought they should think. I tried to come up with the next steps based on this.

Furthermore, the university teaching staff asked, "wouldn't the author achieve even more professional development by keeping a learning journal of the situation after Table 3 along with the author's actions and ideas?" I subsequently realized that keeping a journal was also important for examining the form of

changes in reflection in action.

During in-company education, I realized that it was difficult to provide training to the same participants over a long period; it was also difficult to watch not only the participants, but also the teachers. Figure 1 explains this example by showing a diagram of how my

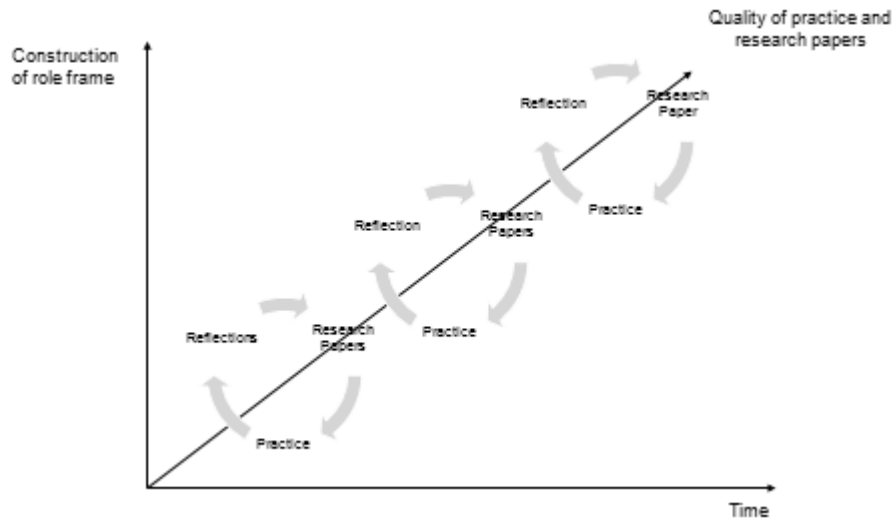


Figure 1 Cycle of practice and writing research papers (diagram when presenting at the communities of practices and reflection)

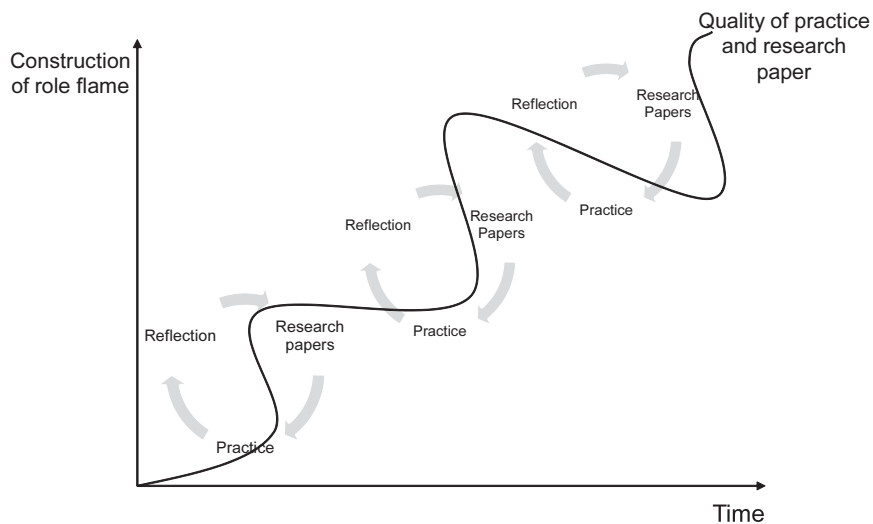


Figure 2 Cycle of practice and writing research papers (modified after participating in the communities of practices and reflection)

practice, research papers, and professional development as a learning coach changed during this process. When this was presented at the round table, several people pointed out that according to my presentation, the straight line could become a curve. From this observation, I became aware that I had always based my opinions on the idea that development should be linear; however, as was pointed out, the process of reconstructing role frames and the quality of practice do not always improve linearly, and I was persuaded that the curve shown in Fig. 2 is closer to actual practice. This provided an opportunity for me to reexamine my beliefs and opinions related to my personal development, allowing me to realize why I had initially drawn a straight line.

3. Function of Role Frames in Reflection-in-Action

Problems that are initially understood from one angle in practice can be understood from another angle by reflection-in-action. I was able to reveal a different problem by reflecting on my own personal role frame, instead of focusing on the problem of making the training content understood by the manager, who I felt had a problematic style of participation in training. In other words, I changed my way of understanding the state of the problem. For example, I started to see new problems in my way of explanation on the training purposes and in the structure of the training program, in

addition to the problematic attitudes of the managers. The opportunities to intuitively change the framework that set the initial problem were the comments by the HRD manager during a meeting in the middle of training (held after the training on the first day, which consisted of five people including facilitators, the HRD manager, and myself) and comments from colleagues, enabling me to take action by communicating with the learners on the following day (“reflection on previous day” held from 8:45 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the second day).

Schön proposed four constants for performing reflection-in-action (2007, 289), with two of the four being “appreciative systems” and “role frames.” If these constants apply to the practice in this paper, I posit that a reflective dialog and resetting of the problem would be derived as “appreciative systems” by reflecting on “role frames.” It has been clarified that practitioners attempt to handle problems in practice on the axis of the overall personal beliefs and values of the practitioner (role frame) by reflection-in-action. Thus, I was able to understand through this case example that the understanding of role frames is slowly changing through the use of an opportunity not only for reflection-in-action but also for reflection-on-action; this includes the opportunity to create a training report for a client, the opportunity to create and report on a resume at the Fukui round table, and the opportunity to write this paper.

Self-regulation and limits on reflection-in-action can also be examined from this case example. I was able to understand that practitioners’ self-limiting to reflection due to organizational and structural relationships involved in the practice may prevent them from grasping a problem in a new framework. For example, when I reported to Dr. Miwa before the round table at Fukui, I was asked, “why did the HRD manager harshly reprimand you?” Of course, such a severe reprimand is not common among relationships between normal consultants (such as myself) and clients (such as the HRD manager). It would be fair to say that it was also necessary to ask why the HRD manager reprimanded me in that situation and what his intention to reframe the problem was. This case example included many roles: participants, instructors, facilitators, training instructors, coordinators, and clients. Questioning the structure of those relationships was not included in reflection-in-action. We are subconsciously controlled by natural relationships, such as the relationship described in a contract, and we cannot contemplate the necessity of questioning such a structure. Furthermore, in the report at the round table, it was pointed out by a listener that “it could be important to keep a journal of the author’s practice of the training after the

case example” and that the practice was not examined continuously. I newly recognized that the site of in-company education contains the structure that forces us to subconsciously fix the relationship among the client (HRD manager), the participants, and the training provider. I personally-albeit subconsciously-performed a self-regulation of reflection. I imagine that breaking down self-regulation in reflection-in-action can be a means for further improving practice. For example, it may be possible that repeatedly reflecting on and questioning practice, when the action based on the role frame affected by limitation is freed from the limitation (for example, writing a research paper in graduate school or reporting at a round table), further improves the capacity of the practitioner to face problems.

Conclusion: Learning Process of Reflecting on Research Problems through Practice

The purpose of this paper is to organize and examine the relationship between the role frame constructed by practice and research paper writing in the doctoral course (the overall belief and value as a learning coach) and reflection-in-action during practice. In this paper, I have discussed the effect of the role frame on behavior related to my attempts to resolve problems when handling issues in practice.

The constructed role frame was understood to form the cornerstone in the process of reflecting on a problem in practice and in reframing the problem during reflection-in-action. I thereby deduced that the role frame is reconstructed during the process of grasping the practice itself, particularly when reporting on the practice and writing research papers, and it is thought that this will lead to professional development. Furthermore, in regard to the undergraduate thesis themes that came up during the doctoral program, the research theme (interest in problem) changed gradually through repeated performing practice and through the writing of research papers that reflect on that practice, and thereby changed to a greater, more specific question. The writing of research papers is an opportunity for reflecting on turning point practice, and is thought to play a role in new questions about the author’s practice and for resetting questions in research. Although it was subconscious, a change in my thinking was made as I attempted to unify as many questions in practice and in research as was possible. The investigation of a structure of learning that attempts to unify questions in examining the learning process of reflective practice will be an issue for the future.

Notes

1. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, "School Basic Survey (2008)"
2. Normal training typically consists of the company selecting work-related problems and providing procedures, knowledge, and training for resolving those problems; this system is rare in in-company training, particular for education of different levels.
3. The author participated in a session entitled "Communities which Practice and Introspect the Practice" (March 1-2, 2008), which was held by the Graduate School of Education of the University of Fukui and reported in "The Fukui Round-table of Practical Research on School Reform."

References

- P. Cranton, (1992) *Working With Adult Learners*, Toronto: Wall & Emerson, Inc.
- D. Schön, (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Basic Books, Inc.
- M. Marquardt, (2004) *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning*, Palo Alto, CA: Davis-Black Publishing.
- Akiko Kimata, Kaoru Sugai, Mayu Takebuchi, Mayuko Horimoto, (2007 a) 'Reflections on being an undergraduate thesis tutor', *Ochanomizu University Practical Research on Lifelong Learning*, no. 5, 2007 a, 27-44. (Originally in

Japanese)

Mayuko Horimoto, (2007 b) 'Research related to study on critical reflection of learning coaches in the workplace', *Bulletin of Japan Society for The Study of Vocational and Technical Education*, vol. 37, no. 2, 21-27. (Originally in Japanese)

Kenji Miwa, (2007) 'Program for professional development of undergraduate and graduate students as learning coaches - reflections on case studies of presentation and undergraduate thesis guidance', *Ochanomizu University Practical Research on Lifelong Learning*, no. 5, 1-8.

Acknowledgment

This paper builds on the article published on pages 131-140 of *Ochanomizu University Practical Research on Lifelong Learning* no. 6 (2008), with additions and revisions. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Kenji Miwa and the members of the Miwa Research Laboratory at Ochanomizu University for supporting my learning cycle of practice and writing research papers. I would also like to thank Mr. I and Ms. H, human resource personnel of the electric appliance manufacturer, for providing me with the opportunity to practice manager training.

Author Note

Mayuko HORIMOTO
Graduate Student, Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences, Ochanomizu University