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How is Coaching Being Used Within School?

Does coaching have an impact on improvement in school settings?

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Introduction

Coaching is here to stay. The recent benchmarking survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) has shown 88% of organisations now expect their managers to use coaching. Furthermore 92% of these organisations believe that **if managed effectively** coaching can have a positive impact on their 'bottom line'. A growing body of research clearly shows coaching impacts on individual performance, behaviour change, culture, confidence, motivation and leadership (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). The common perception is one of a clear return on investment with the majority of organisations seeking to enhance their investment in coaching over the coming years. People also love being coached. Every research study undertaken has identified that people really value the one-to-one development and believe it has helped them become more effective (Jarvis, Lane, & Fillery-Travis, 2006). No wonder coaching has become the must-have of development!

Although education has not been in the forefront of sectors using coaching, it has not been standing idly by in the face of its growing popularity. Over the last decade coaching and mentoring has become an accepted part of the development portfolio offered to head teachers and teachers within school (Veenman & Denessen, 2001). It is promoted as a pivotal intervention within improvement strategies for schools perceived to be failing and also as a tool for embedding success with those identified as highly effective schools. As a one-to-one learning engagement it encompasses peer mentoring of teachers through to coaching as part of the National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers (Simkins, Coldwell, Close, & Morgan, 2009).

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has championed the role of coaching within school, commissioning a number of publications on coaching and its potential within the educational environment. Within its leadership programmes, coaching skills are used explicitly in such roles as the Leadership Coach in Leading from the Middle or the in-school Coach in Leadership Pathways (Simkins, Coldwell, Caillau, Finlayson, & Morgan, 2006). Teachers are now aware of coaching and are being presented with it from a variety of sources. But although much has been written concerning **potential** best practice in this area there is little evidence for practice in education and a real dearth of exploration into the way that teachers and schools are using coaching.

This is worth exploring as 'one size does not fit all'. Coaching can be used to address a wide range of issues ranging from skills development through to deeper enquires around the personal quest for meaning and purpose. But the skill base of the coach addressing these issues would also need to vary. The education sector is perhaps unusual as there is, as yet, no clear definition of, or delineation between, coaching modes within the sector. This presents head teachers and senior leaders with some measure of challenge if they are seeking to introduce and develop coaching effectively within their school. Who should coach whom, what support do they need, what benefits should be expected and in what timescale? These are all questions which need careful consideration when planning such a school-wide change.

To date the increasing use of coaching and mentoring within education has mirrored that seen within commercial organisations but with distinct differences in terms of delivery. Specifically in the past coaching within school has predominantly been carried out by peers or internal coaches (teachers or senior managers trained to deliver coaching to non-reports) whereas the use of external coaches is more prevalent within the business sector (Fillery-Travis & Passmore, 2011). This may be due to perceived financial issues or to the privileging of knowledge about the school culture and environment. There is also a blurring of the distinction between coaching and mentoring which stems from the original definition used within education (Bennett, 1993). We considered coaching in this research but with an acknowledgement of how mentoring is also used within the school environment.

Within this report we are seeking to provide some answers to these queries and take a snap shot of what is currently happening within school. **Specifically we are seeking to investigate how coaching is being used within school, who is doing it and how it is evaluated by those using it. Without such information it is difficult to offer informed support to teachers and schools in this field.**

The results of this work will identify the potential that a sample of head teachers see for coaching as a development tool for the future and indicate where schools are finding value in the coaching approach. Primarily we hope this will inform head teachers and those responsible for teacher development so they have access to the experience of others building best practice in the area. This information may also help to inform decisions of policy and strategy at all levels. It may help to shape the training offered by those with commissioning and provider roles for the development of teachers and leaders in schools. The findings of this report may help tailor provision to the specific needs of teachers and schools rather than using the generic commercial models of coaching currently on offer.

We would like to thank everyone who supported this research through answering questionnaires or putting themselves forward for interview. We would like to thank Lancashire County Council in particular for their support and commitment. We hope you find this preliminary report on the results of the questionnaire of interest. The results of the interview research with a more in-depth perspective on leadership will be available in the coming months.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further reflections or suggestions.

Annette Fillery-Travis and Paul Simmons

Background

As any web or press search reveals, coaching is still dominated in the public eye by the images and concepts of sports coaching. Coaching is thus characterised, initially at least, by a model of practice based usually on highly visible and measurable performance. Whilst this may be the headline, there has been a somewhat different, evolving focus on coaching in the world of education over the last fifty years. Below we provide some pointers to the research currently published in the area and we will expand upon this more fully in the final research publication.

In the 1970's when the professional learning of teachers first came under real scrutiny, evaluations of staff development began to show that the transfer of professional learning to practice was low (Showers, 1985). In the 1980's this led to a focus on the transfer of skills and knowledge to practice. Peer coaching was developed as an 'on-site' dimension of staff development to embed the lessons of training and to apply new models of practice. It was assumed that coaches needed to be experts or at least have more expertise then their clients in the content area.

In the mid-1980's and 90's, peer coaching was seen as part of a process of building 'communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft' (ibid). The focus was on the social organisation of teachers in schools (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Peer coaching study teams were based on a belief in the need for increased collaboration and collegiality. Coaching sessions were seminars for teachers focusing on the learning process in classrooms. The peer-coaching model had some distinctive features; the coach was the teacher in the classroom being observed and verbal feedback was deliberately excluded from the process as was teacher evaluation. The emphasis for such coaching was on joint, collaborative discussion and planning.

The evolution of coaching has also followed differing and often contradictory paths depending upon context, culture and sector. A key issue, for example, has been the question of expertise and feedback. Is feedback part of the coaching process? What form should this take? A 2001 research project in Dutch primary and secondary schools saw coaching as:

> ' a form of in-class support to provide (novice) teachers with feedback on their functioning and thereby stimulate the self-reflection and self analysis needed to improve instructional (i.e. teaching) effectiveness.'
>
> (Veenman & Denessan, 2001, abstract)

The debate between professional autonomy and expertise continues. Is coaching a process for the transfer of expertise and specialist skills and knowledge from coach to client? Or is coaching a process for fostering the thinking, creativity and professional autonomy of the client? A 2004 research study in the US on school-based coaching saw coaches as 'experts in a particular field or subject area'. Coaching in this instance follows a transfer of expertise model, yet coaching is still aimed at facilitating 'greater collaboration and a sense of community' (Russo, 2004). This is at odds with the non-directive and content-less perspective of coaching within other sectors.

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) through its revised website (May 2012) continues to provide a clear policy endorsement for coaching, recognising 'a remarkable convergence' about the importance of coaching and the 'complementary nature of coaching and current, highly significant initiatives in education.' The case for leaders not just developing coaching but also modelling coaching in schools is couched in terms of moral responsibility and clear imperatives around the promotion of learning, knowledge sharing and sustainability.

A Newcastle University research project report for CfBT and NCSL (Lofthouse et al., 2010), based on teacher coaching in thirteen schools, provides a useful picture of the coaching landscape situated within the wider field of professional development. The report was highly critical of the quality of coaching practice, particularly around the lack of depth and expertise in the repertoire of coaches. Within coaching conversations, the clients were spending a major part of their time clarifying, describing and explaining rather than analysing and generating new thinking. Very few coaches in the sample had the skills to provide appropriate levels of challenge. Evidence supported a main premise of the research that 'coaches had little language through which to understand, analyse and develop their own practice' (2010:26). The report was equally critical of the management of coaching within schools, recognising that 'leading and managing coaching is much harder than it might appear.' (2010:32).

The issues around quality and effectiveness confirm the wide range of practice that currently falls under the umbrella of coaching.

Coaching touches many bases in the nature and culture of schools and what they stand for. Lindon (2011), focusing closely on lesson observation and reflective practice, found that 'coaching fits best in a school culture that is predicated on shared leadership rather than hierarchical structure.'

Other perspectives on coaching, for example Critchley (2010), challenge more acutely traditional managerial approaches, highlighting the more complex inter-personal dimensions of the coaching process.

> 'Coaching is an unpredictable and intimate process. The quality of embodied resonance between coach and client has been shown to be the main factor in coaching outcomes.' (2010: 851)

Galucci et al. (2010) highlight a symbiosis of teaching and coaching, how the concepts, skills and approaches of the one can feed the other: 'As coaches' conceptual development about instruction (i.e. teaching) grows, their ability to coach also matures' (2010: 919). This developmental approach points to two areas of learning in particular: the fact that teachers were not always seen to be well prepared for the facilitation skills required in coaching (2010: 923). Coaching also requires a readiness for peer critique which does not sit easily with the cultural norms of teaching (2010:924), reminding us how the work of coaches is inevitably embedded in the specific culture of both the organisation and the profession (Wenger, 1998).

In summary there is an evolving practice of coaching within education which differs from that found within the private sector of commerce and even other public sector services. This delineation has its origin in the culture and purpose of the profession of teaching as well as its changing leadership requirements. This research project seeks to enquire into this evolving practice and identify how head teachers and senior management teams are developing their own models to achieve the most effective development for their staff and pupils.

Project Design

The rationale for this on-going research project is:

- to support a collaborative focus and dialogue on coaching;

- to stimulate practitioner research and enquiry; and

- to help provide comparative data in terms of practice.

Given the ever-increasing interest in coaching in schools, the research was framed around the question: **How is Coaching Being Used within School?** With a subsidiary question: Does coaching have an impact on improvement in school settings?

Within this research we are seeking to take a snap shot of current coaching practice within school (primary, secondary and special within the state system) through a descriptive survey of a sample of schools in England. We used an electronic survey to provide schools with a quick and straightforward method of contributing to the research. A number of schools with a known interest in coaching were invited to participate. The sample was non-selective. The questionnaire survey took place in October 2011.

The research design is based on purposive sampling. We are interested in the experience of those schools that are using coaching. We are not looking at the practice of schools that are not using coaching. We cannot identify how many schools saw the invitation to participate and chose not to contribute as Lancashire County Council, for example, posted the invitation on its web portal to all schools.

Those schools who responded clearly believed that coaching is important for improving education and want to contribute to its development through research. As a result we have a sample with a bias in favour of coaching. The key interest of this research, and its validity, lie in what these schools do, what they understand by coaching, and what gains they have seen or anticipate. The fascination lies around what does actually happen and how differently leaders work on coaching in their different contexts. This research project is about understanding coaching from a single organisation perspective and mapping patterns of evidence across a sample of schools within a reasonably narrow timeframe.

Survey returns were received from 97 schools with a spread across school phases which broadly reflects the national picture: 57 Primary (61%); 23 Secondary (25%); 13 Special (14%) and 8 Other, where schools categorised themselves as middle schools, children's centres, nursery, pupil referral units or academy. Responses were received from schools across a wide geographical area: Sefton, Blackpool, Bolton, Manchester, Tameside, Oldham, Lancashire, Cheshire, Redcar & Cleveland and London. The majority of responses were from schools in the northwest of England.

A small sample of respondents self-selected within the survey to take part in semi-structured interviews exploring the use of coaching within their school improvement strategy and their evaluation procedures in depth. These will be reported upon in due course.

Project Findings

Over the next few sections we will report on the analysis of the questionnaire results and then conclude with a short interpretation of what this means for coaching practitioners within schools.

## a) What Constitutes Coaching within School and how is it Used?

There is a range of opinions about what constitutes coaching as an activity: 92% of respondents were clear that 'supporting staff to develop their own solutions to work issues' was part of the focus but 'assessing performance and giving feedback' (62%), 'mentoring staff in new role '(68%) and 'leading on transformation issues' (58%) as well as 'facilitating team work' (68%) were all part of the expected activity. All of these behaviours identify the coach as a facilitator of learning developing the insight and self-reflection of another but for 54% of respondents there was still a place for 'providing solutions for problems raised by staff'. Figure 1 below identifies the range and frequency of activity identified under coaching.

For you, does coaching include any of the following? Please tick all that apply:
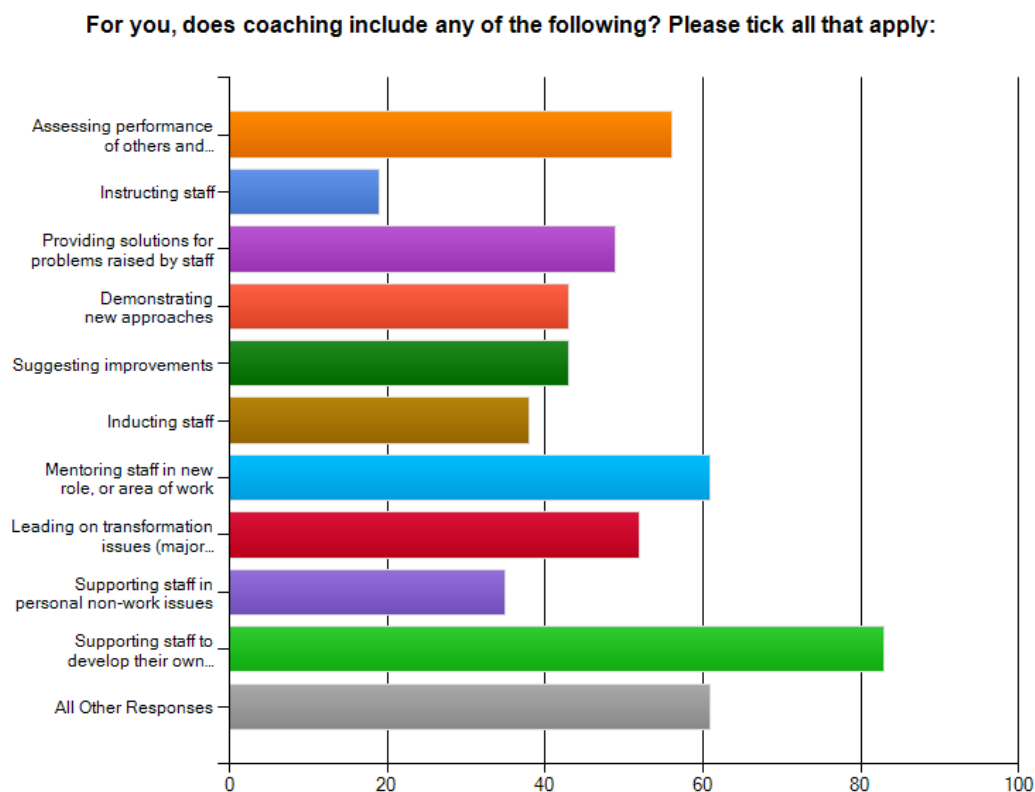
Once the behaviours and activities expected of a coach were identified we asked how coaching was being used and specifically the place of coaching within the school improvement strategy. The purpose and objective of the coaching clearly has an impact on how it is carried out and by whom so there was a sense of exploring whether such coherence is evident in how coaching was being used within school. For this sample of schools the primary purpose of coaching (for 71% of respondents) was as part of teacher development, and specifically it is being used for addressing performance issues with 51% of respondents. The same proportion also identified coaching as being useful in developing pupil learning. The reasons for this response can be seen when we consider the impact of coaching below.

Access to coaching was not restricted to teachers with 12% of schools (eleven in number) using it for development of their governors. However, only 34% of schools considered it central to the implementation of the school improvement strategy as a whole with 7% not considering it to be part of this work at all.

When we explored the context of the coaching in more detail then this focus on teacher development was consistent across all contexts. Figure 2 below identifies the use of coaching within various contexts.
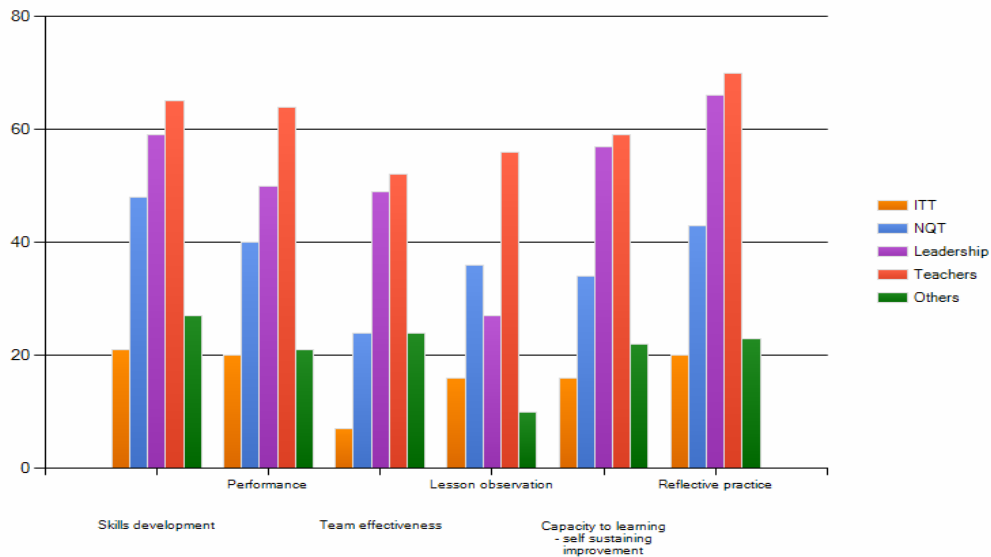
In summary coaching is being provided to address skills development, performance, team effectiveness, self sustaining improvement and reflective practice consistently for teachers with less focus on provision for the leadership team and newly qualified teachers. The provision of coaching for ITT and 'others' is significantly lower for all purposes. 'Others' were in general teaching or classroom assistants but also included administrative staff for a number of respondents.

b) Is Coaching Effective?

Clearly coaching is used widely but who is doing it and is it considered effective? For 94% of respondents coaching was undertaken by line managers with approximately two thirds of schools using external and internal coaches and coaching by peers. The satisfaction with line manager coaching was correspondingly high with 88% rating it as either effective or very effective. Satisfaction with external coaches was similar (82%) when it was used but there were two respondents who reported it to be ineffective. This was similar for peer coaching but internal coaching (coaching by a person who is not the line manager of the client) achieved the highest rating with only one of the 46 schools using it rating it less then effective.

c) What Impact has Coaching had in your School?

Clearly our respondents rated coaching as effective but we were also interested in whether this was bringing about specific behaviour change or impacts for individuals and school.

Within the survey there was almost unanimous identification of a positive impact on the performance of individuals and school with only three respondents identifying no overall impact. Closer inspection of these

three responses identified that two of them had only just instigated coaching initiatives and they felt it was too early to comment.

A more detailed assessment of this impact was considered more problematic and 72% of respondents identified they were not attempting such assessment currently. For these respondents there had been a significant perception of improvement but no attempt had been made to formally measure it either through use of a qualitative or quantitative measure. Of the 28% that were undertaking some kind of evaluation 35 were looking at qualitative measures whereas 23 were using quantitative measures.

Taking the qualitative measures first the methods used to gather views and opinions ranged from interviews, to focus groups and observational studies. The results seen were wide-ranging and impacted not only on the direct focus of the coaching but the professional skills of the coachees going forward:

> 'feedback shows that staff feel their own management skills have improved, that staff are able to resolve their own issues and become more self reflective. They have seen an improvement in their questioning skills in the classroom which in turn is improving learning and teaching'

> 'there has been a change in some teachers how they present and resolve issues'

> 'Staff are more confident now and more active on school improvement issues'

Eleven of the respondents identified direct improvement in the quality of teaching and learning:

> 'Developing pedagogy'

> 'Improved quality of teaching in teacher observations'

> 'Improvement in confidence and teaching ability'

The quantitative measures used by 23 respondents tended to concentrate upon questionnaires and surveys. One respondent identified the main difficulty with this method of analysis:

> 'it has been difficult to identify if coaching is the reason (for the improvement)- due to other initiatives, professional development and support in place… the use of student data on its own has not been used due to all the other interventions that are in place…'

Some schools had used lesson grading, pupil progress analysis and statistical analysis of lesson observation data. Examples of the results identified were:

- a rise in the number of teachers gaining an overall good judgement in lessons;
- satisfactory judgements from lessons moving to good;
- a rise in the number of children gaining 1.5-2 sublevels of progress within one academic year; and
- 'a reduction in pupil visits to Isolation'.

Improved internal promotion results as a consequence of coaching were also mentioned.

d) What Training is provided for Coaches?

The survey sought to build an outline picture of the training that had been provided for staff. The sampled schools employed a total of approximately 5,500 staff. Of these 16% (861) had received some form of training

in coaching. A few respondents made it clear that coaching was for all and that training should be available to all levels and types of staff.

Of all staff in the survey sample schools:

- 10% (535) had undertaken one day or more of training.

- 7% (393) had undertaken two days or more.

- 0.3% (16) had undertaken a postgraduate certificate or masters degree which included coaching.

More schools had invested in two-day programmes (250 staff) rather than in one-day programmes (142 staff).

The aspects of training that schools recognised as key were:

- promoting reflective practice;

- developing listening skills;

- developing questioning skills; and

- connecting with teaching and learning.

In other words, coaching training developed core elements of professional practice.

Within the learning process of the training, schools valued hands-on experience of coaching and being coached; time to practise coaching skills; and learning that was collaborative. Particular styles and models of coaching received little attention.

The survey also sought to gain a picture of what schools considered a minimum level of training to allow an individual to coach one-to-one in a school. A quarter of respondents did not feel able to give a specific answer to this question. Of those that did:

- 23% said a one-day introduction;

- 49% said a two-day course, with many adding the need for follow-up practice;

- 21% said a three to five day course, certificated or accredited.

The remainder thought that less than one day was sufficient training to coach. Responses to the question of what was the minimum level of training required covered a wide range of perspectives from "None - simply to be an outstanding practitioner" and "a half-day is enough for peer coaching" to "At least six full days with reflective journal, background reading and extended coach training and experience in school."

Others preferred not to generalise:

"It differs for different people, some are very natural, others less so."

 "It really depends on the individual member of staff."

"It depends on the coach's emotional intelligence!"

e) Key Lessons Learned about Implementation

The survey produced a wide range of learning and experience. Responses from those schools seeing themselves at the start of developments ranged from one example of 'only just started and not able to say' to a school where 'coaching is still at a very early stage of development, but evidence shows that it is a liberating experience.'More detailed responses centred around two broad areas: firstly culture and relationships and secondly leadership.

In terms of culture and relationships, staff attitudes were important. Staff had to be willing both to coach and be coached. There had to be a sense of colleagues asking for coaching. A foundation of trust and honesty was also important: 'honesty is key', ' trust must be established', 'coaching is about developing relationships based on trust'.

The leadership theme covered policy, strategy and pace of implementation. The comments of respondents were weighted towards giving the approach time: 'It doesn't happen overnight.' 'Don't make it a big bang'. 'Start small and grow gradually.' Time was needed to personalise coaching to the particular context of the school. 'Off-the-shelf models don't work – coaching is too complex and too highly skilled.' Time was needed for training: 'high quality coaching is important, hence the need for training. Ensure staff are trained by an expert.' No schools in this survey talked of a major large scale, whole school strategy for implementation.

Establishing a policy for coaching also emerged as an important aspect of implementation. Clarity of purpose mattered. For one school, coaching was seen as a 'personalised professional development opportunity rather than a strategy to address a deficit situation or poor performance'. For another, there was a clear policy to make coaching 'an integral part of staff development, not viewed as fixing poor teachers.'

The main barriers to implementation were seen as the resources of time, space and finance. Finding and dedicating time within the normal pattern of a timetabled day was highlighted again and again. Other barriers were of a different character – for example:

- the lack of understanding, even suspicion, of what coaching is;
- misconceptions of coaching carried over from the world of sport;
- staff preferring to be told what to do; and
- pressures to show improvement quickly.

One school suggested that making coaching into a big issue was indeed a barrier in itself.

Factors, which were found to support and assist the implementation of coaching, followed similar themes:

- the provision of dedicated time;
- the need for high quality training;
- the skills and credibility of the coach; and
- a readiness to be coached on the part of the client.

Again the leadership dimension was important: having coaching embedded in strategic planning, connecting to the main needs and goals of the school, and with allocated time and budget. At a practice level, there was a need for well-defined protocols, clear boundaries and clear leadership from the top. It was important for coaching to be part of a school culture of peer support and distributed leadership, working on openness, honesty, trust and good working relationships.

Schools were asked what issues they considered appropriate for coaching, rather than some other intervention such as a training course or direct feedback from a line manager. Responses indicate that schools turn to coaching as a broader and longer-term strategy that builds capacity and sustainability over time -

rather than as a technique to handle particular issues. In other words, a coaching approach was used to enhance current leadership practice in improving teaching and learning, professional development, performance management or leadership itself, especially around attitudes, mind-set, self-efficacy and confidence. Issues were mainly individual, with only a very small number of respondents bringing in a teams dimension.

In terms of professional development, coaching was seen as being specific to the needs of each individual, a personalised strategy in contrast to the generic nature of most training programmes. Coaching developed deeper thinking and reflective practice. It allowed risk-taking and helped 'overcome a trial and error approach to learning'. It was seen as 'unique in its focus on the individual finding their own resources and digging deeply'.

> 'It is a strategy that is much more responsive to the specific needs of the individual rather than generic, off-the-shelf training.'

> 'Training could not provide us with definitive answers to the issues – we had to have ownership of them and 'unpick' them to find possible solutions and next steps.'

Coaching as an alternative to training emerged from another school because of the difference in impact. The issue was 'staff being highly trained but this was not impacting on practice.' Coaching helped to get to 'the root causes'.

For some, coaching was seen as essentially non-judgemental and not part of performance management. Another perspective saw coaching as a vehicle for culture change around performance.

> 'Coaching is an ideal place to start. Some staff I think see it as a 'top-down' process, so coaching turned that idea on its head and brought a new dynamic to it.'

The connections with performance management centred around the need to empower staff, to develop a 'collegiate culture' or to 'lessen needy staff'. For some this pointed to a new kind of leadership putting the professional at the centre of their own learning, with 'authentic change coming from the individual and not from directed approaches.' For others, the rationale for coaching was simpler: 'It works!'

What are the Lessons for Schools now?

Our research shows that coaching in schools is being used very nearly as much for leadership development as it is for teaching development. However, the understanding of coaching is both broad and mixed. Nearly two-thirds of schools in the sample saw a place for coaching in assessing performance and giving feedback. Two-thirds of schools included mentoring staff in a new role or area of work as suitable for coaching. Whereas in nearly half of schools sampled coaching also included providing staff with advice and solutions directly.

A growing number of teachers are developing coaching skills and seeking to use them within school thereby mirroring the rise in coaching within commercial sectors. These skills are being used in coaching for a variety of purposes, from skills development to team effectiveness, and the mode of coaching encompasses both directive and non-directive styles. Often there is a more senior member of staff who is overseeing or leading the coaching and can be identified with the 'internal coach' of other sectors. The use of professional external coaches is now more evident then previously thought. As identified here, there is a high level of satisfaction with both internal and external coaches.

The impact of the coaching is as varied as the purpose and context indicating it to be a flexible form of development for both individual teachers and teams. In particular there was a high level of agreement from

respondents that coaching does impact on the self-efficacy of staff, improving both teaching and leadership capabilities. This is in line with findings in other sectors (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). The use of both quantitative and qualitative measures of improvement is still in its infancy but initial results identify a good return on the investment of both time and training.

Training and Support

Is it possible to train anyone to be a coach? The answer from the literature seems to suggest the only requirement is a willingness on the part of the would-be coach to do it. The length of training is a moot point however as it speaks directly to the resources that are available from school, in other words what is necessary and sufficient?

Current best practice for manager coaching in the private sector is between two and five days intensive training spread out over a number of months to allow practice and application of the skills within the work place (Jarvis et al., 2006). Other features of such programmes include assessment exercises and on-going support. If applied to the education sector, a teacher graduating from such a programme should have sufficient skills to work with their staff or their peers to address performance and low-level development issues. Although coaches working with clients as part of leadership programmes (for example, through NCSL) are sometimes 'external' to the school, they would expect to be operating at this level of skill and expertise. The survey results suggest that such levels of training were being used in schools for a significant minority of staff. It was not assumed to be required for all staff in general.

Internal coaches who are coaching peers they do not manage should expect to have further development and to have further developed their knowledge and expertise to the point where they are able to offer support to their fellow teacher coaches and help them in their practice. The appropriate level of training here is generally considered to be at postgraduate level and the teacher internal coach would consider supervision of others as an integral part of their leadership role. There are several professional bodies willing to accredit courses and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) has kite marked a number of these postgraduate programmes at 'practitioner' level thereby providing schools with some reassurance of the level and standard of the training. The level of this type of training within school is still low (0.3%).

Implementing a Coaching Culture

Once people have experienced the benefits of coaching both for themselves as leaders and for the staff they lead, it is natural that many will seek to introduce it throughout their school. Research suggests the effectiveness of this embedding is influenced by a number of factors (Jarvis et al., 2006):

- Buy-in, support of senior leaders
- Ongoing training and support
- Effective support mechanisms
- Initiatives that are introduced for specific learning and teaching reasons
- A commitment to measuring results
- Coaching being used to address specific issues and the boundaries are clear.

As experience widens, other issues have also been identified in the general literature as having an impact. An example is a preference for the use of a single simple model of coaching which everyone understands so there is a common language for all. Similarly there needs to be a clear ethical structure to the coaching as people may need confidentiality to discuss certain issues and the boundaries of this need to be clear if trust is to develop in the process. The importance of each of these factors will vary with each organisation and it is becoming the norm for organisations to consult with external coaches to develop their embedding strategy. Coaching training organisations are also well placed to advise on such processes and can enhance their success significantly.

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Implementing a coaching culture appears to stem from a wish to achieve some broad but often elusive organisational goals to do with creating trust, effective relationships and honest communication. Important outcomes have been the improvement in performance, self esteem and motivation of staff, the clarification of professional development, greater team cohesion and ownership of plans, and greater autonomy in and between individuals and teams. With good relationships and a climate of trust and honesty, staff are more willing to seek support. The leadership and implementation of coaching need to take into account the wondrous yet delicate power of such trust to accelerate growth and performance.

How long does it take to see the Benefits?

Our experience of teachers' response to coaching has been one of overwhelmingly enthusiasm coupled with a real concern about the lack of time they have to do it justice. This is really borne out within the survey where time is identified as the biggest barrier to implementation. In other studies carried out by us we interviewed a number of organisations at varying stages of introducing a coaching culture. One point became very clear; in an environment where change is such a constant, there is an overriding need for a flexible, confident and well-developed workforce able to proactively manage their shifting agenda and coaching supports this type of responsiveness.

But coaching will not produce overnight results. It is about enabling behaviour change and we all know that takes some time to happen. This can lead to impatience both in the leaders and employees of organisations enacting such a strategy but one theme has come forward in this, and the interviews we have conducted in school, is that head teachers should look at one to two years as a minimum timescale to enact a real culture change with coaching. Obviously this can be foreshortened if sufficient energy and resources are applied to the initiative but there is an argument that a slower and more inclusive pace will deepen the embedding and 'make it stick'.

In summary coaching has the potential to offer personalised and accessible development for teachers to equip them to meet the challenges of their changing agenda but only if it is managed and supported effectively. Other sectors have realised significant gains from their investment in coaching and there is a real opportunity now for education professionals to benefit from *their* experience.

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