# Coaching and Mentoring

## (Chapter 1 of 5)



**MIND THE GAP**

**Bridging Theory and Practice in a Post-Covid Era**
## June 2022
## Hosted by
## Sheffield Hallam University

# Contents

# Coaching and Mentoring

This is the Coaching and Mentoring chapter from the UFHRD Conference 2022 proceedings document, published in May 2023.

## Introduction

At this conference, the coaching & mentoring stream had the highest number of papers submitted, of all the streams. Furthermore, the presentations were of the highest calibre; Lynne Cavanagh-Cole, from Northumbria University was the recipient of the Alan Moon prize for best paper, entitled "Somatics in Coaching". The presentations and topics were wide ranging in terms of their context and span across both coaching & mentoring as labels. Nevertheless, there were points of overlap and connection. For example, both Bull's paper on women in coaching and mentoring and Garvey & Rajasinghe's paper on becoming a coaching both used the mechanism of narrative to explore their research. Similarly, Gannon's paper on mentoring in the creative industries and Stabler's presentation on pedagogical practices, whilst different in emphasis, explored some of the practical issues involved in coaching and mentoring practice. This practical emphasis was also present in Beech et al.'s paper on peer coaching. This paper focused on providing insights into peer coaching practice and particularly the value of collaborative conversation to engender mutuality and deeper understanding of the importance of relationships in shaping positive change.

There was also an international element to the papers and presentations received. For example, Arts & Anderson paper on self coaching was based on work done in Eindhoven in the Netherlands which looked at the under-researched practice of developing self-coaching capabilities that might provide professionals with time, mental space, support and guidance to make sense of, and change, their self and professional development. Maguire, Ghosh and Manongsong's paper on diversified mentoring with refugees involved mentees from Lebanon and Syria to explore how mentoring can help refugees to broaden their horizons, identify new opportunities and gain access to outside perspectives and new skillsets. Nathalie van Meurs paper on using the Person-Environment Fit framework had a different take on internationalisation by examining how coaching might work in dealing with peoples' anxiety and concerns about the polarising effect of Brexit.

As might be expected, the HE context was also an important element of some of the papers – as well as Stabler's paper referred to above, Jones & Smith's paper the learning from two case studies; one of a coaching programme and one of a mentoring programme, both aimed at developing employability skills and realising potential for final year business students in two different UK universities, within a widening participation context. Also, as mentioned above, there were two high quality presentations on somatic coaching by Lynn Cavanagh-Cole and Marie Bleuzé, both of which sought to significantly contribute to and extend knowledge in this area of coaching.

All the presentations submitted to the conference made a useful contribution to coaching & mentoring theory and practice and examined the future implications of this aspect of contemporary HRD.

Dr Paul Stokes, Sheffield Hallam University.

# Comparative Study of a Coaching and Mentoring programme in Higher Education

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Abstract #22

There are limited comparison studies between universities with undergraduate career-related coaching and mentoring programmes, and limited research offering best practice recommendations for coaching and mentoring programmes in HE. This paper/presentation seeks to help to bridge that gap.

Coaching and mentoring are supportive, developmental, learning relationships where support and challenge is provided to achieve personal outcomes and realisation of potential (Garvey & Stokes, 2021). The purpose of this paper/presentation is to share the learning from two case studies; one of a coaching programme and one of a mentoring programme, both aimed at developing employability skills and realising potential for final year business students in two different UK universities, within a widening participation context.

On the face of it, two quite different programmes are compared; the first study is a formal coaching programme delivered in two phases involving over 1,500 students within the Business School. This case study involved trained coaches, all students in a particular School and was connected to an assessment. The second study is a mentoring programme involving over 250 students over a 10 year period within the Business School at a different institution, where the mentors were not qualified (but were briefly trained), it was offered to only those students who were keen to volunteer and was not linked to an assessment. Despite the different approaches, the purpose was the same, the same aspects were considered in the set up and very similar outcomes were achieved.

Both case study programmes will be compared to a framework of the key criteria that is necessary to support a successful coaching/mentoring programme within Higher Education (Jones & Smith, 2022) including the importance of alignment and integration, senior management commitment, budget, an application process, clear matching process, trained coaches and mentors, induction for both parties, supportive material, ongoing supervision, and robust evaluation and record keeping. In doing so, this will draw out the key moderating factors (both enabling and challenging) against these 10 criteria, for both programmes with a specific emphasis on selecting, matching, training and supervision. The key learning for both parties will also be shared in respect of knowledge, skills and affective-related learning, together with the reflections from the Programme Leaders.

The ultimate aim of this session/paper will be to compare and contrast the two quite different but quite similar case studies, to share stories from both coaches/mentors and students of their learning journey and to combine the theory with practice to offer recommendations to other Programme Leaders who may be developing such schemes within their HE context to better ensure coaching/mentoring success.

Garvey, B. & Stokes, P. (2021). Coaching and Mentoring – theory and practice. (4th ed.). London: Sage

Jones, J. & Smith, H. (2022). A comparative study of formal coaching and mentoring programmes in higher education, *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 213-231. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2021-0054

Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation – Comparative Study of a Coaching and Mentoring programme in Higher Education
Included below.

# Comparative Study of a Coaching and Mentoring programme in Higher Education

Jenni Jones & Helen Smith

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## plan for the session

▶ motivation for the study

▶ what is Coaching and Mentoring?

▶ classification of coaching and mentoring programmes in HE

▶ previous success frameworks for coaching and mentoring

▶ the challenge

▶ methods to gather information

▶ comparison of the HE programmes

　▶ what works well?

　▶ what does not work well?

▶ suggested good-practice framework

▶ recommendations for HE Programme Leaders and HRD profession

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# motivation for the study

▶ '*finding professional employment after graduation is one of the most important reasons for going to university*' (Dandridge, 2021 p. 1)

▶ TEF framework is about students gaining '*professional-level*' employment (Office for Students [OfS], 2021)

▶ employers want '*transferable skills*' (Sneider and Bakhshi, 2017)

▶ duty of a university?

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# coaching and mentoring

▶ **coaching and mentoring** are supportive, developmental, learning relationships where support and challenge are provided to achieve personal outcomes and to realise potential (Daloz, 29 1986; Garvey et al., 2014)

▶ **coaching and mentoring** nurture professional and personal development by enhancing performance and work satisfaction (Dahling et al., 2016; Ellinger 34 2013; Tan et al., 2018; Usmani et al., 2011)

▶ **formal mentoring** is positively related to commitment, job satisfaction and personal learning in an organisational context (Lankau and Scandura, 2007; Ragins et al., 2000)

▶ **formal coaching** is established to support improved communication (Peng et al., 2019) improved decision-making (Chughtai and Buckley, 2011) internal wellbeing (Nielsen and Randall, 2012) and appreciation of the right social environment for optimal functioning (Joseph and Bryant-Jefferies, 2008)

# classification of coaching and mentoring programmes in HE

- formal vs. informal
- undergraduate vs. postgraduate
- overarching full university programmes e.g. Alumni programmes
- specific specialist groups e.g. researchers
- specific backgrounds e.g. reverse mentoring for under-represented groups
- part of PSRB requirements e.g. apprenticeship programmes
- buddying programmes whereby students support fellow students
- different offerings for different levels e.g. foundation year

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# Previous successful frameworks

| | Condell et al (2011) | Andrews & Clark. (2011) | Andreanoff, J. (2016) | Busse et al (2018) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intervention Type | Peer Assisted Learning | Peer coaching | Coaching and Mentoring | Management support youth mentoring |
| Design Development | Clear expectations<br><br>Clear leadership | Effective marketing<br><br>On-going staff engagement | Identify / recruit coaches or mentors<br>Identify / recruit suitable learners<br>Right to decline or accept or withdraw<br>Awareness and understanding for all stakeholders | Generate idea<br>Gain support<br>Decide model<br>Obtain funding |
| Delivery | Qualified competent facilitation<br>Boundary clarity<br>Pre-training<br>Skill development and support | Rigorous selection process<br>Recruit early<br>Match mentees and mentors within subject / discipline areas, demographic, criteria relevant in targeted mentoring<br>Implement high quality training | Develop and deliver mentor / coach training<br>Ensure learners are aware of responsibilities and relationship boundaries<br>Match mentors / coaches with learners<br>Ensure accommodation is available for sessions | Set up programme<br>Develop infrastructure and policies<br>Assess risk management<br>Work with partners<br>Programme for context<br>Manage relationships |
| Maintenance | Timetable for increased engagement | On-going peer support for mentors and mentees<br>Introduce flexibility if required (mentees to swap mentors)<br>On-going evaluation<br>Listen and act upon feedback<br>Introduce formal recognition of peer mentors efforts (a certificate of achievement / participation) | Provide ongoing support for the duration of relationships<br>Identify and resolve issues linked to maintaining the relationship<br>Obtain regular feedback from mentors / coaches / learners and stakeholders<br>Evaluate mid-way | Ensure funding<br>Manage partnerships<br>Engage mentees and mentors<br>Continued assessment and evaluation<br>Adapt for long-term sustainability |

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## The Challenge…

▶ despite an increase in popularity (Koopmann et al., 2021) there is no *one-size-fits-all* approach to the design, delivery and evaluation of such programmes

▶ research shows that one in three formal programmes fail, with a need for two of the three to be revitalised over time (Owen, 2011)

▶ it is important to find a formula that works to reduce the possibility of failure

▶ Cranwell-Ward et al. (2014) suggest that mentoring '*lives or dies by its reputation*', so it is essential to get the framework right to facilitate success for both the mentees and mentors (Busse et al., 2018)

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## methods to gather information



4. Results
3. Behaviour
2. Learning
1. Reactions

▶ regular end of programme feedback

▶ focus groups

▶ implement as part of formal catch up sessions

▶ reflective assessments

▶ interviews

▶ framework shared with Senior EMCC Practitioners and Scholars

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# comparison of the HE programmes

▶ Two quite different programmes

  ➢ formal **coaching** programme delivered in two phases involving >1,500 students

  ➢ formal **mentoring** programme involved >250 students over 10 yr. period

▶ Two quite similar programmes

  ➢ **set up ->** *formal programmes*

  ➢ **focus ->** *both aimed at developing employability skills, raising aspirations and developing networks for future job opportunities*

  ➢ **students ->** *final year*

  ➢ **school ->** *business students*

  ➢ **university ->** *widening participation context*

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# programme overview

| Points of comparison | Case Study - Coaching | Case Study - Mentoring |
|---|---|---|
| Employability focus | key skills | CV, applications, interviews |
| Context | HE | HE |
| University | UK – widening participation | UK – widening participation |
| Faculty | Business School | Business School |
| Established | 2 years | 10 years |
| Student participation | 1500 | 250 |
| Duration | 3 months - final year | 9 months - final year |
| Coach / Mentor | external | external |
| Early diagnosis of needs | pre-assessment | none |
| Support material – coachee / mentee | handbook & communication updates | none |
| Support material – coach / mentor | handbook | handbook |
| Coach / student ratio | 1:6 | 1:2 (max) |
| Key learning | knowledge / cognitive skills affective-related networks | knowledge / cognitive skills affective-related networks |

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**_what worked well_** (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

**_what did not work so well_** (1, 3, 5)

| Points of comparison | Case Study - Coaching) | Case Study - Mentoring |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Link with other initiatives** | standalone | standalone |
| **2. Senior management commitment** | yes | yes |
| **3. Funding / budget** | yes | no |
| **4. Selection / application process** | yes | yes |
| **5. Matching** | some student selection | co-ordinator chooses |
| **6. Coach / Mentor training** | qualified/trained externally | volunteers/trained internally |
| **7. Induction for coachee / mentees** | yes | yes |
| **8. Supporting toolkit / handbook /contract** | yes | yes |
| **9. Support and supervision for both parties** | yes – weekly drop-in | yes – planned every 2 months |
| **10. Record keeping / evaluation** | yes | yes |

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# suggested good practice framework

| Points of Comparison | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| **1. Link with other initiatives** | make clear links with other initiatives at course unit level and University Services (Careers Dept.) |
| **2. Senior management commitment** | ensure continuous senior management commitment (Dean and Head of School) |
| **3. Funding / budget** | agree funding upfront from external projects or internal employability initiatives |
| **4. Selection / application process** | formal process for coach, mentor and students active participation makes a clear commitment |
| **5. Matching** | permit student choice from list of coach / mentor from diverse backgrounds |
| **6. Coach / Mentor training** | training for coach / mentor with clear boundaries between tutors, course leaders etc. |
| **7. Induction for coachee / mentees** | induction sessions for student to manage expectations, outcomes, time management etc. |
| **8. Supporting toolkit / handbook /contract** | create and share a handbook incl. code of conduct, contract, models, tools, techniques etc. University intranet to host information; keep up to date |
| **9. Ongoing support / supervision for both parties** | offer supervision-type sessions, mandatory maximum attendance |
| **10. Record keeping and evaluation** | evaluate impact and outcomes via detailed analysis and record keeping. University intranet to share, collate information; consider e-options |

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## recommendations for HE Programme Leaders and the wider HRD profession

► be mindful of the suggested framework

► have a committed and supported Programme Leader

► ensure supportive C&M culture in the organisation

► create plenty of opportunity for feedback

► keep a *loose-tight* framework (one size does not fit all)

► allow room for deeper exploration & further study

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# Coaching and Mentoring: Narratives of women in leadership

DR. MEL BULL
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Abstract #33

*"Coaching and mentoring are also seen as important tools in helping to develop female leaders. In many contexts, there is a significant shortage of female leaders in civil society, due to prevailing cultural and social norms. Coaching or mentoring is increasingly used in leadership development programmes for women, especially because they can develop confidence and self-belief" (Deans et al, 2006:1)*

This research explored the influence coaching, mentoring and role models have on female leaders. The research aimed to understand the impact these had on their feelings of self-confidence. The study used a unique qualitative approach drawing on the embodied lives of female leaders, through critical event life histories (Bheenuck, 2010; Scott, 1991; Biesta et al, 2005), artefacts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), and unstructured discussions (Riessman, 2008). There were 7 participants aged between 30-50 and they all held a senior leadership role in a variety of organisations in the UK. Using a narrative inquiry approach allowed the voices of these women to be heard and their stories to be brought to life (Bleakley, 2005; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Patterson, 2013) . The key themes drawn from the narrative inquiry were on confidence; the importance of matriarchal role models (Mendez-Morse, 2004); early career mentoring; and their own skills of coaching and mentoring as leaders. The findings evidenced the need for more informal mentoring (Bynum, 2015), the importance of the relationship (Tolar, 2012), and also the influence of gender in their choice of coach/mentor/role model (Singh et al, 2002; Ehrich, 2008; Durbin, 2010; Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014). The originality stems from the discussion of gender and the concept of formal and informal mentoring along with imposter syndrome or lack of self confidence in female leaders (Sherman, 2013) . The research found that this can be improved by an informal mentoring network that evidences strong female role models. There was also evidence of the need for early career mentoring or sponsorship (Merrick, 2017) to give women confidence in their early careers and to help them to navigate their organisations, particularly in male dominated industries (Fried and MacCleave, 2009; Carlin et al, 2018). The stories that were told have given an insight into the views of senior female leaders and perhaps an adapted approach to coaching and mentoring in organisations, removing a "one size fits all" approach.

Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation - Coaching and Mentoring: Narratives of women in leadership
Included below.

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# Coaching and Mentoring: Narratives of women in leadership

**Dr Mel Bull, CIWFM, FCMI**

**Assistant Head of Postgraduate & Executive Education, Nottingham Business School**

*EQUIS* ACCREDITED   AACSB ACCREDITED   SMALL BUSINESS CHARTER   PRME CHAMPIONS   Principles for Responsible Management Education

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# Overview

*"Coaching and mentoring are also seen as important tools in helping to develop female leaders. In many contexts, there is a significant shortage of female leaders in civil society, due to prevailing cultural and social norms. Coaching or mentoring is increasingly used in leadership development programmes for women, especially because they can develop confidence and self-belief" (Deans et al, 2006:1)*

This research explored the influence coaching, mentoring and role models have had on female leaders through their narratives

**Research Objectives:**

- Explore life histories to understand significant people and events in the lives of female leaders and the influence these have had

- Understand whether female leaders have engaged in coaching or mentoring (or both) either formally or informally

- Analyse whether gender influences the choice of coach/mentor/role model

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# Research Methods

- The study used a qualitative approach drawing on the embodied lives of female leaders, through the following:
  - critical event life histories (Bheenuck, 2010; Scott, 1991; Biesta et al, 2005),
  - artefacts (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), and
  - unstructured discussions (Riessman, 2008).
- There were 7 female participants: in the main mid 40s-early 50s, bar one participant who has reached Director Level in her early 30s. There is a mix in terms of current family life, and women with/without children. All the women have completed an MBA programme.
- Using a narrative inquiry approach allowed the voices of these women to be heard and their stories to be brought to life (Bleakley, 2005; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Patterson, 2013)

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| The Participants | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name | Age | Role | Overview |
| Kate | Early 30s | Working in private sector, consultancy | In transitional space, moving to new Director role. Grew up in North West, parents divorced at young age. Rapid career growth since completing MBA in 2016 |
| Amy | Early 50s | Working in private sector, facilities management | Working as a senior manager in procurement. Married twice with adult children from first marriage. Moved from South to North England for career. Completing her MBA and wants to break the current barrier of there being no females on the Board in the company she works for. |
| Jane | Late 40s | Working in public sector, Higher Education | Academic, part of the leadership team in a University in North of England. Came from a working class family (self quoted). Moved into academia in 2007, working on her self esteem which is helping her career to grow |
| Michelle | Late 40s | Working in public sector, NHS | Senior leader working at Director Level in an NHS Trust in the North of England. Divorced parents. She is married with no children. Her career has been varied and she moved to NHS in 2009 and is very passionate about the NHS and her career. She has had to overcome health problems |
| Claire | Late 40s | Working in private sector, multinational | Group Level Director of a multinational company; in a transitional period at the time of the interview, moving to being self employed. In her early career she ran her own business. Brought up by her maternal grandmother from being 6 days old. She overcame cancer at 18 years old, has more recently been diagnosed with cancer again. Married with no children and lives in the North of England. |
| Tracey | Mid 40s | Working in private sector, multinational | Director role, as a recent promotion, in a multinational company. Her career has meant she has moved around the UK. She is divorced and has two children. She is still close with her friends from primary school. |
| Sharon | Late 40s | Late 40s, working in public sector, Council | Senior management role in a Council. Her career has been varied including working in banking and as a Director in a 3rd sector organisation. She has one child with ex-husband and recently married her childhood sweetheart! Came to higher education later in her career and achieved a BA (Hons) in 2013 and then an MBA in 2018. She is from, and continues to live, in the North of England, in the town she grew up in. |

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# An example of the critical events life history form

| Year | Age | Any significant events for you - please note them in the years | Historical Context |
|------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1989 | 18 | Hospital – ovarian cancer | Fall of Berlin Wall<br>Hillsborough Disaster |
| 1990 | 19 | | Mad Cow Disease<br>Thatcher resigns |
| 1991 | 20 | | Gulf War |
| 1992 | 21 | 21st birthday – limo & dinner in XXX | John Major elected |
| 1993 | 22 | | Jamie Bulger murder<br>Waco Tragedy |
| 1994 | 23 | Met partner at XX ice rink | Channel Tunnel opens |
| 1995 | 24 | Moved from XX to XX – moved in with partner (Flat)<br>Maldives with partner - Monsoon | Barings Bank fails<br>OJ Simpson Trial |
| 1996 | 25 | | Dunblane Masacre<br>Charles and Di divorce |
| 1997 | 26 | Bahamas with partner - Hurricane | Tony Blair elected<br>Lady Diana car crash |
| 1998 | 27 | | Good Friday agreement |
| 1999 | 28 | Bought house in XX with partner<br>Got engaged to partner | Min. Wage introduced<br>Y2K panic |
| 2000 | 29 | Married partner in St Lucia<br>Moved gran from XX to XX | Millenium Dome<br>Dr. Shipman |
| 2001 | 30 | | Foot and Mouth<br>9/11 Tragedy<br>Blair re-elected |
| 2002 | 31 | Grandma died after having a stroke<br>Fell out with mother | Common Wealth Games Manchester<br>Brazil win World Cup |

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**Artefacts**
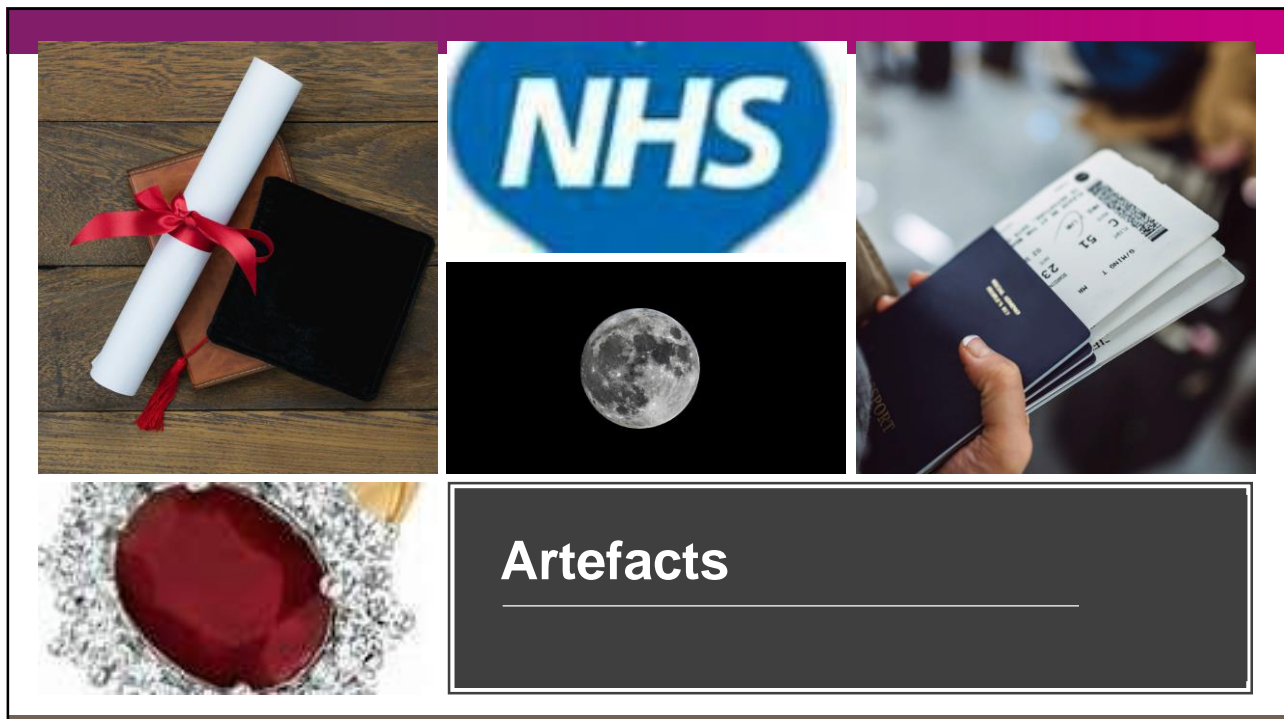
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# Analysis and Stories

- The following section draws on

  - **Stage 1:** Listening for the plots: In keeping with the concept of storytelling, the defined plots have taken on the mantle of the start, the middle and the end, as all great stories have! The focus is on the voices here, as Gilligan et al (2006:257) referred to the *"identification of stories being told"*

    - Plot 1: The Matriarch - early influence;

    - Plot 2: On the journey - early inspiration; and

    - Plot 3: Becoming the role model/mentor/coach.

  - **Stage 2:** Composing an analysis: this stage focused on pulling the stories together and the learning in relation to their shared stories.

  - This element will explore both the positive and negative experiences of these female leaders. There were also stories on the choice of mentor (Rutkove, 2016); whether gender influenced this (Tolar, 2012); and whether the relationships were more formal, or informal (Townsend, 2002); sponsorship (Merrick, 2017) or developmental mentoring (Garvey, 2014), and the benefits felt from their experiences.

# Plot 1: The Matriarch - early influence
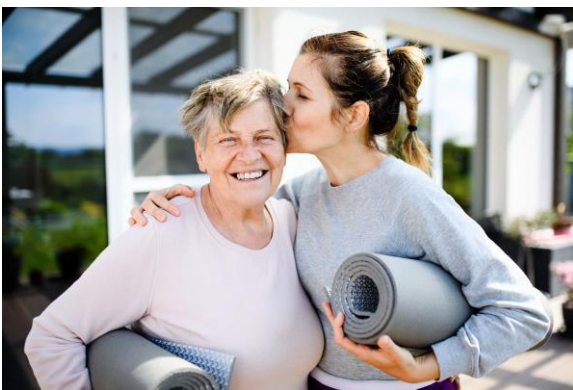
"My mum was my role model. She was in a generation where women didn't work, and necessarily work full-time and have good jobs. And despite all that, she went to night school, she went to the poly, to XXX Polytechnic, and got her diploma. And she did her A Levels part time, and she did really well in her role" (Sharon)."

.. "Because I don't want them to suffer, and I don't want them… they don't get everything; I don't spoil them. But they need to have the support at home, and they need to have a role model to look at; because their dad isn't. So, they have to… I feel like I have to do all of that; which puts a lot on my shoulders … but there isn't anyone else." (Tracey)

"My grandma always brought me up to be very positive…Things can upset you; things can affect you for a period of time, but actually you've always got to look at the positivity, you've always got to be able to stand on your own two feet, be independent and just move through it and use those examples so that you can teach other people how they can come through things. I think, for me, it's made me very strong, so I can get over things quite easily." (Claire)

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# Plot 2: On the journey - early inspiration



- *"when I was about 19, 20, I went for an interview in procurement, because I'd been studying to be an accountant at that point. And I met this guy who was then to be my boss for about 12 years, who was just larger than life. And he just really took me under his wing and really worked hard to make me really the person that I am today, or part of the person that I was today." (Amy)*

- *[early career] "I was in a job where I was doing a lot of work on quality improvement. And the organisation had a management consultant called Jane. And she did a lot of work with us on it…and she was a really flamboyant woman and encouraged me to be ambitious and think more about what I could achieve and gave me a lot of feedback about what I was doing well and built up my confidence quite a bit. And I've stayed in touch with her over the years, only in passing, but she likes to hear what I'm up to and she's been long-retired by now." (Michelle)*

- *"… it wasn't until I kind of left school, went to work, that I felt I became a bit like me again and a bit like I'd got something to offer … particularly my first job, I remember working with a female manager and her really building my confidence back up again and saying, "You can do this, you can achieve, you can do these things," and her helping me to get back on that confidence track." (Jane)*

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# Plot 2: On the journey - early inspiration – lack of mentors

- *"So, I started at 18, and I was promoted when I was 24, so it was six years really, just messing around. And if I'd had got somebody coaching me and mentoring me and saying, "Come on.. you could do this, or you could do that. Have you thought about that?" It would have been different, and I could have got that first promotion a bit earlier. I wouldn't say I was lacking self-confidence back then." (Sharon)*

- *"And to have somebody from an early age would have definitely helped in my career. I wouldn't have made the choices I made if I had a mentor who I could have just had a frank, open conversation with. They'd have, I'd have changed doing what I was doing." (Tracey)*



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# Plot 3: Becoming the role model, coach or mentor

- *"Being a female role model is becoming really important to me now. And I've now got a mentee, who is female, and she's just wonderful, and I really want to do the best job I can, to give her all of the access to things that she hasn't got access to at the moment." (Amy)*

- *"I've mentored about three or more, over time. I've got one or two that are ongoing. But they're all women, yeah. Because I think in that sense, what's happening within our company - the women in the company - are all looking for a female mentor." (Tracey)*

- *"a lovely lady, only a junior at the time, she was struggling because she was in clinic, in a role that was all very male. She wanted to learn, she wanted to progress, she felt that she was being stifled by her boss. He did not want to take her on, he was forced. She wanted to progress, develop, move forward, and she wanted some hints and tips, initially, about how she could do it. From there we sort of developed, I got her onto an IDP, onto a learning plan. We got her onto a training scheme at work, where she was doing her degree. She now heads up, at a European level, a programme management team." (Claire)*

- *"I think over the years I've offered support to people either who have asked for it, or if they've been in my team and they're moving on and I've said, 'If you want to come and have a bit of chat and mentoring or a bit of support, coaching, whatever you want to call it.' So, I've done a bit of that and I suppose I try and take a lead in managing a coaching style, which has been something I've had to work hard on because my style is to say, "What you need to do is…" And, 'If I were you, I would…'."(Michelle)*

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# Story 1: Stories of coaching, mentoring and role modelling in the workplace

- **Female mentors for women:** Strong views of male dominated industries needing to have female role models and mentors for early career women (Chisholm-Burns, 2017). Claire, as an engineer and having "grown up" in a male world, was very passionate about bringing young women into the environment. Tracey reflected that her mentors have all been women, and that this had not been a conscious decision. She stated, *"they've all been strong women; that's for sure".*

Kate, as a young senior leader, identified with never having had a mentor. This is a very successful, early thirties woman, who has pushed the ceiling and achieved Director level at a young age: she wanted to be challenged, she wanted a woman that had understood her struggles, and had *"guidance and to keep challenging me and pushing me to ask me why I'm doing things. Not to just accept what I'm doing all the time… I'd go for a woman, that's been in a male dominated career, that's said, 'I'm not going to listen to this; I'm going to fight through it'* (Tolar, 2012; Czerniawska and Guzman, 2016; Jackson, 2019).

- **Career progression for women:** All the women felt that mentoring for early career women would lead to the potential for having more women in senior positions in the business. Early career mentoring can lead to increased self esteem and confidence; and therefore, open up more opportunities (Liang et al, 2002). Amy had very strong views about the benefits of women in the boardroom stating *"becoming a senior female woman because you're behaving like a man is not necessarily the right way forward. And I think having diversity in teams is really important, and I can see where I work now there's no diversity in that boardroom at all and it suffers as a result of the lack of diversity, definitely."*

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## Story 1: Stories of coaching, mentoring and role modelling in the workplace

- **Informal mentoring:** The majority talked about developing informal mentors outside of a formal scheme (Durbin, 2010; Singh et al 2002). Several of the ladies recognised the need for formal mentoring in early career, but now it would have to be about the relationship. The relationship element was driven through all their stories and how they also work with their mentees. She didn't focus just on hierarchical level, although this was a consideration: *"their skills and the kind of relationship rather than what they'd actually achieved. I think if they can ask me the right questions then it'd be fine. But I guess somebody that's been potentially higher in an organisation and has come across some of the challenges that I get, that'd be helpful."* Her new organisation had a specific mentoring engagement with Women Ahead, and she was being actively encouraged to join this when she arrived, and the mentor would be her choice. she said that she needed to meet people first before she would choose as she needed to understand whether she would be happy speaking to them (Noe, 1988).

- **Need for mentoring in senior career:** Most of them felt they would need mentoring for their next level positions (Czerniawska and Guzman, 2016). As Michelle takes the next step towards being a CEO she would make her choice of mentor by looking *"at the leader that I thought mirrored some of the values and behaviours that I have and the type of leader I would want to be"* which reiterates the need for relationship and to be organised by the individual not a formal scheme.

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## Story 2: Stories of 'Confidence'

- **Impostor phenomenon:** Senior women, top of their career, still allowing negative self talk to influence their confidence in the workplace (Sherman, 2013). Several of the women used the term "impostor". Four of the interviewees had been having coaching to address this. Kate, as the youngest director, talked about changing jobs and the impact her previous CEO had on her confidence levels. Her view was she wanted to start the new job and "… *just be me on a good day. Not me on the day when I feel like I've got impostor syndrome. I just want to do that all the time".*

- **Impact of upbringing:** Views of how women were seen in the family has impacted on performance now and how easily their confidence can go up and down. Jane felt her upbringing left her with a low sense of confidence, she was never seen to be as good as her brother "… *I became quite reserved, quite quiet, never spoke; and, I suppose, that did have an implication on my confidence"* She also referred to a feedback from a male colleagues recently and said upbringing *"I'm feeling like there's this link that I've heard from childhood to now, of a man saying that you're not good enough".*

- **Boosting Confidence:** For some of the ladies, a recent coaching engagement has enhanced their confidence and they were feeling that they had started to rebuild. Tracey discussed having been through dark times both personally and professionally and the knock she had taken but through coaching and returning university to study for an MBA she said "*it's made my confidence really grow again. And it's given me some of me back again."*

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# Story 2: Stories of 'Confidence'

- **Points of criticism:** Several of the ladies talked about receiving negative feedback and taking this to heart, Michelle said she manages 1500 staff but sometimes … **"*there are times when it does knock my own confidence and then, it even makes me question whether I do know what I'm doing*"**

- **Feeling undermined in the workplace:** Claire had been through a difficult situation in the workplace and discussed some horrendous accusations being thrown at her, and these had been made by one of her female members of staff, this has left her feeling under confident. She found it hard to believe that a woman could do this to another woman in this male dominated environment. *I think that's what knocked my confidence, being, 'How could people do that to people?'"* She has started to reflect back on the situation and stated that she is *"feeling my least confident. I actually find that sometimes, in the morning, I get up and I go, 'Oh, god!' I've never, ever felt like this before"* I could feel through the interview that this was not her natural position, this felt confusing to her, this sense of lack of confidence, and that she is now on a "rebuild" phase (Kübler-Ross,1969); there is a sense of an ending and loss and a rebuild of her own work and life persona.

- **Perception of gender difference:** Some of the women felt like men exuded more confidence in the organisation but also the willingness to be vulnerable was a potential strength of female leaders. This concurred with Carlin et al (2018:765) who discussed the need to discourage female practice of "equating low confidence with low competence". *"I think men, generally, have more confidence and far more bravado about the whole thing. Whereas a woman [would say].., 'I just don't know what I'm doing. Can you help me?' They'll be much more open to talking and listening; whereas blokes are more guarded, and they don't want to look weak. This is the way I would see it" (Tracey)*

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## Objective 1: Explore life histories to understand significant people and events in the lives of female leaders and the influence these have had

The concept of the early matriarchal role model and upbringing has had an impact on who these women are today in their roles as female leaders. This linked with research of Mendez-Morse (2004), in that their strongest role model and first mentor was their 'mother'.

The impact these people had on their lives and their careers, either consciously or subconsciously, the idea of the family member either saying they could be whatever they wanted to be or reminding them of their background and not encouraging them to be something different!

Their critical events diaries also highlighted key turning points in their lives and careers, this could have been through having children, divorce or physically moving from one end of the country to another for a job. The drive and determination came from their early influences.

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## Objective 2: Understand whether female leaders have engaged in coaching or mentoring (or both) either formally or informally

Boundaries blurred in terms of who they considered to be mentors and the use of the term role model, mentor and coach; which for some of them were used interchangeably (Shapiro et al, 1978; Spriezer, 1981; Levison et al, 1991; Townsend, 2002; Mendez-Morse, 2004; Fried and MacCleane, 2009; DiRenzoe et al, 2013; Stanton-Salazar and Spina, 2013; Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014) .

In some organisations, once they have reached a senior management level, mentoring was no longer seen as being important, whereas this research evidenced, at this stage in their careers, it is more important to have a mentor from a more developmental, than a sponsorship position (Ehrich, 2008) .

There also seemed to be much more focus on the benefits of an informal mentoring relationship (Byman, 2015), perhaps a more focused 'group mentoring' or 'peer-mentoring' model for women may be a useful step forward and should be something to be considered (Benjamin and Rojas, 2018; Buechel et al, 2018). Similarly, Jackson's (2019) PhD study on women in leadership and mentoring found that informal mentoring, through her research with 10 women, was the most commonly discussed and useful relationship.

There was also a need for the early career sponsorship mentoring. Gender did not seem to play a big part in this, however having someone that can help to navigate the organisation in early career felt beneficial for these women, in terms of early confidence; and for some of the women felt this would have expedited their career advancement (Sandberg, 2013, Groysberg and Bell, 2012, Scheepers, 2018).

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## Objective 3: Analyse whether gender influences the choice of coach/mentor/role model

Gender has been an interesting discussion throughout. My conclusion would be that the majority of the female leaders' stories involved influential women in their lives

However, this has not necessarily impacted on their choices of mentor.

For some of them, having a more sponsorship mentoring relationship within their organisation in early career has been more beneficial, whist for others having a female role model that represents their values and morals, has been their inspiration (Tolar, 2012; Chisholm-Burn, 2017; Jackson, 2019) .

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# Recommendations

- The stories that were told have given an insight into the views of senior female leaders and consideration needs to be given to an approach which allows mentees the opportunity to source a mentor through a more informal method and to not design a one size fits all approach to coaching and mentoring (Tolar, 2012)

- Sponsorship or protégé mentors in early career women can help with confidence and the organisational navigation and career progression (Sandberg, 2013; Groysberg and Bell, 2012; Scheepers, 2018)

- There needs to be consideration of gender, in terms of mentor choice, if there is a more formal scheme ((Tolar, 2012; Chisholm-Burn, 2017; Jackson, 2019))

- Coaches and mentors need to be trained; this is not about ego!

- Have an option for external mentoring or coaching. Organisations need to encourage external networking for staff to allow them to meet different people from different industries to expand their own knowledge, and perhaps through those wider networks they would establish the more informal mentoring networks. I recognise this may be hard to manage, but by encouraging external networks, there is potential for more informal peer to peer mentoring which can be beneficial for female leaders later in their career (Czerniawska and Guzman, 2016).

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# Questions/Feedback



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On Becoming a Coach: Narratives of Learning and Development

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<u>Abstract #61</u>

Coach maturation: understanding the why, what and how has the potential to influence the coaching profession in its own journey of professionalisation. This paper seeks to provide some insight to how experienced coaches understand their own development processes. With a few exceptions, little has been published on coach development and the literature evidences its strong emphasis on coachee development leaving a vital knowledge gap in coaches' learning and development. This study aims to address this void by exploring experienced coaches' experience of their developmental journeys by employing Interpretative Phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a research methodology. We purposively selected 46 experienced coaches and interviewed 32 using semi-structured interviews. The findings appeared as a series of narratives, nonlinear, and no logical sequence, it could be defined as 'messy'. The narratives are: Vehicles of Development, Awareness, Letting Go, Ethical Practice and Characteristics of the Becoming of a Coach. These narratives collectively explain how coaches subjectively approach their often-unplanned development. The findings offer a unique research-based contribution to the literature on coach development with implications for coach education.

<u>Key words</u>: Coach Development, Learning, Development, Narratives, Coaching

<u>Paper</u> - On Becoming a Coach: Narratives of Learning and Development

**Introduction**

Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) published a paper online on a 'tentative concept of coach maturity' (see Figure 1).

| Coaching approach | Style | Critical questions |
|---|---|---|
| Models-based | Control | How do I take them where I think they need to go? <br><br> How do I adapt my technique or model to this circumstance? |
| Process-based | Contain | How do I give enough control to the client and still retain a purposeful conversation? <br><br> What's the best way to apply my process in this instance? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Philosophy-base | Facilitate | What can I do to help the client do this for themselves?<br><br>How do I contextualise the client's issue within the perspective of my philosophy or discipline? |
| Systemic eclectic | Enable | Are we both relaxed enough to allow the issue and the solution to emerge in whatever way they will?<br><br>Do I need to apply any techniques or processes at all? If I do, what does the client context tell me about how to select from the wide choice available to |

Figure 1 The Coach Maturity Stages Model (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011)

Existing coaching competence frameworks for coaches are based on 'stages of development' (Garvey, 2017). Whilst this approach to learning has advantages, particularly in relation to mapping progression in a hierarchical manner, it also has disadvantages. These include the idea that we learn in a linear fashion; one step at a time, that it is not possible to learn things higher up the hierarchy unless one learns the earlier stages first or that people may plateau and not progress. From experience, these are unsubstantiated assumptions. As Rajasinghe and Allen (2020) note, these models tend to 'objectify' learning and minimise the social and subjective nature of coaches' development.

This paper offers a research-based contribution to the literature on the coach's development and raises questions about the adequacy of existing stage-based competence frameworks. We also shed light on the tentative concept of 'coach maturity'.

This study aims to capture the essence of coach development by exploring the narratives of experienced coaches, through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

We interviewed thirty-two experienced coaches to address the question:

*'How do coaches interpret their development journey?'.*

The paper has six parts: A short literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, implications and conclusion.

**Literature Review**

This brief literature review focuses primarily on coach development. Whilst there seems a paucity of work in this area, (for example, Bachkirova and Lawton-Smith, 2015; Garvey, 2017). We draw on what is available and make use of 'proxy' writings.

First, the idea of maturity. Bond (2013.p.9) suggests that 'maturity' is not a destination or a static state, as Figure 1 suggests, it is a *"quality of judgement akin to wisdom"* and it is about ethical judgements in relation to the *"quality of engagement in how we respond to the challenges of professional life."* (Bond, 2013. p. 10).

Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) express concern that policy makers in the coaching bodies

appear to *'lack interest'* (p.124) in alternative approaches to competency frameworks. Drake, (2011:143) suggests that competency frameworks may be helpful in supporting novice coaches to enter the field but more experienced coaches may *'break'* or *'transcend'* these basic frameworks.

A competence-based approach may imply a 'one best way' to coach. Hurlow, (2022:27) states that coaching bodies have a '*powerful role'* in '*legitimizing particular forms of coaching'*. She goes on to say that, rather than promote the 'one best way', there is a need for them to *'promote a plurality of coaching approaches.'*

This paper seeks the pluralities of coaching approaches from a developmental point of view through the detailed analysis of the learning experiences of experienced coaches.

In seeking pluralities, the question of how coaches develop is important. Huggin, Klar, and Andreoli (2021: 489) suggest that coaches tend to *'learn by doing'.* The early learning theorist, Dewey proposed a 'learning by doing' approach with a strong emphasis on problem solving and critical reflective thinking.

Dewey (1896) also developed the idea of a 'reflex arc'. Here, he argues against the standard 'conditioned response' to learning that the behaviourist psychologists advocated and instead, proposed that experience influences the response to any given stimulus. In this way Dewey raised the possibility that learning is not predictable, in the way early behaviourists suggested but, rather, learning is 'emergent'. Hurlow (2022) adds that a behaviourist influenced approach to coaching, like a competence-based approach, emphasises a cause-and-effect application of tools and techniques that leads to the assumption that a specific tool or technique is what brings about change in the coachee. de Haan and Gannon, (2017) argue that coaching is allied to therapy and the therapist, Carl Rogers (1954) states that *'No approach which relies upon knowledge, upon training, upon the acceptance of something that is 'taught', is of any use.'* (p.2) He goes on to say that such approaches achieve little but short-lived *'temporal change'.* He argues that real change comes through the *'experience of the relationship'* (p. 2).

This paper attempts to address these issues.

Jarvis (1992) argues that learning for adults is complex. He suggests that *'people do not always learn from experience'* (p.72). He emphasises 'free will' in his frameworks of learning and argues that to learn reflectively is an active choice that is like 'contemplation'. This has spiritual connotations associated with activities such as meditation, philosophical reasoning and other deep thought processes akin to mindfulness.

De Haan (2008) notes that *'the quality of an experienced coach's work is determined primarily by their ability to tolerate tension and deliberately inquire into tensions'* (p.106). Clearly coaches do work with tensions and this may be stressful for them. Therefore, Corrie and Kovacs, (2022) argue that self-care for coaches matters to enable them to work at their best. Additional to 'self-care' coaches will also need to take care of their coachees in tense situations. Self-care is a developmental and ethical issue.

Schon's (1983) position on reflection is that it is an artistic process, applied through intuition, based on accumulated experience and the confidence that this may bring. This is what others (see: Harrison and Smith, 2001) refer to as practical judgement.

The idea of 'practical judgement' is rooted in Aristotle's concern with ethical inquiry and what it

takes to lead a good life.  He presented three main elements to learning.

- Episteme - scientific theories and analysis
- Techne - craft skills and mastery
- Phronesis - practical wisdom related to dealing ethically with context, practice and experience

He saw these as intertwined and strongly related to virtuous thinking abilities. Current research (Oishi et al., 2020) suggests that people strive for a happy, meaningful life with psychological richness. Coaching may play a role here and this takes coaching beyond the realms of performance improvement, to include wellbeing (Atad, Smith and Green, 2021) and into what Western (2012) refers to as a 'soul guide'. This is where the coach works with 'the interior aspects of the self' (p.132). This also has implications for coach development as the coach becomes more aware of themselves in their role.

Ting-Toomey, (1999) argues that human identity is created through reflection within a cultural setting through social interaction in the search for the human needs of identity security, trust, inclusion, connectedness and stability. It is possible that coaches develop an identity over time and this study seeks to shed some light on this phenomenon.

In considering identity through the lens of development, the etymology of the word 'develop' means to 'unroll, unfold, or 'undo' (Nicholson & Carroll, 2013). This means that development is about creating an identity by embracing something new as well as 'let something go.' According to Nicholson & Carroll, (2013) this also needs to be done within an understanding of the role of power in someone's identity. This may mean developing an *'internal locus of evaluation'* (Rogers, 1954: 19) where the individual takes personal control of their options and choices. 'Power', for example the 'one best way' approach, influences these choices and to develop a person may need to 'let go' of something that has previously contributed to their identity. As Nicholson & Carroll (2013:1237) state, '*letting go, however, is more than role related and involves redefining success and gaining confidence in new practices.'* This study relates to this concept.

Returning to the idea of 'reflection', Hawkins and Smith (2006) argue that supervision plays an important role in facilitating self-reflection and developing 'mature' practice. Hodge (2016) suggests that supervision not only supports the coach's development but helps with the coach's wellbeing and de Estevan-Ubeda (2018:127) in a study on the developmental narratives of coach supervisors suggests that *'learning from life itself'* is a major part of a supervisor's development. Campone and Awal (2012) consider the experiences of coaches and how these impact on their practice. They posit that a stressful personal experience may impact on a coach's ability to be self-aware and empathetic. Their study suggests that personal life events play a large part in a coach's development and have more impact than formal training.

Reflection then appears as a central element in human development and therefore in coach development. It may lead to greater self-awareness, which may in turn facilitate the coach's ability to cope with the stresses of the role. The coach, reflecting on their experiences, in the way they may help others to reflect and reframe, offers a vehicle for the coach's own development. Reflection could develop the ability for the coach to take care of themselves as well as others. Further, development may also mean letting go and the development of greater awareness and this may lead to the coach being more able to develop their 'practical wisdom' and act in the moment for their coachee's benefit.

**Methodology**

This, explanatory study, aims to develop a deeper understanding of how coaches make sense of their development. The source of knowledge for this is the interpretations of individual coach's experience. Bachkirova and Kauffman, (2008) suggest this is a valid way of knowing in coaching research. The study draws on interview data with detail and rigour to access this knowledge (Brocki and Wearden, 2006). It is, therefore, an inductive inquiry.

IPA informs this study. IPA is a health psychological qualitative research methodology. Other disciplines now use IPA (Wagstaff et al., 2014) including coaching research.

Three philosophical underpinnings inform IPA; phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. These philosophical stances relate to the individual coaches (Idiography), their experiences of their development (Phenomenology) and how they interpret these experiences (Hermeneutics) (See Rajasinghe, Aluthgama-Baduge and Mulholland., 2021).

IPA's position on phenomenology is the 'lived experience of human beings' (see Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) and this helps us to place the coach's experience as the phenomenon of interest.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Forty-six experienced international coaches were purposively (see Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) invited for the study. Thirty-two took part. IPA places emphasis on the richness and the depth of the data rather than the number of participants (Gray, 2014). This is a large sample for an IPA study. Seve researchers conducted the study with each interviewing up to four coaches each using the same semi- structured interview schedule.

The data analysis was conducted in four phases explained below.

| The Phases of Analysis | Description |
|---|---|
| Phase 1 | Each researcher analysed their own interviews following Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) data analysis guidance. This phase produced six different tables of themes with subordinate themes. |
| Phase 2 | One researcher engaged with the outcomes of the first phase and developed ten super-ordinate themes. This level of interpretation offers a new and different perspective on the IPA process of double hermeneutics. It was an important milestone of the study that provided us direction for another level of deeper analysis. |

| Phase 3 | We collectively selected four key themes that were more closely linked to the research question. In pairs, we returned to the transcripts of all the interviews. This step shows our continuous engagement with the hermeneutic circle. We engaged with the whole to understand the parts and parts to understand the whole (Wagstaff and Williams, 2014). During the analysis process, techniques such as abstraction, submission, contextualisation and numeration were used (see Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). However, we have not placed much emphasis on numeration. |
|---|---|
| Phase 4 | As a group, we met and engaged in detailed discussions on several occasions about what the pairs had interpreted and refined the themes further. We consider that our approach presents an innovative to IPA and responds to Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) call to innovate within the methodology. |

Table 1: Analysis Process

**Limitations**

This IPA study has a relatively large sample. However, statistical generalization is not part of the IPA philosophy (see, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.110). Positivist researchers may find this problematic (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Despite this, we claim that our findings may be transferable to other settings. Gray (2014) suggest that the sample should be enough to address the research question. We believe this is the case here.

IPA invites readers to play a role in the hermeneutic cycle. In IPA terms, interpretations from the readers' perspectives are legitimate.

In the second and third phases, the research team used its collective judgement to interpret the data. This may lead to different individual interpretations of the data. However, to mitigate this potential, we continued to collectively discuss and reflect on the purpose of our study, the research question and our own backgrounds. We accept our collective role in co-constructing meaning by interpreting each participant's understanding of their experiences (Wagstaff and Williams, 2014).

IPA's data collection conventions of semi-structured interviews were the only data collection method (see Rajasinghe, Aluthgama-Baduge, and Mulholland, 2021) and we did not triangulate. From a positivistic position this could be a limitation. In IPA, language and the interpretation of language is key (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). We endorse Rajasinghe's (2020, p.185) notion that *'communicating experiences through language is human; therefore, how people construct meaning to their experience appears a valid way of knowing rather than a limitation.'*

There is the potential for self-reported bias in the sample. Coaching was a source of income for the majority. Willig, (2014) suggests that IPA philosophy takes a more empathetic and humane approach to this and that researchers should trust their participants rather than being suspicious about them.

**Findings**

To help the reader to play a role in the hermeneutic dialogue, we present the findings *'in a manner that is engaging, coherent and accessible'* (Gray, 2014, p.632); mindful that the analysis *'is of no value unless (...) readers can make some sense of it too'* (Smith, Flower, Larkin., 2009, p.109). The themes are not presented hierarchically. Smith, Flower and Larkin, (2009) suggest honouring

individual participants as well as the themes.  Due to the relatively large sample of participants, we prioritised the themes over the individual participants to help us to both make sense of the findings and to address the research question. We identified five key themes as follows:

- Vehicles of Development
- Narratives of Awareness
- Narratives of Letting Go
- Ethical Practice
- Narratives of Becoming a Coach

**Theme: Vehicles of Development (with seven sub-themes)**

The study revealed that development is facilitated through a suite of processes that the coach individualises for themselves.

1. Intentionality

The findings suggest that the coaches' 'intentionality' is at the heart of their development. Coaches' development was found to be personal, professional and ongoing. Coach C9 said: *"... coach development, I do think it's sort of the action reflection cycle (...). That you have to be doing coaching, experimenting with things and then reflecting and learning from it or getting feedback. And you've got to do a lot of repetitions."*.

2. Supervision

This appears as a major development practice for experienced coaches. D1 stated that they have *"spent a heap of money on supervision. (...) I always have supervision."* and another, C1 noted: *"supervision is essentially, it's a reflective practice…"*.

Coaches also spoke of the safe space supervision creates to enable challenge and new perspectives. C1 describes *"Certainly, my supervisors (...) have played a role. (…) one, (...) was helpful for me in being able to challenge effectively (...)[another] was fantastic in helping me understand (…) how a person was a sum of her multiple systems"*.

Coach C3 stated that: *"supervision (...)"* enabled *"starting to trust who I am as a coach"*.

C3 said: *"I think supervision changes over the years (...). I think at the beginning, you want supervision to be the sort of what should I have done? And I think it shifts much more to Who were you in that conversation? And (...) where are you bringing the most of yourself (...)?"*

C4 said: *"My formal supervision [is] absolutely invaluable to me. And, and that's, (...) deepened over time. so, it's a great place for reflecting"*

3. Work on Self
   **Reflection**

   This can be either structured or emergent. C9 said:  *"…ongoing reflection, I think, is a critical part of coaching development."*

   **Writing**

   Writing is used regularly.  Some examples being:

   Journaling *"reflective processes of journaling"* (C5):

Writing and research *"I do a lot of writing the research (…) a very reflective process, which I think is part of my learning and development"* (P4):

Creating workshops, writing books and articles *"[creating] workshops for people putting the material together, writing about it. When you put it down in writing, you've really got to look, does that hang together? Or what are the other options?".* C3*: "the other thing that's probably increased my knowledge is writing the books"* and *"articles on coaching"* (C4).

**Therapy**

This can be a vehicle to help make sense of life experiences that support self-discovery: *"I spent quite a lot of time in counselling, and therapy, and I found that very helpful. (…) I know that helps me as a coach, as much as I do it for myself. "*(P9),

4. Experience and practical stimulus.

Coaches learn from coachees: P3 *"… and honestly, I learned a lot from my clients."* D3 supports this and said: *"Everything I know, I learned from them [coachee]".*

The variety of settings in which coaching takes place influences their development: D6 said: *"when you are working with an individual client who hires you, you deal with the client. So, when you start working for a corporation, you also deal with the corporation. (…)So in terms of professional development, (…) requires of you a different set [of] capacities, or and (…) skill.".*

Settings can also be across national borders; *"I went to the USA, to California to study, I went to the UK, I went to Spain, I went to France, I went to Belgium, and [other countries]"* (C2).

Coaches also develop through engaging in other learning activities, C9: *"I also got really into pedagogy just because I'm a researcher and a teacher and a trainer. And I just started making more and more links to coaching."*. Being trained in a different profession while undertaking coach training *"I was coaching, internally full time at the company, I worked for the healthcare company. So, I was being trained and then coaching in parallel."* (E2).

Insight and development also comes from feedback. *"The feedback that I get is always, (pause) I have a very good mixture of challenge and support"* (P4). and *"to see your experience refracted through the other people in the group and to notice your own insecurities and your own projections and assumptions, (…), it was huge. (…) in learning. (…)It was really difficult."* (C4).

C5 highlights exploring psychological vulnerabilities: *"and the coach supervision process often also looked at what were triggers for me. it's definitely prepared mentally and emotionally, way more than I did years back."*

5. Acquiring repertoire.

Coaches show a predilection for ongoing development both formally and informally. Formal development can be short courses, a degree course or a PhD. *"So, I've done a lot of short courses and different programmes and some of them have been more influential. (…) My PhD in coaching, so my own learning, (…)."* (C5). And as coach D7 recounted *"So I got my counselling, certifications, and my life coaching at the same time, and thought I was going to go into private practice. (…) then I would get into executive coaching, I went back and did some more training"*.

The effect of higher academic long-term education was influential on D6: *"doctoral research was absolutely transformative for me. (...) because I think what happens is I think that practitioners are disconnected from research".*

Intentional regular informal education such as reading articles, books, listening to webinars for example *"also reading articles and, and books"* (P3) and *"Reading is also something that I do, as a practice, every day, I read something. If I don't read something, it's because I'm listening to a webinar"* (D6).

6. Teacher as learner

The participants learned by teaching and supervising.

*C7: "you can learn by teaching a lot, because you have to teach you have to know it."*

*D3: "I can't exist without learning. I can't exist without converting that learning into teaching."*

*C8: "supervising others (...) sometimes some clients do present me with challenges, (...)that I've yet not yet faced and I start to also learn as well.".*

P3 said: *"I know I'm learning from my supervisees, the sorts of experiences they're having".*

7. The coach in the coach community

This can take place at formal or informal events such as coaching conferences and it involves dialogue and learning from colleagues and peers.

E1: *"So learning from other practitioners"* and C9: *"I have a lot of those conversations with people that are extraordinarily thoughtful, [with substantial experience] (...) and we're just having a different kind of conversation, like I don't think novices and sometimes I don't even think competent coaches can engage in that conversation."* C9 again: *"with Master coaches, about the very fundamental nuances of coaching."* and D1 saying: *"informally, (...) I have been involved in peer learning groups, and our action learning sets, or whatever you want to call them. I cross pollinate with other industries."*

P4 said: *"going to conferences, watching people do coaching, (...) I always learn, (...)"*

**Theme: Narratives of Awareness (six sub-themes)**

The interviewees shared stories of self-awareness by reporting moments where they enhanced self-understanding. This includes a sense of a discovery of identity and purpose. C9 said:

*"I understood early on that I didn't want to do therapy for a living, I didn't want to sit in a room with people who are depressed and anxious. Even though I do believe that that is a noble endeavour, I knew it was not for me."*

The participants noted that discovering boundaries and motivations, appears to enhance their understanding of what coaching approach fits them best in different circumstances.

P3: *"Who you are is how you coach, starting that sort of process of saying this, this is who I'm right for. And this is what I'm not right for."*

Participants highlighted a reflective awareness as a process of getting more self-understanding.

C4: *"that sort of reflective piece becomes important and what are my blind spots? What are the things that get in my own way, in terms of me being successful helping other people"?*

Additionally, participants spoke of noticing the inner dialogue, embracing vulnerability and accepting humanness and this led to their enhanced experience. P4 said:

*"Learn to be more compassionate with yourself and human"*

Self-awareness narratives also present six different forms of awareness in no order.

**1. Awareness in the moment**, "*happens in an instant, it's like lightning, mind shifts, and there is that blinding lightning, which strikes you and opens you up"* (D3).

**2. Intuitive awareness** which is a form of listening, knowledge and information that influences coaching. P6 believes intuitive awareness grows with experience: *"as I've just got more experienced, I think my coaching is just as informed, but it's just more intuitive",* and *"I really trust my intuition"* and C2: *"I'm starting listening, I'm starting seeing things that I was not aware."* This requires being mindful in the moment, C1: *" So I become simultaneously more mindful, and yet so zoned in that I'm not mindful of my mindfulness"* and listening to all parts of the self where the intuition is presenting itself *"paying more attention, perhaps in my own reactions or, or happenings within myself and putting that in"* (C1). *"But that intuition is really where some of that masterful stuff happens."* (C9).

**3. Reflective awareness** E5 raised questioning their practice: *"And of course, reflecting. How did I do that in the past? What kind of approach would I have chosen [in the past] Is that different from how I do things now? Is that related to age? Is that related to my experience, life experience? Or is that related to two things I learned?"* and C1 said: *"questioning myself as to how I was turning up in the coaching.".*

**4. Awareness of boundaries** C5: *"And it's linked to that one of taking too much responsibility is that I care deeply about each of my clients, and sometimes managing my own boundaries".*

**5. General and systemic awareness** Some interviewees mentioned that awareness of energy generates resources for their coaching practice and for life. C7 said: *"all this understanding, (...) I'm living it, embodying it, and so I have become, like, a source of energy (...). I see that way that I radiate energy, (...) and so that kind of learning, our awareness".*

This awareness helps coaches to manage energy between the coach and the coachee. C8: *"being aware of my body, my body's reaction, therefore what signals their body",* and P7: *"to actually integrate all aspects of my life into my coaching"* also P8: *"to be able (...) to read and respond and work at many levels within myself in response to the client, (...) in service of the client"* and as the same coach describes *"it's not a kind of linear improvement step (...) you go through complexity to come out to simplicity"* and C1: *"I needed to pay a lot more attention to the system of the client organisation".*

**6. Self-understanding** D3 said: *"Okay, I understand I'm doing wrong. (..). But there's something which is even more powerful, which is holding you back, and therefore you don't want to move forward. You don't act on it, or you act on it and try it halfheartedly"*.

Enhanced or new self-understanding enabling deeper depths of the self that influences the coaching. P4: *"The understanding of this humaneness in me, very much informs my coaching practice. I think, through (...) the years, I've been working more on self-compassion, on understanding my humanity and working from that place."*

The shift from one form of awareness to another appears to be non-linear, cyclic or 'emergent' (Dewey, 1896) and appears to be associated with the coach's intention to improve. C4: *"Question my own motivations for asking or sharing something? (...) And I think if you do that, you have to first ask yourself the question, Who is this about? So, I think I have to question myself"*.

The shift appears to be influenced by internal and external feedback in the coach's experience as well as through general life experiences. P9: *"it's not just life experience, it's also dealing with those life experiences"*.

This movement towards enhanced self-understanding is about making sense of knowledge and about things that arise in and from coaching. Someone's knowledge of themself helps them gain confidence as a coach.

**Theme: Narratives of Letting Go (three sub-themes)**

Letting go appears as a threshold to coach development. The findings show that this means the ability to 'know', be able to 'do' or 'remember' something unconsciously. The coach is often still aware of what they used to know and that awareness is part of their professional growth.

### 1. 'Holding Lightly' of skills, processes models and theories

These coaches distanced themselves from the models they previously used and trusting themselves. C5: *"I think my journey was really about trusting myself (...) then just trust the process, (…) trust the relationship"*.

D5: said that understanding is in themself rather than models: *"I'm not that hung up on the models anymore. (...), I believe that what I need lives inside of me now. I've embodied it"*.

Distancing from coaching tools seems a result of the coaches' holistic understanding of the models and theories and their application rather than of one tool. D5 said: *"They [tools] merged, so the tools, they are not tools anymore."*. C8: *"they [tools] were the thing at the front of my mind when I started coaching, and now they're in the kitbag somewhere, and I know where I keep them. (...) makes me more conscious about really, you know, being light with the tools"*.

Coaches embody or create space to hold the old and allow the new to influence how they coach and who they 'become'. C2 describes: *"To say that a coach needs to be (…), someone that is floating (…), to have space for all the old parts of me."* and C4 said: *"informs my practice, rather than interferes with it."*.

### 2. Letting go of ego

Participants said they distance themselves from their ego needs as they become more experienced coaches. C2 said:

*"I get detached from that ego needs and this appreciation, the more authentic was my process with a client because I allowed myself to be more and more vulnerable in front of the client (…) The more powerful was the coaching process, and the more my clients were able (…) to be open.".*

C5 said: *"I think my journey was really about trusting myself letting go of control."* and *letting go of feeling responsible for the coaching"* with *"the need to be in control and hold all the answers."* and P7: let go of *"the need to be right"*.

### 3. Letting go of agenda and identity

The study found that the coaches are "*going into a coaching session with absolutely no agenda. It's a blank sheet of paper"* (D8) they are *"letting go of having my own agenda"* (C5).

However, letting go of the agenda is not always letting go. Rather the acknowledgement of that in some fashion there is always an agenda and this produces a tension C9 described:

*"there's a tension between (…) two things, (…) I need to attend to your agenda. But I also have an agenda. And that agenda is essentially, to help you see things in a new way to help you to not be so myopic about your agenda, ( ) And that's my agenda".*

In addition, there was evidence of coaches letting go of either their professional or personal, or in some cases, both.  P7 said:

*"So, I certainly had to let go of the need to win (…) I've had to let go of competitiveness (…) an instinct and a habit to present myself as a sort of senior executive person, which I would have done in my previous career".*

An example of a personal identity change is found in D3, who stressed the importance of letting go of greediness by saying "*I was driven by greed ( ) you need to let go of your greed"*. This demonstrates a shift of focus from power or money to a more fulfilling life or purpose.

We noted that there are often catalysts for 'letting go' and these include a broad category of life events varying from divorce, marriage, relocating to a different country, health issues, work and family.

**Theme: Ethical Practice**

The coaches' explicit ethical thinking and decision making was found to be a rare point of reflection across our cohort. There were mentions of practices of self-care, such as regular sleep, exercise, mindfulness and pre-session self-check to clear their intrapsychic space to be coach ready. A coach's capacity in terms of psychological preparedness and wellbeing not being at its optimum caused a pause in practice - C9: *"I started getting really burnt out. And I called a timeout on my coaching practice ( )*
*I think that was a big sort of choice point for me in terms of professional maturity (…)".*

C1 said: *"I very much understood a lot better the whole notion of being fit for practice and self-care and having the energy and turning up myself resourceful to hold that space."*

The recognition of not just what is happening in the coaching but also other domains of life, such as D9: *"Sometimes I've had to recognise things that are happening in ( ) [my] private life or elsewhere and in professional life, means that for a time, I'm probably better sort of going offline (*

*.........................................................................................) And then come back to coaching, when I'm in [a] better frame of mind."*

There seem to be ethical choice points for coaches as C9 shared: *"I'm seeing some problems that are happening with my clients. And I think that I am implicated in that. And I think the most responsible thing for me to do is back off and get myself together."*

**Theme: Narratives of becoming as a coach (four sub-themes)**

The years of experience as coaches seems to have helped them to improve their 'presence and connectivity', 'trust', and to 'become more authentic in their practice'. The coaches in our sample place emphasis on holding the space. This results in improved trust of their coaching, the coaching process, themselves and the client.

Experienced coaches attempt to create or co-create a space for the coachees and focus on meaning-making, moving away from goals, C5 said: *"I think I have become a lot more, 'let's co-create the space'. And a lot more focused on meaning making for the person, as opposed to a goal direction. (   ) it's more about meaning making in the sense of what's happening, value alignment, and see myself more as a catalyst"*. However, it can be argued that intentional focus on meaning making is a goal in itself.

The coaches' increased confidence and acceptance of their vulnerabilities, through the processes outlined above, enables a safe space for reflection for both the coach and coachee, whereby novel ideas or creativity are found. C2 said:

*"I allowed myself to be more and more vulnerable in front of the client, (...). And then we experience different levels of awareness after that. Because it was more safe, become lost as a partnership (...) And we were both confident that being lost was part of the process to create [an] empty space (...) [for] something new to emerge"*.

The coach holds a space of trust and safety that is dedicated to the client. Some coaches considered themselves as the confidential space, however we interpret this to be the coach's presence enabling a sense of trust and safety. D5 reflects "*how (...) you want to be in the world and how, where do you want to get to"*.

Other coaches recounted their ability to create a space to challenge the coachees positively. The coaches say the space is informal and this helps the coachees to be themselves. The coaches also raise the use of silence as a way of facilitating space for the coachees. They say that the space enables the coach to be present as a co-creator without interference. D6 described this as: "*becoming an empty container"*. Coaches interpreted the space as a place of trust. The coaches consider this capacity to co-create, hold a safe and trusting relationship, particularly when the coaching is unclear, to be one markers of coaching at its best.

### 1. Presence and connectivity

Our participants said that they have a heightened presence and connectivity with clients. The increased focus on presence helps coaches to be more empathetic and to be relaxed yet focused. C4 said:

*"I go completely into flow. (...) And I just know, it's like, oh, that was like being plugged in. So, when I'm super focused in a room, you know, the classic flow of like, relaxed, but alert."*.

Coaches describe the need for 'connection' with all parts of themselves. This can take different forms. C2 said: *"I need to have different spaces in my life (...)to be in connection with (...) my coach part or with my professional part"*.

C1 said: that they are becoming a younger self: *"I like using playfulness in coaching"* and *"the ability to be childlike'.* C2 said*: "I need to be in connection with my inner child because I may want to be silly"*.

Coaches also mentioned the importance of 'effortless', 'natural' and 'more relaxed' engagements with their coachees.

## 2. Emphasis on Relationship

Coaches emphasise the qualities of their relationships. C5 said:

*"I think that those things have allowed me to become a much more compassionate person, a lot less judgmental (...) and probably a lot kinder. I think I'd probably value kindness, deeply"*.

C7 said: *"I stay open. You know, I feel as long as I'm on the dance floor, that's fine"*. D5 said: *"I've learned that it feels like dancing with the client. So where are they? (…) what's happening? What am I noticing? That they may not be seeing? I often coach with my eyes closed, every once in a while to go inside myself. To get my sensing [of] what's happening"*.

The focus on relationships has helped coaches to move away from problem solving and to concentrate on more balanced and equal relationships. Some coaches say that they intend to do less. D7 said: *"It's all about the connectedness and the partnership and the relationship and the focus on the person who was in front of you. So, it has been a natural evolution."*

## 3. Authenticity

The coaches also stated that they have become more authentic in their practice. Authenticity in this sense involves a coach's weaknesses, vulnerabilities and strengths. They acknowledge that experiences, sensations, knowledge, fears or dilemmas are all part of life and they embrace these rather than reject them.

Coaches reported the ability to use all their experiences in their coaching. Sometimes the painful or uncomfortable experience and these represent important transitions in their lives. Dealing with these challenges, sometimes with external support such as therapy or supervision, coaches appear to become more self–aware. Others mentioned 'mistakes' that help them to self-reflect and learn. C6 said: *"I think it's identifying those critical incidents, if you like, that actually shift you from one level of thinking about being a coach to the next level."*. Some participants also mentioned a place of discomfort and self- acceptance despite the feelings of discomfort. C1 said: *"I thought I was doing coaching at a masterful level, I'm not so. (...) It's not a comfortable place to be at all. And yet it is that discomfort it's overcoming that and being open that transforms everything. And of course, you yourself are transformed."*

Authenticity appears as an outcome of continuous cycles of engagement in development 'process tools' discussed earlier and enables the experienced coach to feel confident with their identities.

Through their efforts to 'become,' coaches have the sense they are more mindful with increased tolerance and mental agility. P5 said: *"I think I am more mindful; I am more in the present. And I think my tolerance levels, and (…) my mental agility, flexible approach to change, I think that has all just so developed in the last few years"*.

## 4. Becoming but Never Arriving

Experienced coaches appear humbled and curious by their learning, they actively engage in questioning themselves and their coaching and actively work to integrate new insights to their coaching.

The participants also agreed that they are open to new experiences and continue to improve their practice, so they continue to maintain their curiosity, energy and developmental intentions. C9 said: *"I feel what is it then about the last couple of years? If you're (…) no longer about technique, and you're not so much about process, what are you about?" (…) Feedback repetition, retrieval, spaced practice, all these kinds of things made me think more about my own coaching. I started experimenting more (…). One thing that I'm going to experiment with right now, I believe an agenda has two parts. Hey, what's the topic you want to address today? And what specifically do you want to get out of it? You know, what would be a satisfying session? I mean, that's pretty standard for people. Although I noticed that a lot of people don't do that second one. (…) I just started thinking, what if we dropped the first one? What if I don't even need to know what you're going to talk about today? What if I only had asked what would be a satisfying session to you?*

P9 illustrates the 'always becoming' concept: *"the difference between a good coach and a great coach is ongoing work on yourself, and I (…) believe that never stops"* and C9 said: *"Just the recognition that I'll [be] kind of better than I am now. I haven't arrived."*

**Discussion**

So, how *do* coaches interpret their development journey? In this substantial study, we believe that we shed light on this question.

The question of coach maturity was the starting point for this study and as Bond (2013) notes, maturity is not a destination but to do with the development of wisdom. The coaches in this study do indicate that they do have this quality. They appear to grow, albeit in different ways and through the use of different vehicles but always in a state of 'becoming' rather than arriving at 'maturity'.

It is also clear that this personal growth or development does not happen in stages, as so many models of learning suggest (Garvey, 2011), rather, development is more like Dewey's (1896) reflex arc. Here, Dewey moves away from standard stimulus and response psychology into a more nuanced and emergent theory of learning where outcomes are not predictable. The participants in this study showed that much in their development is both intentional and serendipitous. The intention of these coaches is always to be open to reflect, learn and put their learning into practice. This echoes Rogers' (1954) thought that relying on taught knowledge alone is merely *'temporal'* but that real change and development comes through the experience of relationships. Here the coaches appear to learn from their coaching encounters. However, as Jarvis (1992) reminds us, not all experiences result in learning and that contemplation on experience needs to be an active choice. Again, the coaches in this study seem to take this choice and for some it results in changes in philosophies, and a deeper, almost spiritual awakening. Contemplation may be akin to the idea of mindfulness and appears to have a number of functions in a coach's development, for example, a variety of different kinds of awareness, dealing with 'difficult issues', 'letting go' or 'holding lightly' and ultimately contributing to becoming a better person and a better coach. As de Haan (2008) tells us, an experienced coach learns to tolerate and intentionally inquire into the difficulties.

It is clear in this study that one thing that coaches 'let go of' or 'hold lightly' are the tools and techniques. They appear to learn that being with the coachee and developing a relationship is far more important for the experienced coach and beneficial for the coachee.

To return to Figure 1, whilst this study shows that the presentation and concept of this model is not the whole story, in so far as coaches do not progress in this way to a destination, it does highlight that the Critical Questions in the model do present something useful and helpful and may offer a way to contribute to becoming a coach. These questions could form the basis of a coach's ongoing development.

This study also seems to show that Huggin, Klar, and Andreoli's (2021: 489) *'learning by doing'* is the case, however, it is not just the 'doing' that counts, if it were, the learning would be about 'putting in the hours. Instead, it is within the vehicles of development, the coach's continuous and sometimes, cyclic intent, reflection and application that the learning occurs. It is this that may give some clues as to how coaches may be developed.

Through this study there is a strong theme of different forms of reflection. Schon (1983) believed that this is an artistic process that develops intuition and confidence in that intuition. With the coaches in this study claiming a shift to a greater humanness, more humility, connectedness (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and doing less by being present, evidences Schon's (1983) claim. This is also evidence of what Harrison and Smith (2001) refer to as *'practical judgement'* (phronesis)*. In this study, many of these experienced coaches have moved beyond the craft skills (techne), underpinning theories (episteme) and performance orientation into something that is more meaningful for them and their coachees. This has developed their personal and professional identities (Ting-Toomey, 1992). Part of this development appears to be the development of by equal partnerships between coach and coachee, a reduction in the power and status differentials within the relationship rather than the amount of work or effort that coach and coachee put into the relationship.

This study appears to show that 'life events' (Campone and Awal, 2012) and the coaches' reflections on play a crucial role in their development.

The theme of ethical practice, although infrequently cited by the participants, does seem to hold some importance. The research literature on coaching ethics is in its infancy. However, the question of self- care (Corrie and Kovacs, 2022) is raised by some participants and de Haan (2008) raises the issue of the stresses and strains on coaches through their practice. Some of our coaches shed some light on this issue and questioned their fitness to practice at times. This is an ethical issue and an area of further consideration.

As raised in the literature section, the word 'develop' means to undo or, as we have positioned it, 'let go'. These coaches have taken personal control (Rogers, 1954), let go or loosened their grip, recognised that there is no *'one best way'* (Hurlow, 2022) and as Nicholson and Carroll (2013) suggest, they have redefined themselves and their practice. This study clearly shows that supervision, along with other practices and highly individualised processes, play an important role in this redefinition. This appears to be a constant state of developing and never arriving.

It therefore seems like the idea of 'becoming' is a helpful concept and that the various vehicles of development, the narratives of awareness, letting go and holding lightly as well as consideration of ethical practice contribute to becoming an experienced coach, with wisdom (Bond, 2013).

**Implications**

This research raises issues about the current state of the formal market for coach training. As raised earlier in this paper, little has been published on coach development and in practice the most common approach is competency based (Garvey, 2107). This research provides some evidence that competencies may be appropriate at the start of a coach's development (Drake, 2011) but as they develop through a variety of developmental routes and experiences, the competencies are 'let go' or 'held lightly'.

There is also evidence in this study that coaches do not learn in a linear fashion or through stages and yet, even at the start of a coach's development, the assumption made by the training providers is to the contrary. Hurlow (2022:134) clearly argues that the professional bodies have powerful voices on this issue and that they have a duty to *'promote a plurality of coaching approaches.'* This is not currently the case. If *'learn by doing'* (Huggin, Klar, and Andreoli 2021: 489) is the case more widely than found in our sample, the nature and form of training needs to reflect the actual learning preferences of the coaches and a staged model of competencies may not be adequately serving their needs even as they start.

With coaching primarily as a paid activity, we wonder how sustainable coaching as a business is as coach and coachee develop an 'equal partnership'?

The question of ethics in coaching is something that has been raised in this study but it would seem that more research is needed here.

A constant theme found here is one of profound humility, or increasing humility, yet also significant confidence, while also being comfortable at times of not knowing or uncertainty. A range of reflective processes seem to contribute to the coaches' awareness and confidence in the practice. This also needs careful consideration in how coach development programmes are designed.

**Conclusion**

We started with the tentative concept of coach maturity and have found that the suggestion that this is the end game arrived at as a result of following stages is not how coaches understand their development. For them it is a continuous process of ongoing development, which includes a very wide range of individually defined processes and practices. It is both elusive and complicated, messy in fact; it is clear there is no destination and an experienced coach does not arrive at a mature state but they are always in a state of becoming.

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Presentation – On Becoming a Coach: Narratives of Learning and Development
Included below.

# The Becoming of a Coach: Narratives of Learning and Development

Rajasinghe, D., Garvey, B., Smith, W-A., Burt, S., Barosa-Pereira, A., Clutterbuck, D. & Zoltán, C., Griffin, E.



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# Contents

- Introduction
- Context
- Literature
- Methodology
- Findings
- Practical and Theoretical Implications
- Conclusion

# Introduction

- The starting point - Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) 'coach maturity'
- How experienced coaches interpret their own development process
- Little has been published
- Methodology – Interpretative Phenomenological analysis (IPA)

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# Context - Literature

- Emphasis placed on coachee development (Garvey, 2017; Bachkirova and Lawton-Smith, 2015)
- Little published on coach development; most common approach is competency based (Garvey, 2017)
- Coaching competence frameworks for coaches based on 'stages of development' (Garvey, 2017)
- These 'objectify' learning and minimise the social and subjective nature learning and development (Rajasinghe and Allen, 2020)
- Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) policy makers appear to 'lack interest' (p.124) in alternative approaches to competency frameworks.
- Drake, (2011:143) - competency frameworks helpful in supporting novice coaches but more experienced coaches may 'break' or 'transcend' these
- More research needed

# Research Question

*"How do experienced coaches interpret their development journey?"*

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# Research Methodology

**Our Interest was on**

- Individual Coaches
- Experience of experienced Coaches – as a source of knowledge
- How they Interpret their coaching experience

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

- **Ideography** – interest on individual cases
- **Phenomenology –** experience as a source of knowing
- **Hermeneutics** – Theory of interpretation

# Data Collection and Analysis

**Sampling**

- Purposive sampling (Gray, 2014)
- Invited 46 participants and 32 coaches accepted invitation

**Data Collection Method**

- Semi-structured interviews

**Data Analysis**

- Transcribed using Otter transcribing software
- Informed by IPA data analysis guidance (Smith et al., 2009; Rajasinghe et al., 2021)

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# Data analysis and IPA philosophies

- Data analysis is multiple level of analysis (individual cases by respecting idiographic commitments and then cross analysis)

- Initially cross analysis resulted four key themes. These themes were then further analysed by paired researchers.

- This step helped us to develop a deeper level of analysis

- Usual IPA analysis is subjected to double hermeneutics (participants interpretations interpreted by the researcher). Our study innovated here due to multiple researcher involvement in sense-making

- We continue to question our influences and made every possible effort to give priority to participant experiences

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# Findings

**Five Key themes**

- **Vehicles of Development**

  - (intentionality, supervision, work on self, experience and practical stimulus, acquiring repertoire, teacher as learner, the coach in the coaching community)

- **Narratives of Awareness**

  - (awareness in the moment, intuitive awareness, reflective awareness, awareness of boundaries, general and systemic awareness, self-understanding)

- **Narratives of Letting Go**

  - (holding lightly, letting go of ego, letting go of agenda and identity)

- **Ethical Practice**

  - (mainly about self-care and fitness to practice)

- **Narratives of Becoming a Coach**

  - (presence and connectivity, emphasis on relationship, authenticity, becoming but never arriving)

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# Coach Development

- Learn by doing
- Learning emergent
- Experience of the relationships - learning from clients
- Reflection and reflexivity
- Tolerate tensions and reflect on them
- Self-development important

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# Conclusion

- Maturity not a destination, not staged not an arrival
- Continuous process of ongoing development – many variations
- Development is messy
- Experienced coach always in a state of becoming

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# Practical and Theoretical Implications

- Competencies let go or held lightly
- Serendipitous learning some formal some informal
- Staged learning not serve needs
- Ethics  - more research is needed

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# Thank you!



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# Promoting the use of Somatics in Coaching

MRS. LYNNE CAVANAGH-COLE

Northumbria University

Abstract #62

**Background**: The philosophy of somatics can be traced back to ancient Greek history and reference to the soma: the unified, whole individual. The philosophy has underpinned many practices including coaching, but it is in recent years that somatic approaches in coaching have come to the fore. Neuroscientific research supports and validates mind body connection in learning and development processes, including coaching, and is contributing to the increased use of somatics within coaching approaches. The research and literature on the subject are limited, and although neuroscientific enquiry into coaching is a growing area of research, the wide range of somatic practice and approach is under explored. Very few practical applications exist and methodologies and frameworks that may guide coaches in using a somatic coaching approach are limited. The field is further complicated due to the many labels that coaches may be using to describe their somatic approach, but without any real consensus over vocabulary and content. The growing neuroscientific evidence that a mind body approach to coaching could significantly enhance effectiveness, suggests that more coaches would benefit from gaining understanding of somatics and how it may be integrated into their existing approach.

**Literature**: Richard Strozzi-Heckler, a pioneer in somatic coaching methodology, lends an influential and experienced voice to the literature. Pete Hamill, a US coach and alumni of the Strozzi Institute explores the efficacy of embodiment within leadership coaching and presents a framework for use. William Brendel (US professor of education) and Carmela Bennett (psychotherapist) explore how mind-body coaching, backed by neuroscience, can be used effectively within organisations.

**Objective**: This study explores the use of somatics in coaching, aims to identify barriers that might be preventing its use and to offer ways of managing those barriers.

**Design**: The design of the study is qualitative and exploratory, allowing for a responsive approach that still provides a clear research philosophy and design. Semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth discussion and for rich data to be collected which is analysed using thematic analysis.

**Participants**: Four practising coaches were recruited to the study who worked in a variety of coaching contexts. All had different initial coach training, none of which had been defined as somatic, but they all used somatic understanding and practice to greater or lesser extents within their existing approach. The interviewees were spread around the UK and abroad and so this, combined with the covid pandemic, determined that all interviews happened online.

Brendel, W., & Bennett, C. (2016). Learning to Embody Leadership Through Mindfulness and Somatics Practice. Advances in Developing Human Resources, 18(3), 409–425.

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Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation - Promoting the use of Somatics in Coaching
Included below.

# Welcome

Lynne Cavanagh-Cole

Promoting the use of somatics in coaching

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## Aims of the presentation

- What is somatics?
- What is somatic coaching?
- Justification for the approach
- What are the challenges of the approach?
- Recommendations going forward

With some somatic practice in the middle!

## What is somatics?

- "it's a Greek word…it's fancy…it means body"

- From the soma: the unified whole individual

- The art, science and philosophy of the interconnectedness of the mind and body

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## What is somatic coaching?

- The body is a vital and essential source of information in the coaching approach

- Will involve somatic practice of some kind. This can range from sensation based questioning through to physical movement

- Somatic practice trains attention on the body and encourages somatic intelligence

## Somatic coaching questions

- When and where do you avoid listening to the body?
- What do you do instead?
- What messages has your body been trying to give you lately and about what?
- Why might you not listen to your body?

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## Justification

- Emerging coaching research in the US backed by neuroscience
- Suggests existing traditional coaching approaches are reductionist in nature
- Too much emphasis on the neo cortex
- To involve the limbic and reptilian parts of the brain would have to be learned through the body
- Coaches having even basic knowledge of this would result in more sustained outcomes for the coachee

## Challenges

- Disconnect - the separation between brain and body in western society.

- Would this be an "off putting" coaching approach?

- Coach training and expertise

- Would this discourage coaches from using this approach?

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## Recommendations

- Accessible neuroscientific information

- Clear information and communication

- Coach training that values existing somatic experiences

- Further research into the role of the body in coaching and especially physical movement

**Questions?**

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Transcending the limits of the individual linguistic narrative: an application of somatic coaching in an international group coaching context.

MRS. MARIE BLEUZÉ

Northumbria University

Abstract #85

*Background*: At the core of this practitioner research is the author's involvement in an employability development programme for international female students. The aim was to design group coaching to enable self-confidence to thrive, despite the heterogeneous levels of spoken English. To facilitate this, a co-development (Payette, 2000) framework was adopted which has similarities to Action Learning. At each coach-led workshop, a member of the group was chosen and supported by others to find solutions to their challenging situation. A somatic focus was introduced with particular attention being paid to questioning the body and mind connection of the participants.

*Focus*: The main objective was to explore the lived experience of the participants and to investigate how the somatic informed method helped to transcend the limits of the individual linguistic, emotional, and physical narratives. The intent was to produce some new knowledge to enable the application of the somatic coaching methodology in group coaching contexts.

*Design*: The exploratory research design consisted of a qualitative thematic analysis of primary data collected from online questionnaires, submitted after each coaching session. A phenomenological analysis framework was also applied to capture all the complexity of the participants' experience of verbal and non-verbal dialogue, understanding and meaning. Initially, prevalent theories of adults collaborative learning (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004) and embodied somatic coaching (Shabi & Whybrow, 2019) were reviewed.

*Setting*: At a Business School in the North East of England, eleven self-selected international postgraduate female students engaged in the four workshops running online from December 2020 to April 2021. Six participated until the last one.

*Key conclusions*: The body and mind awareness of the participants helped them to share past experiences with empathy and enabled imagining of novel solutions and learning.

Focusing on how the participants' bodies and minds were affected in a group coaching conversation was freeing and empowering. It enabled them to gain awareness of their usual linguistic, emotional and somatic narratives, and also to experience other body and mind patterns. This eventually led them to consider unexpected new performances.

In the international group context, thanks to diverse and contrasting individual perspectives, a novel and common understanding was developed. Overall, the specific benefits were mind-body intelligence, practice and development.

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Keywords: somatic coaching, group coaching, co-development, embodied conversations

Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation - Transcending the limits of the individual linguistic narrative: an application of somatic coaching in an international group coaching context
Included below.

Transcending individual linguistic emotional and physical patterns thanks to somatic co-development coaching

# The gap in literature: the "phenomenological facets" of learning



poor description in the LR

? —— affecting the body
? —— affecting the mind
? —— felt and shared experiences
common engagement to make sense from experiences —— commitment to learn
project and return to action

collaborative experiential learning

Individual and collective engagement are key

smooth running
enjoyment of learning
learning environment

Extract from Bleuzé (2021) literature review & mind mapping

Marie Bleuzé –June 2022                                              2

## The co-development method and applications

| Step | Client/consultants Roles |
|---|---|
| 1. Briefing | The client lays their situation out. The consultants listen without interrupting |
| 2. Asking for clarification | The consultants ask open questions (no suggestions or solutions) to explore the situation. The client answers the questions |
| 3. Contracting | The client expresses a request… There may be rephrasing or evolving of the question, so as to all agree to work on it |
| 4.Consulting time | The consultants deliver: they give their impressions, comments, testimonies, interpretations, suggestions…The client listens, asks for precision, re- focuses, takes notes |
| 5. Action planning | The client absorbs the information, indicates what he is keeping in mind and commits themselves in an action plan |
| 6. Debriefing and learning | The client and the consultants share their feed-back. They describe their learnings and take notes |

Marie Bleuzé –June 2022          3

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## The somatic infusion

**Finding your voice**

**Co-development Feedback**

*Date:*

1) What I have particularly en**joy**ed:

2) What I felt, in my body and mind:

(For instance, impatience: I had to bite my tongue not to interrupt or make suggestions, tensions in the body, agitated mind; empathy; an urge to move, to help and propose solutions; the impression that I am supported by others…)
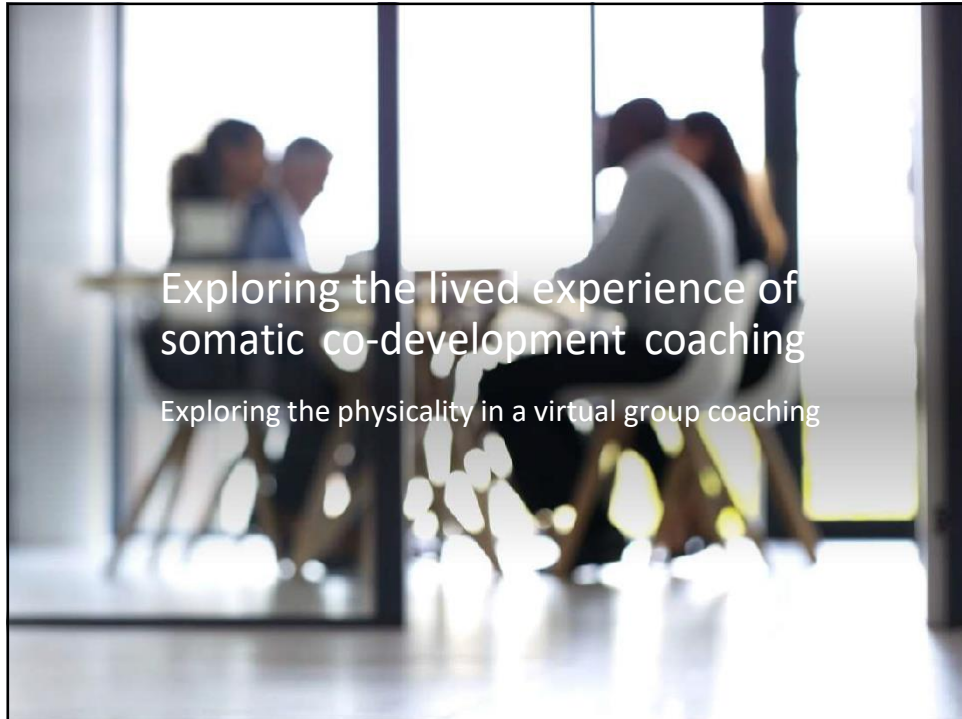
3) The workshop helps me to:

| | |
|---|---|
| Practice and develop my attention | -- - = + ++ |
| Engage simultaneously with my internal dialogue whilst listening to others | -- - = + ++ |
| Brief and speak up in a group | -- - = + ++ |
| Pay more attention to body language | -- - = + ++ |
| Explore and understand others point of view | -- - = + ++ |
| Share different ideas without arguing | -- - = + ++ |
| Broaden my mind to new possibilities | -- - = + ++ |
| Relate to others | -- - = + ++ |
| Connect to my environment | -- - = + ++ |

Marie Bleuzé –March 2022          4

4

5

## 8 phenomenological meaning facets to explore lived experienced

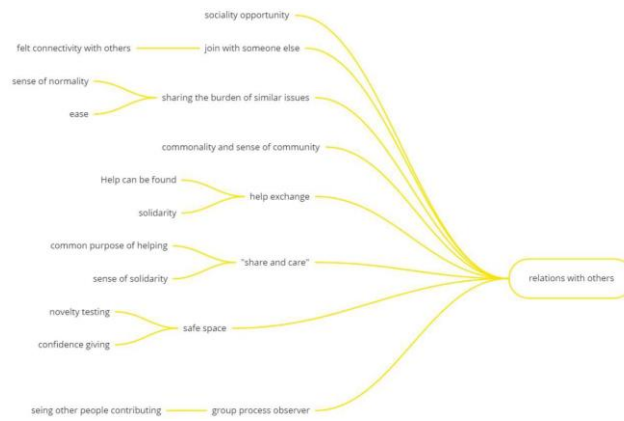Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE

| Sense of time | Space | Embodiment | Self-awareness |
|---|---|---|---|
| Associated | Group shared | Influence on further | Relations with |

Ashworth, cited by Finlay, 2009

Marie Bleuzé –January 2020
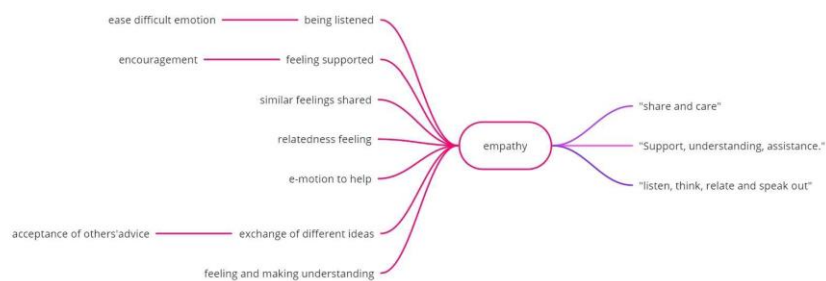
6

Strong connections within the group

sociality opportunity
felt connectivity with others — join with someone else
sense of normality
ease — sharing the burden of similar issues
commonality and sense of community
Help can be found — help exchange
solidarity
common purpose of helping — "share and care"
sense of solidarity
novelty testing — safe space
confidence giving
seing other people contributing — group process observer

relations with others

Extract from Bleuzé (2021) findings & mind mapping

Marie Bleuzé –March 2022          7

7



Example of findings : empathy as learning enabler

ease difficult emotion — being listened
encouragement — feeling supported
similar feelings shared
relatedness feeling
e-motion to help
acceptance of others'advice — exchange of different ideas
feeling and making understanding

empathy

"share and care"
"Support, understanding, assistance."
"listen, think, relate and speak out"

miro

Extract from Bleuzé (2021) findings & mind mapping

Marie Bleuzé –January 2020          8

8

Connecting with others
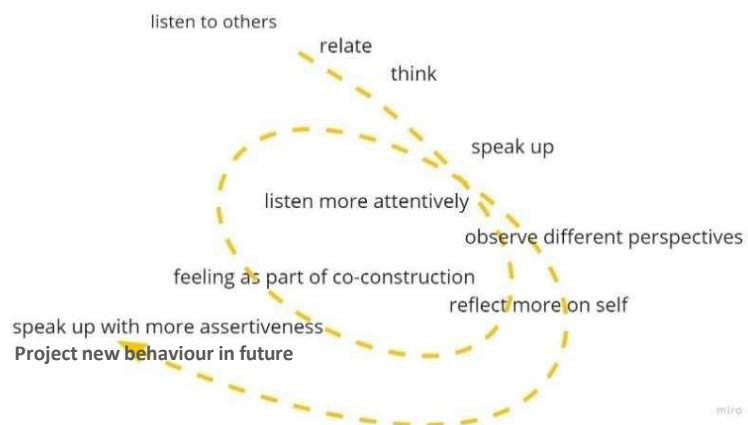
8 The workshop helps me to: relate to others

8.1 1 vs 5

Strongly Disagree | 0
Disagree | 0
Neither agree or disagree | 0
Agree | 1 (11.1%)
Strongly Agree | 8 (88.9%)

*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*
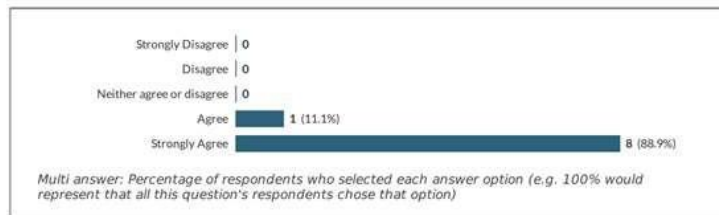
Extract from Bleuzé (2021) workshop 1 feedback questionnaire review

Marie Bleuzé –June 2022                9

9



Somatic experiential learning spiral

listen to others
relate
think
speak up
listen more attentively
observe different perspectives
feeling as part of co-construction
reflect more on self
speak up with more assertiveness
**Project new behaviour in future**

miro

Extract from Bleuzé (2021) findings & mind mapping

Marie Bleuzé –June 2022                10

10

# More questions?

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12

Physicality in Coaching:

"The various ways in which the coach may notice his/her own physiological state, or that of the client, and draw attention to them in pursuit of the coaching process or outcome. [...]"

**Jackson (2017, p 257)** in Jackson, P. (2017). Physicality in coaching: Developing an embodied perspective. In T. Bachkirova, G. Spence, & D. Drake (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of coaching* (pp. 256–271). London: Sage Publication.

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# Existential Coaching for Organizational Performance Improvement

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Abstract #88

Whitmore (2017) asserted that, "coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (pp. 12-13). Organizations and people require different coaching strategies based on different end goals. While coaching in the workplace is certainly different from sports coaching, both of these practices involve a personalized focus on performance improvement.

The purpose of coaching in the workplace is typically a goal-oriented performance improvement. Cox, et al. (2014) argued that this lack of structure can be confusing for organizations and creates uncertainty for HRD practitioners. This specialized nature of coaching is not necessarily a weakness; it just means that there is not a blanket method which works for every client.

Some reasons that there are so many approaches to coaching are because of its subjective nature. Consider that every coachee will seek improvement in different areas. Some common examples for improvement are sales, social anxiety, work-life balance, leadership, burnout or educational attainment. Perhaps the real purpose of coaching is not so specific to the goal. Thus there is no consensus on what constitutes successful coaching.

Despite these concerns, coaching seems to work. Whitmore (2017) argued that coaching is more than a rigid technique, and that it is more of a way of being, leading, and treating others. The focus of our paper is on how utilizing one particular type of coaching theory, existentialism, can improve performance in organizations. Existentialism focuses on existence and what it means to exist; the concept of human choice and what it means to be able to choose; our sense of self as fluid and complex and therefore difficult to categorize (Crowell, 2020). Thus existential coaching focuses on letting go of certain experiences and inviting in new ideas (van Deurzen-Smith, 2014). Some areas of focus for existential coaching include individuality and courage, imagery and dream work, ownership of choice, or change and coping (van Deurzen-Smith, 2021).

The existential way of thinking is a means to learn how to think and cope with hardship; essentially, a way to learn resilience. Providing a way for employees to learn to handle and cope with stress is a valuable workplace tool. Integrating a coaching culture at work can help organizations decrease absenteeism and improve overall employee performance by tackling issues like burnout, stress, and anxiety.

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Paper - Existential Coaching for Organizational Performance Improvement


Coaching, in its modern iteration, was only introduced in the 1970's. At the time, this was a practice only referred to in the sporting world. Sports coaching is still likely the first thing that people think of when they hear the word coaching. In sports, coaching is straightforward. The goal is always performance improvement for the person or team. While the strategy changes from team to team it always involves athletic training and lots of practice.

Now, however, coaching concepts are used in a variety of applications. These can range from sports, team, and life coaching to executive and performance coaching. The applications of these methods are broad and fluid. In fact, a quick search of coaching theories will land hundreds of results. It seems that everyone has his own idea of what coaching is, so how can coaching be defined?

Whitmore (2017) asserts that, "coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (pp. 12-3). This definition makes coaching sound vague and mysterious. Part of the reason for this vagueness is that organizations and people require different coaching strategies and methodology based on different end goals. While coaching in the workplace is certainly different from sports coaching, both practices involve a personalized focus on performance improvement.

It seems that part of what makes coaching unique is the driving force, or purpose behind it. When considering a sports team, the intended outcome of coaching is winning. The purpose of coaching in the workplace, however, is typically a goal-oriented performance improvement. Cox, et al. (2014) argue that this lack of structure can be confusing for organizations and creates uncertainty for HRD practitioners. The specialized nature of coaching is not necessarily a weakness, it just means that there is not blanket method that will work for every client.

Some of the reasons that there are so many approaches to coaching is because of the subjective nature of it. Consider, every coachee will seek improvement in different areas. Some common examples for areas of improvement in the workplace include sales, social anxiety, work-life balance, leadership, burnout, or educational attainment. Perhaps the real purpose of coaching is not so specific to the goal. "Thus, much confusion exists to the nature and scope of coaching as a helping intervention" (Cox, et al., 2014, para. 3). This is because there is no consensus on what constitutes for successful coaching.

Despite these concerns, coaching seems to work. Whitmore (2017) argues that coaching is more than a rigid technique, and that it is more of a way of being, leading, and treating others. In many

regards, the purpose of coaching seems to be more about the relationships between the coach and coachee and how people can work together to increase each other's performance.

**Coaching Theory and Application**

One of the more interesting coaching theories is called existential coaching. This type of coaching is based off existential philosophy. Existential philosophy as a topic of interest has been around for hundreds of years, although the idea was not named until the 1940's by Jean-Paul Sartre. Existentialism focuses on existence and what it means to exist; it also explores the concept of human choice and what it means to be able to choose.

According to Crowell (2020) existentialism "may be defined as the philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence" (para. 5). Essentially, this definition is built on the idea that our sense of self is fluid and complex and therefore difficult to categorize.

Though originally introduced as a groundwork for moral thought, existentialism is more of a historical philosophy term rather than one of contemporary use (Crowell, 2020). Crowell (2020) also argued that ethically, this theory asserts that we should treat free will as a foundation for our other values. Despite being an antiquated philosophical movement, existentialism still has utility as an important concept which can be utilized in fields like psychology, theology, or ethics.

In the realm of coaching, existential thought is used in relation to ideas of personal responsibility and freedom. These notions can be utilized in coaching as a means to explore letting go of certain experiences and inviting in new ideas (van Deurzen-Smith, 2014). There are different ways that existential theory can manifest in coaching behaviors. This is partially due to the coach's personal outlook and philosophical stance.

The study of philosophy is interesting because there are no "right" answers. This leaning toward subjectivism is found with coaching as well. Some argue that this is a criticism of coaching (Cox, et al.; 2014). Despite the lack of a universal directive for coaches, there can be utility in having a flexible coaching methodology that allows for personalized assistance. van Deurzen-Smith (2021) shares some examples of how existential coaches may differ citing areas of focus such as individuality and courage, imagery and dreamwork, ownership of choice, or change and coping. In coaching each coach must be selective and use a theory that is appropriate to the situation at hand. The differences in focus for existential coaching stem from differing views of the philosophers that studied this approach. While all these approaches focus on different areas of assistance, they still all share a common theme of humanity and introspection.

**Existentialism: Individuality and Courage**

The first existential coaching style that encourages individuality and courage is based off Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's views on existentialism. This idea of individualism stems from the concept of "the Single Individual" which was devised by Kierkegaard and expanded upon by Nietzsche (Crowell, 2020). For Kierkegaard the focus on individual was a departure from traditional philosophical thought which, at the time, focused on laws of nature or ethical standards that seemed to exist outside of the realm of self.

Essentially, "the Single Individual" approach focuses on self-reflection and finding a sense of meaning in life. Crowell (2020) elaborates on this concept discussing Nietzsche's take,

On the one hand, if he is weakly constituted he may fall victim to despair in the face of nihilism, the recognition that life has no intrinsic meaning. On the other hand, for a 'strong' or creative individual nihilism presents a liberating opportunity to take responsibility for meaning, to exercise creativity by 'transvaluing' her values, establishing a new 'order of rank'" (para. 15).

Of course, Nietzsche is most famously associated with nihilism, which is often thought of as a means to despair. However, in this passage, there is a message of hope for the freedom to be an individual.

The importance of client's perception of experience and the meaning that is taken from these interactions is vital to existential coaching (Spencer and Albertyn; 2018; Krum 2012). In a more business friendly interpretation, this concept can be thought of as a change in mindset from thinking about what one's goals are and instead, to thinking about how to attain them. It is a way of using visualization techniques to help a client process his goal(s) and strategy.

**Phenomenological Existentialism**

The second approach to coaching centers on phenomenological existentialism. According to Crowell (2020) phenomenology explores the philosophy of experience; it is a subcategory of existentialism that looks at a person's experiences as they happen without judgement or meaning. Tomkins and Eatough, (2013) state, "Phenomenologists are interested in first-person experience … the only certain knowledge that humans can have about anything is the knowledge obtained through the processes of first-person consciousness. Focusing on first-person experience means acknowledging that issues of subjectivity feel real and hence are to be taken seriously" (pp. 260). This type of coaching borders on the realm of therapy in that it requires a certain level of trust and familiarity.

The phenomenological method takes a deep dive into client experiences and requires the coach to remain stoic. Tomkins and Eatough, (2013) list a few areas in the workplace that can benefit from this type of coaching including common areas of turmoil such as work/life balance discussions and organizational change management. The reason that phenomenological existentialism is beneficial for these areas is because it allows the client to work through issues.

This is a similar approach to problem confrontation that is sometimes used in therapy. The key differences between phenomenological coaching and therapy are the duration (short-term for coaching vs. long-term for therapy) and focus (future for coaching vs. past for therapy); additionally, clients are typically not dealing with traumatic experiences (Krum, 2012; Tomkins and Eatough, 2013). When utilizing this coaching style, it is important to ensure that the coach/coachee relationship is predefined and understood. This helps to ensure that all parties' expectations met.

**Sartrean Existentialism**

The Sartrean view of existentialism often deals with ownership and choice. This is the third outlook used in existential coaching methods. Broadly, this refers to the idea of free will and the responsibility that it implies. West (2008) examines this concept as a tool for decision making in the workplace and how this can be used to aid in enforcing ethical behavior. Providing clients with an ethical framework can be useful in the workplace.

This coaching methodology involves personal identity and acceptance of responsibility for actions. Sometimes this is referred to as living authentically. Alrofiai, et al. (2020) explain that authenticity stems from ownership of responsibility in our choices and that we are inauthentic when we shirk responsibilities and passively accept direction. The ability to accept responsibility for our own actions

is a concept that should be learned throughout life. Unfortunately, concepts like identity, choice, and responsibility are often overlooked in the workplace.

According to Ashman and Gibson, (2010) the concept of identity in the workplace is gaining interest and can be explored organizationally and professionally as well as individually. Further, West (2008) posits that promoting "authentic living" can ensure that choice and responsibility are utilized appropriately in workplace decision making and that awareness and reflection are emphasized. Ensuring that coachees understand the importance of their choices and actions is vital and can help to promote a positive work culture, based on a collective identity.

## Existential Coaching for Change Management

The final setting to utilize existential coaching is in times of change. In most workplaces, change is the norm. From an HRD perspective, resistance to change, and anticipating how resistance will manifest is vital. The use of existential coaching has been implemented to help with conceptualizing and working through difficult workplace transitions. (Alrofiai, et al., 2020; Blomme and Bornebroek-Te Lintelo, 2012).

Cox, et al. (2014) discuss the importance of information gathering and how the attitudes and values of the client are important for successful change management. This approach is similar to the one discussed in phenomenological existentialism, where the coach actively listens to the client in order to assist in processing experiences. Clients can reflect on upcoming changes and search for meaning in these experiences.

## Existentialism in the Workplace

The existential approach to coaching is important for workplace coaching because it lends itself to performance improvement. Part of the reason for this is because existential thought breeds resilience. Alrofiai, et al. (2020) explain this, noting that existentialism confronts individuals with responsibility for their actions rather than giving explicit guidance. In a way, it provides training for a person to conceptualize and cope with disappointments.

How is this beneficial to the workplace? There are many instances where existential coaching can be utilized in the workplace. The four approaches discussed outline situations where existential coaching can benefit including, workplace identity, goal setting, change management and workplace ethics. All of these areas are important to the workplace and contribute to performance improvement which are essential functions of organizational development.

## Benefits of Coaching in Organizations

Coaching is beneficial to organizations in many ways. As previously discussed, one of the biggest assets of coaching in the workplace is performance improvement. Often, coaching can be used in the workplace to help clients to identify goals, work through change, or focus on career development.

Specifically, the existential approach to coaching helps people to gain the ability to confront difficulties and bounce back from problems. It is a method for teaching people resilience. Workplace stress has been found to cause absenteeism, anxiety, reduced productivity, and high turnover (Ashman and Gibson, 2010; Blomme and Bornebroek-Te Lintelo, 2012; Krum 2012). Implementing a workplace coaching program can provide clients with a place to focus and address these types of issues. The benefits of coaching can also help to cultivate a positive company culture, where employees are confident and supported by their employer.

Whitmore (2017) discusses other benefits of coaching noting improvements in several areas like performance, productivity, career development, engagement, innovation, and adaptability. Cox, et al. (2014) found that as "individual empowerment grows through use of a coaching style it helps facilitate a change in organizational culture. Employees surveyed confirmed that this approach was more motivating and created more trusting relationships with their managers" (Para. 4).

The biggest roadblock, in terms of managerial buy-in, is that these benefits are difficult to measure. Often, managers are numbers-driven, and it can be difficult to pitch ideas that have intangible returns. Whitmore (2017) acknowledges the difficulties of measuring the impacts of coaching and offers guidance about presenting tangible and intangible benefits to organizations. The issue seems to center around initial buy-in however, and once a coaching program is adopted, organizations are better able to realize the benefits.

**The Future of Coaching**

What does the future hold for coaching? I think that coaching in some form or another will be around for a while. There are so many business practices that exist in the same wheelhouse that it seems there is some acknowledgement of these benefits. Mentoring is an example of a similar practice that comes to mind.

It is hard to say what coaching will look like. My guess is that it will be more widespread. It seems that there has traditionally been more focus on executive coaching, but I think that there will be a shift to offer these benefits to more people in the workplace. I also believe that the ways that coaching will be implemented will likely be more virtual, and more casual.

A lot of businesses currently find coaching to be cost prohibitive, but there could be ways to lessen the cost. Perhaps in the future it will become common to employ internal organizational coaches. It is also possible that the benefits of coaching will become more widespread and more adopted regardless of cost.

If I were asked about the future of coaching just a few years ago I would not have had such an optimistic viewpoint. However, as time passes, I notice that a growing number of organizations are shifting their mindsets to focus more on company culture. More and more businesses seem to adopt principles that encourage personal growth and development in addition to traditional means of growth within a business. Consider, a decade ago it was quirky for a business to have a casual dress code and it was an anomaly to work from home.

The business world is changing, whether naturally or from a forced disruption like a pandemic. In many HR circles there is discussion of the Great Resignation. This is the term coined about the sudden loss of workforce resulting from the pandemic. This is another example of ways that businesses are being forced to change. Now, organizations are raising wages and coming up with new forms of incentives to entice workers. I think that the arena of coaching could grow from this as well.

Businesses are recognizing the importance of a happy workforce. It is becoming more important than ever to focus on employee retention. Developing and offering a coaching program could fill a void. This is because coaching offers many benefits that assist with creating well-adjusted workers.

**Conclusion**

Coaching is a powerful tool that can be used in life and the workplace. Researching this topic has been enlightening, and there is still much to learn about the practice and the ways that coaching can be utilized. Despite being difficult to define, it is clear that coaching is a process that will continue to be used to help people in a variety of ways.

Existential coaching is certainly a niche field of work. However, case studies support the notion that this approach has helped people to deal with stress and trauma. The existential way of thinking is more of a means to learn how to think and cope with hardship. It is, essentially, a way to teach the skill of resilience.

Providing a way for employees to learn to handle and cope with stress is clearly a valuable workplace tool. Integrating a coaching culture at work can help organizations confront one of the leading causes of absenteeism and improve overall employee performance by tackling issues like burnout, stress, and anxiety. Ultimately, a resilient workforce is one of the best tools to wield in the field of organizational performance improvement. While there is room for more research to be done in this field of thought, preliminary evidence seems to suggest that adopting the existential method of coaching helps to establish a strong foundation within the workforce itself.
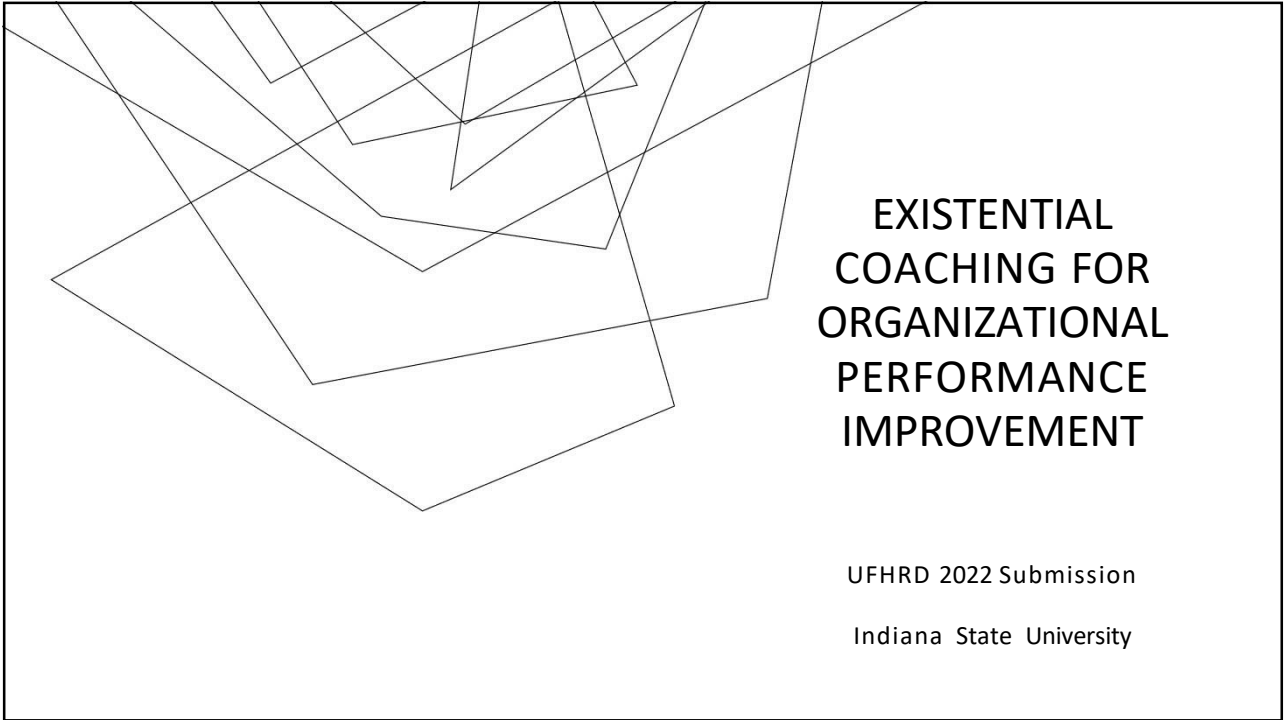
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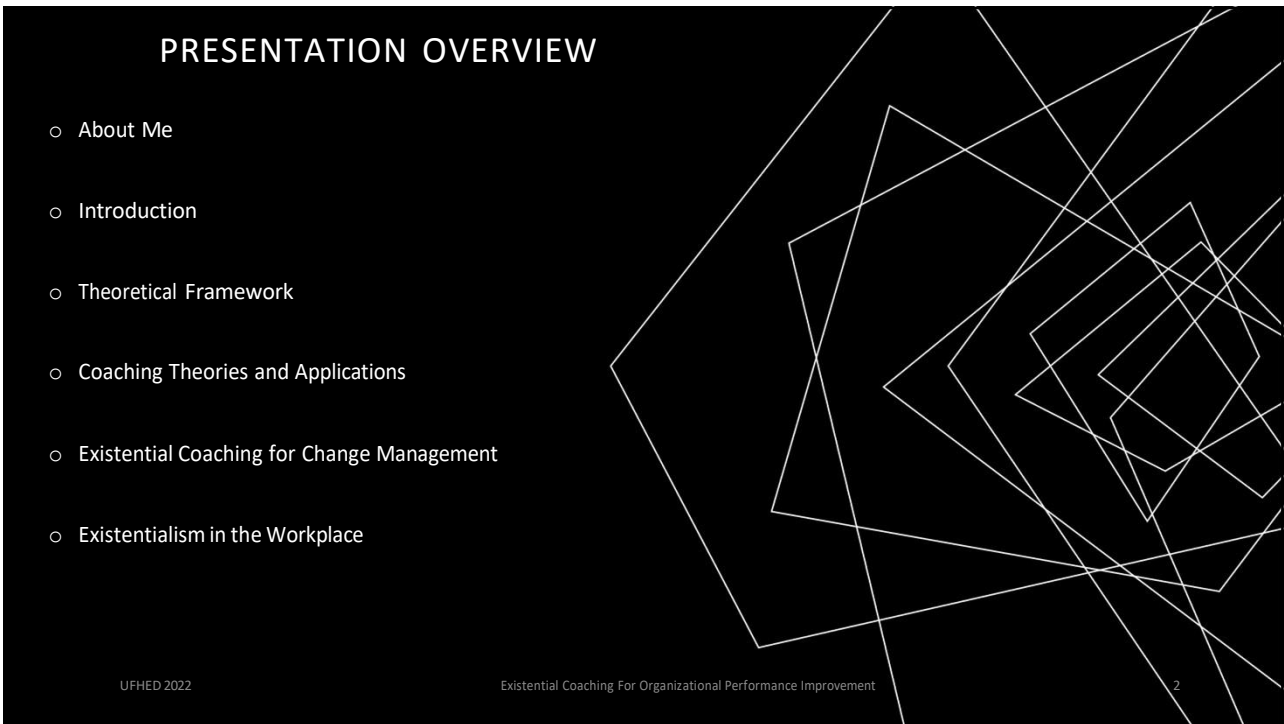van Deurzen-Smith, S. (2021, November 2). *Existential coaching in a Nutshell*. Animas Coaching. Retrieved November 9, 2021, from https://www.animascoaching.com/blog/existential-coaching-in-a-nutshell/.

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Presentation - Existential Coaching for Organizational Performance Improvement
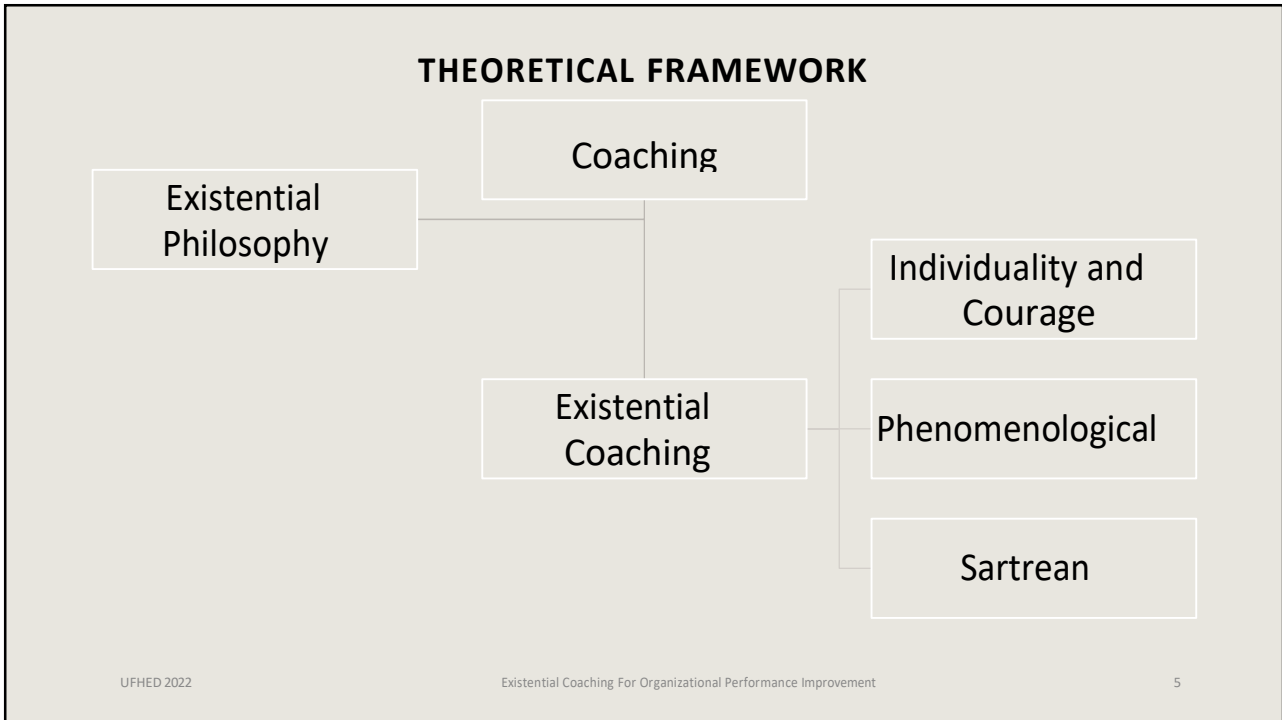Included below.

# EXISTENTIAL COACHING FOR ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

UFHRD 2022 Submission

Indiana  State  University

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# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

o  About Me

o  Introduction

o  Theoretical Framework

o  Coaching Theories and Applications

o  Existential Coaching for Change Management

o  Existentialism in the Workplace

# ABOUT ME

Existential Coaching For Organizational Performance Improvement 3

3

# INTRODUCTION

- "Coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" (Whitmore, 2017, p. 12-3).

- The purpose of coaching is about the relationships between the coach and coachee and how people can work together to increase each other's performance.

Existential Coaching For Organizational Performance Improvement 4

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    Coaching     │
┌─────────────────┐ └─────────────────┘
│   Existential   │
│   Philosophy    │          ┌──────────────────────┐
└─────────────────┘          │   Individuality and  │
                    ┌────────┐│       Courage        │
                    │Existential└──────────────────────┘
                    │Coaching │┌──────────────────────┐
                    └────────┘│   Phenomenological   │
                              └──────────────────────┘
                              ┌──────────────────────┐
                              │       Sartrean       │
                              └──────────────────────┘
```

5

# COACHING THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

### Existential Philosophy

- This paper draws existential ideals from these philosophers:

    - Jean-Paul Sartre

    - Søren Kierkegaard

    - Friedrich Nietzche

- Existentialism focuses on existence and *what it means to exist.*

- Existentialism also explores the concept of human choice and what it means to be able to choose.

# COACHING THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

## Existential  Coaching

- In the realm of coaching, existential thought is used in relation to ideas of

  personal responsibility and freedom.

  - In coaching this explores letting go of certain experiences and

    inviting in new ideas (van Deurzen-Smith, 2014).

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# COACHING THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

## Existentialism: Individuality & Courage

- Based off Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's views on existentialism.

# COACHING THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

- Phenomenology explores the philosophy of experience; it is a subcategory of existentialism that looks at a person's experiences as they happen *without* judgement or meaning (Crowell, 2020).

- The differences between this style of coaching and therapy are the duration and focus (Krum, 2012; Tomkins and Eatough, 2013).

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# COACHING THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

## Sartrean Existentialism

- The Sartrean view of existentialism deals with ownership and choice. Broadly, this approach refers to the idea of free will and the responsibility that it implies.

- This coaching methodology involves personal identity and acceptance of responsibility for actions. Sometimes this is referred to as living authentically.

  - Authenticity stems from ownership of responsibility in our choices and that we are inauthentic when we shirk responsibilities and passively accept direction (Alrofiai, et al., 2020).

## EXISTENTIAL COACHING FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- HRD practitioners must be able to anticipate and plan for change

  implementation and the resistance that follows.

- Existential coaching has been implemented to help with conceptualizing and working

  through difficult workplace transitions. (Alrofiai, et al., 2020;

  Blomme and Bornebroek-Te Lintelo, 2012).

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## EXISTENTIALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

- Coaching can be used in the workplace to help clients to:
  - Identify goals.
  - Work through change.
  - Focus on career development.
  - Cultivate a positive company culture.

- Other areas of the workplace that can benefit from coaching are performance,
  productivity, career development, engagement, innovation, and adaptability
  (Whitmore, 2017).

# BENEFITS OF COACHING IN ORGANIZATIONS

## WHERE DOES THE EXISTENTIAL APPROACH FIT IN?

- It is a method for teaching people *resilience.* Existential Coaching helps people to gain the ability to confront difficulties and bounce back from problems.

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# THE FUTURE OF COACHING

- Businesses are recognizing the importance of a happy workforce. It is becoming more important than ever to focus on employee retention. Developing and offering a coaching program could fill a void. This is because coaching offers many benefits that assist with creating well-adjusted workers

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Performance improvement is central to the field of HRD.

- Coaching provides a means to promote improvement by providing employees with short-term, goal-oriented guidance.

- Coaching is a powerful tool that can be used in life and the workplace.

- Though it is an intangible benefit, coaching provides a framework to encourage growth on both personal and professional levels.

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# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Despite its subjective nature, it is clear that coaching is a process that will continue to be used to help people.

- Even within the broad category of coaching, existentialism is a niche field of work.
  - Case studies provide promising evidence of the utility of this approach.
  - Integrating this type of company culture provides employees with ways to handle stress and change.

- This is a great method for teaching workplace resilience.

# QUESTIONS?

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# THANK YOU

Jessica Fowle

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# Coaching the innovating organisation in a post-pandemic world

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Abstract #94

The authors have long-standing experience working as consultants and coaches with a broad range of clients, cross-sector and cross-scale who would position themselves as innovating organisations. This does not necessarily constrain them to be working at the leading edge of innovation in the narrow sense too often associated with the tech sectors but organisations who consider themselves to be agile and open to new practices in their service/product delivery, or in their modes of operation. The remarkable achievements of many organisations in navigating the pandemic and pivoting rapidly to previously unimagined ways of working often reinforces this ontological identification with innovation. However, it is our experience that this self-identification is not necessarily evidenced in practice.

Our experience, echoed anecdotally by many colleagues, is that even substantial consultancy and other interventions with such organisations do not necessarily deliver lasting, systemic impact, at variance with their self-belief. Such interventions often rub up against the fundamental assumption that the organisation already is inherently innovative and all that is required are mechanistic, process or structural changes to finesse this inherent capacity. It is our belief that a necessary prior step is required – the fundamental challenge of this ontological assumption.

This paper postulates that coaching senior leaders is an effective scaffolding intervention to deliver the critical mindset and system changes which deliver fundamental impact in the innovation space. We examine the constraining beliefs and misunderstandings of innovation that often hinder organisational performance in innovation and explore coaching as a methodology that has particular relevance in affecting transformation. Illustrations will be provided by reference to our praxis with corporates, healthcare, local government, SMEs and non-profits.

Keywords:

Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation - Coaching the innovating organisation in a post-pandemic world
Included below.

**Coaching the Innovating Organisation in a Post-Pandemic World**

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Managing Director, Chapel House Training and Consultancy, Doctoral Candidate, Oxford Brookes University

Managing Director, Imcon Consulting, Professor, The Engineering Design Institute, London

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What The Literature Is Saying

Searching on the terms *Coaching & Innovation* tends to return findings relating to innovative techniques and practices in the field of coaching rather than anything on how coaching can be a tool to support innovation, with a few exceptions.

Rousseau, Aube & Tremblay produced a 2012 paper exploring "Team Coaching & Innovation" and there is some tangential research exploring what teaching, training or coaching might be required to support individuals to be innovative or entrepreneurial in a range of settings.

Abbott, G. & Rosinski, P. (2007) journal article considers the function of coaching during times of global change and volatility stating that; "*Executive coaching is emerging as an attractive intervention in international business because it seems to assist executives to make sense of what is going on and then plan effective strategies, firstly for survival and then for success.*"
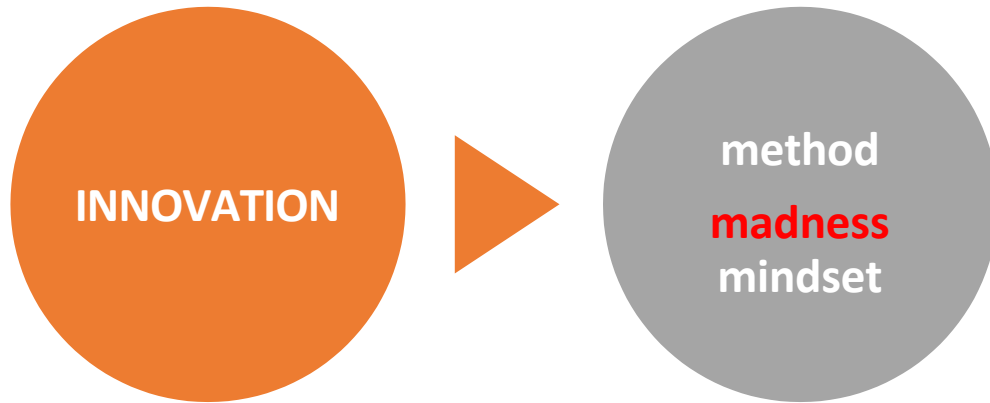
There is also a fascinating 2020 podcast by Griffiths, Still and Gannon available via Oxford Brookes exploring the role of mentoring in supporting women to be involved in innovation and receive support in their 'spin-out' journey.

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**INNOVATION**

**method**
**madness**
**mindset**
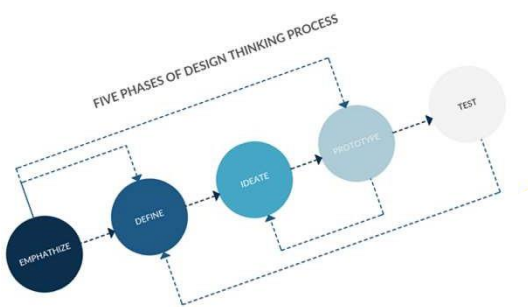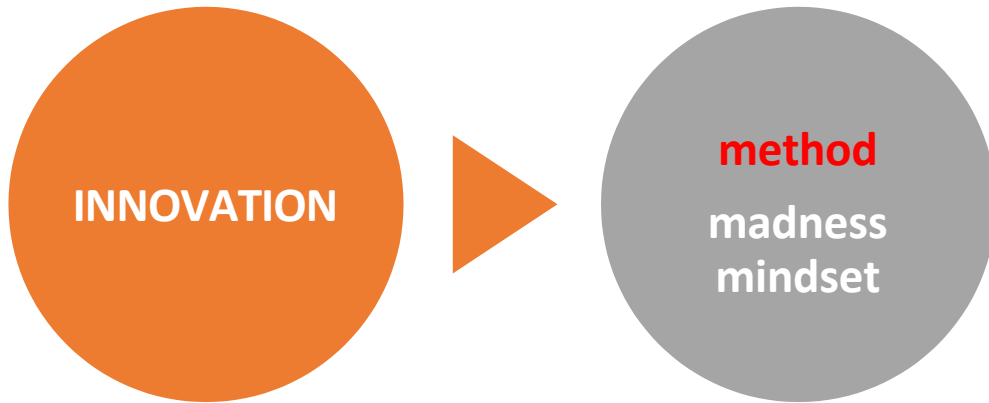
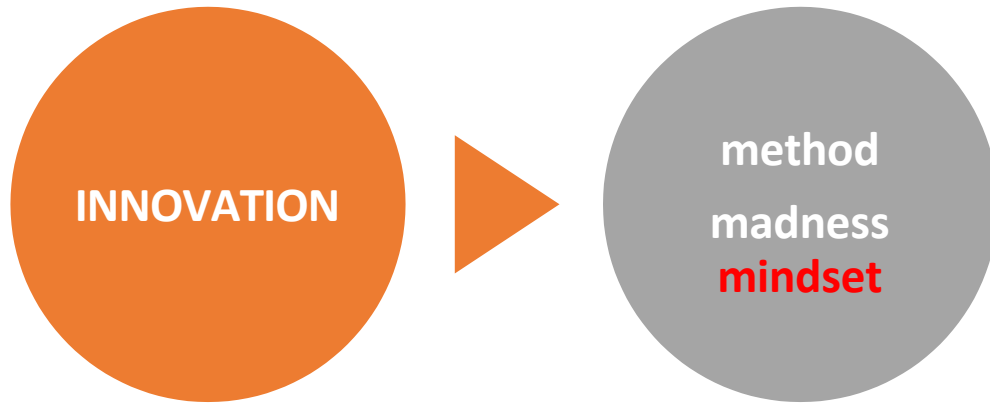## Common Features

Thinking the unthinkable
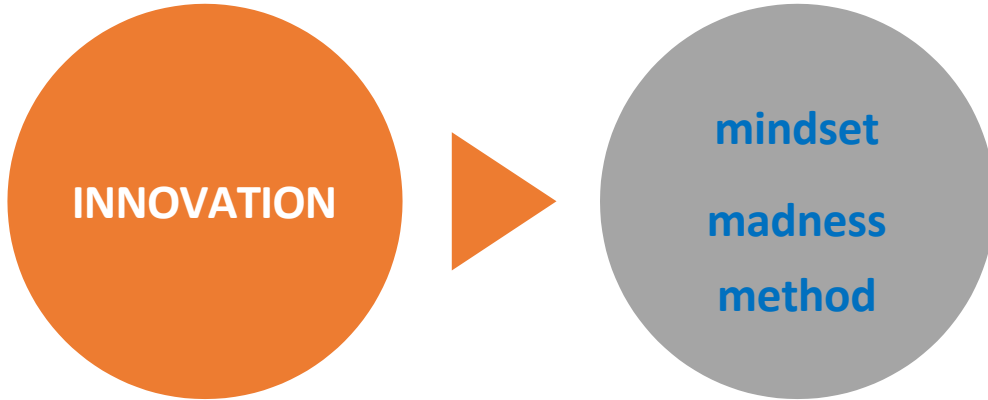Asking the unaskable
Challenging orthodoxy
Disrupt

Expansive
Inclusive

BREAKING THE RULES

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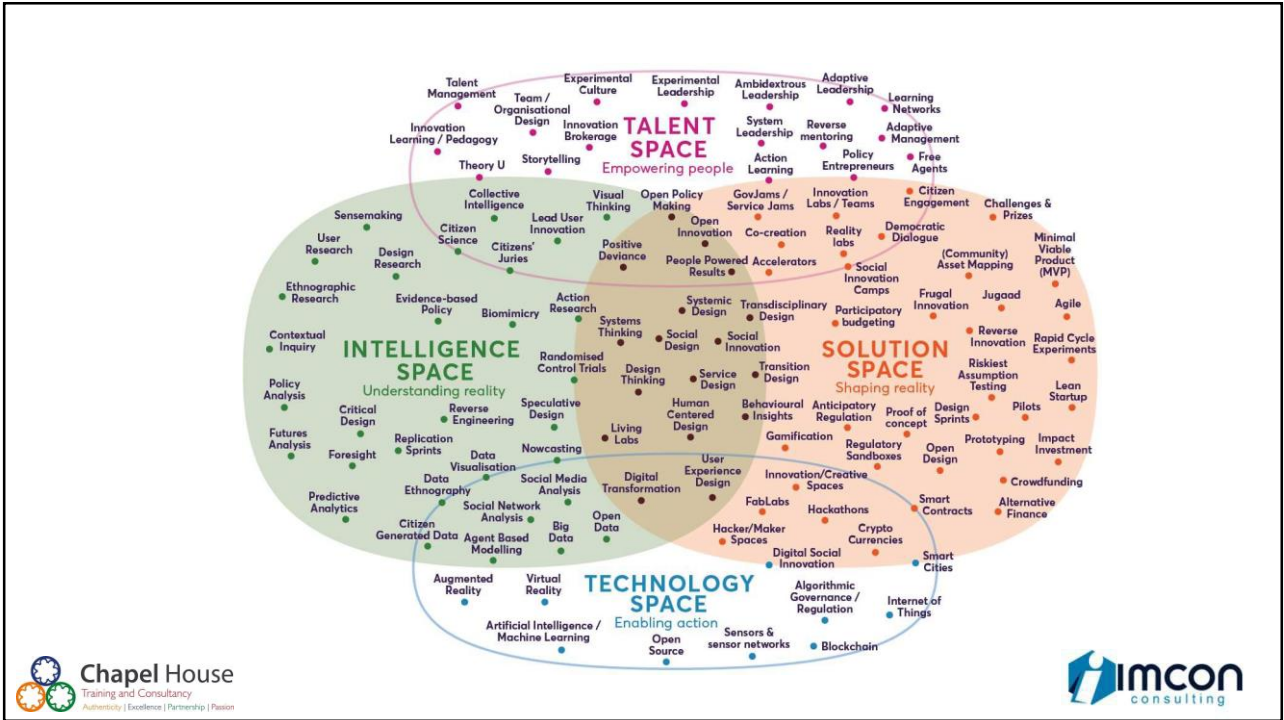
## Pre-requisites

Risk appetite
Big picture
Vision
Curiosity

Imperative/drive
Courage

Speaking truth to power

Challenge assumptions/worldview/orthodoxy
Liberal worldview?

Diversity
Humility
Realism

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# The evolving coaching ecosystem: implications for coach education and development

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Abstract #101

The coaching eco-system is continually changing and evolving in response to changes in the environments within which coaching is practised. One example of this is an increasing emphasis on ensuring a more diverse and inclusive society and organisational cultures. Within organizations one approach introduced to create more inclusive workplaces, is adopting the practice of reverse/reciprocal mentoring (Browne, 2021; Chaudhuri et al., 2021; Harvey et al., 2009). Although these authors argue that this form of social exchange can be beneficial, we question how this practice shapes the coaching eco-system more broadly. As Lawless and Magrath (2021) assert coaching, in particular cricket coaching within the U.K., has not addressed issues of racism and homophobia, inclusion, and exclusion. And by implication has not evolved outside of the sphere of the technical and personal impact of a coach and the coachee's responses.

If we take the assertions of Lawless and Magrath (2021) and examine coaching more generally there are issues of where the responsibility of coaches, and the boundaries of coaching practice, might fit within a wider social, business, sport, ecosystem. Coaching is often described in terms of a one-on-one, or team focused activity (Garvey et al.). Therefore, we feel it important to explore the scope and range of the authority of coaching bodies and coach educators, examining whether these wider issues, referred to above, fall within the responsibility and remit of coaches.

The question – 'what are we not talking about that is important to include?' - might be one of the provocative questions that Passmore (2022: p52-54) identifies as the 'value' that coaches bring to a coaching conversation. Another perspective on Passmore's (2022) question is Browne's (2021:251) reference to the concept of a third learning space being important for mentees in reverse mentoring arrangements. Whilst this may appear to be different to Passmore's assertion, it may serve as a provocation for the coachee, if coaches can create the space, and support for coaches to value the personal impact of this type of learning environment.

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Passmore J (2022). 'Asking Questions is the real value we add'. The Psychologist. January 2022. Vol. 35. The British Psychological Society.

Keywords: Coaching ecosystem, Inclusion and Diversity, Coaching – Boundaries of Responsibility, Coach Education and Development.

Paper

Not applicable.

Presentation - The evolving coaching ecosystem: implications for coach education and development
Included below.

# The evolving Coaching Ecosystem: implications for coach education and development

UFHRD 2022, Sheffield Hallam University
Dr. Christina Evans & Dr. David Lines

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# Background and Context

Genesis of our research

* Previous work by authors (2020) identified that coaching sits within a dynamic eco-system
* As we have continued to observe how the coaching eco-system is evolving – noticed tensions relating to diversity and inclusion and coaching
* Tensions seem to have emerged from coaching within the world of sport ... raised question for us ... To what extent does this apply in other coaching contexts, especially given focus on diversity and inclusion within field of HRM/HRD?

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# Coaching Eco-system



Figure 9.1: Coaching Eco-System
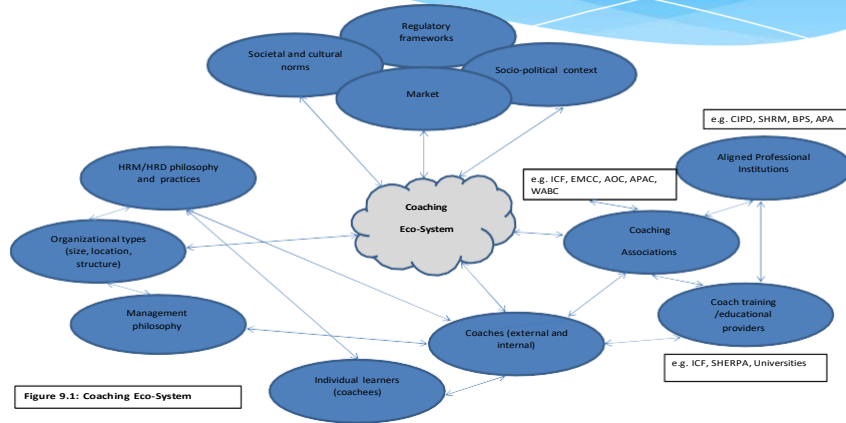
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# Perspectives on coaching and mentoring

* From our previous work, coaches differentiated between these concepts (Lines & Evans 2020: 158):
    ➢ **Mentoring:** "… more about sharing the [mentor's] experience … generally it is a more experienced person who shares their success and failures with a less experienced person so they can learn."
    ➢ **Coaching:** "… coaching is for the coach to support the client towards transformation …. are empowering the relationship with mutual trust, the relationship is more parallel."
    ➢ **Reflection:** Differences in agency here?

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## Research Approach

* Reviewed key coaching journals – key words 'diversity' and 'inclusion' - to identify interest, plus unpack definitions of these terms
* Reviewed websites of key coaching organizations – EMCC, ICF, AOC, Institute of Coaching – to identify discussions/interest/content on D&I
* Conducted pilot interviews with coaching practitioners in UK, Middle East, Asia Pacific

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## Example Interview questions

* To what extent are you finding in your practice that leaders want to discuss issues of inclusion and diversity with you as a coach?
* What might be happening within the leader's environment/world that is influencing this need/interest?
* Are there issues of diversity and inclusion that leaders feel they cannot voice/discuss with others?
* Are there any particular models/tools/resources that inform your coaching conversations to support tensions leaders may be experiencing with diversity and inclusion?
* How well do you feel coach education and development has equipped you and other coaches to support leaders to address these issues/tensions?

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# Initial themes from interviews

* The hidden and invisible aspects of diversity and inclusion based on the personal stories of the individuals who are affected and how this informs their frame of reference

    * E.g. being of a different ethnicity brought up by a single mother - how this created a different diversity and inclusion story

    * E.g. Being gifted - the impact of that on the person who then has a different diversity and inclusion story

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# Initial themes continued

* D&I not something that coaches' raise:
    ➢ could this be due to language differences e.g. is coaching to enhance cultural sensitivity and getting people to understand my thought processes – part of D&I?

* Coaches – have to work with coachee's agenda:
    ➢ coaches do not feel they should raise issues that coachee does not surface. Contrast's with Browne's (2021), third learning space and Passmore's (2022), observation '... what are we not talking about'

* Coach training/education - didn't address D&I:
    ➢ doesn't fully prepare coaches to raise the 'elephant in the room'. Is this a reflection of difficulty getting case examples of actual coaching conversations? Or coach's ability to tease out 'feelings' vs 'organizational reality'

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## Revised eco-system model
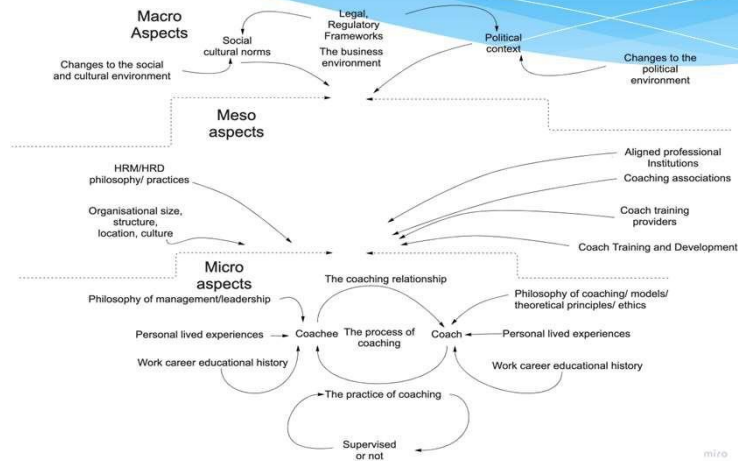


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## Unanswered questions – we would like to debate with you

* What examples can you share about the permeability of coach education/training to societal/organizational changes such as diversity & inclusion?

* To what extent do you feel that coaches have an ethical responsibility to surface D&I issues if they observe that this could be affecting performance/wellbeing?

* As a coach in what ways could we support the agency of the coachee conversations to surface tensions and provide support for wellbeing and psychological safety when these might be affecting performance?

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# Reflections/Discussion



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