

**An Action Research Inquiry into what goes on
in Coaching Supervision to the end of
enhancing the coaching profession**

A project submitted to Middlesex University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Professional Studies

Submitted by

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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this document are mine and are not necessarily the views of my supervisory team, examiners or Middlesex University

Abstract

This Project Report is an exploration of coaching supervision.

Coaching supervision is now being advocated by most coaching associations in the UK as a vital means to support executive coaches in their continuing professional development.

There is still considerable scepticism, caution, even ignorance about the nature and purpose of coaching supervision and many coaches still do not engage in this process or practice.

The aim of this research project is to explore what actually goes on in the coaching supervision process and sessions over a period of time. Taking a Participatory Action Research approach, the researcher aimed to engage with two groups of fellow practitioners, one group of coaches and one group of coaching supervisors, to explore the respective supervision experiences of the participants. The duration of the project was 18 months.

Over the period of the programme, the researcher conducted several Action Research cycles of inquiry that included the following activities (1) participants engaged in their regular coaching supervision (2) in turn they kept reflective logs of their learning and sense-making (3) each group came together to share their experiences in meetings based on Action Learning Set format (Revans 1971).

The final report in the form of this Project Report provides a record of the Project, the researcher's deepening of her own practice, the experience and learning of the participants and the themes that emerged. It offers a fresh perspective with the Three Pillars that inform coaching supervision and its efficacy to support executive coaches to keep them fit for purpose.

Acknowledgements

As I come to the end of this doctoral programme, I am almost overwhelmed as I consider the support and encouragement I have received along the way. I thank all of you with heartfelt appreciation as you have shared some or all of this journey with me. I realise that I cannot name everyone who has played a part but I would like to mention the following people specifically and offer apologies to anyone I may have unwittingly omitted.

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Glossary

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- Home Page
<http://www.associationforcoaching.com/pages/home/>
- APECS Association of Professional Executive Coaches and Supervisors
- Home Page
<http://www.apecs.org>
- CIPD Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development
- Home Page
<http://www.cipd.co.uk>
- EMCC European Mentoring and Coaching Council
- Home Page
<http://emccuk.org>
- ICF International Coach Federation
- Home Page
<http://www.coachfederation.org.uk>
- SGCP Special Group in Coaching Psychology (part of British Psychological Society)
- Home Page
<http://www.sgcp.org.uk>
- WABC Worldwide Association of Business Coaches
- Home Page
<http://www.wabccoaches.com>

PART 1 - SETTING THE SCENE

Preface to this Project Report

Let me introduce myself briefly and offer you a guide to what you will find as you engage with me in this journey of the doctoral process described in this Project Report.

The majority of my professional work now involves supervising internal and external executive coaches who work in diverse commercial, not-for-profit and public sector organizations, largely in the UK. I also supervise coaches who are training to become coaching supervisors.

Coaching Supervision has been encouraged and more recently mandated for coaches seeking accreditation by the various professional coaching associations in the UK. Its purpose is loosely described as providing coaches with an opportunity to reflect on their practice and support, while at the same time ensuring standards are maintained, thus offering sponsors and coachees some assurance of quality control. This all sounds straightforward and appropriate for a professional practice. However, for several years now, and like many others in the field, I have been perplexed, frustrated and yet curious as to why relatively few executive coaches appear to engage in supervision as it is being prescribed by the coaching associations. As someone who has benefited from being supervised, and as I have received feedback from my own supervisee-clients that they find it very helpful, I wanted to know why many executive coaches in the field do not as yet engage in the process as I know it i.e. regular one-to-one sessions with a qualified supervisor. At the same time, I had a vested interest in this question as I wanted to build my practice and wanted to understand what may be holding people back.

I therefore enrolled in the Doctoral Programme in the Institute of Work Based Learning (IWBL) at Middlesex University to deepen my learning and development, to improve my practice as a coaching supervisor and to add my voice as a senior practitioner in the new, young (10 years old) field of executive coaching supervision.

In fact, through this doctoral process, I believe I have actually found some of the answers to why coaches do not come to supervision, but not by asking it in this way. With the help of fellow doctoral candidates and University Advisers, I refined my line of inquiry to explore what actually does go on in coaching supervision. I devised and here now share with you my Project that involved eleven executive coaches and coaching supervisor practitioners. My intention has been to help me and others to understand what is available and also what may be needed to attract more coaches to engage voluntarily in reflection on their practice under this title of “supervision”.

This doctoral journey has been an adventure of self-discovery, stimulating cognitive learning, affirmation of my professional practice as well as occasional spoonfuls of anxiety, fear, frustration and self-doubt. Largely, I have found the experience very powerful in terms of my growth and development. Only occasionally have I felt disheartened. To face the anxieties as I entered new territory and frustration with my own ignorance has been challenging - and yet, how else would I have learned?

A vital element in this programme was that I would be able to draw on my experience as an executive coach, coaching supervisor and group facilitator and wherever possible I have sought to model my professional practice. This informed my approach and methodology and has enabled me to create and complete the Project. At the same time, I came to realise that this process has also been a remarkable experience of supervision of me and my practice as I have travelled with “my team”, who have supported me along the way.

I bring extensive professional experience to this Doctoral Programme, at the same time choosing to model my own practice in this Project Report that includes personal disclosure of my doubts and fears. This is informed by those consultants and psychotherapists from my reading who have shared their own fallibility and learning at the same time acknowledging

their wisdom (e.g. Casement 1985 & 2002, Harrison 1995, Yalom 2002). I have found their humility, curiosity and willingness to learn from their own clients and their practice a constant inspiration to me that I seek to model when I have grappled with the tension between “knowing” and “not knowing” (Casement 1985, Polanyi 1967), holding both expertise and being a learner at the same time.

My own learning has been significant. I have developed in the following key areas: facing my vulnerability, trusting my own intuition and experience, acknowledging my wisdom. I have improved my capacity to stay with uncertainty and ambiguity. My theoretical knowledge and experience of relational psychology, adult learning, reflective practice and generative dialogue has deepened. In the true spirit of action research, that underpinned my approach, my practice has deepened and changed.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline key life experiences and learnings during my career that inform and provide the bedrock for why I have chosen to engage in this inquiry both for myself and what I hope to offer to the coaching profession as a whole. I then provide a description of the executive coaching context as it was in the UK when I started this Doctoral Programme in 2008 and end the chapter with a description of the process I went through to develop my research inquiry.

1.2 Growing up in Australia

I grew up in an open, physical, healthy, sporty, competitive environment. As the fourth out of five children I had to put my hand up at the table to “get a word in edgeways” at mealtimes. From an early age, I have wanted to find a way for my voice to be heard, and in fact, this Doctorate is another instance.

Aside from my schooling when a teenager, my father and I bred and trained horses that I then rode in competition. While my father read the books around educating the horses, I would apply it in practice as I competed in one and three-day events. Together we made a good team - he offering the knowledge from the books and his experience, and me having the lived experience to feed into our joint knowledge. It was clear from early on where my learning preference lay - in experience.

Underpinning this, while I went to Pony Club rather than Sunday School, I have always held the belief from the Christian parable, that we each have talents and we make the most of those we have. This still forms one of my core values.

After graduating I spent a year as a secondary school teacher at Darwin High School (Northern Territory, Australia) and where I am sure I learned more from the children than they did from me. My most significant memory of this period was when the School Inspector gave me the

following feedback: *“My dear, the children don’t understand a word you are saying”*. This was a powerful and valuable lesson. The fact that it was up to me to make my language comprehensible to the people I was trying to communicate with has remained with me since. I trust now that here too in this Project Report, I will achieve this goal.

1.3 Initial career as an employee in organisations

I arrived in the UK after the year in Darwin where I joined a graduate training scheme in the business publishing industry and embarked on my professional career as an employee in a number of organisations.

A vital cornerstone and foundation was the formal sales and management training that I received during these early years. At the time Heinz Goldman (1966) and Peter Drucker (1954) were the ‘gurus’ in sales and management theory and their material formed the basis for my early training and development as a manager. I remember clearly how the concept of “Supervision” was framed as one of eight core areas of management and described as monitoring the quantity, quality and direction of the work effort.

I imagine for many coaches who come from a business background, from that era and since, there are still these associations with the term “supervision” which may in part answer my concern about why, until now, there has been a relatively low percentage of executive coaches engaging in “coaching supervision”.

As an employee and line manager in several organisations, I recruited and trained my own sales teams, delivering both off and on the job training. We did not use the word “coaching” then, but in fact much of what I did would fit that description as I facilitated their learning and development. I was hired, promoted, fired and made redundant - all relevant experiences that enable me to bring empathy to my clients today.

1.4 Setting up my own business

In 1985 I realised that I no longer wished to work with or for an organisation where I had a lot of responsibility with seemingly little authority. I wanted to make my own decisions and not rely on what appeared to me to be political manoeuvring to achieve results and success. The need to work where I had some sense of control and influence and could make things happen were palpable. I therefore set up my own business, dedicated to providing sales and management training and consultancy in the UK publishing industry.

This process of deciding to leave permanent employment to work for myself provided invaluable experience that now enables me to appreciate, empathise with and support my clients when they are stuck or seeking new direction, unable to choose or make a decision to change.

At this stage I was metaphorically steeple-chasing through life - head first, fast, competitively, often out of balance. I leapt high fences, falling at some, picking myself up and moving on to the next. I wanted to achieve and win and realise in hindsight that I operated from the model of either 'I'm OK/you're not OK' (Harris, 1970) or vice versa. Aside from the early period when I had very good formal training, my learning was on-the-job or as I now know it, "experiential" (Kolb 1984, Heron 1992, Boud, Cohen & Walker 1993).

In the early years of running the business, I constantly applied the commercial knowledge and skills that I had learned as an employee. With my increasing success as a training consultant, I decided to grow the business. Here was a shift in my identity from freelance consultant to business owner and over the next four years, I recruited a team of employed and independent consultants. This evolved and led to the formation of a partnership with two of these consultants at which time we moved into offices and created a physical business entity.

Our purpose was to provide sales and management training and consultancy to the publishing and communications industries and for the first ten years of the business this was our primary and successful activity. Along with other members of my team, I developed and delivered a wide range of training programmes to in-house sales and management teams. I was working from a model of the world in which I was the expert where I should have the answers, so my approach was primarily didactic, directive and prescriptive (Heron 1981). This was both a responsibility and a burden, but I did not realise this in the early days. It suited me at the time, but in hindsight I recognise that this was often a mask for my own uncertainties that I found difficult to acknowledge or disclose.

1.5 The Business during the mid-Nineties

1995 onwards was a period of significant and uneasy learning and change for me at all sorts of levels, and I now describe those aspects relevant to this Report.

1.5.1 NLP Training

In the mid-Nineties, my then business partner embarked on NLP training. At the risk of getting left behind and definitely feeling the need to 'keep up with her' I followed suit. I spent several years attending foundation, practitioner, master practitioner level trainings. This was significant for me as it was the first formal training that I had undertaken in many years.

This was extremely unsettling. Many of my beliefs and strategies were challenged, with meeting presuppositions such as: "the map is not the territory" and "there is no failure, only feedback". I was unaccustomed to being a formal learner in a group, and initially found the experiential approach extremely uncomfortable. I felt exposed by my ignorance. To jump in the deep end, see a demonstration and then apply the interventions was very hard. What was I meant to learn? What about

getting it right? How could I be sure what I had learnt? Would I pass and get my qualification? And how would I apply this learning to the content I delivered to my client groups? Such were the anxieties for me as an adult learner in their mid-forties. And yet this was vital experience and awareness to gain, that set me in good stead for appreciating my clients as learners today.

I realise that I now apply much of my NLP learning at an almost unconscious level. For example, Dilts' "Logical Levels" (1996) enables me to diagnose and interpret the needs of my clients, that in turn inform my interventions. Listening to people's language patterns is helpful as it allows me to understand aspects of their identity, beliefs, values, capabilities and behaviours. Rapport building, matching, pacing and leading are integral to my practice now as a consultant, coach and coaching supervisor as I find these are fundamental to building effective working relationships.

Dilts (ibid) also opened my mind to the notion that the learner plays a significant part in determining what is learnt, rather than relying on the trainer. This had a huge impact on me, and perhaps for the first time enabled me to appreciate the imperative to attend to learners' emotional state and how this may influence their capacity to engage, participate and learn. This is often a concern that my consultant/coach clients bring to supervision and we explore their role in creating the appropriate conditions that enable them to facilitate their clients' learning and change.

1.5.2 Business Partner embarks on MSc at University of Surrey

In 1995 my business partner embarked on the MSc in Change Agent Skills & Strategies at the University of Surrey. She returned from the first module and announced that 'training doesn't work' with little further explanation. This was a significant moment for me. Training was the purpose of our business. Training was what I/we did. Training generated

the income to sponsor her on the Masters' programme. So if training did not work, what did? And if training did not work what was I supposed to do? Who was I? I found this extremely threatening. At an existential level, what was my point or purpose? From that day on, I 'lost my voice' in the business, became withdrawn and focused primarily on delivering a huge amount of fee-earning work.

1.5.3 Tai ji and mindfulness meditation

At around the same time, I attended a tai ji and meditation workshop called 'Touching Stillness'. Just the title was compelling. The experience as a whole was very powerful. I found the practice of tai ji with the different exercises and movements energising. I gained a strong sense of well-being. I was inspired by the gentleness of the teacher, Ad Brugman (2013) and the tai ji form. Here now I started to learn about being present, being mindful, noticing where my attention was, becoming aware of my physical self and my breathing. I started to experience what Ad describes as the 'backward circle', moving from my 'tantien' (centre), and being in balance rather than stumbling head first at a physical, mental or emotional level.

This experience was a challenge and at the same time an attractive alternative to my steeple-chasing approach to the world. I had to come out of my head where I sought to explain it and notice what was happening in my body. By letting go of my breath I learned that I could let go of feelings and thoughts and make room for the new breath, new feelings and thoughts to rise. By being present in the moment, I could participate fully. Here I learned about making personal change from a very different perspective. By making physical change within my own body enables me to generate change at other levels such as mentally and emotionally.

I continue to work with this teacher who continues to inspire me. His compassion and loving kindness for his students provides an excellent role model for me. Partly through him I have learned to be tolerant of myself and others, especially when learning. On one occasion when I was trying to do an exercise, I declared: “*I feel such a beginner*”. He replied: “*And what’s wrong with being a beginner?*” Here was another of those moments that continue to inform me.

Engaging in this practice enabled me to support myself during the turbulent chaos that was present in the business at that time and subsequently, especially during periods of transition and change. I rely on many of the tenets of the practice such as “one step at a time”, and “loving kindness” to help me approach new or difficult tasks, and apply mindful awareness to help me to focus and engage in my work.

Being present, or not, is vital in working on a one-to-one basis. With mindful awareness I am now readily able to notice when my attention wanders and bring it back to what is happening in the room with my client and attend to our relationship and the work. Whilst my learning and appreciation initially came from tai ji, Mearns & Cooper (2005), Senge et al (2005), and Erskine et al (1999) have all described the importance of being “present” as a vital ingredient to building relationships when working with others especially when they are making profound change and this practice serves me well in my client work.

1.5.4 MSc in Change Agent Skills & Strategies at University of Surrey

Again as a means of ‘keeping up’ with my business partner, I enrolled on the MSc programme in Change Agent Skills at University of Surrey in 1997. My motivation to do this felt like one of survival. However, once there, I was inspired as I immersed myself in the experience and process of this learning community, building and establishing new, trusting relationships, and finding my voice again. Through my tai ji and here

again with this programme I learned to feel comfortable with the notion of 'not knowing', of being curious, of exploring to discover and not have all the answers.

Aside from the wealth of theoretical learning about individual, group and organisational change during the Masters' programme, by the very nature of its experiential approach based on humanistic psychology (Rogers 1980, Rowan 1988) there was something about the group experience which was particularly enlivening and enabled me to develop both personally and intellectually. We worked from the perspective of facilitation rather than my historic model of expert control as we spent many hours in group process (Schein 1999). We explored and practised expressing ourselves, asking for our needs to be met, negotiating, co-creating learning sets, content and outcomes. This experience continues to inform how I contract and facilitate my work with both individuals and groups.

A significant theme emerged during the group facilitation module that was based on the working hypothesis: 'If we take care of the emotional well-being of the group and *how* we work together (i.e. the process), we'll get the task done' (Rogers 1980, Bion 1968, Schein 1999). So here again was the importance of emotion in group work. I now allow time and encourage people to share what is going on for them and how they are feeling whenever we embark and engage in a group activity. You will hear more about this in Chapters 5 and 6 when I describe the Research Project activities.

We worked with and learned how to apply different individual, group and organisational change models and theories (e.g. Egan 1998, Bion 1968, Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell 1991) with emphasis on systems theory (von Bertalanffy 1968) and action research (Lewin 1946, Reason & Rowan 1981, Reason 1988). We kept learning journals and reflected on our own process and change throughout the programme. This discipline of

journalling and reflection now informs my own approach (Moon 2004). It can also help my clients as they develop their capacity to reflect which impacts on their learning and development.

1.5.5 Group Therapy

The MSc course involved undergoing and experiencing significant personal change so we were encouraged to subscribe to some form of “supervision” that was not clearly defined but the intention was to engage in some form of reflective support. I chose to enter group therapy with the hope of understanding myself better in relation to others. I was anxious and curious about how I engaged and related with others and the impact that I generated. Equally, I anticipated that this would generate further learning about how groups work. My plan was to stay in the group for the duration of the MSc programme, but in fact I remained in the group for almost eight years.

Here I learned to recognise and express my feelings as well as my thoughts, to ask for what I needed, to be authentic. I learned tolerance for myself with my vulnerability and frailties and those of others. At times it was hard and painful. To be honest with my feelings and thoughts, at the risk of hurting other people’s feelings, felt alien and difficult. At the same time however, I realised that for far too long I had often taken responsibility for others’ feelings and actions. This was not only exhausting, but also arrogant of me and disempowering for them.

The combination of self development with the emotional growth here, which goes hand in hand with cognitive learning, has been fundamental for me. I learned to recognise my responses and reactions to others with much greater awareness. This has been significant in my client work as I now notice my own and others’ psychological phenomena (e.g. Yalom 1985, Rogers 1980, Schein 1999, de Haan 2012) such as projection, transference and counter transference as they occur in our one-to-one or group working relationships. I gained invaluable awareness of the way

that I “show up” in a group and how this may be indicative of what is happening for me in the wider world. Likewise, others’ behaviours in a group can often inform the wider system in which those people are operating in what is known as the “parallel process” (Searles 1955, Casey 1993). This awareness is vital in my work as a supervisor. Supervisees will often present issues in the hope that I provide the answer or they might respond to me unexpectedly. They may project historic expert, parent or teacher on to me, which in turn impacts on our relationship. Understanding and recognising these phenomena strengthens my ability to engage with and challenge my clients. At the same time, how my clients show up in supervision and what they share with me can be informative of their clients and the organisational systems in which they are working.

1.5.6 Trekking in the Himalayas

In 1998 I went trekking for a month in the Himalayas with a group of fourteen people. This was a wonderfully rich experience for me. Underpinned with my tai ji practice, trekking became and remains one of my life metaphors. In a recent conversation with an External Adviser, this is how I described my experience:

“And what has that given me? It has given me(knowing that).....you can only take one step at a time. There were days when I had to rest. There were days when I had to ask for help. There were days when I took the lead. There were days when somebody else had to carry my daypack. There were days where I just couldn’t move. There were days when I got altitude sickness and had to come down. So the actual lived experience of trekking....people talk about their journey, well I did it.....And what I bring to my work now is.....it’s a tolerance of a vulnerability of an individual, of these sorts of ingredients. I may have learned these in other contexts but a good four weeks up in the Himalayas actually personified the whole jolly lot for me.” (AH August 2013)

I realise that the significance of this experience holds symbolic relevance in all my work that goes beyond the experience itself. My clients are often highly ambitious individuals who get frustrated when ‘things aren’t working’ or they want to achieve their goals as quickly as possible. By sharing the trekking metaphor I give them permission to stand back, take stock, slow down, plan, reflect and be kinder to themselves. This in turn often helps to unblock them. I have reverted to this for myself during this doctoral journey with its demands and the phases of busyness and inactivity that again personify the metaphor.

1.6 My professional life since 2000

As a result of the deteriorating relationship with my business partner during the previous five years, I ended the partnership in 2000 and decided to ‘downsize’ completely. I made the staff redundant, rented out the offices and returned to working from home after completing my MSc degree. This was a difficult transition. I had significant emotional energy vested in my identity of running a business with premises, with a team of consultants, and the company was well known and highly regarded in its market place, so this ending was dispiriting and at some level I felt I had failed.

It took more than two years to come to terms with the loss of “the company” and what it represented, to distil and accept my new role of independent consultant. Again, this experience has subsequently helped me to empathise with and offer some insight into the impact of such events to clients who experience significant loss of or change in identity and occupation (Kubler Ross 1969, Spinelli 2005).

1.6.1 And so to Coaching Supervision

Since 2000 I have engaged in change consultancy, executive coaching and coaching supervision. My client work has involved facilitation of groups and individuals, I have offered consulting and coaching services

rather than one and two-day training courses. At the same time I was starting to attract consultant/coaches who came to me for “consultation” or shadow consulting (Casey 1993). We did not call it “supervision” then but here were the seeds of my primary practice today as a coaching supervisor.

By 2003 I wanted to build on my experience in this domain and to formalise my learning so I enrolled in a Supervision Training programme with Metanoia Institute, a psychotherapy training institute in London as well as an additional programme in group analytic supervision. (The first *coaching* supervision training programme was launched in 2003 but I was unaware of this when I enrolled at Metanoia). Here I developed additional skills and understanding for handling sensitive personal issues at an individual and group level and gained further therapeutic awareness about the psychological issues that may impact on and determine my clients’ behaviours and development.

With the learning from these programmes and my MSc, I became increasingly appreciative of and interested in the impact and power of the relationships I established with my clients in my own practice as both coach and supervisor (e.g. Gilbert & Evans 2000, Proctor 2000, Barber 2009). Based on my own experience and knowledge of psychotherapy and supervision training, I now believe that relationship is at the core and underpins learning and change (e.g. Hubble et al 2006, Bachelor & Horvath 1999, Buber 1958, Winnicott 1958, Rogers 1998, de Haan 2012, Carroll 2009, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Schein 1999).

Now my cumulative experience and learning were coming together in what felt like an integrated practice. I was able to draw on my experience of being an employee and line manager. My knowledge and skills of training and facilitating learning, together with organisational consulting and working with individuals and groups were both relevant and applicable. I was able to apply my ability to challenge and support, to give and receive

feedback. Added to this, I now had a strong grounding in the psychological theories and models of change from the psychotherapeutic domain and as lived in my own experience of being in therapy.

1.7 Supervision of my own practice

Along with my Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and other support, I have been engaged in two regular supervision relationships as a supervisee for much of the past ten years, instigated partly on my own initiative to support me in my client work and, from around 2005, as a prerequisite for my supervision qualification and subsequently for my accreditation as an Executive Coach with EMCC and as a Coaching Supervisor with APECS.

The value of this process and these relationships is profound. I experience the power of reflective practice and how it supports my learning. Through the dialogue, we identify and generate new approaches to interpret and respond to what arises with my supervisees e.g. managing the psychological boundaries with a supervisee who also wants to be my friend or handling the vicissitudes of narcissistic defences (Marodo 2004). The experience of my supervisors' compassion for my vulnerability together with the safety and trust we have co-created allows me to disclose my mistakes and 'not knowing'. This in turn allows us to challenge my work, from which I continue to learn. These inspiring relationships, and our work together, provide a core foundation that informs my own practice as a coaching supervisor. Suffice to add that I aim to create this safe, trusting experience for my supervisee/coaches and which I sought to develop through my further learning in this Doctoral Programme.

1.8 Deciding on the Doctorate

At the time of starting this Doctoral Programme in the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University in London I was 58 years old and

had reached a stage in my career with significant life and professional experience. I now “knew” what I was doing, reflecting Heron’s (1992) four ways of knowing, including lived experience, a strongly developed sensory and emotional awareness, diverse practical and interpersonal skills underpinned by solid theoretical knowledge in my particular field.

“The affective mode embraces feeling with emotion....the imaginal mode comprises intuition and imagery....the conceptual mode includes reflection and discrimination.....the practical mode involves intention and action (ibid pp14-15)

I now wanted to generate further understanding to make sense of and further ground my experience as a professional practitioner at the same time create new knowledge and skills for myself and potentially for others. This led me to ask: What might I do to continue my own learning and development? How might I improve my practice? How might I share my “wisdom”? I therefore decided to embark on this Doctoral Research path. Ultimately, my learning and development aims to fulfill my own wish to be more effective with my clients, (primarily internal and external executive coaches), who in turn will provide the best possible service to their clients i.e. the coachees and the organizations who employ them. At the same time, in a recent conversation with my University Project Consultant I declared:

“For me, I am seeking the recognition and the academic rigour of doing this sort of project at this level, which has required more discipline than I would normally bring to my everyday work..... I have learned through the rigour of setting up the project, of planning it, of paying real attention to the detail, of creating the core conditions for engagement, participation, supporting those that I’m working with and accounting for my experience, have all contributed. And I have to account for it in a different way and to a level of experience and

expertise which I believe I am worthy of. And subsequently I want my voice to be heard.” (AH conversation with Project Consultant August 2013).

As I have my own experience of receiving and giving coaching supervision over more than ten years so I wanted to learn from a wider circle of professional practitioners. I was genuinely curious to discover what value or learning others gained from engaging in supervision and establish what is helpful to them and why, and if not helpful, why not. Within this domain of inquiry, I was also fascinated to explore the power and value of the reflective process on my own and others’ learning and development.

During this early period of my enrolment at Middlesex, I was becoming increasingly frustrated and curious about why both new and experienced coaches did not engage in supervision, using such justifications as “It costs too much”, “I’m qualified/trained/experienced so why do I need to have supervision?” and “Why do we need it, that’s what they do in therapy and I’m not practising as a therapist?” or “I don’t know where to find a supervisor”. Thus I was keen to engage with experienced executive coaches and supervisors who do participate in supervision, to share their voices within the profession and inform those sceptics and “resisters” of its relevance and value. Furthermore, I felt that it was vital to generate practitioner-based knowledge about how supervision helps or hinders executive coaches. It seemed significant to explore this domain with other practitioners, rather than relying solely on the voices of expert opinion in the literature (e.g. Hawkins & Smith 2006, Bluckert 2006, Hay 2007) and the subsequent mandate from the coaching associations who now insist on supervision as a prerequisite for accreditation of coaches (e.g. APECS 2007, Association for Coaching (2013a), EMCC (2009)).

I wanted to gain a deeper appreciation of what is learned and achieved through this process of supervision at both a content and relational level i.e. what happens and how, when coaches engage in this process called

“supervision” and thus establish why it is useful (it is a presupposition of mine that it is). It was important for me to explore its impact on learning and development as a positive and vital ingredient for executive coaches. I hoped to allay the scepticism by those whose stance is to refer to supervision as the ‘borrowed clothes’ (e.g. Schwenk 2007 uses this term) from other helping professions and as such not relevant to their practice. I was also passionate about developing a project that would enable me to model my own practice and draw on my experience in this field. This commitment informed my choice of Research Methodology discussed in Chapter 3 and the development of my Project Activities discussed in Chapter 4 of this Project Report.

Given the early stage of development of coaching supervision in this country (and indeed worldwide), and its so far limited acceptance as an integral ingredient in on-going Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for executive coaches (Bachkirova 2011), I wished to generate further understanding and appreciation of the significance and value of the process and its importance to the individual executive coach’s practice and thus to the profession of coaching.

I enrolled at Middlesex University in 2008 to formalise and integrate my work and to investigate these questions through a work-based Doctoral Project.

1.9 Developing my Research Inquiry

With a paucity of research-based evidence in coaching supervision, I believed that we needed to know more about what actually goes on in supervision from a practitioner perspective.

In light of a study conducted on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006, discussed in Chapter 2) and my own experience of noticing coaches’ hesitation or reticence to engage in the process, I was very keen to

understand why coaches were not engaging in supervision. Together with a colleague, we found various explanations at both conscious and possibly unconscious levels such as fear, shame, delusions of grandeur, valid expertise, lack of curiosity to name but a few (Appendix Mind Map 1). I believed that if I could investigate and find an answer to that question, then I could find a way to show practising coaches what they might be missing from the experience.

At the same time, I realised that it was not only the coaches who did not appear to understand or acknowledge the relevance and value of supervision. Many coach training programmes did not include supervision as an integral ingredient in the development of their “student” coaches. While corporate sponsors of coaching were seeking some assurances of quality (Bachkirova 2011) and in some cases asking for coaches to be in some form of supervision, anecdotally it appears that they were not always clear about what they were asking for or why.

In the meantime, during a Research Methodology workshop at the University with my Internal Adviser, colleagues challenged me with the notion that I was so steeped in the practice, that I did not realise where the general coaching community was on the subject. ‘*We don’t know what goes on in supervision*’ they declared. I was dumb-founded and at the same time very appreciative of the challenge.

I carried on exploring possible lines of inquiry such as: ‘*What impact does supervision have on the coach?*’ and this shifted to ‘*What effect does supervision have on the coach?*’ Finally, after several conversations with University and professional colleagues, I arrived at the following inquiry in the light of the current state of the profession at the time.

An Action Research Inquiry into what goes on in Coaching Supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession

By creating a practice-based, exploratory inquiry I hoped to generate new insights and learning for a number of audiences within the coaching profession. I anticipated that this would help to develop my practice as an alternative option to attending workshops, lectures, conferences or training programmes. Existing coaches who already engage in supervision might learn how to take further advantage of this forum. Non-user coaches would hear the practitioners' perspective, rather than the "perceived power-holders" in terms of accrediting bodies, coach trainers, client buyers. Purchasers and corporate sponsors of coaching in organisations might gain further awareness of the value of supervision so they could make informed decisions when considering its relevance as a selection criterion in recruiting executive coaches (Ridler Report 2013). Coach training companies would be able to provide the appropriate forum, level and facilities with their students based on the findings from this study. Coaching supervision training companies could offer an evidence-based level of curriculum content to develop coaching supervisors.

In closing this Chapter, I have now shared my personal history and the context in which I am working, together with the steps involved in developing my research question. In Chapter 2 I review the Literature that has informed me and this research inquiry before discussing the Methodology and Project Activities in Chapters 3 and 4 to complete Part One of this Project Report.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study is an exploration of coaching supervision.

With a limited dedicated research base in coaching supervision to date, it is difficult to offer a conventional review of the literature exploring the key conceptual and theoretical frames together in such a way that would allow me to place and validate my practice within accepted theory.

The profession is still in the process of establishing agreed standards in coaching supervision, across several coaching associations, thus going some way to explain the paucity of existing peer-reviewed research papers that are based on either case study (Butwell 2006, Armstrong & Geddes 2009) or small sample investigations (e.g. Salter 2008, McGivern 2009, Passmore & McGoldrick 2009). There are to my knowledge as yet only two unpublished doctoral theses and only one major study commissioned on behalf of the CIPD (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006). I discuss the themes emerging from these studies later in this Chapter.

While trends are starting to emerge dedicated to coaching supervision in this country, the basis for these is largely expert opinion from established practitioners e.g. Hawkins & Smith 2006 & 2013, Bluckert 2006, Hay 2007, de Haan 2012, Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011. At the risk of being provocative, these established authors all come from the helping professions including psychotherapy and social work where supervision has developed and become established during the past 30-40 years. Notwithstanding their origins I discuss these contributions in this Chapter as they have provided some valuable foundations from which coaching supervision is developing.

In considering the literature in the context of this Research Project I am bringing to bear my experience as a coaching supervisor together with my interaction with other supervisors, what I have found important and

valuable so far and what I have drawn on to support my experience and practice i.e. the literature from these allied fields that resonates with my experience. I review some of the key literature from coaching, psychotherapy, psychology and adult learning that has informed my practice until now and creates the context to contain and frame my line of research inquiry.

2.2 Emergence of coaching in an organisational context

With the increasing complexity in today's global economy, with technology impacting on how organisations participate in highly competitive markets, with change being a constant phenomenon and the ambiguities and pressures associated with this, executives in organisations need to demonstrate their flexibility and resilience to cope. They need to develop their emotional awareness and their capacity to learn and think differently to ensure they keep pace (Kegan & Lahey 2009). Likewise, there is a real need for leaders to establish effective relationships with their employees in order for them to meet the demands they face.

During the past 15 years there has been a significant shift in the way that organisations support the development of their people, particularly those at executive level. One-to-one "executive coaching" as it is now termed, has emerged as a significant option to facilitate sustainable improvement in individual executives' performance and their transformational growth to meet these aforementioned demands (e.g. Mezirow 1991, Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck 2010, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Kegan & Lahey 2009).

Recent estimates on the investment in coaching worldwide stand at around \$2billion (Fillery-Travis & Lane 2006). Notwithstanding the ongoing credit crunch and recession, the UK market could be worth approximately £150 million (Passmore & McGoldrick 2009). Not only are the number of coaches growing (Coaching at Work 2009) but a number of member associations have developed globally and already in the UK there

are at least six such Associations: AC, APECS, EMCC, ICF, SGCP, WABC (see Glossary for full titles) with some estimated 5000 members amongst them (Coaching At Work 2010).

These member organisations go some way to meet the increasing demand from both clients (individual coachees and corporate sponsors) and practitioners to “professionalise” this occupation (Gray 2011, Lane 2010 & 2011). The Associations have variously responded by providing a definition of standards, underpinned by Ethical Codes (e.g. Association for Coaching 2013, EMCC 2010a). APECS (2007), as a member organisation dedicated to executive coaching and coaching supervision has placed accreditation as the pre-requisite for membership, along with their members engaging in supervision. Other organisations have taken a more open, inclusive approach with no barriers to entry other than seeking agreement from members to adhere to their respective Ethical Codes (e.g. EMCC 2010a and AC 2013). More recently, these latter two have developed accreditation processes for both coach training programmes and individual practitioners (EMCC 2009, AC 2013a) but again, this does not preclude membership. ICF (2013) has been “credentialling” their members for many years but takes the same approach with levels of membership starting at credentialled “associate” status through to “professional” being the most highly qualified member. The aim with all the accreditation processes is to provide levels of independent benchmarks against which practitioners may be assessed so that clients might know what to expect from coaches with different levels of training and accreditation.

Aligned with this intention to establish standards, coaching supervision has been advocated within the Ethical Codes (e.g. SGCP 2007) and has subsequently become an imperative for any coaches wishing to be accredited (e.g. APECS 2007, Association for Coaching 2013a, EMCC 2009).

It is interesting to note that according to the Ridler Report (2013) 54% sponsors of coaching in organisations now expect external coaches to be accredited. While there is no explicitly stated link between accreditation and attendance in supervision, anecdotally, sponsors of coaching are also now seeking evidence that coaches are in supervision, whether accredited or not.

With this background and before discussing the supervision literature, I think it is vital that we look at the context and practice of coaching that informs the need for and relevance of supervision.

2.3 Types of coaching and the complexity of the process

Coaching embraces a diverse range of types and includes: behavioural, business, performance, developmental, leadership, executive, transactional and transformational (Bachkirova et al (2010) in Cox et al 2010). Grant & Cavanagh (2004:7) speak of “*skills, performance, developmental coaching*” which resonates with Hawkins & Smith (2006:24) “*skills, performance, development and transformational coaching*”.

Without dwelling on an exploration of these diverse types, and given that every book on coaching offers a slightly different definition, the overall purpose of the coaching is to facilitate change in the individual coachee at one or several levels including behavioural, capability, beliefs, identity or purpose (Dilts 1996). This perspective aligns with Heron’s (1992) four levels of practical, emotional, conceptual and imaginal learning.

Bachkirova et al (2010) in Cox et al (2010) stress the significance of change to an individual’s performance in the workplace through a process of human development:

“Coaching could be seen as a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of

appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders.....It is recognised as a powerful vehicle for increasing performance, achieving results and optimising personal effectiveness” (Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck in Cox et al 2010:1).

We can compare this orientation with Hawkins & Smith (2006) who place emphasis on the coaching relationship, suggesting that it plays an integral part in facilitating the coachee to change. I am more drawn to this perspective as I believe that without an effective relationship, there is a limit to the coachee’s engagement and subsequent commitment to learn and change.

“Coaching is the focused application of skills that deliver performance improvement to the individual’s work in their organisation, through robust support and challenge. The coaching process should yield learning and personal development for the executive, and help them to contribute more of their potential. This collaborative relationship will be short-term and practically focused, and will be marked by clear, strong feedback (Hawkins & Smith 2006:22).

The practice of executive coaching is the primary basis of my professional experience. Some would argue it also demands the widest range of skills, knowledge and purpose, particularly given the organisational context in which it occurs (e.g. Hawkins & Smith 2006, Brunning 2006, Pampallis Paisley 2006). I believe the application of this knowledge and skills required by the executive coach is both complex and demanding, requiring an understanding of at least some or all of the following areas: adult development theory (e.g. Kegan 1982, Wilber 2000) adult learning theory (e.g. Kolb 1984, Mezirow 1991), reflective practice (Schon 1983, Argyris & Schon 1974) emotional intelligence (Goleman et al 2001), organisational

change and systems theory (e.g. Hawkins & Smith 2006, Brunning 2006). Furthermore, each coach requires excellent communication and relational skills coupled with thorough self-awareness (e.g. Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011, de Haan 2008, Cox (2006) in Stober & Grant 2006).

In this organisational context, the executive coach seeks to help their coachees to meet their professional and developmental objectives that frequently involves significant personal change as well as acquiring new skills within the complex context of organisational life. Hawkins & Smith (2006) and Cox (2006) describe this as “transformational change”. Kegan & Lahey (2009) draw links between adult development and the levels of mental complexity required in an executive.

Likewise, Hawkins & Smith (2006) argue that without a “felt shift” (Gendlin (1981) cited in Hawkins & Smith 2006) where the client experiences a change in their language, perception, feelings (both at a sensation and emotional level) or in their overall physiology in the coaching session, the changes are unlikely to last beyond the coaching room. I do not entirely agree with this stance as I have found that clients may make significant shifts as the result of further personal reflection between coaching sessions, that may not necessarily be evident in the coaching room itself.

As I have already alluded, these shifts involve learning, including both first and second order learning to learn (Bateson 1973) or single and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon 1974) or the transformational learning of Mezirow (1991) where the coach may challenge the coachee’s underlying beliefs, assumptions and frames of reference to enable them to understand how they are learning and subsequently how to resolve issues through new interpretations and which might be described as *“the extension and clarification of meaning of one’s experience”* (Knowles, Holton and Swanson 2005:11 cited in Cox et al 2010).

Notwithstanding where and when the changes for the coachee occur, there is often considerable pressure on the coach to be held accountable for such changes (de Haan 2008).

2.4 My own perspective on executive coaching

From my own learning and experience as an executive coach, I define executive coaching as follows:

“Coaching is a process that enables an individual to develop and grow in terms of personal and professional capabilities and will result in greater effectiveness in the workplace. Through the process of dialogue, the individual gains awareness of their personal strengths and learns how to build on these. They identify blind spots about their behaviours, thinking patterns and feelings that may hinder their performance and development. Through the process of support and challenge coaching enables the individual to achieve self-determined outcomes.”

Here I place emphasis on the self-development and growth of the executive that in turn will enable them to achieve appropriate learning and change. For me, vital ingredients in the process are that the coachee holds personal responsibility, self-efficacy (Bandura 1977) and as much autonomy for the learning and change as is possible in an organisational context. Without these additional ingredients, over and above the coaching relationship or capabilities of the coach, there is a danger that the organisational culture and system may sabotage both the coachee’s capacity and commitment to make sustainable changes (Oberholzer in Brunning 2006).

“It is often not the lack of clear goals or motivating factors that hinder growth and advancement, butit is the more hidden personal and institutional factors that stall and sabotage

development. These....factors are now increasingly recognised as key elements that need to be addressed if the best possible outcome is to be achieved” (ibid p xxi).

My perspective is further informed by a systems-psychodynamic approach (Gould, Stapley & Stein 2004, Brunning 2006). According to Brunning, “*systems psychodynamic coaching is a multi-factorial, multi-layered process that primarily addresses itself to the person in the role and the multiple organisational and social fields that comprise the context in which work with the client takes place*” (ibid xxviii).



Figure 2.1 The Six Domain Model of Executive Coaching (2001 & 2006)
(Reproduced with permission from Halina Brunning)

From this Model we can see that there are six domains where the coach may attend to their client. One or another of these may form the basis for the initial executive coaching goal and some or all of the other domains may emerge as influencing or impacting on the original intentions for the coaching as the domains are inter-related.

1. *“The client’s personality;*
2. *The client’s life story;*
3. *The client’s skills, competencies, abilities and talents;*
4. *The client’s aspirations, career progression so far and future direction;*
5. *The client’s current workplace environment in which he/she performs*
6. *Current organisational role” (Brunning 2006:134)*

Brunning proposes that executive coaching addresses these six areas and therefore requires knowledge of *“human systems, psychology, organisational and group dynamics, impact of change and individual development” (ibid 2006:135).*

This model paints a very clear picture of the complexity and diversity of what may emerge and thus needs to be attended to during an executive coaching assignment and demonstrates the diverse resources needed by the Executive Coach. Not only do they have to apply a vast range of interpersonal and communication skills, they are faced with the diverse psychological and organisational demands which may manifest in the process of the work. These need to be understood and managed not only by the coach but also at some level by the coachees and the sponsors of coaching so that the goals and expectations in the coaching assignments are realistic. Furthermore, these changes, at whatever level are likely to take time (Kegan & Lahey 2009), so the coach needs resources and resilience to support the coachee through the process.

At the same time, Brunning also acknowledges that it may be appropriate to seek specialised knowledge such as psychotherapy or counselling if the

client shows persistent patterns of behaviour that may have been established at an early life stage. Likewise, if the client lacks a particular skill in a new role such as presentation or delegation skills, they might benefit from training. An important element of the coach's skill then lies in being able to recommend or suggest alternative options for the client instead of or as well as the coaching. Here it is evident that the coach not only needs to understand their own boundaries of expertise, but also be sensitive to alternative, more appropriate options (Coutu & Kauffman 2009, APECS 2007, EMCC 2010a).

2.5 The debate around Coaching and Psychotherapy

Given that the coachee's personal history and experience may well impact on their capacity to engage with the coaching and/or make the changes that they declare is their intention (Sperry 2004), there is a constant debate about when coaching veers into the domain of psychotherapy and what distinguishes each of these practices. Sperry (ibid) in fact argues for the need for coaches to be psychologically trained. Similarly, Hawkins & Smith (2006) and Bluckert (2005) acknowledge the overlaps and warn of the need for the coach to be vigilant and mindful of the boundaries and have the resources to refer clients to other specialists as appropriate. Peltier (2001) draws clear comparisons between the two domains suggesting that in therapy the focus tends to be on the past with a "*pathology orientation*" whereas coaching tends to focus on the present and future with a "*growth or skill development orientation*". While these distinctions may appear clear on paper, and it is clear when the client is referring to personal history, the impact the personal history may be having on the present for the coachee is not always immediately evident and indeed can surface unexpectedly e.g. a coachee is suddenly reminded of their father when discussing their boss and the impact the latter is having on their performance.

Coutu & Kauffman (2009) also acknowledge the overlaps between Consulting, Coaching and Therapy in a survey conducted on behalf of

Harvard Business Review. They alert us to how coaching borrows from consulting and therapy when the organisation has an active presence in the coaching assignment in terms of goal setting and funding, or when the coaching may address difficult personal issues at work and home, which might be attended to in therapy under different circumstances. However, they do not advocate the need to keep clear boundaries between these three domains of consulting, coaching and therapy. Important here is a need for clear contracting with the client not only at the beginning of an assignment but as the work progresses, so that both parties know as clearly as possible the purpose of the work and the appropriateness to continue with the coaching assignment.

Berglas (2002:87) warns that *“executive coaches who lack rigorous psychological training do more harm than good.....when an executive’s problems stem from undetected or ignored psychological difficulties, coaching can actually make a bad situation worse.”*

As we continue to debate the distinctions between coaching and therapy, some coaches argue that coaching is not psychotherapy therefore supervision is not relevant. This is a narrow view given that supervision is widely practised in diverse other helping professions such as social work, nursing and psychology, where these practitioners recognise the need for support, with ongoing learning and reflection to sustain themselves, given the professional and emotional demands in these fields.

I would also argue that coaching presents just such demands as can be seen in social work or psychotherapy, not only given the complexity of the coaching process, but also when extreme instances arise unexpectedly.

Three examples come to mind when supervisees have come to me for supervision that demonstrate this. On one occasion, the supervisee’s client had a “psychotic episode”. On another occasion, the supervisee’s client broke down in tears persistently during the first three coaching sessions. And again, the coachee manifested behaviours resembling

symptoms synonymous with psychopathology along the narcissism spectrum that were clearly impacting on the effectiveness of the coaching (e.g. Buckley & Buckley 2006, Murdoch 2006, Babiak & Hare 2006). In each case as the coach was not qualified to work therapeutically with their client, the coaching assignment was either ended or postponed until appropriate professional help was provided. I offer these examples to highlight the aforementioned unpredictability. At the same time, here too were instances that support the efficacy of supervision, where we attended to the safety of either coachee or coach or both.

I appreciate that these examples may be extreme, but what is not extreme is that in the current economic climate and 24/7 culture of many organisations today, as coaches and supervisors we need to be sensitive to and mindful of the possible mental health issues that face many executives such as depression and stress-related issues (Buckley & Buckley 2006). How these may impact on a coachee or indeed on the coach working with these issues may not be immediately evident, but as executive coaches we need to be alert to their possible existence.

2.6 Support for Executive Coaches

With the knowledge and skills required to engage in this work of executive coaching, allowing for the complexity and demands of facilitating change and learning with coachees in an organisational context leads us to the question of what support coaches need and how best might they find this. These diverse demands require skill to manage and can create stress and tension for the coach. de Haan (2012) highlights the sources of tension for our attention:

“From the coach themselves, from the profession with the standards expected, from the sessions themselves in terms of content, approach, behaviours of the coachee and/or the relationship between both parties, (especially when either party

may feel stuck), *from the client/coachee/coachee's organisation and from others/colleagues/coach's organisation.*" (ibid:186)

This leads us to a review of the literature regarding coaching supervision as one of the core Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resources that offer support, the well-being, the development and standards of executive coaches.

2.7 Supervision as a safety net

As coaching supervision is only slowly becoming acknowledged by practitioners, until mid-2000's there was little written specifically about coaching supervision with only a few, small-sample research studies seeking to establish what coaches may get for their money, let alone whether the client/coachee benefits from the coach being in supervision (Passmore & McGoldrick 2009, Salter 2008). Furthermore, Moyes (2009) pointed out that many of those now writing about coaching supervision have their roots in the helping professions such as social work and psychotherapy where there is an established body of research and literature (e.g. Carroll 2006b, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Bluckert 2006, Hay 2007).

Thus it is not surprising that my development as a supervisor has been informed by several of the seminal theories and models from psychotherapy supervision. In many ways the integrative approach is most appropriate to coaching supervision as it fits well under the broader psychology of relationships and my practice has been underpinned by Gilbert & Evans (2000) "*integrative relational*" approach. They focus on the interactional field between supervisor and supervisee as the basis for the supervision and through which meaning is co-created:

"Involves a process of inquiry rather than a search for truth, from a systems perspective, is the co-creation of a "new" narrative by supervisor and supervisee that informs the work with the

client.....the supervisor needs to shift her focus from observing the psychotherapist's performance, to assessing the client's dynamic, to an awareness of her own reactions to the supervisee, which may impinge on the process, to an appreciation of the psychotherapist's possible...reactions, to promoting trust in the supervisory relationship. This....involves a sharpened and sensitive awareness of the dance between them which will then model for the supervisee the type of contact that is possible with clients.” (ibid 2000:8)

This approach emphasises the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee, stressing a number of key elements. Through the safety and trust that is co-created, the supervisee can fully engage in and share their practice, become open to scrutiny and learn from this process. At the same time, both supervisor and supervisee may gain insights into what is happening in the client system through what is happening in the supervision relationship i.e. parallel process (e.g. Searles 1955, Casey 1993). Furthermore, through the process of this dialogue, the supervisee develops a form of what Casement (1985:29) called “the internal supervisor” in the therapy field, often modelling the behaviours of their supervisor that in turn emerge in the coaching relationship. These factors may also contribute to the supervisee’s “tacit knowledge” (Polanyi 1967) which enables them to make intuitive as well as informed interventions in their coaching. Thus learning is occurring at a number of levels - both consciously and at times also out of awareness.

Given the complexity of the relational phenomena in supervision, Proctor’s (1997) guidelines on contracting in therapeutic relationships have formed the basis of my own approach today and these are reiterated by Hay (2007:112) as she describes the importance of working with the “*practical, professional and psychological*” aspects of contracting in coaching and subsequently in supervision. Particularly in the organisational context, with the complexity of stakeholder involvement, attending to these three levels of contracting is pivotal in establishing clear working relationships to

achieve the outcomes for coaching. When relevant, these enable the coach to manage explicitly many of the expectations of all the stakeholders who may include those in Human Resources who hold the budget, the line manager who wants to see tangible results in their employee and the coachee themselves who is keen to succeed or improve their performance (Carroll 2005). Understanding these “multi-partite agreements” (Hodge 2013a in Murdoch & Arnold 2013) is often at the core of my work as a supervisor as often it is an area that the coach may have overlooked in the interests of getting started on a coaching assignment.

Carroll (2005) also explores the notion of the psychological contract highlighting how misunderstanding can occur when two parties come together without discussing their respective hopes and expectations in the relationship or indeed when no attention is paid to the unspoken fears that can often exist particularly in a new working relationship such as coaching or supervision. If the supervisor does not allow or encourage the coach to air their concerns or fears about how they like to learn or how they engage in a discussion of the coach’s practice, then the scope of the learning is potentially limited as the coach will limit what work they bring to supervision.

This area of fear of exposure and shame is discussed by Cavicchia (2010) in the context of the coaching relationship. I would argue that the same elements exist in the supervision relationship where the coach may well feel exposed and potentially shamed when discussing client work that may not have been very effective or the coach made a mistake or both coach and coachee may be feeling stuck and not know what to do next. If there is a likelihood of shame, we are less willing to share our work and thus may fail to identify blind spots or patterns of practice that may hinder our effectiveness. I believe that this fear of exposure is indeed one of the key reasons why many coaches have not engaged in supervision before now.

“On Being a Supervisee” (Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011) is written for *“anyone, of any profession, who brings his/her work experience to another*

in order to learn from it" (ibid:5). This manual offers guidance for any coach, particularly when new to supervision, to help them choose a supervisor. The authors provide guidelines for what to expect and how the coach can make the most of the process through their own preparation and input. Equally, they place significant emphasis on the fact that this process of supervision is primarily a learning relationship and a forum for the supervisee to explore and reflect on their practice. Informed by this text, I find that spending time particularly in the early stages of a supervision relationship to explore the nature and purpose of reflection-on-action (Schon 1983) and the supervisee's learning style is time well-spent so that the supervisee can make the most of our sessions, and exploring their practice from diverse perspectives.

"Supervision is a forum where supervisees think about their work in order to do it better....coaching psychology supervision is a form of experiential learning, focused on the actual practice informed by Schon's reflection on- and -in action." (Carroll 2007: 433-434)

Here Carroll applauds the value of supervision in the domain of coaching psychology, and at the same time goes on to caution us around the impact of its being imperative to affect participants' commitment and engagement. In a later definition, he adds: *"Supervisors facilitate reflective practice as a method of learning from experience and support supervisees to return to work renewed with new insights, shifts and transformations"* (Carroll 2011 in Shohet 2011:14).

Farmer (2012) identifies what the coach needs to establish when choosing a supervisor. He advocates that the supervisor needs to have an appreciation of the coachees and their organisational context where the coach is working that is aligned with the purpose of the coaching. In fact however, I do not entirely agree with this view as I have found real value in my lack of knowledge or experience of the specific context in which my supervisees' clients are operating. I avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions through over-familiarity with a market or organisational

context. By contrast, Carroll & Gilbert (2005 & 2011) differentiate personal qualities and characteristics from effective behaviours which to me is a more comprehensive guide than that offered by Farmer (ibid).

2.8 So what do I mean by coaching supervision?

With the increasing awareness of coaching supervision in our field, from the mid 2000s we started to see some dedicated literature. While the authors offer differing definitions (no two are the same), there are some recurring themes developed in different guises by Hawkins & Smith 2006, Brockbank & McGill 2012, Hay 2007, Carroll 2009 & 2010, de Haan 2012, Bachkirova et al 2011:

- (1) the value and significance that the relationship between supervisor and supervisee brings to the on-going learning and development of the individual coach which they can then take into their coaching practice and
- (2) adult learning theory and
- (3) reflective practice

I hope therefore to have captured this in my own definition of coaching supervision:

“Coaching supervision is a co-created learning relationship that supports the supervisee in (their) development, both personally and professionally, and seeks to support (them) in providing best practice to (their) client. Through the process of reflecting on (their) own work in supervision, the supervisee can review and develop (their) practice and re-energise (themselves). It offers a forum to attend to (their) emotional and professional wellbeing and growth. Through the relationship and dialogue in this alliance, coaches can receive feedback, broaden their perspectives, generate new ideas and maintain standards of effective practice (Hodge 2013b in Murdoch & Arnold 2013:xv).

Here I aim to represent the relational elements of the process at the same time making explicit the links with learning and reflection to achieve an overall purpose of the coach's well-being, together with standards of practice that in turn enable them to provide the best possible service to their clients.

By contrast, Hawkins & Smith (2006) offer the following definition of coaching supervision:

“The process by which a coach/mentor/consultant with the help of a supervisor, who is not working directly with the client, can attend to understanding better both the client system and themselves as part of the client-coach-coach/mentor system and transform their work.” (ibid:147)

Taken out of context, this description is adequate but for me fails to capture the relational quality and significance that allows this work to be effective as likewise it makes little reference to the learning processes involved, stressing “understanding” as the primary outcome to enable change in the coach's practice. To me, this is only part of the story.

I compare this with Murdoch's view which demonstrates more alignment with the relational, reflective space and the care associated with supervision:

“A transformative professional conversation (which) supports and develops anyone who works closely with other practitioners.... Supervision offers a unique space - a space in which practitioners reflect on their work and become more effective in taking care of their organisations, their teams, their clients and themselves.....Supervision involves working skilfully with generating new ideas, honing interventions, understanding relational dynamics and reducing fear and shame.” (Murdoch 2013 in Murdoch & Arnold 2013: xxiii-xxv)

And finally, here Bachkirova highlights the supportive nature of supervision in the interests of the coach's development through reflection at the same time stressing attention to the coach's effectiveness:

“Supervision is a formal process of professional support which ensures continuing development of the coach and effectiveness of his/her coaching practice through interactive reflection, interpretative evaluation and sharing of expertise” (Bachkirova (2008:16-17) cited in Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck 2011:3)

With these perspectives in mind I now discuss the supervision relationship with its relevance, adult learning theory and reflective practice.

2.8.1 The Supervision Relationship

For this process to be effective, the relationship is crucial (Gilbert & Evans 2000, Hawkins & Smith 2006, de Haan 2012). Looking at social learning theory (Bandura 1977) it is clear that people do learn from one another in the process of being together, observing each other, imitating and modelling. As a result, learning from the supervision relationship itself is a significant influence as the coach develops themselves and takes this into their coaching work and relationships.

Through the process of the supervision the coach in supervision is able to explore their own behaviours and responses to their clients and identify new approaches and techniques for their client work. They are likely to gain self awareness, as well as receive genuine and sensitive feedback. Through the process of relating with the supervisor and exploring what is going on between them, the coach may gain insight into their own patterns of relating which are impacting on their performance and success within their coaching assignments.

Curran (2008:61) in Critchley (2010) proposes:

“If you have made a good emotional connection with the person who is trying to learn from you, you have dramatically increased the chance of them learning that thing from you.”

At the same time, the coach is potentially vulnerable as they open themselves and their practice up to scrutiny with another (de Haan 2012), so it is vital that the supervisor is able to engage with the coach in such a way that they achieve *“relational depth”* (Mearns & Cooper 2005) and a sense of connectedness to allow the coach to explore their practice safely and generatively not only through the work they are doing in the sessions but also through the relationship. To achieve the ideal context, the supervisor needs to demonstrate a genuineness and congruence as described by Rogers (1957, 1980) creating the core attitudes of *“unconditional positive regard”* and *“empathic understanding”* to enable the relationship to develop positively and safely. Here too there is relevance in the work of philosopher Martin Buber (1947) who describes this process of *“genuine dialogue in which each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them”* (cited in Smith 2000, 2009).

According to Lewis et al (2001) it is the process of *“limbic resonance”* which may lie at the heart of this connectedness where the chemical dopamine is secreted in the brain to enable our capacity for empathy with another: *“Our minds seek one another through limbic resonance, because we change one another's brains through limbic revision, what we do inside relationships matters more than any other aspect of human life* (ibid: 191-192).

DeFilippo (2013:47) also proposes that the relationship between coach and supervisor, *“is influenced by one another's moods and emotions due*

to the nature of the brain's open-loop limbic system" likewise described in Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2001:48) as "*limbic resonance*".

Given that supervision involves two people communicating, in addition to this "connectedness", it is relevant to consider the notion of "dialogue", developed in the work of Isaacs (1999) informed by Bohm (1996) and Schein (1993) in what Isaacs describes as "the art of thinking together", when two people meet in such a way that they suspend their personal opinions and their need to defend themselves in the interests of co-creating fresh thinking and new possibilities for themselves and each other. I believe this exemplifies the height of the supervision process and is personified in the following quotes from a variety of thinkers in the relational field of co-constructing developmental partnerships:

"Dialogue can give us a way to regain gold standard. It does this by helping to create an atmosphere in which we can perceive what really matters most to us, and to one another. Doing this gives us access to a much finer and subtler kind of intelligence that we might ordinarily encounter." (Isaacs 1999: 47)

To enable us to do this effectively we both need to be present in the dialogue and the relationship.

"Only the present exists now and...to stray from it distracts from the living quality of reality." (Polster & Polster 1973:7)

The notion of presence as a means to deepen our learning is explored by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers (2005) with "Theory U" and which they describe as moving from:

"A thinking space, increasing awareness of the whole as it is and how it is emerging, leading to actions that increasingly become part of creating alternative futures." (2005:11)

Through the process of slowing down and noticing what is happening within each of us, something new emerges which may hold possibility for new interpretation and thus action. All of these comments point to how to make an effective helping or developmental relationship, be it teaching, therapy, coaching or supervision. Together supervisor and supervisee connect with each other, slow down, notice what emerges in the present (Perls 1947), from what has occurred in the past, and allow new insights and awareness to rise for what might be possible moving forward.

2.8.2 Adult Learning and its relevance to Supervision

I have already discussed my own experience as a learner in Chapter 1 with particular reference to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model and Heron's (1992) levels of knowing. Now we come to adult learning in the context of coaching supervision.

Carroll (2010) includes the following definition of learning in his discussion on critical reflection:

“Learning consists of changes a person makes in himself or herself that increase the know-why and/or the know-what and/or the know-how the person possesses with regard to a given subject.” (Viall 1996:21 cited in Carroll 2010:3)

When Cox (2006) explored the significance of adult learning to coaching it is also apparent that it is applicable to coaching supervision. She purports that coaching involves learning through the process of reflection on practice (Schon 1983 & 1987) along with the phenomenon of dialogue, informed by Bandura (1977) and Isaacs (1999). She goes on to draw links between the process of autonomous mature learners using actual experience (Knowles 1980) and their capacity for critical self reflection, based on Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) within an ongoing reflective practice (Brookfield 1986, Schon 1987) to identify new learning, ideas and insights. Highlighting the significance of experiential

learning (Boud, Cohen & Walker 1993, Kolb 1984) and learning styles to inform how the coach can engage with the coachee, as the coachee draws on their personal motivation to achieve any learning or change (Maslow 1998), underpinned by their belief in their actual capacity and self-efficacy to achieve the intended outcomes (Bandura 1977) it seems clear that this is compatible with a *generative* approach to coaching supervision.

2.8.3 Reflective Practice

Although supervision can be thought of as a learning process, it is worth noting that while we may have experiences, for instance, coaching assignments, or indeed supervision sessions, we do not necessarily learn from them (Boud et al 1993) unless we reflect either during or afterwards. This is congruent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory where action is followed by reflection from which new theory or concepts are drawn that inform subsequent action.

Schon (1983) identifies how reflective practice enables the individual practitioner to draw on their experience and expertise to recognize patterns. He established the notion of "reflection-in-action" and reflection-on-action and ascribes learning as "*an active process involving reflection on current and past knowledge and experiences to generate new ideas and concepts*". Arguably then, if we are not stopping to reflect, we are less likely to see the patterns. If we do not see the patterns, then we carry on doing what we have been doing, so may not be able to identify how to modify, adapt, experiment with and integrate new approaches.

Boud et al (1985) offer a clear model of "Reflection Processes in Learning from Experience" that informs what we are trying to do in supervision. By inviting the coach to revisit their experience and reflect on what happened, the coach can reconnect with the events, the feelings, the relationship, and together we enable the coach to gain fresh perspectives and re-

evaluate their approach that they may subsequently modify in future encounters.

Brookfield (1986) argues the value of self-reflection and critical thinking as the basis for personal change (or learning) and Boyd & Fales (1983) describe reflective learning as:

“The process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective.” (ibid: 100)

This generic description is further developed by Cox (2006) in the coaching literature where she argues that reflection is a fundamental ingredient to the coaching process. Without taking these steps, the coachee may well remain stuck in established patterns of thinking or behaviour.

“Reflection is where professionals come to terms with their feelings, learn from their mistakes, explore their successes, and develop understanding and empathy.” (Cox 2006:199)

Raelin (2002:66) defines reflective practice as:

“The practice of periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of what has recently transpired to ourselves and to others in our immediate environment. It illuminates what the self and others have experienced, providing a basis for future action.....it is associated with learning dialogues”.

He argues that as practitioners we may suffer from assumptions that what we say we do is the same as what we actually do, and that we have blind spots which may be elicited most effectively through dialogue with another person. He establishes five skills of reflective practice which serve us well in the context of coaching supervision: *“speaking, disclosing, testing*

through open inquiry, probing to draw out facts and assumptions, and being present, inquisitive and vulnerable" (ibid 69). Fook & Gardner (2007:14) offer a similar option described as "*critical reflection*" which is based on extensive research particularly in the field of social work. Their stance and approach is highly applicable to coaches who come to supervision to address amongst other issues their own self-doubt, or sense of powerlessness when working in an organisational system with all its pressures, demands and complexity.

It is now important to look at the actual process, tasks and responsibilities of coaching supervision in more detail.

2.9 Different Models of Supervision

All the models of coaching supervision seem to contain a number of significant elements that I review here so the reader can gain a picture of the complexity of the process.

Hawkins & Shohet (1989 & 2000) provided one of the original key models describing the process of supervision called the "7-eyed Model". While this was originally developed for the helping professions, this has now been modified by Hawkins & Smith (2006 & 2013), for coaching and consulting supervision and which is shown in Figure 2.2 below. This model offers the supervision dyad (i.e coach and supervisor) seven key lenses through which to explore the work. Thus the coach brings to supervision what is going on with the coachee and their issues/concerns/change outcomes, the coach themselves, their skills and interventions, they explore the coach/coachee relationship, the supervisor/supervisee relationship and the organisational, social, economic, legal and/or political system in which the client work is taking place.

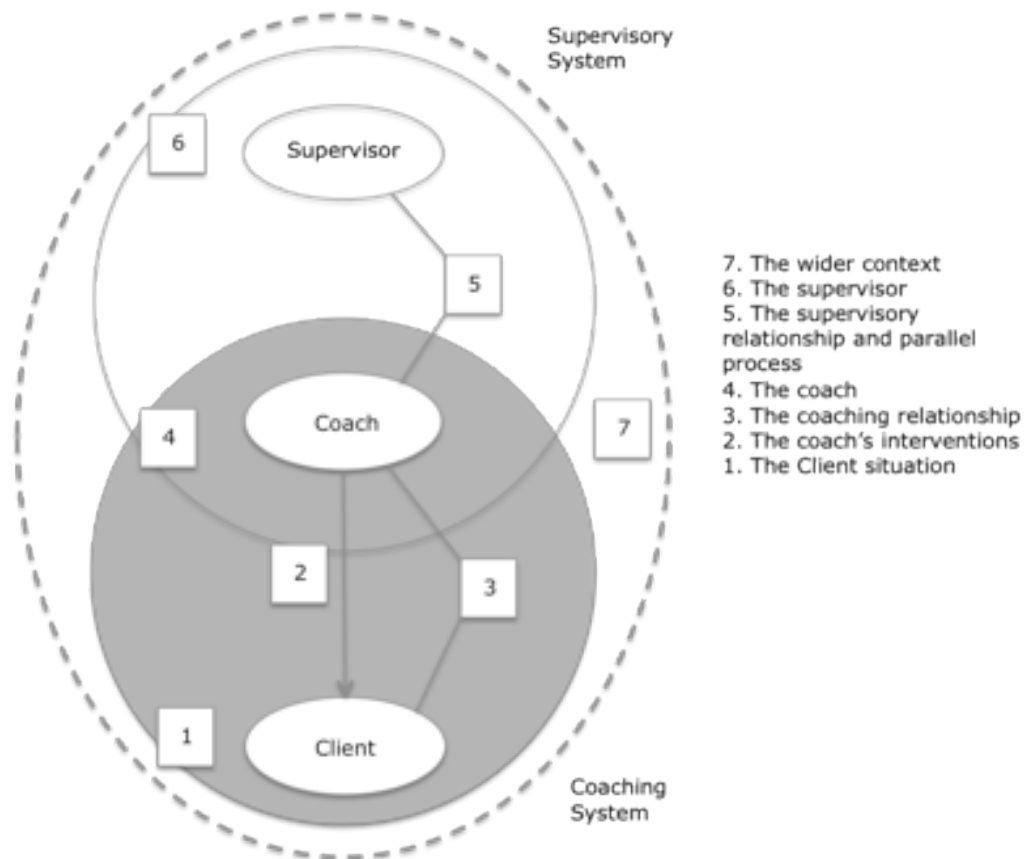


Figure 2.2 The Seven-Eyed Model of Supervision
(Hawkins & Smith 2013) - Reproduced with permission

More recent models such as “Three Worlds, Four Territories” (Munro Turner 2011), the Seven Ring Model (de Haan 2008 & 2012) and the Seven-Eyed Model combined with Systems Constellations (Moral 2011) are all variations on Hawkins & Smith (ibid) original concept. Each of these variously propose that all primary participants in the process i.e. coachee, organisational sponsor, coach and supervisor bring with them their own histories and the associated complexity into the system that may need to be attended to within the core dyad relationship. Gray & Jackson (2011) offer a Systemic Model that places the tasks of supervision such as contracting and teaching within an organisational and social “container” and conclude that the overall purpose of supervision is to enable the coach to develop and change.

The Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch, Adamson & Orriss 2006) takes a different perspective by placing the supervision relationship at the centre of the work with the tasks, skills and contexts feeding into or informing this learning relationship. In their view, whatever the tasks of supervision or the lens through which the focus is placed, the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is primary.

“The model amplifies the need for supervisors to work skilfully with psychology, energy and parallel processes and to be attentive to the conditions necessary for adult learning.....The approaches at the heart of the Full Spectrum Model are dynamic, systemic, cognitive and contemplative.” (Murdoch 2013 in Murdoch & Arnold 2013:xxx)

Interestingly, if we reverted to the counselling supervision literature again, and set these models side by side, we might find ourselves considering Holloway’s very thorough “Systems approach, Seven Dimensions” (1995), which, while apparently complex, incorporates both the process and the tasks of supervision and includes all the parties involved.

In each of these models, what is clear is the complexity of the process and tasks of supervision as the dyad explores the supervisee’s client work and their overall development. Together they explore how the coach engages with their sponsor/shareholder expectations, within an organisational system and culture, at the same time attending to the individual coachee’s needs, expectations, and stage of development (Kegan & Lahey 2009). Alongside this, they are both attending to the supervisee’s personal and professional development and well-being, allowing for the coach’s own stage of development from “*novice to expert*” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986 adapted by Lester 2005 see Figure 2.3, Hawkins & Smith 2006). What is less obvious, and maybe this is the stage we are at in coaching supervision, there is less frequent explicit reference in some of these models to what is considered one of the primary functions of supervision i.e. maintaining standards of practice and ethics (e.g. Hawkins et al 2006).

2.10 Functions and Tasks of Supervision

From this discussion with the diverse definitions and models, we can extract the key themes and purpose for coaching supervision: to facilitate learning through reflection on practice, to enable the practitioner to develop and, less explicitly, to ensure that standards are maintained.

Well-known descriptions of the functions of supervision include: “*formative, normative, restorative*” (Proctor 1997), “*educational, supportive, managerial*” (Kadushin 1976) and “*developmental, resourcing and qualitative*” (Hawkins & Smith 2006). Thus together the supervisor and supervisee address the skills and competencies of the coach (“*developmental*”), their well-being and resourcefulness to manage the demands of the work (“*resourcing*”) and maintaining professional standards of practice (“*qualitative*”).

Patterson (2011) offers four core functions of coaching supervision: “(1) *Assuring professionalism, integrity and ethical practice of the supervisee;* (2) *The personal and professional learning and development of the supervisee;* (3) *The rest, refuelling and restoration of the supervisee* (4) *Celebrating and honouring the work of the supervisee* (2011:123). St John-Brooks (2014: 208) highlights the importance of this final task, drawing attention to the fact that with the “*constraints of confidentiality, coaching can be a lonely business.....and the supervisor is in an ideal position to affirm a coach’s work.*”

To fulfil these functions, Carroll (1996:53) describes the ‘*generic tasks of supervision*’ from the supervisor’s perspective as: “*to consult, to counsel, to monitor professional ethics, to evaluate, to teach, to set up a learning relationship, to manage administrative aspects.*”. Hawkins & Smith (2006:149) offer a similar list that includes: “*teacher, monitor evaluator, counsellor, coach, colleague, expert technician, boss, manager of administrative relationships*”.

These descriptors are thorough and while I hold these for myself, I find that I describe my role, purpose or tasks to a new supervisee more

colloquially as a sounding board, as a mirror, as a co-explorer, a provocateur and a supporter, or a safety net to name but a few. As Hawkins & Smith (ibid) point out, it is important that we are both clear what the coach needs and wants at any one time so that we meet the purpose of supervision within the supportive yet developmental intention.

It is important to note that Carroll (2006a, 2007) discusses the challenge of supervising executive coaches which requires not only the skills to deliver these generic tasks, but also a knowledge of coaching, supervision and organisations. This in turn needs to be resourced by the supervisor's emotional resilience and capacity to attend to both the coaches' needs and the expectations of the organisations in which they are operating (Copeland 2000, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Pampallis Paisley 2006). So, coaching supervision is complex and demanding.

2.11 Different Formats of Supervision

There are several different format options for coaching supervision. These include one-to-one with a qualified supervisor, peer supervision, group supervision with each format using different modes including telephone, Skype, face-to-face. At the time of embarking on this Project I wanted to explore from a generic perspective and have therefore privileged the literature around one-to-one supervision of external executive coaches in this Chapter and draw upon the literature around groups and group supervision in Part 2 of this Project Report.

The choice of approach is dependent on a variety of factors (Gray 2007, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Drake 2011) often closely related to the stage of development of the coach and their needs and experience (Stoltenberg & Delworth 1987, Hawkins et al 2006). I do not want to argue in favour of one or another approach here as they each offer advantages and disadvantages. For the purpose of my inquiry, I wanted to explore one-to-one supervision between an experienced executive coach and a qualified coaching supervisor (see Chapter 4 - Project Activities).

2.12 Stages of Coach Development

So far, I have established the definition, purpose and tasks of supervision. I have discussed the theories and models that underpin this.

One further ingredient that is significant to my approach and the tasks I perform is that of the stage of coach development. I am informed here by Lester's (2005) exploration of Dreyfus' (1986:7-13) model of skill acquisition and the stages of learner/practitioner development from novice, through advanced beginner, to competent, to proficient to expert which I find helpful when looking at coach development.

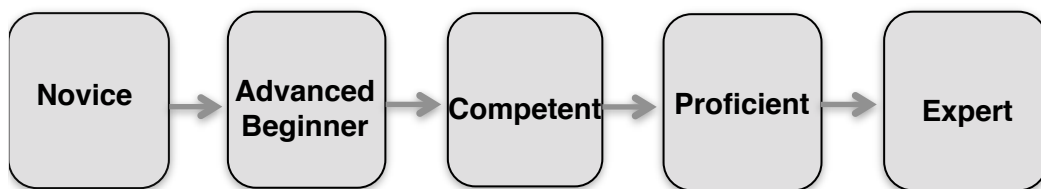


Figure 2.3 Lester's (2005) Stages of Learner Development based on Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1986)

Stoltenberg & Delworth (1987) defined stages of counsellor development when the counsellor moves through four levels: Level 1 - self-centred, Level 2 - client-centred, Level 3 - Process-centred and Level 4 - Process-in-context centred. Hawkins & Smith (2006) developed this further to apply to stages of coach development with its subsequent influence on the focus and tasks of the coaching supervision. They examine the stages of coach development in terms of "*capabilities, capacities and competencies*", and offer insight into how the coach's needs are met by the supervisor and where the attention is focussed. So a new coach may be most concerned with whether they are actually effective in applying newly-learned tools or skills and often seek input and ideas for interventions and what they might do next. At Level 2, a coach may be concerned with whether the coachee will actually achieve their coaching outcomes. When a coach reaches Level 3, they are becoming more resourceful and can look at the impact that the wider system may be

having on a wide range of coachees and the coaching itself. With an experienced coach at Level 4, who has achieved significant personal autonomy, or in Drake's (2011) terms a degree of "mastery", the nature and content of the supervision allows for a more generative dialogue where both parties may create new thinking with and for each other about some of the wider issues that the coach is exploring such as the recurring patterns in their coaching relationships or the types of clients they are working with.

Drake (2011:146) draws on Dirkx & Mezirow (2006) who propose that expertise develops through four progressive stages from "*knowing (1) what works, (2) to how it works, (3) to why it works (4) to when it works*". Drake (ibid) argues that amongst other developers, coaching supervisors need to establish what stage the coach is at along this pathway to inform where the focus of attention lies. He argues that as the coach moves through these stages of development, they in turn acquire mastery which he defines as "*artistry + knowledge + evidence*" (2011:139).

2.13 Ethics and Safety in Supervision

I have looked at the literature around executive coaching and coaching supervision as it refers to the purpose and tasks of supervision in supporting coaches' learning and development, along with their capacity to reflect on their work. As already stated, the overall intention of supervision is for coaches to continue to learn and grow to enable them to offer effective professional coaching to their clients. Inherent in this lies another ingredient that supports the notion of "professional practice" and the importance of adhering to an ethical framework as discussed by Lane (2011) and Hawkins & Smith (2011).

Townsend (2011) reviews the Ethical Codes of the leading coaching bodies in the UK and identifies the common domains addressed by them all. She proposes that coaching supervisors need to be familiar with the guidelines regarding: "*professionalism, competence, confidentiality,*

relationships, integrity, client-focus and boundaries" (ibid:155) in order to support supervisees as they explore their client work in supervision. Issues around any of these areas are likely to arise in the course of the coach's work and the supervision forum provides the safe space to explore whatever dilemmas may arise and help the coach establish their own professional stance and responses.

Bluckert (personal communication cited in Hawkins & Smith 2006:147) stresses that supervision not only addresses the developmental needs of the coach but to some degree provides protection for the client (both individual and organisational) that the coach is practising safely and ethically. As Rogers (2004:173) voiced, I am aware of being slightly sceptical of the degree to which being in supervision may necessarily provide the client with such protection. I am conscious that the basis of the supervision relationship is strongly founded on trust and that the coach will share their truth about what goes on in the coaching relationship. If for some reason the coach is embarrassed, ashamed or in fact even unaware that there is an ethical issue around client safety, then they will not raise this in supervision. So while I affirm that my clients subscribe to an Ethical Code (e.g. EMCC 2010a), from my experience of running Ethical Awareness Workshops for coaches across the UK and in Europe, often these workshop participants are unfamiliar with the core tenets of their professional Code and thus may unknowingly be embroiled in ethical issues or unwittingly causing harm with their clients. Supervision is therefore merely one way to consider the protection for the client, be that the individual coachee or the sponsoring organisation.

Allen, Passmore & Mortimer (2011) examine the concept of ethics in the context of coaching which they define as "*a way of going about things that is consistent with underlying principles concerning what is right..... Ethics-in-action is a process of continuing personal inquiry into how we individually behave and what behaviour we will accept or challenge in others.*" (ibid: 162-163)

Likewise, Brennan & Wildflower (2010) in Cox et al (2010) discuss the core concerns facing coaches in their practice and which the Ethical Codes provide guidelines for, but do not actually advise on how to resolve issues of contracting, confidentiality, conflict of interest, multiple relationships and competence (ibid 2010: 374-386). Here is where supervision can play an important role in helping coaches to unravel ethical dilemmas and develop their own “internal supervisor” capacity, as Casement (1985) calls it, given that they identify such dilemmas and bring them for discussion.

St John-Brooks (2010) conducted research on behalf of the EMCC to explore the ethical dilemmas faced by internal coaches. She has subsequently written extensively on how internal coaches attend to such dilemmas (2014). To me, the ethical dilemmas she discusses arise equally for external coaches around such areas as conflict of interest (e.g. coaching two people in a direct reporting line), boundaries (e.g. where the sponsor wants to know how the coaching is going) and confidentiality (e.g. when a client comes to coaching who is being bullied or harassed by their boss) (Hodge 2013a).

Carroll & Shaw (2013) discuss the complexity of ethical decision-making not solely dedicated to the coaching or coaching supervision context. However they alert us to the need to take into account the personal factors involved, the specific situation and people we are engaged with and then the pressures of an organisational context where the company’s values may differ significantly from our own when making ethical decisions. They argue for the need to develop our ethical maturity which they define as:

“Having the reflective, rational and intuitive capacity to decide actions are right and wrong or good and better, having the resilience and courage to implement those decisions made (publicly or privately), being able to live with the decisions made and integrating the learning into our moral character and future actions” (ibid 2013:137).

They go on to suggest that this requires considerable experience, skill and self-awareness so that we engage our capacity to reflect, we employ our ability to think logically and rationally, and we recognise our feelings and emotions towards a particular person or event and notice how these may interfere with our capacity to think clearly.

In closing this section, I note that there is as yet no common Ethical Code for coaching supervisors, albeit it is likely that we are informed and abide by the Ethical Codes of the professional coaching bodies of which we are members. I personally abide by the Ethical Codes of EMCC (2010a) and APECS (2007), where I hold accredited membership.

2.14 Research into Coaching Supervision

In bringing this literature review to a close, I would like to offer some discussion around the published research and other activities that have emerged within the coaching profession germane to coaching supervision.

A large-scale research project was commissioned on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in 2006 (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006). One of the most frequently quoted statistics identified that while 86% of coaches believed supervision to be worthwhile, less than 44% actually engaged in regular supervision of their practice.

The authors concluded *“the challenge.....is to develop and embed models and practices in coaching supervision so that it can provide maximum support and benefit for coaches and coaching services”* (2006:19). At the time of writing this Project Report in 2013 there are no subsequent statistics to indicate whether this level of coach engagement in supervision has changed but I would imagine that with the increasing insistence on coach accreditation more coaches will be engaging in supervision, whether voluntarily or otherwise.

This CIPD Report (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006) identified some key elements in the practice of coaching supervision, that are summarised in a “*wheel of good practice*” and include:

“focuses on client, organisation and coach needs, provides continuing professional development to the coach, quality assures coaching provision, provides support for the coach, generates organisational learning, manages ethical and confidentiality boundaries, balances individual, group and peer supervision, takes place regularly.” (ibid 2006:8)

It is clear from this that the “wheel” corresponds with the earlier discussions around the purpose and tasks of supervision but with additional explicit reference to quality assurance and generation of organisational learning. This latter ingredient is not always a pre-condition or integral to the purpose of supervision. Unless it is explicitly contracted or agreed with coachees and sponsors, there is a potential conflict of interest to safeguard the confidentiality of the coach and/or the coachee while sharing any organisational learning that may come from supervision.

2.14.1 UK Round Table Working Party

While there had been a growing groundswell of interest and action to bring coaching supervision into play during the early 2000’s that was led by some of the leading coach and supervision trainers and authors (e.g. Downey 2003, Hawkins & Smith 2006), in 2008 the UK-based coaching associations formed a Round Table Working Party to investigate and bring some definition to coaching supervision. This project sought to establish the benefits of supervision for all stakeholders, consider appropriate levels of practice, and offer some guidelines on qualifications and capabilities for supervisors.

The stakeholders, who were represented by volunteers of which I was one, from across the coaching associations, included: providers of

supervision training, purchasers or corporate sponsors of coaching services including supervision training, independent supervisors, independent coaches/mentors and ethics. As far as I am aware, they formed groups consisting of members from the AC, APECS, EMCC, and ICF.

Perspectives from the participants in this working party varied. Some were resistant to and sceptical of supervision, either from a place of non-understanding or for fear that these were the “borrowed clothes” (e.g. Moyes 2009) from the helping professions and thus allegedly not relevant.

Allied with the scepticism from some here, they also argued that the notion of supervision felt like “big brother”. Schwenk (2007) and Childs et al (2011) affirm that the term can be off-putting. Until now, with the minimal examples of research to validate its relevance, value and efficacy in coaching (e.g. Passmore & McGoldrick 2009, Salter 2008, DeFilippo 2013), these views are perhaps not surprising. As St John-Brooks (2014) argues, until a coach has had experience of supervision, the benefits have not always been self-evident.

At the same time, many others in the Round Table Project were very enthusiastic about the introduction of supervision for coaches, particularly those from a psychotherapeutic background where supervision is deeply embedded and integral from the early stages of practitioner development and beyond.

2.14.2 Paucity of Research in Coaching Supervision

Aside from the CIPD study, there is a paucity of published research into coaching supervision. While I am aware that some students on Masters Degree Coaching Programmes in the UK have conducted small-sample studies using different research methods over the past 10 years, to my knowledge there have only been six peer-reviewed articles based on supervision research published in the UK in the past 10 years (Butwell

2006, Salter 2008, McGivern 2009, Passmore & McGoldrick 2009, Armstrong & Geddes 2009, Lucas 2012). These can be found in the five peer-reviewed coaching journals published in the UK (namely “Coaching”, “International Coaching Psychology Review”, “The Coaching Psychologist”, “International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring” and “International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching”). Equally, there are only two doctoral theses: Pampallis Paisley (2006) and most recently DeFilippo (2013).

Pampallis Paisley (2006) was committed to the efficacy of the supervision process and developed an integral framework based on the work of Wilber (2000). Working with the AQAL (all quadrants, all levels model) provided a strong foundation on which to overlay other models for coaching supervision (e.g. Hawkins & Smith 2006, Carroll 1996). She established key similarities and differences between therapy and coaching and between supervision in the helping professions and coaching supervision. She found that the most significant distinction lay in the comparative complexity of the task of contracting with often several stakeholders that exists for coaches working in an organisational context and subsequently the complex range of knowledge and skills needed to facilitate effectively the learning of these practitioners through supervision.

Passmore & McGoldrick (2009) proposed that aside from cost and availability of supervisors, there is as yet no clear evidence of its usefulness and commercial value to the practitioner nor how it does actually enhance the coach’s practice (ibid pp147). In this study participants found it difficult to identify specific benefits in terms of improvement to their practice from supervision however this might be attributed to the fact that the participants had no previous experience of engaging in this reflective activity. At the same time, they acknowledged they gained insight and awareness, and their confidence was boosted, noting too the relationship was important.

Butwell (2006) and Lucas (2012) both investigated whether supervision is a worthwhile practice for internal coaches in different organisational contexts using a group supervision format. A number of themes emerged from these studies that are also relevant to external coaches: for the supervision to be effective, the supervisor needs skill and ability to facilitate the group's process and create the safety and trust to allow personal disclosure and support individual learning; the group forum helps to alleviate the sense of isolation coaches can feel (confidentiality agreements compound this); boundary issues were a recurring theme - these being particularly potent in an internal system where a coach may work with an individual in one department and meet them or their line managers in other contexts. My sense from these studies are that the results were inconclusive with the advantages counterbalanced by the disadvantages (such as taking the time for CPD and fear of self-disclosure).

While my own study does not explore the issues faced specifically by internal coaches, given my experience of working as a supervisor with several teams of internal coaches, in my view supervision is essential for them for a number of reasons. Supervision of internal coaches sends a message to the organisation that coaching is a professional practice that is supported through coaches attending to their ongoing development (St John-Brooks 2014). Internal coaches need somewhere to process the issues that their clients bring which often includes the stresses, the fears, demotivation and "anti-organisational" issues of the coachees that is very demanding for the coaches to manage, given that they too are employees. Equally, they hear about poor leadership or strategic issues that may undermine their own commitment as an employee. This is demanding and stressful and supervision provides the "container" where they can process and offload the impact the coaching may have on them.

Armstrong & Geddes (2009) took a case study approach to investigate a group of independent executive coaches engaged in supervision over a

four year period. The participants found the supervision experience effective as it provided them with a reflective space within a community of practice. While they appreciated the accountability and challenge that this group provided, there were apparently some issues with the fact that the population of the group was not consistent, which I imagine impacted on the safety and trust that was created. Equally, there were different levels of coaching experience within the group, that I imagine impacted on the depth of reflection and may have caused some difficulty in meeting the individual needs of the participants. What became clear was the importance of the supervisor's role and skill as this person provided a role model to the group and was instrumental in balancing the needs of all the supervisees. The model they devised to address the three functions for supervision: "learning, insight and oversight" would appear to correspond closely to and not add anything significant to the body of knowledge around the functions already described in the wider domain of the literature i.e. normative, formative, restorative functions (Proctor 1988).

McGivern (2009) explored coaches' lived experience of supervision. I would agree with her recommendations that engaging in supervision needs to be voluntary, while bearing in mind that coaches need to be willing to open their practice to scrutiny. This requires courage and humility but if the core conditions of safety and trust are met, this forum will help the coach to increase their self-awareness, they can explore assumptions, gain more than one perspective and continue to develop and improve their practice - the pre-supposition being that we can all continue to learn and improve in what is a complex interpersonal practice.

DeFilippo's study (2013) involved nine pairs of supervision dyads and sought to "*understand the dynamics and effects of the coach-supervisor system*" to establish the respective perspectives of coach and supervisor in this relationship. The express intention of the study was to contribute to the improvement of coach supervision processes and the development of supervisors. The findings included a recognition of the complexity of the

tasks and process the supervisor needs to attend to. Likewise, “*emotion*” played a significant part for both participants in the dyad pairs and from which the researcher identified the importance of the relationship with fundamental ingredients including trust, safety, support. It would appear therefore that this study in fact affirmed some of the key arguments I have already discussed particularly with reference to the importance of the supervision relationship.

2.15 Summary

In summary, Executive Coaching and Coaching Supervision are both young “professions”. With the complexity involved in the process and practice of executive coaching that takes place in an organisational context, the executive coach needs to attend to their well-being, development and standards of practice. Ideally this needs to be on an on-going basis and coaching supervision is one such process to support them.

Until now, the “borrowed clothes” from the helping professions have provided some significant and effective guidelines for supervision from which models and approaches are slowly being developed addressing the specific conditions found in the world of coaching. With very little dedicated research in this field so far, there is little to inform the coaching practitioner themselves or indeed the sponsors and clients of executive coaching other than “expert opinion” of the efficacy and value of coaching supervision. It is on this basis therefore that my study is well-placed to explore some of these factors and concepts to establish what goes on in supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

“Good qualitative methodologists conduct research the way they conduct themselves in their personal lives and “seek the good.” (Ellis 2007:123 cited in Tracy 2010:16:849)

The purpose of this Chapter is to share what informs and grounds my Research Project approach and methodology. I describe the actual Project Activities in Chapter 4.

I see myself very much as a “Practitioner-Researcher” (Barber 2009). Before placing myself within any philosophical school or research paradigm on this doctoral journey, I knew that I wanted to explore and improve my own practice, through lived experience, and somehow to engage with others’ lived experience (Whitehead 1989). From here I hoped to generate new learning and knowledge not only for myself but also for others. I was keen to create a Research Project that would personify as closely as possible the characteristics and qualities of coaching supervision as I see it, as a relational practice based on generative reflection on practice, drawing on and applying my established experience as a coaching supervisor. From my experience of using Action Research as my research methodology during my study for MSc at University of Surrey (1997-99), I also knew that I would work within a qualitative, constructivist paradigm, and create a Project based around the methodology of Action Research (McNiff et al 1996).

According to Guba & Lincoln (1989), within the Constructivist paradigm it is possible to engage with a number of different participants to exchange their subjective perceptions and experience, all with equal validity and subsequently generate deeper meaning and understanding for each person.

Again, influenced by my experience at Surrey, my values are strongly informed by humanistic psychology (e.g. Rogers 1957, Maslow 1998, Rowan 1988) where experience forms the basis for determining wisdom and knowledge (Barber 2009:22) and we exist in a social context. Each person's experience is unique, and experiential learning based on action and reflection is at the core (Kolb 1984, Heron 1981). We are social animals and relationship is at the core of the human condition (Reason 1988, Heron 1996). Again, this underpins my Project which would be socially constructed, learning orientated and developmental for all the participants.

With these factors in mind and supported by my understanding and alignment with the values and practices of humanistic psychology, it seemed entirely congruent to develop a collaborative inquiry "*with and for people rather than on them*" (Reason 1988, Heron 1996) and where all those involved would benefit in terms of their development.

"We believe that ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a co-operative inquiry group to see if these ideas make sense of their world and work in practice." (Heron & Reason 2001:144)

I am now going to invite you the reader to travel in my shoes during the next few pages where I share my experience of how I engaged with the initial draft of this Chapter and what emerges here as the end result. I appreciate that for some this Methodological aspect of research is easy. However, for me, this has been a struggle. As a Practitioner-Researcher and an experiential learner (Kolb 1984) I have therefore addressed this in a slightly different way, which for some readers may appear to be "back to front". What I want to do here is to start from what I know, and work backwards, as you will see from my later discussion.

I was necessarily superficial in my Project Proposal in 2010 when I discussed the Research Methodology, as word count would not allow me to elaborate on this in any depth. At the same time, I understood that I would need to contextualise and ground my Project in a research paradigm in this doctoral Project Report. Whilst I had attended a short workshop on research paradigms and developing research questions some nine months earlier, we did not explore my philosophical underpinnings in any depth. I admit, I was not really interested as again I already “knew” I would be using a qualitative approach that would allow me to research “with” rather than “on” others (Reason 1988).

3.2 Draft Methodology Incident - The Magical Mistake

In mid 2011, I faced a series of significant incidents during the early stages of this programme once my Project Plan had been approved and as I was subsequently setting up the Induction Meetings (Appendix 5.1 & 6.1) and the Action Learning Set (ALS) Meetings with the co-researchers that I describe in detail in Part Two in this Project Report.

For some time I had been grappling with the concepts of ontology and epistemology - the language itself creating the sensation of what I describe as a “brain scramble”. I had not found an explanation of these concepts to which I could relate and I found the literature difficult to engage and associate with. Equally, I was unclear in the early stages about why I needed to know or understand this and reading the Programme Handbook/Manual did not help me. Getting started from a practitioner position, as an experiential learner created some real tensions for me. It would have been useful to have a “Beginners’ Guide” to the concepts and language of the doctoral process, structure.....and I appreciate that I may have only grasped most explanations at a surface level until I had gone through the process. I found my early forays into this domain of literature overwhelming (e.g. Burr 2003 and Dewey 1963) when each time I opened one of these texts, I was unable to find a way to relate

these to what I called “the real world” - my real world, which has formed and been informed primarily through my lived experience, from action and reflection (Schon 1983) that leads to my formulation of meaning and knowledge (Heron & Reason 1997). I also found it difficult to write congruently and coherently when I had not had the lived experience of the Project with which to connect these domains of knowledge and their associated texts.

There was a real tension here as I did not know what or how to ask for what I needed. As I was grappling with these concepts and language, a University External Adviser expressed their concern for my “*intellectual agility to work and write at doctoral level*” and they intended to include this in their report back to the University.....This set off many triggers associated with “*imposter syndrome*” (Kets de Vries 1990) and I found myself asking:

- *Was I good enough to be doing a doctorate?*
- *Should I keep going?*
- *What was wrong with me?*
- *Had I bitten off more than I could chew?*

Some time later, as I was getting ready for the data gathering cycles described in Chapters 5 and 6 of this Report, I was urged to write a draft of this Methodology Chapter so that I would have a clear process by which to gather the data effectively and have some sense of how I would analyse it. Again, I was struggling, not knowing where to start.

After some tense exchanges with this External Adviser, a breakthrough came when it was suggested that I start from what I knew. Eureka! Within twenty four hours, I had created three large Flip Chart Posters, full of Post-its, setting out in the following sequence (1) My Project Plan, (2) Developing my Research Methodology and (3) Grounding my Research Practice (Appendix - Photos 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). By working “backwards” from the Project Plan through the question of why I wanted to know what goes

on in supervision I was able to articulate for myself why I had chosen the Action Research methodology and why I was doing it this way, based on my beliefs and values. As you might imagine, I continued to hold huge tension throughout this process provoked by the doubts about my capacity and capability to pursue this programme.

By engaging in this activity, I now had some understanding and appreciation of what I might include in this Methodology Chapter. Whilst I did not do more than draft the chapter at the time, this process of “working from what I know” inspired me to engage with the literature around my own learning processes and Action Research (Reason & Bradbury 2001), which in turn enabled me to refine my rationale for my choice of Participatory Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart 2007) and this informed how I would engage with my co-researchers throughout the Project.

In the end I managed to grasp the concepts of ontology and epistemology. I was able to establish that as a Practitioner-Researcher I align myself within the philosophical School of Pragmatism (Dewey 1963). I realised that my own world view has emerged and developed primarily through my lived experience. From this I can see now how new learning, knowledge and changes to my practice emerge. Whilst I am informed by the writing and theories of others, I am motivated by my experience and reflection. Put simply, I don't read a book and try it out, I try it out and then read a book. At the same time, I value dialogue and reflecting with others. Through the doctoral journey, I have come to realise that I frequently make meaning through the process of dialogue (Bohm 1996, Isaacs 1999) which involves social interaction and which falls within the domain of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann 1991, Burr 2003).

I sent my draft Chapter to this External Adviser and made the fatal mistake of not being specific about the feedback I needed. What came back was a “Tracked Changes” document so full of corrections and comments that I

could barely see my own words. Along with this were comments such as “*Not scholarly*” and “*It reads very banal*“. This “*harsh feedback*” (their words) was unexpected and I was not ready for it.

Compounded with the former challenge to my “*intellectual agility*” I was devastated. I froze for several weeks (Cannon 1932). The feedback triggered a deep level of self-doubt and loss of confidence and I found that I was frightened to take a step in any direction, even in familiar territory. I managed to recover and reconnect with those parts of me which are competent and capable through dialogue with several personal and professional friends and colleagues. I somehow managed to re-engage with what was positive and working in the Project and put the Methodology Chapter to one side. The Adviser and I agreed to end our relationship, on the basis that I needed a “*gentler hand*”.

Once the dust had settled, one friend described this as a “*Magical Mistake*”. Whilst it certainly did not feel like it at the time, once I had reconnected with my “*capable self*” I was able to review the experience through the lens of “*this is all data*” and really appreciate the significance of my learning style, which is “*Accommodator*” (Kolb 1984).

What this gave me was a crucial experience of the antithesis of how I learn and I imagine, how many other adult learners learn. I experienced what had occurred as critical, judgmental and ultimately destructive. Whilst I am sure this was not the Adviser’s intention, it did not negate the impact or result. Equally in hindsight, it prompted me to wonder what might have been happening between us at an unconscious level such as: Did they feel competitive towards me? What power did they need to wield as Adviser and how might this be a parallel with supervisors and their coaches? What identity were they holding as Adviser which meant that they behaved this way? And what was I holding in the way of Learner/new Researcher which left me so powerless and exposed? I discuss how

these incidents have subsequently impacted on my practice as a supervisor in Chapter 9 of this Project Report.

I can only imagine that I am not alone in reacting this way within the research domain. With my preference for learning lying in the “Accommodator” quadrant in Kolb’s Learning Styles (1984) I therefore enjoy trying out new ideas in action, with social interaction, unlike perhaps an “Assimilator” who values and prefers a more theoretical base from which to engage in action. Given these insights into my own learning preferences, I can also now understand more clearly why some of the existing learning forums have not been conducive to my own development as a coaching supervisor. I lose interest or feel alienated by powerpoint presentations, lectures, keynote presentations at conferences, and demonstrations where there is no dialogue and interaction. At the same time, as a supervisor, mindful of my own preferences which may differ from my supervisee/clients, on engagement to work together, we discuss their preferences for how they like to learn and I am constantly mindful of this during supervision (Carroll & Gilbert 2005).

3.3 “Living Educational Theory”

I have been strongly drawn to Whitehead’s “Living Educational Theory” (1989). As he describes it, action-reflection cycles enable practitioners to improve practice. This is often initiated when the practitioner senses or knows that there may be a misalignment between how they are living and not living their values. For me this was one of the original triggers for embarking on the doctorate. I was not learning from existing external resources such as conferences or lectures, and I wanted to develop my practice to enable me to become a leading practitioner in the field. Here again there is such congruence with Action Research which allows for an inquiring mindset. This starts with how can I improve my practice (McNiff et al 1996) and through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon 1983), I can adjust, modify, introduce new

behaviours that will generate different results.....and so, over time, my practice and I are transformed in the service of my clients and the profession as a whole.

Whitehead puts it succinctly:

“I think values are embodied in our practice and their meaning can be communicated in the course of their emergence in practice” (1989:45).

3.4 Reflective Practice and Dialogue

I had been teaching Kolb’s (1984) learning theory on leadership programmes from the early nineties and I would always endorse his view that without all four stages of “plan, act, observe, reflect”, learning is most likely temporary and probably unsustainable, without necessarily being conscious of this for myself. It needed something more for me, as an “Accommodator” to know this for myself. I was introduced to the work of Donald Schon (1983) during my MSc at University of Surrey where we explored reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (ibid 1983) and this really helped me to understand and appreciate the value of the reflection process (“Diverger” in Kolb’s terms) to complement my “Accommodator” preference. Through my experience of working in learning sets on the MSc programme, I came to appreciate the process of exploration through dialogue and reflection as an integral part of my own and others’ learning process. As such, this led to my genuine acceptance of the value of reflection as the underpinning for effective supervision.

After I completed my MSc and subsequent training in supervision at The Metanoia Institute in London, I engaged as a supervisee in what I describe as formal, professional supervision as well as a participating in regular peer learning relationships. I noticed too how my clients responded to our conversations and the value they gained from engaging in supervision with

me to explore their practice. These elements of reflection and dialogue, intrinsic to my practice, thus contributed to how I created my Research Project that I describe in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, I have modelled the process of supervision for myself during this Project when I have engaged in regular dialogue with a number of key people: my Doctoral Advisers, my professional supervisor, my “critical friends” (Torbert 1976, Revans 1971) as well as a number of trusted colleagues and clients. I found that through the process of exchanging and sharing my experience and exploring my reflections, I have been able to distil my experience and interpretation of what is happening within the doctoral process, including the following key stages: developing my research question, establishing my research methodology and identifying the methods I wished to apply. As I describe the actual events during the inquiry cycles with the two groups of co-researchers in Part Two of this Project Report, I also engaged in regular dialogue with the above-mentioned people at different stages of the Project along the way. Again, this mirrors my experience of coaching supervision: through the process of being in relationship and dialogue, supervisees reflect on their practice, gain new perspectives on themselves and their work.

3.5 “Critical Friends”

Aside from the invaluable conversations with my University Adviser, Project Consultant and my professional supervisors, I have a number of “critical friends”. It is fair to say that they have met the descriptions of “*Devil’s Advocate*” (Heron 1988) and “*Friends willing to act as enemies*” (Torbert 1976) cited in Reason & Marshall (2001) at the same time being extremely supportive and reassuring during some of the more demanding phases of the journey. Two of these “critical friends” are doctoral graduates and are familiar with the rigours of the academic and doctoral process. They were also familiar with and practising in the field of coaching and coaching supervision. I met with them or spoke on Skype

regularly, sometimes even daily at critical stages of this journey. Through our process of dialogue, which included both support and challenge, we explored my thinking and I was able to distil and consolidate my ideas and resolve quandaries. Again, I was “walking my talk” engaging in reflection on my practice as a Practitioner-Researcher.

I discuss in much greater detail the impact of these conversations with these significant others along the way as part of the review of my own learning in Chapter 9. However, methodologically, these conversations not only supported me, but also provided one of several sources of “*crystallisation*” (Patton 1990) not only to challenge my assumptions and blind spots but also to alert me to insights that I may have missed, clouded by my own inexperience and biases (triangulation not being appropriate in Action Research). For me, the whole notion of supervision is about dialogue which is generative and co-created. It involves interaction, exchange, reflection, joint reflection. So too in the doctoral process, I was modelling my own practice engaging in reflection on all aspects of my work through regular cycles of dialogue.

Now I have set the scene in terms of my world view and the values that inform my practice, I now explore the Methodology of Action Research, the particular mode I chose with my rationale for this choice.

3.6 Action Research

Action Research (AR) purportedly emerged from the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1946), was subsequently influenced by the work of Rapoport (1970) at the Tavistock Institute in London UK amongst others, and has links with Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (1984). More recently Reason & Bradbury (2001) have been at the forefront of developing this research methodology:

“Action Research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world view which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual people and their communities.” (Reason & Bradbury 2001:1-2)

Whilst I had decided early on that I wanted to work with AR, for the interest of the reader let me explain how I knew this. During the infamous Draft Methodology - Magical Mistake incident described earlier in this chapter, I asked myself:

What is it about AR that will enable me to investigate and inquire into my area of concern, which is why coaches don't come to supervision? And what is it about AR that would enable me to personify and model my professional practice? (AH Journal note - July 2011)

At the core of AR is a change to practice which corresponded so closely to why I wanted to do the Project. I wanted to improve my practice and make a contribution to the community as a whole (Reason & Bradbury 2001:1, McNiff & Whitehead 2009). I also wanted to expand my learning from more than the primary source of my own experience.

From my previous research project for my MSc, I knew that AR is an emergent, cyclical, longitudinal process with generative outcomes (an example of the cycles appears in Figure 3.1). It is a co-created, socially constructed activity involving more than one party. Not only does it provide multiple perspectives, but also it values each person's experience as unique. All participants can learn from the process (Reason & Rowan 2001, Rowan 2001). With all these characteristics, this methodology was

highly congruent with my professional practice as a supervisor. As a socially constructed methodology, which is inductive (i.e. not trying to prove or deduce something other than improve practice) this choice of AR seemed self-evident.

I was adamant that I wanted to research “with” rather than “on” other co-inquirers, so I considered using a collaborative model of co-operative inquiry (Torbert 1981, Reason 1988, Heron & Reason 2001). However, this raised concerns for me around my autonomy. I was concerned that taking this approach might mean that I would lose my academic independence if each aspect of the Project was co-created and negotiated. Equally, I was afraid that I might lose my voice and perhaps naively, not meet my own aspiration to become a leading practitioner in the field.

3.7 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

I opted for Participatory Action Research defined as:

“A social process of collaborative learning realised by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world.....(which) involves the investigation of actual practices not abstract practices.” (Kemmis & McTaggart 2007:563)

According to Kemmis & McTaggart (ibid) there are several key features of this approach that include the practical and collaborative nature of a project, where people engage to explore their own knowledge and how this informs their practice. They are able to explore new options within a group setting, challenge their own and others’ views of reality, and explore new perspectives and theories to inform what exists within the group setting which in turn may then be offered to other practitioners beyond the research group. This struck me therefore as an ideal approach with which

to pursue my inquiry. There are also resonances here with Action Learning Sets (Revans 1971) that I discuss later in this Chapter.

By taking this approach of PAR, I would be able to gather stories from my co-inquirers, and share the understanding and sense-making, but retain the capacity to stand back from and make my own overall sense of the findings to bring to this Project Report. I would be able to contribute to the data but also take final responsibility for the synthesising and evaluation of the data without the risk of being “outvoted” about the significant findings from others’ perspectives. While I would be able to hold the authority for the data analysis, we could all choose what changes we made to our own respective practice. At the same time I acknowledge the point which Heron (1981) makes: that if this were to be a fully experiential, co-operative research Project the participants would also be involved in the final data analysis and write up. I chose not to take this approach for the reasons given earlier.

“The process of action research is one of reflective learning.....It is part of the action researcher’s brief to provide the means by which the clients are enabled to reflect on their own experience i.e. to provide a mirror in which they can see their activities and a conversational framework within which they can become more aware of their ongoing thoughts, feelings and perceptions”.

(Thomas & Harri-Augstein 2001 : 933)

An Action Research Project typically involves a number of cycles, each with four stages. An example of a three-cycle process is shown here in Figure 3.1. Given the nature of my inquiry, Kemmis & McTaggart (2007) describe this process as a series of “self-reflective cycles” undertaken collaboratively by co-participants following through from planning, to action and observation, to reflection and subsequent re-planning. I describe in Chapter 4 how we followed this process in the actual Project.

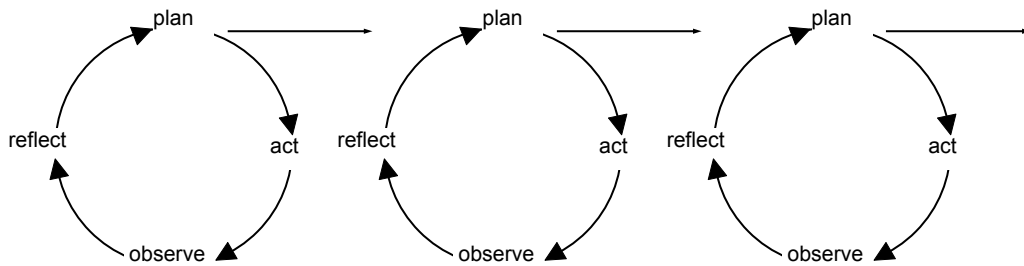


Figure 3:1 Three Cycles of Inquiry showing four stages in each cycle

I appreciate that there may have been downsides to this methodology which included the possibility that the participants may have been selective in their reporting which in turn might have diluted the efficacy of the findings. Equally there was ambiguity in my role as lead researcher (Herr & Anderson 2005) that I discuss later.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I considered and decided against using Torbert's (2001) 1st, 2nd, 3rd person inquiry framework. As I interpreted this approach in the early stages of my planning, this would have involved my focusing through three lenses and attending to the data at three levels in equal measure and as formal clusters: my own practice, the practice of the co-inquirers and the impact on the coaching profession as a whole. Whilst in fact I have attended to these levels and will report on these in my Outcomes and Conclusions in Parts 2 and 3 of this Report, my primary focus has been to *"investigate my practice in relation to the co-inquirers not theirs in relation to me"* (McNiff & Whitehead 2009). While engaging with others in the process, I was concerned that the outcome would be improvements to my practice, albeit I was not sure exactly what and how this would emerge.

3.8 Action Learning Sets (ALS)

In Chapter 4 I describe how I involved the co-researchers in ALS meetings as part of the Project design. My rationale for including this process is underpinned by my wish to model my professional practice.

As a supervisor, I facilitate supervision groups and have appreciated the value and power of this as a learning forum (Proctor 2000). By sharing and reflecting on their respective experience, supervisees gain a wealth of knowledge and multiple options when considering their practice and how they engage with their clients. They gain new insights not only from presenting their own client work to the group but also when they hear of others' experiences in the field. Equally, through giving and receiving feedback, participants can learn how they impact on others and this may inform how they are impacting on their clients in the field. Finally too, there is a phenomenon known as "parallel process" (Casey 1993). Thus, what may be occurring at an individual or group level within the supervision process may provide insight into what may be happening within the coach themselves or the coach's client system. I anticipated that I might learn from the research groups' activities about what might be happening in their client systems and/or as an indicator of what was happening in the coaching profession as a whole although I did not explore participants' experience of group supervision per se. I discuss how I worked with this in Part Two of this Project Report.

My idea to use groups was also informed by Revans' (1980) Learning Equation: $L = P + Q$ i.e. Learning = programming + questioning. This has been subsequently supplemented with an "R" by Marquardt et al (2009) where the "R" represents "reflection". So in the context of the research groups, the ALS meetings would enable people to bring their existing knowledge and experience, explore through inquiry and reflection any gaps they may have, or revisit existing knowledge and experience that they thought they had and thus extend their learning. This therefore seemed an ideal means to support the co-inquirers in any changes they were seeking to make in their practice, at the same time meeting the core tenets of both Action Research and Coaching Supervision.

3.9 Data Gathering and Data Analysis

I describe in Chapter 4 the actual methods I used to gather and analyse the data. However, let me establish here that my aim was to generate and gather data from several sources: the reflective notes from the participants' supervision sessions, the data gathered during the ALS meetings, transcripts from the ALS meetings, my own journal reflections and conversations with "critical friends" throughout the Project. I used "*thematic analysis*" (Boyatzis 1998) to generate the findings and conclusions as this was congruent with the emergent nature of Action Research. I immersed myself in the data throughout the Project, engaging with the data as they came from the participants' notes and during the ALS meetings. Together we generated the themes inductively that in turn enabled us to identify and establish avenues of inquiry from one cycle to the next, emerging from the initial question. This approach was underpinned by my own and the participants' "*theoretical sensitivity*":

"Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data.the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't." (Strauss & Corbin 1990:42)

Regular conversations with "critical friends" enabled me to discuss the data, gather their insights and perceptions and respond to their challenges to my own assumptions or pre-conceptions. Again this approach modelled my practice as a supervisor when I listen to supervisees' accounts of their client work, we identify patterns and themes either with a specific client or with the coach's practice and draw conclusions. So too in analysing the research data I sought to "*recognise what is important, give it meaning, and conceptualise the observations*" (Boyatzis *ibid*:8).

3.10 Why not Dyads

I discuss in Chapter 4 my rationale for creating a Project that did not include one or more of my own existing commercial clients i.e. one of my dyad relationships. However, in July 2011 during my presentation at the EMCC Research Conference in Twente, Holland, I was asked why I was not researching dyads in supervision i.e. a coach and supervisor in an existing professional relationship. At the time I responded rather clumsily, probably from nervousness and I do not think my reply was clear to me or the person asking the question. On subsequent reflection, I regained my clarity and realised that there was something here for me about modelling the supervision process. If I had invited both members of a dyad to engage in the research together they might have felt inhibited to declare their own reality of the experience. Equally, I may have become involved in whatever psychological games that might have existed in the dyad relationship e.g. the coach may have wanted to get out of that relationship but had not told the supervisor and did not feel they could now they were in the research project. Without disclosing this fact, the coach and/or the supervisor may therefore have pretended to find the supervision effective or the coach may have felt protective of the supervisor with the same result.

I wanted to gather data from a number of practitioners and their respective experiences of supervision knowing they were not beholden or contractually committed to each other. At this stage I also felt that we as a profession did not know enough about the primary activities of what goes on in supervision at a core level, which is borne out by the relatively low attendance amongst coaches at this time (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006). At this same conference in Holland I was again challenged on the dyad question on the basis that I would only be getting one half of the story. This was a fair challenge. However, based on my own experience when I am supervising, I only get the story of the coach, and do not meet the coachee, so again, my approach was congruent with modelling the

supervision process. In reality, I did get both the coaches' perspective and the supervisors' perspectives on some of the same core issues and themes, just not from each person in a specific dyad.

Given that we are still defining and establishing coaching supervision within the profession, I did not want to study the specific phenomena that occur within one or more sessions between two individuals. I believe that the profession still does not know enough yet about what goes on across the diverse range of executive coach-practitioners. In fact, as yet, we have no "best practice" standards universally agreed, so I can envisage that this method could provide the basis for subsequent research, once the overall domain has been defined/refined. At the same time, a doctoral study using dyads has just been completed in USA (DeFilippo 2013) that may contribute to this debate.

3.11 Other Methodologies and Approaches I Considered

Given my world view, informed by humanistic psychology, as a social constructionist and experiential learner, it would have been incongruent to take an approach within a positivist, quantitative research paradigm. These aspects of me and my lived experience informed how I narrowed down my research methodology options. I therefore decided against methods such as online or other written surveys which would involve the phenomena under study to be predetermined, using quantitative analysis, that would generate statistical data which might indicate trends. While there is a valuable place for such studies to provide a form of evidence or deduction, my experience of participating in such studies is that I feel like a number, not valued as an individual, and as such the process would not have contributed to my own development.

Equally, I have participated in other professional research (de Haan et al 2007) using semi-structured interview methods. Here I felt researched "on" rather than "with", thus missing the co-created, collaborative

relationship that I find so valuable and is so vital in the supervision process. This interview approach can also miss gathering longitudinal data or seeing changes/emergence over time, so would not have met my personal need for professional development nor meet the criteria of an ongoing supervision process and relationship (DeFilippo 2013).

3.12 Summary

I have now described my philosophical stance and my theoretical rationale for my research methodology. Here I have resolved my early struggle and through the experience of writing this Chapter have transformed this into meaning. I have presented you with a cohesive and coherent account of my world view, the theoretical research underpinnings which informed my Project and how my own learning style has informed my approach to this aspect of the doctoral journey. This in turn will inform other elements of this Project and my practice as a supervisor.

CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT ACTIVITIES

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of my inquiry lay in exploring coaching supervision from a practitioner perspective. To achieve this aim, I considered that it was vital that I work with other professional executive coach and supervisor practitioners beyond my own immediate client base so that whatever emerged was not subject to coercion or manipulation through any existing commercial, professional relationships (Gilbert & Evans 2000). I wanted to explore the practice across a number of participants, over a period of time, and use research methods that personified the key elements of the supervision process/relationship as I knew it. It was crucial for me to create a Project that included many of the same ingredients and qualities congruent with my experience as a coaching supervisor and my understanding of the supervision process that include:

- co-created and relational
- *with* other practitioners rather than *on* them (it's not a one-up one-down process)
- dialogic and generative rather than testing a hypothesis
- based on lived experience - from an action-and-reflection-on-practice approach
- over time rather than a one-off incident so that we modelled the development of the working relationship of supervisor/coach
- practice-based so we would all deepen our insights and awareness about our practice as coaches and/or supervisors
- collaborative - sharing and exchanging approaches to practice
- emergent, allowing for the uncertainty and "not knowing what would emerge" from one cycle to the next (Reason & Marshall 2001)

In this Chapter I explain the activities and stages of the Project to pave the way for Chapters 5 and 6 where I describe the actual events and outcomes with each of the two research groups.

4.2 Selecting my Co-Researchers

4.2.1 Introduction

I wanted to explore the experience of a number of practitioners representing both parties in the supervision relationship i.e. coach and supervisor and so I chose to have two groups of co-researchers: one group of executive coaches (CG), one group of coaching supervisors (SG). These people were not connected with each other professionally i.e. they were not professional dyads as I discussed in Chapter 3.

When I embarked on this Project and created the Project Plan, I was confident that I had enough professional colleagues in the field who would either be interested in being involved themselves, or help me to locate people who would be willing and keen to participate.

Several of my own supervision clients expressed an interest to participate. Here is one client's comment when I told her about the Project:

“Being involved in this Project would meet my need for on-going professional development as a coaching supervisor. There's nothing else in the market at present that meets my needs in this way” (HM, personal statement, 19 Feb 2010).

However, in hindsight I realised that this approach would not necessarily enable me to establish a “purposeful sample” (Patton 1990) that was “information rich” and would meet the criteria of trustworthiness and validity (Herr & Anderson 2005, McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead 1996).

With this in mind, it seemed as though it would be quite straightforward to recruit the co-researchers. However in fact, it was more complex than I envisaged and took six months to achieve. As I wanted to model my

practice as a supervisor to co-create our relationship, I needed to find a way to engage with these people that would do that.

I explored how to create the core conditions I believed would be effective in establishing and co-creating the participants' engagement and commitment to the Project that would provide a platform for our individual and collective learning. I realised I was asking for a considerable commitment from them in terms of their time, personal record keeping and participation in the Action Learning Set group meetings where they would share their personal reflections. I wanted to articulate this clearly when getting started.

4.2.2 Options I considered

My original plan was to go to people that I knew in the field and invite them to participate. On reflection, taking this approach could have been problematic as each person might have more than one agenda including personal and commercial interests. If I selected professional friends, an outsider might consider this familiarity akin to an "old girls' network" that would potentially dilute the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

I also considered inviting some of my own clients to participate. However, I realised that this might easily trigger a conflict of interests or create "messy" boundaries (e.g. Gilbert & Evans 2000, Hawkins & Smith 2006). Given that there are sometimes issues of power within our supervision contracts (e.g. Gilbert & Evans 2000, Proctor 2000, Hawkins & Smith 2006), I realised that my clients may have felt inhibited from reporting or reflecting truly on their lived experience out of loyalty or respect or compliance with me. At this stage I had envisaged that I would be bringing my own practice as supervisee and supervisor to contribute to the data so by participating in the research group together, we might have upset our existing supervision relationship (Brennan & Wildflower (2010) in Cox et al

2010, Hawkins & Smith 2006). I think unconsciously I was also nervous about sharing my practice to my client-supervisees in this context.

Another possibility was to invite supervisor colleagues, who in turn would invite one each of their clients (dyads) but again, I decided against this because of potential power issues between the dyad, which I myself had wanted to avoid.

The sampling method known as “snowballing” (Gray 2009) using personal contacts and personal recommendations was also a possibility. As referral is often the way clients contact me, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many of us are informed by recommendation in choosing our own supervisors, this was a feasible approach. However, I was holding the title of my Project in mind around “enhancing the coaching profession” so I decided against this method as there was no guarantee that I would reach enough coaches/supervisors beyond my own professional circle or in those coaching associations where I had no membership.

4.2.3 Refining my selection criteria and method

I engaged in a dialogue with “critical friends” and University Advisers to explore and refine my selection criteria for the actual participants in terms of their qualifications and experience. The following core criteria corresponded with many of those used by several of the professional coaching bodies when they accredit their “senior” members (e.g. APECS 2007, EMCC 2009, AC 2013a):

- participants would need to have some form of professional qualifications (coaching or affiliated e.g. HR, OD)
- a minimum of five or more years’ experience of executive coaching
- have worked in a line management function within an organizational setting prior to coaching career

- working with clients in an organizational context (not private individuals)
- able to demonstrate a capacity to reflect (e.g. learning journals)
- have experience of being in a supervision relationship/s
- have some level of independent accreditation by one of the professional coaching bodies

Once I had determined these criteria for the co-researchers, it was important to me that the professional bodies were engaged, at least at this stage, as I sought their endorsement of the Project. I anticipated that they might also have an interest in the Project findings, given their stated commitment around the efficacy of supervision for their members (e.g. APECS 2007, EMCC 2010b). This also meant that I was casting my net widely and provided a means of ensuring there was little influence or coercion on my part with this invitation (Gray 2009).

I approached five of the coaching associations (APECS, EMCC, AC, ICF & SGCP). As a member or affiliate member of four of these five, I was already familiar with their member profile (excluding ICF) and knew they had executive coaches as members. All except SGCP provided a formal coaching accreditation process. All (except ICF at the time) advocated or affirmed supervision as a condition for accreditation for those people practising as executive coaches (e.g. APECS 2007, EMCC 2009).

Three of the Heads of these organizations endorsed the Project and subsequently sent an invitation to their members to apply (APECS, EMCC, ICF). (Appendix 4.1: Email Invitation to members of APECS to join the Research Project; Appendix 4.2 Invitation to Coaches and Supervisors to join the Research Project). In the interests of time, I decided not to pursue the other two. The SGCP wanted to see a full research proposal and AC were not available, albeit they had affirmed the Project was worthwhile. People replied directly to me and I set up telephone interviews with the

sixteen people who replied. Five of these were already known to me from previous professional activities.

I prepared notes and interview questions to ensure that I was consistent in what I shared with each applicant, and to make sure I covered the same areas with each person, taking a semi-structured approach (Jankowicz 1995) (Appendix 4.3 Selection Interview Guide 10 March 2011).

In my notes from these conversations I anonymised the respondents' personal identities and sent these to my "critical friend", Eunice Aquilina. Beyond the selection criteria above, we agreed that she would pay particular attention to the candidates' organizational breadth and depth, their awareness of whole systems and their own commitment to CPD. We agreed I was looking for a mix of commercial backgrounds and educational disciplines (e.g. HR, OD, Coaching, Psychotherapy) in addition to the core criteria. Once she had scrutinised the candidate notes, we discussed each person, with her observations, recommendations and reservations.

In the end, I selected six coaches and five supervisors from the "applicants". As we finalised the list, I remarked:

"They are all hugely self aware and able to....I mean, the quality of the conversations with me was really lovely and it was generative and curious and they know their stuff and they're curious.....Also, there is difference in their contexts...and their experience of supervision and a mix from the coaching associations." (AH to EA 17 April 2011)

There were five others who did not join the Project. This was either because they did not have a clear practice as executive coach; they were supervising their own teams of coaches led by a quality control agenda; they perhaps misunderstood the purpose of the Project and were

expecting to be supervised by me in their practice or they decided to withdraw, concerned that they could not give appropriate time to the Project.

I prepared my Informed Consent document (Appendix 4.4 Informed Consent for Co-Researchers 01 June 2011) to protect all parties: co-researchers, their working partners (supervisor/supervisee), and me/my material until published in this Project Report. Here I explained the purpose of the Project, what they were committing to as co-researchers and at the same time acknowledging their freedom to withdraw at any time. This was now ready to send in advance of our first meetings.

4.2.4 Offers to participants and acceptances

In May 2011, I rang those selected to invite them to join the Project. I chose this approach rather than writing to them to personalise and build on our initial contact at the interviews. I was mindful that as with any supervision relationship, we were choosing each other and therefore the relational aspect was important (e.g. Rogers 1998, Gilbert & Evans 2000, Proctor & Inskipp 1988, Gray & Jackson 2011).

Much to my delight, everyone accepted. I was thrilled by their reactions. Having only a couple of short conversations with me, they each seemed very excited, pleased, enthusiastic, and curious. I was relieved and surprised that they all seemed to grasp clearly that this would impact on their own practice and how this would be a new and different form of professional development for them. They were delighted that they would be contributing to the profession as a whole in an area that they believed to be important. Finally too, I had achieved my intention of purposive sampling (Gray *ibid*) to have two groups of co-researchers who were participating entirely voluntarily and with no commercial involvement with me as supervisor.

I confirmed in writing their engagement in the Project and established their agreement to share their contact information with the others in the respective groups so that I could arrange the first Induction Meetings that I describe in Appendix 4.5 & 4.6. At the time, the selection of the co-researchers had felt like a preliminary stepping stone and had not felt as though it was part of the Project as a whole. In hindsight this was naive. It was a vital ingredient, as without the co-researchers my Project couldn't proceed. Equally, the time and effort, with my attention to detail at a relational level contributed an important ingredient to the Project as it set the tone and created the conditions to allow people to engage with the Project. At this stage I did not appreciate the parallel with the issues I have subsequently faced in getting my own supervision groups started, when it can take months to attract a cadre of "compatible" practitioners to sign up for my twelve month creative supervision groups.

4.3 Induction Meetings

Once recruited, I set up Induction Meetings with each group. My purpose here was to set the scene, enable the participants to meet with me and each other to prepare for their participation in the Project. I sought to create the core conditions that would allow the co-researchers to feel safe, to encourage their transparency and their authenticity that in turn would enable them to disclose their practice and ideas freely to generate rich data (Rogers 1980, Proctor 1997, Schein 1999). I have provided a detailed description of both Induction Meetings in Appendix 4.5 and 4.6. An example of my notes and the Agenda for the SG Induction Meeting appear in Appendix 4.6a. Getting started in this way contributed significantly to most participants' engagement, commitment and willingness to participate throughout the Project.

At these Induction Meetings I clarified and invited the participants to engage in the following Project Tasks and as shown in Figure 4.1:

1. Participate in their individual supervision sessions (ideally minimum of one, maximum of three sessions per cycle)
2. Write up their reflections of these sessions and send these to me as they occurred (using research diaries/notes)
3. Come together in sessions based on an Action Learning Set approach (Revans 1971) to share their experiences and reflections at approximately quarterly intervals. I called these Action Learning Set meetings (ALS meetings) as shown in Figure 4.2. I describe each of these ALS Meetings in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.
4. Generate new questions to consider - before returning to Task 1.

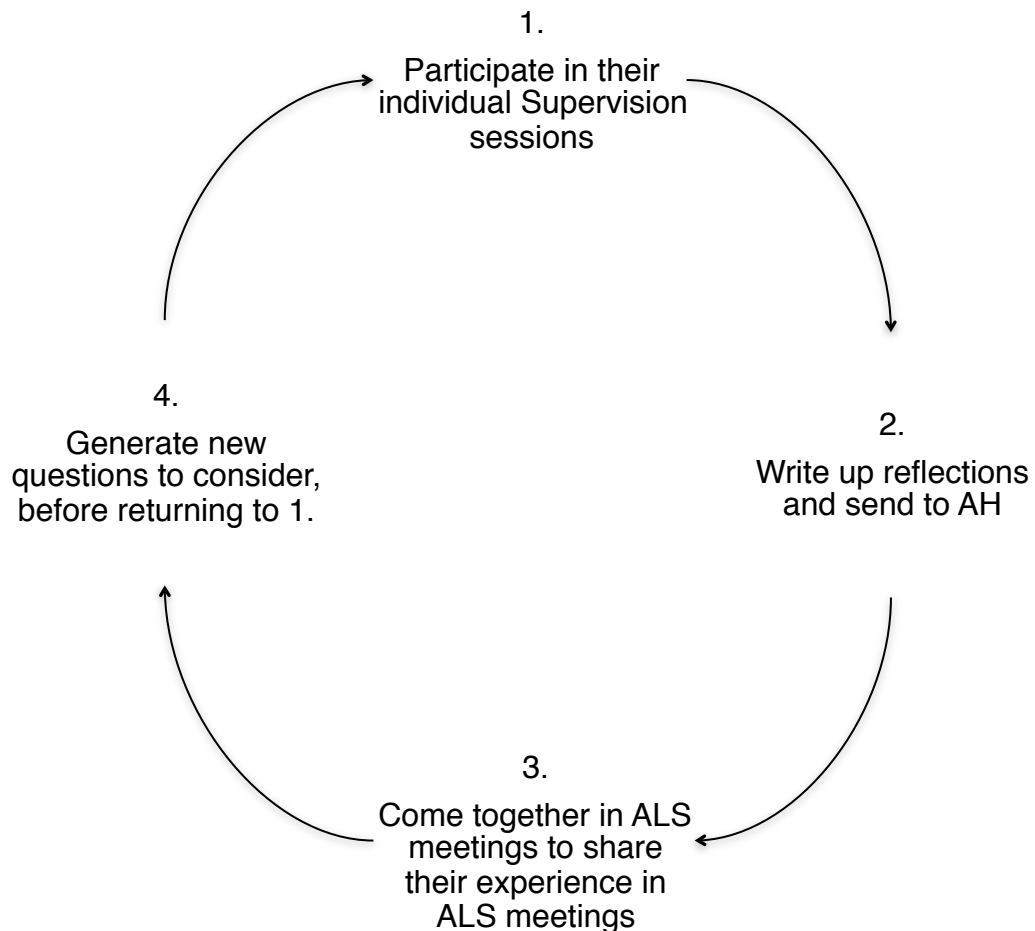
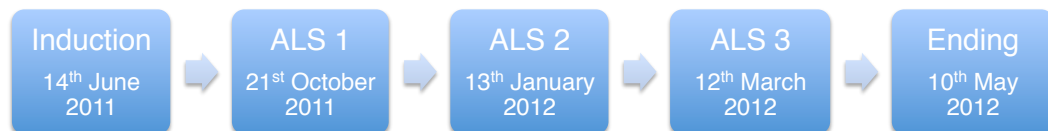


Figure 4.1 Project Tasks for the Co-Researchers

Through this process, we/they would be able to consider what was working/not working for them, what impact this might be having on their coaching/supervision practice, decide what to continue, what to explore/change during subsequent cycles and thus generate the data to inform the core of the research inquiry i.e. what goes on in supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession. My intention was that each person and each group would go through at least three AR cycles involving these tasks shown in Figure 4.2 (Appendix 4.7 Action Research Project Timetable shows the full timetable of activities).

COACHES



SUPERVISORS



Note:
All co-researchers engaged in their own professional supervision sessions with their working partners between each of the above ALS meetings from induction through to the ending.

Figure 4.2 Schedule of ALS Meetings with Coaches & Supervisors in the Research Project

4.4 My Role as Lead Researcher

Originally I had intended to include my own client work as both a coach and a supervisor and be an “equal” member within each of the research groups.

However, once I engaged with recruiting the participants, and during both the Induction Meetings, I found that it was difficult to hold both practitioner and researcher roles simultaneously. I therefore decided to withhold my own experience of being in supervision as a source of data, and instead, I chose to take an “Insider” stance with the other “Insiders” (Herr & Anderson 2005) as is appropriate in Participatory Action Research. I realised here that my approach was also informed by my experience of working with group process (Schein 1999). My role therefore involved facilitating each of the groups’ cycles of inquiry into their individual and collective practice and I took primary responsibility for choosing the data gathering methods and conducting the formal analysis. I was conscious here of how this may have raised the possible issue of power and how I may have been perceived in terms of not sharing my practice directly with the groups (Barber 2009). Again, this is not inconsistent with my experience of the co-created supervision relationship where, as supervisor, I hold responsibility for monitoring the relationship, creating the safe space, exploring professional and ethical issues and deciding what notes and records to keep (Carroll & Gilbert 2005) along with choosing what aspects of my experience I share with my clients.

4.5 Data Generation and Data Gathering

While I discussed my general approach to data gathering in Chapter 3, here I describe the specific activities involved. These fell into 6 main areas:

- (1) Co-researchers engaged in their own individual supervision sessions as supervisees/supervisors that they wrote up and sent to me. I compiled these in anonymised files.
- (2) I met with each group for digitally recorded sessions when they shared their reflections on their experience of supervision. For the first ALS meeting, I devised three “sub-questions” within the overall inquiry of what goes on in supervision that I invited the participants to present to.

After the first meeting, we agreed the “sub-questions” for each of the next cycles of inquiry together (see note 4 below).

- (3) With the help of my “critical friend” Eunice, I devised a data gathering process that involved all the participants at each ALS meeting. When one person presented their reflections, three others jotted down verbatim what they were hearing onto Post-It Notes the points/data they identified as corresponding with each of three questions (Appendix Photos 5.1 - 5.6 for examples of data gathered during CG ALS1 Meeting).
- (4) Participants requested feedback from the others in the group; we engaged in a group dialogue around what was emerging, then we planned and agreed what themes we wanted to explore in the following cycle. Informed by these discussions, the “sub-questions” extended beyond the original inquiry, as the participants explored and exchanged their experiences. This process gave them insight and ideas into how they engaged in their supervision and their coaching practice between ALS meetings.
- (5) I typed up the Post-it notes and sent these with a summary of the themes emerging and lines of inquiry to the group (Appendix 5.1c & 6.1b for examples of Typed Post-Its)
- (6) My Virtual Assistant or I transcribed the tapes from the sessions and I drew out the questions and issues from these for my own reflection and practice.

As with new supervisees, I was mindful of the possibility for participants to distort or adapt their written reflections from their supervision sessions e.g. selective recall, wishing to appear “perfect” (Gilbert & Evans 2000). Given that they were going to share their practice with me and others there was a risk that they may have felt defensive, or be fearful of exposure which is not unlike engaging in a new supervision relationship. To this end, I was particularly sensitive to and conscious of my role as lead researcher paying particular attention to create safety in how I reacted to them when

they sent their reflections to me and when they came to the ALS Meetings (e.g. Schein 1999, Corey & Corey 1997).

By involving two groups of co-researchers, I was able to gather data to meet the criterion of “*rigour*” as described by Dick (1999). With the significant wealth of professional knowledge and experience of the participants (Strauss & Corbin 1990), we were able to challenge our individual assumptions about our practice at both a practical and theoretical level. By taking the ALS approach to the group meetings, we were able to engage in thorough, reflective dialogue to deepen our understanding of our practice. By working through three cycles of inquiry, with its emergent nature (Reason & Marshall 2001, Rowan 2001), everyone in each group was able to consider and review their own areas for attention and change to practice.

4.6 Data Analysis

The ALS meetings provided the primary data source that I then analysed. After each meeting I transcribed the recordings from the ALS Meetings, and drew out my own thoughts, reflections and identified the themes that fed into each subsequent ALS meeting, thus my data analysis was on-going and emergent. This seemed entirely congruent not only with Action Research methodology, but also with my own practice as a supervisor. After supervision sessions I reflect for myself on the themes that have emerged from a specific session and periodically I review the cumulative themes that emerge over time with a particular client and discuss these with them.

Once we had completed all the ALS meetings, I analysed the cumulative data and established the recurring themes (Boyatzis 1998) through the following steps:

- I read all the notes from all the participants for each cycle

- I read all the transcripts from each of the ALS meetings (and listened to some of the tapes)
- I reviewed all the Post-It sheets from each ALS meeting and elicited recurring language/themes/ideas/actions
- I read all the transcripts from my recorded conversations with Advisers and “critical friends”
- I collated these onto flip charts for coaches and supervisors and elicited the themes
- I discussed these with my Project Consultant and created Mind Maps, then a Table comparing the two groups looking for similarities and differences in themes (Appendix - MIND MAP 7.1 - CG ALS1 DATA, MIND MAP 7.2 SG ALS3 DATA, TABLE 7.2 CG/SG TABLE; Photos 7.1, 7.2. 7.3).
- From here I established the similarities and differences in the themes that emerged from the two groups that appear in Chapter 7.

The participants were involved during each ALS meeting in drawing out the themes and they self-determined how these could inform their own practice. Based on their feedback I believe that the participants gained personally and professionally from their participation in the Project, as they explored, reflected on and shared their experience of engaging in supervision. From their feedback too, it was clear that they felt they had contributed to each other’s and my knowledge of what goes on in supervision. Many described how they engaged in their supervision differently as a result of the steps we took in the process (see Chapters 5-7). I did not engage the participants in the final analysis of the cumulative data as I wished to retain my own independence and autonomy (as discussed in Chapter 3) and this parallels my practice as a supervisor, where my clients and I do not attempt to reach joint conclusions. The learning for each of us is individual. Here in the Project I was mindful of my original intention for engaging in the Doctorate to create a learning platform for me, to find my voice and extend my professional

development and authority, with my contribution to the profession being a natural consequence.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Finally now I consider the ethics of my approach in the Project and how I safeguarded the well-being of my co-researchers (Silverman 2011).

As an accredited executive coach with EMCC and an accredited coaching supervisor with APECS, I have two clear Ethical Codes to inform my professional practice (EMCC 2010a, APECS 2007). All the participants likewise were accredited members of professional coaching associations and were thus informed by some core ethical guidelines including not doing any harm and observing confidentiality. My experience of co-creating coaching and supervision agreements with my clients prepared me well for open and robust conversations with the participants around the ethical issues germane to the Research Project and their engagement in it.

However, Fillery-Travis (2009) challenges us as researchers to consider what else we might need to pay attention to especially in terms of the data which the participants share with us. As this Project was based on PAR methodology, it was inevitable that the participants would be involved in interventions and make changes to their existing situations, thus likely to affect themselves and/or their clients. In the case of the coaches, their inquiry may have impacted on how they engaged with their supervisors. Likewise for the supervisors, their engagement in the Project may have impacted on the supervisees they selected to involve in their reflections. For the purpose of this Project, I refer to these parties as “working partners”.

To attend to both of these elements i.e. the participants and their working partners, the Informed Consent document (Appendix 4.4) contained all the

relevant information about the Project - its purpose, timing, personal and professional commitments. I discussed this personally with each individual participant when I confirmed their selection in the Project. I sent this letter to them in advance so they had time to consider the implications for themselves in participating and could ask questions when we met as groups. I also reaffirmed clearly their expected level of participation, terms of confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw at any time when we met at the Induction Meetings.

By involving the Coaching Associations who sent out the initial announcement along with an invitation to contact me if they wished to participate, the people who responded did so entirely voluntarily. Once we started working together, I sought their confirmation that their working partners had been informed of their involvement, sharing the Informed Consent letter with them. We agreed that all reference to working partners was anonymised as was all reference to clients and organisations associated with participants from either group.

Silverman (*ibid*) stresses the need to build trust between all the participants in a research project. I believe that trust can only be built over time and again my experience as a supervisor served me well. As lead researcher I did this by being transparent, authentic, and reliable. I communicated regularly, by email and phone, with individuals in both groups between ALS meetings. Together we built trust through spending time getting to know each other, through being explicit about how we would work together, by agreeing our collective terms of confidentiality for the Project (Hay 2007, Schein 1999). I was fastidious in anonymising their individual identities in all transcripts and their reflective notes as well as any references they made to client organisations. Perhaps a strong indicator of their trust in me and each other was how readily they shared their personal biographies/CVs, their reflective notes and their experiences with each other in the ALS meetings.

There are also the implicit considerations such as the power relationships which may inevitably exist in Action Research and in my role as lead researcher, alongside whatever the participants may have projected on to me because of my reputation and/or how I showed up within the group (Silverman 2011, Cook 2010). Again here I believe that by being authentic and transparent I was able to dispel some of these pressures, and was mindful of ensuring that we attended to our psychological contract in terms of respect, safety, time and attention for each person (Carroll 2005). I am also mindful of the potential for the participants to recognise each other from the text as I describe incidents within each cycle of inquiry.

I have held all materials such as digital recordings, electronic transcripts and learning journals on a Password encrypted computer. My business book-keeper is the only other person who holds this Password and she does not access my computer in my absence.

4.8 Summary

I consider that I developed a Project that would meet the AR criteria of validity, robustness and trustworthiness of the inquiry (Herr & Anderson (2005), Bradbury & Reason (2001)) in terms of the quality and level of participants' critical reflection, the professional skills and experience of the participants as well as the underpinning and structure of the Project.

In closing this section, I offer the following:

“We believe that the outcome of good research is not just books and academic papers, but is also the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them. Of course, it is concerned too with revisiting our understanding of our world, as well as transforming practice within it.” (Heron & Reason 2001:144)

We have now come to the end of Part 1 of this Project Report where I have established my identity as practitioner-researcher, the context in which the Project was developed in light of the current literature, my rationale for and selection of research methodology and I have described the actual Project Activities.

As we move into Part Two I will now tell the story of the implementation and outcomes of the Project Activities. This falls into three Chapters: Chapter 5: Coaches' Group Outcomes, Chapter 6: Supervisors' Group Outcomes and Chapter 7: Comparison of the two groups' Outcomes. Chapters 5 and 6 cover each of the ALS Meetings with the research groups where I describe what happened. I distil and present the key data that emerged in each session and offer my own reflections and questions prompted by the process, the data and the impact this was having on the Project and me. In Chapter 7 I draw the themes of both groups together and discuss the similarities and differences between the two groups that subsequently inform my Conclusions in Part 3, Chapter 8 and Chapter 9.

PART 2 - PROJECT OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 5 - COACHES' GROUP OUTCOMES

5.1 - CG ALS Meeting 1

5.1.1 Introduction

After the Induction Meeting in June, the coaches engaged in their respective coaching supervision sessions. From mid June to October, when we met, they sent me notes from seventeen sessions of supervision.

I invited each person to choose their own style to compile their reflections to acknowledge their individuality and differences, perhaps highlighting their learning preferences and giving them the freedom to interpret their experience of supervision uniquely. I read these briefly, anonymised and renamed their pieces according to their Code Name/Number, determined by the alphabetical order of their surnames.

As it was quite some months between the Induction and the first ALS meeting (June to October), I contacted each of the participants personally by phone or Skype to connect with them and establish that they were happy with what they were doing. Indicative of the emphasis and significance I place on the relationship in my work with my supervision clients, my aim here was to build this further and connect with them between sessions. I wanted them to feel remembered and acknowledged, affirming their importance and sense of belonging to this new group. My interest in them as people and co-researchers was coupled with my wanting reassurance of their continued commitment and engagement. I did not discuss the content of their reflection notes, I was more keen to encourage them to keep going. Without getting into detailed discussion about the Project with each person, I experienced them all as open, enthusiastic, positive and friendly which was reassuring.

I was also curious and slightly anxious about whether their participation in the Project might be impacting on them and their practice. In noticing my own need for reassurance that their practice might be changing as a result of their participation I was aware of two “drivers” at this early stage. The

first was to meet one of the underpinning purposes of Action Research (Reason 1988, McNiff & Whitehead 2009) being change to practice. The second, and perhaps more powerful, was my concern and tension around complying with my perception and interpretation of the University's expectations and requirements that were not altogether clear or self-evident to me. I reflected that what was happening to me was perhaps similar to that which occurs for new supervisees, wanting to know how they are doing when they first engage in supervision.

5.1.2 Preparation for ALS Meeting 1 with Coaches Group

I was aware of a growing tension for me around this first ALS. This was partly fuelled by my earlier experience of the Magical Mistake. Whilst I felt I had taken a significant step in finding my own voice by choosing not to work with that External Adviser, I was not completely free of tension as their personal comments about me lurked beneath the surface throughout the Project, especially when I was feeling uncertain and not sure what to do next or how to proceed. I was also anxious about the University expectations and protocols for "data gathering", this being a "research-based" term and the anxious feelings remained with me at different stages throughout the Project when I was entering the unfamiliar territory of "academia".

At the same time, the experience from the Magical Mistake heightened my own commitment to the research groups to create the safety and trust that would enable them to come together to share their practice with me and each other.

As I started preparing for the actual meeting, I developed a "mantra" to manage my anxiety: *"I love groups, I love dialogue, this is generative, this is my project and I am a senior practitioner in my field"*. Given the tensions just described, these mantra helped me to keep focused on the task in hand.

With the help of colleagues and “critical friends”, I explored and clarified my role and purpose, established the format for the day and how I would facilitate the session. I was clear that I was not expecting the coaches to come and reflect on their client work (as they would do in supervision) but rather come to share their reflections on their experiences of being in supervision. I wanted them to bring examples of the issues they took to supervision, what they gained from the process and what impact the supervision may have had on their coaching practice. Whilst I was keen to model my practice as a supervisor in terms of creating and facilitating a safe, reflective, learning relationship, I wanted a clear boundary so that they did not unwittingly cast me as their supervisor and begin discussing actual client work nor seek this from each other as they were all familiar with group supervision or ALS elsewhere.

With this in mind, I planned the Agenda and sent this to the group a week beforehand (Appendix 5.1a Email: Supervision Research Meeting - 21st October 2011 and Agenda for the day). Thus they would know what to expect, have time to prepare, and help to dispel any anxiety they may have been feeling about this first data gathering event. I was also curious for myself how this would be similar to and different from my experience of group supervision.

Finally I re-read everyone's session notes the day before, not drawing any conclusions, just noticing the differences in each person's approach. I was struck by the unique approach each person had taken to describe their experiences and reminded myself of sitting in a place of non-judgement and curiosity to pave the way to gather the data.

5.1.3 On the Day

5.1.3.1 Opening Check In

Before everyone arrived, I set up the room with flowers, fruit and biscuits and put the chairs in a circle to create an inviting environment.

We started with a brief welcome from me, an outline of the plan for the day and I asked their permission to digitally record the whole day.

We then “checked-in” (Rogers 1980, Schein 1999). Each person in turn shared whatever they chose about themselves both professionally and personally, which allowed us to know how each person was showing up for the day. I learnt this intervention during my Masters programme at Surrey University and have subsequently applied this approach with all groups with whom I work. Kline (1999) would suggest that until all the voices in the room are heard, not everyone is present. As a facilitator, I find it invaluable to have some idea of what is in each person’s foreground of attention so I and others don’t get drawn into mind-reading how people are engaging with me, the group and the task. Equally, I find that if people are able to share with the group what is impacting on them outside the room, without trying to resolve it, this gives them permission to be authentic and, being present, to engage then with the task in hand (Senge et al 2005).

I shared the Project Timetable (Appendix 4.7 Action Research Timetable), showing them the programme of cycles - to reconnect them with the AR approach and so they could see where we were in the process and the Project.

5.1.3.2 Data Gathering - Post-It Flip-Chart Headings

We then moved on to the main purpose of the day - gathering the data. With the help of my “critical friend” Eunice Aquilina, I had devised a

method and timetable for gathering the data which enabled me to involve everyone throughout the day (Appendix 5.1b CG ALS1 - Data Gathering Timetable). Given that this was the first of these sessions, I took a fairly directive stance (Heron 1990, Schein 1999) so that people might feel confident in the process (and so that I might appear to know what I was doing). I had chosen the questions I wanted the group to talk to. My intention in selecting these questions for the first ALS meeting was informed by my wish to gather data which I hoped and assumed might inform not only the participants, but also be relevant subsequently for others who are unfamiliar with supervision and thus our experience might help to demystify what goes on. Here I was informed by my original concern about the reasons why people don't come to supervision.

Each person had 20 minutes to "present" their description of their reflections of their experience of being in supervision, without interruption from the group and addressing the questions:

- * *What issues did you take to supervision?*
- * *What happened, what emerged, what worked, what didn't work in terms of process, content, relationship with supervisor, anything else that seems relevant?*
- * *What changes the supervision may have had on your coaching practice?*

As each person presented, three other members of the group were allocated to gather data from one of the three questions above. They jotted what they were hearing onto Post-Its. These were then collated onto large sheets around the room. By the end of the day we had gathered everyone's *descriptions of their experience of being in supervision*. At the end of each person's presentation, I invited the "presenter" to ask for what they wanted from the group. Here they received some feedback, observation or questions that they could take away to reflect upon. Again, whilst modelling aspects of the supervision

process by inviting feedback, I did not want the presenter to respond or be tempted to get into a supervision-like dialogue around why they were doing what they were doing. I was very concerned that we all maintained a stance of curiosity and hopefully pre-empt and avoid any shame, defensiveness or competition within the group (Bion 1968). I use this method of “non-reply” in group supervision for the same reason and it proves to be very effective.

The full data from this meeting in the form of colour-coded, typed Post-Its appears in Appendix 5.1c Typed Post-Its from CG ALS1 21 Oct 2011 and Appendix Photos 5.1-5.6. Here now I summarise the key data we generated from each of the questions.

5.1.3.3 HEADLINE DATA: Issues brought to Supervision

The coaches took actual client incidents, and issues where they were not sure what to do next or felt stuck. Supervision was a place where they explored who they are as a coach, where they are going and their overall well-being. Skills and techniques are often on the agenda. It was a very important process in helping the coaches find reassurance, build their morale and their confidence.

5.1.3.4 HEADLINE DATA: What happened, emerged?

As a result of supervision, the coaches received validation. By taking a “meta-perspective” with their supervisor, they were able to notice patterns, whole systems' issues and gain insights into what was happening in their client systems. In this safe relationship, the coaches were able to explore and resolve personal and professional uncertainty and vulnerability.

5.1.3.5 HEADLINE DATA: What Changes to Practice?

The process of supervision impacts on how the coach shows up in their work. When supervision is a positive experience with a supervisor, the

supervision is very fulfilling; when it is a negative experience with the supervisor, issues around power and compliance might trigger resistance or rebellion, selective sharing of practice, disengagement (my word) from the supervision.

5.1.3.6 The Closing Dialogue

We spent the final half hour reviewing what had emerged for people from the day. By now there was an explicit acknowledgement that the purpose of supervision is to support coaches' development and changes to practice.

We then agreed the next steps, continuing with their supervision and sending me their reflections. We confirmed the areas where they wanted to place their attention as they engaged in their next round of supervision sessions and reflections. My intention here was to involve the participants with me to co-create our next line of inquiry, rather than me doing this alone, thus moving into a more participatory, collaborative phase (Dick 1999, Heron 1996). I describe these areas for the next cycle of inquiry in Section 5.2 CG ALS Meeting 2. I agreed that I would contact each of them before the next ALS meeting scheduled for January 2012.

5.1.4 After the Event

I came away from the day feeling very pleased, relieved, excited and tired. My pleasure lay in how I had managed the group and the task, creating the safety and trust that enabled people to share their practice with each other in what appeared an open and honest way, even though they were still new to each other, having only met once at the Induction. I was relieved that the methods I had developed were successful: people presented without being interrupted, others gathered on Post-Its verbatim what they were hearing and we finished on time. I was very keen that the day would be positive for people in terms of their experience and that their

interest and commitment to the Project would be affirmed so the fact that they engaged with each other and me in developing the questions for the next cycle was very encouraging (see excerpt below). I was excited as I carried my “data” home on the tube because this felt as though the Project was really happening and could hardly wait to write up my notes, type up the Post-Its and transcribe the recordings to capture what we had done. I was tired for a number of reasons: holding my nervousness around my own capabilities, which had taken a beating in the “Magical Mistake” incident; I had vested time preparing for this occasion; and I had concentrated intensively throughout the day, holding the process and tasks (Schein 1999) of this first meeting.

5.1.5 My Reflections after the Day

In the process of transcribing the recordings and Post-Its from the day (Appendix 5.1c - Typed Post-Its from CG ALS1 Meeting 21st October 2011), what I was hearing and seeing prompted me to ask more questions and reflect on the day itself, what had worked, not worked, the data gathering process we had used, supervision in terms of general thoughts and what I might attend to from the group’s input relevant to my own supervision practice and what I might do differently as a result of this.

Here below are some of the questions and reflections that emerged for me during this post-session period. I have deliberately left these items unresolved. The impact of these thoughts and ideas about my practice and about supervision as a process to support coaches was to “stir me up” in terms of my thinking, noticing with curiosity what was happening in my day to day client work as well as themes to explore in the next cycle of inquiry.

- i) Some participants raised a concern about what is appropriate content to bring to supervision, and especially whether the coach’s overall business practice is “appropriate” content or do they need a coach for this? So, we were holding what is *appropriate* to bring to supervision.

- ii) Participants found that it was useful to prepare for and make notes after supervision sessions - including keeping a journal of incidents from one coaching session to another - which would add up to themes for supervision and this helped them to identify the recurring themes or patterns in their practice.

- iii) Some shared that one of the things they take to supervision is the pressure they feel from the client system in which they work which can create tension and self-doubt in the coach, making them wonder if they are doing their best and whether their best is good enough. Sharing and dispelling the doubt of “am I good enough?” in supervision enables the coach to return positively to the client system. This research group is highly experienced and skilled as coaches, and yet many mentioned the value of talking through their work as a way to reconnect with their confidence that they are doing the best job possible for their clients - while they may not have been doing a “poor job”. I was curious about the impact of carrying the doubt which resonated with my experience of doubt at different stages of the Research Project that I discussed in my conversations with “critical friends”.

- iv) Again, linking what coaches pick up from the client system with what they bring into the supervision space, I wondered whether the coach can isolate and attend to this on their own or if this is one of the key values of the process of dialogue and thinking space in supervision where we can disentangle ourselves from the possible psychological phenomena such as indoctrination, contamination and collusion in the client system.

- v) Supervision needs to meet the needs of the coach: so is there a “right way?” Addressing the needs in terms of allowing the coach to choose their content enables the coach to show up with confidence and curiosity; sometimes we may need transactional supervision i.e. tips

and techniques, other times we need morale-boosting and confidence/reassurance. At other times we need to explore the bigger philosophical themes that may impact on how we show up. One coach was holding anxiety about whether people are using supervision “the way we are meant to” i.e. how it is being advocated by the professional associations.

- vi) One person explored the question of whether you can have effective supervision as a coach with someone you don't like. Or is the dislike about difference, which feels uncomfortable particularly at the beginning? Maybe there needs to be compatibility around values of professionalism whilst not necessarily liking the other person - I wonder.
- vii) What stops the supervisee challenging the relationship/supervisor to act professionally or meet the supervisee's needs? Self doubt - others' recommendations; reputation; need to check transference/projection on the supervisor (de Haan 2012) - do we subsume ourselves as coaches?
- viii) I was left holding the question about the information, knowledge and experience coaches need to make informed decisions about their choice of supervisor. This led me to consider that new supervisees may not know what to ask for and when they get what they get, they may feel compelled to stick with it out of self doubt or deference or compliance as “the supervisee” (Hawkins & Smith 2006). And if coaches are not used to reflecting on their practice, let alone with another, how can they make an informed decision? And if they don't know how they learn, how do they know who will suit them as a supervisor and what to take to supervision? Some of the group were apologetic about being critical of the supervisor if their approach or style didn't *resonate, inspire, facilitate learning* (my words). This prompted me to ask of myself as supervisor: what are my

responsibilities to provide a professional service that includes discussion around compatibility?

- ix) The list of Post-Its on the “Changes to Practice” flip chart was the shortest, but maybe the changes don’t happen immediately, but rather over time, and how do we know whether to attribute this directly to supervision or not? Or maybe they didn’t actually make many changes to their practice?

- x) During the day, I did not hear much about the actual supervision relationship and what was it about that which allows/enables coaches to open up and share angst, worries, fears, pleasures. As this is one of my beliefs, what was it about our relationship in this CG that was enabling disclosure? Does building the trust and safety for the coach to bring “all of themselves” to supervision perhaps mean that the issues may be resolved, calmed or “parked” so the coach can take themselves resourcefully back to their clients? The high levels of personal awareness amongst this group enabled them to declare what they took to supervision, without shame in front of the research group - what made that possible? The group? Me? The purpose? So, what would a stranger-to-supervision need to feel to enable them to discuss their practice while at the risk of being exposed.

5.2 CG ALS Meeting 2

5.2.1 Introduction

From October 2011 to January 2012 the CG engaged in further supervision sessions and sent their reflections to me. When their notes arrived, as in the previous cycle, I read and filed them.

5.2.2 Preparation for ALS Meeting 2 with Coaches' Group

In December 2011 I had a conversation with a colleague, Sally Kleyn when I reviewed the first ALS meeting and reflected on thoughts and concerns I was holding in terms of my own process. This was part of my preparation for the next meeting due in mid-January 2012.

I shared with her my surprised, and slightly relieved delight that some of the participants had declared, either at the first meeting or in their emails to me between times, that their practice was already changing as a result of participating in the Project. Whilst my original declared intention and hope was that they would benefit from participation, I did not assume that this would happen automatically. Perhaps because of my surprise or what felt like my inexperience in this role of "researcher", I did not inquire into this feedback more deeply, perhaps because I was afraid of interrupting their process. At the same time, I wondered aloud what may be contributing to these changes and came to some tentative conclusions:

"Is it me? Is it the phenomenon? Is it the process of knowing they are meeting periodically to share their respective reflections or something else?.....And yet clearly, by reflecting on their supervision and what they take to supervision, that's going to have an impact on their practice, because they're going to expect and ask for different things from it..... Equally, hearing how others engage with their supervision - and no two coaches used the process the same way - would give them ideas about how they might get more from it." (AH in conversation with Sally Kleyn 3rd December 2010)

We then looked at the question of what content or reflections of mine I "should" or "could" share with the group that seemed to have a connection with my actual role within the group. Here again I was grappling with my intention to research "with" rather than "on" the participants (Heron &

Reason 1997, Reason & Bradbury 2001) and at the same time I found my attention was focused on managing the Research Project process and tasks (Schein 1999). To contribute my own reactions, assessments and reflections to what was emerging from the CG at this early stage seemed to me to blur the boundaries. I appreciate that in the interests of truly collaborative inquiry, others (e.g. Barber 2009, Heron & Reason *ibid*) might disagree with my stance here. Through my conversation with Sally, I was able to reaffirm my role and goal for the ALS meeting:

“To bring the group together to share their respective experiences and reflections on their supervision and generate explicitly in this group what goes on in coaching supervision out of which, through hearing their own and others’ experiences, they can plan how they’re going to engage in their practice - in terms of their supervision and their coaching. And to gather data around these areas. So that’s my goal.” (AH in conversation with Sally Kleyn 3rd December 2010)

By clarifying this, I reassured myself that sharing the data that we gathered on the Post-its in the group was enough/satisfactory. At this stage, when asked by my University Project Consultant whether I also shared my own reflections from the day, I acknowledged that I had decided not to. So what was this about? There were two issues for me. One was that I was afraid that if I shared my reflections I would interfere with the experience and reflections they were each having around their supervision and what they might therefore share with me and the group. I imagined that they might want to please me or seek my approval (as can happen with new supervisees) or they might edit their own experiences if they heard my opinion/reflections (Hawkins & Smith 2006). Secondly, I think in hindsight, I felt exposed at the thought of sharing my reflections about my own practice as a supervisor that had been prompted by their input. I think about how this compares with what I share of my own

reflections and vulnerability as a supervisor. At what point do I acknowledge/trust the autonomy of the supervisee to decide what to do with my input/opinions/reflections and thus share them?

5.2.2.1 Personal Reflections - January 2nd 2012

On 2nd January 2012 I began my preparation for our next ALS meeting on 13th January. I had received fewer notes from the participants than for the previous ALS meeting. I considered the possible reasons for this including the fact that the cycle period was shorter and included the Christmas season when the participants may have done less coaching and therefore may not have been to supervision so often. Here again my tension was creeping in and found myself considering whether maybe they had been to supervision but hadn't done any notes, which led me to wonder if they had forgotten about the Project or their initial excitement had waned.

As I reflected here I began to shift to what felt like a less-emotionally charged place, my "Adult" (Stewart & Joines 1987) and asked myself how I would work with the limited reflection notes, what had emerged from the first cycle to inform how I would work in the second cycle and how we might use the data (i.e. fewer sessions, fewer notes) to explore what experience everyone in the CG had been through. This helped to allay my nervous fantasies and mind-reading. I became curious about what might have shifted for everyone between the two cycles, and to ponder on the impact of the economic climate (which was very depressed at the time) and how, if the coaches had done less coaching, this impacts on their relationship with supervision. This gave me an opportunity to explore further what they saw as the purpose of supervision and therefore when, where and how often they decided to have supervision. I also wondered what else they might do instead or as well to get the support they needed and wanted for their overall practice.

With these thoughts in mind, given the themes that had emerged from the first cycle, I sent an email to the group to help them prepare for our session (Appendix 5.2 Invitation to CG ALS2 Mtg 13 Jan 2012). I reminded them of our agreed focus between sessions i.e. the connection between supervision and changes to their practice (see later the actual questions they spoke to in the data gathering session). At the same time and given my underlying belief in the importance of the supervisor/ee relationship, I also asked them to give some thought to the relationships they had with their supervisors and how this impacted on their engagement and participation in the supervision process so we could gather this data too.

I reviewed my own reflections from the first cycle and was mindful that we had gathered little data about what changes to practice the coaches shared in the group, how there had been very little reference to the relationship between the coach and the supervisor and whether it may have impacted on the supervision or informed the coaches' practice. There had also been very little discussion around the differences between individual and group supervision even though three people participated in both.

5.2.2.2 Conversation with "Critical Friend" - January 12th 2012

As with the first cycle, I held a planning session with my "critical friend", Eunice. Here we explored my doubts and curiosity around whether the session needed to follow the same format as the first meeting. I acknowledged that the "formal data gathering process" last time had been productive, the participants had enjoyed it and we generated relevant data, albeit in my mind, it didn't tell me much more than I felt I already knew from the field. As my own preference would have been to engage in dialogue, I was holding a question around whether this data gathering process would have the same or at least appropriate impact on their practice. I was expecting/intending that the ALS meeting would stimulate

changes to practice, thus modelling how supervision brings about changes to practice. I concluded that we would use the same data gathering process on the basis that the participants would be more likely to feel confident in a familiar process and thus be able to attend to how they engaged with each other, what they were sharing and the learning that emerged.

We also explored how the group itself was developing. This would now be the third time we had come together. I was mindful of attending to the safety and trust that is essential for any group to work together, and how I help to create the container to allow them to deepen their experience and their reflections (e.g. Tuckman 1965, Schein 1999, Corey & Corey 1997).

We discussed how this deepening of the relationship of the group with the growing safety and trust would allow double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon 1974), expanding from what might have been described as a transactional event the first time with surface level data (familiar to us all) into a transformational process this time with more personal disclosure and reflection.

5.2.3 On the Day

5.2.3.1 Opening Check In

I prepared the room in the “familiar” way. Again I invited everyone to check in.

One person was unable to come as they were unwell. I was disappointed as I personally would miss their presence and contribution, and at the same time, this meant that the configuration of the group would be different, both practically and psychologically. I was encouraged to notice that the group was happy to follow the same data gathering format and sequence of presenting, and in one person’s absence, they quickly

rearranged who would collect data for each question with each participant - definitely a sign of group development, safety, engagement, co-ownership of the task.

After everyone else had checked in, I took my turn. I shared a number of threads that I wanted us to consider during our work together in this session, starting to offer some of my reflections. With fewer session notes, I shared the questions that this had raised for me, inviting their input i.e. how we do supervision with the peaks and troughs of workload, calendar, downturn in market, or anything else. Informed by their reflective notes of sessions, I observed that no two of them engage in supervision in exactly the same way, so it could be interesting to explore how often we go to supervision, what determines why we go, how do we choose the frequency of supervision? As it happened, we never did discuss these specific details as other themes took priority in this and the next ALS meetings (see in Section 5.3 CG3).

I referred to previous comments that participants had made about whether one participant or another had engaged in transactional or transformational supervision. This had aroused my curiosity about how our supervision is consciously or unconsciously informed by our coaching purpose and/or what the coachee/client brings to coaching. I therefore invited each of them to share a "one-liner" describing the purpose of their coaching at the start of their respective presentations.

"The purpose of my coaching is helping clients to make changes that are sustainable and that enable them to move forward in a way that gives them more choices....incorporating new ways of being.....helping people to sustain the learning" (CG01)

"The purpose of my coaching is to help managers to become more effective in their roles as leaders of others" (CG02)

“My purpose as a coach is to help people get clear about what they want and then work with them to achieve it” (CG03)

“Making work work for people - supporting performance, enjoyment and fulfillment” (CG04)

“I guide international leaders on their professional journey - creating connections between behaviours, goals, results, purpose, meaning...I help people create those connections for themselves” (CG05)

“To enable change and growth to take place both at an interpersonal and an intrapersonal level....allowing someone to change and grow inside but allowing them to change and grow in their relationships with others as well” (CG06)

I signposted the fact that we would soon be coming to an end (i.e. only one more ALS meeting scheduled), so we agreed that we would consider how we bring this work together to a close at the end of this day.

5.2.3.2 Data Gathering - Post-It Flip Chart Headings

We followed the same data gathering process and here I now summarise the key data that emerged under each of the following questions:

- * *How has your practice evolved/changed?*
- * *What influenced the changes?*
- * *What goes on at a relational level?*

5.2.3.3 HEADLINE DATA: How has your practice evolved/changed?

It was evident from the data we gathered that some of the group were very happy with their supervision, others less so. The coaches learned new techniques, they were able to restore their centre if they were out of

balance, they found it helpful to reflect aloud to clarify their thinking and approach by bouncing ideas around.

“I think the supervision is helpful in giving feedback about what I am doing well and being very attentive and validating of me as a coach and also enabling me to see what might be happening at a pattern level” (CG01)

“As a direct result of our meeting (here) last time, I realised that I wasn't at all happy with that Supervisor - I found that when I went for supervision I would have some clients in mind and I was no longer getting the wonderful insights or new ideas or hypotheses that CG01 describes.....and the feedback from this group helped me to say this is.....it's come to an end.....I haven't met with that Supervisor yet.....and want to think about (how) to end it well” (CG02)

5.2.3.4 HEADLINE DATA: What's influenced the changes?

The safe space of supervision, where the coach was able to think aloud and be guided in their reflection enabled them to distil their thinking and gain clarity. The actual process and dialogue of supervision supported them in seeing what was their own and what was the client's and therefore how to proceed. The coaches valued the supervision space to connect with their inner strength and peace. They were motivated by a breadth of conversation including philosophical and existential discussion beyond core skills and techniques. It was evident that a “poor supervisor” has an adverse effect on the supervisee - stifling their thinking and their learning.

“The process of supervision for me is about closing down the doubting voice. The supervision space is where I can bring a client, a doubt, a feeling.....when I go into doubt I don't do anything...When I am back to my inner strength and I shift that

state back to this alignment then I can take risks, I can challenge my client in the right way, I can be at my best, at the top of my game” (CG05)

5.2.3.5 HEADLINE DATA: What goes on at a relational level?

The recurring theme here was the mention of trust, support and validation. Because of the relationship, the coaches were able to be authentic, bring all of themselves to the supervision which in turn created the safe platform to explore their practice, be challenged, notice patterns. Respect was an important ingredient and when the coach doesn't respect the supervisor's experience, skill, knowledge and relational capacity, then it doesn't work.....If the relationship and skill of the supervisor are not congruent for the coach, then the work won't be effective.

5.2.3.6 The Closing Dialogue

We now entered into a group dialogue, informed and stimulated by what had emerged during the session and one participant suggested that perhaps we needed *“to take supervision to boot camp and be transformed”* (CG03). There was agreement around the complexity, demands and challenges of executive coaching that meant that as coaches, we need support. However, supervision in one-to-one conversations as advocated by the professional associations is not the sole source of support. We each have different methods and capacity to reflect on our practice, either alone or with another/s. Whatever approach we take, we need to keep ourselves *“fit for purpose”* (CG06). We explored these issues and what emerged through the discussion was that diverse needs are met, in the moment, depending on the issues or material each coach takes to supervision.

“Is there something here over the next couple of months' cycle (for us to explore and notice) - I go to supervision and I get this,

and I meet Doris on Thursdays and get that, and I have a beer with George on Friday and we talk about such and such and for us all to be mindful what is it that we get from each of these ingredient contributors to go out and do this work?" (AH Closing Comments - CG ALS2)

Maybe it was the nature of the inquiry at this stage or the domains that we explored here but I came away with an impression that when supervision is not rewarding or fulfilling, some of these coaches tended to look to the supervisor as "the cause" and for that supervisor to be responsible for putting it "right".

In drawing the session to a close, CG01 summarised the questions we would explore between this and the next ALS meeting and everyone would present to these the next time:

"How do we support ourselves, keeping ourselves fit for purpose, noticing our sources of support, in an ideal world what would it be like, and what is it about the work we're doing that makes supervision so important?" (CG01)

Here the session ended.

5.2.4 My Reflections after the Day

I held a number of conversations and reflections with members of my "team" of "critical friends" which was becoming a natural and important part of my own process as researcher. I was not conscious of the pattern that was emerging here, however I review this when I reflect on my overall experience of the Doctoral journey in Chapter 9.

As I reviewed the day in one conversation I was feeling very excited at a number of levels.

“In this group, they have uninterrupted individual time to share their own experience; they have five opportunities to listen without interrupting, to listen to other people’s experience; so they get affirmation, difference, ideas, they get opportunity to be heard - so there’s a parallel process here with good supervision.” (AH conversation with Eunice Aquilina 16 Jan 2012)

Here now are some of my reflections and questions that emerged from the ALS meeting.

- i) As our work together had deepened in this ALS meeting, I was becoming clearer about the learning they were getting from participating in the Project. I could see that everyone went away with some new ideas about how they scrutinise and evaluate how they engage in their supervision.

- ii) We were definitely changing as a group. As I was more relaxed, and being clear about my role, so too were they; being familiar with the purpose and the task of the session contributed to this. As this was the third time we had come together, we were really getting to know each other, we had co-created safety and a growing trust that enabled each person to find their voice. In the general discussion at the end I noticed how everyone contributed and listened, they built on the ideas we shared around the purpose of supervision and its link to the demands of executive coaching.

- iii) We explored what part reflection plays in keeping us “fit for purpose” and how each of us reflects differently - some of us reflect aloud, and/or alone, some reflect in dialogue, some reflect internally, silently. So

how do we attend to the individual need of the practitioner? What emerged was that for this group, at their respective stages of professional development, capability and identity, coupled with the purpose or nature of the coaching they are doing, one hour's supervision with another is not necessarily the "be all and end all", nor the imperative, nor necessarily the "best" solution, particularly when they have diverse ways of reflecting.

- iv) Another interesting connection for me was around the professional experience in this group. One participant was part way through her supervision training, three others were qualified supervisors as well as being executive coaches, and one was sceptical about the whole notion of supervision as it is being advocated and promoted by the coaching associations at the moment (as a "mandated prescription" - my words). Those of us who have had supervision training and experience acknowledged what an improvement to our coaching this has made. This therefore raised the question for me around what's going on in terms of the coaching training that may only be being addressed in the training for coaching supervisors.
- v) The data from the ALS Post-It questions themselves in this Cycle prompted a more generic inquiry for me. What the group wanted to look at for themselves and was starting to emerge in this inquiry was "Why Supervision?" "What is it about supervision that is unique, special, relevant?" and "Is the term supervision the right term?"
- vi) I noticed that what appeared to be emerging was that we could actually put a range of activities under the heading of "supervision" rather than an arbitrary one hour/two hour/three hour session, at regular intervals, with a person who may or may not be appropriately equipped and qualified to provide what we need at our respective stage of development. This led me to consider the possible implications for the recommended guidelines for supervision as

declared by some of the professional Coaching Associations, that might result in coaches meeting this minimum guideline to comply for membership or accreditation requirements and perhaps omit to ask themselves the question "What do I need to keep me fit for purpose?"

- vii) I was also fascinated by the data from those who were not getting what they needed or wanted from supervision. Here are some examples of their comments:

"I went along to this, did it this way, this is what the supervisor did and it wasn't good enough.....I had to do it his way rather than my way - this new supervisor insists on me bringing client work - he is not interested in me bringing anything else about my practice at a philosophical or psychological or other level - he just wants me to report on my client work". (CG06)

"I feel judged.....I've been working with this supervisor for three and half years, I think it's time to move on, actually the energy is low.....and (I'm not learning anything - my words)." (CG02)

There seemed to be something in the room for those who were not getting what they needed. They tended to suggest that they would look elsewhere rather than challenge the respective supervisor to engage with co-creating what the coach needed, this request being initiated by the coach. I had a sense that the coaches held an expectation that the supervisor was primarily or solely responsible for establishing and meeting the coaches' needs and therefore perhaps not initiating the dialogue to co-create this. I was therefore wondering here how both parties could share the responsibility to co-create something that works for them both. I might have had a different response here if the coaches were new to the process of reflecting on their practice or supervision but these were all experienced coaches. I also acknowledge that I may have been

feeling defensive around my own practice, as I don't necessarily always ask, or perhaps ask often enough, whether my clients are getting what they need and want and I could do this more regularly.

An important additional element here was that the group was clearly feeling confident to share their dissatisfaction with some aspects of their supervision or supervisor and this implied that my presence and role as lead researcher (and supervisor) was not inhibiting this.

- viii) What I had drawn from this group so far was that supervision can be affirming and reassuring, they learn new techniques, gain new perspectives, explore hypotheses. The relationship makes a lot of difference and in fact triggered almost polar reactions in terms of affirmation or demotivation. The coaches who valued their supervision appreciated the trusting, non-judgmental relationship with a generative and developmental result. Others, who perhaps held some scepticism with supervision is currently framed or with specific experience, felt as though they were being compliant and when the supervisor was not creating a conducive, compatible learning environment, the supervisors were appraised as bringing their own agenda and not acknowledging the agenda of the coach.
- ix) I had received really positive feedback from the CG about their experience of participating in the Project thus far. They were finding the AR approach which involved reflecting after supervision sessions, coming together in the ALS meetings, sharing and exchanging experiences in the safe, confidential space was stimulating, supported their learning and was personified by one participant who said at the end of the ALS 2 meeting:

"Today is supervision." (CG05 13 January 2012)

Whilst my objective at the outset was to ensure that our sessions were not perceived as supervision per se, this comment suggested that we had co-created the core conditions of the process of supervision that enabled them to reflect on their practice and learn in this setting.

- x) I was also keen to explore my recurring curiosity around what it is about the supervision relationship that helps or hinders people's capacity to reflect on their practice and learn. Without reaching any conclusion here, I remarked that the participants had commented that under normal circumstances they don't always reflect in the way that I was encouraging them to do i.e. go to supervision, then write their reflections/notes following this experience, then come together to discuss, share and compare. So, again, I became aware of the value of this Project to them as participants and not just for me alone.

- xi) As I was holding the process in the ALS meetings (Schein 1999), this was allowing the content to emerge, as I would hope I do with my own supervisees. While I was clear on my purpose and process by this stage, I was also feeling comfortable with the unpredictability and uncertainty of what might emerge as data from the group. I trusted myself more now with the group and felt confident in their commitment to themselves and to me in this Project.

5.2.5 And finally.....

I was starting to consider what we might want to reflect on at our final CG Ending session which the group had scheduled for May, some two months after our final ALS meeting planned for March. Given what had emerged from this CG ALS Meeting 2, I was already curious to explore the experience the participants had had as co-researchers in this Project. I

was wondering and ultimately wanted to capture what it was about the Project, the approach and/or me as lead researcher that may have contributed to or hindered their participation, their learning and any changes to practice that may have occurred, in line with overall AR intention and purpose that would inform my practice as a supervisor going forward.

5.3 CG ALS Meeting 3

5.3.1 Introduction

At the end of February 2012 I met with a colleague shortly before the third CG ALS Meeting. Here I shared my reflections on some of the themes that were emerging for me with this group. As I recalled the previous ALS Meeting and the members of the group, I reflected on the conclusions we had drawn, the feedback from the group and how we had engaged together.

"I'm having great fun with this group - this is what research is about for me because they're engaged, the feedback I'm getting is that for each of them they are saying this is making a difference - this is very exciting - I was very aware when I invited them to participate that I wanted them to get something out of it, each of them is saying, unsolicited, that by the way they are engaging in the Project and the way the Project is evolving and the way the group is working their practice is changing - that is fabulous - I had no idea it would be so good....."

.....There are also some interesting data coming through about how supervision supports coaching practice and how other activities also support that and the question that that raises about my own practice is how am I helping the coaches I work with be "fit for purpose." (AH Conversation with RM 29th February 2012)

During this conversation I reiterated my rationale for not sharing too much of my own process and thoughts with the CG. Whilst they were curious about what I was getting from our sessions together and the Project, I continued to avoid too much discussion of what was going on for me, other than my delight and excitement with how the groups were working and how the Project was developing. There were a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, I was not entirely sure of nor able to articulate what impact the Project was having on my supervision practice and found myself asking why was this. This prompted me to wonder whether the coaches were also having trouble articulating the impact of their supervision sessions on their practice (i.e. a parallel process). I think at this stage I was concentrating on managing the Project rather than what I would do to develop my practice as a supervisor. Here perhaps were echoes of a new coach concentrating on basic techniques, and echoes of a new supervisee learning how to reflect on their practice. Perhaps too this was a demonstrable example of my learning style i.e. I saw this phase as “having the experience” and I would reflect and determine changes to my practice later.

Secondly, I think there was something about not wishing to draw conclusions and make immediate changes to how I worked until this phase of the Project was complete. In this respect I continued to hold a tension around trying to be the “good researcher” and thus whether I was “supposed” or “not supposed” to draw conclusions at each stage. This led me to ponder whether I was really researching “with” rather than “on” the group which had been my original intention. Was I an “insider” or an “outsider” researcher (Herr & Anderson 2005) if I was not sharing all my thinking and learning with them? In hindsight, I was probably confused about what that meant, but I was clear that I needed to hold the process, the groups and the Project and I would attend to my practice later. It was only later that I realised that I was in fact attending to me through the

regular and frequent dialogues (supervision) I was having with “critical friends” and others. I discuss this extensively in Chapter 9.

Thirdly, mindful that the purpose of the Project was an inductive inquiry I was still not wanting to get in the participants way. I felt that sharing the impact of the data from the ALS meetings on my learning and practice, together with the questions this was raising for me around the profession's view of supervision, I might inhibit their honesty and openness. Equally, they might modify or edit their experience and opinions in deference to please rather than disagree with me (Hawkins et al 2006, Gilbert & Evans 2000). Based on the data that was emerging around what worked and didn't work for them in their supervision, I do not believe they were editing their contributions.

Finally, I was keen to model the process of my supervision practice, especially when developing a new supervision relationship (this group had still only met three times by this stage). Whilst I do share my thinking or experience with my client-supervisees in the interests of their learning, I'm mindful not to impose my agenda (Schein 1999). It is their time and they are paying for it, so I hesitate to talk about me except as it has a bearing on their learning or development. With a new supervisee, if my own view is markedly different from theirs, they may interpret this as a judgement and might inhibit them from bringing all of themselves, which would defeat the purpose of the work. As I write this now, I realise that maybe it's a limiting assumption that it's not my time to talk about my learning when I'm supervising.

5.3.2 Coaching Session with a Client - 13th March 2012

Shortly before the ALS meeting, one of my supervision clients asked whether they could coach me as part of their application for coaching accreditation. I agreed to do this and chose to work with exploring my lurking tension around the next phase of the Research Project - the data

analysis phase. I now realised clearly my emerging patterns in the doctoral process (discussed in Chapter 9). The process of dialogue (Isaacs 1999), and thinking aloud with “another”, was proving vital in helping me to develop my thinking, to plan and to resolve doubts and anxieties.

“I’m struck by the parallel process of dialogue to enable me to gain insight and reflect on my work..... albeit this is the research Project, as a parallel process to what goes on in the supervision process with coaching. So layers and layers and layers of parallel process about what is reflection on practice or reflection as a process to enable clarity, movement, direction, easing of tension, all of those things.” (AH Coaching conversation with MF 13 March 2012)

In the meantime, I emailed the invitation to the group to help them to prepare for our third and final data gathering session. We would use the same format as previously and I reminded them of the three areas that had emerged from our last meeting that we wanted to address in this last session. I also added the following question that had persisted for me and I hoped that we would have time to discuss beyond the data gathering task.

“How do/can we co-create a relationship which is generative, which supports us in our practice? And what criteria do we use to choose our supervisors?”

I had received very few session notes (4-5 pieces in total). This time I was not anxious - this was “just data”. I realised that my early tension around this had been because “things were not going according to the Project Plan” (i.e. each person would have a minimum of 3 supervision sessions between each ALS meeting), so again the tension around doing the right thing as a researcher - my own compliance and deference raising its head. On reflection here, I also realised that I was receiving their *actual*

experience that would contribute to my conclusions rather than meeting the “idealised” intention of the Project Plan (and maybe here again was a parallel process that I was holding an idealised intention and “compliant” expectation that the coaches *should* be having ‘regular’ i.e. monthly supervision).

5.3.3 On the Day

5.3.3.1 Opening Check In

Once everyone had checked in I shared the very positive and affirming feedback I had received from the University Internal Adviser around how the Project was evolving. I shared my enthusiasm for how the Project was developing and offered encouragement and reassurance that what we were doing was worthwhile and would potentially be interesting to others in a wider context. I re-capped on what had emerged from the last ALS meeting, moving from the original question to the changes to practice and reaching the theme of this day i.e. our need as coaches to look after ourselves and keep us fit for purpose.

5.3.3.2 Data Gathering - Post-It Flip Chart Headings

We agreed to use the same format for the data gathering process. Their increasing familiarity with this method now allowed them to engage fully with the process and the content. There was evident openness within the group as they engaged with each other, taking genuine interest in how people were showing up, their check-ins, their individual contributions.

Each person then “presented” against the three questions that had emerged from our previous cycle:

How do we support ourselves through supervision, keeping us fit for purpose?

How else do we support ourselves beyond supervision?

In an ideal world, my supervision.....what would this support be like?

I was on the eve of leaving for a holiday in Australia so I did not manage to draw out the key data with the group at this stage. The general conclusion included a clear acknowledgement from the group that executive coaching is a hugely complex and demanding practice, requiring the coach to draw on an extensive range of knowledge, skills and personal resources at physical, mental and emotional levels. Regular supervision plays an important part in supporting coaches to remain fit for purpose and at the same time, we need other support beyond the actual one-to-one supervision relationship as described by one co-researcher.

“Coaching is hugely concentratingyou do need to keep fit for purpose, because if you’re using that amount of brain all the time, it’s not surprising that it might be tiring.... And also I think, because of the concentration required in your coaching, because you are trying to be in the moment, but you’re also trying to look outside to think what’s happening here, what’s happening in the

room, I think there’s a lot going on. And also, just as a kind of risk management thing, for me, you know there’s always a risk in coaching about collusion games, you know you’ve got the transference, the counter-transference, and I just think it’s really important.....

.....For me I need to make sure I’ve got a buffer between sessions, that I’m doing other things other than just coaching all the time – it’s really important. I get a lot out of doing CPD....giving me new ideas. Having supportive colleagues and someone to talk to helps a lot and being involved in other networks as well. I think it just broadens, broadens the work.....Then basic

things like health and exercise and making sure you have enough breaks during the day and all that stuff. Although it's quite basic, I think it's really important." (CG01 ALS3 16th March 2012).

As we were drawing the meeting to a close I was asked: "How are you feeling?" I was whole-heartedly able to reply that I was absolutely thrilled with what we had done. I shared my delight at how the Project had gone, mostly according to plan, and even when the actual events differed, I had come to recognise that the source of my tension was around meeting the University's expectations rather than how we were working together in the Project itself. Furthermore, how our inquiry had deepened through the cycles as we co-created new questions to explore in each phase was genuine cause for celebration.

The tensions for me are/have been where I had a notion of what it was meant to be and we've gone somewhere different and actually, holding the ambiguity and the emergence is an eternal tension. There are times when I'm very happy with emergence and there are times when I get anxious with it. And because of the connection with the University and am I doing it right, that's what has often triggered my tension. When I just pay attention to the Project and working with you and how it is emerging and the fact that the first session we looked at this question and the second session through dialogue something new has come out and through this third session something more, this is what it's about. I'm feeling fantastic." (AH 16th March 2012)

After collating and typing up the Post-Its from the day to send to the group, I offered them some suggestions for reflection before we met again on 10th May for our "Ending Meeting". It was important to me that they think about the impact of the Project on their practice, what had been their experience of participating in Action Research and what impact had I personally had on their engagement in the Project and/or their practice.

5.3.4 What happened next

What happened after this was completely unforeseeable. I went to visit my family in Australia in March 2012 and returned to London to learn that my sister, who lived near me there, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and only had a few months to live. Somehow during this time, I managed to complete the Ending Meetings with both the CG and the SG (see Chapter 6). Aside from collating the Post-It data and arranging for the tapes to be transcribed, I put all the data and evidence for the Project that I had gathered so far into several big boxes under my desk (papers, notes, folders). The Project was now on hold for the foreseeable future.

The next few months were gruelling and I had no capacity to think or feel anything for the Project. After my sister died in June 2012, I took leave from the University while I started to recover. I was just starting to open the boxes towards the end of the year (November 2012) when my 94 year old Mother in Australia had a heart attack. Again, the boxes went under the desk and I spent two months there helping her to settle into residential care and helping to sort her affairs with other family members.

My intention in telling this here is not to seek sympathy but rather to share the impact on me in terms of the Project and my learning. During this time, I necessarily reduced my client work and paid particular attention to getting enough rest so that I was able to function relatively clearly with my clients. I made sure I was seeing my professional supervisor regularly so that I was supported and taken care of.

At one level, I was not worried about putting the Project on hold as I was all too aware that I did not have the capacity to engage with it, either intellectually or emotionally. At another level and as time passed, I was concerned about losing the momentum I had built up and feared that I would not be able to remember what had happened and therefore not be able to re-engage with and complete the research. Furthermore, once I

returned to UK at the end of January 2013, I was mindful that yet another year had passed since I had started the doctoral journey in 2008 and I was anxious that my research would lose its significance or relevance to the profession. This anxiety was further fuelled by the recent arrival of several new books on coaching supervision (e.g. Bachkirova et al 2011, Passmore 2011, Shohet 2011, de Haan 2012).

5.3.5 Re-engagement

In March 2013 at last I felt ready to bring the boxes out from under the desk and re-engage with my research. I met with my Internal Adviser and Project Consultant to start to think about how I would analyse the data. I engaged with my “critical friends”. I reopened the boxes and began to explore the cycles and what had emerged. In April 2013 I collated the key data I had gathered when I revisited this third ALS meeting with the coaches addressing the three questions we explored.

5.3.5.1 HEADLINE DATA: How do we support ourselves through supervision, keeping us fit for purpose?

Supervision provides a restorative and therapeutic space for offloading concerns of personal and professional life. The coaches appreciated the acknowledgement, encouragement and reassurance they receive from their supervisors. They are able to clarify their thinking and can explore the emotional issues triggered by the coaching, the client and the system in which they are practising. It was hugely beneficial to be attended to by someone who understands them and has their best interests at heart, focusing on their whole practice and their whole selves. Supervision provides learning and challenge.

“Fitness of purpose from supervision is time to reflect about the...my competence and what I do,.....so it is actually about what is it that actually enables me to master the process of coaching within the context of my capability.” (CG03)

“If you look at the ancient philosophy of Reiki, the role of the Master versus students, the relationship as I understand it, being present, being available, caring, challenging, over-looking the activity of the student while giving them opportunities to grow...that’s what I think is a supervisor.” (CG05)

5.3.5.2 HEADLINE DATA: So how else do we support ourselves beyond supervision?

Given the acknowledged demands of their coaching work, these coaches sought physical exercise, walking, quiet time alone and meditation. Some engaged in such activities as massage, yoga and bodywork. Holidays were also important. They valued support and dialogue with others, including role models, where they could exchange ideas and they found further learning through different types of CPD events and reading.

“I made a note of the various meetings, or phone calls or coffees I’ve had with various colleagues, friends and it came to 13 people since we last met (here), although they weren’t supervision as such, had some sort of restorative....in each of those cases they added something to me as a coach.” (CG02)

“So I walk a lot....and sometimes I need something to wash myself from all those negative energies....and I need a humble Master, humble not arrogant, who walks the walk, who is genuine and caring....I need quiet time on my own, the peace and quiet is heaven....and meaningful conversation with colleagues, just sharing, whatever....” (CG05)

5.3.5.3 HEADLINE DATA: In an ideal world, my supervision.....what would this be like?

One person in this group proposed that they take personal responsibility for their own “package” of supervision which might involve a variety of

participants and methods including one-to-one dialogue. They wanted the opportunity, either in a dyad or with others where they could bring all of themselves, to slow down, consider ideas, exchange thinking, reflect on their work. Whilst they considered that skills and capabilities needed to be refreshed, they wanted a forum to explore their spiritual and emotional concerns, not solely within the coaching agenda. They valued meaningful conversation, either with a supervisor or a.n.other, where they were challenged in their thinking and for someone to hold up a mirror to help them see recurring patterns and themes. On occasion it would be helpful to have a "Helpline" for instant access in "crises". In all of this, the recurring quality they sought was one of caring non-judgment, with an absence of fear.

"If we pigeon-hole supervision - we go to a person, a place and that's where you get supervision and that's it, we're missing a

huge opportunity, it's about recognition that so many conversationshave been your opportunities to reflect on your work." (CG03)

"I'm beginning to form a model of the type of supervision that suits me best. I don't really need supervision on the content of my clients' stuff. It's more the bigger concept and understanding my practice and where it's going and what contributes to my practice.....and on holiday, I got a massage every day and after 2 weeks I could just be there, present with the massage...something about slowing down, de-cluttering, quietening my mind and just being present in myself, and that made me realise that the busier I get the less present I am...it's also about getting an external check or meta check on the totality of my practice, keeping it at a higher level." (CG06)

5.4 Ending Meeting with Coaches Group

5.4.1 Introduction

On the eve of my departure for Australia in March, I jotted down my ideas about the areas for us to explore at our Ending Meeting in May to ensure that we addressed the participants' needs in bringing this phase of the Project to a close. I saw this meeting as a vital data gathering occasion and recognised my wish to model reflection on practice. I then went on holiday to Australia.

5.4.2 Preparation - May 2012

Mindful of how I prepare myself and my clients when we periodically review our work together in supervision, I sent the group the guideline agenda for this final meeting that for me was integral to the Project. There were three main areas:

- *The impact on the coaches of participating in the Project and the associated changes to their coaching practice*
- *Their experience of engaging in Action Research as a "research approach"*
- *And finally what impact I may have had on them and their practice.*

I was careful to stress that I wanted their continued honesty and openness, inviting them to share both positive and negative reflections, these all being part of the data that would support not only my learning but also the validity and trustworthiness of the inquiry (Herr & Anderson 2005, Bradbury & Reason 2001 in Reason & Bradbury 2001). I also prepared my own reflections around these questions in readiness to share with them and that I discuss later in this Section.

5.4.3 On the Day

At the start of this meeting there was a lot more banter and laughter as we came together. There was a lightness and frivolity in the group reminiscent to me of “end of School term”. This added to my own delight and excitement about how far we had developed as a group and what we had achieved together. After we all checked in, we engaged in the data gathering process which by now was well established. The key data that emerged now follows.

5.4.3.1 HEADLINE DATA: Impact of the project on your practice

Participants said that they were spending more time preparing for and reflecting around their supervision thus getting more out of it. Several were now clearer about what they might expect and seek from their supervision. They valued exchanging experience and the discipline of writing up their reflections deepened their learning from supervision.

Through the process of engaging in the Project, some felt more confident and validated. They were really appreciative of the confidential space to discuss their practice. They were invigorated by the discipline of the tasks and at the same time, by areas we explored in the group. Hearing others' experience helped some to appreciate their positive experience of supervision and those who were less satisfied became clearer about what they needed and wanted from their supervision. Through the Project, participants created further links between the process of reflection in supervision with enhancing their coaching practice.

“I have done a lot more reflecting pre and post supervision since getting involved in this Project and doing more writing up....just the act of writing up was helpful, almost supervising myself by reflection...I'm picking up patterns more quickly than previously.” (CG01)

"I think it's been extremely important and influential...I realise that I've actually moved quite a long way. It's been very much a place where I felt able to say exactly what was going on and I don't find that easy usually. It's been great to hear others' stories and that's terribly comforting." (CG02)

"What I think this has done is help me to step back and begin to think more about what's going on for my supervisees or coachees and reflect on that. By having this group and us talking about the topics we have discussed, I'm more often stepping back and actually noticing how I am engaging with my clients." (CG03)

"It has enhanced the clarity, the level of clarity of my needs as a coach, with my client, and my needs in terms of supervision. I found that the value of writing the journal had an extremely positive impact on my coaching." (CG05)

5.4.3.2 HEADLINE DATA: Experience of action research

The group acknowledged that they appreciated the discipline and rhythm of the cyclical process which enabled them to let go of the process and engage in their supervision and reflections. They said that they found learning from and through each other was motivating. They found the safe, familiar space was effective as it enabled them to contribute, say exactly what was going on for them and they really enjoyed participating in the emergent inquiry.

"There's something about the discipline of going away, reflecting, doing your own writing up, reporting back...I enjoyed the whole rhythm of it and being part of something....feeling very emergent and quite creative....when I sometimes think about research I think about it being a bit dull, but I haven't found this experience dull at all. It's been very enjoyable." (CG01)

I didn't realise how important it was to speak without people diving in and interrupting, or talking over you.....has been absolutely wonderful actually." (CG02)

"You've made this process really fun." (CG03)

"This didn't feel like research." (CG04)

I found this latter a fascinating comment, as I was feeling very much the same and I recognised that for many of us, who may not consider ourselves "researchers", by modelling my practice of supervision and "living theory" (Whitehead & McNiff 2006), we had co-created a safe learning space underpinned by curiosity.

5.4.3.3 HEADLINE DATA: My impact on the participants and their practice

Feedback from the group was that I created a safe, disciplined space where they could participate wholeheartedly and they did not feel judged. People felt cared for, supported and heard. At the same time, we had fun. They appreciated the depth of my questions and insights. Some would have liked feedback on their reflections and one person acknowledged that the room could have been more cosy (especially the chairs, which I admit were not comfortable for sitting for long periods).

"I didn't feel at any time you were holding a candle saying "Oh supervision is great" that you were very open to the views of the group, and over time, we veered into well, actually do we need supervision at all.....so I felt you were very neutral and open to the group and therefore you encouraged curiosity, flexibility, and it's funny when I sometimes think about research, I think about it being a bit dull, but I haven't found this experience dull at all. It's been very enjoyable, thank you." (CG01)

“I think you’ve been extremely professional in handling this. Superb facilitation - a relatively light touch but all the more powerful for that. The contracting at the start has been done with great care and consideration but with great rigour....there’s been a lot of warmth and empathy anda sort of neutrality. It’s never felt that there’s a bias here. It’s just been a group of like-minded people sharing in something that’s felt very important.” (CG02)

“I did feel very part of the group and that’s different for me. And the quality of your focus - so even if we wander around you just bring us back to the essence which is a superb role modelling and a source of inspiration.....one thing more which could have been there was more challenge from you around my journal notes (which would have been) more for my own value than maybe for the Project.” (CG05)

“Very professional, very gentle. A bit like a warm bath, quite relaxing and supporting and allowing that space for reflection. But also some insightful questions to take home which prompted on-going reflection....for me personally, a more casual environment with easy chairs, something more cosy I think could have allowed even more enquiry.” (CG06)

5.4.3.4 The Closing Dialogue

Partly in response to the data we had just gathered and partly emerging from my own thoughts before the day I now shared some of my reflections with the group. Again, these are brief here and developed more fully in the Conclusions in Chapter 8.

- i) I acknowledged my appreciation to them all for their willingness and courage to participate so openly and trustingly. While I had known some of the participants previously, others I did not, and I was very

respectful of their trust in me and each other as they shared their coaching practice and experience of being in supervision.

- ii) I was struck by their recurring reference to the value of the discipline of the tasks involved, following the cyclical process, and was heartened that my attention to detail and planning had allowed this to develop which they found easy to follow. I intend to take this into my practice.
- iii) From their feedback, my intention of staying out of their way and not including my own data as a supervisee directly was effective in enabling them to share their experiences openly and honestly, without feeling fearful or judged - so again a parallel process with my intention in supervision. This contributed to their learning in the group sessions. I will never know what may have happened if I had included as direct data my own experience as a supervisee.
- iv) I appreciated their feedback around how I had facilitated the group, creating the safety and clarity, holding the process lightly which enabled them to concentrate on the task and the content.
- v) At this stage I shared my excitement in my own sense of truly knowing what Action Research means. As an experiential learner, this Project, underpinned by Action Research methodology, had enabled me to "live it". I have subsequently applied this approach with two client Projects where we've started by establishing what we're trying to do and then working in a cyclical way, with a very conscious choice in the steps we have taken and given ourselves time to plan, take action, notice what's happening and then reflect before we try to race on to the next step.
- vi) Finally in this conversation with the CG I was asked where was I around supervision now. I replied tentatively. Without having

analysed all the data thoroughly, I was holding questions around what we need to keep us fit for purpose in executive coaching.

“How to find those resources that we need to ensure we stay fit for purpose.....Both individually, but collectively, as a profession. How do we do that?.....I think the myth that we’ve blown out (for me) is you must have one hour of Supervision for 12 hours of coaching practice and the minimum time gaps between must be...and the maximum number per year must be....and maybe our contribution will be to move onto the next phase because maybe it had to be imposed to give us something to push against, to take us into something that becomes more fit for purpose for the profession.....so that’s about where I’m at the moment.” (AH Ending Session 10th May 2012)

5.4.4 My Reflections after the Day

At this point we ended our session and went for a celebratory drink. I returned home tiredly delighted. Their feedback had been so affirming of the value of the Project to each of them both personally and in their practice. I too felt affirmed and that the Project had worked at a number of levels. We had generated data that would inform my practice and in the process of sharing this with others, potentially our experience might inform the wider coaching community. By personifying my practice as a supervisor and group facilitator, aligning this with the research methodology which was congruent with my approach and learning style, together we had co-created a learning experience for the participants, so they had benefited and their practice had changed.

I close this Chapter with the latest feedback from one of the CG participants who shared the following with me recently, 18 months after our final ALS meeting:

“It’s been fantastic to be part of this work, and has really made a difference, the approach of working in a learning set environment

is so powerful. You may be interested to know that, since our group meetings, I have carefully selected a new supervisor - he's a psychotherapist as well as coach, and he is a breath of fresh air compared to some earlier experiences - I can say exactly what I like in our sessions and it's wonderfully liberating! “ (CG02 30 November 2013)

CHAPTER 6 - SUPERVISORS' GROUP OUTCOMES

6.1 ALS Meeting 1

6.1.1 Introduction

The supervisors went from their Induction Meeting in August to engage in supervision with their respective supervisees. In the following Section I describe the first ALS meeting with the Supervisors' Group (SG).

During the period from the Induction to mid November I received only six session notes from the group - three from one person and one each from three others. Again, as with the CG, this triggered tension for me for a number of reasons. I had hoped and probably expected when I planned the Project that the supervisors would have at least three sessions each with their clients between ALS meetings on the basis that their supervisees came to supervision monthly. In this case, only one had managed to do that. I was struggling to see this as "data" but rather found myself mind-reading and imagining what might be happening with the SG. I was afraid that I may have been asking too much from them, or that they had lost interest in the Project. Silence in the early stages of group formation can be deadly and not only for the participants! In fact, as part of my process, I did have conversations with most of them between the Induction and this first ALS Meeting in November so I was able to allay some of my fears, when again I was struck by the enthusiasm from several of this group during these conversations.

During the period between the Induction Meeting and SG ALS1 meeting, one of the participants expressed concern about who to choose as their supervisee/"working partner". We agreed that they could work with one member of their supervision group, having decided earlier that the whole group itself would not be appropriate. I took this decision on the basis that to include group supervision might divert me from what I saw as the primary inquiry of looking at one-to-one supervision. I was afraid that exploring groups might create an unmanageable dimension. I also held some concern around whether we might move towards exploring the

parallel process of our Research Group compared with this participant's supervision group - but that was an intuitive guess. I know that I had created the ALS groups so that the co-researchers could exchange their learning with each other, but I had not consciously set up the ALS groups to inform what happens in group supervision. At the same time, I was also able to consider how this exchange with this participant might have represented something that might have been going on in the wider field of supervision but at this stage was not sure what this might be.

6.1.2 Preparation for ALS Meeting 1 with Supervisors Group

I took the same approach with the SG as I had with the coaches in terms of the structure and format for the day. To this end, I sent them an email explaining the purpose of the day and the questions we would use as the basis for gathering data.

- *What did your client/s bring to supervision?*
- *What happened, what emerged, what worked, what didn't work in terms of process, content, relationship with your supervisee? And anything else that seems relevant.*
- *What changes the sessions may have had on your own supervision practice?"*

As had happened with the Induction, one participant sent their apologies for this first ALS meeting as they had a funeral to attend. They had sent notes from one supervision session and agreed I would be able to read these out to the group. I was disappointed as we would be a new group again, and I was concerned about how this would impact on the level of safety and trust I wanted us to establish that would allow disclosure as they shared their practice in the group. Again with my "critical friend" Eunice, we considered what might be playing out here, notwithstanding at a surface level, the reason for the person's absence was entirely legitimate....but more of this later.

6.1.3 On the Day

We checked in (as I described with CG). I shared some of the excitement I was holding around how the Project was developing, fuelled by the encouraging feedback I had received from my Project Consultant. I shared my sense of what was emerging from the CG that no two coaches were using supervision in exactly the same way and how this was prompting me to re-consider the professional associations' "mandate" for a methodical approach in terms of frequency and duration of sessions and as also recommended in the literature (e.g. Hay 2007, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Bluckert 2006).

What was already evident in the Project was that while we were following the methodical process in terms of AR and the sequence of events, individual participants were experiencing significant life events that were impacting on their capacity to engage in their work, including supervision. This was also evident from the random session notes I had received from these supervisors that appeared symptomatic of their clients' sporadic attendance at supervision. At this stage I could not foresee what would be happening in my own life some four months later (discussed in CG ALS3) with its subsequent impact on me. Such issues had not arisen so far with the CG, so I was curious about what was different with the SG.

Following the same data gathering process that I had used with the CG, here now I summarise the key data gathered from the three questions the SG participants presented to. The full data from this meeting in the form of colour-coded, typed Post-Its appears in Appendix 6.1b Typed Post-Its from SG ALS1 and Appendix Photos 6.1-6.4.

6.1.3.1 HEADLINE DATA: What did your client bring to supervision?

For this group of supervisors, their supervisees sought very little around tools and techniques with one exception. One coach brought an ethical

dilemma, otherwise, the coaches brought issues around their own well-being as well as their overall personal and professional development.

Some supervisors shared that their supervision allowed the coach the space to explore; by using creative interventions such as drawing they enabled their supervisees to access what is happening; they trusted the coach to know where to go; they gave them the space to explore themselves and what was happening for them as a whole and only sometimes made reference to specific clients.

“The concerns my client brings up are about herself, and the impact of her work and her life experience on her as a person and then can she keep this in awareness but not impact on her work too much....and she is very concerned about the well-being of her clients.” (SG01)

“As she presented her client, her concern was that certain long term issues had not been addressed, such as the client’s tendency to avoid difficult behavioural challenges.” (SG03)

“She said she wanted to explore something about a client issue situation, something else and then something about an engagement she’s having in an organisation to bring in a coaching culture.” (SG04)

6.1.3.2 HEADLINE DATA: What happened, emerged?

There was a recurring question amongst the supervisors around how much of their own thoughts, processes, feelings to share with the coach - which prompted me to wonder what stops this? What informs this? At the same time, and in what seemed a slight contradiction, some referred to sharing what happened between themselves and their supervisee/client to inform how their supervisee may be showing up with their clients or to

inform the parallel process from what the coach was reporting and reflecting on. This left me wondering what specifically they may have withheld and for what reasons. I wondered whether there were any parallels with my own experience as researcher and what I chose to share with the Research Groups.

They were conscious of modelling the process of relationship and interventions; seeking through their engagement with coach that the coaches may engage similarly with their clients.

Some shared their intention of shining the light on the coach and their coaching work in supervision that may lead to their supervisees' subsequent reflection and transformation when they left the room/session. This differs from the view that transformation occurs when there is a "felt shift in the room" (Hawkins & Smith 2006).

At the same time, one supervisor shared their purpose of holding responsibility for the ethical and moral stance for their coach's practice, identifying that the relationship is not completely equal.

"I noticed all kinds of stuff going on with me in the here and now which were reflections of the there and then of my supervisee's client work. I was really curious about how to work with this, what extent do I bracket my own experience.....I decided not to say anything...for fear of contaminating the here and now with this client." (SG05)

"What happened was that in that first conversation she brought the client situation, she talked about what happened, what was going on and what her question was and her frustration really about how transactional her engagement had been with this client and that she was frustrated that the client could have done a lot more and what they were really talking about was what she was going to put

on her shopping list.....What was clear was a lack of contracting with the client, so we went into all sorts of tripartite stuff around three way contracting, contracting for the relationship, contracting for the conversation.” (SG04)

6.1.3.4 HEADLINE DATA: What changes to practice - your own or your supervisee?

Through this process of reflecting on their supervision sessions, some of the changes to the supervisors' practice included: contracting carefully and clearly, exploring how to be authentic and not get in the supervisee's way, adapting personal style to suit the supervisee, balancing theoretical input with exploration and inquiry.

“How this has changed my approach - I have become much more reflective both afterwards but also in the moment - you know - the idea of the internal supervisor.” (SG01)

“I think there's an interesting piece of learning around my assumptions.” (SG04)

6.1.3.5 The Closing Dialogue

I was encouraged by the feedback from the group at the end of the day which they described as “fun”, “interesting”, “real value in monologue”. We engaged in an open discussion where we considered some of the questions and issues that we as supervisors are concerned about, and as these may be indications of what might be happening in the profession as a whole.

One person mentioned the significance of trust in the supervision relationship and what a privilege it is that our clients trust us as their supervisors. This prompted me to wonder what part we as supervisors play in building that climate of trust. We explored how we decide which

aspects of ourselves to bring into the supervision room and when to share our own learning as supervisors. We considered the difference between having expertise and having responsibility - what are we holding in our role - the ethical piece - who is accountable if the coach is having problems or not practising professionally?

Finally one of the participants shared their experience of how this ALS event had felt different i.e. our process in the SG of sharing our practice had felt different from meetings they had attended with other supervisors.....We considered what this difference might be in terms of how people had shared their process, their thoughts and feelings with an intimacy which may perhaps have been unusual. We spoke little of the tools and techniques of supervision but rather participants focused on the power of their client relationships and the part that they played in co-creating the safety and trust that enabled their clients to share their practice.

6.1.4 At the end of the Day

I was relieved with how the day had unfolded. I was reassured and encouraged by their feedback. The group had engaged willingly with the process and discipline of data gathering. I wondered how much of pre-session anxiety was mine and how much was in the group as they were coming together in a new conformation to engage in a new process. I was pleased to be able to hold the space lightly and co-create the appropriate conditions for the group to work productively together.

I sent a summary email to the participants accompanied by a typed version of the Post-Its (Appendix 6.1a Email Follow-Up SG ALS1 Meeting & Appendix 6.1b Typed Post-Its from SG ALS1). In light of what had emerged from the CG and this day together, I alerted this group to my interest in supervision contributing to changes to practice and how this paralleled the underpinning of the AR purpose.

I invited the participants to reflect between our sessions on what changes to practice they noticed for themselves and/or their supervisees and to consider what may have brought about the changes e.g. triggered by our day together, the actual supervision process or anything else, and specifically what was it about their supervision relationship that enabled them to disclose, explore, challenge and support their clients. In suggesting this focus of attention, I was aware that I was steering the group to my agenda, but as this had already emerged from the data from the coaches, it seemed appropriate.

6.1.5 My Reflections after the Day

As I reviewed the day with my colleague Sally, again I revisited the theme of sharing my reflections with the group that led to us exploring my goal for these sessions. My intention was to bring the group together to share their respective experiences and reflections of their supervision. By generating explicitly what goes on in coaching supervision with the SG, through hearing their own and others' experiences, they would be able to plan how they would engage in their practice - in terms of their supervision and their coaching. Equally, I needed to gather data.

In this dialogue I therefore concluded that to meet my goal the role I needed to take up was to share enough of the gathered data (i.e. the Post-Its) to enable them to continue, that they could refer to as they looked at their practice. At the same time, I became clearer around my own identity as "insider/insider" researcher (Herr & Anderson 2005) in Participatory Action Research.....In hindsight I sensed but was unable to articulate at the time, that if I shared my reflections this would feel more like co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996) and encourage too much dialogue with its associated complexity and "messiness". This posed the issue for me of possibly losing control of the process and the content prompted me to consider here how this paralleled my need for control in my practice.

We also explored how my reflections as lead researcher might carry more weight than the fellow participants and so I decided to stay with not sharing. I was also mindful of the parallel process with the participants who had declared that they were not sure when to share their process with their supervisees.

In a further conversation with my “critical friend” Eunice, I explored what might be happening in terms of the number and frequency of supervision sessions conducted by this group, and the element of non-attendance at the ALS Meetings.

- i) Given the paucity of supervision session notes from the SG prior to our meeting, I was curious to discover how coaches were engaging in supervision with these Supervisor-participants. Clearly, attendance at supervision was sporadic or at least less frequent than monthly. I was drawing a comparison between the SG participants' respective number of sessions with the CG participants alongside my own attendance as a supervisee with my professional supervisor.
- ii) My hypothesis at this stage with the SG was that, like me, other supervisors accepted that when the supervisee was not having coaching sessions they were not going to supervision. It is certainly not automatic for my clients to come to supervision regardless of the volume of client work, especially in the context of the economic recession we were experiencing in the UK. There appeared to be an inconsistency in the recommended ratio of coaching hours to supervision defined by the professional coaching associations that were idealised or recommended norms and this was not necessarily appropriate or congruent with the reality. So, what part does and can supervision play when coaches are doing less coaching?
- iii) It would appear from this SG, that on the basis that their clients are autonomous adults, they are responsible, they are taking care of

themselves and if they are not doing much coaching they are not going to supervision. This provoked a further reflection for me around how coaches are using supervision as it is currently defined. Given that many coaches are doing other relational work as well as coaching in organisations, the demands and challenges of projection, transference, systems' stresses will be present in all this work, so how are the coaches, who also work as consultants, supporting themselves in these areas of their practice? So, is supervision still being viewed as a mandatory "must do" activity with a narrow frame around specific coaching assignments, rather than an invaluable safe space to reflect and review the practitioners' overall well-being across a whole range of client work?

- iv) I reflected on the absenteeism at the SG ALS meetings. Already this had occurred twice (one couldn't come to the Induction Meeting, another couldn't come to the SG ALS 1 Meeting). By the 14th December one participant had explained that they couldn't come to the next ALS Meeting in March. So what was going on here? Possible threads included the stage of development of the SG (Schein 1999, Bion 1968). What might the supervisors be afraid of? How was the way participants were engaging in the Project a parallel process of the stage of development of supervision in the coaching profession as a whole? What resonance with coaches' attendance at supervision when life and commercial considerations may take priority? What impact was I having on the group? What was it about the Project and its formulation that might be having an impact?

6.2 ALS Meeting 2

6.2.1 Introduction

Between the SG ALS meetings, I had a number of reflective conversations with colleagues and "critical friends" in which I explored what was

happening for me and the research groups. The first of these conversations was with Sally. Here we explored some key issues that were impacting on how I would engage with the SG at our next ALS Meeting in March.

6.2.2 Conversation with Colleague - 21st January 2012

I shared the tension I was holding around the SG that fell into a number of areas. This group had felt “messy” from the start with our difficulty finding dates, for some in choosing their supervisees for the Project, not sending many session notes, attendance at the ALS meetings (neither of the first two meetings had been fully attended) and already I knew I had to organise two sessions for this second round of ALS Meetings in March. I really felt that I didn’t “know” this group yet.

“(They’re) not methodical like my coaches. And that’s Action Research and it’s the world in which we are living. So, holding the anxiety of what’s messy and how do I - what are the - may not be so tidy in gathering the themes - one thing is whether I will meet the Uni protocol and maybe that’s not a problem. Another thing is - there is something going on - in group evolution terms - each time we’ve met we are a new group and whatever the implications of that are - each group has been ok and I have an underlying voice - in group development terms, we are starting afresh each time - so what does that do to the trust, the relationship, the sense of belonging, the support and engagement and therefore their capacity to reflect publicly.....And I think - what is going on here? I feel it’s a “what is going on here?” (AH Conversation with Sally Kleyn 21 January 2012).

Together we explored my assumptions around the SG’s level of understanding of group dynamics and whether they all had to be there for the group to develop (which may not be the case), and whether group development was a necessity for me to gather data. I realised that my job

was to have co-researchers who were giving me the data. At the same time, I also hoped and intended that they would gain something for themselves in their practice. So how could and would I “tolerate” the balance between acknowledging people’s busy lives alongside their commitment to the Project? I knew it was easy for me to get hooked into their needs at the expense of my need to get data, but intuition led me to suspect that one specific participant might not actually want to continue but did not know how to tell me. And of course, what was my part in this? I wondered if there might be a parallel between this participant and an ambivalent supervisee in the wider field. Again I revisited the question about what stops people having supervision, from bringing themselves in, from giving themselves to supervision, allowing themselves to be vulnerable enough to learn. I chose not to draw conclusions around these questions at this stage.

I wondered what might have been the unconscious processes, “*based on psychological defences*” (Schein 1999) that might or might not have been sabotaging or supporting us until now. Perhaps it was just co-incidence that the SG were not having many sessions with their clients. Perhaps because we were all supervisors there was an element of competition between each other and with me as lead researcher. Perhaps I was not as clear in my requests as I had been with the coaches, not wishing to appear too directive towards “peers”. Perhaps I had not paid enough attention to creating an appropriate level of safety. I noticed that some of my musings here were also connected with me wanting “to do it right”.

We revisited the issue that in SG ALS1 we had gathered very little data around their supervisees or their own changes to practice. I was informed by what had emerged from the CG where we agreed that supervision can (and as is currently defined possibly “*should*”) play a significant part in bringing about changes to practice, and yet both Groups had identified barely any attributable changes as a result of their actual supervision. I therefore wanted to bring this into the SG’s foreground when we next met

to explore more deeply what links these participants saw between supervision and change to practice. This was also informed by my original intention that the Project would model my purpose as a supervisor. With changes to practice also lying at the core of Action Research the Project was providing a lived, shared experience of how reflecting on practice might be impacting on their practice.

By now, January 2012, I had had very few session notes from anybody since the first ALS Meeting in November and notwithstanding that December is a quiet time in terms of professional work, I was anxious about this. Through my conversation with Sally I was able to reframe this as “data” and again get in touch with my curiosity around what might be happening for these particular supervisors and how this might potentially inform the larger community of practice.

I considered the difference between the CG who cooperated consistently by sending notes and attending the ALS Meetings, whereas some members of the SG appeared to be giving other business and life events precedence, at least over the ALS Meetings. So, what might be happening? Is this a coach/supervisor phenomenon? So were the coaches cooperating with me, knowing me as a supervisor and as lead researcher? Was there an element of compliance therefore with the CG? And what place does cooperation and compliance play within a peer relationship, which might be how the supervisors perceived our group and me within it (Hawkins & Smith 2006)?

There was clearly something for me around holding the ambiguity and erratic experience of the SG who were not behaving as I had hoped they would. There was also the reality for some that their supervisees showed up for supervision irregularly. And my tidy little self wanted to be a proper “practitioner-researcher” (Barber 2009) and do what I had said in my Project Proposal - was this me wanting to comply? And yet, maybe it was ok to be “good enough” and just hold the tension (Winnicott 1958 cited in

Heard 1978) as I do in the real world where clients do not show up, do not have sessions when they say they will, do not have supervision as regularly because they do not have much work on - life, business, personal crises occur and supervision is compromised. That is my reality, so what was going on for me with my idealised intention as lead researcher? This led me to consider the tension between practitioners and the coaching associations advocating or even mandating that executive coaches must have a certain number of sessions, over a certain period of time, with a certain number of hours of supervision (e.g. Association for Coaching 2012).

6.2.3 Preparation for ALS Meeting 2 with Supervisors' Group

I chose to arrange two meetings so that I would meet with everyone (two of the group were unable to attend the agreed date). I could have stayed with the original date and just met with the three who were available, but it was important to me that the other two were included in this ALS meeting process. I wanted to demonstrate my commitment to them and what I valued in their participation. It was important to me that I kept them engaged in the Project as I hoped they would benefit from the ALS process to inform their practice. I also wanted to affirm that this was an important ingredient in the Project, just as I see supervision being an important ingredient to our practice. Respecting the importance of the meeting with my commitment and flexibility to meet when they were available was another instance of the modelling of my practice.

I reminded them of the areas we would be exploring in an email before the meetings:

"In thinking about the agenda for the day, I've looked back to what emerged during our first day together.....We agreed that you would consider paying more attention to the connection between supervision and changes to practice.

I know that you'll have taken time to consider and reflect on what goes on at a relational level with your supervisees, so what is it about the relationship that enables or hinders disclosure? Is it you, the supervisee, the co-created relationship?" (AH Email to the SG 3rd March 2012)

6.2.4 On the Day - 8th & 14th March 2012

In the interests of clarity to the reader, here I amalgamate the key data that came from both meetings. We used the same process of check-in at each session and I posed the same questions on the flip-charts as the basis for gathering the Post-It data. The process was slightly adjusted for the second group which comprised only two participants.

At both Check Ins (Schein 1999) I wanted to model self-disclosure as the lead researcher to parallel the issue that came from our first ALS meeting where the participants had shared their concern with how much they shared of their own thoughts/feelings with their supervisees. I surfaced the tension I was holding as I wondered about why we had not yet managed to meet as a whole group yet, acknowledging that this might have been just how life is.

I shared some of my reflections emerging from the CG including what is meant by supervision, what is appropriate supervision, how we can make this work for the coaching profession. I acknowledged that some of my own "shoulds" in terms of format and frequency of supervision sessions corresponded closely with the professional bodies' expectations for accredited coaches. I compared this with what the coaches in CG were actually doing and saying. What was emerging was that some of my "shoulds" and the CG reality were not the same. I was enjoying the fact that the CG group were not being obedient and compliant as they shared their views that differed from the advocated "right way". My intention here

was not only to be explicit about what was going on for me, but also to invite and implicitly give permission to this group to challenge the “shoulds”.

I reminded the group of the shift in attention from the first cycle (“what goes on in supervision”) to here in the second cycle where we would look at whether and how their own practice and their supervisees’ practice was changing. We would consider what was influencing the changes and give particular attention to the impact the supervisor/supervisee relationship might be having on their client-coaches and consequently their work.

From this base I wanted to understand how the SG described the purpose of their supervision. This was prompted by my earlier reflections considering the changes to practice that resulted from supervision for the CG. I was keen to see how this aspect featured in the SG’s description of purpose. Here are a number of examples:

“To provide a self-holding space, where the coach can share whatever they need to about their work and themselves, so that they will learn about how they work, what gets in their way of offering the best of themselves to be effective with their clients.” (SG01 - 8th March 2012)

“To enable reflexivity in my coach,.....to get a meta-view and meta-perspective on the relational aspects of themselves and their work - provide space for the co-creation of ideas.” (SG02 - 8th March 2012)

“To help coaches reflect on their practice so that they can serve their clients and their clients’ systems even more effectively and there’s something about safety for the coach, the client and their organisation and there’s also something about modelling the responsibility piece and the adult to adult responsibility.” (SG04 - 8th March 2012)

6.2.4.1 Data Gathering - Post-It Flip Chart Headings

I followed the same format for data gathering as each participant presented to the three questions:

- * *How has your or your supervisee's practice changed?*
- * *What's influenced the changes?*
- * *What goes on at a relational level?*

6.2.4.2 HEADLINE DATA: How has your or your supervisee's practice changed?

In hindsight I realised this question was worded ambiguously, so it was not clear whose practice they were referring to in terms of change. So, what was this about? I think I may have been confused here. I hoped the supervisors' practice would change as a result of participating in the Project, and I wanted to know whether their supervisees' practice was changing as a result of their supervision. Notwithstanding that I was unclear in my brief to them, I was also curious that at the first of these two SG ALS Meetings, no one asked me whose changes I wanted to know about, and it was interesting that they tended to report on changes to their supervisees' practice in precedence to their own. At the same time, several did report that their practice was changing as a direct result of participating in the tasks of the Project.

Bearing this in mind, some of the changes the supervisors described included: shining the light on the supervisees' work and clients, giving greater awareness and insight. The relationship changed over time which impacted on how the supervisee showed up not only in supervision but also in how they engaged with their clients. Several supervisors described how they worked with and made explicit what was going on between themselves and their supervisees which in turn informed them both around what might be happening in the client system. By challenging the supervisees' assumptions and behaviours, the supervisors were able to

highlight the parallel process with coachees and help their supervisees identify new approaches.

“We are both changing as a process....I may be listening more deeply, I’m not sure....For me the quality of the relationship is crucial to what goes on in the work, so as I allow myself to move towards her and she’s allowing herself to move towards me, then it generates something in both of us, and she is learning to steady herself....another thing I do a lot more of as I sense her settling into herself is we step back more and we view the whole system, who’s there and what they are doing and how are they impacting etc. She’s making some really key shifts in her capacity to be present with people, as I make key shifts in my capacity to be present with her.” (SG01)

“In the previous session we had talked about contracting with a particular client and she was saying that the rigorous contracting that she had done subsequently, so there was a change in that she was much more rigorous about contracting and....what do I learn about myself in every Supervision session that I have a tendency to be the Coaching Police....and one of things I’ve noticed is that the learning happens in the space in between.” (SG04)

6.2.4.3 HEADLINE DATA: What’s influenced the changes?

Some acknowledged that the discipline of writing reflective notes for the Project was impacting on them and deepening their own reflections and insights. They also concluded that as they deepened their relationship with their client, so they both made changes and that this was emergent rather than through major “aha” moments. Some supervisors considered that their/their supervisee’s practice changed over time and as they

became more familiar with each other and the trust and safety was established.

“What’s influenced the changes is the coming here, reading over my notes, the deepening of my relationship with my Supervisee.....I’d like to reflect on the impact of this process on me and how I work - I know it’s having an impact, keeping the notes, sending them in, listening to you folk, listening to you - whole wonderful delicious cake.” (SG01)

“I am finding this project is really challenging my practice as a supervisor, and really getting me to rethink and reconnect with principle beliefs I hold about personal responsibility, accountability and in particular the relational nature of the supervisory relationship.” (SG05)

6.2.4.4 HEADLINE DATA: What goes on at a relational level?

The supervisors declared that trust and safety improved and deepened over time, which allowed both parties to disclose more thoughts and feelings and to bring more of themselves to their work, thus extending the learning for them both. By creating a level of intimacy in these relationships the supervisors saw how their supervisees took this into their coaching thus enhancing the development and learning for their coachees. They identified that there was real value in the continuity of the supervision relationship. Aside from deepening and building the relationships, in the context of the unpredictable and turbulent economic and commercial climate at the time, the supervisors noticed that their presence was stabilising for their supervisees.

“So, relationally it’s a very collaborative process, it builds a lot of interest and energy because we get, we get right into

understanding and knowing a very precious part of somebody's practice. ...it's a shared sense of responsibility and interest when you get brought into it, it's very intimate, and the articulating of ideas is very constructive." (SG02)

"My reflections on what happened that day is that I was more conscious...as this relationship develops I think we need to have an even more honest conversation about boundaries and roles in her coaching space and in our supervision space and be honest about what it's there for.....this supervision is new for her and we have come a long way after two sessions and my big questions are about intimacy, but it is happening slowly." (SG04)

"What has become explicit is the idealisation of the other. So I immensely honour her experience, practice and way of being, and she honours mine. As we have made that conversation more explicit it has fundamentally changed the work, the supervision works and its impact." (SG05)

6.2.4.5 The Closing Dialogue

One member of the group remarked on how I shared that I didn't know what I would do with all the data and I appeared to be ok with this "not knowing". I was comfortable with "not knowing" as I hope I can also sit with this when supervising and trust the "not knowing". (This was an echo of a conversation with my Project Consultant who encouraged me to stay with the uncertainty and not knowing.) This raised a question for me later around how comfortable the participants were with "not knowing" within the Project and how they managed any anxiety here, and whether this might show up in their practice as supervisors? Through this conversation, I was able to consider my own practice where the supervision space is where we can be still and calm for a while and let go

of trying to control. We remarked here on how all our supervisee/clients need to find some certainty and order in a turbulent and chaotic world. We also saw a parallel with how the supervisee needs to support the coachee in the client organisation where unpredictability and constant change are often the norm, just as I was having to do as lead researcher in this Project.

We explored how having guidelines and principles can allow for divergence and difference in approach, so here again were parallels with meeting the guidelines of the research approach, alongside the recommended guidelines from the coaching associations for coaching supervision.

As we were considering what we would explore at the next ALS meeting, one person acknowledged their particular enjoyment in this session as we concentrated on what goes on between the supervisor and the supervisee. I too acknowledged that this was one of my biases that I had introduced for us to explore even though it didn't emerge explicitly in the first SG ALS meeting. This was informed by my own practice with clients. I hold a question in my head when I'm not sure what's happening or if something is sticky or we're feeling stuck: *"I wonder what's going on between us at a relational level?"* I also shared my own view that the significance of the relationship in supervision has not been clearly communicated to the coaching profession as a whole until now and I was curious why this was the case.

What was reassuring and heartening for me at the end of these two SG ALS Meetings was that I again felt connected to the group, albeit we had not all met together. By sharing reflections and practice we were building our relationship, the trust and safety, thus meeting my need and wish for the opportunity for learning to emerge for us all through this process.

As it happened, I did not revisit my concern about why we had not managed to meet all together during these SG ALS meetings. I'm not sure what this was about. Maybe I was afraid to do this as I was keen not to upset what equilibrium and trust we appeared to have established. I was aware that if I did explore this, I may have appeared judgmental of the SG, that may have triggered defensiveness, shame and mistrust that may have impacted on their subsequent engagement and participation. This area of inquiry could wait as I was not sure whose concern it was: mine, specific individuals within the group, the group as a whole, a parallel for the unconscious phenomena in the field of supervision at the time.

I agreed with both groups that we would hold our third ALS Meeting at the end of May and thereafter hold a Review/Ending Meeting when we would reflect on our experience of participating in the Project.

6.2.5 My Reflections after the two Days

Here are some of my reflections and questions prompted by these two SG ALS meetings. They are unresolved, and inconclusive, with the intention of keeping an open mind until more data emerged through the final cycle.

- i) I was mindful that I had agreed with the CG to look at what they actually needed and wanted from supervision and what else in addition to supervision they needed to keep them "fit for purpose". Prompted by what had emerged from SG ALS2 Meetings, I detected that there might have been a possible difference between the CG and the SG experience of being in supervision, as supervisee and supervisor. At this point I decided to introduce new questions for the supervisors that were different from the questions being addressed by the CG. I wanted to invite the supervisors to consider what they believed was effective in their work and how they knew this and alongside this, why they believed their supervision was valued....I

shared this agenda in the email I sent to the SG in preparation for the SG ALS Meeting 3.

- ii) I was struck by one of our group conversations around rules and how perhaps I may need to be more flexible in co-creating the supervision format that I agree with each of my clients. This thought then prompted a question: how do we create a profession that honours individuality at the same time enabling certain minimum standards, that honours learning as integral to our practice, so we can understand and empathise with our clients as coachees/coaches?
- iii) I noticed that the supervisors expressed their appreciation of the value and importance for the supervisee to be able to discuss their whole selves, not just specific client work. I considered for myself that I might even pay more attention to all the elements that supervisees draw upon to inform their work - training, books, experiences, poems, music, retreats, how they are thinking about the world at large. Several participants from both CG and SG groups also acknowledged that their learning and transformation occurred over time and not necessarily within each specific supervision session. This left me wondering again about the significance of the “felt shift in the room” (Hawkins & Smith 2006).
- iv) In both of these SG ALS 2 Meetings some participants acknowledged how the Project, using the ALS approach was deepening their learning about their supervision.
- v) If our supervisees value their supervision relationships, how might this be playing itself out in the coaching relationship? Do coaches stay with their supervisor just as the coachee may wish to stay with coach or not? There was some assumption that coaching assignments have a finite life span whereas supervision contracts with these participants frequently appears to be more open-ended. This did not preclude

regular reviews, which I know I like to do periodically with my supervisees. So, how as supervisors are we modelling relational work that the coach then integrates into their own practice with their clients? How is the notion of dependency avoided in the supervision relationship while often being a major consideration and driver for ending the coaching relationship?

- vi) Following on from this and what had emerged in the SG group, I was also left wondering how honest supervisees are about the effectiveness of their supervision/supervisor. If the supervisee only knows one method, one approach, one supervisor, how does this familiarity help or hinder the process, the learning, changes to practice? How safe does the supervisee feel about challenging the supervisor? What conditions does the supervisor create with their client that makes it ok for the supervisee to challenge or end the relationship? What collusion might be occurring?
- vii) There is a need for flexibility to allow for divergent streams of coaching in differing contexts - avoiding the compulsion to conform - give them choices and let them do it - it's about noticing what is different when it works in different ways and learn from that and change our practice.
- viii) What do I need to offer in my supervision, with my various supervisees, at different stages of their development, in different contexts, and at the same time, ensure rigour and professional practice to serve the client - both individual and organizational - while helping to keep the coaches "fit for purpose"? How do I keep myself fit for purpose?

6.3 ALS Meeting 3 & Ending Meeting

6.3.1 Introduction

By mid April 2012 my sister was gravely ill and I was putting most of my energy into supporting her. I was only able to give minimal attention to the Project but wanted somehow to complete the final ALS meetings with both research groups which were already scheduled to happen during May. To share in the caring process of my sister with her daughter, my niece, was both a privilege and non-negotiable so the Project, along with other client work could and would wait.

Before the SG ALS meeting on 25th May, I worked through all the transcripts from SG ALS2 where our inquiry had been exploring the impact of the relationship on the supervisors and their supervisees. One participant had notified me that they could not come to the final ALS meeting and we had not managed to find a half-day for an Ending Meeting in all of June/July. So, here again, we were repeating the patterns from earlier, struggling to find a date and not everyone able to attend.

6.3.2 Conversation with “Critical Friend” - 20 May 2012

In conversation with Eunice on 20th May, I decided to invite the SG's thoughts on how to end our work together when we all met on 25th May. As we would be one person short, we would have “spare” time on the final day, so I offered an invitation that we devote part of the day to bring the Group to a close. Together, we explored again what appeared to be a contrast between the CG and the SG, whose engagement with the Project had seemed different and how this Project might be a manifestation of the stage of development of supervision within the coaching profession. We wondered again whether there were unconscious ego or power issues at play in the apparent lack of availability or whether the participants were just busy with work commitments hence being unable to find a separate date to bring the SG to a close.

Notwithstanding these reflections and the fact that I was extremely stretched and tired with my family circumstances, I was determined to arrive at the final day well prepared, open and curious. I framed what was happening with the SG as “this is just data”, somehow suspending my frustration and disappointment, wishing to appreciate fully what everyone had contributed. Again in hindsight, I realised that my diverse pressures and feelings were not atypical of what any of us may experience at different times as we engage in our professional activities. I was in regular conversation with my professional supervisor, friends and colleagues who listened to what was happening for me and this enabled me to engage with this final SG ALS 3 Meeting as mindfully and positively as possible.

I reviewed the SG ALS 2 notes and transcripts in preparation, and it was evident that the participants were very clear that their supervisor/supervisee relationships were both significant and instrumental in the effectiveness of their work. At the same time, I was mindful that some from the CG had talked about what was “not working” for them in their supervision. Some had reported frustration with what they described as non-professional behaviour/assumptions from supervisors at what the coaches “should” bring to supervision. I was also curious about a comment by one of the SG during ALS 2 in which they declared:

“My lot (as in supervisees) were very clear what happens when it’s effective and the impact it’s having on them”. (SG03)

This had prompted me to reflect that I may not always be so certain with my clients and in future might need to be more rigorous in asking them, but equally I wanted to explore the experience of the SG. I therefore devised the following questions which I invited the participants to present to when we met:

- 1. What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?*

2. Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? And what informs this?

6.3.3 On the Day

After others had checked in I shared some of my thoughts.

In the context of the Project, I shared my delight that the actual events in the Project corresponded closely with my original Proposal. In the Project Proposal I had declared with a certain “bravado” that I understood enough about the Action Research process that my plan would be successful without really knowing whether this would be the case. The fact that the process actually did happen as I had proposed was genuinely very exciting to me. I shared with the Group that when I presented the Project Proposal I had said to myself:

“I know what Action Research is and I’ve read my Peter Reason and I’ve read my Jean McNiff, my Jack Whitehead and those other seminal authors of Action Research”.

At this ALS Meeting I shared that now I felt that I *really knew* Action Research, as that is what we had been living. This of course could have been the self-fulfilling prophecy as an experiential learner that I summed up with *“I don’t really get it until I’ve lived it”*.

I then moved to the questions I had invited the SG to respond to (see above) in order to contextualise my suggestion for these questions specifically. I reviewed the phases of the Project from “what goes on in supervision”, followed by “what relevance the relationship holds”. This led to my question: *“So what else do we need to explore from the Supervisors’ perspective about Supervision and what goes on?”* I acknowledged that I had wondered:

“How do we know it’s working? How do we know what it is that we’re doing and what people are bringing and how supervision is influencing? How do we know that? And, what is it that’s working? And why? And what do our clients value about it?” (AH SG ALS Meeting 25 May 2012).

I shared my reflections with the Group on how this Project and the findings would make a contribution to the profession:

“Supervision (has been introduced) into the profession, lots of us are doing it, or not doing it, or practising it in different ways and the clients are coming or not coming, so where are we now with it? And my sense is that our data, our experiences will actually be, will make a contribution to the dialogue, the discussion, the enquiry about what is Supervision about.” (AH SG ALS Meeting 25th May 2012)

We agreed to follow the same process as previously for data gathering from each participant’s presentation as they addressed the two questions (Appendix 6.2 SG Data Gathering Timetable, Appendix Photos 6.6-6.9). I was still holding some tension in following this rigorous process, silently asking myself: “What about emergence? What about dialogue?” However, in hindsight, and with subsequent feedback from the group, the consistency and familiarity for the participants enabled them to concentrate on the task in hand and know that I was holding the process (Schein 1999).

At this stage we agreed that we would hold our Closing/Ending Session later in the day.

6.3.3.1 HEADLINE DATA: What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?

Effectiveness lies in the supervisor bringing all of themselves to the process and relationship; inviting the supervisee to do the same. Building trust and inviting disclosure enriches the content of the sessions.

Supervisors need to have the capacity to create the safe, calm, reflective space and curiosity about the person and their whole selves, who they are, how they are showing up. There is real value in working with different approaches e.g. metaphor, fairy tales, whole systems, psycho-dynamics of what is happening in the room.

“People tell me I have a capacity to create calm peacefulness around me and I’m good at creating reflective spaces. I think my supervisees are drawn to me because I’m very open to new experiences and new ideas and I love exploring new things. I’ve also got a lot of experience in the world of psychology and the world of relationships. It matters to my clients that I am interested in them as a whole person.” (SG01)

“I think I’m very purposeful in that I do think about what I am bringing, what I am offering, how are things shaking out, where’s the space for collaboration....and I look at what’s emerging and I’m purposeful about the task.....and I’ve been very attentive to working with the kind of limbic mode and quietening the logical analytical stuff, and I’ve brought in what I call “tacit” knowing... and we talk about the reason why we do that, as we are becoming more articulate with the subtle stuff for which we don’t necessarily have language but we develop this gradually.” (SG02)

“I know the supervision is effective when the client actually moves physically in the room. When asked, clients tell me they value looking at the art and science of the coaching space that they

have with their clients....as well as actually understanding their context in the system.” (SG04)

“I meet her in my gentleness, so she helps me connect back with my core, so that’s a real learning for me all the time I’m in a session with her. Just looking at her enables me to touch a part of myself which mirrors her, but also the way I am, because it’s so intimate, it’s also deeply challenging.we work with absolutely everything that we both notice in the relational space, and then try and map it onto whatever the agenda is that she brings.....We stand next to each other and illumine and look together and see what’s going on.” (SG05)

6.3.3.2 HEADLINE DATA: Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? What informs this?

When the supervisee acknowledges they are able to bring all of themselves to this safe, calm place and the supervisee appreciates the supervisor’s input/sharing/self-disclosure as sources of learning and modelling. Supervisors ask for feedback and explore what the supervisee is learning, the supervisor clarifies what is significant, relevant, supports their process and development.

“My client values that I know what her agenda is and I wait with her until it emerges. Value is interesting to me because it’s not just about her, it’s about me, and I think if I didn’t value my own way of working, I don’t think she would either. I’m more and more convinced that I’m able to step into a place in me which is real and authentic and not playing a part.....we are both experienced, and stage of development matters.....I think she brings her vulnerability and all sorts of concerns and enquiries and worries and things that are going well.” (SG01)

“Why do I think my supervision is valued by the supervisee? Feel, when I feel tingling and goose pimples that’s when, whatever is being created is valuable and valued, and when other people express what they are feeling in the moment or reflecting on having done it. When I asked the group what they found unique and special about the space, they replied: “The way we do it, presenting a case with two or three people doing some reflections is enormously powerful”. (SG02)

“There’s something intuitive about how I know it’s effective....there’s something about flow, you broadly know you’re walking around in a space, but there’s no sense of any one person in particular putting in a certain amount of energy, when that shifts I become very conscious of there’s something going on, that may be calling for attention. And we both will recognise it and when that happens simultaneously, rather than independently, then we know.....” (SG05)

Once we had completed the data gathering for these questions we took a break before engaging in a review of the Project and its impact for these participants.

6.3.4 Ending Meeting with Supervisors Group

As we came together again after lunch, I invited the participants to share their reflections of their experience in the light of the same questions I had asked the CG:

- * *What’s been the impact of this project on your practice?*
- * *What has been your experience of working in an Action Research methodology?*
- * *What has been my impact upon you, that I’ve helped or hindered you in terms of either your participation or your practice? (how may I have*

impacted on your contribution, your participation that may or may not support the data piece)

For several reasons I decided not to use the Post-It method for gathering this feedback. I was aware of being tired myself and that this may have impacted on how effectively I would be able to hold the process. I also knew that we would capture the data in the tape recordings. We had already done a round of data gathering using Post-Its in the morning and I was anxious that this might have been too repetitive. I invited them to speak, in turn, without interruption, to share their reflections. In hindsight there were some parallels with my own practice here as I'm aware that I do not always invite my clients to reflect on our work together in a formal way. However, I do have a document that I send in advance of periodic reviews and invite them to conduct a "Reflexive Rewind" (Aquilina 2007) that addresses their learning as supervisees and as coaches, any changes to practice, how our work together has informed their client work and their overall development and what impact I may have on them.

6.3.4.1 HEADLINE DATA: Impact of the Project on your practice

Some found that doing the notes was sometimes "*a bind*", however they found it a useful discipline that enabled them to consider their practice from a different perspective. This prompted them to reflect more consistently on their own practice as a result. They found that hearing others' perspectives, experiences, approaches was extremely rich and stimulating. One participant stayed with a "difficult" working partner for the duration of the Project, exploring their relationship and the work resulted in a significant change. Some mentioned that they noticed more about what was happening in their supervision sessions with clients as a result of participating in the Project.

"The note-writing sometimes has been a bit of a bind, but I've wanted to do it, because I wanted to support the process.....I've

become a bit more self aware now and I just notice more about what's happening and I'm sure it's because of this." (SG01)

"It's been really good for my practice to hear people talking about supervision and the way that they engage with clients, in ways that are similar and in ways that are very different and I've really liked that. I've loved listening to the group....and I now have a client who I really like....the big learning for me is holding my nerve.....and I've come today because I wanted to, not because I had to and that says something about the experience." (SG04)

6.3.4.2 HEADLINE DATA: Experience of Action Research

Again, this group mentioned that *"this hasn't felt like research"*. They really enjoyed working as a group (rather than previous research experience for some that tended to be one-to-one). The actual ALS Meeting process that gave the participants space to talk and be heard felt like a great gift. While the presentations were in fact twenty minute monologues, there was still a sense of dialogue as space was created to listen and engage. As I held the process with light-touch rigour, this made it easy for them to engage and participate, especially once they became familiar with the process. They were pleased to have contributed to the Project and at the same time, felt strongly that they too had learned for themselves through our work together.

"The post-it stuff is so fascinating because what do you write and what catches your ear and then when you sent the notes I think, "Oh, I never heard that" or "I never thought of that", so that in itself is absolutely fascinating.....Your diligence, your capacity to keep feeding in, so we feed in, you feed in, it's felt reciprocal and I've loved that. You know, we're not just giving you. You're giving us." (SG01)

“I’ve loved the way we’ve kind of co-discovered as well as co-created this space and yes, kind of co-noticed.” (SG04)

“My experience of this, this doesn’t feel like research to me, this feels like meeting with peers to have a discussion, that’s not even a discussion is the way you research stuff.....we have space to simply talk, uninterrupted which is a wonderful gift.....and how much more profound my own learning could be to continue to work in this way, with somebody like you, with holding the space that is different to if we were doing this (on our own).” (SG05)

“Action Research I think it’s been different from what I expected a little bit, it’s very...my experience is it’s very much about creating a space and dialogue for responsive dialogue, even though the practicality might be that we’re listening to someone presenting, there is still that sense of dialogue....and it’s far more interesting than being a research participant in an individual way, being part of a group is much better.” (SG02)

6.3.4.3 HEADLINE DATA: My impact on the participants and their practice

Feedback from the group included such elements as: with my holding the space, the participants were able to let go of whatever Action Research meant and the data gathering process, and engage fully in the tasks. People experienced me as warm, confident and present, which inspired confidence in them. They appreciated my methodical process and attention to the detail that left them free to participate. Somehow I established our relationship such that several people reported that they felt connected to me between sessions even without direct contact. They acknowledged the value of having the reflective space held for them and contrasted the ease of this with self-held peer learning groups. With my demonstrable commitment to the Project, its purpose and the participants, people felt engaged and I engendered in them a positive responsibility to me and the group.

“I find you wonderfully warm, you give me confidence that you absolutely know what you’re doing so I can completely let go of the process. So there’s something about you that enables me to let go of thinking about this and be here with us all. I feel connected to you between sessions even though we may not have a conversation.....there’s something about your presence.” (SG05)

“I’ve really liked the way you’ve held it, and I think it’s made me understand that when you are in a self-facilitating group you’re engaging in more energy holding it between you than I think I thought you were.” (SG04)

“(And with you not bringing your client), it’s meant that you’ve been able to do what we value, just hold the space.” (SG01)

6.3.4.4 My Feedback and Reflections to the Group

At this stage it seemed timely for me to share my feedback and reflections to the Group.

I was very appreciative to all the participants and shared my delight with their feedback that their participation had had an impact on them. In hindsight, again this legitimized my decision not to bring my own client-supervisees as data to the ALS Meetings, which might have taken my eye off the ball, and/or triggered competition amongst some members of the SG. I acknowledged their recognition of the value of my holding the space so they were able to focus on what people were saying, drawing on this for their own learning, sharing their reflections with others - in fact, modelling the process of what they do with their own supervisees. I wondered to myself then how they show up as supervisees themselves as this Project appeared to be a different experience for some of them.

I was pleased they found the ALS Meeting approach stimulating and fruitful as it enabled exchange and exploration. I realised that there was real value to my own practice through the process of the Project and

listening to what others shared, again, not needing to bring my own supervisees directly into the room. I know that some had been curious and interested to look at our actual group process in the ALS Meetings but reiterated that this could have distracted us from what I saw as the main task in these meetings. However, I continued to be curious around their attendance and the sporadic session notes' data and how this might parallel what is happening in supervision within the wider coaching profession.

6.3.5 My Reflections after the Day

As a way of closing this part of the Project, I reviewed this SG Meeting with Eunice where I shared the headlines of what had happened on the day. In listening to the tape of this conversation, I could hear the tiredness and perhaps relief in my voice that I had managed to complete this final Meeting but was too exhausted to acknowledge that I had passed a major milestone in the doctoral process. I still wanted to collate and transcribe the Post-Its and notes so that my data trail was complete. This I did with the help of my Virtual Assistant over the next couple of days.

6.3.6 Closure of this Phase of the Project

Once I had completed these tasks, and was up-to-date with my record-keeping, I put the Project to one side. My sister died a fortnight later. As I have already mentioned in Chapter 5, I put all the files, notes and diary for both groups into some plastic boxes under my desk where they remained for the next ten months. To do justice to the Project I wanted to create a clear boundary around it and keep it clear from the emotional turmoil and demands I was experiencing. In hindsight I realised that I was modelling self care and self management which I would hope to demonstrate with my supervision clients too.

CHAPTER 7 - COMPARISON OF CG & SG OUTCOMES

7.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I present the comparison of the outcomes from both Research Groups, noting the similarities and differences between them. I draw interim conclusions after each ALS Cycle and then offer concluding reflections to complete Part 2 of the Project Report.

Before comparing the outcomes, let me briefly re-iterate the steps I took with each group. The primary data emerged from the series of ALS Meetings with the Coaches Group (CG) and Supervisors Group (SG) over a period of nine months. In Table 7.1 overleaf, you will see the Questions we explored at each ALS Meeting that generated this data (as reported in Chapters 5 and 6). The data was gathered on Post-Its relating to each of these Questions. At the end of each ALS Meeting I typed up the Post-Its verbatim. Examples of these data for CG ALS 1 appear in the Appendix 5.1c, Photos 5.1-5.6, and for SG ALS1 in Appendix 6.1b, Photos 6.1-6.4.

I sent the participants in each group after each ALS Meeting: Typed Post-Its, a note of the key issues that had emerged from each meeting and the questions we would explore at each subsequent meeting.

After all the ALS meetings were completed I immersed myself in the data, listened to the tapes and re-read the transcripts and Post-its from all the ALS Meetings. This enabled me to extract collective themes. I transposed these onto flip charts (Appendix Photos 7.1, 7.2, 7.3) and created Mind Maps to help me to refine these (e.g. Appendix - Mind Map 7.1 & Mind Map 7.2).

I then posed the question: *How are the themes from the two groups similar and different?* An example of this comparison appears in Table 7.2 CG/SG ALS 1 overleaf. Appendix 7.1 CG/SG Themes Comparison shows the complete comparison of themes from both groups from all the ALS meetings.

Coaches Group - Questions asked at ALS Meetings

Session	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Induction			
ALS 1	Issues brought to supervision	What happened/ emerged - worked/didn't work - process, content and relationship	Changes to coaching practice
ALS 2	Changes to practice	What influenced changes to practice	Supervisor/ee relationship
ALS 3	Support in supervision - fit for purpose	Support beyond supervision - fit for purpose	In an ideal world.....
ENDING SESSION	Impact of research project on coaching	Experience of engaging in action research	Impact of Alison on you/your practice

Supervisors Group - Questions asked at ALS Meetings

Session	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Induction			
ALS 1	Issues brought to supervision	What happened/ emerged - worked/ didn't work - process, content and relationship	Changes to practice
ALS 2	Changes to practice	What influenced changes to practice	Impact of the supervision relationship
ALS 3	What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?	Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? What informs this?	n/a
ENDING SESSION	Impact of research project on coaching/ supervision	Experience of engaging in action research	Impact of Alison on you/your practice

TABLE 7.1 QUESTIONS EXPLORED AT EACH ALS MEETING

COACHES - CYCLE 1	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 1
ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION	ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION
Client issues	Well being of clients
Who am I as a coach - where am I going, overall practice	Who am I as a coach - where am I going? Overall practice
Skills issues e.g. contracting & endings	Skills issues e.g. contracting & endings
Personal well being/balance - sharing whole of self, addressing self doubt	Personal well being/balance - sharing whole of self, addressing self doubt
Reassurance, morale, confidence	Reassurance, affirmation, confidence
Physical, mental, emotional well-being	Physical, mental, emotional well-being
WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED	WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED
Validation, affirmation, reassurance	Use of poetry, visualisation
Technical skills/ideas/methods	Technical skills/ideas/methods
Meta-perspective - noticing patterns, whole systems issues	Mixed expectations of purpose of supervision
Holding space to explore/diagnose, resolve uncertainty, vulnerability	Supervisor holding back own experience
Recurring themes, next steps	Health concerns
	Issues around professional identity
CHANGES TO PRACTICE	CHANGES TO PRACTICE
How coach shows up in their work	Help supervisee find new places: space
Permission to review current supervision arrangements	How and when to share reactions/responses/ thoughts/feelings
Attending to awareness of whole systems	Clarity & confidence of supervisee
Accessing variety of sources	Holding spectrum of supervision & what's needed, purpose of supervision
Sharing all aspects of self	Parallel process - what might be happening in coach/client system
Positive - fulfilling; negative - issues around power, compliance, supervisor should know	Shining the light - may lead to transformation
	Modelling relational process so coach can take this away

TABLE 7.2 CG/SG ALS1 - COMPARISON OF THEMES

7.2 Cycle 1 - Comparative Outcomes

7.2.1 Issues brought to supervision

Both groups appear to have very similar intentions and purpose with the issues brought to supervision. Coaches want to explore and address the actual issues that clients bring to coaching including organizational issues which may impact on the work. Coaches seek to explore their overall practice and who they are as a coach, including their purpose, how they show up in the market, and how they are with their clients. They want to learn new theories and skills to expand their theoretical understanding of what might be happening with the client and/or between coach and client, and or the coach themselves in terms of development and improve actual coaching techniques. Coaches take their doubts, uncertainty, and confusion to supervision as they seek reassurance and affirmation to regain their confidence. Supervisors aim to create a safe space for the coach to unload events and experiences both within and beyond the coaching relationships including incidents from family pressures, life events and business pressures.

7.2.2 What happened/emerged?

Coaches received affirmation, validation and reassurance. They gained technical skills, ideas and methods. With the “meta-perspective” away from the actual coaching space, they were able to notice patterns with their clients and whole-systems issues. With their supervisors, coaches were able to explore their vulnerability and resolve uncertainty. They were able to notice recurring themes in their own practice and identify new steps and approaches.

Supervisors referred to some of the different interventions they used including poetry and visualisation. Sometimes their supervisees were not

clear on the purpose of supervision and how to make use of it. This created tension for the supervisors as it tested their pre-conceived notion of the purpose of supervision. The supervisors debated when and how to share their own experience and how this might impact on the coach. Sometimes the supervisors were supporting their clients with significant life events such as serious health concerns (and which may impact on the coach's capacity to practise). They also worked on the coaches' professional identity as coaches.

7.2.3 Changes to practice

For the coaches, supervision impacted on how the coach then showed up in their work. By reviewing their supervision experience, they scrutinised their current supervision arrangements - reviewing the purpose, relationship and effectiveness. Through supervision, coaches were able to re-engage with their clients' whole system rather than just the individual coachee and this gave them additional data from which to determine interventions and approach. By sharing all aspects of themselves in supervision, they were able to return to their practice feeling refreshed and resourced. The positive aspect of supervision was that the process and relationship was significant and fulfilling. Where some had a "negative" experience of the supervision process or relationship, there were issues around power and compliance and to me an implicit suggestion that "the supervisor should know" and/or address any mismatching or incongruence between what was going on and the actual needs of the supervisee/coach.

Supervisors helped their clients to find new places and space. They referred to a dilemma over when and how to share their feelings, reactions and thoughts (possibly paralleled the coaches' frustration and doubts over what to share with their clients); they sought to enable the coaches to gain clarity and confidence. By holding the full range of supervision tasks (Proctor 1997, Hawkins et al 2006, Patterson 2011) and what's needed, they sought to fulfil the whole purpose of supervision. They noticed the

parallel process (Casey 1993) of what might be happening in the coach/client system. By shining the light on the coach's work, they may contribute to the coach's (and/or client's) transformation. They were aware of modelling the relational process (de Haan 2012) so the coach can take this away and apply this in their coaching relationships.

7.2.4 Conclusions after Cycle 1

7.2.4.1 Coaches

Good supervision, which meets the coaches' needs and stage of development, is significant in terms of their personal and professional effectiveness and well-being. It forms a vital part in their ongoing development. Being in the dedicated safe space with a professional supervisor allows them to be completely themselves, re-connect with any aspects of themselves which may have been eroded/lost/suppressed by their circumstances and "re-balance", acknowledging the buffeting and pressures of the individual client demands in terms of presenting issues and relationships as well as life events. They do not automatically, consciously or deliberately associate supervision with "changes to practice".

7.2.4.2 Supervisors

With clear, agreed intention and purpose, the supervisors are committed to the overall well-being and development of their coaches. Their purpose is to shine lights, co-create a meta-perspective on the coach/client relationship and whole system to enable the coach to gain new insights and awareness so they provide the "best possible" coaching with their clients. They see their supervisees as "whole" people to work with whatever matters to the coach that may impact on the client work. They are mindful of supporting the autonomy of the coach and of modelling the relational process and methods which the coach can then take into the coaching.

7.2.4.3 Similarities and Differences

Both groups recognise the value of supervision as a place for reflection, learning and “recovery” for the coaches. Both appreciated the necessity for the coach to bring “all of themselves” to the supervision, mindful of how what may appear to be unconnected experience and life demands may impact on the coaches’ effectiveness. Neither group automatically referred to the purpose of supervision being “changes to practice”. However, this is implicit in the issues that were discussed e.g. seeking new theories or skills together with what emerged in terms of awareness, insight and fresh perspectives for the coaches. There were no significant differences between the two groups in this cycle of inquiry.

7.3 Cycle 2 Comparative Outcomes

7.3.1 Changes to practice

For the *Coaches*, supervision helped them to restore their centre, reconnecting with self (which may have been diverted or diluted through the demands of the coaching process and the impact of their client relationship/system and/or life events). The experience of being in relationship with their supervisor informed how they engaged with their clients, modelling the supervisor and/or the relationship, being explicit about what they were thinking and doing with their clients. By reflecting aloud in supervision, the coaches were able to clarify their thinking and explore ideas and develop new insights and awareness.

For the *Supervisors*, the changes to their practice included sharing the responsibility for the work with their coach/client. They were aware of modelling in supervision by being explicit about their process/thinking, anticipating that their clients may take this to the coaching. They challenged behaviours and assumptions - both the coaches’ and their own.

7.3.2 What influenced the changes?

Coaches: The supervision process and dialogue was a strong influence; having an opportunity to think aloud with an informed “other”; having a safe space to think and be wholly oneself and have a space to connect with inner strength and peace. The breadth of conversation was stimulating and inspiring; being able to see from the issues discussed which were the coach’s and which the client’s. By reflecting on their experience of supervision and actually comparing it with others in the research group, some were able to question whether their existing supervision was appropriate and how a “poor supervisor” can have an adverse effect on thinking and learning. (By poor, I mean such things as environment, the supervisor’s insistence on an agenda that was different from the needs or wishes of the supervisee, the supervisee not learning anything new - overfamiliarity).

Supervisors found that being in supervision with their own supervisor and reflecting on their practice influenced the changes. They were impacted by the intimacy, quality and depth of the relationship with their supervisees. Some mentioned that participating in the Research Project prompted them to be more reflective about their practice as supervisors which suggested that the cyclical process of engaging in supervision, subsequent note-making and ALS discussion enhanced their practice. By connecting with the process of the supervisor/coach relationship and the trust that was co-created enabled changes to practice. However I was curious to notice that while they acknowledged that the supervisee was not always clear on how to use supervision they did not comment on their own responsibility to help them both to reach a common ground around the purpose and therefore what the coach might bring to supervision.

7.3.3 Impact of Supervisor/Supervisee relationship

Coaches described the positive aspects including trust, support, validation and opportunity to be authentic. The supervisor held up a mirror; created bridges between the presenting issues, the personal well-being and patterns within the coach. The coach felt cared for as a whole person. With the coach respecting the supervisor's experience, knowledge and skills together with familiarity (being known by the supervisor) this allowed for deeper connection and more challenge. When the relationship was "poor" or they felt disconnected or disrespectful of the supervisor, the impact was negative, demotivating, incited apathy, resistance and a lack of engagement.

Supervisors sought to provide a "still point in a turning world" (SG01). By modelling a relational approach, they provided continuity and stability, deepening the trust and building the relationship which allowed them to support and challenge their supervisees; manifesting their respect and support for the coach's experience, knowledge and skills.

7.3.4 Conclusions after Cycle 2

Both groups acknowledged that their practice changed as a result of being in supervision. It was not always a measurable or definable change, but the process of reflecting on practice in a highly trust-based relationship was restorative and motivating. The coaches were re-invigorated with a sense of self and purpose alongside diverse learning in both theory and practice. Not surprisingly, when the relationship or respect was low the result was likely to have been little change to practice and coaches felt resistant to engaging in the work of supervision with that supervisor.

A significant phrase emerged in the group discussion at the end of the *Coaches ALS 2*: "*fit for purpose*". Thus, moving into the next cycle, the coaches' agreed to consider what they actually needed and wanted from

supervision (as in the relationship/process) and what else in addition to supervision they needed to achieve this “fitness for purpose”.

Prompted by this line of inquiry from the coaches’ group, and what I detected was a potential difference between the coaches’ and supervisors’ experience of being in supervision, I invited the supervisors to consider what they believed was effective in their work and how did they “know” this, and alongside this why they believed their supervision was valued....so the questions each group explored differed in the third cycle.

7.4 Cycle 3 Comparative Outcomes - COACHES

7.4.1 How do we support ourselves, keeping us fit for purpose?

Coaches found supervision provided a restorative effect in offloading their concerns - both personal and professional. They received encouragement and reassurance in terms of who they were and how they showed up with their clients. They gained clarity in their thinking and identified new approaches to take. They were re-energised by being attended to by someone with their best interests at heart, feeling acknowledged. By stopping to reflect on their practice they could slow down, explore new ideas and learn.

7.4.2 How else do we support ourselves, beyond “supervision”?

Coaches paid attention to their physical well-being through exercise and going into the natural environment. At the same time, they sought time to be alone, and found regular walking was valuable. Many found that practices such as body work, yoga, massage, homeopathy refreshed them. They enjoyed being in contact with other colleagues, exchanging ideas, supported by dialogue with others including those they deemed as role models. CPD events and reading provided different and additional ways to learn.

7.4.3 In an ideal world what would this support be like?

Coaches wanted to take personal responsibility for a package of supervision to include a variety of methods and participants, including 1:1 dialogues with a qualified supervisor/“other”. They wanted a relationship with a trusted other, who knows them and is committed to their well-being, who can hold up the mirror, support and challenge their thinking, their ideas and their practice. They did not want to be judged, and they wanted an absence of fear at the same time appreciating appropriate challenge. They wanted quiet, restorative time alone, with others as well as a supervisor. A “helpline” for instant access in a crisis would also be helpful.

7.5 Cycle 3 Comparative Outcomes - SUPERVISORS

7.5.1 What is effective and how do you know? Why is your supervision valued?

Some know that their training as a psychotherapist is helpful. The safe, calm, reflective space that they create is effective where they can work with the coach with everything that the coach brings, including the supervisor/supervisee relationship. There is real value in focusing on the whole person and practice of the supervisee. Specific interventions which are effective include working with poetry and metaphor, story-telling, visual imagery. The supervisors attend to all aspects of the coach including somatic (physical) information, appearance, feedback, level of supervisee engagement and discussion. When the supervision is effective, the supervisee continues to attend as they feel cared for, they are learning and developing, resolving tensions, valuing the reflective space as well as exploring different models and theories.

7.6 Conclusions after Cycle 3

There is a significant place for 1:1 professional coaching supervision, given an appropriate “match” between the supervisor/supervisee where

the supervisee feels they can be truly themselves, feel cared for, where they learn and develop and where they can “offload” the emotional and mental demands of the work, their clients, and other impactful life events. BUT this is not enough in its own right to keep coaches fit for purpose.

In addition, coaches need and want a diverse range of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual support, input, restoration and stimulation to keep them fit for purpose.

The supervisors have a good understanding of the purpose and methods that enable their clients to learn and grow through the supervision process and relationship - this latter being where they placed most attention.

The term “reflection” was seldom used by either group which I was curious about. Perhaps participants made an assumption that this is synonymous with supervision, informed or influenced by the original definition that I offered them at the Induction. At the same time, when considering what emerged in the Ending Meetings where people declared how useful they found participating in the Project which involved extensive reflection on their practice/engagement in supervision, this prompted me to wonder how this differed from their regular engagement in and process of supervision.

There was very little reference to exploring specific coaching techniques or tools. This might have been for a number of reasons including the level of experience of the respective participants in the Project and their specific needs. It would be a fair assumption that the participants were well skilled in core coaching techniques. The nature of the research inquiry to look at “what goes on in supervision” did not immediately invite a detailed analysis of specific supervision session content and there was only limited time allocated for each person to present at the ALS Meetings which informed what they chose to share. It might also mean that the participants may learn new techniques elsewhere i.e. at CPD workshops and events or from reading and dialogue with others, or in co-coaching relationships.

I would have found it helpful to hear what the supervisors' supervisees actually said to provide further evidence of the effectiveness of the supervision, in addition to the reports provided by the supervisors.

7.7 Ending Sessions - Comparative Outcomes

Common themes emerged for both groups when asked the three questions as I invited them to reflect on their experience of participating in the Project.

7.7.1 The Impact of the Project on your practice

They appreciated the value of reflection and how supervision provides a means of learning. They appreciated the value of thinking aloud, to distil ideas, come up with solutions. They valued hearing of others' experience to gain new perspectives. They found the discipline of writing session notes after their own supervision sessions very helpful and deepened their learning from supervision. They also found that participation and writing session notes enriched their appreciation of their supervision sessions. They developed more confidence in their practice (*"How much more profound my learning could be to work this way"* SG05).

7.7.2 Your experience of Action Research

Many said: *"This didn't feel like research"*. They remarked on a flow to the process and they developed a rhythm to engage more fully in supervision. Some suggested that running supervision in an ALS format along the lines of the way we worked in the Project could be really productive/useful. There was a real sense of co-discovery in the Project and the ALS group space. They valued the quality in the exchange and participants enjoyed sharing with and learning from others. They valued speaking in the group without being interrupted, feeling heard, acknowledged and their confidence was boosted in the process. They enjoyed contributing to and helping to shape the emergent themes of the inquiry.

7.7.3 My Impact on the participants and their practice

Feedback from the participants was that I made it fun and yet provided a discipline to the process. They found writing up between ALS meetings easy. They felt my care, consideration, rigour, warmth and empathy. They described me as a role model for research - so that it didn't feel like research. I think this was an interesting observation from a group of practitioners, who might have been holding pre-conceived or pre-conditioned associations with what research feels like. They valued my insight and depth of questions. Through my approach I inspired confidence, as though I knew what I was doing, so they could let go of the process and just participate as wholly as possible. They experienced me as positive, engaging, enthusiastic and gentle. I provided "*exemplary facilitation*", for example holding the space, managing the process, being non-judgmental and creating the safety to enable people to share their practice and their thoughts. I created a supportive, safe space for people to share their practice. My light touch was non-judgmental thus encouraging people to be open, share and disclose their vulnerability. People felt they were receiving (learning) as well as giving (contributing); this elicited a sense of connectedness and responsibility to "stick with it". Perhaps here lay the link with why this did not feel like research.

7.7.4 Conclusions after Ending Cycle

Through the process of participating in the Project, the participants gathered a stronger awareness and appreciation of their on-going experience of being in and engaging in supervision. Equally, their supervision relationships support their learning and well-being. They have a refreshed perspective on the role of supervision and the part it plays in bringing about changes in their practice and attending to their well-being as a whole. Here might be the link with the fact that they were actually reflecting more deeply during the Project than they would do under normal circumstances. Sharing of their practice in terms of how they engage with

their supervision gave them confidence indicating the value in the group learning process (Revans 1971, Wenger 1999).

Through exchange and dialogue in the Project they felt affirmed, appreciated (Isaacs 1999) and the discipline of meeting the Project commitments enhanced how they subsequently showed up at their own supervision. The relationships we formed demonstrated/modelled what they might expect and seek to co-create with their supervisors/ees. With my holding the stages of the Project over the 12 months, they were able to engage with their tasks i.e. reflect on their supervision, record this and then come to share this in the ALS meetings and co-discover what goes on in supervision. They appreciated how I facilitated the group sessions: my attention to detail, holding the process, attending to the relational aspects to create the safety and trust so they could engage and share their practice openly with others.

7.8 Summary

It is interesting to note that there is very little difference between the themes. At the same time, it was significant to consider the experience of those coaches who were not finding their supervision effective or fulfilling and the possible assumption that the supervisors believed they were being effective - hence asking them different questions in ALS 3. It is clear that both parties in the supervision relationship need to be clear about their respective expectations and needs, and it would seem that in some cases this initiative needs to be led by the supervisor. This raises the interesting element of who holds what power in this relationship and what part compliance or deference (Hawkins & Smith 2006) plays with any individual coach.

As a result of doing this thematic comparison of the ALS meetings I realised and appreciated that there was significant data in the transcripts of my conversations with others (e.g. Advisers, "critical friends"). I

subsequently reviewed and explored these to reflect on my own process through the Doctorate and I discuss this in Chapter 9 where I consider my learning experience at the centre of the Inquiry.

As discussed in Chapter 4, I did not engage with the participants in my final analysis of this data so these conclusions here are based on my own interpretations and reflections, supported by the data. However, based on their feedback as noted in Chapters 5 & 6, the participants gained personally and professionally from their participation in the Project, as they explored, reflected on and shared their experience of engaging in supervision.

From their feedback too, they felt they had contributed to each other's and my knowledge and understanding of what goes on in supervision. Many described how they engaged in their supervision differently as a result of the steps we took in the process. Here again this parallels my practice as a supervisor, where I don't attempt to reach joint conclusions from inquiry into my clients' practice. The learning for each of us is individual. And if I return to my original intention for engaging in the Doctorate, it was to create a learning platform for me, to find my voice, extend my professional development and authority and offer this as my contribution to the profession as a further consequence of this.

PART 3 - CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I draw the threads of this Project together and offer the conclusions that have emerged from my study.

This Doctoral Programme has been an exploration of coaching supervision. It was developed from my original concern and curiosity about why coaches do not come to supervision. At the same time, I wanted to learn more about coaching supervision to change, improve and deepen my own professional practice and offer some insights to the emerging coaching profession. The recommendations that follow inform how we might attend to this, and are based on what emerged from the Project, in particular from the ALS Meetings and my reflections throughout the Project Activities as I reflected on my own personal experience.

I now address the following areas:

8.2 The nature and complexity of executive coaching

8.3 Links with psychotherapy and mandated by the coaching associations

8.4 So, why supervision? What is it about supervision that is unique, special, relevant?

8.5 Three Pillars of Supervision

8.5.1 Importance of the supervision relationship

8.5.2 Create the core conditions of individual adult learning

8.5.3 Promote the value of reflection

8.6 Stages of coaches' development

8.7 Supervision or reflective practice is just one ingredient to keep us fit for purpose

8.8 Fitness for purpose

8.9 Final Conclusions

8.10 Further areas for research

8.2 The nature and complexity of executive coaching

The nature and complexity of coaching in an organizational context is demanding and challenging for executive coaches (Brunning 2006, Bluckert 2006, Hawkins et al 2006). They are drawing on a diverse and extensive range of skills and knowledge, at the same time needing emotional resilience and awareness to handle whatever emerges.

There is pressure for the coach not only from the individual coaching relationship and assignment but also from the organizational client system, with its cultural and contextual demands and the impact these have on achieving specific coaching outcomes. These pressures can trigger self-doubt in the coach (de Haan 2008). There is real value for the coaches in talking through their work with another person or group to connect with their confidence, allay their doubts, identify new approaches or interventions and refresh their energy levels (Hawkins & Smith 2006, de Haan 2012).

“...It was one of those boundary things, where there could be conflicting roles, would I be the right person to do that and I was feeling very anxious and it felt messy so brought that to supervision, and....all I wanted was to get clarity and think about, think it through, you know, a way forward, and I was thinking “why am I so anxious” and I was interested in where the anxiety was coming from because it was kind of unusual and I wondered am I picking up some anxiety from the system.....so what helped was having that non-judgmental space to reflect... being able to pay attention to the whole picture and the whole system.” (CG01 16 March 2012)

“I’ve always said that my emotional issues get in the way of my performance as a coach, so that’s something I want to bring to supervision, that’s very important for me....” (CG04 16 March 2012)

8.3 Links with psychotherapy and mandated by the coaching associations

Anecdotally, and echoed in the CG research group, some coaches continue to have negative associations with the term “supervision” itself, either with its management connotations or as the “borrowed clothes” (Schwenk 2007, Moyes 2009) from the helping professions, in particular psychotherapy. This plays some part in the large number of coaches who do not engage in supervision. At the moment there is no way of verifying the statistics here but a wider research study similar to that conducted by CIPD in 2006 (Hawkins & Schwenk 2006) may add to this.

There is also still resistance from some executive coaches who consider that their work does not involve engaging with their clients’ emotions which they associate with psychotherapy. I would challenge this notion on the basis that for sustainable change to occur, we must attend to the emotional level along with other cognitive or behavioural changes (Heron 1990, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Kegan & Lahey 2009, de Haan 2008 & 2012). What this does not mean is that we are trying to repair emotional history which is where psychotherapy can be crucial (Peltier 2001, Brunning 2006). This element needs to be addressed fully in coach training programmes, so that coaches understand the significance of emotion in helping or hindering change and learning. We are now gaining evidence from research in neuroscience that “proves” what has been fully acknowledged and accepted in the psychotherapeutic world. We now know how emotions play a crucial part in enabling people’s capacity to think, learn and act, and this provides appropriate “proof” for some coaches to accept the importance and relevance of attending to their own and coachees’ emotional well-being (e.g. Brown & Brown 2012, Goleman & Boyatzis 2008, Critchley 2010).

Some coaches continue to be sceptical about supervision being mandated by the coaching associations, and its connection with accreditation. While organisations seek assurances that their external coaches are in supervision (de Haan 2012) accreditation is still only one of the criteria for selection (Ridler Report 2013). Other criteria include the coach's credibility and gravitas and their ability to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of the organisational context in which the coaching will take place. Coaches are engaged by organisations whether they are accredited or not and this is borne out not only by the Ridler Report (2013) but also by the undisclosed number of accredited members compared with total number of members in for instance, EMCC and AC. In fact, neither of these organisations was available to provide the actual number of accredited coach members at the time of writing this Report.

At the moment several of the accrediting bodies (e.g. EMCC 2009, AC 2013a, ICF 2013) are defining specific competences and knowledge that a coach needs to demonstrate. This appears to make little allowance for the diverse backgrounds with the depth and richness of knowledge and skills coaches bring from their previous professional lives to this work. APECS (2007) invite this flexibility. I would argue that we need to steer away from establishing too tightly defined competency norms. The coach needs to attend to their complete personal and professional well-being.

“I have been bruised by the accreditation and obligation of accreditation and I failed my recent accreditation and I had the most appalling feedback, and I have another one in April, with the set of criteria getting longer and longer and I'm not sure how this keeps me fit for purpose.....what I have been doing is one or two hours a week on something, going inside, more into Hinduism, yoga, tai ji, that is reconnecting with my senses and my body and my physical well being.....and wanting space where no-one wants something of me.....” (CG05 16 March 2012)

I have another concern which lies in the recommended format of a number of hours of supervision as a ratio of the number of hours of coaching (e.g. Association for Coaching 2012). It would appear from this that newer coaches need more frequent supervision than experienced coaches when in fact arguably the depth and complexity of the work for “senior” practitioners is more demanding and therefore requires deeper support. If we take this numerical approach, we are in danger of creating a fixed recipe, so coaches subscribe to the bare minimum to comply with and engage in supervision solely to meet their accrediting body’s minimum requirement and are not asking themselves what they actually need to keep themselves fit for purpose.

The research participants’ approach and their commitment to supervision would indicate that autonomous practitioners are able to determine the appropriate level and frequency of supervision to meet their own needs. They take into account the volume of coaching and number of client assignments at any one time, as well as other personal or professional demands that impact on how they show up with their coachees. Our role as supervisors is to engage in a dialogue with our supervisees to calibrate and monitor together how they are taking care of themselves so they are able to engage effectively and consistently with their clients and to avoid “burnout” or “compassion fatigue” (e.g. Stamm 2010).

Given the fact that supervision is mandated by the coaching associations as an imperative for accreditation which invites some resistance, it is important not to lose sight of the purpose of accreditation in attempting to bring standards to our “profession”. However, we have not made much progress in this domain when as recently as August 2013 I received a call from a prospective supervisee who said:

“I’m going to tell you how it is for me, how I’m coming to this call. I’m feeling really resistant, I’m really nervous about it, it just triggers all my hot buttons about not being good enough. Having

somebody else supervise me, telling me that I'm not good enough and I'm really angry, a) with myself and b) with having to comply with the mandate from the coaching association so I can be accredited." (Executive Coach, CJ August 2013)

My reply:

"Let's explore this..... How can we support this as an exploration and an enquiry rather than a jumping-through-hoops, so let's not be driven by the associations or accreditation but rather by a wish to do our best possible work with our clients. For me, supervision is a generative, reflective dialogue process. We each hold an expertise, we have experience and a wisdom, we are drawing on a range of skills and together we are enabling an exploration of your practice to enable you to refresh and recharge and take a good look at how to keep yourself fit for purpose." (AH Reply to CJ, August 2013)

From this example, this persisting scepticism and resistance, that I would suggest is not unique to this individual, would appear to mask insecurity, fear of exposure and the potential for shame (Cavicchia 2010) amongst coaches, especially those who have been practising for many years and who may have become coaches through routes other than formal coach training programmes. The ambivalence and resistance indicated here may have been fuelled by beliefs such as: "I think I know what I am doing, and (unspoken) because I am charging a lot of money for this, I daren't go and disclose that I do not know" or "I do know what I'm doing because I have lots of experience, and clients keep asking me back so why do I have to engage, indeed pay to discuss this with someone else" or "there is no evidence/proof that this process called supervision makes a difference to my success/practice/profitability" (Passmore & McGoldrick 2009).

It is not surprising that with supervision being mandated, this removes the self-directed, voluntary conditions of adult learning (Mezirow 1991, Cox 2006, Gugliemino 1977) along with personal motivation and self-efficacy (Bandura 1977), so as a profession we need to keep addressing this from a number of directions.

“There’s some brain-washing about how many hours of supervision - it’s like a....the whole process has been imposed on us and now.....” (CG06)

“I bet there was a teeny bit of research years ago that said there was evidence.....” (CG03)

“...did the same piece of research say shall we copy it from counselling?” (CG06)

....”with the professional bodies, when I’ve talked - they seem to always be internally focused and forgot to ask “what is it that the client wants and needs in terms of buying a coach....” (CG04)

(Comments from CG ALS 3 -16th March 2012)

The profession needs to place more emphasis on the value of the supervision relationship and creating core learning conditions that may go some way towards allaying this resistance. We need to be encouraging coaches to engage in ongoing, regular dialogue and reflection as integral ingredients of their overall practice. Again, the coach training organisations and the coaching associations can play a crucial part in explicitly discussing and encouraging generative, reflective dialogue as the practice to support coaches’ professional development.

However, there are many self-motivated practitioners who take personal responsibility and have autonomy for their own learning who are already engaged in regular supervision/reflective practice. If we take the research group as providing some indications, executive coaches are engaging in one-to-one supervision alongside diverse additional activities with the underpinning informant being their appreciation of the value of having a

safe space to explore their practice, resolve dilemmas, re-connect with self, offload their doubts as they appreciate the complexity and demands of the process and practice of the work.

8.4 So, why supervision? What is it about supervision that is unique, special, relevant?

While the term “supervision” has and continues to provoke negative reactions for some, I believe that supervision with all its diverse dimensions including reflection on practice (Schon 1983) is vital to keep coaches practising safely, healthily and freshly (Proctor 1997, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Brunning 2006).

I propose that we continue using the term “coaching supervision”, which has now been in use for ten years (Coaching at Work 2013). I would add that the professional bodies and those of us offering supervision need to continue to highlight and emphasise those elements that represent the positive and valuable aspects of the process and how it supports and affirms coaches in their practice. We need to stress that supervision involves dialogue that is generative and co-created (Isaacs 1999, de Haan 2012). It involves interaction, exchange, reflection, joint reflection and learning, rather than one person telling another what they are doing wrong and how they should do it properly.

At the same time, given the inextricable links between standards and accreditation for coaches in the profession, what is our responsibility as supervisors? Do we hold the *“health of coaching”* in our hands as suggested by Bachkirova (2011)?

8.5 Three Pillars of Supervision

There are three ingredients that consistently emerged from my study that I now term “Three Pillars of Coaching Supervision” that underpin and provide the container for any models, tasks, types or functions of

supervision. We need to establish these clearly to embed supervision so that it becomes integral to our development both individually and as a coaching profession.

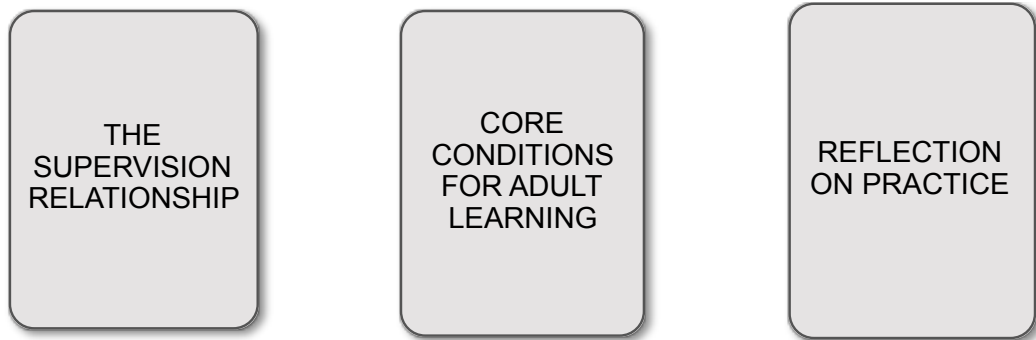
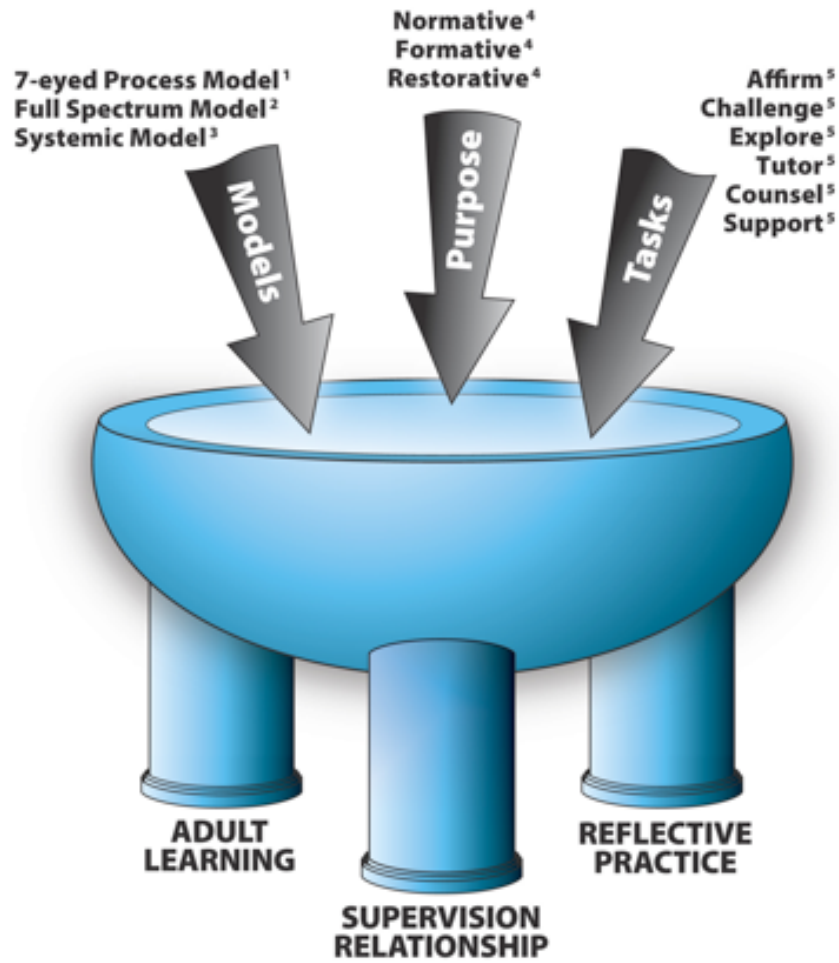


Figure 8.1 Three Pillars of Coaching Supervision

The Container of Supervision (Figure 8.2 on the following page) captures the essence of how the Three Pillars of Supervision underpin the models, purpose and tasks of supervision. I have listed some examples of each of these elements in Figure 8.2 below, which I also discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review.



Models	Purpose	Tasks
(1) 7-eyed process model (Hawkins & Smith 2013)	(4) Purpose - derived from Proctor (1997)	(5) Derived from Carroll (1996) & Hawkins & Smith (2006)
(2) Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch, Adamson & Orriss 2006)		
(3) Systemic Model (Gray & Jackson 2011)		

Figure 8.2 The Container of Supervision

8.5.1. The supervision relationship

The first pillar that we need to stress more strongly is the importance and value of the supervision relationship: the trust and safety that enables coaches to open up, share their fears and vulnerability so they can allay any doubts, re-connect with their confidence and skills, gain clarity about their practice that may have been challenged in the coaching assignment (Hawkins & Smith 2006, de Haan 2008) and which they expect of their coachees. Each person will have individual needs that may trigger their shame or vulnerability, perhaps from their own personal history and the impact of a specific incident or relationship with a client. It is up to the supervisor to create the safety for this to emerge and enable learning from this.

We need to stress how the process and relationship of the supervisor/ supervisee provides vital information at two levels: (1) what arises in the supervision space in the form of the parallel process (Casey 1993:78) and how this can raise awareness and give insights into what is happening in the client system thus give the coach direction in how to proceed with their client (2) through observation, modelling and feedback from the relational phenomena that exist in the supervision relationship, coaches gain self-awareness and insight that they can take into their coaching relationships (Hawkins & Smith 2006, Drake 2011, Hay 2007, Critchley 2010).

"I feel playful sometimes in my work, and so when I've been feeling playful and the supervisees, we are playing together...that to me is a sign of being effective, so not just that hand on the forehead a la Rodin, but you know engaged, even silent in that you know someone is really thinking.....when I've seen their eyes shining, that's a good sign isn't it? The other thing I thought about was the idea of "fit", that my personality and her kind of personality fit enough together, but our particular preferences, our way of seeing the world, our way of

being, was enough of a fit to get us together.” (SG01 25 May 2012)

If we accept Bachkirova’s premise that we hold the standards of the profession in our hands (ibid 2011), as supervisors we need to be mindful of how this power may play itself out in the learning relationship which is supervision and what impact this can have on the supervisee. Lane (2011) also suggests that the supervisor holds responsibility for the moral and ethical stance of the coach’s practice thus identifying the relationship is not entirely equal but at the same time, we are expecting the coach to be open and vulnerable as they share their practice with us. There is the potential in this dynamic that might disempower the supervisee, so they may either not show up or hesitate to disclose their vulnerability or challenge the supervisor’s methods, approach or relationship (e.g. Childs et al 2011, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Hay 2007).

We need to attend to creating the conditions of safety and trust to encourage a level of participation and disclosure (Carroll & Gilbert 2011, Hay 2007, de Haan 2012) that enables the coach to be honest about themselves, their practice and the working relationship. Based on the feedback from the research groups in my Project, and given that relationship is at the heart of supervision, it is important that coaches do not feel judged, but are supported to engage and learn and contribute. An important ingredient here is how we as supervisors model this in our own vulnerability and disclosure with the coach.

Coaches need to consider carefully what they need and want from a supervisor before engaging with one person (Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011). We need to educate newer coaches in what to look for, in light of their experience, their stage of coach development, and their learning style. Sometimes the coach may be inclined to blame the supervisor if the supervision is not rewarding or fulfilling. It is up to the coach to share what is happening and take personal responsibility for their learning. The

supervisor cannot mind-read and at the same time, as a co-created relationship, both parties need to give time to exploring honestly what is working and not working in their work together. The supervisor needs to invite the coach to share their views and feelings about the effectiveness of the supervision and what else may be needed to improve the working relationship and the approach to achieve the learning intentions.

*“I need to keep myself....the quality, I need to ensure that they are safe, you know all the “clean”, it all needs to be clean and whatever goes on in supervision has to help me to do that....and this new supervisor was as excited as I was about the new things I was uncovering and then we would uncover something together somehow. It was a very different style of relationship and she thinks it is because she doesn’t have any formal supervision model.....
(CG04 16 March 2012)*

8.5.2 Create the core conditions of individual adult learning

The second pillar of supervision is the creation of the core conditions of adult learning. Currently supervision does not appear to be framed sufficiently as a reflective learning space, and that by association might be deemed a positive experience. This is borne out by the minority percentage of those engaging in the process. With deeper awareness and understanding of how they learn, coaches are able to determine the most appropriate forms of reflection that enable them to engage in the process to maximum effect (Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011). We need to be more explicit about the complexity of the task of executive coaching assignments in an organisational setting (de Haan 2012, Hawkins & Smith 2006) and therefore the relevance and value of the “borrowed clothes” and the link with psychological-mindedness (Bluckert 2006).

When each coach takes responsibility for their learning, as self-directed, autonomous adults (Cox 2006) they then hold the personal motivation to

learn, to open up new avenues of inquiry, to enhance and develop their practice. Learner autonomy and self-efficacy (Bandura 1977) achieve different outcomes from arbitrary stipulations and guidelines. We need to highlight and give permission to “not know”, and at the same time inspire curiosity to explore and learn rather than provoke defensiveness and the need to demonstrate expertise (Schon 1987).

“It’s made me appreciate much more and take much more seriously the large number of conversations that I have with peers that are not really supervision but are, can be very transformational, restorative or challenging and I wouldn’t say they replace supervision but I’ve kind of brought them into my “mixed economy” of me as a coach, me and my practice.....I think supervision sort of drags you away from this, I want to be much more holistic, so me as coach, me as a practitioner, I want to participate in conferences, in workshops, in training....I’m seeing supervision as an element, not the only thing that we do.” (CG02 10th May 2012)

8.5.3 Promote the value of reflection

The third pillar of supervision is reflection on practice. We need to encourage coaches to prepare for their supervision sessions and write up their reflections afterwards as a core discipline. We need to encourage them to determine a personal format of the notes/drawings/emails that is congruent with their learning styles and ways of working (e.g. Raelin 2002, Bolton 2010) that enables them to capture recurring themes, patterns, new learning outside of the actual supervision thus developing their own form of “internal supervisor” as Casement (1985) calls it. When the coach takes personal responsibility for their supervision, their preparation and subsequent reflections give them a wider purpose than just meeting imposed accreditation requirements. As a result, there is a different

dynamic and outcome, and the process, the relationship and the learning is more highly valued.

8.5.4. Supervisee & Supervisor Responsibilities

Table 8.1 on the following page, shows the range of respective responsibilities of each person in the supervision dyad as they seek to co-create a generative, learning relationship. This table elicits the most significant elements that emerged from the research groups and which correspond with Carroll & Gilbert's (2005 & 2011) analyses of the roles and responsibilities.

Supervisee Responsibilities	Supervisor Responsibilities
Need to ask for what is needed to co-create a safe place to share the work, coaching practice and whole of self; avoid deference and compliance	Establish and co-create safe space to enable the supervisee to share their work; show trust, respect, non-judgment, presence, attending to supervisee needs - not supervisor agenda
Explore and establish clear purpose of supervision	Initially may guide on purpose and subsequently co-create with supervisee
Give and receive feedback to and from supervisor - attending to the relationship, what is working or not working to support learning	Give and receive feedback to and from supervisee to ensure the supervisee is supported in their reflection and learning
Prepare for sessions	Prepare for and manage time keeping in the sessions
Bring all of self, present work openly and honestly. This includes relevant client issues, concerns and anything else that may impact on coaching effectiveness and overall practice.	Identify areas to explore + offer new perspectives/theory to expand supervisee's awareness and understanding
Identify and explore own learning and development needs; apply learning that will enable changes to practice	Respond to and engage with the learning style and needs of the supervisee
Attend to own well-being beyond the supervision space to show up effectively with clients	Attend to own well-being to show up effectively in supervision session - engage in own supervision of practice
Keep notes and reflections from supervision sessions	Keep notes and reflections from supervision sessions
Share and explore concerns that may have ethical implications	Attend to and support supervisee to resolve ethical concerns
Manage boundaries and confidentiality	Manage boundaries and confidentiality
Keep in touch with developments in the profession that may impact on the field of executive coaching - organisational/ leadership themes	Keep in touch with developments in the profession that may impact on the field of executive coaching - organisational/ leadership themes

TABLE 8.1 SUPERVISEE & SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

8.6 Stages of coaches' development

It is important to distinguish what types of intervention (Figure 8.2) and frequency of supervision is appropriate depending on the experience and the stage of the coach's personal and professional development. New coaches are likely to need something different from those with experience (Stoltenberg & Delworth 1987, Hay 2007, Carroll & Gilbert 2005 & 2011, Hawkins & Smith 2006). Newer coaches may need more "tutoring" and are often looking for input in terms of practical skills and techniques (Hawkins & Smith 2006). More experienced coaches hold greater personal autonomy and are able to co-create the areas for inquiry and reflection depending on the demands of their client portfolio (Hawkins & Smith 2006) that also helps them to determine the level and frequency of their supervision.

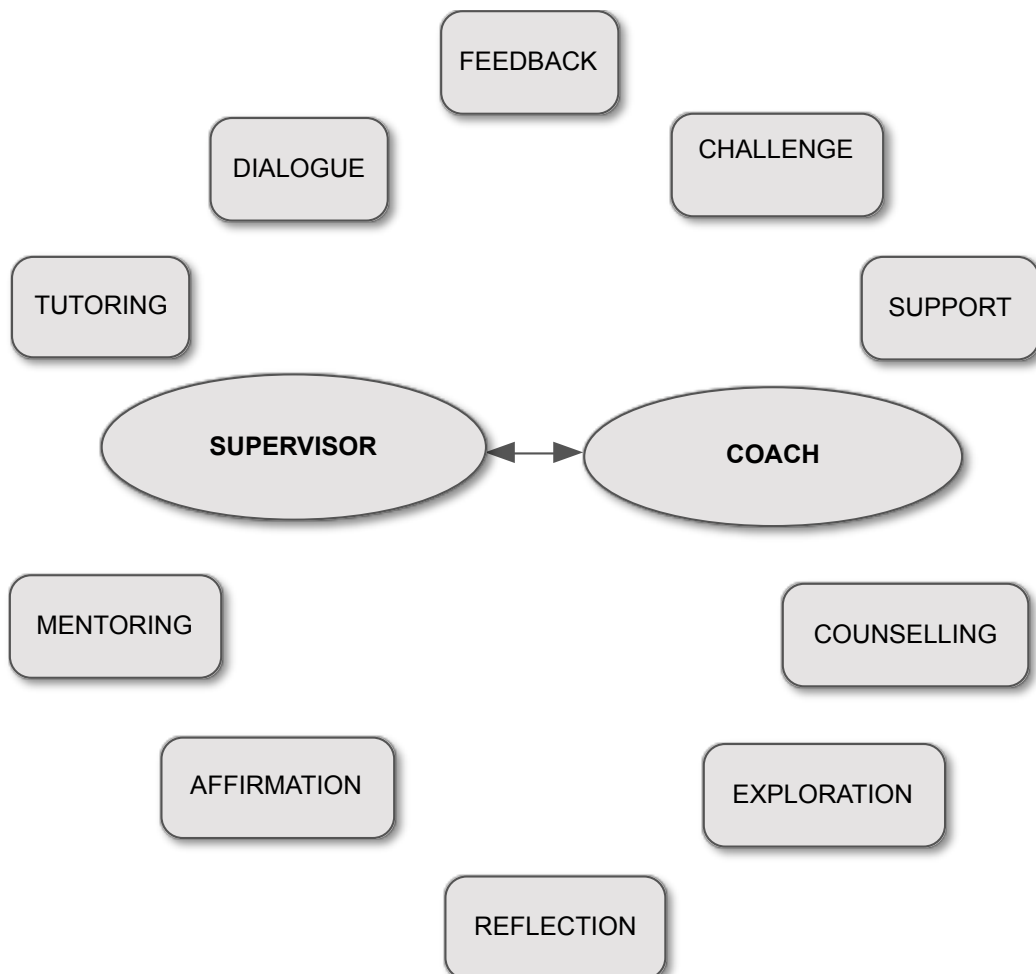


Figure 8.3 Types of Intervention in Supervision

As coaching is ostensibly a solitary occupation, there is real value for coaches to hear about others' experience and perspectives. While there are pros and cons to any format, be that one-to-one or group supervision, feedback from the research groups would indicate the value of a supervisor who has responsibility for holding the process so that participants can engage in the content rather than sharing this responsibility for the process as would happen in peer-based supervision. Through the process of dialogue (Isaacs 1999), coaches are able to clarify their thinking and explore all aspects of their practice. There is real value for the coach in being able to bring all of themselves, and not just specific client work, and being attended to by someone who knows and understands them.

It was also interesting to note that all the participants in the Project who had had training in supervision acknowledged how this had improved their coaching practice. So, what is in the curriculum of supervision training that is not in coach training that enhances coaching practice? I believe that in supervision training where such models as the "7-eyed model" (Hawkins & Smith 2006) and "Full Spectrum Model" (Murdoch et al 2006) form the bedrock of the curriculum, such areas as multi-partite contracting and addressing ethical dilemmas are explored in depth (Hodge 2013a), and these frameworks expand the coach's awareness and perspective beyond the initial one-to-one interaction between coach and coachee. With attention given to the supervisor/supervisee relationship as well as to the organizational context, with all its complexities of stakeholders and relationships, this whole-systems view will improve coaches' practice whether they become supervisors or not (Oberholzer in Brunning 2006, Hawkins & Smith 2006, Pampallis Paisley 2006).

8.7 Supervision - just one ingredient to keep us fit for purpose

My own experience of the doctoral journey and the findings from the Research Project would indicate that we need a variety of the modes and

methods at different times to sustain and expand our professional development. One hour's supervision with a qualified "Other" is not necessarily the be-all and end-all, nor the imperative, nor always the best solution for executive coaches. We need flexibility in how we engage in this process.

"...So we said, let's do 20 minutes and we kind of said, this will never work, you know we'll never be able to get anything done in 20 minutes, and actually it was fabulous, so one of the things that came out of this was you can have extremely powerful supervision in a very short time.....and I might go to a museum or gallery to look at beautiful things just to get away from the introspection and questioning yourself, so restoring yourself as a human being....and in an ideal world I'm seeing it as a package of things would be better than having something very structured, very routine. I want a more customised approach....." (CG02 16 March 2012)

"I put myself in a "special needs" just for this 2 year period. Prior to last August 2010 I worked with about 4 or 5 supervisors over a period of 10-12 years - in a traditional sense, we'd go and meet and talk about coaching clients because I had a coaching practice but that all changed when I became independent 2 years ago, when I took on this big piece of work, a group leadership programme, which has an element of coaching, not like anything I've done before, and I was doing the Masters. And it was so totally different, I thought about the supervision that I'd received and felt it wasn't going to be what I needed for this 2 year period, so I've contracted with both my supervisor and my supervision group to say specifically that what I want is supporting my morale and confidence during this period. That's the backdrop to it all, so I feel it's a slightly specialized arrangement and I'll change it when I come to the end of this period." (CG04 21st October 2011)

As a profession, we need to share the value of regular personal reflection on our practice to keep us fresh for when we engage in our client work. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that as autonomous adults, coaches need to make their own voluntary decisions around the frequency, format and purpose of their supervision, based on the volume of relational work they are doing that may include not only one-to-one executive coaching but also other OD and team-based interventions.

Having immersed myself in the Project, and feedback from the Research Groups would affirm this, there is real value in following the cyclical process of engaging in practice, meeting periodically to reflect either as a group or in one-to-one dialogue (Childs et al 2011). This is endorsed by Whitehead & McNiff (2006) with their advocacy of living theory where action-reflection enables practitioners to improve their practice and was well researched by Revans (1971) in the development of Action Learning Sets - this latter being well received and productive with the Research Groups.

Based on the feedback from my research groups, they derived real value from coming together in the ALS groups. As experienced practitioners this methodology of ALS as a safe, reflective container enabled the participants to deepen their reflections on practice through the process of listening and exchanging experience with mature peer colleagues. This process of deeper reflection is less likely to occur with newer coaches who perhaps understandably seek more tools and techniques to add to their "toolkit". While they may benefit from hearing about other colleagues' experiences and issues, they may find it more difficult to present and reflect aloud on their work in front of others. I would therefore advocate that when bringing Action Learning Set groups together that attention is paid to gathering practitioners with compatible levels of experience. The role and tasks of the supervisor shifts from "young supervisees" to "more experienced" i.e. with the former group there is often more supervisor input

in terms of “teaching” while the process becomes more peer-based exchange between experienced practitioners.

Equally in the research groups, new lines of inquiry emerged through the exchange and dialogue during the ALS meetings which again I would attribute to the maturity of the participants. With less experienced practitioners, I would envisage that the focus for attention and learning may tend initially towards specific clients and interventions rather than the overall development of each coach.

We need to make supervision worthwhile for coaches to attend and create fora where there is real value in working with like-minded practitioners such as in communities of practice (Wenger 1999).

8.8 Fitness for purpose

Coaches who appreciate the complexity of the process, know they need to support themselves and appreciate that they can’t and don’t know it all. They realise that what occurs in the coaching space is unpredictable, challenging and demanding. They appreciate that coaching may be emotionally charged and they see the link between emotion and learning and thus how well prepared or resourced the client is to make the intended changes which the coaching espouses to support.

With the complexity and demands of coaching, coaches need support. Supervision provides a restorative space for offloading concerns of personal and professional life. It is helpful to get reassurance, affirmation feedback and encouragement. However on its own it is not enough. We each need diverse methods that allow us to reflect on our work, either alone or with others to keep us fit for purpose. I would argue that supervision provides the entree or portal for us to engage in other supportive activities. Supervision might also encompass and take the form

of other activities - including bodywork, relaxation techniques, meditation and reading.

8.9 Final Conclusions

There are many activities that can fall under the heading of supervision as identified by the research. For those of us who appreciate its value, we are constantly exploring what we are doing and how we are doing it, wanting to learn new approaches, challenging our existing approaches, exploring what happens with specific clients.

Let's keep it voluntary so that people come to it from a place of enquiry and acknowledgement that we have more to learn; we can hold expertise and we don't have to be the expert just as the coachees hold a lot of expertise, so too the coach. At the same time, I acknowledge that many coaches do not appreciate its value until they have an experience of supervision.

I am left with some further questions. How do we create a profession that honours individuality, honours learning and reflective practice as integral to our practice and at the same time, supports certain minimum standards?

With the value and continuity of the supervision relationship, this raises a question around the purpose and type of supervision that is offered that has flexibility in the number of sessions and frequency. Likewise, how do we avoid creating coach-dependency in supervision over a long period? How does this familiarity help or hinder the learning and development over time? How can the supervisor create the conditions for the supervisee to challenge them, to provoke a shift? What compliance and collusion might be occurring?

I end this Chapter with some of my personal reflections in dialogue with my University Project Consultant as I was drawing the threads of this Project together:

“Each professional coach needs to pay attention to their ongoing well-being at a personal and professional level - and a fundamental ingredient is that they reflect on their practice. A primary resource for that is either individual or group supervision on a regular basis where they have the opportunity to explore and reflect on what they are doing, how and why.....and out of that then come all the diverse options such as rest, physical health, meditation, inquiry, exploration and on-going learning.....ALS groups would work if they know what they are scrutinising....and don’t collude.

The value of supervision is that the standards are being attended to, but so far, based on what’s gone on so far, there is some issue with people feeling checked up on, not valued, fearful of exposure and shame, which means that they are not reflecting on their work with a qualified other.....Whose standards? Because of the low take-up until now, the associations are holding the standards and that’s what’s being resented and the whole mandatory nature is the thing that is provoking the reticence, the non-participation.

To me.... the thing that has been missing, with supervision seemingly being arbitrarily imposed (there have been consultations)....imposition generates resistance.....we don’t pay enough attention to the complexity of coaching, and therefore how demanding it is, with no indictment of the practitioner; as a result, people need somewhere to go to offload, to re-charge, to clarify thinking, to learn.....

We need to emphasise the power of the learning in this relationship which shows up when the coach goes off to do the work....the modelling that this relationship provides informs the work there -

for those who are not aware of these phenomena, they may not be as sensitive to the value of being able to sit and let it all hang out and be vulnerable, and be held in the container for the learning to emerge through the dialogic process and relationship which is supervision.....

In terms of originality, there is no other study like this that has modelled the supervision relationship and process where we became stronger, deeper, more trusting and more inquiring as we went along. It is not possible to create these phenomena in a semi-structured interview or online survey” (AH Personal Comments 25 October 2013).

8.10 Areas for Further Research

In closing, I offer some suggestions for further research that I have not addressed in this Project.

There could be further work prompted by DeFilippo’s (2013) study of dyad relationships to identify the impact of “critical moments” in coaching supervision, along the lines of de Haan’s study in coaching (2008).

As there are still many coaches who do not engage in coaching supervision as I have defined it here in this inquiry, it would be interesting to explore the perspectives and practice of these practitioners and investigate their effectiveness. This links with a further idea which would be to establish what evidence there may be for any direct links between supervision and the individual client engaging in the coaching relationship.

I have not explored how supervision is developing to support internal coaches specifically and this would be an interesting line of inquiry as there is evidence that more and more organisations are creating their own teams of internal coaches (St John-Brooks 2014).

CHAPTER 9 - MY LEARNING

9.1 Introduction

In the process of analysing the data from all the ALS Meetings, I re-read my diary notes and the transcripts of many of the recorded conversations I had with Advisers, “critical friends” and other colleagues during the Doctoral Programme. Many of the earliest conversations were crucial in helping me to develop my research question, decide on the methodology, plan and manage the process and the tasks of the AR cycles. I realised that here too lay a wealth of information about my own process and development as a Practitioner-Researcher as well as Coaching Supervisor. I became acutely aware of the significant impact that several key individuals consistently played during my doctoral journey.

At the time I did not consciously frame all these connections and conversations as “supervision” per se, but I knew that support, input, reassurance, guidance and encouragement were fundamental as I proceeded in this learning journey, sometimes in familiar territory, sometimes in completely new territory and what else might we call this if not “supervision”? I concluded that the overall description for these conversations was *“generative, reflective dialogue”*.

In analysing these transcripts through the lens of researcher, I identified some recurring themes (Appendix Mind Map 9.1 - AH Keeping Fit for Purpose). As I reflected on these, I realised that I had unconsciously been addressing one or more of the questions that were asked in the ALS Meetings e.g. “what do I take to supervision”, “what emerged”, “what was the impact of the relationship?” In distilling the themes from these conversations it was clear that they were crucial in keeping me “fit for purpose” throughout the doctoral journey, and meeting my own wish to practise ethically and professionally. Thus, my own experience was a clear example of the parallel process (Casey 1993) with the research groups addressing the final question in CG ALS3 Meeting i.e. *“What do we need to keep us fit for purpose?”*.

9.2 Key issues I have taken to supervision over the past five years

a) *My practice as a coach and coaching supervisor*

- Client work, techniques, theoretical knowledge, my well-being, ethical issues, and how these might have been echoed in the ALS Meetings

b) *My development as a doctoral researcher*

- University requirements and expectations - protocols
- Doctoral themes - Ontology, epistemology, methodology, Project Activities, thesis development
- Adult learning and supervision - my own process
- Peaks and troughs of the process

c) *My emotional well-being and resilience*

- At a personal level, I have had some significant family events including two deaths. I have found the support from supervision invaluable during some particularly challenging and turbulent times
- The demands of the doctoral process have varied but it has been manageable with the support from all those who have been walking alongside me

d) *The coaching profession and the role of coaching supervision*

- Exploring what coaching supervision is
- What's happening, latest literature, events etc, why coaches do/don't come to supervision
- My identity and purpose in this changing profession

e) *Anything else*

- Which may or may not have appeared relevant at the time, but would inform our conversations and which inevitably led back to the Project and thus my practice within this.

9.3 What is at the core of these themes?

I am quite clear that no one person would have been able to meet my needs in all these areas and to me it would be naive to suggest the possibility. Furthermore, these conversations took place over a protracted period of time. Regularity and consistency proved invaluable.

Unwittingly and unconsciously I created a network of people who supported me both professionally and personally. Some of these people have been with me throughout the journey from the very beginning, and others I have connected with along the way and for all of them I have the utmost appreciation and respect.

When I consider the people involved (Appendix Mind Map 9.1) there are some **key qualities** they share in common:

- They are all highly experienced in their own fields as well as holding varying degrees of understanding of my field
- They are curious about the field that I am in and equally committed to their own learning and development in their respective areas of interest
- They are all very keen for me to succeed and have been consistently encouraging and reassuring to me, with no sense of competition or competing agenda, and wishing the best for me
- I trust them so when they support and challenge me I know that it is from a place of wanting me to succeed. Rarely have I been triggered into defensiveness by them, but rather by my own embarrassment at not knowing or understanding something
- There is a quality to our conversations which I term “generative, appreciative, reflective dialogue”. Whilst I frequently had an agenda to discuss, our conversation evolved, as we listened to each other, themes emerged that we explored, ideas germinated, and frequently we both reached new unexpected awareness and understanding
- They acknowledged my lived experience as “real” for me. Explorations, investigations and reflections were offered without judgment

- There was a strong sense of mutual respect. This process would indicate that the learning was not just one-way. These colleagues were stimulated by our conversations, which reduced my anxiety that I was taking up too much of their time with no reciprocal benefit (Bohm 1996, Isaacs 1999, Kline 1999)

I realise now that the common qualities in these relationships have been vital to my learning, in helping me to develop my thinking, my ideas and my understanding. I found support here that helped me to manage my own anxiety and fears as I was in phases of “not knowing”. I was able thus to access my courage to stay with my vulnerability in the “not knowing”, seeking the tai ji notion of “passive alertness” described by Raab (2007) when I was feeling out of control, and then be willing to improvise, adapt, experiment and learn.

The process of “dialogue” and the exchange of ideas and input from diverse parties has been inspiring and stimulating. Spending time with people who encouraged and affirmed me, listening to me in a way that helped me to bottom out my quandaries, issues, concerns, worries, dilemmas without judgement was invaluable. I have said for years that learning can be fun, and mostly this has been my experience with these people.

Here too, I was delighted to notice how my own experience emerged in parallel with the data that emerged from the ALS Meetings around what they valued in their relationships with their supervisors/supervisees. As this experience has been so rich for me, I would hope that I offer myself in the same way to my clients and contribute at least in part to their learning and development.

9.4 Insights from The Magical Mistake and Beyond

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the incident of the Magical Mistake had a significant impact at the time and subsequently on my practice today.

This incident gave me an experience of many of the factors that may influence why people do not come to supervision e.g. fear of exposure, not sure of being good enough and not actually knowing what I was doing. While the recurring message from the University was that I was a senior practitioner there was also a tension for me in being a “learner” and not knowing the standards expected at “doctoral level”. I experienced pressure in trying to meet the University’s requirements, not always being clear what these were. Over time, I learned to trust myself in this process, which perhaps corresponds to a stage of researcher development?

I am clear now when asking for feedback for myself exactly what I need and want and even when I’m unsure about this, I at least explain how I want this to be provided. In turn, time spent with my clients establishing what they need when they ask for feedback is vital. I have become acutely aware of creating safety in the relationships I develop with my supervisees so they can share their vulnerabilities with what I hope is little risk of shame or damage (Cavicchia 2010, Gilbert & Evans 2000).

With practitioners, I aim always to work from reference to their experience from which theory may be linked rather than the other way around, at the same time acknowledging their learning preferences of Accommodator, Diverger, Assimilator or Converger (Kolb 1984). I use appreciation and acknowledgment of who they are and what they’re capable of (Rogers 1957, Kline 1999). Given that I personally respond very positively to praise and affirmation, I am mindful to take this approach with my clients.

I seek to co-create the conditions for generative, reflective dialogue with my clients (Buber 1954, Rogers 1980, Isaacs 1999). As a social

constructionist, I learn through dialogue (Berger & Luckmann 1991). While I have no firm evidence of this, I imagine that many in our field may be the same given that they are attracted to this type of work of coaching and coaching supervision which are relational, dialogical processes.

9.5 One other possible option

At one stage, together with a number of other doctoral candidates in a similar field I tried to set up a Learning Set, informed by Revans (1971) to support each other. It was difficult for a number of reasons for us to find compatible dates, which was ironic given the experience I had of getting the SG together. Furthermore, we were all at different stages in the process, with differing needs and I found it difficult to ask for the support I wanted or needed as I was not always sure what this was. As others had their own agenda, I found that it would have been too easy for me to attend to them and not to me. This insight gives me some understanding of the value and the disadvantages of peer learning groups which are one of the methods coaches are using as a form of supervision. Who knows what may have happened if we had persisted to co-create this support group? Perhaps all of us would have benefitted over time if we had persisted and developed a learning community akin to a community of practice (Wenger 1999).

9.6 Further changes to my practice

Through using Action Research, I immersed myself in this approach of Action-Reflection as a living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006). It is highly congruent with my experience of trekking and my tai ji and meditation practice. I now aim to approach all my work this way and encourage my clients to do so too i.e. plan an intervention, take action, notice what happens as a process of data gathering, review and reflection on this and deciding on next steps. While we may not always have a clear picture of the ultimate destination until we get there, we do need to have some

sense of where we are heading. At the same time, we need to be willing to hold the ambiguity and uncertainty, and trust that through the process of the journey, clarity will emerge.

For those researchers seeking to *explore* or *investigate* a particular question rather than perhaps testing a hypothesis, Action Research allows the researcher to engage and participate relationally “with others”, while intervening practically in the system in which the work and research is occurring.

I found that the Action Research methodology was entirely congruent and supportive of this inductive inquiry where I sought to make changes to my own practice as well as explore and contribute to the wider coaching community.

With its cyclical, emergent and longitudinal “structure”, it also provides a container for and parallel process with consulting or coaching tasks and process. In a long term project which may be complex and involve many participants, either directly or indirectly, the AR methodology with its four stages, loosely held, provide “punctuation points” to allow new themes and directions to emerge and evolve.

If we take McNiff et al’s (1996) perspective that AR is about change to self and change to system, this is a strong methodology for managing and intervening for organisational change.

The process of taping, transcribing, reflecting and then listening to and re-reading my conversations is a powerful method to stimulate further insights and ideas for me. Whilst I may not be able to sustain this in all my client work, I am considering how I capture the key ingredients of this process on a regular basis.

I have come to appreciate the value of my attention to detail particularly when preparing for supervision. I pay particular attention to creating the environment and core conditions (Gilbert & Evans 2000, Carroll & Gilbert 2011) that will enable my clients to enter and engage in our work together safely and with curiosity.

Much of my understanding comes through having an experience first against which to then read and to compare. Incidentally, I can now read and understand some of the literature that made no sense to me three-four years ago because I have lived the process and now it makes sense. I thus find myself checking with my clients what part reading plays in their ongoing development and feel warmly supportive of those who admit with some embarrassment to having lots of books on their shelves which they have yet to read. We sometimes laugh about this phenomenon and I share the notion of experiential learning (Kolb 1984) and social constructionism (Berger & Luckman 1991) to explain what might be happening for them. Normalising their experience in this way reduces their possible shame and invites their curiosity.

Ultimately, the co-researchers in the ALS Meetings placed emphasis on supervision resulting in changes to practice - I find myself now asking this of my clients more often *i.e. what has changed since we last met*. Given the experience and feedback from the co-researchers, more often now I am encouraging my clients to write up their supervision sessions afterwards adding further reflections to our conversation to help to embed any new learning from our dialogue.

I delight in the power of *generative, reflective dialogue* (Isaacs 1999) and appreciate the deepening of the qualities of intention, listening, engagement and relationship in my practice. My intention as a supervisor is to cultivate a safe space for my clients to come to me to share their practice, be vulnerable, explore, co-create and refresh themselves. I am currently sitting with a remark that Michael Cavanagh from Sydney

University made at a recent supervision conference when he spoke of generative dialogue being “*when two people enter a conversation and neither one has the answer*” (quoted from session at Oxford Brookes Coaching Supervision Conference 20th June 2013).

Likewise, I think this comment describing “focused conversation” captures in part the spirit of the supervision dialogue:

“Rational discussion is an open, focused, serious, collaborative *dialogue of discovery* where you speak *so that you can hear*. In stating your opinion, *you invite others to differ*. *You listen to their differing views* and offer differing views of your own; moreover, you don’t merely *exchange views* with others; rather you *change* your own views. You state your opinions *experimentally*, for the purpose of thinking and developing your understanding” (Howard & Barton 1992:20).

I have become more appreciative of the need for flexibility in my supervision agreements in terms of frequency and duration of sessions with my clients. Rather than complying unquestioningly with the guidelines I adopted during my original training and the coaching associations’ accreditation requirements (which many of my clients now seek or have achieved), we explore how our work together will support

them in their coaching practice to keep them fit for purpose as the primary criterion, see how this aligns with creating generative working relationships that then meet accreditation requirements. I have found that most of my clients in fact engage in more supervision than the minimum requirements, which demonstrates to me their commitment to their on-going well-being and their appreciation of how supervision supports this.

9.7 Next Steps

Throughout the doctoral programme I have become increasingly involved in supervising coaches who are training to become coaching supervisors. I supervise the supervision of these students and run tutorials and teleclasses in topics such as Ethical Awareness in Supervision (informed by Carroll & Shaw 2013) and Psychological Contracting (informed by Carroll 2009). This is stimulating and rewarding as we explore the practice of coaching supervision and how we enable coaches to make the most of this process to support them in their practice.

As a result of presenting my Project at an EMCC Research Conference in 2012, I was invited to join the faculty as Associate Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) where I facilitated some of the Supervision Module on their MSc in Coaching and Mentoring in 2013. I have been invited to do so again in 2014. Sharing the purpose and practice of supervision with coaches-in-training on this Masters programme highlights to me the value of introducing coaches to supervision at this stage so that it becomes integral in their development. Based on my doctoral learning, instead of starting this module with definitions of supervision, I co-created a Module with SHU colleagues based on an experiential learning approach, where we spent the first day with the delegates actually reflecting on their practice of coaching giving them a lived experience of supervision from which we then introduced some of the theories and models. Feedback from the delegates was that this approach was inspiring and effective.

There are a number of coaching and research conferences in 2014 where I would hope to present my findings and conclusions from this Project (e.g. APECS Coaching Symposium June 2014, EMCC Research Conference June 2014, Coaching Supervision Conference June 2014, EMCC Conference November 2014). I trust that these will provide varied platforms from which to share my experience and contribute to the

continuing debate around the relevance and effectiveness of coaching supervision.

Most recently, I have been invited to work with an organisation seeking to create an internal supervision service for their internal coach team and already I have introduced the notion of Action Research as an approach. We have also discussed how Action Learning Sets would form a solid platform from which to develop the internal supervisors. I expect this to be the first of any subsequent assignments where I intend to model my Project approach and methods to develop coaching supervisors and to provide coaching supervision to other executive coaches.

9.8 And finally.....

This Project has enabled me to live my trekking metaphor and my tai ji practice: I can only take one step at a time, I can ask for help, sometimes I lead from the front, sometimes I need to rest, sometimes I follow others, walk alongside, and don't try to climb straight up or straight down the mountain, but rather tack across the mountain, conserving my energy, and having the strength to notice what is happening along the way. I did not trek alone, and nor do I practise alone as a coaching supervisor. I am optimistic that my experience will not only continue to inspire me in my practice but also inspire others seeking to understand and integrate coaching supervision in some way into their own practice.

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Appendices

DOCUMENTS

4.1 Email Invitation to Members of APECS to join Research Project

To: APECS Members

APECS has agreed to ask Members if they would be interested to volunteer for a research project - see attachment.

It is important that APECS continues to play a part in the development of Coaching and Executive Coaching Professional standards. Established Practitioners should be at the centre of this work.

This could also be a useful opportunity for your own continued professional development, as well as making an important contribution to developing the profession in the important area of supervision.

Please read the attachment, and reply direct to the email address provided, if you might be interested.

Regards

Pam Atkinson



This message and any attachments are confidential and may be privileged or otherwise protected from disclosure. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender as soon as possible and delete this message and any attachment from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you must not copy this message or attachment nor disclose the contents to any other person.

Pam Atkinson

Membership Secretary

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Association for Professional Executive Coaching & Supervision

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4.2 Invitation to Coaches and Supervisors to join the Research Project

Doctoral Research Project

An invitation to executive coaches and coaching supervisors

I am an executive coach and coaching supervisor working in the UK and I am undertaking a doctoral research project through The Institute of Work Based Learning at the University of Middlesex in the UK. My research question is:

What goes on in coaching supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession?

The project is an Action Research inquiry in which I will be exploring my own and others' experience of this process and for which I wish to 'recruit' two groups of co-researchers: six executive coaches and six coaching supervisors who are practising in this field in the UK.

I would like to invite you to consider participating either in your capacity as an executive coach or as coaching supervisor.

By engaging in the project you will have an opportunity to explore and reflect on your own experience of coaching supervision and through this process *review and develop your practice. At the same time you will be contributing to an important piece of research work which will make a serious contribution to the development of the coaching profession.*

The research project itself will be conducted over a period of 12-18 months during which time participants will gather their reflections on their experience of coaching supervision. We'll meet together three or four times in London to share these reflections on our respective experience of engaging in supervision. We'll then identify and agree our respective new learning/developmental goals for the next phase.

At this stage I'd like to hear whether you are interested as a possible co-researcher in the project. We can then discuss in more detail precisely what your participation will involve and how it will support your own development so that you are able to make an informed choice about whether to engage in the project.

Please contact me on either 020 8995 5485 or via email at alison@alisonhodge.com so we can discuss this together.

For further information about me and my work, I refer you to my website (www.alisonhodge.com).

Kind regards,

Alison Hodge

For your interest I have included my own definitions of 'executive coach' and 'coaching supervision' here below.

Executive Coaching

"Coaching is a process that enables an individual to develop and grow in terms of personal and professional capabilities and will result in greater effectiveness in the workplace. Through the process of dialogue, the individual gains awareness of their personal strengths and learns how to build on these. They identify blind spots about their behaviours, thinking patterns and feelings that may hinder their performance and development. Through the process of support and challenge coaching enables the individual to achieve self-determined outcomes." (Alison Hodge 2010)

Coaching Supervision

"Coaching supervision is a co-created learning relationship that supports the coaching supervisee in their development both personally and professionally and ensures that they provide 'best practice' to their client. It offers a forum for the coach to attend to their emotional and professional well-being and growth. Through the process of reflecting on their work, coaches are able to review their practice and re-energise themselves. Through the relationship and dialogue in this alliance, coaches receive feedback, broaden their perspectives, generate new ideas and maintain standards of effective practice. (Alison Hodge 2007)

4.3 Selection Interview Guide 10 Mar 2011

Semi - structured Conversation with Co-Researchers

Thanks for your interest and being available for this conversation

Purpose of the conversation - Like a chemistry session in coaching and coaching supervision:

- (1) for me to explain about my project and share something of me and how I work
- (2) to find out about you and your interest in coaching supervision and this project
- (3) to get a sense of whether we might work together
- (4) Whatever you might also want to get out of the call - would you like to add anything here?

2 parts - shall I talk first and then perhaps you may like to tell me about you.

1. From my perspective:

Let me tell you about the project, its purpose and format and what will be involved.

If I get into research jargon, please stop me. It's challenging to find the balance between arguing the case for my approach with the University and their criteria and explaining my project to fellow practitioners who appreciate how engaging in this project is an optional approach to their CPD.

As you probably know, many of the current seminal authors come from the helping professions. There is only one doctoral project in the UK so far, aimed at developing a theory of coaching supervision, based on the work of Ken Wilber. There are some small Masters' level projects emerging with research *on* supervision, often using quantitative, random sampling survey methods followed by semi-structured interviews. There's no doctoral level practitioner-based research in the field and I'm very much a practitioner.

I've been practising as a coaching supervisor for 10 years now. I want to contribute to the development of the profession and I see supervision (or whatever we call it) as integral to the integrity and well-being of the clients, the coaches and the organisations in which we do this work. As a practitioner with some years of experience, I wanted my voice to be heard across the profession and to generate learning for the community as a whole. With a focus on **executive coaching in an organisational**

context (and perhaps establish what may or may not be similar to/different from supervision in other fields including the helping professions).

In developing the project there were a number of key elements which are important to me:

1. I wanted to model the supervision relationship as closely as possible, so I wanted to research *with* rather than *on* my own and others' practice - hence co-researchers
2. For me in supervision, (as either supervisor or supervisee) the value of the relationship and how this supports my development and the development of my clients is as important as any factual knowledge or technical skills I may gain about my coaching or supervision practice. So it was important to develop a project where I could notice and reflect on my own practice over time, and in response to live experience.
3. I am primarily an experiential learner. I respond well and thrive on dialogue to expand my thinking and awareness, so action research was an obvious methodology which has an ongoing process rather than doing a few interviews with a few people on one isolated occasion.
4. I'm comfortable, indeed, enjoy the emergent nature of how things are/ what happens (in all aspects of my work) - hence taking an action research approach with no definable conclusions until we get wherever we are going.

Selecting my co-Researchers

It is important for the validity and reliability of the data, that I cast the net more widely than my own network. So, as you will know I've now put an invitation out via the coaching associations so that my co-researchers represent at some level, what is going on in the field at present. I'm pleased to say that virtually all the larger associations have responded very positively and have been very happy to endorse the project - and therefore have willingly sent out this invitation. It's early days and response has varied and that's data in itself.

So, participation in the project will involve:

Are you familiar with Action Research? It's about working on live practice in a series of cycles which are based on Kolb's learning cycle. Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect with a view to generating change in our own practice.

This is an action research project, so the data we generate will be based on our respective lived experience and the inquiry will be informed by and develop from one cycle to the next over three or possibly four cycles

- a. We have practical steps required by the University, such as gaining your agreement in writing to your participation, gaining agreement from your supervisor/supervisees that they are happy for you to refer to your work with them, anonymously

- b. Meeting for an initial briefing/contracting session - agreeing first cycle outcomes
- c. Spending 3 months supervising/being supervised and gathering your individual reflections about what goes on for you/the other during and between sessions
- d. Meet with the group to share/exchange our experience, explore possible changes we/you now wish to make during each of the the next cycles, considering the awareness that emerges from each group session and from our reflections on our practice.
- e. I'll write up what emerges through the data to create the end product of my thesis - present this in appropriate contexts such as conferences/ journal articles

[These will not be supervision of your supervision, they will be a sharing of experience and planning for next steps].

[These sessions will be digitally recorded and from these I will garner the data, write it up, agree with you all what to include, anonymously.]

So, would you like to ask me any further questions at this stage?

2. So, would you like to tell me now about you:

1. Background - key elements of your development/portfolio/nature of your work?
2. What informs your work as coach and supervisor?
3. What approach have you taken to your own supervision/CPD - how do you keep up with this for yourself?
4. Tell me about your supervision practice - what informs this?
5. On average, how many hours a month would you be supervising?
6. How many supervisees do you have currently, on average and what sort of coaching are they doing?
7. Would you be willing to come to London/teleconference several times (3 or 4) over the next 12-18 months?
8. How would you feel about keeping a reflective journal - in whatever form that takes - and sharing your experience with others - in an action learning set type of format?
9. How do you think your supervisees/supervisor may respond to your participation?

10. Likewise, you may like to consider whether any of your clients might be willing to participate, anonymously of course, as executive coaches in the project? And if so, would you be happy to ask them if they would be happy for you to nominate them. Thereafter, whether they engage or not will be entirely up to them and they may choose to share or not share their involvement in the project with you.

Process Check

How have you found this conversation/process?

Next steps

As you might appreciate, I am still expecting replies from some of the other organisations who will be sending out invitations to their members.

So, from what we've discussed, how do you feel about engaging in this project?

Anything else you'd like to know at this stage?

Once I've closed the books - probably end of March, I'll check in with you again to confirm that you'd like to participate and/or how this would work from my perspective. From there, we have practical steps required by the University, such as gaining your agreement in writing to your participation, gaining agreement from your supervisor/supervisees that they are happy for you to refer to your work with them, albeit anonymously and then agreeing the first date for us all to meet.....so we're probably looking at May/June for this. How would that fit?

4.4 Informed Consent for Co-Researchers 01 June 2011

Informed Consent Form for Co-Researchers

The purpose of this document, in accordance with the requirements of Middlesex University's Code of Research Ethics is to make explicit the nature of the proposed involvement between the researcher and the person or organisation agreeing to supply information (the participants) and to record that the research subjects understand and are happy with the proposed arrangements.

The researcher in charge of this study is Alison Hodge, of Alison Hodge Associates, who is a Doctoral student registered with the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. She is being supervised by Dr. Annette Fillery-Travis (Head of Department) and Dr xxxxxxxxxxxx (external). Complaints about the conduct of the research or principal researcher may be addressed to Annette Fillery-Travis, the academic advisor and point of contact for university regulations at the above address. The study is:

“An inquiry into what goes on in coaching supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession”.

The Research: The purpose of the research is to inquire into what goes on in the process and practice of coaching supervision for both the coach and the supervisor.

The research methodology is based on participatory action research and will involve at least three cycles of inquiry lasting over a period of approximately 12-18 months from June 2011 until mid 2012. A diagram showing three cycles appears in Figure 1 overleaf.

Participants will be asked to engage in the study as follows:

- A preliminary meeting/teleconference in London with fellow participants (approximately 4-6 executive coaches and 4-6 coaching supervisors in separate groups) to agree initial individual change goals in your practice (of either coaching or supervision)
- Establish and agree to ground rules for confidentiality and anonymity within the group
- Engage in up to 3 or 4 x one/two hour coaching supervision sessions with your regular supervisor/supervisees and from which you will record your reflections (e.g. the key issues arising, key incidents)
- Meet again in London with fellow participants on three or four occasions to report on what has changed for you and what emerged during your supervision, and to develop subsequent change outcomes for subsequent cycles. These group sessions will be digitally recorded.

Participation will give you an opportunity to enhance your understanding of the phenomena under question, engage in reflection on and make chosen changes to develop your professional practice. From this, participants may also expect to identify how to get more value from the supervision process and relationship. Overall, participants will contribute to an important area of coaching practice within the emerging coaching profession.

Given that you will be gathering reflections from sessions with your supervisors/supervisees, they will need to be informed of your involvement in the project and give their consent to you making anonymised reference to your sessions, with respect to your terms of confidentiality within your working agreements or supervision contracts.

Use of data: The aim of the study will be to present the research in appropriate contexts, academic and professional, through publications, conference presentations, teaching etc. If so requested, the researcher

will refrain from using any data that the participants consider sensitive (e.g. when there may be a danger of identifying participants or working partners, individual or organisational clients). The participants will be given an electronic pdf version of the final thesis on request.

To comply with research guidelines, data generated will be kept securely in paper or pdf electronic form for a period of three years from the data gathering period or submission and reward of the degree, whichever is the earliest.

The materials in the final thesis are the copyright of the author; they are not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the author's permission, and if quoted or reproduced they must be attributed to the author.

Anonymity of participants: All information acquired will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Unless specifically agreed otherwise, references in publications, talks etc to particular individuals or organisations etc will be anonymised and features which might make identification easy will be removed.

It is also understood that, as participants, you are free to withdraw from the project at any time and your data will be deleted from the data collection process and final results of the study up until the data has been absorbed into synthesis.

I hope this information has been useful in helping you decide whether or not to participate in this study. I am also happy to discuss the research with you in more detail before you decide whether you would like to participate. You can reach me at work on 020 8995 5485 or email at alison@alisonhodge.com

Declaration by the research participants:

I have read and am happy with the arrangements as set out above.

Signature of participant (s):

Researcher's signature:

Date

Research Methodology Diagram

The research approach is shown below and involves three or four cycles of inquiry, planning and engaging in coaching supervision sessions, recording and learning from these, meeting to share and review experience to then adjust subsequent actions.

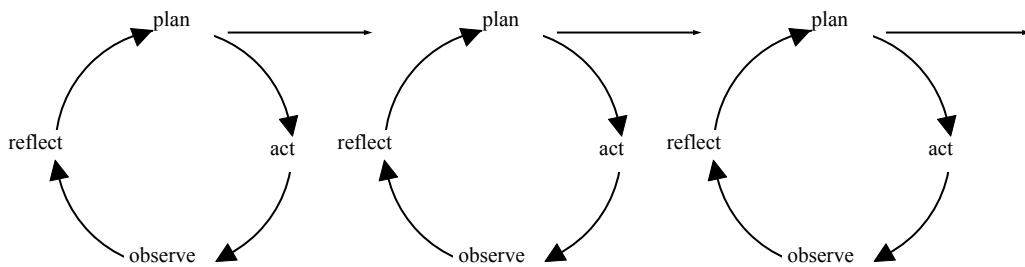


Figure 1: Four Stage Spiral showing Three Cycles of Inquiry

4.5 CG Induction

Introduction

Once the research participants had been identified it was possible to set up the Induction Meetings with each group to establish and clarify our shared agreement. I discuss the respective meetings with each group separately as they occurred at different times and what emerged was different. So here I share my experience and reflections from the Coaches Induction in June 2011.

Preparation

Informed by my practice as a supervisor, I wanted to pay particular attention to create the conditions that would allow the co-researchers to feel safe, to encourage their transparency and their authenticity that in turn would enable them to disclose their practice and ideas freely to generate rich data (Rogers 1980, Proctor 1997, Schein 1999).

The participants did not know each other and I would be inviting them to engage in a year-long Project where they would be sharing their experience and practice with me and the other members of the group. While I was not actually creating a supervision group, I did want to establish the foundations for the group to work effectively together, so they could bring and share their practice, as this would form the data for the inquiry. At the same time, I wanted us to be able to challenge whatever emerged in support of the core inquiry and potentially impact on their individual practice (McNiff & Whitehead 2009).

I created an Induction Mind Map (Appendix Mind Map 4 - Induction Preparation) as a key step towards my preparation. Here I “dumped” everything I thought we would and might need to address during the Induction Meeting. The map addressed several key domains:

- who was I, why I was doing this Project
- who were they and why were they participating
- my role and their roles as co-researchers and why I had selected them
- what I needed and wanted from them as they engaged in their respective, individual supervision, writing up reflections, coming to the ALS meetings to share this as part of the data gathering process, exploring the ideas and themes which emerged
- confidentiality within and beyond the group
- modelling the process of supervision but not actually 'doing supervision', so whilst we would all be learning we would take personal responsibility for our individual learning intentions and I would not be holding them to account for this
- their freedom to choose what they shared with me in their reflective notes and in the group sessions and complete freedom to leave the group at any time

This process was informed by my experience as a group supervisor and facilitator. I was mindful that we would be contracting to work together and I therefore attended to the three core dimensions of good contracting practice: the practical, professional and psychological elements (Hay 2007, Sills 2000).

There were specific ethical issues I needed to address as this was a Research Project (Gray 2009). I was tentative about the imperatives to meet the University protocols and was nervous about "getting it right". This event felt new to me with its foreground messages being this is a Doctoral Research Project, where we would be making a contribution to the profession, with an explicit research approach known as action research underpinned by formal Informed Consent with its ethical orientation, and what seemed to me a particular emphasis on the voluntary nature of their participation. This element seemed unlike my

supervision groups, where once we have contracted and they start coming to sessions, their commitment both physically and psychologically feels solid (while of course always being open to review). The language of research and phrases such as data gathering, data analysis, informed consent were not in my day-to-day vernacular.

Notwithstanding this, I was excited as I felt as though at last this was the real start of the Project and different from the previous selection process stage.

I set up a conversation with my critical friend, Eunice. It was clear that in my eagerness to “get it right”, and my anxiety “not to get it wrong” I was attributing huge significance to this event. I was in danger of overcomplicating what I would say and do with the group. Eunice and I explored this and I was able to distil and simplify my purpose for this first meeting:

“The purpose of the first meeting is that each of you walk away knowing what’s expected of you, and that we’ve agreed a way of working together that allows us to gather the data...” (AH in conversation with EA 13 June 2011)

Another key ingredient in this conversation was how Eunice helped me to prepare my personal approach with the group. I wanted to be articulate and clear as I explained the Project and our roles, and at the same time, I wanted to bring my curiosity to the foreground, to demonstrate my own capacity to inquire and listen and learn, and model what I hope I bring to my supervision sessions with my clients. While I would be holding my own experience of supervision, I wanted to suspend my “judge”, let go of my own assumptions to enable me to encourage all the participants to contribute. It was essential that we captured the diverse richness of the co-researchers’ experience and together we could start to make sense of

supervision, explore different options and hopefully reach some sort of “so what?” by the end of the Project (Schein 1999).

Holding the tension between meeting the University standards and trusting my experience of groups and supervision was all part of my preparation. I knew largely what I needed to cover in the meeting and therefore could concentrate on how I engaged with everyone and how I would deliver my message. I prepared an email to the group outlining the purpose of the day and offering a lightly held guide to what we would cover and what I would like from everyone so that they would have some idea of what to expect on the day. (Appendix 4.5a Email Invitation to CG Induction Meeting).

On the Day

Having been to the venue before, I was aware that the room was clean and fresh but, being painted white, had a somewhat clinical feel and appearance to it. As this was not congruent with the atmosphere I wanted to create (Schein 1999, Rogers 1980, Kline 1999) I prepared the room with flowers, provided fruit and biscuits and from this hoped people would feel taken care of. I put all the chairs in a circle so we could all see each other as we worked together (Schein 1999). I followed this approach with all subsequent meetings with both groups.

After initial personal introductions I invited people to share their intentions for participating in the Project. I shared the overall purpose, process and intended outcomes of the Project and talked about the current literature in the field and existing research. I shared my personal aims of this Project and we explored how we would contribute to the field.

As we explored the current context of the coaching profession, together we exchanged our different perceptions of what is happening in the

context of coaching supervision at the moment and how it is viewed, level of engagement, some of the possible hindrances.

We then moved into the domain of the practical tasks that would be involved and discussed what each participant would need to do in terms of engaging in their supervision, making notes of the sessions afterwards, sharing these with me, and coming to the ALS Meetings.

As part of this process, and while I had stated it clearly in the Informed Consent letters, which they had already seen, we explored whether they would seek the agreement of their working partners (i.e. their supervisors) and why we needed this. One or two people thought that it might be interesting not to tell their supervisors. I believed that ethically we needed to have the knowledge and agreement from their supervisors, similar to a multi-partite contract in coaching. Modelling our own practice of transparency and authenticity underpinned this agreement. If this changed the way these supervisors worked with their coaches, this would be a spin-off benefit from the core experience of the coaches and so much for everyone's good but would not be a primary aspect of the inquiry. We held a discussion here around the Hawthorne Study:

“Basically, a series of studies on the productivity of some factory workers manipulated various conditions (pay, light levels, rest breaks etc.), but each change resulted on average over time in productivity rising, including eventually a return to the original conditions. This was true of each of the individual workers as well as of the group mean” (Draper 1997:2).

This dialogue was momentarily stressful for me. As the question was raised (to tell or not to tell their working partners) and they looked to me for the answer, I was uncertain how to respond. However through discussion with the group, we agreed that it was appropriate and ethical to tell their supervisors. I reflected on this specific incident with EA afterwards as it

was a “moment of tension” between my knowing and not knowing and the expectations I held for myself in this (Raab 1997).

I then shared my hope that everyone would be able to engage in at least three supervision sessions between each ALS meeting that would form a solid basis to provide data for themselves and for the inquiry. We also discussed ideas for how they would each reflect on their individual supervision sessions, and collect post-sessions reflections. At this stage I did not want to impose a strict formula/format for this as I do not do this with my supervision clients, but rather I invited them each to devise their own method. They could build on their existing approaches or methods of keeping reflective journals or create something new. The important piece for me here was that whilst I wanted their data, their approach needed to suit their learning styles (Kolb 1984) and methods of reflection, so they would get maximum effect/benefit. I was also unsure at this stage precisely how I would analyse the data, which may have informed my flexibility. I did however ask them to write up each session as they attended supervision and feed this through to me. This would help to sustain the momentum of the Project by having a specific action after each supervision session and I would have contact with each person between ALS meetings. This regular reflection for the participants proved to be an important aspect in their experience of and learning from the Project and I discuss the CG’s feedback to me during the Ending Session later in this Part of the Report.

Finally, we discussed how we would work within the group in terms of confidentiality. I explained that it was important that the content of the ALS meetings remained within the group as this was the research data. Everyone respected this while at the same time we agreed that they could mention to others outside of the group that they were participating in the Project but that they would keep fellow researchers’ identities anonymous.

I came away from the afternoon very pleased and relieved. We had started. People appeared genuinely enthusiastic and engaged and I had achieved my purpose. My only disappointment was that my digital recorder had somehow jammed and I therefore did not have a taped record of the event. As a result, I was unable to capture verbatim why these people had chosen to participate in this Project so I asked them to send me their recollections of why they had joined the Project as I was writing up this Project Report. Here are four of the replies:

“My primary motivation for getting involved with the project was a desire to contribute to the coaching profession in particular on the research side. I also knew that I would enjoy the interaction with Alison and the other coaches, and that it would give me a unique opportunity to reflect on my practice outside of my work setting. I like to reflect alone and also with others. I gain a lot from being able to interact about my work and clients in a safe setting. I also like to apply learning from reading and other sources to my work.” (CG01)

“I was attracted to the project for several reasons – because I’ve had mixed experiences of supervision, some wonderful and life-affirming and some completely counter-productive and negative, and was interested in exploring this further. I felt that my mixed experiences might be useful to the research. I am also interested in the apparent received wisdom that all coaches must have supervision, and felt this needed to be challenged more rigorously, to find out if it’s true, and what the real benefits are, especially in the knowledge that many practising coaches do not currently take supervision for their work. I thought that being in the research group might help explore and answer some of these questions.” (CG02)

“I was attracted to the project because of the fact that what seemed to be emerging as “advised practice” for supervision in coaching wasn’t going to provide me with the sort of support I need as a Business Coach, and that I was already providing to others as a Supervisor.” (CG04)

“I was attracted to this project for a variety of reasons including:

- The opportunity to be part of a team*
- The opportunity to give something back to the profession*
- A safe place to explore supervision, supervision standards and practices*
- A way of supporting a professional colleague on the challenging journey through a Doctorate, having just completed my own and finding it a lonely place at times*
- A place to be supported as well as supporting others” (CG06)*

At one level not having a recording did not appear to be a major problem. However, my subsequent experience of reviewing recorded conversations and transcripts proved invaluable in enabling me to recall ideas and generate further reflections that I might not otherwise have captured, so I am not sure what might have been missed from this session and might have informed my reflections.

Key issues that emerged from this meeting that stood out for me was that in the market at this time “supervision” as a term could be off-putting and one or two people in the group expressed their scepticism towards how supervision was being advocated and mandated by the coaching associations. At the same time, one or two others shared their experience when working with coaching consultancies who only used associates who were in supervision. Another person expressed their concern that they might not be suitable for the Project because of the way they were using

supervision. In addition to these perspectives, I noticed that we were all curious as to why some coaches do not come to supervision. There was a high level of engagement from the participants from which I sensed that we were setting off on an inquiry that would be extremely rich in terms of data. I did not try to draw any conclusions from these insights but noted them “as data” to create the basis for the ensuing cycles of inquiry.

The final element here lay in a shift in what I describe as my role and identity. In my Project Proposal I declared my intention that I would be one of the group, as supervisee in the coaches’ group and supervisor in the supervisors’ group. I think at the time I held an idealised view that I could sit with the coaches and be one of them, sharing equally what I take to supervision. My intention to research “with” rather than “on” had informed this intention (Heron 1996). However, during this Induction, I became aware that this did not feel comfortable or indeed possible. As I held the role of lead researcher (Herr & Anderson 2005), facilitating and managing the process, drawing themes together, raising questions for further discussion, considering how this would inform the profession, and administering the Project for myself, it seemed inappropriate and unfeasible to contribute my own supervision session data in the same way as the others. I subsequently explored where I was now placed along the “insider-outsider researcher” continuum (Herr & Anderson *ibid*).

In addition I realise that this prompts an interesting conundrum for peer supervision groups which I discuss in Chapter 8.

After the Event

I debriefed with two critical friends and we explored the following issues.

With EA, I explored my early tension as this was symptomatic of my initial lack of confidence in managing a Research Project. As we discussed this, I started to see the distinction I needed to make between me as supervisor

and me as lead researcher. While my preferred approach with groups is facilitative (Heron 1999), there are times when I am clear, decisive and sometimes even prescriptive around a task, and because of my experience I have confidence to do this. While here in the Project I needed to be decisive as lead researcher, I did not have the same certainty and I reflected that this may correspond with the experience of new supervisees embarking on supervision for the first time or coachees engaging in their first coaching experience. EA and I agreed that as I gained more experience on the research pathway, this was a small step in the direction of finding my voice.

With JR, we explored how I had co-created the core conditions for enabling everyone to come together and reach some form of consensus about something that was new to us all (e.g. Proctor 2000, Rogers 1980, Schein 1999). We were embarking on a new inquiry that had not been done before in this way and with my attention to detail and preparation, I had managed to achieve a level of participation and disclosure at a psychological level which resulted in a very productive Induction Meeting that I hoped would support the group's development (Schein 1999, Corey & Corey 1997, Barber 2009) as we moved forward. On reflection, I realised too that this had actually started from the original wording of the invitation to join the Project and how I had engaged relationally with each person thereafter. This struck me also as an indication of the maturity of the participants. I found this conversation very affirming and reassuring as here was positive feedback from an external observer as I related the story of this first event.

Further reflections

Only in hindsight did I realise that I did not ask the participants to define or commit to what changes to practice they were seeking through the programme which I had proposed we do in the Informed Consent. I think

this was probably partly nerves on my part as I was anxious to engage them in the Project without being overly controlling or asking them for “too much” commitment. After all, I was not their coach or supervisor. At some level, I knew (Heron & Reason 1997) that their practice would change both through their increased attention and reflection on supervision and through their participation in the ALS meetings. This was affirmed during the CG Ending Session some eleven months later when we reviewed the impact of the Project described in Section 4, Chapter 5.

Here again, I was modelling my practice as a supervisor. I invite my clients to consider their learning “intentions” for our work together and we do not establish too tightly defined learning goals, particularly with experienced practitioners. My intention is to encourage supervisees to take personal responsibility for their learning and in my view this allows us the freedom to open new and unexpected avenues to explore (Cox 2006, Knowles et al 2005). At the same time I realise there may be an issue here, as I am also aware of my role in supervision as one of the holders of the coaching standards for the profession (Bachkirova 2011).

4.5a Email - Invitation to CG Induction Meeting

Hi everyone

I'm really looking forward to our first meeting on 14th June when I can share more about the purpose and intentions for the project. I propose that we'll include some time getting to know each other, co-creating and negotiating our ground rules around confidentiality, and how we manage ourselves in and as part of this group.

It'll also be helpful for you to give some thought in advance to your individual expectations and intentions, what you hope to gain by participating, what you would like to bring to the group and what you hope to receive from the group. There'll be time for us to share whatever you choose here. We will then map out the first cycle of inquiry.

Informed Consent:

As with any academic research project, it is important that you know what you're committing yourselves to. To this end, I've attached an Informed Consent letter which sets out the key elements of the project and which I propose that we discuss when we meet, so that you're happy with what's involved. I've discussed most of this with you already, but I wanted to give you the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns with the group as a whole. I'll then ask you to sign this on the day for my records, so *please bring this with you*.

Practical Details:

I've booked a room at The Hub in Victoria, very close to the station and will provide afternoon tea!

Date: June 14th **Time:** 14.30pm to 17.30pm **No. of people:** 7

Location: Hubworking Victoria, 9-11 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0BD. You can find a map here: <http://www.hubworking.net/index.asp?PageKind=ContactUs>

Do let me know if you have any questions in the meantime, otherwise look forward to seeing you at 14.30pm on 14th June.

Warm regards

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4.6 SG Induction

Introduction

Unlike the coaches' group, where it was straightforward to get a meeting date for the Induction in the diary, getting the supervisors together was protracted. It took us 3 months to find one afternoon when all six of us could attend. I was both curious and anxious about the apparent lack of availability, wondering if people may have lost interest. Given that this was already a group of five and not the six I had originally specified in my Project Proposal, I was worried whether this would have implications for the Project if someone dropped out, not that I could foresee what those implications might have been at this stage. I was also unable to draw parallels with my own client work where such events are typical, as I was still wrestling with my need to "get it right" as the Doctoral Research Project.

I noted to myself:

".....I wonder what is going on at an unconscious level with this group? What might they be afraid of? Were they nervous about sharing reflections on their practice with other colleagues? What might this be saying about the profession at the moment and the identity/status of supervisors? How might this be indicative of how coaches engaged in supervision, playing itself out through the supervisors as a parallel process" (AH diary note 31 May 2011)

I followed a similar preparation process with the supervisors as with the coaches. I reviewed my Induction Mind Map (Appendix Mind Map 4 - Induction Preparation) prepared my notes (Appendix 4.6a SG Induction Agenda 4th August 2011), and sent an email to let everyone know what

they could expect and what I would be needing from them at the Induction Meeting.

When we finally met in August one person could not attend, so I met with that person later to give them a full brief and offer them the same option to withdraw that I had offered to the group. Aside from wanting the group to “comply with” my Project Plan, I was aware that part of my disappointment here lay in what impact this might have on the group’s development (Tuckman 1965, Schein 1999). I hold the view that getting started all together allows a group to create the safe shared space that contributes significantly to people’s engagement, commitment and willingness to participate. I was therefore worried about how this might impact during the subsequent SG ALS Meetings.

In fact, this configuration was symptomatic of how the SG showed up throughout the Project.

On the Day

In spite of my earlier concerns, the day went well.

I followed a similar agenda to that which I had used with the coaches i.e. after a short personal, biographical introduction from me I invited others to do the same and share their interest in the Project at this stage. What was common here with everyone was that they appeared to be curious about their practice, their development and their learning. One person acknowledged their interest in joining this group as they worked on their own as a supervisor. Here are some comments from the participants.

“I’ve known you a while and I’ve always loved your inquiring mind. I thought “Alison’s hatched something, this is interesting” and also I’ve a research background too....I just love the whole process - finding out what’s going on. Here’s a great opportunity to have another look at what I do and learn from other folk as well.” (SG01)

“I was attracted to the Project for valuable reflection on my supervision practice amongst experienced colleagues..... I was keen to contribute to a collaborative group dynamic and observe how the dynamics evolved.....I am usually in charge of leading learning processes of this nature – encouraging others to embrace ambiguity and complexity and to work at the creative edge between order and chaos - and seldom a participant being ‘done to’ and was intrigued to notice my response to this, whether I would feel empowered or otherwise, exhilarated or scared.” (SG02)

“This Project seems an outstanding opportunity to get insight into the ways in which others engage in supervision, to create a disciplined space to reflect together over the next year and to make a contribution to the profession.” (SG04)

“I was attracted to the Project as I wanted:

- To learn from other practitioners in the field about their practice in a way that was safe, ethical and supportive in order to hone my own practice*
- To share my learning and practice to grow as a coach with others and contribute to the field of learning*
- To contribute to a formal, rigorous study of what goes on in the supervisory (and coaching) relationship to understand it better*
- Support a professional colleague in their endeavours to provide research that would enhance and support the growing professionalism of coaching supervision” (SG05)*

What struck me already was how these participants had grasped and held an expectation that this Project represented a new and different way for them to engage in their ongoing development. I found this thrilling and already my earlier anxiety was dissipating.

After introductions, I went on to share my perspective on how I saw the executive coaching market at the time, with its growing emphasis on accreditation and professionalisation, and thus the emergence of supervision. I declared my biases and what had drawn me to develop the Project.

In terms of my interest in Supervision.....I'm fascinated by the complexity of relational work, I'm curious with those who don't see any need to reflect on their practice. How do they know how they're doing? My own bias is that if they pretend that "I'm the same person I was after this session as I am tomorrow".....I must hold that with curiosity rather than a judgement, because my own interest is in what goes on relationally, what do we generate between each other e.g. What do I take out of a room where I've been coaching that may land as residue with another relationship or with that same client from here on in. What impact might that have on the work that I'm doing with an individual client as a Coach and therefore how can I make sure I'm practising safely, healthily, freshly and looking after my own angst because what the heck might I be picking up from the individual client and the system in which they are....."

To me it is what has underpinned my curiosity about the value, the relevance of what Supervision may be able to add in the support of us being 'Professional Coaches'Do you want to respond at all? I'm curious about your responses(AH SG Induction Aug 4th 2011).

The participants shared their different perspectives around the profession, supervision and accreditation for both coaches and supervisors. Some shared my view, others offered a gentle warning around not judging those coaches who do not come to supervision but rather look to supervisors "to explain its value more clearly" (SG02). There was also a thread regarding

its origins coming from psychotherapy which was not necessarily well received by some coaches whose work is based on a “healthy” frame rather than a “medical” or unhealthy model. This discussion was lively and we exchanged a variety of views, listening to each other, building on the themes. I was encouraged by this for a number of reasons. It demonstrated that the people were interested, they were curious to learn from each other and exchange opinions. Based on this evidence, I concluded that people already appeared to feel safe in the group which allowed them to share their individual perspectives.

I then went on to explain Action Research, why I had chosen this approach to develop the Project and why I had selected these participants to join me, as they represented not only an appropriate level of experience but also came from four of the five coaching associations I wanted to include.

I wanted to find a research methodology that would be co-operative, collaborative, that would be co-created, it would be participative, that would be relational and guess what, we’re describing what Supervision and / or Coaching is about and Action Research is an approach that enables me to do that, us to do that, we to do that.” (AH at SG Induction 4th August 2011)

After a break, I explained what would be involved for them as participants. In re-reading my transcript here, I realised that I was talking about “we” and each of us selecting a supervisee who would be our “working partner” for the duration of the Project. There were a number of issues here.

The group was showing tremendous interest and enthusiasm for choosing more than one supervisee from their clients for themselves, and in some cases for working with a whole group from group supervision. One person suggested here that as a group we might explore our own group process as a parallel for what goes on in supervision. I discouraged this particular line of inquiry with the group as this did not seem to have a direct connection with the core research inquiry, however I subsequently found

that I was personally reflecting on this after every ALS meeting with both groups.

I was delighted by their eagerness as it demonstrated their engagement. However I was concerned about how they would manage what could become a significant workload i.e. to write up reflective session notes from more than one supervisee over 9 months. Equally, I had an image of being inundated with data and I was unsure at this stage how I might manage that. I suggested they start with one person each, and we would see what evolved. I had already explored this issue for myself with my professional supervisor and I was very clear who I wanted to work with from my client base as she personified the value we both got from our work together. While the client I was considering as my “working partner” had initially started in supervision as a “should” for accreditation purposes, they subsequently came to appreciate that through dialogue with me, and reflection on their practice, they were gaining unique learning and insights not available elsewhere with peers or training courses.

So, what was happening here? By mentioning my prospective working partner, I indicated that I would be one of this group as an equal co-researcher and bring one of my clients to generate data. For some reason I had suspended my intention (*if I had made that decision by this stage*) or may have still been undecided to take the lead researcher/facilitator role without a client, or maybe I was just speaking of the “we” to ally with them. Perhaps by nominating myself as an equal co-researcher I wanted to make it clear to the group at some level that I too have credibility in the field with all the authority that comes from that.

We explored how they would write up their reflections after their supervision sessions and I offered headline suggestions that they cover what happened, any themes, thoughts, feelings, concerns, changes in approach all being possible content. I clarified my own intentions around

confidentiality and we agreed how we would respect each other's anonymity and material when discussing the Project outside of the group.

We agreed that longevity of relationship with their "working partner" was more important than the actual number of supervision sessions they had. In hindsight, I realised that I forgot this ingredient during the subsequent ALS meetings when I became anxious about how few notes the supervisors were sending me.

Again I was aware of a tension for me in leading this session, providing clarity around the tasks which would be involved, engaging them in co-creating the various elements e.g. how many clients and how many sessions and how to write up the notes. On reflection, I may well have appeared to have less authority and be less decisive than some of the SG may have wished or needed and indeed would have been appropriate (Schein 1999). At one level, I was left wondering whether this may have impacted on the Group's subsequent engagement and adherence to the process. At the same time, I realised that part of me was resisting being completely prescriptive (Heron 1990) as I also avoid this in my supervision practice. I enjoy the emergence and unpredictability when together with my client we generate fresh insights and perspectives, so perhaps my approach with this SG was influenced by this, especially given that there was a "peer" quality to the group which felt different from the coaches' group. I was also holding the tension that I picked up in the room, wondering what of this was mine, what of the Group's.

My Reflections after the Day

I reviewed my experience and thoughts from this SG Induction Meeting with a critical friend, EA.

I reflected that I was pleased with how the session had worked. While I had been holding some tension beforehand, in the room I had felt different. I had encouraged dialogue to co-generate rather than inform,

remarking that the session with the Coaches first was almost like a dress rehearsal. It was almost as if I had “learned my lines” with the Coaches and now I could be freer to engage and invite opinion in a more generative way because I knew what needed to be covered and how I would manage the time and the participants’ contributions. The fact that the session had more of a peer group quality to it raised a question as to whether I may have engaged with this group differently. I’m sure there were subtle differences. I was more confident of my content, thus probably more relaxed. At the same time, I was mindful of the possible competition elements which may have existed with the supervisors and so did not want to demonstrate behaviours which might trigger a “power response” (Gilbert & Evans 2000, Hawkins & Smith 2006).

EA and I revisited my role and whether I would bring a client, given my intention to bring changes to my practice. Again, I concluded this did not feel possible, in spite of my suggesting I would do so during the actual SG Induction Meeting. What was apparent already, and consistent with my practice as a group supervisor, was that I was curious about what was happening with each group and how I was within each group, particularly at a relational level. At this early stage in the Project, how I would draw on this as data was unclear to me. On reflection, I was contributing through facilitating and intervening in these dialogues which is what I do as a supervisor (Schein 1999, Heron 1999). With facilitated conversations people would share their reflections on their practice, from which something new would emerge, and that would inform the next cycle and beyond. So, in fact, I could now see that my own data would emerge as I facilitated these learning, generative conversations. I realized now that my attention had been appropriately focused on managing the groups, the Project and the tasks during these Induction Meetings enabling me to model my practice as a supervisor.

4.6a SG Induction Agenda 4 August 2011

Agenda for Meeting with Supervisors in Doctoral Research Project 4th August 2011

Welcome, introductions and purpose of the afternoon - WOULD LIKE TO TAPE THE SESSION - USE THIS FOR MY REFLECTIONS - DATA GATHERING - WILL NOT BE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE

Firstly, SG05 has a personal matter which was unavoidable, for which (they) were very apologetic and offered to withdraw, however, I wanted them to be in the study. I will be meeting with them in late August and we anticipate that they will be with us for the subsequent meetings.

SO - THIS AFTERNOON:

- *Tell you about how it has come about in terms of what's happening in the field so far - my perspective on executive coaching and supervision;*
- *Current research to date*
- *My purpose in doing the project - what's your purpose and what you can hope to get from it*
- *Devising the research methodology - how and why I chose you*
- *Structure of the project and your part in it*
- *Agreeing how we'll work together*
- *"To Do" list*

So, before we start, let me tell you a bit about my background and it would be great to hear from each of you, some background and what's your interest at this stage in the project:

Come from commercial background,
ran a sales and management development business for 15 years,
did a MSc in Change Agent Skills at Surrey and since then (2000)
have "consulted to consultants".

Did my supervision training at Metanoia (before there were any coach
supervision training programmes) and
have been practising as executive coach and supervisor since

I'll tell you more about why I'm doing the Doctorate later in the session.

So, let's hear from each of you

CONTEXT - much of this is probably familiar to you:

- emergence of executive coaching
- move towards professionalisation with:
 accreditation processes

- training programme accreditation
- CPD accountability
- Codes of Ethics
- emergence of supervision - with diverse resistances:
 - why do what other helping professions do
 - we are different - need to create our own approach

COMPLEXITY OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

- psychology
- adult learning and development
- emotional intelligence
- organizational systems
- change processes
- interpersonal and communication skills
- self awareness and presence

MY VALUES

- coaching is hugely demanding - need somewhere to go to unpack, recharge, clarify, check
- huge power in experiential learning in adults
- emergent processes including co-created dialogue generates new learning
- importance of reflection on practice, to seek affirmation, change, development, growth

MY PURPOSE IN DOING THIS RESEARCH

- *to demonstrate the importance/relevance/value of supervision*
- *to demonstrate the importance/relevance/value of reflective practice*
- for my own learning and development as a coaching supervisor and as practitioner-researcher
- to generate current practitioner based evidence c/f espoused/borrowed evidence
- to generate fresh approaches
- to inform coaches, trainers, buyers
- to contribute to the professionalisation of coaching
- to support the client

LITERATURE AND CURRENT RESEARCH

Key Authors: Hawkins & Shohet, Carroll, Hay, Bluckert et al; Bachkirova, De Haan (January)

Other fields: Carroll, Holloway, Gilbert & Evans; Proctor, Sills, Page & Wosket, Ladany; more recently Holton (Soul of Supervision) Finnegan - supervision across professions rather than dedicated to function

2006 - CIPD study/Bath Consultancy - 80% in favor, 40% actually do it

Research: 2005 Doctorate: P-Paisley - theory based on supervising students - based on Wilber

Barbara Moyes - literature review in 2008 - 'borrowing from other fields'

Salter 2008: coaches need to have more input to the supervision agenda
paradox between benefits versus compulsion
need to eradicate the fear

Liz McGivern 2009 - An exploration of coaches' lived experience of supervision - 6 - phenomenological study, semi-structured interviews.

Jonathan Passmore 2009 - grounded theory study with 6 pairs

Wardell 2010 : supervision as a term is off-putting
no apparent significant gains in terms of the coach's business

2011 - CIPD re-run of previous study across the profession

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY - ACTION RESEARCH

Given the existing research in the field, devising my question and methodology emerged:

- What I didn't want:

- specific analysis of the content of a conversation because I don't believe the market knows enough about what goes on in the process
- I didn't want an online survey, semi-structured interviews, quantitative study (CIPD project)

What I did want

- an approach that models as closely as possible key ingredients in the supervision process:
 - generative - emergent/cyclical/longitudinal
 - co created - dialogic
 - diverse perspectives - collaborative
 - we all benefit (in terms of practice/outcome)
 - learning from the process of the project
- endorsing reflection on practice (as way of learning)

Selecting my co-researchers

Invitations from 5 of coaching organizations in UK who define their members as being executive coaches and/or have some form of accreditation process for coaches.

As we know, as yet there is no accreditation process for supervisors - being worked on!

3.30PM TEA BREAK - SO, WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Contracting (Informed Consent)

- what we are doing: individual and collective intentions
- why we're doing it: personal and professional - new learning
- respective roles, tasks and responsibilities
- honest record/reflections on your experience of what goes on in supervision
- as you write up your reflections, you may share these with your supervisee, invite their reflections
- support, challenge and feedback on our practice

Confidentiality & Contact

- with me as researcher, with each other, with our supervisors
- with our friends, colleagues, clients, other interested parties

Practicalities - Data Gathering and Analysis

- our group meetings (diary dates) digital recording and transcribing
- journaling, gathering our reflections on practice - creating a template, sharing your records with me (DATE, ACTION, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, REFLECTIONS)
- writing up the project by cycle
- your CVs (where you are now)

So, some of your reflections may include:

what's it like to work with this person

what goes on between us

what do people bring to supervision and why

what's the outcome, learning for people in the process of reflecting on practice

what did we cover, how did we feel?

Other Activities: focus groups - buyers, trainers, authors, sceptics - NOT NEEDED FOR VALIDATION, BUT ADDING A PERSPECTIVE; my tutors + critical friends

TO DO:

IDENTIFY YOUR 'CLIENT' - PERSON YOU WANT TO WORK WITH -
AGREE THAT THIS IS OK

WRITE A SHORT PARA ON WHERE YOU ARE NOW AS A
SUPERVISOR? AND/OR EXEC COACH - YOUR PURPOSE/
OUTCOMES AS SUPERVISOR. INCLUDE A NOTE ABOUT YOUR
SUPERVISION AGREEMENT - FREQUENCY, DURATION, FORMAT

NOMINATE YOUR SUPERVISEE (CONFIDENTIAL) - SEND ME A NOTE
THAT YOU HAVE THEIR AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE - HOW LONG
YOU'VE WORKED WITH THEM, WHY YOU'VE CHOSEN THEM FOR
THE STUDY (REFER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION)

I'LL PROVIDE A TEMPLATE TO COLLATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE - TO DEMONSTRATE THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF
YOUR EXPERIENCE

CAN MENTION TO OTHERS THAT YOU'RE INVOLVED - BUT NOT
DIVULGE THE FINDINGS FROM THE MEETINGS

MY CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT WITH YOU - WITH EACH OTHER

SEND YOUR NOTES THROUGH TO ME IN DRIBBLES

STAY IN TOUCH BY PHONE - JUST TO CHECK IN

SESSION MEETING DATES

DIGITALLY RECORDED - TRANSCRIBED - FOR MY THEMES

ANYTHING ELSE?????

4.7 Action Research Project Timetable

COACHES	1 Jun 2011	1 Jul 2011	1 Aug 2011	1 Sep 2011	1 Oct 2011	1 Nov 2011	1 Dec 2011	1 Jan 2012	1 Feb 2012	1 Mar 2012	1 Apr 2012	1 May 2012
INDUCTION	PLAN											
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT	X	X	X	X							
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE	X	X	X	X							
ALS OP MTG 1	REFLECT + PLAN				21 Oct 2011							
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT			X	X	X	X	X				
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE			X	X	X	X	X				
ALS OP MTG 2	REFLECT + PLAN							13 Jan 2011				
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT							X	X	X		
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE							X	X	X		
ALS OP MTG 3	REFLECT + PLAN									12 Mar 2012		
ENDING												18th May 2012
SUPERVISORS												
INDUCTION	PLAN		PLAN									
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT		X	X	X	X						
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE		X	X	X	X						
ALS OP MTG 1	REFLECT + PLAN					25 Nov 2011						
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT					X	X	X	X	X		
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE					X	X	X	X	X		
ALS OP MTG 2	REFLECT + PLAN									8 Mar 2012		
SUPERVISION SESSIONS	ACT									X	X	X
WRITE REFLECTIONS	OBSERVE									X	X	X
ALS OP MTG 3	REFLECT + PLAN											25 May 2012

5.1a Email CG Supervision Research Meeting - 21st October 2011

Hi Everyone

I'm really looking forward to getting together next Friday 21st and want to let you know what we'll be doing.

The purpose of this session is for us to share and gather the data from your respective experiences of being in supervision, identify key themes so far, and plan the next cycle of inquiry. As we each listen to others' data you may also draw learning for yourselves, both in terms of what goes on in others' supervision as well as learning about learning. The day will run based on an Action Learning Set framework.

Preparation!

I know and appreciate that you've already "done" some of the work in terms of recording and sending me your reflections on your experiences until now. So, by way of helping you to orientate your thoughts around what you want to share on the day, here's the guide for preparation. Each of you will have an equal time slot of 30 minutes. In this time I'd like you to present your experience (approx. 20 minutes) and then invite questions/ thoughts from the group (approx. 10 minutes). This is not intended to be a "formal" presentation, but rather a "talk to the group" – so no Powerpoint Slides needed!

When it's your turn, the questions I want you to address are:

- What did you take to supervision?
- What happened, what emerged, what worked, what didn't work in terms of process, content, relationship with supervisor, anything else that seems relevant?
- What changes the supervision may have had on your coaching practice?

I would hope that this preparation won't take you too long, especially as you've already sent me your reflections from your sessions already (and if you have a session in the meantime, please do let me have these notes). However, if anyone wants to know more beforehand, please do give me a ring.

When each person is "presenting", the rest of us will be helping to gather the data as it emerges using a particular process and I'll explain the details of how we do this on the day. There'll also be time for each of you to plan what changes you want to explore when you go back to your coaching/ supervision for the next cycle.

Here is a guide to the **Agenda**:

10.30 – 11.15 Everyone checks in. Outline of the data gathering process, allocating roles etc, contracting around how we work together.

11.15 - 12.45 Three members of the group will "present" your experience/ reflections of being in supervision

12.45 – 1.00 Group Reflections so far

1.00 – 2.00pm Lunch (people make their own arrangements)

2.00 – 3.30 Three members of the group will "present" your experience/ reflections of being in supervision

3.45- 4.30 Gather the key themes that have emerged, agree individual actions to take away, plan the next cycle of inquiry

A couple of reminders:

- This is not a group supervision session so we won't be seeking to engage with any specific client work (as in "normal" supervision). We'll be sharing, exploring and reflecting on your experiences of being in supervision and I'll be holding the research frame in light of the question: "what goes on in coaching supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession"
- Please bring the notes from your sessions that you've already sent to me since we last met
- I'll provide fruit and biscuits and I think we agreed that you'd make your own arrangements for lunch

Location: Hubworking Victoria, 9-11 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0BD. You can find a map here: <http://www.hubworking.net/index.asp?PageKind=ContactUs>

Looking forward to what I trust will be a very rich and interesting day together.

Warm regards

Alison
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5.1b CG ALS1 - Data Gathering Timetable

	COACH 1	COACH 2	COACH 3	COACH 4	COACH 5	COACH 6
ROUND 1	Presents	Resting	Post-Its - Changes to practice	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else	Post-Its - What Issues	Resting
ROUND 2	Reflects	Presents	Resting	Post-Its - Changes to practice	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else	Post-Its - What Issues
ROUND 3	Post-Its - What Issues	Reflects	Presents	Resting	Post-Its - Changes to practice	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else
LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
ROUND 4	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else	Post-Its - What Issues	Reflects	Presents	Resting	Post-Its - Changes to practice
ROUND 5	Post-Its - Changes to practice	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else	Post-Its - What Issues	Reflects	Presents	Resting
ROUND 6	Resting	Post-Its - Changes to practice	Post-Its - What emerged/ worked/didn't, anything else	Post-Its - What Issues	Reflects	Presents

5.1c Typed Post-Its from CG ALS 1 21 Oct 2011

ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Challenge when client wants to work in a specific way - how much do I have to flex as a coach?	Not clear about the relationship with the client. What patterns are happening between me + client? Talk briefly about another client, practical questions and FIRO B	Can't remember what I brought to the session. Holding a mirror over the last 3 sessions: EMDR referral, practical solutions
Gp. sup - not sure what to bringing "older" client. Check out how I handle an existential issue - need for developing a different stance as a coach		
A mix of client and "me and my practice" - this year more about practice	focus on coaching 1:1 clients not team work	Client issue about critical feedback from peers. Big deal for me and timely as seeing client same day. How can I help client gain insight and make effective change?
Reviewed previous client (less energy to discuss)	Supervisor brought up issue of working together over time	Me as coach and developing my practice - very helpful and invigorating
What I do as move away from group to working more on my own. My strengths and uniqueness, differentiation, types of clients		

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Talked about research with supervisor and what is meant for me	Closings and re-engaging with clients e.g. 3 people I'm finishing with, 3 people engaging with	Re-engaging - how can I make it different and developmental?
Talked about relationship between me + my supervisor - the future; in context of going on retreat	Re-visited new beginnings. New roles for clients - where they are surprised by that; conscious of what I want for them which is more than they may want for themselves. How to feed this back. How to get permission to make observations	supervision PLE triangle - management, support + development - what's happening. How it can be fed back to the organization
Client had new boss; 3-way with boss; boss called me - issue with contracting and confidentiality	3-way with line manager of new coachee. They were concerned about the conversation; surprised by her reaction; how to make conversation safe for line manager	Brought up previous client - ref contracting in 3-way; questions about how organization is using coaching, culture; are they avoiding giving feedback and using the coaching as a way of giving feedback
How I re-contract with a group supervision group	Concerned with how I stay out of Drama Triangle with this client organization	How my supervisees are working with clients who feel threatened and stressed
Chemistry meetings - how do I start to challenge and start to do the coaching "proper"?	After one chemistry session, person disappointed. How do I handle that?	

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Supporting my morale and confidence during unusual period - doing a Masters, running big leadership programme	Masters much more difficult than I thought - paralysed me (bad marks). Brought to group supervision initially, brought same issue to client ALS in which I participated as a client; unusual step as not "real" supervision session	Negative feedback in other parts of life causing drop in confidence elsewhere = incongruent behaviour/showing up differently in different situations. so who am I <u>really</u> in different parts of my life
Project. Integrating personal life still coaching positive	Emergency. Wow, what is going on here. Client resistant to 360. Drama Triangle - violent relationship; squeezed - organizational structure, responsible for so much - personal safety of client.	"Smart guys" - destabilized by direction; vulnerability - where am I going with this? working with stuff that's not on the script. Am I able to deliver against the elitist pressure?
Link - experience, personal life, coach, supervisor - making connection	doubts around how I offer a gift. Saying my truth. Who am I to say that or offer it?	How to grade my interventions
Shared couple of client cases for something to talk about	negative experience with supervisor	2 client problems (I searched around for). 1. Co-incidence - coaching people with big issues with clients - one was the other's problem!
(Press release - self regulation of coaching). What about proper note-taking and record-keeping in the face of this	Signed supervision contract	To avoid my tendency to twin-track

WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED, WORKED/DIDN'T WORK, ANYTHING ELSE - PROCESS, CONTENT, RELATIONSHIP?

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
I felt validated and confident as a result of the session; affirming about what I was doing; encouraged my authority as a coach; felt unhooked from pattern of pleasing, colluding	Warning bell for me - care about situations that might trigger that; developed contracting ideas. Gave ideas too for another client I could go back to.	Could see I was in danger of getting caught in his pattern - limit to my objectivity
What emerged was feedback for me - all 3 clients had similar pattern. Supervisor identified this and played it back. Needy clients pull out my rescuer. Felt ashamed and embarrassed - loop potential	Observations from group about what is happening at unconscious level - e.g. giving me an experience of something, might make me collude	Got good ideas about client re doing FIRO B work with him. Practical questions I could ask
Helpful - picking up on patterns between me and client. Parent/child dynamic - rescuing theme coming out. "Oh dear" - realized I had jumped in "I'll fix you" - reviewed this	Helpful to get objective perspective from group by talking myself - enabled me to get meta perspective	
Challenge me to allow my client to get insights; discuss hypothesis; feeling positive at end of session; not sure how I could use that in next coaching session	helpful - on business development, practice; challenge me on whether I do a Masters or not; challenge me to find my voice	Am I resistant to her supervision? Being in supervision with her for 3 years - value of just airing my thoughts; low energy

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
<p>Repetitive outcomes - coincidence - impact on future work - affecting confidence</p>	<p>How do you re-engage in a developmental way - contracting and re-contracting</p>	<p>Acknowledging feedback - am I being used or employed? confidence in handling situation outside the coaching conversation. Coaches used for avoidance?</p>
<p>Contracting process - supervision supporting that. New beginnings. Noticing patterns of change and not withholding observations</p>	<p>How to treat chemistry session + follow-up. How organizations take coaching forward. What do we work with, what do we project</p>	<p>Leadership pipeline - loss of strokes - giving up what good at - different strokes in future; a gentle and positive experience; where do I take this when it comes to an end?</p>
<p>Supervisor is not a coach - I have evolved what I did in the past e.g. one-liner record - preparation thoughts;</p>	<p>Planned closing process - mechanics of coaching as compensation for loss</p>	<p>What is contract connection between what I observe and say?</p>
<p>Supervisor made some suggestions of people to go to talk to - who gave me very positive feedback</p>	<p>Able to talk about my feelings in very chaotic way. The group observed I could explain my feelings. They helped me unpack what was happening. Able to notice how feedback are (?) in my life was affecting everything in my life</p>	<p>Able to get to the real me - got me connected with who I really am when working. Felt far more grounded - less of drama queen. For first time felt safe to look at feelings without being overwhelmed. As result, able to devise a really simple Go Forward plan - with all emotion taken away</p>
<p>I had 2 people who could help me - realized asking for help is anathema for me</p>	<p>I observe you acting like a child - it immediately unblocked what was stopping me. I connected with what I was delivering</p>	<p>Supervision was able to give me observations, and able to give positive feedback and observe new things I had not noticed</p>

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
<p>Speaking to someone who could hold the space. He could give me an interpretation and context - put into perspective - like a huge sigh of relief - I was alive again.</p>	<p>Holding all the complex pieces of the client "What emerged, emerged" "this is your path as an executive coach. Peace, alignment. I was vulnerable due to personal life</p>	<p>Together we created a coherent link / connection between my personal life, coach/supervisor experience and put it all together and with a wand - connect it to something deep from my childhood. It was healing</p>
<p>Made connection between my vulnerability and the client's. Looking at what's in the field (OD, systemic) of my client organization. Acknowledging all the elements that destabilized me and pulling it all together.</p>	<p>He suggested that I could offer it as a suggestion/process. Practical tip - to make an offer "How about this?" Very soothing for my French background/upbringing. Learning how to grade what I see, for next session</p>	
<p>Professional environment - how important. Concept of the 4th person in the room. "Proper" note taking. Parent - come with client issues. Sitting on the sofa - soft, difficult process, if I don't like the supervisor</p>	<p>If I don't like the supervisor, can I have a supervision relationship? Contracting and environment. Learn from difference. Think about types of client drawn or not, to me.</p>	<p>Concept of self-supervision Value - what happens after David M - holding a mirror to my face. What professional supervision means for me</p>

CHANGES TO COACHING PRACTICE

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
More confident, validated	Therefore slowing down, listening to myself	Encouraged in my authority as a coach
Clearer, more confident, unhooked	Play to strengths. Themes: slowed right down, noticed what came in the room, gave space, asked what wanted	Warning bell - what might trigger that response Contracting, another client, panic attack
Subtle, aware of pattern changing state, outcome, slowing down	Issues - life stage issues, regrets, check when see next, revisit	
Decided next time we meet we will review our relationship and how long we have worked together. Run its course?	Notice I am more able to find my voice rather than "the right way to do this". General sense - rejecting beliefs I have been carrying	Thinking about taking up a Masters or professional training
I question whether I am resistant to this supervision. Feels like advice. How open am I with supervision?	Felt very positive and confident after supervision - BUT client had moved on. I tried to get her to look (But should I go with my agenda or with the client?) We talked about the issue but I felt I couldn't get into depth I wanted. Client wanted to talk about something else	Checked in with client frequently to see how she was finding the coaching
Follow up after chemistry meeting and business relationship with client organization	Coaching culture in organizations, management support, development	Reflecting about my observations, a pattern without becoming judgmental

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Exploring new stroke when new role in leadership	What is the conversation I need to have with my client's boss; paying attention to my state	Preparing theme for supervision session as I go through my coaching sessions
Think about inject humanity in the closing of coaching, keep points conscious	Coaching as substitute for management; talking through the contracting process with group session	Chemistry session - is it a coaching session?
More grounded, less drama Queen and changed own description of coaching practice, more authentic	seeking positive affirmation, attracted positive feedback, causing me "show up differently"	Confidence and connection and commitment to action learning
More planning, accessing people as resources to get back on rails	several supervisors over 12 years then specific individual and group supervision for morale and confidence	
Felt aligned going back into the organization	sense of inner calm and being grounded	offer a hypothesis - ability to offer ideas e.g. how about this?, felt very soothing, freeing
Learning how to grade my interventions		
I get more value out of someone shining a mirror right in my face rather than fluffing around	Think about the type of clients drawn to me; if very different to me, what is the effect. Led me back to my past clients, caused me to keep more detailed records; compare my different approaches to clients	What professionalism means to me and what professional supervision means. Clarified the supervision I want and principles and values that mean a lot to me

5.2 Invitation to CG ALS2 Meeting 13 Jan 2012

Hi everyone

Happy New Year to you all. I hope you've all had a good break. I'm looking forward to our session next Friday 13th January at 10.00am for 10.30am start.

In thinking about the agenda for the day, I've looked back to what emerged during our first day together. We agreed that you would consider paying more attention to the connection between supervision and changes to practice.

So, with that in mind, please consider: "How has your practice evolved since the last time we met? "What's the same, what's different?" "If your practice has changed, what has influenced the change?"

- (a) our day together
- (b) what goes on in supervision
- (c) your reflections between sessions and our days together
- (d) or something else

Take some time to consider and reflect on what goes on at a relational level - what is it about the relationship that enables you to disclose/ explore or hinders you from this? Is it you, the supervisor, the co-created relationship?

As a result of going through the first action research cycle, think about what you may want to change and/or make a request in terms of how we work when we meet next week. We will have the opportunity to discuss this next week and if you have any thoughts in the meantime, feel free to let me know.

A couple of reminders:

- This is not a group supervision session so we won't be seeking to engage with any specific client work (as in "normal" supervision). We'll be sharing, exploring and reflecting on your experiences of being in supervision and I'll be holding the research frame in light of the question: "what goes on in coaching supervision to the end of enhancing the coaching profession"
- Please bring the notes from your sessions that you've already sent to me since we last met
- I'll provide fruit and biscuits and I think we agreed that you'd make your own arrangements for lunch

Final Note: If any of you have notes to send me from recent supervision sessions, then please feel free to send them through.

All the best until next Friday. Warm regards

6.1a Email follow-up SG ALS 1 Meeting

Hi everyone

It was great to see you all last week. Thank you for your very rich contributions, thoughts and questions on our first "data gathering" day together. SG3 – sorry you couldn't be with us.

I've now transcribed the Post-Its and gathered these, verbatim, in the attached document. The text is colour-coded as per your Post-It choices and in the order you presented. SG03, I'll explain this to you when we meet in a couple of weeks time.

Having reviewed the tapes of the day, I want to offer some thoughts for what you may like to consider as we engage with this next cycle.

As you gather your reflections from your next sessions, you may like to use the three questions we used.

(Reminder: What issues did your supervisee bring to supervision? What emerged, what happened, what worked/didn't work in terms of your interventions, the process and relationship? What changes to both your own and your supervisee's practice?).

I'm particularly interested in the last question about changes to practice. So, possible options which you might include in your reflections: "How has your/your supervisee's practice changed since the last time we met?" "What's the same, what's different?" "What brought about the change?"

- (a) as a result of our day together
- (b) as a result of what goes on in supervision
- (c) as you reflect between sessions and our days together
- (d) what is it about the relationship that enables you to disclose/explore/challenge/support or hinders you from this? Is it you, them, the co-created relationship?

I know you'll give some thought to how we worked on the day and we can discuss anything you want to change and/or make a request in terms of how we work when we meet next time.

As ever, do please keep sending your notes as you have your sessions. I'll touch base with you by phone before we meet again, probably in January/February.

In the meantime, I trust you all have a wonderful December and look forward to continuing our work together in 2012.

Warm regards

Alison

6.1b Typed Post-Its from SG ALS 1 Meeting 25 Nov 2011

ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Depth and breadth - "I want to bring more depth and breadth to my work, to bring more heart into my work"	Considering her own choices within her professional journey, next steps she could be drawn towards	Concerns about herself and the impact of her life on her work e.g. Mother - mental illness - "Can I keep this in my awareness but not let it interfere, noticing her pattern of working,
Well being of clients, managing complexity of work so that they feel empowered they can do something rather than (victim) both getting into "Isn't this awful" - not getting over-invested in the client issues	Staying conscious of her involvement but not getting into telling her story	How to follow up with someone who wanted to withdraw
What issues?	Learning to facilitate group - systemic perspective	Build his business
What is coaching? What is his professional identity?	Converting chemistry sessions into contracts	More challenging - fierce and comforting, asking for this
Managing endings	Long term coaching relationship/issues	random choice of clients
Sexual attraction	Assumptions	Being distracted by own health
Was it a dance? Dancing lesson - collusion?	Own collusion of teaching with PhD supervisee	Lack of contract (s) - conversation, relationship, 3-way

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
She wants supervision from a practitioner. Late at first session. Wants to work towards accreditation - the science not the art of supervision	Supervisee frustrated with her client because thought it was too low level	Roles in different pieces: - coaching - supervising - mentoring - coach training (contracting)
Knowing Who knows?	PhD and Grade 1 mistakes	Trust - the coachee did not trust the coach - tested trust between supervisor and supervisee
Supervisee did not have practice of the skills - no basic scales to play the symphony	Supervisee had done no contracting with her coachees - which raised the "coaching police" in me	
Ending coaching relationship - whose responsibility	function serving for the client	countertransference
contracting for safety	holding and seizing up - holding back	whose client am I dealing with?
My stuff - bracket or here and now?	Somatic connections	Personal safety - feeling safe
2 clients with loads of shit	continuum here and now versus there and then	

WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED, WORKED/DIDN'T WORK, ANYTHING ELSE - PROCESS, CONTENT, RELATIONSHIP?

POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT
Contemplative style	Be aware of holding our contract	Brought in poetry
Draw images to describe situation - move from either/or to 3rd place - embody	impact of clients' life experience on her own as a person	"I distanced myself" - we sat quietly with it - mismatching
Mirroring - we were acting out our bad day and acknowledged it (and energy)	We have a bond from our backgrounds - tribe?	Learning partnership - I learned too - giving her more place in my inner life in sessions
What happens when our issues pop up - "I want to be authentic too"	Process - how much of my own experience do I share (coach and supervisor)	See her eyes shining Concerns - looked at it existentially - awareness
Male, known to supervisor from previous work - request is for systemic supervision of coaching + group facilitation. Very explicit why coming to supervision because has 2 other supervisors	Client wanted "fierce, comforting" supervision "I'm good at being fierce" He doesn't have enough gumption, backbone. Notion of "insipid" connection to the person - my hypothesis of him "he needs more gumption"	Sent him a questionnaire after the session which he returned having completed it - said how great it was to work with me - clarity and confidence
He now has "first sessions" - contracting in session 1 - link with other supervision content was about preparation of a chemistry session and how to convert these to build business	In his systemic training, issues of his professional identity were raised with him	I have to be careful I don't get into too much telling; my mind had some questions which I held and 'reframed' (scribe's word)

POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT
<p>Played with renaming chemistry sessions and what may be different. Used his experience of what worked and didn't and how to extrapolate. Lots of praise and acknowledgement of him by me. Weaving the magic became a generative phrase for him</p>	<p>I was mindful of pace and it was punchy enough - balanced changes of pace</p>	<p>Checking that chemistry session don't erode his sense of being a coach. We rehearsed some situations in which I gave reflections</p>
<p>He described me as fierce and supportive - he talked about weaving the magic - shared with him the need to identify both the power of "me" and "you" in the feel of the magic</p>	<p>Naming my belief of TC - helped me to get it out of my system</p>	<p>Told him I'm coming from a "Transformational coaching space" and shared that this can/needs to happen in a chemistry session - Explicitly named with him the parallel process of transformational coaching</p>
<p>Health concerns Some discomfort in supervisor - focus on presentation to deal with distraction about writing notes afterwards</p>	<p>Visualization - readily took this on - worked with this - went deeply into this Didn't go into transference issues with her</p>	<p>Noticed some depression in supervisee Ideas for future sessions taken from post session reflections</p>
<p>Likes me as I help people going for coach accreditation Distinction created between art and science of coaching</p>	<p>We engaged very quickly - mutual trust acknowledged; we established very soon she'd not done any contracting with client she brought and emerged lack of contracting between her, client and sponsor Teach-In on contracting - hypothesis - lack of rigour</p>	<p>Covered lots of basics of process- overriding sense of transactional and how much I was adapting my style to this supervisee parallel process - dilemma coachee brought to coach mirrors nature of low level dilemma supervisee brought to supervision</p>

POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT	POST-IT CONTENT
<p>As supervisor striving for, next time, staying more in the “not knowing” position - not getting down into problem solving</p>	<p>Illuminating for her - positive comments on what she got from this - has brought her next session forward (hypothesis - disappointed expectations for supervisor? supervisee?)</p>	<p>Supervisor’s note to self to explore what supervisee got from academic supervision and the differences</p>
<p>Sharing own experience of contracting Joint fascination in their respective other skills and trainings</p>	<p>How to hold back stuff - recognition of the effect of holding back - body rigidity Somatic memories - how to work with these</p>	<p>Working with the here and now - stepping into the space - naming it next time Counter-transference issues parallel process - personal safety - meaning of this in the various relationships - lots of stuff around, people watching other people</p>

CHANGES TO COACHING/SUPERVISION PRACTICE

POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT	POST IT CONTENT
Supervisee is finding new places - space, tension	I've become more reflective both afterwards and during the sessions - notion of internal supervisor	A challenge for me is to hold the spectrum of supervision and what the supervisee might need. I learned from her how to manage my own experience
I want to be authentic - how and when do I share my responses?	Asked this particular client to draw her state; of 3 positions. 2 + alternative. Asks others to draw but this was the first time for this supervisee	
Bring out the elephant - what do you think I think about Clean Language? Pay attention to my misgivings about clean language	Learn more to move from either or to both/and	pace and punchy to bring attention to something Paying attention to the teller (judge?)
Clarity, confidence and gumption(coach)	Create space in the session for my client to experience my magic	getting buy-in to transformational coaching
Remember to re-contract clearly and carefully	Reminder of power of visualization	Remember to ask which clients are not being brought to supervision
Challenge in a public place	Matching the supervision with supervisee - adapting style	Science - Art - balance 4 bits of theory - too much?
I can give up "always wanting to be better" in this choice of this supervisee for the research	Go more intuitively with where it goes rather than holding too tightly to the idea of staying at the edge when supervising	Negotiating space with the supervisee

6.2 SG ALS 3 & Ending Session Data Gathering Table 25th May 2012

	SUPERVISOR 1	SUPERVISOR 2	SUPERVISOR 4	SUPERVISOR 5
ROUND 1	Presents	Post-Its What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?	Post-Its Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? And what informs this?	Resting
ROUND 2	Resting	Presents	Post-Its What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?	Post-Its Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? And what informs this?
ROUND 3	Post-Its Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? And what informs this?	Resting	Presents	Post-Its What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?
ROUND 4	Post-Its What specifically about your supervision do you know/feel is effective and how do you know this?	Post-Its Why do you think/feel your supervision is valued by your supervisee? And what informs this?	Resting	Presents

	SUPERVISOR 1	SUPERVISOR 2	SUPERVISOR 4	SUPERVISOR 5
ROUND 1	Presents	Impact of research project on your supervision	Experience of engaging in action research	Impact of Alison on you/ your practice
ROUND 2	Impact of Alison on you/ your practice	Presents	Impact of research project on your supervision	Experience of engaging in action research
ROUND 3	Experience of engaging in action research	Impact of Alison on you/ your practice	Presents	Impact of research project on your supervision
ROUND 4	Impact of research project on coaching	Experience of engaging in action research	Impact of Alison on you/ your practice	Presents

7.1 CG / SG Themes Comparison

COACHES - CYCLE 1	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 1
ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION	ISSUES BROUGHT TO SUPERVISION
Client issues	Well being of clients
Who am I as a coach - where am I going, overall practice	Who am I as a coach - where am I going? Overall practice
Skills issues e.g. contracting & endings	Skills issues e.g. contracting & endings
Personal well being/balance - sharing whole of self, addressing self doubt	Personal well being/balance - sharing whole of self, addressing self doubt
Reassurance, morale, confidence	Reassurance, affirmation, confidence
Physical, mental, emotional well-being	Physical, mental, emotional well-being
WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED	WHAT HAPPENED/EMERGED
Validation, affirmation, reassurance	Use of poetry, visualisation
Technical skills/ideas/methods	Technical skills/ideas/methods
Meta-perspective - noticing patterns, whole systems issues	Mixed expectations of purpose of supervision
Holding space to explore/diagnose, resolve uncertainty, vulnerability	Supervisor holding back own experience
Recurring themes, next steps	Health concerns
	Issues around professional identity
CHANGES TO PRACTICE	CHANGES TO PRACTICE
How coach shows up in their work	Help supervisee find new places: space
Permission to review current supervision arrangements	How and when to share reactions/responses/thoughts/feelings
Attending to awareness of whole systems	Clarity & confidence of supervisee
Accessing variety of sources	Holding spectrum of supervision & what's needed, purpose of supervision
Sharing all aspects of self	Parallel process - what might be happening in coach/client system
Positive - fulfilling; negative - issues around power, compliance, supervisor should know	Shining the light - may lead to transformation
	Modelling relational process so coach can take this away

COACHES - CYCLE 2	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 2
CHANGES TO PRACTICE	CHANGES TO PRACTICE
Restored centre, reconnecting with self	Sharing responsibility with coach
New techniques	Working with unconscious processes
Learning through listening, watching others	Improving capacity to work with emergent ways of working
Philosophical shift in practice	Shift in material presented
Modelling in supervision, applied in coaching - being explicit	Modelling in supervision, applied in coaching - being explicit
Help to reflect out loud to clarify thinking bounce ideas around	Challenging behaviours and assumptions
WHAT INFLUENCED CHANGES	WHAT INFLUENCED CHANGES
Supervision process & dialogue	Own supervision and reflection
Opportunity to think out loud with informed "other"	Intimacy - quality and depth of relationship
Safe space to think and be oneself	Participating in project - being more reflective
Space to connect with inner strength & peace	Space to connect - attention to process with coach
Guided reflection - distil thinking, clarity	Seeing what is mine/the coach's
Seeing what is mine/the client's	Trust
Breadth of conversation - philosophical discussion	
Questioning whether existing supervision is appropriate	Questioning whether existing supervision is appropriate
Poor supervisor can have adverse effect on thinking, learning	
Doesn't have to be a "supervisor"	
Coach isn't always clear how to choose supervisor - importance of co-creation	Coach isn't always clear how to use supervision
SUPERVISOR/SUPERVISEE RELATIONSHIP	SUPERVISOR/SUPERVISEE RELATIONSHIP
Trust, support, authenticity, validation	"still point in a turning world" - foundation stone
Holding up the mirror	Need for flexibility - stage of development of coach
Creator of bridges - allow me to show up as whole	Continuity, deepening trust, building relationship

COACHES - CYCLE 2	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 2
Sharing patterns from supportive space	Sharing patterns from supportive space
Someone who cares about me as a person	Modelling relational approach
Familiarity allows deeper connection and challenge	Familiarity allows deeper connection and challenge
Coach's respect for supervisor's experience, knowledge, skills	Supervisor's respect for coach's experience, knowledge, skills

COACHES - CYCLE 3	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 3
SUPPORT THROUGH SUPERVISION	WHAT IS EFFECTIVE - HOW DO YOU KNOW?
Restorative, "therapeutic" offloading concerns both personal & professional	Psychotherapy training & experience
Encouragement, reassurance	Noticing things that matter to my supervisee
Clarifying thinking & approaches	Creating safe, calm, reflective space
Being attended to by someone with my best interests at heart	Working with everything we notice in relational space
Exploring emotional issues triggered by client/system	Bringing all of self - seeking to know the whole person of supervisee
Challenge - slowing down	Inviting supervisee to engage in learning log
Acknowledgement, receiving	Get permission to share my experience
Learning	Co-created space
Focus on whole practice	Focus on whole practice
	Working with metaphor, poetry, fairy tales, whole systems
	Somatic information, feedback, appearance, level of supervisee engagement & discussion
SUPPORT BEYOND SUPERVISION	WHY IS YOUR SUPERVISION VALUED?
Physical well-being, exercise, being in nature/nice environment	Supervisee always turns up
Meditation, yoga, body-work	Supervisee matters to me - feels cared for
Being attended to - massage, homeopathy	Growing trust
Quiet time alone, walking	Learning and development - sense of progress
Exchange of ideas	Exchange of ideas
In contact with colleagues - avoid isolation	Becoming more reflective
Support & dialogue with others including role models	Feels like flow
CPD events - opportunity to learn in other ways /reading	Working with different approaches - theories, models
IN AN IDEAL WORLD.....	
Take personal responsibility for package of supervision	

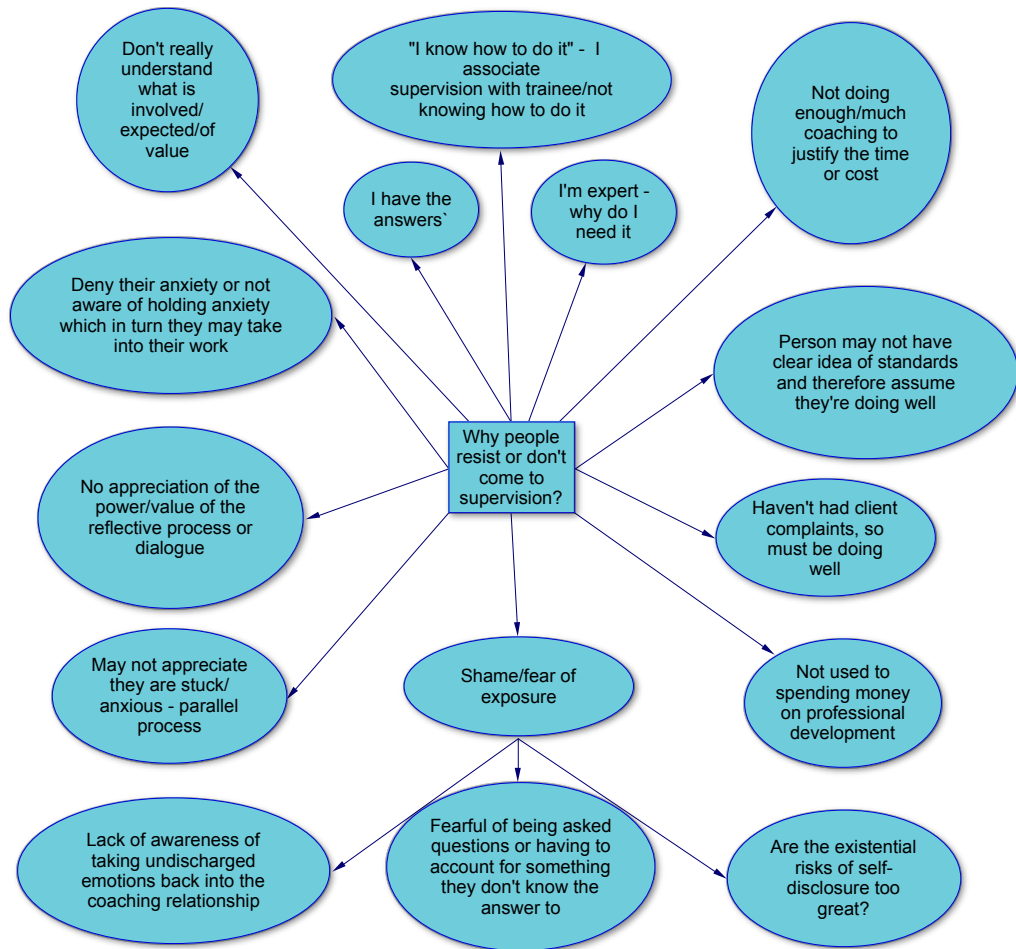
COACHES - CYCLE 3	SUPERVISORS - CYCLE 3
Variety of participants & methods including 1:1 dialogues	
Quiet restorative time with self, another, a supervisor	
Challenge - holding up mirror	
Slow down - consider/develop ideas, exchange thinking	
"helpline" for instance access in a crisis	
Not judged, without fear	
Breadth of content - not just skills/clients, spiritual & emotional focus	

COACHES - ENDING	SUPERVISORS - ENDING
IMPACT OF PROJECT ON PRACTICE	IMPACT OF PROJECT ON PRACTICE
Value of reflection	Value of reflection
Supervision as a means of learning	Supervision as a means of learning
Validation - appreciation of self	Validation - appreciation of self
Value of thinking out loud - distil ideas, come up with solutions	Value of thinking out loud - distil ideas, come up with solutions
New perspectives - others' experience	New perspectives - others' experience
Appreciation of what supervision is and can be	Appreciation of what supervision is and can be
Value of writing a journal - enhanced contracting	Value of writing a journal - enhanced contracting
Confidence in my practice	Confidence in my practice
Discipline to capture the learning	Discipline to capture the learning
Enriched - value of the group	Enriched - value of the group
Value of process, rather than story	Value of process, rather than story
EXPERIENCE OF ACTION RESEARCH	EXPERIENCE OF ACTION RESEARCH
Didn't feel like research	Didn't feel like research - more interesting being part of a group
Flow of the process - developed rhythm to engage more fully in supervision	Flow of the process - developed rhythm to engage more fully in supervision
What about supervision based on ALS	What about supervision based on ALS
Learning from others - quality of exchange	Learning from others - quality of exchange
Writing up supervision sessions a good discipline	Writing up supervision sessions a good discipline
Speaking without being interrupted - felt like supervision	Speaking without being interrupted - felt like supervision
	Felt heard - contributing, acknowledged, boosted confidence
IMPACT OF AH ON YOU/YOUR PRACTICE	IMPACT OF AH ON YOU/YOUR PRACTICE
Fun	Fun

COACHES - ENDING	SUPERVISORS - ENDING
Discipline of process - writing up easy to follow	Discipline of process - writing up easy to follow
Care, consideration, rigour, warmth, empathy	Care, consideration, rigour, warmth, empathy
Role model for research	Role model for research
Insightful - level and depth of questions	Insightful - level and depth of questions
Positive, engaging, enthusiastic, gentle	Positive, engaging, enthusiastic, gentle
Created space to talk and not be interrupted	Created space to talk and not be interrupted
Superb/exemplary facilitation	Superb/exemplary facilitation
Supportive, created safety for people to share practice	Supportive, created safety for people to share practice
Light touch, neutral, non-judgmental, permission to be open	Light touch, neutral, non-judgmental, permission to be open
	feeling connected with you even when apart
	supervisor - "I felt responsible to stick with it"
	reciprocating with us - your input/our input

MIND MAPS

1.1 Reasons for not coming to Supervision



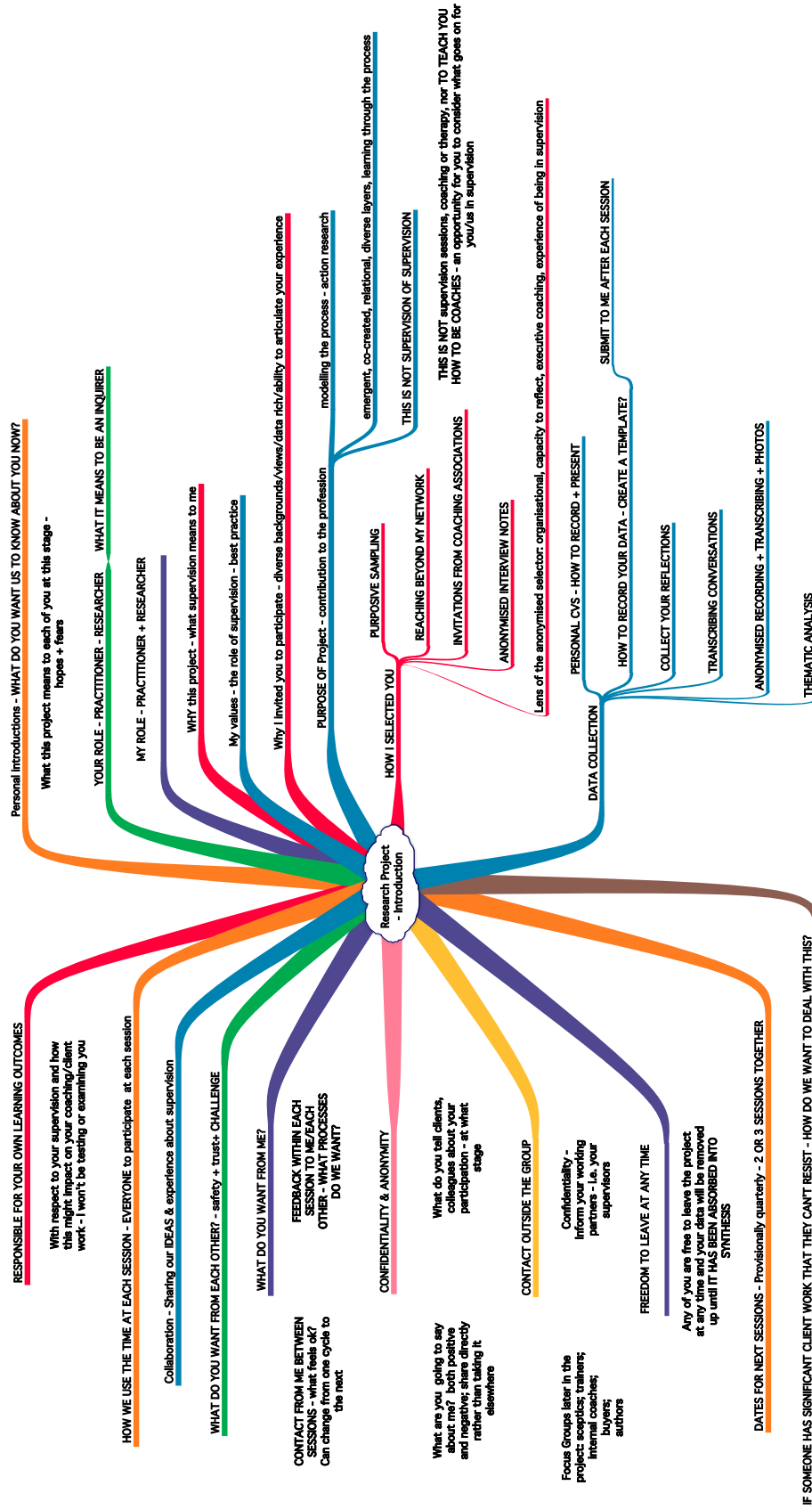
What do we take into the coaching relationship if it's not processed separately and/or with another?

How can the coach address the emotional or unconscious relational elements of their work?

How do both parties co-create a safe reflective relationship where sharing and disclosure lead to learning and growth rather than imagined shame and existential destruction?

MIND MAP (1) REASONS FOR NOT COMING TO SUPERVISION

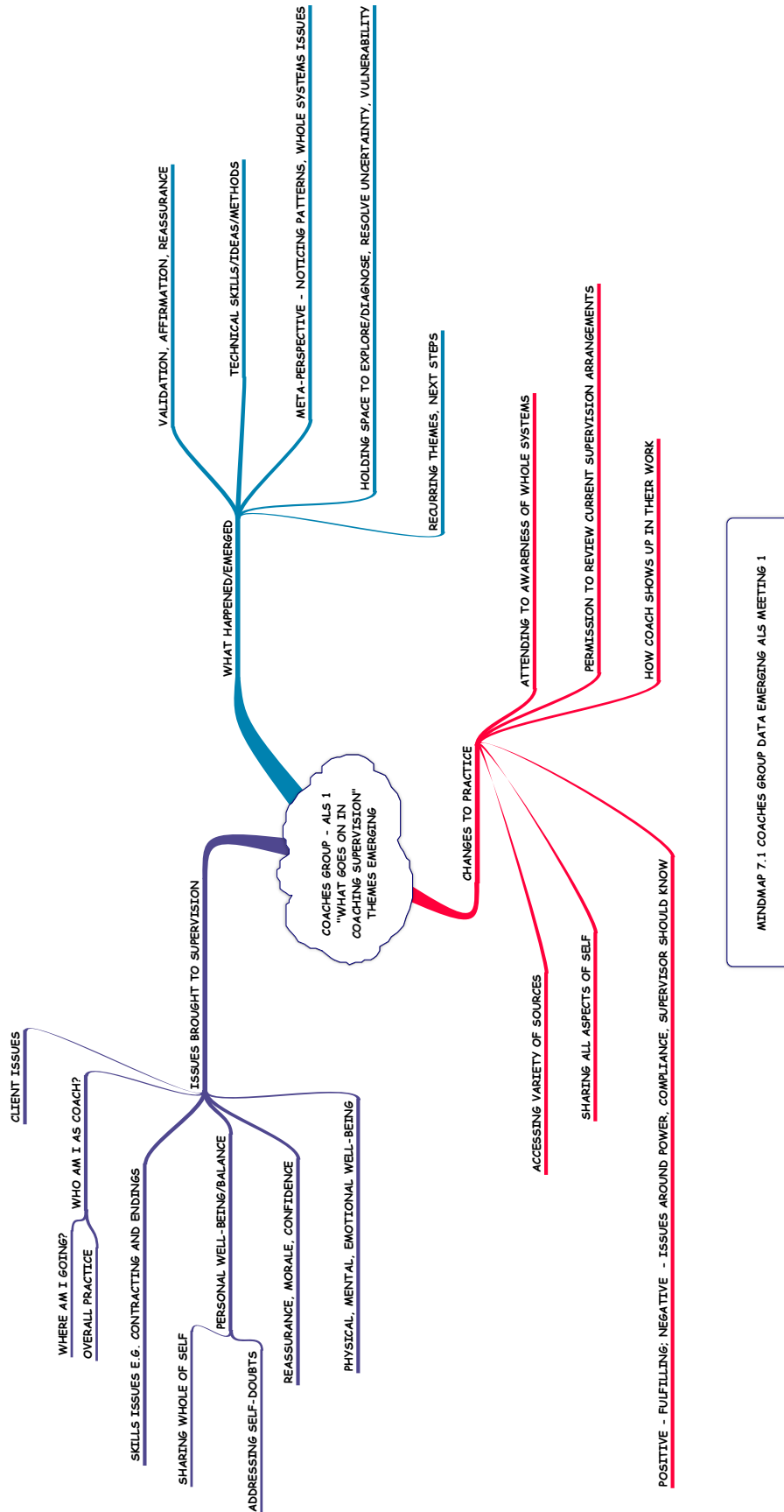
4.1 Induction Preparation



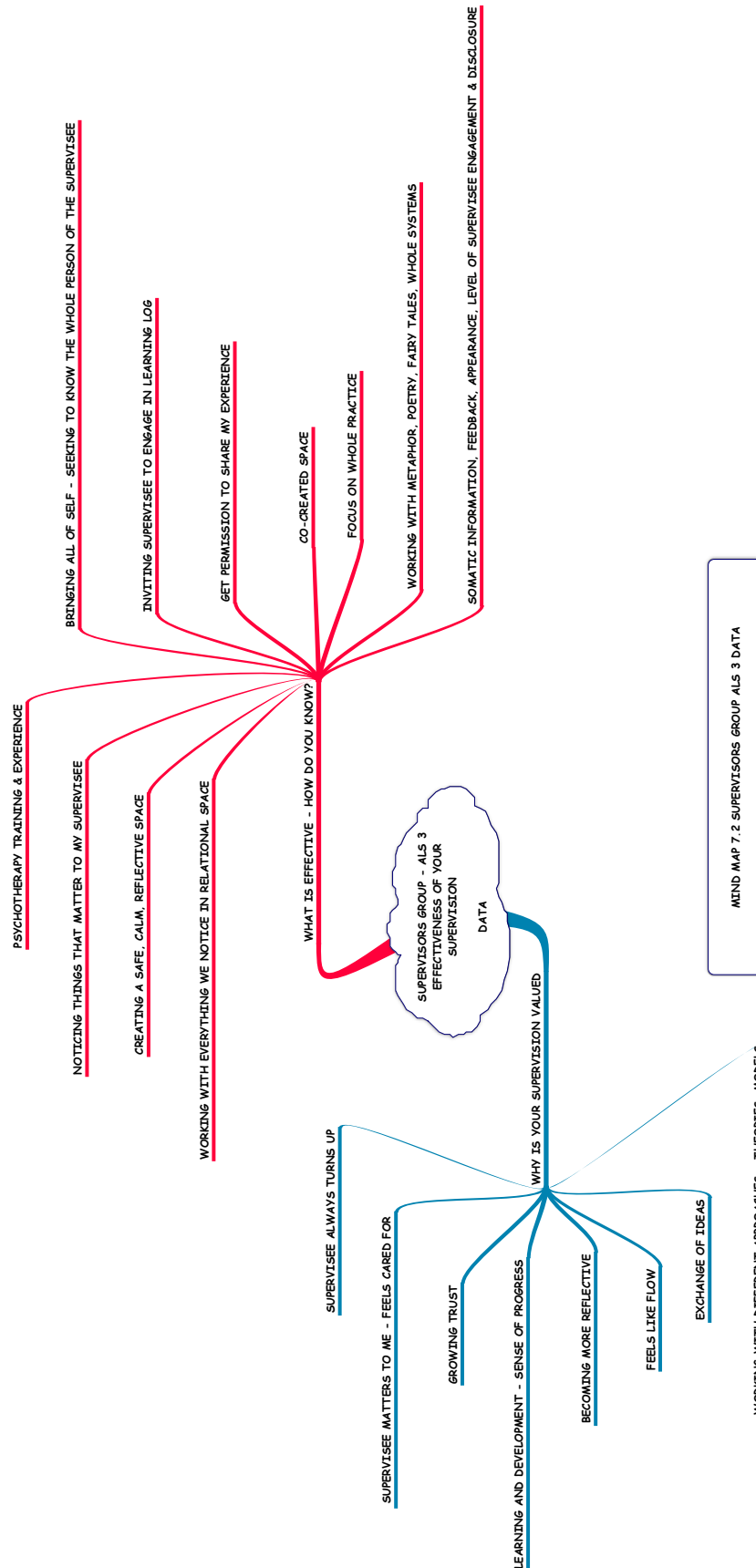
MIND MAP 4.1 PREPARATION FOR INDUCTION MEETINGS WITH COACH AND SUPERVISOR GROUPS

ORIGINALLY
02/06/11
ADAPTED 24/07/13

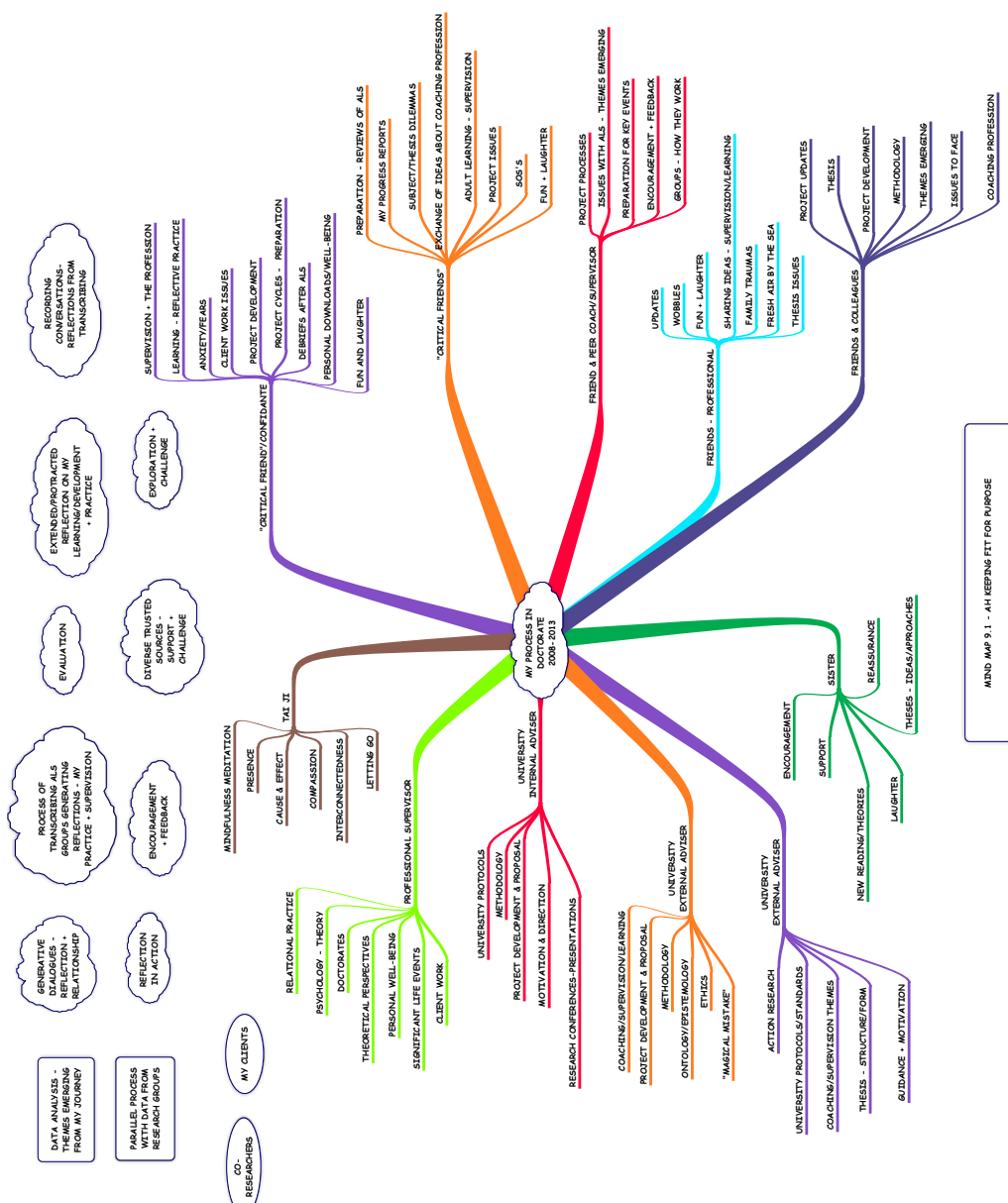
7.1 CG ALS1 Data



7.2 SG ALS3 Data



9.1 AH - Keeping Fit for Purpose



MIND MAP 9.1 - AH KEEPING FIT FOR PURPOSE

PHOTOS

3.1 Flip Chart: My Project Plan, July 2011



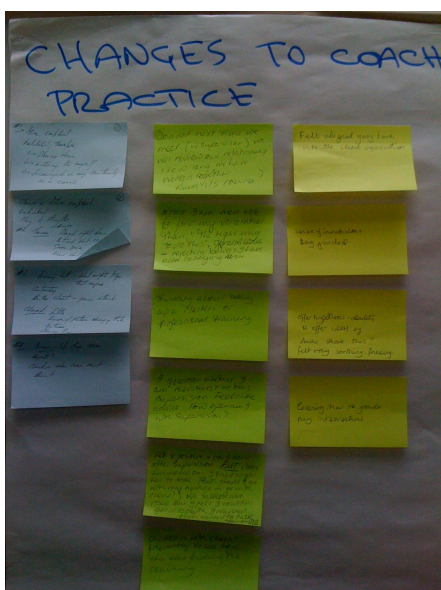
3.2 Flip Chart: Developing My Research Methodology, July 2011



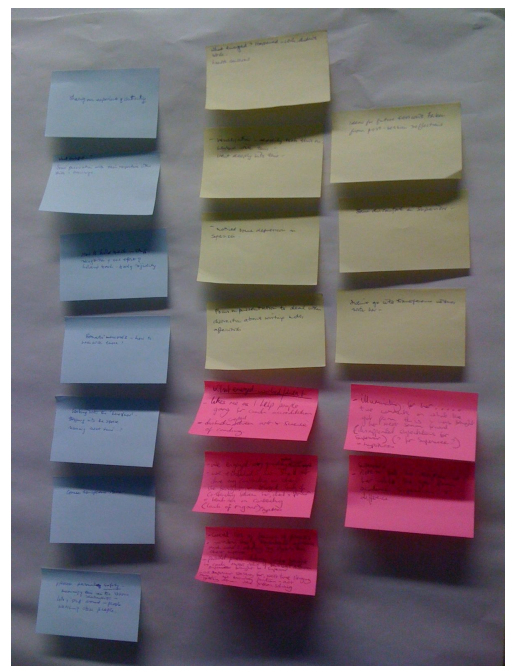
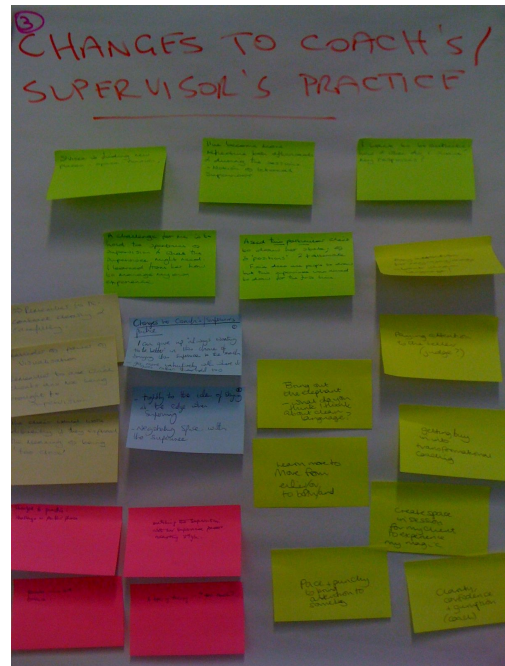
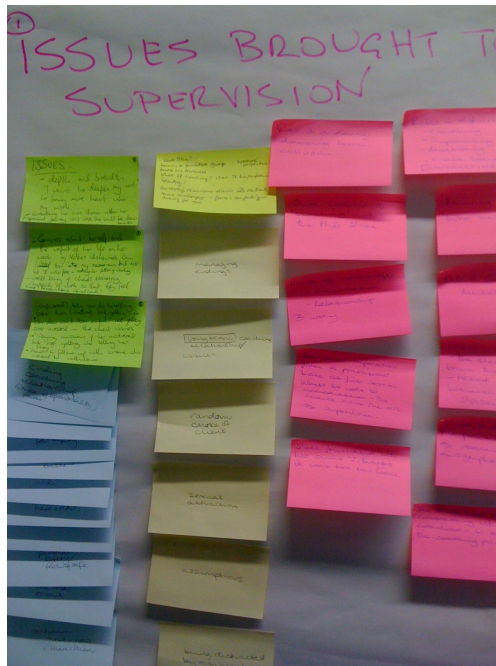
3.3 Flip Chart: Grounding my Research Practice, July 2011



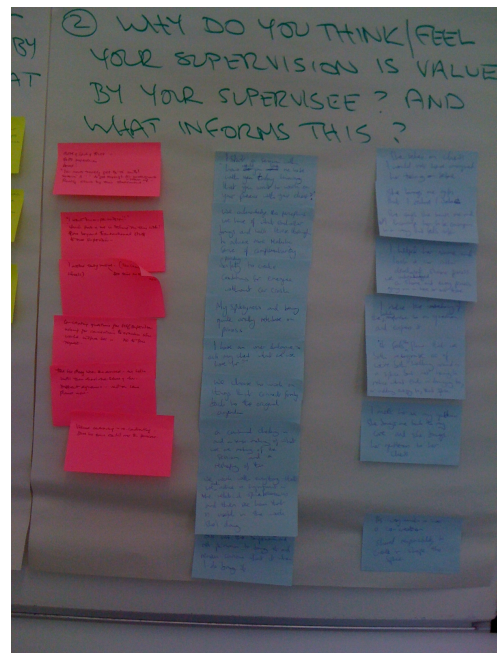
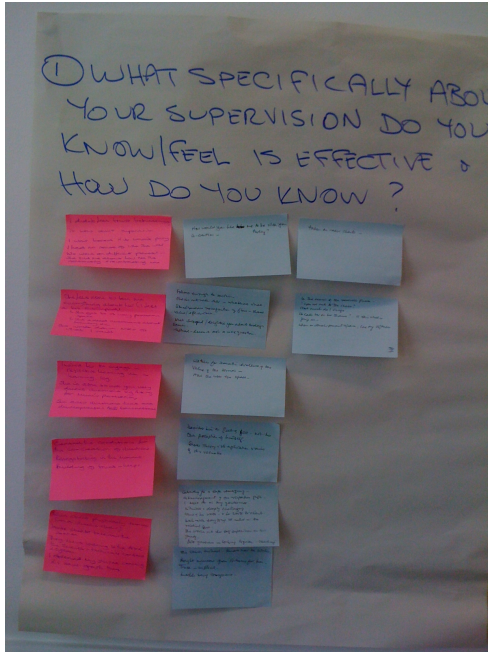
5.1-5.6 Post-Its of data gathered during CG ALS 1 Meeting



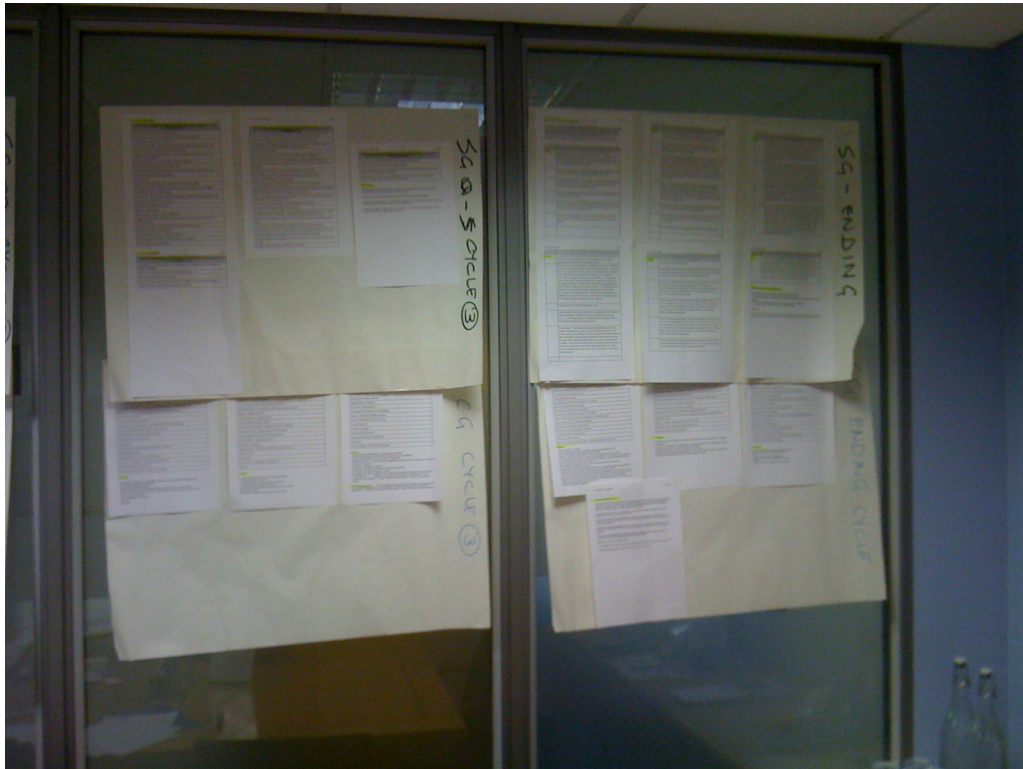
6.1-6.4 Post-Its of data gathered during SG ALS 1 Meeting



6.6-6.9 Post-Its of data gathered during SG ALS 3 Meeting



7.1 Data / Themes Emerging from CG / SG



7.2 Data / Themes Emerging from CG / SG



7.3 Exploring Data / Themes Emerging Between CG & SG

