

CPDConfer Coaching and Mentoring - Introduction

The practices of coaching and mentoring are growing in schools, education and children's services organisations across Scotland. Coaching is catching on as powerful leadership practice. Mentoring is making an increasingly important contribution to the professional development of newly qualified teachers. Teachers consistently identify developing as a coach or mentor as one of the most valuable forms of professional development.

Coaching and mentoring are being employed in a range of situations: to engage young people who might be turned off by school or whose behaviour is difficult to manage, to facilitate learning between classroom colleagues, to support professional development and to bring a sharper solution focus to problems and issues faced by school leaders. A critical mass of educators with skills in coaching and mentoring is developing in classrooms, schools and educational establishments where the impact that coaching and mentoring can make is beginning to be realised.

In the sections that follow you will find reflection and accounts of how things are developing in schools and local authorities and examples of the impact coaching and mentoring are making. These are a few snapshots from a much wider development. They are offered with appreciation and thanks to those whose stories are included and in recognition of the many other stories not included and still developing. They are examples of practice, application and learning which will hopefully stimulate your thinking and questioning as you read them and some reflective prompts are included at the beginning of each section. Please do make use of the discussion facility to share your views and ideas.

BACKGROUND

Abronnhill High School is a small secondary school in Cumbernauld, North Lanarkshire. We have four staff trained in coaching and mentoring at present, Head Teacher and Senior Depute trained as part of the Council's response to the national initiative, one PT Pupil Support and a teacher of chemistry who was trained in coaching and mentoring as part of a 5-14 science strategy within the authority.

The piece of practice considered here is about culture and permeation.

WORKING DEFINITION

Coaching and mentoring is being seen as part of the continuum of ethos and culture development which takes in restorative practice, appropriate personnel policies, leadership development (at all levels), citizenship development, support for pupils and policies on better behaviour-better learning, formative assessment and anti-bullying.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE APPROACH

The quality of relationships within the school community is critical in seeking growth and improvement; coaching and mentoring techniques are put to use by trained personnel in conversations with different stakeholders in a range of contexts to support the development of productive relationships. To spread awareness and knowledge, HT and the chemistry teacher ran a session on coaching and mentoring as part of our 'learning forum' model of in-house CPD and to support those staff who volunteer to mentor SQA exam candidates. The following year the session was jointly run by the PT PS and the chemistry teacher, generating considerable interest and a request for more!

With the senior school citizenship and leadership programme, several **options for service** are targeted to support self confidence, leadership and further engagement of young people in their school community as active citizens. While we enjoy good support in this area, there is room for improvement which we believe can impact upon all aspects of achievement.

Kick start sessions were provided for seniors, with team building, communication and confidence building tasks. Volunteers from senior school were invited in the usual way to become involved in leadership and citizenship options for service: paired work with younger pupils both in anti-bullying and in supporting learning, charities involvement, enterprise involvement. Staff leading the different areas adopt some coaching and mentoring techniques in supporting young people to undertake and to develop their role to the full – goal-setting, listening and questioning. These options for service take place throughout the school session and there is evidence of very good levels of engagement and staying power.

S6 MENTORING PROGRAMME

Within the options for service referred to above, a well developed example is the **paired working of seniors with young people experiencing literacy difficulties**. As a very focused development from the more familiar paired reading, a group of S6 are undertaking a well structured course in Working With Others.

- The certificated course supports S6s to deliver effective support for younger learners in writing, reading and in the classroom.
- The confidence levels of the S6s involved have developed: they have been mentored by the teacher in charge of the project and in their turn support the group of younger pupils with literacy skills.
- The programme is innovative: the S6s have developed games to make learning fun, games which have generated interest within the Council's literacy strategy team.
- The S6s have been supported to generate high quality work, for example the games already referred to and insightful essays on topics such as dyslexia.
- The group adapts and combines different approaches to arrive at a mix suited to the young learners they are mentoring, for example the use of different IT packages.
- A positive impact has been identified in the work of the S6s on the literacy development and confidence of the supported learners and on classes where the S6s provide input.

KEY LEARNING

Coaching and mentoring can make a valuable contribution to the development of a professional learning community where all of us are learners. The use of listening and questioning techniques to assist participants to share ownership of some potentially difficult conversations.

LOOKING AHEAD

The following are planned:

- More integration of techniques from coaching and mentoring within the PRD (professional review and development) process and in career development meetings.
- Mentoring work in the school by a group of staff from a business partner company who volunteered to work with senior school students to support their motivation and progress towards exam success. Exposure to coaching and mentoring training has raised our confidence levels in delivering induction to the company employees.
- Greater use of coaching techniques in absence management.
- Growth of coaching to support leadership development in young people.
- Use of coaching and mentoring as a means of achieving greater consistency in pastoral care delivered across the school

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Danny McDonald - Baldraggon High School - Dundee City

Changing the Personal Review and Development (PRD) Conversation

Danny is the acting Headteacher of the school which is a merger of what was Kirkton HS and Rockwell HS. The roll of the school is around 600 and there are 52 teaching staff.

Definition of Coaching

Danny's definition of coaching is that it is a process which aims to bring the solutions out of a person; one which supports the coachee to find the solution. (XXX-can' read your writing here) Giving the mentee the benefit of their experience is the role of the mentor which he suggests is a process which works very well with Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) although he adds that the mentor would hopefully use a coaching model too.

Initial Involvement

Danny's initial involvement in this area was supporting teachers using a mentoring approach. When the SEED pilot was introduced, he was invited to bid for some funding. His successful bid allowed him to have 12 teachers, including two of the Senior Management Team (SMT), trained by an external provider. At the same time a group of staff were working with all staff in a collegiate way to firstly establish the aims and values of the school but also to change the way they communicated with each other. This involved all staff in a series of twelve in-service sessions looking, through circle time, at their shared aims and values. This was a new way of consultation. The nature of these 'conversations' was not dissimilar to the coaching process. There were also similarities here with Restorative Practices¹ which the school had introduced in session 2005/06. It was important for the school that pupils' voices were also heard and this happened through Social Education classes. The philosophy behind this approach was around a humanitarian view as to how schools might be. Coaching was seen as key to taking Continuing Professional Development forward.

A Fresh Approach to CPD

In the meantime, another twelve staff were trained, the rest of SMT, some Principal Teachers (PTs) and a few more teachers, bringing the total number of staff trained to 24 out of a staff of 52. At this stage it was possible to take a serious look at reviewing the process of PRD, which it was felt had become stale, to include coaching as part of the process and a coaching group was formed to do this. The new coaching PRD model was set up as an alternative with all but one member of staff agreeing to be involved; the traditional method was still available to that member of staff. The new model started in September '07 with coaching conversations taking place between coach and coachee every five weeks when goals are set by the coachee. Goals set must articulate with the schools' aims and values and are reviewed every five weeks with the coach.

¹ The term 'Restorative Practices' is used in education to mean restoring good relationships when there has been conflict or harm; and developing school ethos, policies and procedures that reduce the possibilities of such conflict and harm. It is an approach that acknowledges that schooling is an increasingly complex task, with increasingly wider demands on schools in a diverse and complex world and that teachers' work can be challenging and stressful.

The coaches meet before each five week block of coaching sessions start and co-coach each other. There is also an evaluation of approach at the end of each block of coaching and so far the feedback is very positive. The 12 hours required for coaching comes from the working time agreement and is agreed by an executive working group within the school. While the structure is still hierarchical, it is hoped that a SMT involvement on 360 degree evaluation might initiate a change to a less hierarchical structure.

Key Learning

One of the key areas of learning for Danny was the way that, even outwith the PRD/Coaching model, all staff involved have embraced coaching in different ways and all those trained continue to see a value in it. He also thinks it is critical to keep an eye to practice to ensure that it is coaching, i.e. a solution focussed approach, rather than mentoring which is taking place.

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Peter Flood - Bishopbriggs Academy - East Dunbartonshire

Promoting the emotional wellbeing of staff

Peter Flood, Depute Head Teacher, is the Continuing Professional Development Co-ordinator at Bishopbriggs Academy, a new school formed from the merger of Bishopbriggs High and Thomas Muir High in August 2007. The school has a role of 1300 with 102 teaching staff.

A programme of coaching was introduced into the school as part of a wider programme of peer support intended to promote the emotional wellbeing of staff. Initially coaching was delivered to a mixed group of staff (Guidance, PT HE, 2 Modern Languages teachers and the RMPS department) who now act as peer mentors.

Peter defines coaching as two people in an equal partnership working on a specific issue belonging to one of them which they seek to clarify, set goals for and come up with specific strategies to achieve these. He sees the key skills of a coach as empathy, being non-judgemental and genuine. He suggests that the benefits of peer support for staff in a busy school with demanding jobs is in providing them with opportunities to step back from what they are doing, ask questions about what they are doing and clarify why they might be getting stuck.

Peter sees the programme of peer support helping staff maintain a sense of perspective and reducing work-related stresses and anxieties. He hopes this will also contribute to developing an ethos within the classroom and school which is about being in control and resilient. He believes pupils will also benefit through staff having, and conveying, a sense of balance and wellbeing, direction and proportion, with the ethos in the classroom changing from one of direction to one of participation which underpins Co-operative Learning and Assessment is for Learning.

The programme is an integral part of the School Improvement Plan and is being evaluated with the support of a colleague from Educational Psychological Services. For evaluation purposes, pupils were issued with a questionnaire at the start of the programme and will be issued with another next June. The evaluation focuses on the impact of coaching on the ethos of their Personal, Social and Emotional (PSE) classes, these classes are taught by teachers involved in the programme. The teachers also completed questionnaires about professional support and their feelings of efficacy as a teacher.

Teacher paired working ensures peer support and there is also a move towards ALS during department meetings, the idea being that department meetings will be given over to peer support once per month. While there is no shortage of enthusiasm from the participants on the programme, Peter is clear that for sustainability the programme needs to have a focus (tied into PSE in this case), a clear operational structure, and time built in to the school day for peer support (department meetings). His previous experiences in this field would suggest that impact is gradual but incremental and comes at a time of crisis when people are under pressure, the fact that there is a structure in place helps at these times.

Peter finds his coaching training of benefit in all areas of his work and he now finds he uses active listening skills more and doesn't make judgment as quickly as before. His coaching techniques allow him to focus on what his real priorities are and to keep a sense of perspective. He sees huge benefits in colleagues from different departments working together as part of an Action Learning Set. He is looking

forward to the programme of peer support extending to include all staff in the school with all staff trained and actively involved in peer coaching with all meetings having monthly ALS built in.

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City of Edinburgh Council Creating a Coaching Culture

Introducing the Coaching Programme

In 2005 the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) created an integrated Department of Children and Families bringing together colleagues from Social Work, Community Learning & Development and Education. In 2006 CEC began an initiative to take forward coaching widely in the department, give coaching a higher profile and begin to develop 'coaching cultures' within the five city neighbourhoods and their senior leaders and managers.

An extensive programme of coach development was introduced involving 82 CEC staff taking part in a range of accredited coaching training options. These were structured on a cross department basis to allow colleagues from different sectors to participate together thereby promoting partnership working. The Director and Heads of Service also took part demonstrating their commitment to the coaching approach.

Following the successful delivery of the programme an event was held for all coaches to celebrate coaching, encourage coaches to make individualised coaching plans and to support each other by making coaching connections. This event included representatives from other council departments, external coaching companies, freelance coaches and business leaders including colleagues from Standard Life.

How has Coaching Developed?

Many members of the coaching pool created by the project have volunteered to take coaching forward in a variety of ways: coaching aspiring leaders; coaching other coaches; developing and delivering training for colleagues. A number of coaching courses have been offered and internal expertise is used to deliver and review these. In addition, every leader participating in any Children and Families leadership development, from aspiring to senior level, is allocated a coach.

Evaluation and Feedback

The CEC coaching development has been evaluated as highly positive by the vast majority of participants in terms of the design and delivery of the training, the quality of the programmes offered and the impact coaching can make in practice. The CEC initiative has developed a cadre of accredited coaches in the department many of whom are committed to applying coaching in their leadership and management roles and to taking forward their professional development in this field. The coaching development has generated important insights for many CEC managers and leaders.

I was initially sceptical, but found as my learning increased so did the results. Applying the concept of coaching was not much different from the way I normally deal with people, but it has allowed me to focus and develop both my social and work relationships. Applying the questioning, or should I say exploring techniques, has given solutions to issues that could possibly not have been resolved, solved as quickly or as effectively as has been the case. I am impressed by the totality of the coaching concept and the impact it has on enhancing a solution -focused culture. There were key insights that have continued to resonate and have sharpened my self-awareness and behaviour. These include: the delicate language of questioning, the key differences between coaching and mentoring and the various features of listening.

Putting Coaching into Practice

Doris Mitchell from Canonmills School was a participant in the CEC training who has taken forward coaching in several ways in her establishment. She has taken advantage of professional development opportunities to develop her skills as well as being a member of the

coaching network formed by all participants on the five day course for support and supervision.

She employs a coaching approach in her work with pupils with social and behavioural difficulties, finding that coaching can bring about powerful realisations for pupils in terms of responsibility and in identifying stress factors. She uses open questions and other coaching techniques in her teaching and discipline management. Doris has found that daily pressures in school mean she uses a 'quick coaching' approach with pupils rather than formal coaching sessions.

With pupils I listen carefully to their side of any issue, teasing out and questioning as required. From this, I sometimes find that I have 'the wrong end of the stick'. I apologise/ thank the pupil for their help and the coaching bit ends (however this is very valuable because pupils know I listen so an element of trust starts to form). When the coaching does continue we talk around the pre-incident scenario etc then come up with strategies for the next time. I give them a time that I'll get back to them to check that the strategies are working or need to be tweaked. I inform staff on a need to know basis with the pupils consent.

She has also used her coaching skills in managing people particularly when issues arise with parents and when offering feedback after classroom observation. She has found coaching very helpful at these times when previously she would have offered solutions herself. The centre itself is part of a CEC emotional well-being programme pilot 'Creating Confident Staff' and she is pleased that her coaching is contributing to a more emotionally literate approach.

We've begun to create our own coaching culture here in the centre – almost a third of the staff have signed up for coaching sessions with me and two staff will attend coaching training programmes next year so we can offer more. The place certainly seems less frenetic recently and I think this is at least in part due to staff and pupils feeling more empowered.

She has found supervision with a very experienced coach extremely helpful in keeping coaching at the forefront of her mind. Doris' school is merging with another in a month's time and she will use this as an opportunity to train Learning Assistants to use coaching techniques in their discipline management.

Looking Ahead

The CEC initiative to create a coaching culture continues through: individual coaches creating small scale 'coaching cultures' within establishments and teams; communicating through the bi-monthly coaching newsletter *Coaching Connections*; an executive coaching partnership with Standard Life and a working group which is developing Framework guidelines in both Coaching and Mentoring.

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Coaching in South Lanarkshire

Coaching and mentoring form part of South Lanarkshire's strategy to develop leadership capacity and promote leadership for learning in the authority. The following short case studies from three South Lanarkshire schools illustrate the different ways that coaching is being put into practice following the authority's investment in a coach development programme.

Biggar High School

Contributing to an environment of improvement

Alex Dunbar from Biggar High School sees coaching as a way of holding conversations with people that enable them to identify problems and find solutions by active listening, careful questioning and thoughtful responses rather than by giving out advice or showing people how to do things. Coaching enables him to support staff more effectively, develop good practice and negotiate more effectively in his role as union representative. He sees coaching contributing positively to staff welfare which impacts on teacher's effectiveness in the classroom and in their lives beyond the workplace.

Alex has put coaching into practice in a number of ways in the school: by presenting the fundamentals of coaching to colleagues and demonstrating the use and power of coaching language and in his own interactions with staff. Staff responded positively to the introduction to coaching and could see a number of ways to take things forward during faculty meetings, departmental meetings, self help groups in the school and target setting with pupils. His coaching conversations take place with some staff who have approached him and with others whom he has identified. Some conversations are very brief and others last for 30 minutes or more, either during the school day or at the end of the day. Alex regards flexibility as important and strives to make himself approachable at all times.

He sees coaching developing slowly but surely in the school. There are small signs of success and following on from coaching conversations, self generated ideas or actions are sometimes undertaken. Coaching conversations are increasingly used to support young people in realistic target setting at several points in their academic year, in course selection interviews and to help pupils set realistic targets for their attainment.

His key learning as a coach is around the importance of active listening and the need to practice coaching skills. He believes coaching is a very effective way of helping people cope with change and the challenges of everyday teaching and for developing solution focused ways of working and promoting mutual support among staff. He sees coaching contributing to the development of a positive school culture in which improvement is encouraged and supported.

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Stonelaw High School

Encouraging creativity, building on strengths and focusing on the positive

Donny McGeoch is Depute Head Teacher in Stonelaw High School. He sees coaching as a process that brings out people's potential and this investment in people in turn builds leadership capacity in the school. He has implemented coaching in the school by inviting colleagues to participate in a coaching project with a focus on leadership and self improvement, drawing on his own learning from the authority's coach development programme.

The Stonelaw project aims to promote professional dialogue and has involved identifying people's needs and interests around coaching/mentoring via questionnaire, offering training and setting up pairs of colleagues to take forward their coaching/mentoring dialogue at times and in places that work for them. Donny has worked with all members of the group providing advice around contracting, the purpose of the dialogue (issue to be discussed), confidentiality, listening and questioning techniques.

As a coach he has learned about the power of the coaching/mentoring dialogue for providing opportunities for stepping back and demonstrating a real interest in people. The coaching process has given him a structured way of putting into practice his basic belief in the power of coaching/mentoring for empowering the coachee to take action based upon a relationship of trust and honesty. He thinks the power of the professional dialogue encourages creativity, builds on strengths and focuses on the positive. His intention is for this project to go forward with earlier participants taking on the role of facilitators with others to continue to build leadership capacity.

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Hamilton Grammar

Developing awareness, moving to improvement

Richard McGowan, Principal Teacher of Maths, has introduced coaching to his team of 14 teachers to help develop their effectiveness, give him a better sense of how things are going in their classrooms and identify any issues that need to be addressed. The school has already piloted and evaluated the impact of coaching which it sees as a means of improving leadership capacity. He sees coaching as about moving people on a pathway from awareness to continuous, active improvement.

Richards' approach to coaching involves meeting each member of his team for an hour three times a year for a coaching conversation which is distinct from the professional review and development discussion. This conversation allows teachers who may not speak out in department meetings to air their concerns or just have an opportunity to discuss their remit and classes. It also allows Richard and his teachers to focus on an aspect of practice that might need improvement using a process that invites a teacher to visualise what improved performance would like and describe the steps they might take to achieve that.

These conversations give Richard a bigger picture of what is going on in all of his classes and help him focus on the issues that an individual teacher might be facing.

These conversations are not around maths but to do with strategies, engagement with children, thinking and learning. They are to help teachers cope and for demonstrating a manager's responsibility to support teachers to improve their practice in a climate of trust where recognition of good practice happens and praise and support are given. Richard is also using coaching/mentoring strategies to support disruptive pupils to engage and look for solutions to enable them to access their education. Feedback from staff has been positive and staff feel their coaching conversations are beneficial and supportive.

His key learning as a coach has been around the development of his own interpersonal skills and how coaching has contributed to creating a more trusting, open and honest climate with all his staff. He feels coaching encourages active rather than passive responses from staff and encourages him to be more proactive with them.

Looking ahead he intends to continue coaching his team and hopes there will be coaching development opportunities for aspiring Principal Teachers. He hopes that the introduction of Action Learning Sets, which have started in his school with Faculty Heads will be another effective way of promoting learning, adopting a solution focus and promoting high quality professional dialogue across the school.

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Arlene Wilson - Dallas Primary

“You’re making me think”

Dallas Primary is a small, rural, two teacher school with 35 pupils. Arlene Wilson has been Head Teacher for three years. The school is one of the first group of schools participating in the Moray *Coaching for Change* project. In this conversation Arlene talks about how coaching has been integrated into the work of the school and its effect on children, about the skills of questioning and listening, the connection she makes between coaching and Assessment is for Learning (AifL) and the importance of the Moray project for her and her school. She also describes how she uses both coaching and mentoring in her role as school leader.

Bringing Coaching into the Schoolroom

In some of the other Moray schools coaching is offered as a form of peer support or as a solution focused process, but because Dallas is a small school the way in has been to establish coaching skills as part of classroom practice. Here she describes how she brought coaching into the classroom.

We took what we had already established with our formative assessment work, particularly with effective questioning and we developed our questioning into more coaching style questioning....so that every single day when we were in class the effective questioning was being developed into coaching questions. So we weren’t trying this almost solution-oriented conversation with children....we were developing a coaching culture with coaching coming into everything.

Thinking, Questioning and Listening

Arlene’s views on coaching are that is a lot to do with developing thinking skills and that the benefit for children is in the effect it has on their thinking.

For us the whole thing about coaching is helping people think....but you can only help people think if you’re playing this game of tennis that they ask you a question and you’re batting the ball back to them with a question that’s really helping them to think. So to develop our questioning was really key to developing coaching.

Skilful questioning and skilful listening go together and Arlene’s appreciation of the importance of listening developed with a colleague from Highland during their time at Columba1400 on Skye.

We had a lot of conversation together and I learned a lot from him about the importance of listening....We’d be walking and I’d be saying all these things and he’d say nothing. And just by saying nothing you’d almost talk it out for yourself....So when I came back we incorporated that into our coaching. The listening is as important and it’s not about the blind panic of thinking up the next best question! It’s about being more relaxed about it....and it’s almost by not saying anything that people talk themselves round to the solution.)

She sees this combination of questioning and listening making an impact in the classroom and having a powerful effect on children’s learning.

All we need to do is go into a classroom and you’ll notice from the type of questioning we do that we’re continually trying to get the children to think for themselves....to

become much more responsible for their own learning....Now they're beginning to notice "I need to think".....Some of the children sometimes say to us "That question's too hard because you're making me think!"....The coaching tools that you can use evoke thinking and promote thinking.

Linking to Wider Vision for the School and the Authority

Arlene feels positive about the development of coaching in Moray and the contribution that coaching can make together with other initiatives designed to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in the authority. She sees the future of coaching closely linked with the development of AifL.

AifL is something we should all be doing and we should all be familiar with the effective questioning part of it. If we introduce coaching to people as an extension of effective questioning and develop that into a coaching culture I can see that as the easiest way....I think to roll it out you have to have a clear view of exactly what it is you're doing and where you're trying to get to....I'm a great one for looking at what you do already and looking at what's really working....and I think the "hook" you can hang coaching on is what you are doing already.

Coaching and Mentoring

Arlene's final comments are about how she is sometimes both coach and mentor in her role as school leader.

There is a place for mentoring as well as coaching. I had been making a mistake in having everything as a coaching situation....Sometimes there is a place for mentoring, for being more instructional. That was a hard lesson to learn. Sometimes people need the reassurance of somebody's expertise, so they need to use your experience in whatever field you're in.

So as a teacher of many years' experience, instead of encouraging a young teacher to find a solution for herself, sometimes you have to say "Have you thought about doing it this way?" or "I did it this way and it worked" and they're almost relieved to know that, for example, you made a similar mistake and learned from it rather than let them make the mistake then coaching them on it....I feel that sometimes I coach too much and I don't give enough of my expertise and experience. I think there needs to be a balance specially if I am dealing with a probationer teacher or a teacher facing difficulties....

So, now, if it's appropriate I coach and help them find the answer and they'll have more ownership of what they're doing. But there are times, and it would be specifically over teaching issues, that my experience is more pertinent to the problem and will be of much more help to the person.

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Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries and Galloway have an established mentoring programme for newly appointed Head Teachers and Deputies. The authority's view is that one of the most crucial factors involved in effective mentoring is the ability of mentor and mentee to 'get on.' This case study reflects the experiences of a newly appointed primary Head Teacher in a small rural school working with an experienced HT.

Mentoring Approach

In Dumfries and Galloway mentoring is defined as "a process whereby an experienced, highly regarded, empathetic person (the mentor), guides another individual (the mentee) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning and personal and professional development"

Mentoring is about building a relationship based on confidence and trust. It goes beyond straight instruction and passing of practical skills and extends into areas of career development, life planning, and sharing of useful contacts. The mentor takes an interest in the mentee's progress and acts as a sounding board for their ideas and concerns.

The authority see coaching and mentoring as complementary activities forming part of a continuum of one-to-one support with coaching conversations occurring within a mentoring relationship.

The authority has concluded that mentoring is a purposeful conversation in which a mentor offers support, insight and perhaps advice to an individual within a skilfully constructed and managed ongoing relationship. This dialogue should lead, though perhaps not directly, to tangible outcomes which benefit the individual and their organisation. The authority consider that mentoring is not about telling or advising a less experienced colleague how best to run their school

Providing Practical Support

In the mentoring relationship described here the mentee met her mentor about 5 times over the course of the year. Most meetings had been in the mentee's school which had helped the mentee feel a little more relaxed 'on home ground', although they had also met once over an evening meal. Most meetings had been at the end of the school day and had lasted upwards of 2 hours. They set an agenda via email before each meeting then added to it on the day with clear action plans developed for completion before the next meeting. The range of areas discussed was comprehensive though both felt that the most learning and impact on practice occurred when exploring Leading and Developing People.

As the mentee had not previously held a promoted post and had also not previously worked in Dumfries & Galloway there was an initial need for immediate, practical help from her mentor.

I had not had a promoted post before this appointment, so I was prepared to be led somewhat by my mentor. I needed help with basic stuff at first - like what do I throw away and what do I keep! I was still at a rather reactive stage when we first met - I hadn't really got to the stage where I could look at forward planning. One of the first things my mentor did which was really useful was that she introduced me to the idea of carrying out an audit of where the school was now on all sorts of aspects. It was

such a simple idea but it paved the way to clarifying what was important to do and in what order it should be done. That really helped a lot.

Guiding and Supporting

The mentor has provided guidance on how to approach key aspects of the Head Teacher's role and supported the new Head Teacher during the early phase of her appointment.

My mentor has helped me break down my work ... breaking new initiatives down into more manageable steps for the people who will have to implement them; making a set of targets which has made the job much more achievable. Before I talked with my mentor, I didn't really know where to start! I would definitely have been too quick in my pacing of change and struggled to keep people with me. It's a much more strategic overview I now have.

Without a mentor I guess I would of course have learned how to do things properly, but it would be a much longer process learning by my mistakes. Especially in a remote rural school - you would feel very isolated. It could become a very negative experience for you. I think I would have drowned without it. I would have got so entangled I might not have been able to manage. I would have tried to do too much and would have become very demoralised.

This has helped build the Head Teacher's confidence in her ability to perform her role.

Part of the long-term effect of my meetings is that I now have the confidence to act on my own initiative in certain situations where I might have been hesitant before.

Developing a Relationship of Trust

This mentee was typical of many of her peers in her assessment of the quality of the support she received from her mentor and the nature of the issues she felt she could raise with her mentor.

There are lots of things I would talk to my mentor about that I wouldn't mention to my Quality Improvement Officer, for instance. I could also phone other people for help I suppose, but I am not going to confide in them like I do with my mentor.

This confidence in the integrity and confidentiality of the mentoring relationship lies at the heart of the potential for learning and development that the relationship can bring. The depth of the learning is determined to a significant degree by the quality of the relationship:

Mentors and mentees in the authority are highly committed to the programme and its future development. Head Teachers are often motivated to participate as mentors because they recall their own 'white-knuckle ride' on appointment.

Looking Ahead

From the mentee's perspective this professional relationship will continue to develop.

Where do I see this going in the future? Well, I would like to think that we will talk less and less about the day-to-day issues and start to focus on a longer-term vision for my school. That's not to say we won't talk about some of the nitty-gritty stuff; there'll always be that I guess... but I think we will have the space to really explore where I

want the school to go. Maybe we won't meet so often but I would like to think that she will be there in the background for me for a long time yet...A mentor can be for life, not just for Christmas you know!

Following evaluation of the 2006/2007 Head Teacher/Depute programme, the authority are enhancing the programme in a number of ways. These include offering an induction workshop for mentees and mentors and extending the programme to include newly appointed Principal Teachers. The authority is also embarking on a cross service coaching and mentoring programme involving colleagues from Children's Services, NHS and social work managers. Mentoring and coaching are seen as important and growing aspects of creating a developmental culture across the region.

Coaching case study - Ruth Munro - Dunbar Grammar School

Recently, a programme of coaching was established for S5 students in the Dunbar Grammar School. This arose out of the collective experience of coaching for professional development in which all four members of the senior management team had taken part.

At Dunbar Grammar School, we have seen an upward trend in attainment at the end of S4 over several years now. In common with many other secondary schools, we have found that students have not always converted a successful S4 performance into an equally successful S5 performance

In the past the school had run a mentoring scheme for senior students. Generally, this involved one to one chats with an assigned member of staff who explained how to revise, how to construct a study plan and gave advice. Evidence suggested that it had little impact and feedback from students and staff showed that there was little ownership or real engagement on the part of the students.

Our experience of coaching made us consider this as an alternative. Students have different circumstances and approaches to study. Some have part-time jobs; others spend a great deal of time participating in sports or other interests. We felt that coaching offered an individualised means of supporting senior students and would both take account of varying circumstances and promote greater responsibility. Only one of us, though, had any training in coaching or experience of actually being a coach.

We decided to float the idea with staff and were encouraged by their response. More than 25 staff volunteered to act as coaches, though various circumstances have now whittled this down to a core of around twenty. We recognised the need to introduce this group to the coaching process and, working with a professional coach, we devised a four-hour training programme. This was delivered by the professional coach, and tailored to the experience of the staff involved. Staff response to the training was overwhelmingly positive.

We have decided to target the coaching programme at those students who were doing three or more Highers in S5. As well as giving us a manageable number, this also means that we will be able to analyse any impact on attainment. This year, we have asked all students who fall into the identified group to participate, though we have already identified this as something which may be changed in the future.

The programme is structured to give four opportunities for coaching conversations over the course of S5. The initial conversation focused on how the student felt things were going, how they are managing the transition to S5 and the identification of goals both for the end of the session and, more generally, for their future lives. Prior to that conversation, students were given the chance to think about the issues which might come up via a simple worksheet. The second round of conversations was timed to coincide with the run up to the prelim exams and the third will provide an opportunity to reflect on prelim results. A final conversation will be offered prior to the beginning of study leave and the SQA exams themselves. At the end of each conversation a brief pro-forma records the goals and agreed next steps which have emerged and both coach and coachee keep a copy – as students are not coached by someone who teaches them currently, this acts as an important aide memoir.

Around 70 students are involved and initial feedback indicates that both students and staff are finding this a valuable learning experience. The student experience has yet

to be fully evaluated, but initial indications are encouraging. Staff have commented that they have occasionally found it challenging to remain non-directive, but have been prompted to consider other areas of their practice because of the positive results they have experienced in guiding students to their own solutions.

An important feature of the programme has been the provision of on-going support for the volunteer staff involved. After each round of conversations has taken place staff are invited to an informal lunch which allows them to share their experiences of the process. We can already see that the programme is having unanticipated outcomes. Staff have reported that they have been prompted to think about whether they are overly directive in other aspects of their work and lives. Some have indicated that they would be interested in pursuing the accredited coaching training which is offered by the local authority and we look forward to the benefits that this may bring.

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FLEXIBLE ROUTES TO ACHIEVING THE STANDARD FOR HEADSHIP PILOT PROGRAMME 2007-08 - THE ROLE OF COACHING

Jim Keegans. National CPD Team. Project Lead, Flexible Routes to Headship.

The Scottish Government following extensive consultation is currently piloting the Flexible Routes programme for achieving the Standard for Headship. The pilot consists of 3 cohorts of 10 participants each, and involves 5 Local Authorities. The aim of the pilot is to encourage more individuals to aspire to headship by offering choice and flexibility. Each participant is supported on the programme through the appointment at Authority level of a Professional Development Coach (full time).

The overall vision of the Flexible Routes programme is to develop the leadership potential of aspiring headteachers in Scotland through high quality professional development coach support. Coach objectives in the programme are to support and challenge participants in the process of self evaluation against the Standard for Headship, to support in the construction of individual Professional Learning Plans, to address and respond to individual CPD needs, to engage with participants during a period of formative assessment in progress towards the Standard, to engage with participants mainly on 1:1 face to face contact, and to provide opportunities for networking of participants on a formal and informal basis.

The coach role has involved setting up a rhythm of coaching sessions with participants on a frequency of one session every 2-3 weeks although this can vary dependent on individual need. Emotional Competence evidence for individuals from the equivalent of a 360 analysis is used by the coach and participant in the process of self evaluation and linked to CPD needs. This is a unique coaching initiative providing active coaching and an opportunity for in-depth 1:1 relationship. Early evaluation indicates that participants value the contact with the professional development coach, good working relationships have been established on the basis of honesty, integrity, respect, trust and confidentiality as essential attributes. Coaches have required to be approachable, good listeners, to build confidence and encourage, and be alert to participants' sensitivities and sources of vulnerability. As a consequence of their experiences, several participants on the programme are developing coaching techniques and are developing a coaching culture to contribute to school improvement.

The coach is perceived as operating a multiple role involving one as coach, mentor, assessor, tutor and facilitator. Some coaching can occur in school, 'in situ', which is an area for further exploration and likely to be a feature of any future programme. Training of the coaches has been necessary for success, confidence of coaches and the quality of support for participants. The varied and flexible role of the coach with ongoing training ensures that this as an ongoing professional opportunity for the coach with a contribution to capacity building of coaching at Local Authority level.

Personal qualities and professional skills of the coach are critical to the success of the coaching process in the Flexible Routes pilot. The coach requires to have experience at senior level in leadership and management, have experience or an awareness of coaching skills and theory, to have an adequate body of knowledge on educational literature and how critical reflection on reading can influence practice, and be aware of their own professional needs as a continuing learner in the process of coaching.

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PEER COACHING AT FORRES ACADEMY

BACKGROUND

Forres Academy is a secondary school within the Authority of Moray with over 1000 pupils. In 1995 we established a 'buddy' system for registration, where trained S6 pupils registered alongside the first year pupils and act as friends and mentors. During 2005 a small group of S6 pupils approached one of the Depute Heads and requested that the buddy system be expanded to allow them to give more time to some of the problems that the new S1 pupils were experiencing. After further training and discussion a 'peer coaching' group was established in the school and this has continued as each new sixth year volunteer to participate.

WORKING DEFINITION

Coaching is defined as using questioning techniques to enable individuals to decide on actions required to improve matters.

KEY PRINCIPLES/COACHING APPROACH

The following key principles underpin the peer coaching programme.

1. If it works, do more of it.
If it doesn't work, do something different.
2. A small change in any aspect of a problem or failed solution can initiate a solution.
3. People have the necessary resources to make changes.
4. A focus on future possibilities and solutions enhances change.
5. No sign up – no change.
6. Co-operation enhances change.
7. The problem is the problem; not the person.
8. Possibilities are infinite.
9. People have unique ways of solving their own problems.
10. Keep one foot in pain and one in possibility.

A solution oriented model of coaching is used by the peer coaches. The peer Coaches have been trained over a weekend using trainers from Childline UK and with our in-house input on solution oriented principles and techniques.

COACHING EXAMPLE

At Forres Academy we use a very efficient tracking and monitoring system to help give an overview of the progress of our pupils. After several weeks of this year it was noted that pupil A had several loggings for failure to produce homework; for forgetting to bring equipment; for lateness and for failure to follow the school dress code.

During interview with his Guidance tutor it became clear that pupil A really felt that he could not be bothered to change his ways as nobody at home was interested in his progress and that his parents were unconcerned about his behaviour at school. He agreed that coaching with a peer might help him to see things from a different perspective. With parents' (slightly grudging) permission, a weekly coaching meeting was established with the pupil and an S6 peer coach. The coach took a real interest in his progress and helped pupil A to set some short term goals of zero loggings for one week. This was rewarded with a certificate which the pupil took home. The first week was followed by a second with no loggings and again this was rewarded with a

certificate and this time a walk up to the High Street for an ice-cream. The parents of the pupil telephoned his Guidance tutor during week three to comment on the marked change in their son at home and at school and to thank the peer coach. This coaching has continued on a weekly basis over the past twelve weeks, during that time the pupil has only had one logging for lateness. Some of the comments from pupil A during the past weeks.

'It was good to speak to someone who really understood my feelings.'

'It was the first time someone really took an interest in me.'

'My parents are really proud of me now and things are brilliant at home. I even made a cup of tea for my mum and dad last night.' (It may have been two cups, we did not ask!)

KEY LEARNING

Our experience has taught us that it is important to begin from the key principles/values and visions and then to progress to techniques. The intention of the coaching sessions is much more important than the technique or model employed.

LOOKING AHEAD

Each school year brings a new challenge and different perspective on peer coaching as we welcome new S6 pupils to form the new team. The present team have begun to develop new ways of communication and we hope to use technology such as mobile phones, e-mail and web sites to assist in the programme of peer coaching. We have just begun to train some younger (S2 and S3) pupils as peer mediators to be part of the peer coaching scheme.

Some Reflections on Powerful Professional Coaching

Gary Bloom, Associate Director, New Teacher Center @ University of California Santa Cruz

The words “coaching” and “mentoring” are used to describe all kinds of activities in this day and age. Google the word “coaching” and you will get about eighty million hits, and dozens of sponsored links for companies like finishrich.com and actualizedliving.com. People calling themselves “life coaches” will gladly take your money promising to “increase your satisfaction in every aspect of your life.” At their worst, coaching and mentoring can be a guise for fuzzy and even exploitative practices. At their best, coaching and mentoring can be powerful foundations for individual development and organizational culture.

Legitimate coaching and mentoring in the education world fall along a broad scale of intensity and rigor. From the veteran teacher informally mentoring the novice in the classroom next door, to the professional leadership coach working with the head, a number of common characteristics should be evident in the coaching/mentoring relationship:

- It is a voluntary, trusting relationship for both parties
- The coach or mentor is an asset by virtue of his or her status as a “different observer”
- The goal is to build the coachee’s professional capacity and efficacy
- The coach or mentor is a strong listener and questioner, stimulating reflection on the part of the coachee
- The coach or mentor provides the coachee with non-judgmental feedback

These characteristics are but the basics of coaching and mentoring. What I would like to suggest here are some of the steps that can be taken to move coaching and mentoring to higher levels of rigor and impact.

Coaches should observe their coachees doing real work. If coaches rely on meetings with their coachees as their only source of data regarding the coachee’s performance, they are working from a very narrow perspective. Coaches should observe their coachees carrying out important job responsibilities, whether it be teaching classes, conferencing with parents, or running meetings.

Coaches should use multiple sources of data as they provide feedback to their coachees. Two sources of data are the coach’s observations and his or her conversations with the coachee. Others might be student test scores, 360° survey results about a Head’s performance, or a Supervisor’s performance evaluation.

Coaches should work with their coachees to identify opportunities for systems improvements. It is easy to spend coaching time talking about whatever problem or issue might be on the coachee’s mind at that moment, and to focus upon immediate presenting problems rather than upon systemic causes. Powerful coaches push their coachees to look behind immediate symptoms for systemic causes, and to identify and implement systemic solutions. For example, a head or teacher might be concerned about the behavior of a particular pupil. A superficial approach to the problem might result in a conference with and reprimand to the student. A systemic approach might uncover a need for an instructional program more attuned to that student’s needs. Effective coaches help their coachees to peel the onion back to core institutional issues.

Coaches should be prepared to engage in transformational coaching. In our book, *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*, we suggest that coaches must be prepared to help their coachees to develop their core beliefs, interpersonal relationships, and emotional intelligence. Transformational coaches ask their coachees to test their stories and interpretations, and to practice new ways of seeing, thinking and acting. Being an effective head or teacher is about more than professional knowledge and skill; it is about who you are as a human being. Effective coaches are alert to these deeper issues and are willing to take them on.

Coaching should be organized around an explicit set of goals. Early in the coaching relationship, powerful coaches work with their coachees to establish a clear set of goals for the coaching process. These goals serve as benchmarks against which the coaching work can be measured, and an ongoing focus for the coaching conversations. Again, coaching should not be about whatever might be today's problem; it is about sustained and focused professional development.

Coaches must hold their coachees accountable. Coaching makes a difference for coachees because coaches keep track of the commitments made in coaching conversations, and hold their coachees accountable for keeping those commitments. Coaching without accountability is just talk.

Coaches must be bold. Not careless, but courageous. It is not easy to challenge a coachee's interpretations or to give them feedback about their relationship skills or job performance. Coaches typically have only a limited amount of time with their coachees, and should not hesitate to quickly get to the hard conversations. Paradoxically, it is often by taking the risk to raise difficult issues that coaches are most likely to build solid trust with their coachees.

Coaches in school settings must remember that their first commitment is to student achievement. We are not in these roles to hold peoples' hands, to protect their feelings, or to ensure that they survive in their jobs. We are there to help our coachees to have a positive impact on teaching, learning, and student welfare.

At the New Teacher Center, we believe that coaching is a new professional practice requiring high levels of knowledge and skill. Coaches participate in rigorous training, ongoing professional development, and certification. Through this approach, we are seeing very promising results for teachers, administrators, and their students.

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New Approaches to Mentoring – The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project

Background

Liz Heron, Probationer Support Officer with Glasgow City Council (GCC), participated in a group study visit to the New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California Santa Cruz as part of the Scottish Continuing International Professional Development Programme. Her visit to Santa Cruz gave Liz an opportunity to identify ideas and approaches she might use to supplement the good practice in probationer mentoring already in place in her authority. In particular she was interested in observing the NTC mentoring model in action in the context of developing a DVD exemplifying effective practice in probationer mentoring for Glasgow, learning about the ongoing professional development of mentors in the NTC model and considering how to extend network support for probationer mentors.

Current Practice

Glasgow schools' senior management teams currently recruit in-school probationer mentors who then receive central training and support. The approach to probationer mentoring conforms to GTCS guidelines with schools adopting a number of approaches for developing probationer's professional practice support including structured peer evaluation, observation and feedback sessions led by probationer teachers and providing opportunities for probationers to observe more experienced colleagues in a variety of teaching settings. Some schools also provide opportunities for students and probationers to share learning and experience and there are various opportunities for probationers to participate in school and Glasgow City learning and teaching initiatives. Within this pattern of provision it has been acknowledged that it is important to enhance the quality of support and development for probationer mentors.

Insights from the New Teacher Center

In the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP) model, mentors who are exemplary teachers from participating school districts are appointed full time for a period of 2 to 3 years. Each mentor works with a group of between 12 to 15 trainee teachers who they meet individually on a weekly basis for approximately 2 hours to work on specific aspects of practice within the framework provided by the Californian Standards for the Teaching Profession. Mentors engage in ongoing professional development during their period of appointment beginning with orientation and initial training and then participating in weekly, collegiate forum with other mentors to reflect on and develop their practice. These meetings follow a standard protocol of: a connecting activity; problem pose, problem solve; new learning; reflection and feedback for future meetings. Mentors are each paired with a coaching partner and have the opportunity to discuss what is going well and challenges relating to their work, to examine and analyse data of teaching practice, practise observation and coaching skills and review assessment tools and their use. This weekly meeting allows mentors to develop greater familiarity with the California Standards and give input into the refinement of the programme structures and processes. Training is provided in the areas of literacy development, coaching and observational skills, giving feedback, equity pedagogy, and group facilitation skills.

Central to the SCNTP induction model are the partnerships that form between the trainee and mentor. While in Santa Cruz Liz and a colleague shadowed two mentors each of whom carried out two mentoring sessions. The more experienced of the two mentors was a skilled coach who blended facilitative and instructional approaches as

appropriate. There was a clearly established trust between mentor and trainees and the new teachers were encouraged to accentuate the positives and suggest possible next steps to address challenges. The mentor offered instruction where required and at the end of both meetings it was evident that the new teachers were reflective, energised and positive. They were clearly familiar with the use of the collaborative logs for recording the meeting and with the formative assessment documentation used by the mentor for planning or analysing student work, linked to the California Standards. One particular mentor said that the opportunity to meet weekly as a learning community of mentors at the weekly mentor forum is crucial to the success of his mentoring. He is able to share what is working and any challenging issues using the same type of coaching approach and collaborative log.

Implementing New Approaches

Since her return Liz has begun to incorporate aspects of the NTC model into the approach used in Glasgow. She has adapted the collaborative logs used by mentors and coaching partners, and mentors and their trainees, linking them to the Standard for Full Registration and the Probation Supporter Guidance issued by GTCS.

Mentors have been trained in the use of this documentation and Liz has introduced the “problem pose, problem solve” protocol into mentor meetings. The first of these included a background presentation on the NTC experience, input from a primary head teacher who operates a successful, established coaching/mentoring model in her school, and consideration of logs and a “problem pose, problem solve” session. Once these mentor fora become established it will be possible to build in a “hot topic” related to developing an aspect of practice requested by mentors. A DVD demonstration of “problem pose problem solve” sessions is being developed and this will form part of a DVD documenting good practice within the probationary period for future use within Glasgow’s educational establishments.

Liz has also worked with staff to develop awareness of the use of the Standard for Full Registration as a baseline professional standard and as a focus for PRD and CPD. She is undertaking her own professional development in coaching and will participate in the wider roll out of coaching developments within Glasgow’s New Talent Initiative succession planning programme where she will be the point of contact for mentors participating in this initiative. She hopes that her professional development in coaching will enable her to offer more direct support to mentors and probationers.

It is Liz’s intention to elicit support from school Senior Management Teams (SMTs) to establish mentor fora on a more frequent basis than the current bi-termly meeting to allow a more structured approach to improving mentor practice. This would also include building in some time to allow mentors to observe one another during their regular meetings with teachers, coach each other, and share reflections. The NTC model has demonstrated the value of mentors working collaboratively to develop their practice, share their strategies for supporting trainees, observe and reflect on each other’s practice.

Looking ahead Liz plans to establish mentor fora, complete and distribute the DVD of exemplary probationer mentoring practice and reinforce to Glasgow Headteachers the use of SFR, the GTCS guidance on selection and training of mentors and the need to create rich and diverse opportunities for continuous professional development to encourage teacher leadership of which mentoring is one.

Louise Sinclair, Gracemount High School, Edinburgh

Empowering young people to find their own solutions

GHS is a six-year non-denominational, comprehensive school serving the community of South East Edinburgh. The school has 592 students and 57 staff and is a *School of Ambition*. Louise Sinclair is a Principal Teacher of Guidance who participated in the City of Edinburgh coach development programme and this case study is an account of her coaching work with pupils.

As a Guidance teacher I have responsibility for the pastoral care and well being for 195 pupils and this gives me an opportunity to apply coaching techniques. I have tended to use the GROW (link) model and the Rule of Three (link) but have on occasion encouraged the coachee to transpose (link) themselves into the other chair and “see it as others see it.” This technique is particularly useful when helping a young person resolve a conflict with another person - often a teacher - and has helped to defuse situations and even to some extent avoid exclusion.

Individual pupils may come to me of their own free will but I have also identified others requiring support. The issues have been wide and varied, for example, senior pupils considering whether or not to apply to University, or pupils facing personal issues at home or in school. I have arranged to meet some pupils on a weekly basis for a period of time while I have met others only two or three times. One pupil I am currently working with is experiencing difficulties in her personal life that are impacting on her schoolwork. Over the last month we have met weekly and she has identified and worked towards agreed goals. She has been pleased to stop me in the corridor and update me on her progress outwith our arranged meeting times.

I have applied coaching techniques when working with a group of Fifth Year Friends who are supporting our S1 pupils in a mentoring role. We have monthly team meetings that seem to be helpful and the youngsters involved are gaining in confidence and becoming more able to take the initiative with their responsibilities.

A colleague is developing and piloting a Personal Life and Employability course for a small group of young people who have been identified as at risk of not entering employment or training. As part of this course the pupils involved will receive regular individual coaching sessions.

I think coaching is a way in which I can enhance the pastoral provision/support I provide for pupils. This type of support is an integral part of the guidance/support teacher's post but having the coaching training has made me better able to empower the young people to find their own solutions.

A major challenge is finding time and a quiet space in a very busy building. I now have the luxury of an additional non-contact hour but this does not allow me to engage with many for specific coaching. However I feel that my skills have been applied throughout my work. I would hope to have further training in team coaching as I think this would be particularly useful not only when working with staff/department teams but also in classroom and group work situations.

I am still at the infancy stage of coaching and gaining confidence myself but as I progress I would like to share my expertise and encourage other colleagues to adopt these approaches.

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Mhairi Stratton - Humbie PS – East Lothian

Let it go and let them go!

Mhairi is a P4-7 teacher in Humbie Primary. It is a two classroom school with a roll of 19;. East Lothian offered a coaching training programme to teachers as part of their coaching project. Mhairi attended the coaching training which lasted two days and was so taken with it that she immediately thought of the benefits of using it in her teaching. Mhairi defines coaching empowering people to learn and move on for themselves and make their own decisions is how.

Bringing coaching into the teaching and learning

The GROW model was introduced into Mhairi's teaching and the pupils' learning in August '07. She could see how this would encourage the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

The pupils have now used this model when working on topics such as The Jacobites, The Body and Electricity, taking ownership of their learning and going into areas that the teacher might not have if she had directed the learning more closely. The pupils can confidently tell you what they have learned and where they want to go next. Mhairi claims they get more out of their learning now because they know the purpose behind it. Learning intentions are being recognised by the pupils themselves because it means something to them and success criteria being met because the pupils are feeding naturally what they need to know and learn.

The whole school is benefitting because the pupils are involving the other class and sharing their learning with them. Pupils are now identifying what resources they need, and why, and then working out how to source these. This is also having a very positive effect on parental involvement as the pupils are also discussing their learning more at home and often asking them to provide the resources! Parents have commented to this effect recently at Parent' Night.

Lessons learned

A key learning point for Mhairi has been not to underestimate what the children can achieve. She has realised that planning too rigorously can in fact stifle the pupils learning. She suggests that if we give the power over to the children we will get the best out of them. She also suggests, with a note of caution, that if we are doing this that we do this within the structure of the GROW model. Let it go and let them go! Her initial fear of doing this was around what others might think. Her prior knowledge of coaching had been in an adult context and to move this to the classroom was tinged with some concern for her. However, she immediately saw the benefits and how quickly and naturally the pupils were taking responsibility for their own learning. By seeing the children in action, her initial concerns soon disappeared. Of course outcomes still need to be met and Mhairi has this in mind at all times, but her teaching is now less controlled allowing the pupils a degree of freedom in their learning with the pupils being the ones who plan tightly now!

The main breakthrough for Mhairi came when she was able to stand back and let the reins go allowing pupils to work in their groups and learn for themselves. She claims she now teaches them how to learn, instead of teaching them facts, giving them the tools to learn independently. Quality learning which they have identified is producing some very positive outcomes. With the support of her Headteacher, she has also encouraged risk taking in the classroom. Pupils are encouraged to see mistakes as

learning opportunities and the classroom is a safe environment to allow discussion around this to take place.

The way forward

The coaching training was a huge insight for Mhairi who now sees this as a way of being and it is now starting to come naturally to her. After the initial two days, there were further opportunities to meet up and share experiences which she found very helpful. Her advice to others is to have a go. She invites us into her classroom to see how it works and see how it ties in with Assessment is for Learning(AiFL) approaches, but perhaps more than anything she suggests that we need to let go of the control freak within us so as to allow the children to flourish.

Her wish for the future is that her pupils become even more independent in their learning and start coaching each other. She would also like to build links with the High School so that the model can be appreciated by all, ensuring a continuity of learning styles being available for her pupils.

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Coaching leadership – A Way of Being: Jan Robertson

Dr. Jan Robertson is the Director of the London Centre for Leadership in Learning at the Institute of Education, London University. Jan's teaching and research has focused particularly on learning relationships through coaching leadership and international aspects of leadership development. She has travelled and studied extensively in the USA and worked with the National College for School Leadership in England. She has been the director of many major professional development and research projects with the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. Jan was formerly a school principal and Chairperson of Department in the School of Education at the University of Waikato.

A number of Jan Robertson's comments link to the earlier article *A Reflection on Coaching* by Mike Sutton.

Introduction

When I was a school principal I became personally aware of some key factors that influenced my later academic research on coaching leadership development:

- The isolation of leadership – there are few people you can talk to about the real issues that face you in your day to day work;
- The lack of *coherent* support and challenge in leadership development and school development for school principals;
- The importance of outside perspectives and a trusted colleague to enable reflection towards the achievement of goals, on an ongoing basis – someone committed to the same task as you - your school and your professional goals.

I loved being a school principal. It was the epitome of all I had hoped for in my career – a real opportunity to work with others to put into practice all the values and beliefs about how children achieve most effectively. The most fulfilling, responsible and challenging role I had as yet undertaken...with little consistent, coherent leadership development or preparation. Times have changed since that time 20 years ago – or have they?

Since that time I have worked with thousands of leaders in over a dozen countries, coaching educational leadership, through workshops, keynotes, school-based residencies, academic teaching, and research, developing and researching a model of leadership development that will support and challenge educators to continue their growth towards providing better leadership and learning opportunities for adults and for young people.

The model of coaching educational leadership that many school leaders have worked with me over the years to develop, has some key principles that Mike Sutton's case study effectively highlights. This model is about an ongoing learning relationship that is built upon the concept of 'partnership.' The coach is a learner, not an expert or adviser, in this model, and this has particular implications for ways of working, ways of "being" in the relationship, and therefore too, implications for the desired outcomes of the people one works with – whether children or adults. My research and development over the past two decades has revealed these 10 principles around coaching educational leadership. I am going to use these principles as a framework to discuss Mike's reflective case study. They are not in any particular order but all are important aspects of a school culture and professional practice where coaching is the philosophy around which people carry out their work.

RISK-TAKING AND CHALLENGE —experimentation in a cycle of reflection

Mike ended his reflection with the words *“Take the risk, plan a process and remove the classroom walls that are barriers to teacher learning. Enjoy coaching.”* In his school Mike took an informed, guided and supervised risk as he set out to establish coaching as a practice throughout the school. He *modelled* this willingness to try out new ideas; he *encouraged* teachers to try out new ideas. There was a sharing of successes and failures – or things that did not work as effectively as one might have expected – between professionals on a learning journey together as they strived to improve student achievement in the school. Their actions were informed by past reflection, evidence and decision-making and the extent to which these actions met the intended outcomes or goals was then subject to further scrutiny and reflection. This reflection then informed future actions, and so developed a cycle of reflection and action, as in action research, with the coach acting as the challenging friend. The challenge aspect of coaching leadership practice provides the opportunities and structures that will move people beyond self, out of comfort zones, to enable different perspectives and methodologies to confront existing ways of knowing. This was summed up by Diana who said she had *“lifted my game definitely and increased my professionalism.”*

RESPONSIBILITY AND TRUST — accountability and ownership of one’s own practice and development

Teachers, such as typified by Diana’s quote, were seen taking responsibility for the quality of their own work. They became critically reflective about their work, regularly assessed their own practice and sought descriptive feedback, and actively identified their areas of strength and areas for development. They did not need to have someone else telling them what to do, how to do it and checking up on whether they had done it well. This is because giving responsibility to others goes hand in hand with being able to trust that they can and will do the job effectively. Trust develops from trustworthy, respectful leadership behaviour, such as Mike modeled, which allowed the teachers to assist in the design of the coaching model and to begin to see their own potential as expert teachers and then effective coaches with their colleagues. Interestingly the teachers chose to only use descriptive rather than evaluative feedback in their coaching processes. Joyce and Showers (1996) also support the belief that assessment or evaluation of teachers is not essential to effect changes in practice, and can even work against teachers being open to change. Evaluative feedback, if it is used, needs to be conducted with skill and expertise, leaving responsibility with the learner for the self-assessment against goals set (Robertson, 2005). Mistrust, and checking up on people, or monitoring people and telling them what to do, simply creates a culture of dependency and lethargy. Effective coaching is not based on a deficit model of trying to “fix” teachers or leaders.

INQUIRY — researching practice and seeking information

This principle becomes evidenced in schools when teachers can be seen “problematizing” their practice as they did in Mike’s school. The teachers will be the ones asking questions about the problems they encounter during their practice. They will be engaging in problem solving, not as a mere reacting to the day-to-day minutiae of their practice, but as a proactive search for continual improvement through a problem-posing process. Mike said *“Coaching is now part of all the professional learning that we do in the school as all staff strive to change pedagogical practice.”* They began asking such questions as:

- “What would happen if ...”
- “What might I do differently?”

- “What does the research literature say about this?”
- “Who has tried something similar to this?”

Through this process, Mike’s teachers then created and shared new knowledge as part of their daily work.

SHARED LEARNING — also known as mutual understanding

When there is evidence of reciprocal learning between teachers, between teachers and students and between school and community, in coaching educational leadership there is real hope for improved practice. Coaches who engage in shared learning will be actively listening more than talking. Coaching is a different way of being. Coaches focus will be on developing their awareness—of a colleague’s practice, of purposes and of outcomes. Leaders, as Mike stated, begin to *“move from what was informal discussion to a structure including setting the issue to be the focus of our next meeting.”* Teachers who share understanding know why they are doing what they are doing, and the intended impact on student achievement. Moreover, they are able to articulate and justify their practice, as they have many opportunities to do so in this context of inquiry within the coaching relationship. They will first listen to learn about what others are sharing with them, they will suspend judgment, and only then, in full understanding and with invitation, will they share their own ideas. As Mike said *“The art of active listening has continued to develop and has helped form a trust relationship with each colleague which has become the basis of the coaching partnership.”* With this principle in place, teachers and students will at times be teaching, at times be learning, at times be leading and, at others times, be following in the pursuit of successful learning.

SUPPORT — a commitment to “caring” for others in the institution

If people in a professional learning community are supporting one another, they will be acknowledging one another. They will see the person within the professional, and the person within the student. They will care about, and for, the wellness of colleagues and students. They will be aware of others’ dreams, goals and aspirations. When this principle is evident, leadership practice will include the provision of resources, including time, and efforts to protect what is important. Such practice will mean showing overt commitment to the initiatives and leadership endeavours of others by attending the meetings other leaders organize, reviewing policies and practices that may hinder development, and being willing to listen and to learn about what helps or hinders others in achieving their goals. Support is also about having some fun and laughter and a general feeling of collegiality and friendship in the workplace. Supportive people know the importance of renewal, revitalization and balance between their personal and professional lives. Mike knew that *“to be successful in embedding change you have to be patient and support teachers and what better support than other colleagues?”*

BUILDING CAPACITY — to practice, create and sustain the vision

When you go into Mike’s staffroom or professional development meetings, it is hard to distinguish who is the principal and who is the expert in the development taking place. As Diana said, they now had *“an ever increasing circle of colleagues to share ideas and reflect with.”* Mike has always been committed to developing the capacity of others around him. The third year teacher coaches the deputy principal. Remember this is a partnership, a non-hierarchical model. Teachers in this learning community are also committed to building capacity in others, but they know too that this process starts with oneself. Intellectual capacity is not sufficient—social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural capacities are necessary as well. The job of leadership (in which I include teaching) is too big a responsibility to do alone—interdependence is more important than independence, and synergy is developed

through working with and through others. Mike said *“By far the most exciting thing that I have done in my long period in education was to introduce and research peer coaching to my school.”* Principled leaders look for opportunities to develop others, to give others opportunities to lead and take responsibility, and to build a group of people around them who are committed to building and working towards the shared vision. Teachers are then led by a shared vision, not by people in positions of responsibility. The comments from the teachers in Mike’s school demonstrate an empowerment around the process as they seek to improve their pedagogy. *“I have been observed many times (as a student/beginning teacher) but I felt for the first time that the focus was really on me and that was great”* and *“When are the rest of the staff going to get this opportunity because its changing my teaching so much”* are comments indicative of empowered teachers. As such, when leaders leave, the capacity of the institution to support the vision, and the journey towards it, is sustained.

QUALITY — the highest standards, developed through vision and values

For teachers focused on quality pedagogy and improved student achievement, only the best will do. Mike’s school has the individual student as its number one priority and the starting point for decision making. Teachers therefore will be seen focusing on student achievement—on all students and all their achievements. *“Over the past five years we have increased student achievement by over 20% with the 2007 results showing that 85% of Year 6 students are reading at or above their chronological age.”* These teachers will consistently struggle with (i.e., discuss, reflect on and seek solutions to) the dilemmas and tensions they face in reaching students who are more difficult to reach and in this case are in the 15% of students yet still to reach. They became *“investors in the school not mere tenants”* and their enjoyment of teaching increased.

INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT — the essence of leadership

Innovation is about new ways of thinking and being, and people in learning communities are open to new ideas—in fact, they seek them out. The teachers in Mike’s school gave up their lunch-hours to discuss research articles together, and the implications of this research for their teaching and the school. *“We had changed to whole school development.”* There was the expectation that this is part of the culture and this is “the way that we work” – coaching built into staff meetings, professional development opportunities, and government development contracts such as literacy and numeracy projects.

Teachers who are transformational can show evidence of improvement, and hence their progress towards the vision.

CRITICAL THINKING, AWARENESS AND REFLECTION — outside perspectives and feedback

Effective critical reflection requires skill, the systematic development of which requires time structured into the day. Critical reflection focuses on policies, values, beliefs and principles. It helps to lessen the gap between what we think we do, or would like to do, and what we *actually* do in our practice. Teachers who are critical thinkers will be seen practising double-loop learning. Rather than just thinking about whether something is effective, they will be questioning why something is done in the first place and what values and principles it is founded upon. They will want to know, for example, why one aspect of curriculum is included and another is not. They will ask what perspective something is written from, and on what evidence. They will think about the essence of the curriculum, and the intended skills and qualities, not just the content. And they will seek the help of others to aid their reflection by providing outside perspectives and feedback on it. Mike worked with each teacher to develop narratives of their teaching practice, their values and beliefs that

underpinned their teaching, and these stories were then used as a baseline in comparing espoused theories versus theories in action. Mike began talent spotting for the expert pedagogues and has “*unleashed the expertise*” and brought it out from behind closed doors.

BELIEF — in oneself, in people and in ideas

I said these principles were not in any particular order, but last, and possibly most important to the concept of principled leadership, is belief and being positive. Mike unerringly believed that the teachers could improve their teaching and that the students could all improve their achievement. This is the belief in one’s own ability to do the work and to make a difference to the quality of learning in an institution. Just as self-esteem is highly important in developing students’ ability to learn, self-belief, or efficacy, is highly important in facilitating adults’ effective learning and practice. Equally important is a belief in others: principled leaders see people as “a glass half-full” rather than half empty (as in lacking, lazy, not committed, unprofessional). Mike always believed sincerely that the teachers he worked with had the ability and the potential to change, that they were part of the solution not the problem, and that, in the right conditions and environment, they would want to change...and they did change. Teachers who were ready to leave teaching became revitalized; teachers developed and left the school to move into promotions; the teachers genuinely owned the vision that all children would learn, and knew that Mike was authentic in his desire to make sure that every student received the very best opportunity to achieve success in his school.

The process takes time. Deep change takes time. Mike started with his own development, gathering confidence in the practice and theory of coaching, modeling that he was authentic in his belief that coaching was important. Mike has worked at the development of a coaching school culture over five years. He started small - with four keen, volunteer, expert teachers with whom he developed “*core coaching skills*” and ensured that the coaching development was “*done with them and not to them*” ... he started and it took on a life of its own, as Mike describes ... “*far beyond what I ever imagined.*”

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Jane Holmes, Auchtermuchty Primary

From the start of the project my perception was strongly that this was a learning experience for me as a new leader and I aimed to use the opportunity to develop my coaching skills. As a new Head Teacher the experience of being coached and coaching others within my Action Learning Group (ALG) has been powerful. My coaching skills have developed through working with my colleagues in the ALG but, more powerfully, the ALG has provided a “safe space” where I have the opportunity to discuss issues related to my school and colleagues. As a new Head Teacher this has enabled me to confront a number of leadership challenges and move forward with these challenges. There is an important distinction here between mentoring and coaching.

When I took up my HT post I had (relatively) recently completed the Scottish Qualification for Headship and had completed long-term Acting HT posts, I was therefore fairly confident about the day to day managing of a school. Could a mentor provide the support I needed with leadership issues? Possibly but coaching has certainly been more appropriate for me although I would not rule out mentoring completely.

- I'm clearer about when coaching is appropriate and when a mentoring style is more appropriate
- I am much clearer about where I am able to support and where a colleague needs to be referred on to more specialised support.
- When talking with staff I now have coaching as a key skill which I can use to benefit the individual and the school.

(The Head Teacher has been practising with two volunteer members of staff Feedback from these colleagues highlight that the Head Teacher has adopted a facilitative style which encourages others to think more deeply, own and solve their issues for themselves.)

During planning sessions and Professional Review and Development I am using coaching type questions to encourage my colleagues to come to their own decision about the action they will take to resolve an issue. This takes time but in the long term is much more effective in ensuring improvement. We have quickly gone over the prepared agenda and then focused quality time on one aspect that my colleague wants to talk about more.

The development of coaching skills will be a central part of our School Improvement plan (SIP) for next session and we have already organised quality input from a coaching consultant. This will be whole-staff as I believe this is the most effective way of ensuring whole-school improvement. The aim of developing coaching with the whole staff is to encourage us to think about how we communicate with other people and how other people communicate with us. ('other people' being the whole school community – staff, parents, pupils etc)

Judy Brotherton, Deputy Head Teacher, Kelso High School, Scottish Borders

Dealing with what is at the heart of the matter

"I can't think straight!"

"My head's a mash!"

How many times have I heard people saying that? How many times do I think that to myself? Yet, in the past, when people have asked me what they should do, I have often been quite taken back when they have not followed my advice at all; and in a similar vein, when asking others what I should do, I have often been dissatisfied with their advice and gone on to do something quite different, or not acted at all.

Developing Clarity

My recent development in coaching has shown me a very different approach to this sort of situation. Coaching allows an individual to firstly really peel away all the layers that surround an issue/question/concern/uncertainty in their mind, so that they start to deal with what is at the heart of the matter rather than what is often some type of distraction, often placed there by the individual to avoid confronting something which is difficult or unpleasant to deal with. It can sometimes be an uncomfortable process as the coachee is made to look at a situation from angles which have perhaps been avoided. As a coach this in turn presents a challenge; it would be all too easy to move swiftly on, avoiding any discomfort, but by doing that the coach might not arrive at the heart of the matter. Skills such as rephrasing questions, allowing for silence, pushing for an answer and maintaining the delicate balance between challenge and support all help to move the coachee forward. I have found it particularly important to challenge the coachee's perceptions in order for them to get a better grip of the reality.

The different stages of the coaching process allow the individual to sort out the confusion of thoughts in their mind, to identify where they want to go and to put into place a step-by-step plan of how to get there. During my coaching training and in subsequent coaching sessions I have learnt how the GROW model is an excellent structure for coaching. To start with I was over-anxious about which stage I was at, but as I have practised this process has become better internalised and my approach less mechanistic.

An Empowering Thinking Skill

Coaching is amazingly empowering, it is like a guided journey where we make all the choices and having arrived at the conclusion ourselves we are much more likely to act upon the decisions we have made. I feel that coaching constitutes a very powerful tool which can be used in a range of situations and will be very effective within a school context. It has helped me personally and professionally to become more focused and to be able to manage many aspects of my job and life in a more efficient way. I see it as an empowering thinking skill, which if developed in people, offers them a tool to help them realise their own potential. I would very much like now to develop my coaching skills further and to share what I have gained over this year with as many other people as possible. I would like to build up a coaching culture in the school and in the region. There remain many challenges and questions: how do I really embed coaching within the working environment? How do I get people to understand the value of coaching? Should I consider being an external or an internal

coach? There are concerns with credibility and with confidentiality. However, it is up to me to meet those challenges and not to allow them to become blocks!

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Sandra Crawford – Mearns Primary School – East Renfrewshire

The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas

Background

Mearns Primary School is a four-stream school situated in Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire. The school presently has a roll of 816 pupils and also provides Nursery places for 120 children. I first became aware of Action Learning Sets in 2006 when I was invited to participate in an Action Learning Set (ALS) - Coaching Project. The aim of the project was “to develop Principal Teachers and Chartered Teachers across sectors to lead the development of action research within local authority schools by using coaching skills.” Further information on the course referred to the development of questioning skills to raise attainment in literacy in the ‘below average’ group, I felt that improving my questioning skills would promote further progress in pupils’ learning by enabling me to enhance the development of critical thinking and reasoning skills. The practice could then be rolled out to benefit the whole school.

A Working Definition of Action Learning

Action Learning involves taking a new approach to problem solving, with a small group providing challenge and support to assist one another to find the best solutions and to formulate an individual action plan. A key principle of the ALS is that participants are enabled to identify and maximise their own learning skills. Open questioning which avoids advice or prescriptiveness enables individuals to reflect on practice and assists them to find *their* best solution to *their* challenge. Trust is essential; once established, it enables the group to form closer, more collaborative relationships and the synergy produced promotes higher-level thinking and reasoning skills.

The process of the ALS is as important as the content, and the five day training programme to be a coach/facilitator consisted of learning by doing, working through the four stages of skill development from “unconscious incompetence” to “conscious competence”. It is essential to develop the skill of being observer as well as participant. By doing this the facilitator can see both perspectives to situations and can therefore take a more holistic position in order to provide more accurate and creative ways of making a difference.

Putting the Training into Practice

Having undertaken the training as coach/facilitator for the ALS, the next step was to explore how this would lead to improvements to be experienced by pupils in the classroom. This would involve planning and implementing a mini-project which would focus on literacy and involve children in the underachieving group for whom the project would make a difference.

I enlisted the support of my stage colleagues and after some discussion we decided on a project to promote personal reading among boys. This would afford us the opportunity to identify obstacles to boys reading and hopefully to implement effective strategies which would encourage and support positive attitudes and a lifelong interest in reading.

I introduced the concept and structure of the ALS to my colleagues, and in order to familiarise them with the process, we chose a first issue unrelated to the reading project. The presenter of the issue reported that the non-judgemental and empathic approach had been of great assistance in helping him find the best solution to the problem and had enabled him to formulate an action plan. This fostered a positive

attitude in the group towards the effectiveness of the set and a second session led to an action plan to promote reading.

The Project

All of our P6 pupils were given a questionnaire (National Literacy Trust) about their reading habits and preferences which confirmed that boys would read more if they were in reading groups with friends. So, initially we decided to focus on boys for our five week project. Our discussions with the boys suggested that there was little parental involvement in their reading; this highlighted the importance of involving parents in the project. We ensured a variety of genres to interest the boys and were credited with stickers for each book read. On achieving five stickers, they received a certificate. The boys were also encouraged to complete short book reviews and 'Fantastic Facts' for the reading display in the school corridor. A second questionnaire helped us with our evaluation; parents said that the new approach encouraged their children to read more. The staff involved were very encouraged by the success of the project and are aiming to expand the project to encompass P5 and P7.

Our success in the Reading project was in large part due to our participation and collaboration in the ALS, which afforded the opportunity for "the open flow of ideas; faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems; and the use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies."(Beane and Apple)

Key Learning

Participating in action learning sets engenders an ethos of mutual respect and support among colleagues and enables professionals to work together collaboratively to enhance teacher professional development and performance, resulting in greater impact within the classroom and the increased potential to raise standards and attainment.

Looking Ahead

In order to introduce the concept to a wider audience I gave a short presentation to staff on the May in-service day 2007 and followed this with the offer of in-house CPD; to date I have received eight expressions of interest. I hope to establish an action learning set in the school and to encourage others to develop an interest in becoming coach/facilitator. Learning about the concept and structure of the set and becoming comfortable with the process will require staff to dedicate a substantial number of CPD hours .

The impact of this practice will hopefully be seen in projects that will be taken forward by individuals and teams, but there may be another, less tangible result in the form of closer, more collaborative relationships with colleagues which will have a positive impact on the learning experiences of the pupils.

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A Reflection on Coaching

Mike Sutton, Principal, Nawton School, Hamilton, New Zealand

I have been involved in coaching as both coach and coachee, and as a researcher for over ten years. I am convinced that it has made me a more effective leader and practitioner and has impacted hugely on the school culture, professional development and student achievement. In this brief reflection I will look at some of the key points about coaching and the factors that have contributed to it being a success.

Initially I was involved in a leadership reciprocal coaching partnership with another principal colleague as we reflected on each other's practices and education. It was during this period that I came in contact with leadership coaching research by Dr Jan Robertson (1995). This helped my colleague and I move from what was informal discussion to a structure including setting the issue to be the focus of our next meeting. It was during this time that Dr Jan Robertson (2002; 2005) introduced us to active listening and reflective questioning which have become core coaching skills I use. Since the initial entry into coaching I have had a coach every year and it's very much the reason that I continue to grow and develop as a professional educator. It's lead me to increase my reflection on practice, to read widely and encouraged me to complete a Masters in Educational Leadership with coaching as my thesis.

As a consultant Principal with the University of Waikato Educational Leadership Centre I have continued to practice and learn as a coach. The art of active listening has continued to develop and has helped form a trust relationship with each colleague which has become the basis of the coaching partnership. Last year each of the three colleagues I worked with struck major issues in their schools and had the trust and confidence to telephone me and work through the issues. I wasn't the person with the answers but the colleague who listened and asked the hard questions that encouraged reflection and their decision making.

By far the most exciting thing that I have done in my long period in education was to introduce and research peer coaching in my school. It has enhanced the abilities of peers to work together, visit each others classrooms, talk about teaching and learning and impacted on their classroom practice far beyond what I ever imagined.

The process started small at the school based on the beliefs of Hopkins (2001) who advocated a cadre or cascade approach to change. Four staff began to work with me and the skills developed were based on the work of Holmes (2003) and Robertson (1995; 2002). About four months was spent training the initial group (less time now) to learn the skills of coaching and to develop trust. They approached a colleague each to become their coachee for four terms with a focus on pedagogical change. A key aim was to empower the coaches to get them to 'buy-in' to coaching and Gottesman (2000), Bishop (1996) and Bishop, Berryman, and Richardson (2003) were key influences. Status or experience was not a factor in the partnerships that were set up. Some comments from teachers included:

"I have been observed many times (as a student/beginning teacher) but I felt for the first time that the focus was really on me and that was great" Teacher W.

"When are the rest of the staff going to get this opportunity because its changing my teaching so much?" Teacher X.

Prior to beginning coaching I had developed the belief that one off courses didn't support teachers in changing pedagogy or impact on student achievement. We had changed to whole school development. At the beginning our focus was on reading

as student achievement was very low (for example 62% of Year 6 students were reading at or above their chronological age at the end of the year). All the staff would attend a whole school course with a facilitator or colleague. These were over a year long period. Each whole staff session would be followed a short time later with teaching teams meeting with the facilitator to help their look at how the 'big picture' ideas could be implemented with the particular age group. With the coaching I found that the coachees were using the coach to observe the lesson(s) as new ideas were trialled to ensure that they were in line with the professional development. Over the past five years we have increased student achievement by over 20% with the 2007 results showing that 85% of Year 6 students are reading at or above their chronological age. This has resulted in whole school change. To put the results into context this is a low socio-economic school community. What better results could teachers, students, community and principal want?

Coaching is now part of all the professional learning that we do in the school as all staff strive to change pedagogical practice. My original belief behind coaching was that there was a huge amount of teacher talent in the school that was hidden away behind single cell classroom doors. I believe that this expertise has been unleashed. We also now have a teacher who was never a leader, managing the process so that all staff benefit from peer coaching.

As I reflect on coaching I believe it's important to start small and let the momentum grow and to empower teachers so that this change is done with them and not to them. It also has to take place in a school culture where trust is valued and encouraged. Teachers have become leaders as Barth (2001) has said they would. They have become investors in the school not mere tenants' and the enjoyment of teaching has increased.

I believe that to be successful in embedding change you have to be patient and support teachers and what better support than other colleagues? There is a need to have a clear process and model of coaching that has to be flexible enough to meet teachers' individual needs. I also believe that it is important that teachers are introduced to readings and develop some common language about curriculum and change. This needs to be an important part of the coaching process. The best recommendation for coaching comes from one of my staff who joined Dr Jan Robertson and me when we ran a 2 week on line conference (2006) on coaching. Diana wrote:

"Some of the spin offs that I have experienced from being involved in coaching have been; growth for myself as a leader, a higher level of professional talk, and an ever increasing circle of colleagues to share ideas and reflect with. We are developing a learning community within our staff which is growing as we pick up more people to be part of the coaching process. Being involved in coaching has definitely lifted my game and increased my professionalism which will of course have major benefits for the children I teach."

Take the risk, plan a process and remove the classroom walls that are barriers to teacher learning and ultimately student achievement. Enjoy coaching.
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Moray Council Coaching for Change Project

The Moray coaching project commenced in Spring 2006 with support from the Scottish Executive. The initial phase of the project has involved developing a group of coaches in six pilot schools and in the education services department who have taken the lead on coaching in their own schools and in their work with colleagues. A full time secondee has been appointed to support the development and the project is being evaluated by Aberdeen University. The project aims to create fertile conditions for a significant culture shift moving away from a traditional top down model to one where staff feel more empowered to lead. The project sees dialogue, reflection and coaching as fundamental to achieving a shift of leadership culture in the authority.

The Moray project involves an extensive coaching development across a number of schools in the authority. There are accounts of coaching developments from Dallas and St Sylvester's primary schools and Forres Academy in other sections. In the following section George Sinclair, Head of Educational Development in Moray, talks about the strategic development of coaching in the authority.

George Sinclair

"Coaching is leading to a more purposeful dialogue and more positive outcomes"

The Moray coaching project has a number of strands to it: developing coaching as a contributor to leadership development; developing synergy between the skills and practices of Assessment is for Learning (AifL) and coaching skills and practices; developing a coaching climate as a part of a change in leadership culture in the authority. These strands have developed as teachers, school leaders and colleagues in educational services have explored the potential of coaching in their schools and as their experience of coaching has grown. In the following sections George Sinclair talks about how coaching is developing across schools in the authority, how his own leadership practice has changed and how coaching connects to the change in leadership culture which the authority hopes to develop.

Coaching Leading to Positive Outcomes

Although George had no prior knowledge of coaching before the project began, coaching struck a chord with his belief that people usually have the answer to their own issues and these can be elicited with the help of a process like coaching. By involving himself in the first phase of training he demonstrated his own commitment to the project and could see how the connections between coaching and AifL could be developed. Coaching has also had an important effect on George's own leadership approach.

There was a school in the authority going through a difficult time. I arranged a meeting with individual parents. When I went to the meetings I asked people what they wanted: they came up with the answers and those answers are now in place....I feel coaching is something that has changed the way I work...maybe not every day but most days.

He also highlights changes in interactions with HTs and between colleagues and parents as examples of where coaching "is leading to a more purposeful dialogue and more positive outcomes." Referring back to the school facing difficulties he comments, "It certainly seems that people went away from those meetings feeling they had been listened to."

Creating a Coaching Culture

One of the aims of the project is to help shift culture in schools and the authority and the ongoing evaluation being conducted by Aberdeen University suggests that a coaching culture is developing in schools in different ways. The evaluation highlights improvements in questioning and listening skills; identifies teachers making the link between coaching and other developments such as a Curriculum for Excellence, critical skills and Assessment is for Learning; comments on how coaching is being seen as a mechanism that underlies a number of different developments in schools. Coaching is seen as complementing initiatives such as Solution Oriented Schools and supporting the collegiality agenda through the non hierarchical nature of coaching. George offers as an example the experience of the Coaching Development Officer who, as a former PT, is now working with Head Teachers, and how the project has involved support staff in coaching conversations with teachers, and teachers in coaching conversations with HTs.

The selection of schools to participate in the first phase of the Moray project involved thinking about the conditions that already existed, how schools were already looking at the craft of teaching, how they were looking at staff development and then considering how coaching might add “richness” and “diversity” to things already underway in a number of schools.

Coaching makes most impact where the culture is already a collegiate one, already with elements of being non hierarchical, with teams working together....and staff developing staff. Those dynamics may well have impinged on the impact coaching has had.....Coaching fits in if a school is developing a particular way of working.

It takes investment in people, time and positive attitudes to keep things going once they have started.

I think there have been a couple of key things: one is the attitude of the Head Teacher and the support of the Head Teacher to the development....[and] setting up a secondee. Clearly the quality of the secondee has had an impact....and we didn't have the capacity to support the project properly without that....it has made a huge difference and has helped keep the project going. I think it has helped distribute the leadership....

George emphasises this point further with an example of a school where two coaches returned fired up following training and looking for the Head Teacher to tell them what to do next. The HTs' response was to invite the coaches to go away, think about what they wanted to do and come back to her with a proposal.

Continued Commitment to Coaching

To take coaching forward George believes it will be important for the authority to continue to commit to it and further develop coaching in schools. He observes that coaching is playing out in different ways in different schools and that coaching fits well with the authority's interest in developing professional learning communities and developing leadership. He hopes the authority will be able to extend the work it does with HTs and to expand the number of external mentors working with probationers.

Developing Leadership Culture

In the next section George talks more about the connection between coaching and leadership culture and the importance of senior leaders in the authority “walking the talk.”

We need to go back to the vision for the authority “learning to live, living to learn” and what’s important to my mind is that you’re actually living it....and at the moment the senior management team in Moray educational services is going through a values assessment....working through what do we actually stand for here? What do we actually believe in? Because what an organisation stands for is important whether that organisation is a school, a department within a school or a larger organisation....This comes down to your values set and your underlying beliefs and to my mind it is all about how we treat each other and relate to each other as human beings.

Underlying all this coaching work is a belief that people can work together to identify, draw out and develop strengths as well as work together on problems and that the nature and quality of interactions and dialogue between people define an organisation. Coaching is seen as fundamental to the kind of culture the authority hopes to develop because it supports individual development, creates capacity and is not about giving answers.

You’ll always have the rainy December when things are not going well....but how you get through those days could well be determined by how you are with others, your relationships, how you work with other people, how your organisation is.....the kind of values driven organisation where people are important and where people are skilled at helping one another overcome barriers and hurdles is the kind of positive organisation that can really make a difference because the children and young people are a part of that.

I think we can develop something that is rather special and different. In Moray I think we’re developing something that’s about growing people. So, yes there is the direction and there is leadership but people are increasingly finding what works for them in their context and growing it from within... That is potentially far more powerful.

Moray has made an impressive and important start to the development of a coaching culture in the authority. Everyone involved appreciates it will take ongoing effort and commitment of resources to sustain what has begun.

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Perth and Kinross Council – Jean Cessford

Introduction

In this example Jean Cessford, Services Manager, Support for Staff, Education and Children's Services describes how coaching has developed in Education and Children's Service (ECS) in Perth and Kinross Council. The authority had already begun to provide people across ECS with opportunities to be trained in coaching before the SEED project. Within ECS the aim has been to build coaching capacity and to create a directory of people who felt confident to support their colleagues across the Service. Staff across ECS from Heads of Service to Head teachers, Probationer mentors and Chartered Teachers have participated and their expertise has been used to support new staff for the first weeks and months of a new job with people self selecting a coach from the directory.

Working Definition and Key Principles

Jean thinks of coaching as a partnership of equals in a relationship which encourages the coachee to develop his or her confidence. Coaching can create an environment where the truth can be told and mistakes made. Coaching involves effective questioning, listening, summarising and reflecting. The values of integrity, honesty, credibility, visibility, reliability, consistency compassion and trust to empower people in risk taking are central to coaching. Objectivity is a vital characteristic of coaching, as are avoiding providing opinions, projecting one's own expectations and making judgements of the coachee. The model that have been reviewed and Training Offered

PKC offered participants a two day skills development programme based around the GROW/OSCAR solution focussed approach to coaching. The training included establishing the links between coaching and mentoring, establishing what coaching is and is not, looking at values, building confidence, and looking at where coaching is an appropriate approach. Following the training there is a recall day to review the coaching sessions that coaches have had, to revisit the skills and gain feedback from the trainer. There is also a network session each term where coaches can meet with the trainer and share experiences and build confidence.

Putting Coaching into Practice – Supporting Return to Work

The following account describes how a senior member of ECS assisted a member of staff return to work following a period of absence.

I adopted a coaching approach to facilitate the return to work of a member of my staff following a long term stress-related absence. The purposes of adopting a coaching approach were to help the coachee identify changes she could make to improve work/life balance and to help her to regain lost confidence. This entailed having weekly meetings as agreed in our return to work meeting. These were informal and lasted for roughly an hour and we focused on planning the week's tasks to begin with. I used coaching questions to give ownership of, and responsibility for, improvements to the coachee. This enabled her to find appropriate solutions to personal issues and demonstrated her competence. I undertook to find resources from time to time with the coachee undertaking most of the actions identified. As time progressed, with the coachee reporting an increasing level of confidence and enjoyment in her job, we sometimes missed our weekly meetings and also the coachee would come to the meetings with more and more preparatory work

completed, thus making the meetings shorter and tipping the balance of who was leading the agenda.

This coaching process lasted for one hour per week, over a period of five months. It was sometimes difficult to find the time however both of us felt that the time was so well spent that we had to make sure we kept up with our meetings which was a challenge. The other challenge was the coachee's feeling that she had a huge mountain to climb to feel competent and confident. This was overcome by focusing on very specific tasks, knowing what needed to be achieved and by reflecting on her success (or not). Having made the opportunity to reflect and discuss matters openly and honestly has been fundamental to the success of this coaching example.

From my point of view I feel that I have a very good understanding of my colleague's work and am able to encourage her to share the good practice I am seeing her develop. Her confidence has greatly increased and she is now thinking creatively about her work and is not afraid to make changes to longstanding plans, with the needs of the young people she works with at the core of her thinking. Previously she had stuck to what she viewed as being the prescribed approach and had worried about her ability to adapt her approach but now she is much more flexible.

In summary I regard this example of coaching as having been most successful – as a result the coachee has regained confidence, now has much more job satisfaction and is demonstrating a high level of competence in her work. I have been able to improve my coaching skills during this time and using these skills has in turn resulted in better monitoring feedback meetings with other members of staff.

Key Learning

Jean believes this initiative has been successful because it was not imposed. She began by approaching a few people for the first training session and the word spread about what a useful experience it had been. As a result, new people are still requesting this as a training opportunity. Another important factor in its success is the opportunity people have had to meet and be counselled by an experienced coach/trainer so their skills are maintained to a high standard. She also sees coaching as is not another initiative but a skill to be added to a toolkit at all levels within the ECS organisation. The key learning most people have taken from coaching is empowerment of the individual to take responsibility for their actions and build confidence in their decision making.

Looking Ahead

Jean's comments on the further development of coaching in ECS are:

I am trying to build a community of coaches across the Service where coaching conversations prevail. I have now built a group who are committed to coaching approaches. Next steps are to consider accreditation for this group who may be able to act as ambassadors for this approach.

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Rosemarie Andrew, Headteacher Drumlanrig, Roberton, St Margaret's and St Joseph's Primary Schools

Coaching has brought a different dimension to my job as Head Teacher within the realm of Managing People.

It has given me valuable insight into how to work with the wide variety of people I encounter in school life in a wide variety of situations. I have been given a growing confidence to deal with many tricky situations using the tools of coaching. My relationships with staff have deepened and trust is evident. Head teacher/ staff consultations are much more enjoyable for us all.

Through the use of a coaching approach I have been allowed to have a much more positive interaction with colleagues, parents and children who have taken ownership of solutions to issues and concerns. So often when advice is offered/given it is not taken on board because the solution offered is not the other person's solution and dissatisfaction, if not failure, is the result. This has often meant that the blame for lack of success is placed on the advisor's shoulders.

Coaching for me has meant a dramatic turnaround in dealings with

- Teachers – a teacher who had a crisis of confidence and was leaving the profession is now once again enjoying the challenges of her job
- Performance management – after years of monitoring, support, advice , training for a failing teacher, allowing this person to articulate their own realities and identify their own options has meant a clear and sustained improvement in performance
- Pupils – a class who were extremely difficult to manage turned the corner, took on board responsibility and made a positive impact on school life
- An ancillary staff member was enabled to find a pathway through a personal difficulty
- A new job sharing position has been eased using coaching to enable solutions to issues to be found resulting in an excellent working partnership being developed.
- A parent who was experiencing a life crisis has been able to bring things to a satisfactory state through working through options.

As one coachee said: “You have let me ask myself the questions I would never have asked of me before” – (the most important conversation of all – the one with yourself)

For myself, being coached and being a member of the Action Learning Set has opened up a new set of friendships and trust within a group of wonderful people. This experience of being listened to in a non judgemental way and helped to see solutions which were always there and just needed to be made visible, for me, has been second to none. The group has become increasingly important to me as my remit has widened to manage 4 schools and I have been effectively supported by the members through my own crisis of confidence in my ability to do this complicated job efficiently and successfully.

I look forward to continuing to develop my abilities as a coach and using them in my personal and professional life.

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Christine Jackson - St Sylvester's RC Primary

Bringing a coaching lens to a Head Teacher's leadership role in her school

St Sylvester's is a denominational primary school with 187 pupils, 11 teaching staff and 11 support staff in the town of Elgin. Christine Jackson has been Head Teacher for about 9 years. She describes her school as one with a strong child-centred ethos and values.

Reflecting on Practice

Christine has developed a coaching relationship with Mandy, a colleague in the school. Coaching has encouraged Christine to reflect critically on her role as a school leader and make changes in how she fulfils her role. This extract focuses on her experience of being coached by Mandy during a CPD activity for all staff. Although it is not uncommon to engage in a coaching conversation in front of colleagues during a training session, it is probably less common for a school leader to offer her reflections on her role in front of her staff and to allow herself to be coached in public in the way Christine does here. By making her coaching visible to her staff they gained insights into Christine's thoughts and feelings about being a Head Teacher and learned how the process of thinking through issues and developing fresh approaches on these contributed to changes in Christine's own leadership practice. Staff in St Sylvester's have also had the opportunity to participate in coaching sessions and acquire new skills to help them implement classroom innovations and provide support for colleagues in the school.

In the following sections Christine describes how the coaching session went.

The session was based around what it was like for me as a leader....It was a very emotional experience. It started by me acknowledging as a leader and as a person in the school that I often felt I wasn't doing the job well enough and I was beginning to ask myself why that was? We talked through what it was like to be a leader and the kinds of issues I dealt with on a day to day basis; the way I planned my time; the way I organised my work and the unexpected problems that landed on my desk which prevented me from focusing on what was important.

I talked about feeling very isolated a lot of the time as a leader.... Partly because of the huge volume of paper work, also the challenges in the school across a wide range of issues and I felt I was trying to do a bit of everything and not doing anything very well....I felt there was a lack of understanding among the people I worked with who could knock on my door, walk in, expect me to deal with something there and then, give them an answer....so that's how the conversation went and (laughing) I looked out at the faces and there was a stunned silence! And they were all looking at me....and the staff became very emotional. From the comments at the end, one member of staff asked me "Did all this come from coaching?" and I said "Yes, it did."

....I felt quite vulnerable in front of the staff but things had come to a point where I really needed to talk about it....afterwards I felt relieved....I felt more confident. I was bearing in mind that I had a group of people in front of me who over the next few weeks would notice the impact this coaching session had made....When we talked through the solution, one of the reasons I felt isolated was that I had perhaps allowed myself to become this way due to the way I was managing my workload and the demands and expectations made by everyone.....Now I strive towards putting my staff, parents and pupils first. I go round and see the staff every day, take my diary,

check in and see how they are and ask if there is anything they need or anything I can help with. So it means the staff and school are my priority. And that has changed because through coaching I have found a solution which has enabled me to deal with interruptions and the at times overwhelming paperwork to allow me to focus on the school.

Making Changes

Coaching has helped Christine look specifically at what she was doing on a day-to-day basis and reconfigure how she could be both a leader spending time with people and carry out the other aspects of her role as Head Teacher. The coaching process led her to manage her time differently, ensuring she was available to staff by implementing a system so they could bring important issues to her as well as allowing her to be visible in the school, starting her day by meeting and talking with her staff. This coaching process has also helped remind Christine of her purpose for being in teaching.

I went into teaching because I love working with children....and I found I was spending less time with them and more time on administrative tasks and unnecessary interruptions....It becomes quite overwhelming really. I talked to my staff about what I missed. I missed working with children, being there for them, in class, working with small groups, out in the playground, being a leader. So those are the kinds of things I now do. In my role as school leader, part of my job is to be out there working alongside the children and staff, noticing, encouraging, being an example and almost like a role model....If you're not working alongside your colleagues and pupils some of the time how can you possibly understand the day to day challenges, joys and achievements of your school community and take forward your vision? So I do get out quite a bit now....

Coaching Benefits

Although Christine considered the possibility of working with a HT colleague as a coach, she has taken her coaching relationship forward with Mandy.

Mandy is very good at what she does....very skilled....an excellent listener....able to draw out from my conversation the areas I was most worried about and the areas I could do something to improve and change.

Christine is clear that coaching has contributed to her changing her practice as a school leader.

....I think I am listening a lot more to staff, not just listening but making the time to see them and work alongside them....and I spend a lot more time with the children too. Probably it's impacted on the way I work with parents, pupils and staff.

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Developing Professional Practice – Points to Consider

Coaching and mentoring conversations with peers, more experienced colleagues and external coaches encourage reflection, contribute to personal learning and help develop professional practice. The involvement of experienced, supportive and skilful colleagues in the professional development of newly qualified teachers (NQT) is acknowledged as vital in establishing effective professional practice. Where trust-based relationships develop between more experienced colleagues, coaching or mentoring conversations can move into explicit areas of practice, raise more difficult or demanding issues and go deeper in terms of learning insights.

There is no short cut to becoming an effective coach or mentor and there is no shortage of potential opportunities for bringing coaching or mentoring into the school context. As with all other aspects of teaching or school leadership, coaching and mentoring take time and practice to do well. Many teachers who have begun the journey as a coach or mentor notice the impact on themselves, appreciate the opportunity to work with others on the ongoing development of their practice and require feedback from the colleagues (or pupils) they are working with so they can effectively and continuously develop and improve their practice.

- How do you plan to reflect on and develop your practice as a coach or mentor?
- What opportunities are developing for you and your colleagues to bring coaching or mentoring into classroom situations?
- Which aspects of learning and teaching can you connect to your coaching practice?

Coaching and Leadership – Points to Consider

What comes through clearly in many accounts from school leaders (both those in formal leadership positions in schools and those participating more widely in school leadership) is the impact coaching or mentoring can have on their own leadership practice. Coaching and mentoring often seem to contribute to changes in leadership style and approach, encouraging deeper reflection, prompting someone to take a more critical stance in relation to their own work and bringing greater clarity to the changes that need to be made to develop personal effectiveness in the role.

One noticeable effect is the shift away from offering solutions to everyone's problems to one of actively encouraging others to develop and take ownership of their own solutions. Another is to do with the quality of learning that occurs between professionals whose listening and questioning have been developed through coaching and who engage in processes such as action learning. Yet another is the way coaching sharpens leadership practice, brings into focus what matters and sheds light on what might be in the way. Importantly for school leaders, coaching is another way to demonstrate unconditional belief in the potential of individuals to learn and develop whether those are peers or young people in their schools. Coaching also contributes powerfully to building leadership capacity in schools by creating opportunities for leadership learning, reflection on practice and taking action.

Working with Pupils – Points to Consider

Developing as a coach or mentor provides many teachers with a set of skills and concepts which they find highly congruent with their educational values. Many definitions of coaching highlight that coaching is the art of facilitating learning.

Coaching represents an unconditional belief in another's ability to learn. There are also connections between effective coaching and effective teaching. As a number of teachers have noted, there are synergies between the skills aspects of coaching and the concepts and practices that underpin Assessment for Learning in developing a more skilful practice of classroom dialogue in which the learner can be encouraged to think through the teacher's use of effective questioning and listening. As described in a number of the accounts here, coaching heightens the teacher's awareness of his or her interactions with pupils as well as offering some specific techniques which can be added to their classroom practice. In conjunction with other strategies, solution focused or goal oriented coaching is a powerful method for encouraging individual responsibility for action and enhancing pastoral provision and support for young people.

If coaching skills add to teacher effectiveness in the classroom, what is the potential for you to explore this?

Creating Coaching Cultures – Points to Consider

What are the conditions which support the development of coaching and mentoring practice in schools and how do we take into account the degree of "fertility" of the ground into which any coaching or mentoring project has been introduced? Does coaching or mentoring flourish once introduced or do these practices struggle for lack of support, time or resources?

Sometimes coaching seems to present a challenge where existing approaches to leadership and management are more hierarchical or less receptive to the changes which coaching encourages as an empowered thinking practice. Sometimes coaching will take root more easily where norms of collaboration, enquiry and peer learning are already established and where professional dialogue is encouraged. And yet we have to begin where we are, not in some idealised set of circumstances or hold out until the perfect conditions appear. The kinds of factors that tend to be highlighted in creating conditions in which coaching and mentoring can flourish include leadership who demonstrate the practice, provide support for others, ensure there is purpose and focus to the activity and are keen to see that coaching or mentoring make an impact in terms of learning, teaching and professional development. At the practical level, simply having time and the right kind of physical space in which to hold coaching or mentoring discussions are incredibly important.

Evidence is growing of the importance of having a clear purpose and focus for coaching and mentoring. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) report *Leading Coaching in School Networks* highlights that "having a well-articulated and compelling purpose or focus helps to build ownership of the coaching process, galvanize action and share learning....The focus might be pedagogic...or process...or skills-oriented." It seems that where coaching or mentoring are closely associated with taking forward key learning and teaching strategies, where they are part of a progressive and coherent approach to professional development they are more likely to be sustainable and make more impact.