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Differentiated Coaching: Developmental needs of coachees

Introduction

Wide scale coaching for teachers in schools was introduced into the United States of America during 2001. Since then Australian schools have also introduced it as a form of in-service professional development for teachers. It is likely that the intensification of teacher accountability has promoted the coaching of teachers (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). In Victoria, 310 coaches were funded from 2009–2011 by the education department. The coaches’ focus was building teacher capacity to improve student learning. Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) wrote over a decade ago about how coaching and mentoring were viewed as important in improving teaching and learning within education. Their observation remains relevant today and yet there is not a shared definition of coaching or mentoring (Rhodes and Beneicke, 2002).

The terms ‘coaching’ and ‘mentoring’ are often conflated. This can be problematic inside and outside the education sector, especially when the terms are used interchangeably, seeking the same outcomes through a similar process. ‘[E]ven the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, the most active body in bringing the worlds of coaching and mentoring together, cannot achieve a single definition acceptable to all’ (Clutterbuck, 2009, p.1). Clutterbuck (2013) argued that while there are numerous mentoring definitions, researchers often fail to articulate the one that they are investigating, lessening confidence in research findings and accurate comparisons between models.

For the purposes of setting our research context, an investigation into coaching, we have attempted to disentangle coaching from mentoring. We suggest that understanding mentoring and coaching definitions requires knowledge of their roots. Coaching’s recent prominence within education is becoming increasingly recognised as deriving from sport, noted for a skills and outcomes focus. Since Homer’s Odyssey, mentoring has had its roots in protection and counselling.

Mentors with mentees are focused on personal development. Riley (2009) argued that ‘mentoring can be defined as a relationship between two people and a process-oriented facilitation’ (p. 236). Riley’s definition highlighted for us how the conflation ignores that each term has its own theoretical framework. Coaching in this paper is defined as a skills orientated facilitation between two people or groups. The skills encompass: teaching, planning, assessment, observation and reflective practice.

While there are a number of different types of coaching models, most if not all forms of coaching have their roots in psychology and counselling (Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesh and Anderson, 2001). For example, cognitive coaching is a practice that is underpinned by psychology and counselling paradigms. This is framed by clinical supervision theories, which involve three phases: pre observation, observation and post observation (Garmston et al., 1993). Executive coaching is framed from a number of different disciplines including psychology, counselling, learning and consulting (Passmore et al., 2011). Passmore et al. (2011) have argued that ‘we need to have clarity concerning the distinctiveness of coaching and what delineates it from other development interventions’ (p. 81).

We were not investigating a mentoring programme: as Clutterbuck (2009) noted, the focus of mentoring is more on personal growth and career aspirations, while coaching is often associated with improved performance. NG, P.T. (2012) highlighted that coaching instruction has object specific outcomes and short term foci. We investigated coaching that focused on instruction to improve teachers’ skills, stemming from the behavioural tradition of psychology.
In an educational setting, coaches are usually teachers who have been deemed excellent pedagogical practitioners, trained through an instructional approach to coaching. They replicate this model when working with coachees (Jewett and MacPhee, 2012). As Clutterbuck (2009, p. 482) noted, empirical studies regarding coaching generally are associated with ‘increases in performance’. This form of coaching is viewed as an apprenticeship model, consisting of observing, being observed, taking instruction and acting on it.

In some literature (e.g. NG.P.T., 2012) mentoring is distinguished from coaching due to the presence of reflection. However, this is problematic. Coaching in education can require reflecting on skills to improve outcomes. For example, sports coaches will ask coachees to look at videos of the performance and reflect on what happened and what could/should happen to achieve better outcomes in the future. Educational coaches also tend to ask teachers to reflect on their practice for improved outcomes (Jewett and MacPhee, 2012).

In education, coaching is viewed by some as being closer to the practical skills based end as opposed to mentoring which is at the other end of the learning continuum (Fletcher, 2012). Coaching has been articulated as an act that focuses on ‘Professional dialogue designed to aid the coachee in developing specific skills to enhance their teaching repertoire (Lofthouse et al., 2010, p. 8). The development of skills often occurs through a coaches’ instruction.

Achieving coaching goals and coaching cultures

The success of achieving coaching goals can be recognised when there is ‘more effective workplace behaviour’ (Passmore, 2007, p. 69). Cognitive coaching focusses on ‘trust, learning and autonomy’ to facilitate successful coaching goals (Coasta and Garmston, n.d., p. 92). However, regardless of the model, coaching is generally framed by ‘collaboration and accountability, awareness raising, responsibility, commitment, action planning, and action’ (Grant et al., 2010, p.154). In executive coaching, goal attainment is also connected with assessing individuals and developmental plans (Saporito, 1996). Developmental planning however may not take into consideration the coachee’s stages of development and that learning is on a continuum. The coachees who participated in this project worked with trained instructional teacher coaches.

This research paper reports on a case study of a school that had ongoing coaching for up to six years. The study focussed on coachees’ perspectives, in particular what factors allowed them to achieve their set coaching goals (e.g. improve student reading, writing, speaking and listening, and math). In this research setting sometimes the coaches chose the skills-based goals and on other occasions coachees selected them. The coaching goals had to be linked to the school’s strategic plan, which emphasised improving student numeracy and literacy outcomes.

Fletcher (2012) argued that ‘research into mentoring and coaching has historically often comprised descriptions of what participants have done or said, with no analysis’ (p.6). Being mindful of this, data was analysed using constructivist grounded theory (CGT) to ascertain why coachees believed some coaching goals were more achievable than others. This knowledge could potentially inform educators about how to advance a coaching culture (Grant et al., 2010). This study did not attempt to link coaching with student learning outcomes. Rather the focus was on investigating why coachees felt/believed some coaching goals were more achievable than others.

Research context

The setting for this research was a primary school in Victoria, Australia. A whole school approach saw all coaching goals being aligned to the school’s strategic plan (regarding improved student literacy and numeracy).
Teacher coaches

The school had funded two senior teachers to be full time coaches of teachers working with the same grade level they previously taught. Prior to commencing their role as (teacher) coaches they had undertaken a coaching programme that used GROW as the model which was aimed at: coachees talking through their goals (G), identifying current reality (R), identifying options to achieve goals (O) writing an action plan outlining what would be done to achieve the set goals (W). After four years this model was not practiced and coaches, more often than not, chose the goals.

One teacher coached 12 P-2 classroom teachers and the other coached 14 grade 3-6 teachers. Concurrently, staff were involved in ongoing professional development aimed at building a shared understanding of coaching. Teachers were regularly observed by a coach who provided feedback to support goal acquisition. There were noted differences with some goals being more achievable than others, and these anomalies precipitated the research investigation.

Research Questions

The research focused on two questions:

1. Why are some coaching goals more achievable than others?

2. If some coaching goals are more achievable than others, how can this knowledge advance a coaching culture that has the potential for sustainable improvements to teaching and learning?

Participants

There were 26 possible participants from the pool of classroom teachers involved in the coaching program and 22 volunteered to participate in the research.

Methodology

The research focused on understanding the coaching process from the perspective of the coachees. Constructivist Grounded Theory framed the research, because we believe learning is socially constructed and that the coach and coachee’s relationship is underpinned by their constructed meanings and co-constructed learning.

From a constructionist, interpretative perspective, the grounded theory researcher must then study the meanings, intentions and actions of the research participants - whether he or she observes them directly, constructs life histories with them, engages them in intensive interviewing or uses other materials such as clinical case histories or autobiographies. (Charmaz, 1996, p.32)

CGT directs researchers to derive ‘analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses. Thus, [constructivist] grounded theory methods force the researcher to attend closely to what happens in the empirical world he or she studies.’ (Charmaz, 1996, p. 32). CGT allowed the participants’ perceptions and experiences to emerge as thematic data for analysis (Charmaz, 2000). This methodological framework allowed us to further theorise and explain why coachees believed some coaching goals were more attainable than others (Birks and Mills, 2011). Analysis of the subjective worlds of coachees was also aimed at investigating how their perceptions might lead us to recognise what fosters coaching cultures in schools (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999, p. 7).

Data Decisions

Coachees involved in this study were asked to complete an online questionnaire about their coaching experiences, speculating about why some coaching goals were more achievable than others. One of the researchers had been a coach in the research setting, but not at the time of the research; nonetheless online questionnaires were used as they provided anonymity in
order to encourage coachees to share their lived experiences in confidence (Charmaz, 2006). They also act to lessen accidental leading by an interviewer (Charmaz, 2006). The questions were designed to enable data saturation and rich insights. The questionnaire contained one demographic item regarding the length of time coachees had been involved in the program. A further 16 questions required identifying coaching goals, whether they were achievable or not, the impacts on teaching practices and how the coaching experience could be improved. Examples of the items are:

Take a moment to think about all of the individual goals you have set during the coaching program.
1. Which goal do you consider was most successfully achieved? (Write the goal below).
2. Why do you consider this the most successful goal attained?
3. What factors contributed to making this goal achievable?

The three questions were repeated with the emphasis shifting to least successful goal attainment. Coachees were also asked if they had been part of a team goal, and if so which goal was more or less successfully attained and why. There was another set of items that asked which goals resulted in changes to their practice and why others did not. Following these there was an inquiry into whether goals resulted in improved student outcomes and the nature of, and evidence for, any improvements. If no improvements were reported we asked them to suggest why not. The final set of items asked what might be needed to improve the coaching program in terms of improved practice and student outcomes.

Data analysis

Phase One: Paying close attention to coachees’ language helped to connect with their lived experiences and allowed answers to the research questions to become apparent (Charmaz, 1996, p. 36). Data was analysed using line by line coding, identifying key words or groups of words and labelling them accordingly (Birks and Mills, 2011). Focused coding then took place by examining sections of coded data to reveal key elements for each coachee. This allowed us to independently crosscheck line by line coding and to see where categories were emerging. This form of multi-level graduated coding helped identify key perceptions regarding why some coaching goals were more successful than others. It also assisted in researcher bias control (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). A category was only formed by multiple data segments coalescing (Glaser, 1998).

Memos were kept throughout the coding process, recording reflections, raw data and analytical thinking. Including raw data verbatim allowed us to make more precise comparisons. Memo-writing aided in identifying patterns between and among the codes. The patterns allowed categories to be recognisable and therefore made further sense of data, without being restrictive (Charmaz, 2000). Memo-writing helped us to ‘go beyond individual cases and to define patterns’ (Charmaz, 1996, p. 43). Memoing also provided a way to code as part of the ‘processes to explore rather than … solely … to sort data into topics’ (Charmaz, 1996, p. 43). This approach ensured that data analysis remained true to the coachees’ views rather than fitting them to predetermined codes based on the researchers’ prior assumptions (Charmaz, 2000). Memos were sorted and six core themes emerged: Pragmatic I, Pragmatic We, Student Driven, Team Driven, Data Driven and Research Driven (Birks and Mills, 2011; Glaser, 1998). These themes were derived from how participants appeared to position themselves as coachees, and how they determined what made coaching goals more attainable than others.

Phase Two: theoretical coding: Theorizing about the themes and the overlap regarding coachees’ concerns led us to look more closely at the concerns embedded in the themes and across them. In this phase we set out to investigate what were the dominant concerns (DC), moderate
concerns (MC) or slight concerns (SC) that emerged when a goal was viewed as being achievable. We looked to see if, how and when these altered across themes (see Appendix for data coding). In order to do this, researchers independently coded data (DC, MC, SC) within and across themes, and then cross checked with each other in order to see if a further theme arose. A seventh emerged: temporality. This had not been obvious in Phase One’s coding, categorising and memoing.

Data Findings and discussion

The six core themes (Pragmatic I, Pragmatic We, Student Driven, Team Driven, Data Driven, and Research Driven) reflect how coachees positioned themselves or others when determining what made their coaching goals achievable. All coachees shared the same concerns (or foci), however, the degree (emphasis) varied across all six themes. Notwithstanding the overlap, the seventh theme (temporality) serendipitously aligned with their exposure to coaching.

This led us to consider whether the six core themes possibly identified stages of teacher coachee development over a six year period. As we mentioned coachees shared many similar concerns, however it was found that those who had been coachees for the longest only slightly focused on the concerns that dominated first and second year coaches. The more experienced coachees had different concerns that dominated their attention.

Coachees who coalesced around the theme Pragmatic I had been in the programme for one year, the Pragmatic We two years; The Student Driven coachees three years; Team Driven four years; Data Driven five years; Research Driven six years. This finding suggested further consideration is required regarding the developmental and differentiated needs of coachees. It also appeared to indicate that the longer a coachee was involved in instructional coaching, their needs were less likely to be met by a behaviourist model of instructional coaching.

Pragmatic I

Coachees found to have a pragmatic and self-focused attitude towards coaching were recognised for their strong ‘I’ focus, which was evident throughout their responses, an example that illustrates this is —

I was able to improve and reflect. (C10, L3)

Overall the coachees positioned themselves at the centre of the coaching goal, meeting their needs as a teacher. This was highlighted by comments such as ‘I have a clearer direction’ (C4, L3). The Pragmatic I placed greater emphasis on goal achievement being connected to their present needs as demonstrated by this comment ‘all goals and their related work was easily combined into their day to day teaching and not add[ed] to the workload and teaching pressures’ (C1, L13-15). Other coachees shared either a moderate or slight concern for the practical aspects of teaching, however for the Pragmatic I coachee it was a dominant concern that underpinned how they judged what made goals achievable.

This group attributed goal attainment, more than any other coachees, to an instructional coaching model for example ‘a clear direction for the goal, a clear purpose for the goals and coaching that met a need’ (C4, L5). They also emphasised coach /coachee time for ‘...discussions about different strategies and activities that could be used in the classroom’ (C1, L4). These coachees were identified as seeking regular time with the coach, which others did to a lesser extent: consistent contact with a coach was a dominant concern for them, and they linked this to why some goals were more or less achievable than others. The following example
highlights this –

There have been some goals that have not really been followed up due to cancelled or missed coaching sessions. (C1, L8-9)

**Pragmatic We**

The Pragmatic We positioned themselves like the Pragmatic I as learners, however this theme revealed coachees were beginning to position themselves as part of a group of coachees. These coachees were identified as becoming less reliant on a dyadic coaching relationship as they began to consider working with other coachees, provided that they were focused on developing the same skills. Examples that illustrate this are –

I have found that I need many attempts to moderate writing in conjunction with others to develop my confidence in assessing student work. (C17, L8-9)

I like the idea of having conversations in groups and having others working on the same skills. (C8, L15)

The ‘Pragmatic We’ were still focused on the practical or technical aspects of teaching. How can we (coach/coachee/colleagues) work together to improve my practice? Examples of this emphasis included comments such as —

...I have been coached to better my understanding of writing assessment. (C17, L 16-18)

To a large extent they still shared a pragmatic attitude towards achieving coaching goals.

Practical support for the Pragmatic We remained a dominant concern. There was evidence of a moderate concern (or emphasis) on the role of coach in ensuring goal attainment. This is notable with the following example where the credit is being given to a coach who had ‘... in creating the... marking guide... made my assessment ...better’ (C17, L57-58). The Pragmatic We, like the Pragmatic I also acknowledged they wanted a coach who ‘was flexible and understanding of teacher workload’ (C20, L21). However, they were placing an emphasis on reflecting upon the changes in practice. The following example highlights this –

Once a change has been implemented allow for time to see if that change has been positive before rushing into the next goal. (C20, L24-25)

**Pragmatic We: Goal achievement**

Goal achievement was often accompanied by developing confidence for the Pragmatic We coachees. Perhaps this is why there was a shifting emphasis from I to an emerging We among those who had been coachees for two years. However, goal achievement was still recognised as meeting the pragmatic needs of the teacher. This was illustrated by comments such as –

Really helped with my planning. (C8, L3)

Achieving a coaching goal was identified when they ‘helped me the most with my day to day teaching’ (C20, L3). Achieving a coaching goal was viewed as one that was relevant, practical and enacted immediately, perhaps indicating their developmental stage within the coaching programme.

**Student Driven**

While these coachees saw themselves as learners, analysis also indicated they positioned
themselves as teachers with a dual focus on improving their own practice and student learning. This dual focus is evident in the following data extract –

It (the goal) developed my understanding of the variety of assessment strategies... and how to read and understand the results to better teach to individual needs. (C19, L 4-5)

The positioning of self as central learner or peer collaboration shifted for these coachees, they referred to students more frequently than previous coachees, and an example of this is noted in the following data extract –

It (the goal) allowed me to explore a different teaching technique that I had not had any previous experience with and use it in a realistic setting. Not only did it improve my teaching knowledge and add something extra to my skills, it allowed me to cater for a particular student and is something I will be able to use in future years to help support the reading development of future students. (C11, L11-14)

Increased confidence was again noted as with the Pragmatic We, however it now revolved around both coachees and students as demonstrated here –

These changes always led to increased confidence in both myself and the students. (C14, L12-13)

The Student Driven coachees were also concerned with the pragmatics (but to a lesser degree). Also, similar to other coachees previously mentioned, there was an expectation that coaches should be familiar with coachees’ working lives and demands. However, unlike other previous coachees the dominant concern for the Student Driven coachees was related to flexibility and extra time. For example, this is illustrated in the following data extract —

Being flexible enough to understand that some weeks are intense enough and hard enough already so having the consideration to be prepared to put the program back a week or two, also being adaptive enough to see that what works for one cohort may not for another. It must be something that requires change and once that change is implemented some time to consolidate rather than sprinting to the next goal. (C19, L22-25)

More than other groups, these coaches ascribed a lack of goal achievement to being inundated with numerous goals, underpinned by unrealistic timeframes for achieving and sustaining changes in practice, which is illustrated by the following comment —

Spending more time on one goal rather than trying to cram multiple goals into a term. (C11, L38)

Analysis indicated that Student Driven coachees wanted to ‘choose their own individual goal to work on that would benefit their student group’ (C2, L35). They articulated their desire as noted by this comment to ‘be involved in setting the goal they are working towards’ (C16, L 38-39) because they believed that ‘different classes, different groups of students and different teachers have different needs’ (C2, L36).

The emphasis on I or We and the pragmatics of teaching was less dominant among the Student Driven coachees who had been in the programme for three years. Their dominant concern included student needs. Again, perhaps this might reflect the developmental needs of third year coachees, and why differentiated coaching programmes might be required.
Student Driven: Successful goals
Within this theme sustainability was identified as an indicator of whether a goal had been achieved. This is demonstrated by the following two examples –

The (successful) goal was measurable and sustainable. (C2, L11-12)

The success of this goal has seen the implementation of... goal charts that are still implemented in the... classroom two years later. (C15, L17-18)

Sustainable improvements were also connected to time for discussion, implementation, consolidation and reflection. The following example highlights this –

It (the goal) has been successful because my partner and I have had the opportunity to discuss ideas for lessons with the coach. We have also been able to reflect on our lessons to see what is/ isn’t working with what we are trying to teach. (C12, L6-8)

Successful goals were not only practical, relevant and achievable but were viewed as making a positive impact on student learning and outcomes, as shown by this comment –

In my opinion the most successful goal was one that focused on catering for an individual student within my grade. (C11, L2-3)

Successful coaching goals for these coachees were, as they explained ‘practical and achievable’ (C9, L18), meeting the needs of both the teacher and the student.

Catering for student need and improving their outcomes were of concern for all coachees. However, for the Student Driven coachees it was a dominant concern, which was indicated by how they measured goal attainment, as highlighted by the following example –

This [goal] led to the students becoming more confident to share and explain their problem solving strategies. (C2, L8-9)

Team Driven
The Team Driven theme revealed how coachees positioned themselves as being part of a team which was connected to developing teacher capability in the school. They wanted their goals to empower them and enable them to support team members as exemplified by the following quote –

This team goal assisted all teachers... It didn’t matter if you had been in the unit for a long time or a short time. (C3, L23-24)

Being part of a team minimised the position of the coach as the central focus, which is demonstrated by the following extract –

This goal was sustainable when I was working independently (of the coach)... student learning improved as a result of this goal. (C3, L7-9)

While these coachees saw themselves as learners, they were more autonomous than previous coachees mentioned. This was recognised when they attributed the improvement in their learning to the goal itself, rather than to the coach or group of coachees, as illustrated by the following extract –

It (the goal) developed my understanding of the variety of assessment strategies... (C19, L4-5)
Analysis also indicated they positioned themselves as having a multiple responsibilities for improving practice and student learning, which is evident in the following data extracts –

...how to read and understand the results to better teach to individual needs. (C19, L 4-5)

Student outcomes and attitude to writing changed in a very positive way. (C6, L15) Team Driven coachees required a coach who would empower them, but the difference here was so that they could empower others. These coachees required initial ‘support, guidance and modelling from the coach’ (C3, L8), rather than ongoing intensive support as it was important to them that they sustained the changes after the initial coaching.

These coachees positioned themselves as educators who were in control of their own learning and could facilitate learning for others (peers and students) which is evident in comments such as –

All members of the team shared their understanding and knowledge [and] students had an option to participate in their own learning. (C3, L19-20)

Coaching was seen by these coachees as a way of empowering them and others. It was viewed by Team Driven coachees as a way to support continual improvement of practice and develop professional capabilities. They also wanted coaching goals that were practical, relevant and realistic. However, they identified a stronger need for sustainable goals, and where workload could be shared across a team and appropriate time given to each team goal. This is illustrated by the following extract –

the goals set need to be realistic and relevant to the teacher/unit. If teachers can see they are easy to maintain and help improve student learning they will be more willing to change their teaching practice. (C3, L34-35)

Team Driven: Goal achievement

Goal achievement for these coachees was attributed less to the coach. For example, comments such as ‘This goal was successful because I have continued to refine and develop processes beyond the coaching period’ (C6, L3-4) indicated a shift from a dependent relationship with the coach.

Goal achievement was linked to both their current practices and setting future goals that were sustainable. These coachees advocated that goal achievement was connected to (if not contingent upon) how well team members support each other in utilising the knowledge of other coachees. An example of this is where they referred to developing –

...units and then [implemented these into a] school based program, with [further] changes and development [encouraged] as it [the goal] was taken on by each new group. (C6 – L11-12)

Team Driven coachees were found only among fourth year coachees. They placed greater emphasis on teaching teams and how they could work together to support each other regarding goal attainment. This was explained by one coachee as ‘the goal was too large for one person to take on therefore sharing the workload was important’ (C3, L20-21).

Another coachee stated that a factor that led to achieving a goal was when coaching went beyond a dyadic relationship to include ‘lots of discussion between coaches and the team involved... resulting in a major change to teaching practice for all teachers in the unit’ (C6, L13-14).
Data Driven

Data Driven coachees still positioned themselves as learners but their emphasis was on evidence based learning to improve student outcomes by using summative and formative data, an example of this is illustrated by the following extract –

Goals (should be) linked to triangulated data. (C21, L29)

They looked for ways to change their teaching that would directly impact student data in a positive way, which is illustrated by the following extract –

Working on goals that are relevant to your current class, the students’ needs/abilities and their data ... (C5, L7-8)

The dominant focus for Data Driven coachees was learning to look at data more holistically. They were no longer only concerned with data related to their current class but year level outcomes as explained by this coachee –

We looked at the data in more detail and worked towards putting the data into a more usable document so that we could clearly see what each of our students could do at a class level and a unit level. We then were able to determine what the students needed to learn next. (C5, L15-17)

These coachees (like others) wanted goals that were relevant, would improve teaching practice, and were directed by data. Realistic goals for these coachees were bound by context and ‘ensuring the time frame was realistic’ (C13, L39). Another coachee articulated that the coaching goals needed to be realistic as ‘this way they will be able to be continued as part of the teaching practice of the teacher/team’ (C13, L38-39). Again as demonstrated by this extract sustainable practice was connected to goal attainment.

Concerns with over-crowding of coaching goals was not mentioned by this group, perhaps a team approach negated this from occurring. Perhaps this is why coachees sought goals that were ‘teacher generated and formed in consultation with the coach’ (C21, L26), the emphasis on the coach was far less dominant for them.

Data Driven: Goal achievement

Achieving coaching goals for these coachees were found to be directly related to classroom practice, with definable parameters of achievement so that ‘success in the goal could be easily gauged’ (C21, L14-15) and ‘goals that improve student data and inform your teaching are the most successful’ (C5, L6).

Their aim to use data to guide more successful changes to practice, is illustrated below –

If the goal is based on teaching practice or data, it does usually improve student outcomes; however it needs to be monitored over time to see valid improvements and changes. (C5, L11-12)

Goal achievement was identified by these coachees when there was a change in teacher practices that positively impacted on student learning. Their dominant focus was on formal and informal student learning outcome data, which they used to inform their current practice in order to influence future student learning. An example of this thinking is illustrated by the following extract –

Yes, it certainly changed my teaching practice. I was more aware of the expectations of writing, especially above expected level, so was more confident in my VELS teacher judgements. Also, it transferred into my teaching the following year and I was able to use my experience from the year before to continue that growth... It also changed my unit’s planning
the following year. (C13, L12-15)

For these coachees it was essential that a coach engaged in regular data discussions as noted in this extract -

Initial discussions with the coach were fruitful because we had time to look at data and put students into certain groupings. (C7, L25-26)

Goal achievement was also associated with trialling new approaches, and ‘reflective discussions with my coach about the implementation of the goal [were] ... most valuable’ (C7, L10).

Their data reflections focussed on short term and sustainable goal attainment. Their aim was to see if student data improved over time due to the changes they were making. To determine goal success they looked for concrete evidence of pedagogy impacting on students’ learning. Data Driven coachees identified a need for longer periods of time to work on each goal in order to collect data and to assess impact. If the element of long term data collection was missing they believed that this negatively impacted on their ability to achieve the coaching goal, as they could not monitor and make changes to their practice, which is illustrated by the following quote –

I feel most goals I have worked on have been relatively successful, however you work towards one (goal) and as soon as it is completed it is straight onto the next. You do not have time to see how it works after time and how successful it really is. (C5, L2-5)

We found that the Data Driven coachees had all been involved in the coaching program for five years.

Research Driven

There was only one coachee who had been involved in the coaching program for six years. The language analysis indicated s/he was a big picture thinker which is exemplified by their argument that -

[Goals linked to research] would feed into the PRP [performance review process] when conversations about practice are happening. There would also be a chance to document all the goals that people are working on... This again would support sharing of new learning between individuals and teams. (C22, L66-68)

What was different from the other coachees was this coachee positioned themselves as teacher researcher. When they spoke of selecting a goal it was ‘...as a result of some professional reading’ (C22, L11).

S/he was motivated to change by learning about best practice based on research and supported by professional development as demonstrated by this extract –

I understand the changes I made and the research that supports these changes. (C22, L3-8)

Research Driven: Goal achievement

For this coachee achievement was recognised when their practice ‘resulted in changed thinking and a more effective use of data to inform planning and teaching [for the team]’ (C22, L29-30).
Goal achievement required all aspects of teaching to be considered (planning through to assessment). Student work was viewed as data which could be tracked in detail. Evidence of this thinking can be found in the following response –

I also had to look at my assessment documents and consider if they were giving me enough information to inform my day to day planning and teaching. I now have more detailed tracking documents that I use to inform my small groups and planning of tasks. (C22, L18-20)

This coachee considered staff goal achievement was connected to having opportunities ‘to share new understandings/strategies/approaches with other staff who are interested in learning about the same thing’ (C22, L57-58) and with those who shared ‘similar personal goals [being] put in touch with each other to support the work that is being done’ (C22, L53-54).

Discussion and conclusion
A sample of 22 coachees involved in this research was an appropriate sample size for in-depth analysis, although it does limit generalisability. However, it did allow a detailed understanding of the coachees’ first-hand experiences of coaching (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). Another limitation of this study is that coachees were not asked about teaching experience: hence correlation between years of teaching experience and years of coaching exposure was not analysed. This is something that we feel now needs to be included in further research if we are to develop more conclusive knowledge about the longitudinal developmental needs of coachees.

A key finding was that coaching goals were deemed attainable when they aligned with coachees’ specific focus, which was reflected by the six core themes that emerged. The seventh theme (temporality) indicated that over time coachees’ dominant concerns shifted to become less of a focus with other overriding needs emerging.

The findings suggested that if there are not differentiated coaching models, based on developmental stages, there is a risk of not recognising coachees’ dominant concerns, leading to an inability to develop all staff capabilities. For example, what made a coaching goal attainable for the Pragmatic I coachees would not be a dominant consideration for the Data Driven coachees. Pragmatic I coachees were perhaps not yet ready to be coached about developing social capital (Hargraves and Fullan, 2012) as they were trying to develop (their own) human capital (Hargraves and Fullan, 2012). Nor were they ready to delve into data analysis. Instead, they required exposure to activities and strategies that would help them with upcoming lessons. Equally, the Data Driven coachees would not identify a coaching goal as being achieved unless indicated by data. Coaching for them needed to provide opportunities to strengthen their capability in working with data to inform teaching and learning practices and to evaluate the success of interventions. For coachees to successfully achieve their coaching goals, consideration needs to be given to aligning the individual’s personal and professional development needs over time. Specific coaching needs and measures of success appeared to shift over time and consequently coaching programmes in schools might consider differentiated models, rather than adopting a single method.

We suggest that a single method of coaching, such as instructional coaching underpinned by a behaviourist focus, may not facilitate progression from Pragmatic I to practices that are
Research Driven. Although there appeared to be coachee stages, further longitudinal research is needed on a larger scale before it could be determined that the concerns foci (needs) are generally what teacher coachees’ experience. What this investigation suggested however, is that we need to know more about coachees’ developmental needs over time and how this knowledge could inform the creation of a coaching culture in schools.

Commonalities between coachees

Whether involved in coaching for one or six years, some commonalities remain for all coachees but to varying degrees. Those commonalities were: the pragmatics of teaching; a focus on students; a need for discussion and reflection; time for coaching; personalised coaching and developing professional capabilities (human, social and decisional capital). The concerns matrix conveys these nuances by indicating whether each commonality was a Dominant Concern (DC), Moderate Concern (MC) or Slight Concern (SC). For example, all coachees mentioned the pragmatics of teaching in their responses but the degree to which this was emphasised changed from theme to theme. For the Pragmatic I and the Pragmatic We coachees it was the most dominant consideration, but was only mentioned briefly by Research Driven coachees. The Research Driven showed only a slight concern with teaching pragmatics. It seems the amount of emphasis placed on teaching pragmatics decreased as the years involved in coaching increased. This finding, albeit tentative until further research, suggested that coaching may be a cumulative process in shaping teachers’ professional selves and educational knowledge. However, in future research other variables (teaching experience, teaching qualifications), need to be considered along with other possible impact factors.

Coachees of three years (as a group) had significantly more overlap with others, when it came to common concerns. Three years could be professionally symbolic in the development of teacher coachees’ identities. They share some of the concerns, as noted in the previous section, with first and second year coachees. However, they did not share any dominant concerns. There was evidence of a shift in focus albeit slightly to that of the more experienced coachees. They appeared to be moving away from needing an instructional model of coaching; however, it is questionable whether their developmental needs would align with an example an executive coaching model, since this would require higher levels of reflective inquiry. This would also require more autonomy in choosing goals. Increased reflexivity and autonomy could further encourage evidence based practices that might lead to more holistic evaluations regarding intervention effectiveness. Both of these elements might also enable these coachees to consider drawing on research to guide their future goal setting.

Developmental focused coaching appears to be one way to establish a coaching culture, as it seems to be potentially responsive to the possible existence of stages of coachees’ learning needs. In doing so it is more likely to support sustainable improvements in teaching and learning. Grant et al. (2010) argued that successful goals are ‘best facilitated by understanding the reciprocal relationships between one’s thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and the environment, and purposefully structuring these so as to best support goal achievement’ (p. 155). It has been argued that literacy coaches should adapt coaching to suit the readiness of the coachee (Bean, 2009). The study suggests the developmental needs of teacher/coachees might be advanced through differentiated coaching. As it has been argued (Gregory and Chapman, 2013) there is no one size fits all solution for school improvement, nor is there one coaching model able to cater to the different needs and contexts of teacher coachees. More needs to be known regarding the identification of the specific developmental needs and career stages of teacher coachees, to determine the different types of coaching models that are required.
The dominant concerns underpinning the themes and how they might assist in creating a coaching culture revealed that trust and collaboration between coaches/coachees was needed (Costa and Garmston, no date, p. 92). This is particularly so if the aim is to promote sustainable pedagogical improvement, as coachees are required to take risks when trialling and experimenting with new practices. The coachees’ perceptions about successful coaching goal attainment suggests that creating a coaching culture is connected to meeting diverse needs and that teachers’ pedagogical learning is recognised as an ongoing process.

References

Gregory, G. and Chapman, C. (2013), Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All, Corwin. USA.


Appendix Concerns based matrix: here

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{i} Coachees were coded C1- C22 and their data was annotated line by line numerically} \]
## Appendix One Concerns matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic I</th>
<th>Pragmatic We</th>
<th>Student Driven</th>
<th>Team Driven</th>
<th>Data Driven</th>
<th>Research Driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can the coach help me?</td>
<td>How can the team help me?</td>
<td>How can I help my students?</td>
<td>How can I help the team?</td>
<td>How can the team help all our students?</td>
<td>How can research underpin whole school learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I focused</td>
<td>We focused</td>
<td>Engage students</td>
<td>Empower me so I can empower others.</td>
<td>Student data</td>
<td>Big Picture Whole School Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach me</td>
<td>Help me</td>
<td>Empower students</td>
<td>Support colleague’s learning.</td>
<td>Class Data</td>
<td>Based Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Assist me</td>
<td>Improve student confidence</td>
<td>Shared workload</td>
<td>Unit Data</td>
<td>Research Best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>with my planning.</td>
<td>Improve student outcomes</td>
<td>Supportive teams</td>
<td>Measuring impact</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Assist me</td>
<td>Sense of readiness to change.</td>
<td>Data improvements over time.</td>
<td>Definable success parameters.</td>
<td>Sharing learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with my assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of readiness to change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatics (DC)</td>
<td>Pragmatics (DC)</td>
<td>Pragmatics (MC)</td>
<td>Pragmatics (MC)</td>
<td>Pragmatics (MC)</td>
<td>Pragmatics (SC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners (SC)</td>
<td>Learners (SC)</td>
<td>Learners (DC)</td>
<td>Learners (DC)</td>
<td>Learners (DC)</td>
<td>Learners (DC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (SC)</td>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (DC)</td>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (MC)</td>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (DC)</td>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (DC)</td>
<td>Discussion and Reflection (DC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (SC)</td>
<td>Time (SC)</td>
<td>Time (MC)</td>
<td>Time (DC)</td>
<td>Time (SC)</td>
<td>Time (SC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalised Coaching (SC)</td>
<td>Personalised Coaching (SC)</td>
<td>Personalised Coaching (MC)</td>
<td>Personalised Coaching (DC)</td>
<td>Personalised Coaching (SC)</td>
<td>Personalised Coaching (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
<td>Developing capability (DC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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