



CITY & GUILDS
CENTRE FOR SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT

INSIGHTS N°1

THE ROLE OF COACHING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



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INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY & GUILDS CENTRE FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) is a not-for-profit research and development body for vocational education and training. We work to influence and improve skills policy and practice worldwide through an evidence-based approach. We are part of the City & Guilds Group.

The desire to integrate evidence into skills policy and practice sits at the heart of what we do. That's why we work closely with policy makers, teachers, trainers and researchers to:

- Understand current challenges and find evidence-based solutions
- Provide research findings that are relevant and practical to teachers, trainers and learners
- Link research, policy and practice by sharing evidence and good practice
- Deliver skills development projects to test research findings and create good practice models.

Our rigorous approach to research and policy development, and our commitment to testing our findings in practice, mean that our project partners – and the people who will ultimately be affected by our work – can be sure that every recommendation we make is based on evidence.

If you want to find out more about how we are influencing and improving vocational education and training worldwide, visit our website at www.skillsdevelopment.org, and follow us on Twitter @skillsdev.

This publication provides an insight into various approaches through which coaching has, and possibly might be, used within the vocational education and training sector. We welcome feedback and comments on the chapters and insights into your own personal experiences. Please add to the discussion through our website, twitter, or email us directly at info@skillsdevelopment.org.

WHAT IS COACHING?

KATHLEEN COLLETT

City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development

INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in how vocational skills are best acquired, in healthy contrast to the traditional emphasis on how they can be assessed for qualification purposes. The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD) is therefore producing two publications with a focus on teaching and learning in vocational education. The first report which will be available towards the end of 2012, looks at the theory of vocational pedagogy in general. In this publication, we focus on one specific aspect: how to use coaching to improve workplace performance. We explore the idea that coaching can play a role in promoting excellent workplace performance as part of vocational learning, looking at the role coaching plays in a variety of vocational learning situations. The fundamental question driving this publication is how coaching can help move a person from understanding the theory behind vocational activity, and being able to perform at a basic level, to being fully competent, and, beyond that, capable of excellent performance.

This publication consists of chapters, each by a different expert author, which explore the application of established coaching models and methodologies to vocational learning. The contributions draw on evidence from existing coaching provision within the further education (FE) sector. They also look at how coaching encourages performance improvements in various fields where it is particularly strongly established, such as music, sports, public speaking, and leadership and management, and how these approaches might be transferred to other vocational education contexts. The publication also contains interviews with coaches, and examples of practical ways in which coaching can be put into practice.

WHAT IS COACHING?

While it is easy to picture particular examples of coaches such as executive coaches, football coaches, voice coaches or even subject learning coaches, further examination shows that, in different contexts, the term 'coaching' and the associated term 'mentoring' are used to capture a range of concepts. Consequently, several attributes of coaching which might appear to be definitive are not.

One example of this is the existence of contrasting ideas about the role of directive intervention in coaching. Some definitions of coaching emphasise the importance of equipping the person receiving coaching with the ability to increasingly direct their own learning. For example, in CUREE's National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching, produced for the development of teachers, coaching is seen as a non-judgmental process where emotional support is provided and the focus is on equipping the coachee to make their own decisions. Mentoring, on the other hand, is seen as a goal-directed process linked with career progression. However, in other contexts, the distinction is made in exactly the opposite direction. Morgan (2005, p. 41),

reflecting on the practices of effective executive coaches, defines coaching in more directive terms: '[T]he coach, not the coachee, is in control of the pace and direction of the journey. It is within the coach's realm of responsibility to set the ground rules, collect the necessary information, assess, analyse and judge the situation, define the right action plan, push or prod accordingly, monitor progress, adjust approach as required, and deliver the goods.' The two contradictory conceptualisations demonstrate that neither directive intervention nor hands-off support is a defining characteristic of coaching. Instead, these different perspectives suggest that there is a spectrum of approaches that coaches use, with the underlying aim of helping the coachee to improve their performance. Coaching appears to include both situations where coaches assert their judgment of the performance standards, and situations where coaches facilitate the development of coachees' ability to make these judgments for themselves. Sometimes one or the other will be more dominant, depending on the context, but in all cases the goal is that the coachee ultimately owns the new 'performance' or learning.

Some definitions of coaching highlight the role of coaching in allowing individuals to develop their own approach to their work or performance. Again, this does not appear to be definitive. In vocational contexts, coaching a learner towards excellent workplace performance may involve the coach actively correcting the learner's techniques and approaches. This approach often has a particular place when learners are beginners or are mastering new techniques. For example, a lecturer in an FE college might show an apprentice painter how to hold a paintbrush to prevent paint dripping, or a piano teacher might show a beginner student how to hold his or her hands over the keyboard. As the learner becomes more experienced and competent, the coaching they receive might become more accommodating of their individual approaches and techniques. However, even with those who are performing at a higher level, such as professional athletes, a coach might occasionally seek to actively

correct techniques or approaches that he or she thinks may limit the coachee's performance.

These examples also illustrate a third dilemma: although it initially seems that the need for coaching, and the type of coaching that is appropriate, varies according to the level of performance of the coachee, in practice it is not so clear cut. As we have seen above, however, although learners who are performing at a lower level may appear to need more direction, directive intervention is used in coaching at all levels of performance, including the very highest level, and coaching which encourages reflection, problem-solving and ownership of the learning by the coachee is important at lower levels of performance as well.

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF COACHING

In summary, it appears that coaching cannot be defined in terms of:

- whether or not it is directive,
- whether or not it allows individuals to develop their own approach,
- what level of performance the coachee is at.

However, there are some things which do appear to be central attributes of coaching, and could be considered definitive, as the interviews and chapters in this publication, in line with the framework developed by the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE, 2005), suggest.

First, coaching is **relational**. It involves individualised feedback and responsiveness to individual progress, to at least some extent. In chapter 5, Chris Devereux discusses the central importance for both teachers and coaches of adjusting their approach in response to interim assessments of how learners or coachees are performing. He points out that this responsiveness is at the core of both coaching and good formative assessment. For this to take place there must be an effective two-way

relationship between the coach and the coachee. CUREE (2005, p. 2) characterises this relationship as one of ‘developing trust, attending respectfully and with sensitivity to the powerful emotions involved in deep professional learning’. In chapter 2, CUREE, drawing on interviews with coaches undertaken for this publication, shows that in vocational contexts this was particularly challenging where coachees were afraid of criticism or resistant to change, or when they were not used to reflecting on their practice or appeared to be more expert than the coach. The toolkit in the coloured section at the back of this publication (chapter 6) provides some ideas about how coaches can develop these relationships through structured approaches.

Second, coaching is **dynamic**. As discussed above, although the coach may have a plan, the coaching that happens will change in response to the coachee’s progress, and the type of coaching required will change over time, as the coachee develops new skills. Coaching may also change in response to new workplace demands. One of the executive coaches we interviewed reflected on the importance of being responsive to external challenges as a coach:

‘For me, the term coaching is really about helping individuals achieve their full potential by helping them work through work-related issues they might have, helping them to think through problems or challenges they might face, changes that might be coming up in the workplace or in the job that they are doing.’

Reflecting on the role of the coach in a dynamic, social work environment, Alan Brown notes that ‘interactions with coaches increase the likelihood that individuals can make the most of ... opportunities for learning and development arising from interactions at work’ (chapter 4).

Third, coaching is **co-productive**. Both the coach and the coachee must be actively engaged in creating the learning

experience. Both of them must bring some level of understanding to the task at hand, and a willingness and ability to reflect on the learning process. Devereux (chapter 5) discusses how a ‘professional conversation’ can be used as a coaching tool. CUREE (2005, p. 2) refers to this ‘professional discussion’ as a learning conversation in which there is ‘structured professional dialogue, rooted in evidence from the professional learner’s practice, which articulates existing beliefs and practices to enable reflection on them’. The explicit recognition that both the coach and the coachee bring different existing skills, experience and understanding of the vocational task to the coaching process, appears to be central. This is in contrast to some other teaching methods commonly used in vocational learning contexts, such as demonstration.

Finally, coaching is fundamentally **performance- or outcome-focused**. The coachee needs to be doing something already, or to quickly start doing something, in order to be coached, and coaching is intended to enhance performance rather than to lay theoretical foundations, for example. Alan Brown’s chapter in this publication points to the importance of existing performance as a basis for coaching. He notes that taking on challenging work is an important way in which high level vocational skills are developed, and that coaching relationships provide critical support in this context which helps the learner to develop existing skills, learn new techniques and gain new perspectives on his or her practice (chapter 4). The importance of focusing on outcomes is articulated in each of the chapters. CUREE’s analysis of the interviews with coaches (chapter 2) shows that establishing the desired outcomes of the coaching relationship is an important part of the coaching process, although whether these desired outcomes are best understood initially by the coach or the coachee is context-dependent. Jill Jameson (chapter 3) points out that focusing on performance improvements by setting goals facilitates the learning process because it enables learners to measure

their progress and adjust their performance. In chapter 4 Brown shows that the concrete goals that characterise project work provide a useful context for a supportive coaching relationship.

One important aspect of the focus on performance that is that the dialogue between coach and the coachee is rooted in evidence of the coachee's practice. The nature of this evidence will depend on the vocational context and on the aspect of performance that is the focus of the coaching session. Evidence is often provided by direct observation or via a recording such as a video or audio recording. If the performance in question has a physical output such as an artwork or a written report, this may provide the evidence upon which to build the coaching conversation. The key point is that the coach and the coachee work with shared direct examples of practice. It is this which distinguishes coaching from counselling (which focuses on the subject's feelings) at one end and teaching (which is not individualised to the same extent) at the other.

These four attributes (relationality, dynamism, co-productivity and a performance focus) make up the definition of coaching as we understand it in this publication. The chapters, interviews and tools explore different aspects of attributes with specific attention to the vocational education context. The following section briefly discusses why coaching's context is important.

COACHING IN CONTEXT

The context in which coaching takes place affects the type of coaching which is most appropriate for improving workplace performance or potential workplace performance. The publication explores different dimensions of this.

The **standard** of practice that the coach is coaching towards is one important part of the context. Is the coach aiming for basic competence or a level above basic competence? Arguably, confidence in basic skills as well as higher level skills

are required for an individual to be able to use their skills in any reasonably complex work environment, and this can sometimes throw up unexpected challenges. The level of practice towards which coaching aims may affect the amount of time spent on mastering both basic and higher level skills. For example, in the field of catering, coaching a chef to enable them to work in a Michelin-starred restaurant will be different from coaching a chef who intends to work in a canteen, even if they will be making similar dishes. A learner chef will spend a lot of time chopping onions. The more they chop onions, the better they get at it. How good do they need to get at it? How fast? How precise? They will also learn techniques they will seldom use. How many of these techniques do they need to learn and to what standard? These techniques will give the chef flexibility and creativity later on, but will also take time to learn. These questions create one dimension of the context of coaching.

A second contextual factor is where on their **learning journey** the coachee is, and their ability to engage with the coaching process. A learner who is just beginning to learn a skill might in general require more direction, but later in the learning journey, less direction might be required. The coaching process needs to take into account the other skills, knowledge and experience the coachee already has, and how much of the framework for performance they have already mastered, since this will cause them to approach the demands of the workplace in different ways, and will affect their ability to direct their own learning. We interviewed a lecturer in adult literacy, also responsible for supporting the development of other staff, who put it in this way:

'If you are coaching someone that is new to teaching then you come at it from a position of more expertise ... It is a different dynamic if you are coaching someone who is more of a peer or colleague.'



A senior civil servant who has consulted on risk management for charities made a similar distinction:

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'[Coaching is] much more skills-based at lower levels and much more strategic [at higher levels] ... Much more strategic and [focusing on] very key principles, rather than the real minutiae of how to do it.'

The chapters in this publication explore in different ways how coaching can be adapted to support coachees at different stages of their learning journey.

The degree of **rigidity** of the work performance which is the ultimate goal of coaching is a third contextual factor which affects the coaching relationship. In some work environments, such as aircraft engineering or surgery, there is, at least in the earlier career stages, little room for creative interpretation of basic processes. Competencies are **well-defined** and fixed – learners have to do things in a specific way: this is a rigid context for coaching. One of the interviewees for this publication works for a large missile systems company and commented on the need to ensure coaching was appropriate for the exacting standards demanded in some aspects of its work:

'We make missiles. For instance, if you are building a missile, it's how do you actually learn the best way do it. It's showing them, this way is better than that way. [Whereas] in other areas we work in, it's not about telling them how to do it but have you thought about doing it this way, have you thought about doing it that way?'

In other contexts, interpretation and flexibility are required from an early stage. For example, a coach for ICT teachers whom we interviewed said:

'What we used to do [when developing virtual learning environments was] we would have different people developing different sections and we would let them develop it their own way and deliberately use different ways of doing it: more pictures, more text, interactive tours, embedded video clips, bright fonts, small fonts, dark fonts. We deliberately let everyone do it so that they could then evaluate each other's and see which ones were easiest to read, remembered most, taken away from most. We would share the best practice; I wouldn't tell people to change their things but they would go away and change it so it reflected what experience worked best for them.'

A range of workplace contexts, from aerospace industries to vocational education colleges, are considered in the final three chapters which draw out how these workplaces affect the type of coaching which is most appropriate.

Finally, the **vocational context** is important. Coaching for workplace performance differs from coaching in an academic subject such as Ancient Greek, or yoga which is usually neither academic nor vocational. To use a skill effectively in the workplace an individual needs to consider a wide range of different things, including but not limited to: their relationships in the workplace, commercial considerations, and limitations of time and money. Each of the chapters explores this point in different ways. For example, in chapter 3, Jameson points out that coaching can also play a role in introducing coachees to a vocational 'community of practice' beyond their usual work or learning context, and that this engagement may well provide further material for improving the coachee's ability to apply their skills in practice. In chapter 4, Brown discusses four different ways in which coaching can be used to develop high level skills within the context of the workplace. In chapter 5, Devereux explores how coaching can be seen as formative assessment, applied to vocational context, and in chapter 6, Liz Browne

discusses a number of practical coaching tools, and applies them to different vocational learning settings, in particular teacher training.

Together, the chapters, interviews and tools explore how and why coaching can play a role in promoting excellent workplace performance, as part of vocational learning. Our hope is that this publication will broaden the understanding of issues relating to the delivery of coaching in the vocational learning context, increase enthusiasm for and uptake of coaching as a tool in vocational learning, reach new audiences of potential coaches, and promote dialogue between trainers, employers and learners at all stages in order to share good practice.

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Throughout the publication we have included the perspectives of coaches from a wide array of sectors to develop the practical application of some of the issues that have been discussed throughout the chapters and to illuminate some of the preceding discussions.

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL DICK
APPLEGATE CB OBE**

Managing Director of Eagle Strategic Consulting Ltd

What do you mean by the term ‘coaching’?

A coach is effectively someone who draws a better performance from an individual or a team by engaging them rather than driving them in a narrow didactic sense. He or she attempts to bring out the best in them by providing a perspective which the individuals would find it hard to discover themselves.

How do you start the coaching process?

As a coach, you have to carry out a detailed analysis of what you are hoping to achieve through coaching. One of the first things you can do is help individuals discover what they hope to achieve, in what sort of timescale, how they would measure success, what they believe their current capabilities are and where they might need to improve. By going through those questions you are engaging with the individuals you are coaching and getting them to buy into the eventual solution and the pain which may be necessary in order to achieve that goal.

Who sets the agenda for coaching?

I have always strongly believed in the individual or the group learning for themselves. The individual or group has got to function when you are not there. If you make them too reliant upon you, as the coach, to be the stimulus and you are absent, then the stimulus fails. It would be very easy to say, ‘do this and do that’ but increasingly I have found that a non-confrontational approach is much more productive and much more likely to get long term success. You have to be approachable, but the ability to stand back is also important because it provides you with insights which the group, or the individual, hasn’t got.

Could you describe the times when coaching has worked exceptionally well?

The person being coached needs to want it. I think the coach has also got to put in the hard yards of understanding the problem, measuring progress and assessing progress. Coaches can do this by assessing their formal activities but also by designing a particular testing activity to draw the best out from them or to illustrate their weaknesses.

What do you think the benefits of coaching are?

It opens their minds; it helps to remove false boundaries. For me coaching moves you beyond that basic level of knowledge towards understanding, which is different.

REFLECTIONS ON VOCATIONAL COACHING PRACTICE

CHAPTER 2 PAUL CRISP, REBECCA RAYBOULD AND KATE HOLDICH
Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE)

PREVIEW

Many tutors, trainers and managers already use coaching in vocational settings as diverse as colleges, training centres, manufacturing workplaces, music studios, gardens and commercial kitchens. Why do they use coaching approaches to building vocational skills and improving performance? What can we learn from their experiences about when coaching is useful and how best to do it?

This chapter addresses these questions, based on interviews with different types of coaches, as well as evidence from four systematic reviews of the evidence on coaching of teachers?

‘The coach needs to bring something to the party which that group doesn’t already have in order to add value. It isn’t about a classic consultancy approach – give me your watch and I’ll tell you the time. It needs to be more than that. Both need to bring a watch, but the coach also needs to bring a torch so you can see it at night.’

What role does coaching play in developing people’s skills and improving their performance? Does coaching practice vary according to the context it’s practised in? To find out, we interviewed a range of people (17 altogether) who regularly used coaching in their settings:

- some were senior staff working in colleges or an academy, where they were responsible for training new teachers or developing the teaching and learning skills of colleagues in their team;
- some were company directors or senior managers working to develop their team’s efficiency, or independent executive coaches working with senior managers and directors to improve their personal and business skills; and
- some were responsible for helping people to learn the particular skills needed to perform a specific job well (such as a chef in a restaurant kitchen or a professional singer in a West End musical) or to perform well at a sport (such as judo).

While some of the interviewees were based in the FE sector, we also wanted to learn from those who used coaching in the workplace or in a sports environment. Despite their different contexts, the approaches they used were broadly similar, although there were occasional variations in some aspects of coaching practice too. In this chapter, we report on the coaches’ views on seven key areas:

- what coaching is;
- how it is carried out;

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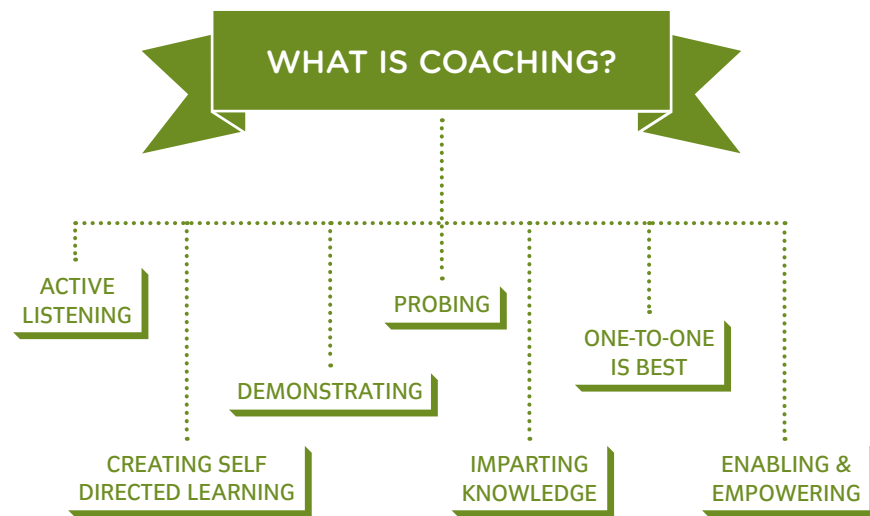
- who sets the agenda;
- the skills needed by both the coach and coachee for coaching to be successful;
- what makes for an effective coaching relationship;
- when coaching works best; and
- the benefits of coaching.

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We also relate what our small sample of coaches said to the much larger evidence base provided by four systematic reviews (Cordingley *et al.*, 2007, 2005a, 2005b, 2003) which examined the impact of different aspects of professional development, including coaching, on teachers, as well as the National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching which was developed in relation to CPD development for teachers and trainers (CUREE, 2005). The evidence was derived from thousands of international studies across all sectors (but drew more heavily on school systems). It clearly demonstrates the link between coaching and improved student learning outcomes. We were struck by the **commonality** between the experiences of our interviewees and the key themes in the wider evidence base.

Along the way, we also highlight related evidence about effective teaching and learning for students. We conclude the chapter by summing up the key features of coaching in vocational contexts and highlight some implications that will enable coaches, both new and experienced, to take their own practice forwards.





'I see coaching as enabling and empowering people to realise their potential.'

All the coaches saw coaching as a means of helping to improve the specific skills and performance of those being coached. They generally preferred to draw the improved performance from the coachees by helping them to see alternative, better ways of doing things for themselves, rather than simply telling them how to improve. Consequently, their conversations usually involved them in asking questions designed to probe coachees' thinking (such as, *'Do you think this is the best approach? Is there another approach you could try?'*) and listening actively, to help the coachees consider different ways of doing things. Coaching was thus about empowering learners to develop themselves.

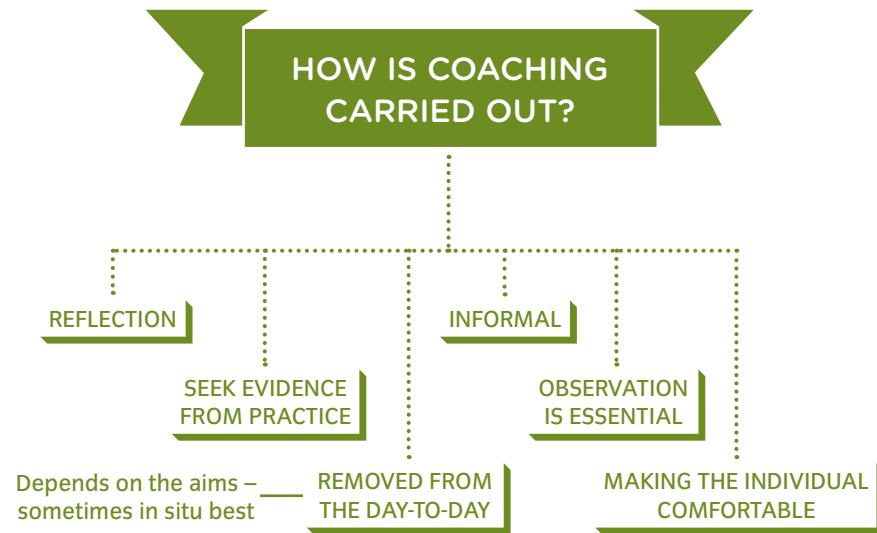
One coach gave this example of how she encouraged her colleagues to develop ideas and skills for themselves.

'When we introduced the Moodle VLE at our college, we encouraged different people to develop different sections. We let them develop it in their own way and find different ways of doing it, such as including: more

pictures, more text, interactive tours, embedded video clips, bright fonts, small fonts, dark fonts. We deliberately let everyone do it differently so that they could then evaluate each other's and see which ones were easiest to read, remembered the most, and taken away from most. We could then share the best practice.'

But coaches also saw their role as one of imparting knowledge and demonstrating particular techniques or ways of doing things when working with people who were at the beginning of their learning journey. Although some of the coaches did use group coaching to enable them to talk to everyone in the team or group collectively, they all felt that coaching was most effective (ie ensured greater progress) when it took place one to one because this enabled their help to be bespoke.

The interviewees' ideas about coaching largely echoed the National Framework concept of specialist coaching, namely that coaching *'enables learners to take control of their own learning through non-judgmental questioning and support'*. This has parallels with research about effective teaching and learning. Swan (2006), James *et al.* (2006), Wegerif *et al.* (2004), Black and Wiliam (1998), Rogers (1994) and Bruner (1960), for example, all show the value of teachers facilitating learning in ways that help students to think and learn for themselves, rather than using didactic transmission approaches in which knowledge is simply passed from teacher to students and the teacher is seen as the font of all knowledge.



‘Coaching has to take place in an environment where there won’t be any interruptions, so for my staff I tell them they can leave the site, go to Starbucks or McDonalds, whatever they want to do, but get out of the school so they can concentrate properly.’ [Headteacher]

Many of the coaches recognised that helping an individual to reflect on his/her development needs and find a way of moving forward takes time and is dependent upon the individual feeling comfortable about discussing these things. Consequently, they arranged for extended coaching conversations (lasting from 30 minutes to an hour) to take place somewhere removed from the day-to-day work in order to create a safe place in which to talk and reflect on issues, challenges and successes. Usually, these sessions built on an individual’s development needs that had been identified by the coachee him/herself (either through failure or through wanting to excel) or by other people in the organisation. But once coaching was established, a coaching session could also be a five-minute conversation that took place, for example, while passing in the corridor. Sometimes, the coaches felt that coaching was best done in situ, for example

when honing practical skills (eg gardening and cookery) or physical skills (eg judo techniques) or crafting performance skills (eg singing). Either way, the coaches felt that their observation of the coachee’s current practice was crucial because *‘seeing where people are challenged or making mistakes is where you can help them most of all’*. Below are two examples of how coaches made use of observation in their different contexts.

This example shows how a judo coach used observation to help his coachees identify and develop particular skills:

‘We have been at a competition and something hasn’t quite worked out for a player and then we’ve come back to the club and identified and worked on the skills they needed. In the next competition they’ve gone in and applied these skills to win the match. It can also be a case of watching a judo match, analysing the tactics, whether they are left handed or right handed, things like that, and then next time they get to fight that person they are aware of the tactics they could use to win the match.’

In this example, a coach working with teacher colleagues describes how observation was integrated into other aspects of coaching:

‘We use a three-stage, structured model that incorporates the use of video. It starts with getting to know the teacher and establishing a supportive coaching relationship. Then we go into a session and video their practice. The teacher uses the video to self-reflect and to identify their own strengths and areas of development. Then we have the coaching conversation ... to identify what they do well, what they don’t do so well, and what might be the solution to that problem.’

The importance of observation/evidence is highlighted in the National Framework for Coaching and Mentoring. To be effective,

coaching conversations have to focus on efforts to try out new approaches and seek out evidence from practice, which involves careful observation and reflection on it, as indicated by the coaches above.



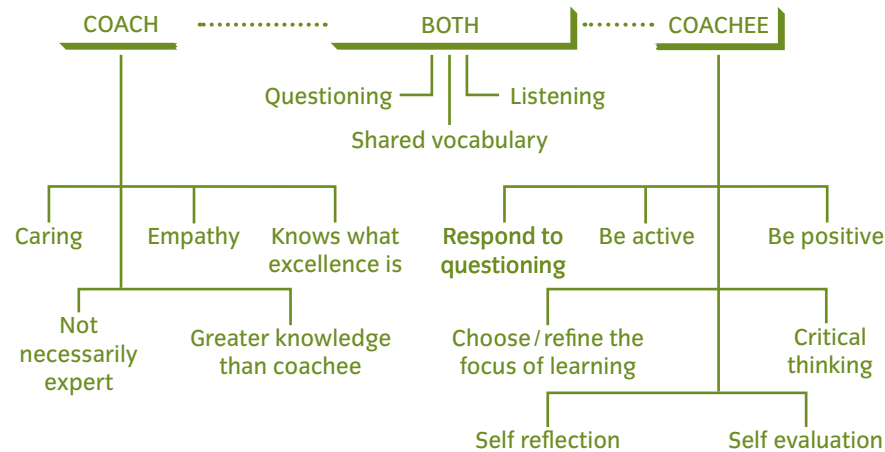
'The coachee has to set the agenda; the coach provides the structure.'

The coaches' views on who should set the agenda of the coaching sessions seemed to depend on the context or point at which they took place in the person's journey. Some felt that the sessions needed to be led by the coach, for example, *'when their boss has identified something that needs to be dealt with and they themselves don't realise it or don't accept it'*. Those working with young or inexperienced people learning particular job skills often set the agenda too because they felt it was their responsibility to develop the individual. One coach described how the head chef organised a carousel of tasks for the trainee chefs to do in the kitchen. Each learner was then coached in the particular skill for a certain period of time with the aim of helping them to learn to do the job as fast as possible, before moving onto the next station. Other coaches noted how the agenda was set by the coachee because *'they were able to identify their own personal areas of need'*. A singing coach explained how a professional singer might ring him up and say: *'I've got an audition for Jesus Christ Superstar tomorrow.'*

I know what songs I want to sing, but I want some coaching in them to make my performance as good as it can be.' In this scenario, while the coachees set the agenda, the coaches usually structured the session (clarifying the issues, what they were going to cover, and what was achievable), although sometimes this was in collaboration with the coachees through using 'what' and 'why' questions to explore their development needs.

The National Framework highlights the differences between mentoring and coaching. It recognises that those at the beginning of a new career often benefit from mentoring where a mentor who has a lot of knowledge about the demands of the role not shared by the mentee identifies the learning goals and supports the mentee in achieving these, although there is clear crossover with coaching definitions. It seems that while our interviewees mainly focused on specialist coaching, they drew on mentoring for those who needed it. This involved them in taking more of a leading role in determining the agenda of the conversations.

SKILLS OF THE COACH AND COACHEE?



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'You have to build the relationship and mutual respect; you have to really listen and use questions that help them reflect.'

The coaches highlighted the importance of having active listening and questioning skills, particularly when working in sensitive situations. Coaches sometimes found that they had to deal with people who found any kind of criticism, however positively phrased, very hard to take, due to feeling vulnerable (which could be for a variety of reasons). Sometimes, coaches found they had to work with people who perhaps saw themselves as more experienced and/or who didn't see the need for change because they considered their practice to already be good. Such situations required that the coach acted with sensitivity and developed the coachee's confidence in them, such that they *'will open up to you and feel that they can trust you and talk to you quite deeply about things and how they feel'*. The coaches achieved this partly through

active listening, *'really listening to what people are saying'*, and encouraging freedom of expression through questioning and being non-confrontational. This didn't always come naturally to the coaches: *'The moment someone starts talking to me, I know the solution in my head, so stopping myself from telling them is a real challenge.'* One coach noted the importance of having a shared vocabulary: *'There's no point coming in and hitting them with management speak; it just turns them off.'*

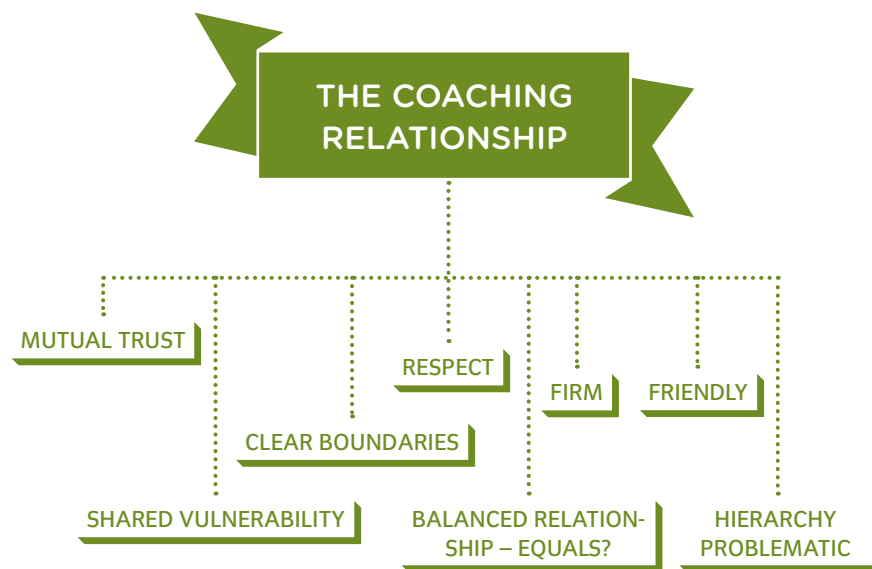
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The importance of active listening and questioning is unpacked in a little detail in the National Framework. While some people may look as though they need a 'good talking to', they actually function better if they get a 'good listening to', and in the process listen to themselves. Being listened to forces people to articulate often unconsidered thoughts, which in turn helps them notice and become more rational about their feelings. In a similar way, Rogers (1994) found that listening to students helped them to take actions that made them more independent and that solved some of their problems.

As well as noting the skills needed by the coach, the interviewees identified the importance of coachees having the skills of self-reflection, critical thinking and self-evaluation, but highlighted how coachees don't necessarily come with these skills; sometimes they need to be developed. This wasn't always easy. The coaches' views of the skills coachees need to bring to the partnership echo those identified by the National Framework. These are the ability to:

- choose and refine a learning focus;
- respond positively to questions;
- take an increasingly active role; and
- learn how to analyse and reflect on practice.

Like the coaches we interviewed, the National Framework recognises that coachees may need support in their development of these skills in order to help them to make the most of coaching opportunities.



'You have to be entirely honest from the outset and set the ground rules from the start.'

The coaches we interviewed considered the nature of the relationship between the coach and coachee was key. They saw it as being *'firm and friendly, but not being friends'* because *'coaching is a professional relationship'*. To build the necessary mutual trust, respect and understanding took time, although it could be tricky to achieve if hierarchy got in the way, for example, *'if you're their line manager'*. It required being *'entirely honest from the outset and setting ground rules from the start, such as explaining what teaching observations are for, how they are done and how they are reported, so that you create trust from the outset'*. The relationship needed to be *'very close because you need to be able to get inside the other person's brain; you need to know how they are thinking. Without that, it is very difficult to get a good performance from them'*. At the same time, the relationship needed to be balanced, with both individuals respecting each other and seeing each other as equals even though

they might have different skills. One coach commented, for example: *'If I was coaching a chief executive and I felt submissive to them, I wouldn't be able to coach them; it would be a completely imbalanced relationship.'*

The National Framework emphasises the crucial role of professional relationships in effective coaching and shows that, as the coaches we interviewed identified, successful relationship building involves *'developing trust, and attending respectively and with sensitivity to the powerful emotions involved in deep learning'*. Rogers (1994) reached similar conclusions about the importance of relationship building between teachers and their students. In order to build successful relationships with their students, teachers needed to be able to listen, show empathy and care, and have a positive regard for them.

The coaches felt they also needed to have a certain level of knowledge and competence in what they were coaching to give them credibility, to enable them to deal with difficult questions and to take an individual's understanding forwards. They felt this didn't necessarily mean they needed to be an expert: *'If you think about it from a sports point of view, you don't have to have won an Olympic medal to coach someone to win one.'* What was seen as important was that the coach had some specialist expertise, an understanding of the situation, and knew what excellence looked like in order to move the coachee on: *'They have to be confident that you are going to add real value.'*

One coach gave the following example to demonstrate the level of knowledge and competence required of coaches in order to make them credible and able to add value:

'If you have a group problem in nanotechnology, the expertise that is required of a coach in that circumstance is not in nanotechnology, but maybe an expertise in group dynamics. The coach needs to bring something to the party which that group doesn't already have in order to add value. It isn't about a classic consultancy approach – give

me your watch and I'll tell you the time. It needs to be more than that. Both need to bring a watch, but the coach also needs to bring a torch so you can see it at night.'

Another coach commented on the potential downside of being viewed as an expert:

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'It doesn't matter what subject you teach, if you say you're the expert, you will automatically start telling that person things, and they will expect you to tell them things because they will expect you, if you're an expert, to know more than them, and to be able to give them useful information. You just have to use your expertise in a different way. Rather than telling them how to do things, you have to try to get them to find the skills themselves.'

These observations about the importance of expertise echo the National Framework's identification of expertise as an aspect of specialist coaching. The Framework also recognises the complementary value of collaborative peer coaching which does not require such expertise but which offers, instead, an extended reciprocal learning relationship in which shared vulnerability accelerates trust building and builds commitment to risk taking.

Some of the coaches we interviewed highlighted how hierarchy sometimes got in the way of coaching relationships. The National Framework indicates that being clear about the boundaries of their relationships can help coaches to manage the potentially distorting effect of power differentials effectively. They also increase their coachees' sense of control and help to develop their trust. Learning agreements are one way of creating such boundaries. They involve agreeing and upholding ground rules quite explicitly. An example of a ground rule might be agreeing that the coachee owns all video recordings and is free to decide whether or not to use them in, for example, performance management meetings.

Like the coaches we interviewed, the systematic reviews highlighted a potential problem arising out of the fact that successful specialist coaches are likely to know a great deal more than those they support. The reviews noted how coaches sometimes find it difficult to watch others struggle to solve a problem when they can see an easy solution; it is tempting to dive in and provide information to accelerate learning. But, the reviews point out that help of this sort merely solves the immediate problem. It doesn't build capacity to tackle future challenges or build much ownership of the solution in hand. It's like handing someone a freshly caught fish rather than enabling him/her to develop the skills to catch one for him- or herself.

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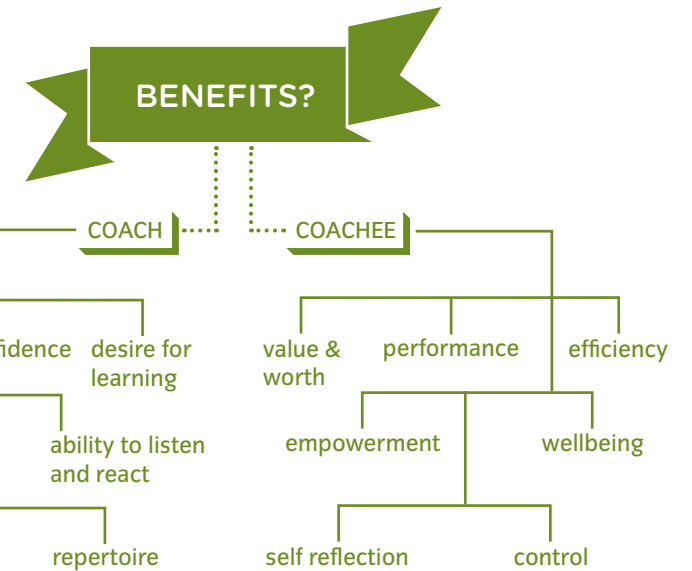
'Coaching works best when the person being coached wants to improve their practice or performance.'

Coaching was much more likely to be effective, in the coaches' view, in situations where the individual accepted the need for change than when she or he didn't. One coach, for example, commented how initial teacher training programmes tended to be really effective because *'they are new and want to learn to*

be the best they can'. Similarly, another commented how 'it works well on our support programme for teachers who are not new teachers to the profession, but new teachers to our college'. Others have used coaching effectively with people who have not performed well in observations because they could genuinely see that what they were doing wasn't good enough and they wanted to improve their performance.

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As indicated in the previous section, the coaches found that not everyone is so willing to change: for some the impetus for change may have come from the individual's boss, but the individual may not accept the need for change; some may not be interested in improving; some may react negatively to the perceived criticism; and some may feel they don't need to improve because they already feel they are outstanding and/or experienced. Others may be resistant to the coaching process itself at first because they are not used to it (due to usually being directly told how to improve their practice). To turn such situations around, the coach needs to act sensitively, take time to build up trust and respect, keep asking questions designed to change thinking, and listen actively to the coachee's responses. It can take time for people to think about and reflect on what has been discussed, but perseverance and patience usually pay off. All our interviewees espoused this 'sensitive' approach and none advocated the aggressively challenging style.



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'Coaching for me means you develop someone more quickly and to greater heights.'

The coaches felt that the people they coached benefited in a great many ways. These benefits included:

- improved performances (in auditions, competitions, in their role) and greater practical skills;
- greater efficiency in their job, *'being smarter, quicker, more able to meet deadlines and more cost efficient'*;
- a greater sense of value and worth *'because someone is taking time to listen to and value your opinion'*;
- improved wellbeing due to people feeling empowered to deal with their own problems;
- more control over their learning, *'the coachees very quickly come to understand what their learning needs are'*, and feeling empowered to develop new skills; and
- becoming a self-reflective and self-improving person.

Many of the coaches provided specific examples in support of the benefits they identified. Sometimes the benefits were

dramatic and obvious to the coach, for example, a clear improvement in an aspect of someone's singing by the end of a session (such as 'better articulation of their tongue muscle') or when somebody won a competition, landed a job or got promoted. People new to their jobs, such as those in initial teacher training, often made great strides very quickly, but for experienced people the tweaks in practice were less noticeable, although the conversations were on a higher level.

One coach described the attempts made to measure the benefits of coaching at her organisation:

'I have anecdotal evidence that people have come back to me over the years and said coaching is brilliant. We have done research ourselves within our college to test this out. The research was on traditional observation in teaching and learning and whether coaching would improve that process for initial teacher trainers. We had staff who said they thought they could teach before; that there was nothing wrong with their practice. But after going through coaching they realised there were many things they could improve on. We have also measured the improvement in teaching and learning in terms of achievement grades over the years. Obviously, the improvement is not just down to coaching as other factors will have been involved, but we truly believe it has made a significant difference to standards within the lessons at the college.'

The four systematic reviews, which specifically explored the impact of professional development activity on teachers, found that coaching had a range of benefits. It enhanced teachers':

- self-confidence (eg they were prepared to try out new ideas and strategies);
- belief in their ability to make a difference to their students' learning;

- willingness to continue professional learning;
- willingness and ability to make changes to practice;
- knowledge and understanding of subject and pedagogy;
- and repertoire of strategies and ability to match them to students' needs.

The reviews also found that the positive impact of coaching continued through to the students, who showed evidence of improved performance and skills, collaborative learning and enhanced motivation and organisation of work.

While our interviewees and the broader evidence base clearly point to the benefits for the coachee, the benefits are not all one-sided. The interviewees noted that they gained as much as the people they coached. Apart from having the satisfaction of helping other people, they felt that becoming coaches had taught them to listen to what people say without interrupting, helped them to get the best out of their students and/or colleagues, and helped prepare them for dealing with potentially difficult situations because they could use their coaching skills to diffuse situations. In short, becoming a coach had become a way of life. As one coach commented:

'I use the techniques almost all the time. It's not something you turn on or off. Now it's my behaviour, it's how I am; it's how I interact with other people. I think that it is a more positive way of interacting with other people, than being assertive and dogmatic about things.'

They also felt they learned as much from the coachee as the coachee learned from them, because:

'There's always something you can learn from someone, which you can share with others. It's not all about me telling people how to do stuff. It's often me saying: 'Blimey,

that's a good idea; I haven't seen that before.' That's essential; the day you stop learning is the time to give it up I think.'

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The systematic reviews suggest that recognising and making use of the learning that coaches gain from the coaching process is an aspect that is sometimes overlooked. The benefits arise because of the opportunity coaching provides for observing successful and less successful practice, and for planning together with others and testing those plans out, all of which are very great professional privileges.

**SUMMING UP:
WHAT WERE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF COACHING
IN VOCATIONAL CONTEXTS?**

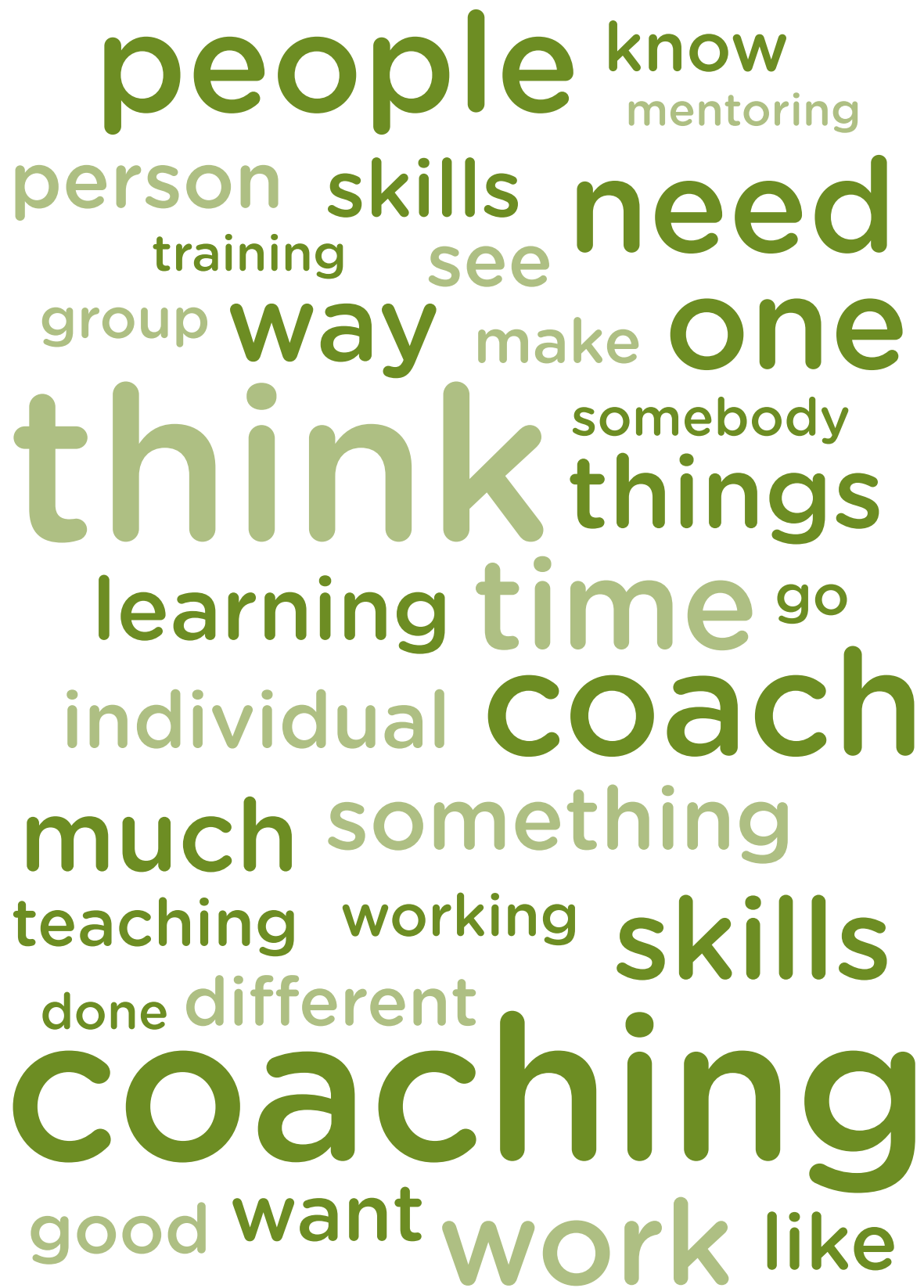
Coaching was effective for helping people improve their skills and performance; they became more accomplished and efficient at what they did and happier in themselves. These benefits were seen in those just starting out in a job and in those who were experienced and already good at their job. But these differences in starting points needed to be accommodated by the coaches, and sometimes caused them to alter their approach.

Coaches primarily saw their role as helping people to see how they could improve for themselves through self-reflection and analysis, rather than telling someone how to improve. An exception to this was coaches working with less experienced people who were in the early stages of their learning journey, when the coaches did provide some instruction, guidance and direction. Because self-reflection demanded deep thinking and a safe environment, coaching conversations often took place in comfortable places away from the immediate context; whereas coaching in practical, physical or performance skills was best done in situ. Observational evidence (which sometimes involved video) was key to both.

All coaches needed to be skilled at building relationships and winning their coachees' respect, trust and confidence. This was a particular challenge when working with people unused to self-reflection; people who were fearful of criticism; people who appeared to be more knowledgeable or experienced than the coach; and people who were resistant to change. They succeeded by showing sensitivity and asking reflective questions combined with active listening. For some, the latter meant overcoming the further challenge of resisting answering their questions themselves! They also successfully rose to the challenge of striking a fine balance between creating a close relationship with the coachee, without being a friend; being seen as an equal, despite differences in hierarchy; and appearing knowledgeable, an expert even, without knowing all the answers.

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The coaches reported how experienced learners often set the agenda for coaching sessions while the coach provided the structure. With less experienced learners, and those resistant to change, the coaches usually found they needed to direct the sessions themselves. Coaching conversations were usually on a much higher level with experienced learners, but the changes in practice were more subtle than those made by people at the early stages of their learning journey, who often made great strides forward. Yet it wasn't only the coachees who benefited from the coaching process; the coaches gained too, although in different ways. Coaches gained new ideas themselves and the satisfaction of seeing other people improve. But, perhaps more importantly, they learned how to get the best out of people through interacting with them in positive ways; a skill they found useful in all aspects of their lives.



Wordle based on coach interview transcripts

KEY MESSAGES

As noted earlier, there was a high degree of agreement across the different settings about the value of coaching and the ways of using it effectively. The following practical messages emerge for teachers and trainers:

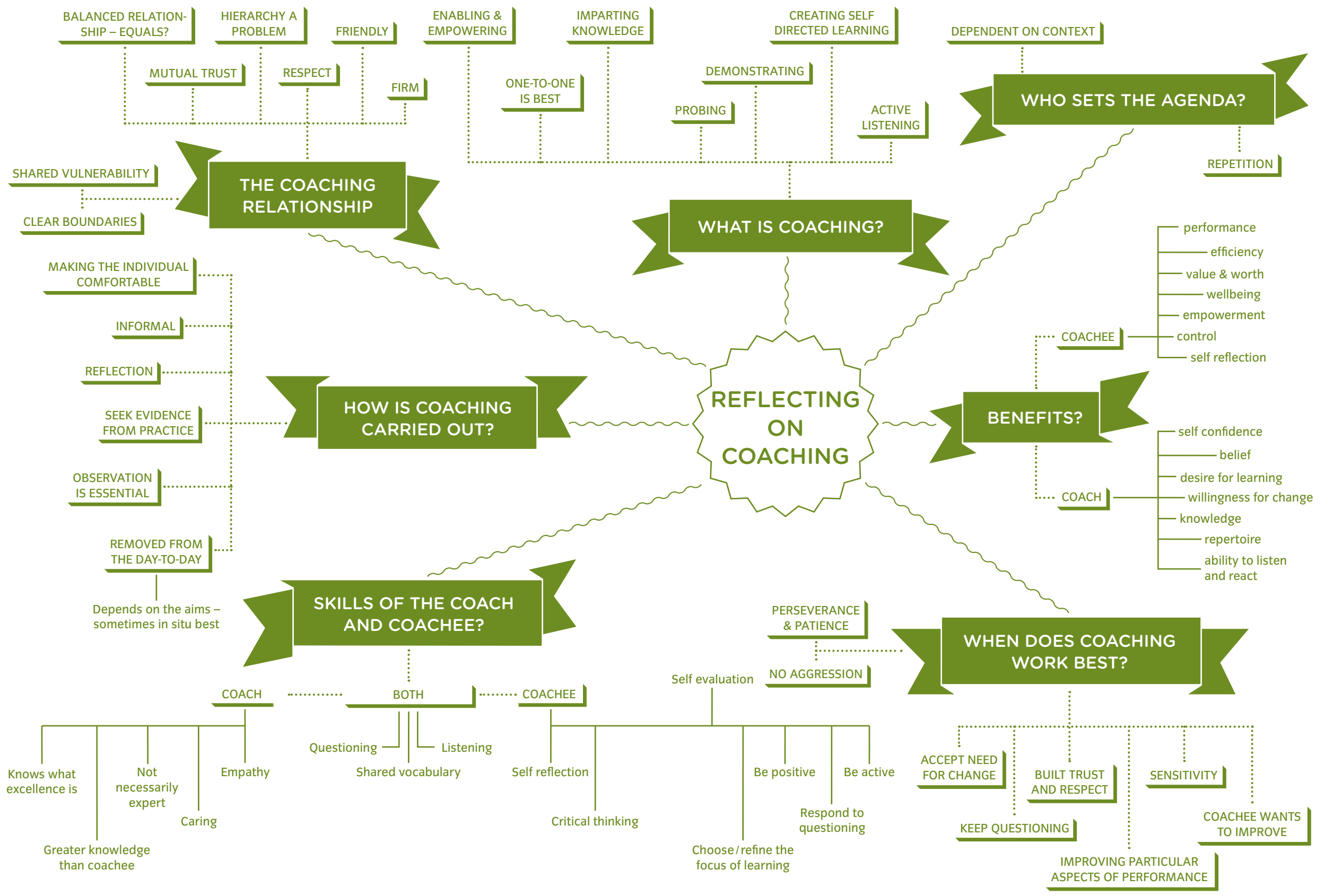
- The interviews with coaches highlighted that while the skills of the coach were essential, so were the skills of the coachee. Students in the vocational sector may not be proficient in skills such as self-evaluation and critical thinking. You might like to discuss with colleagues possible strategies for supporting coachees in developing these skills. Would it be helpful to share the National Framework's outline of skills with the people you coach?
- Many coaches worry that hierarchical differences between themselves and their coachees will have a negative effect on the partnership. This may be particularly pertinent when, for example, the coach is also a manager for a trainee. The National Framework highlighted how setting up learning agreements that involve abiding by ground rules helps to establish confidence about the boundaries of the relationship and address unequal balances in power relationships. If you are concerned that hierarchy affects the relationship you have with your coachees, you may like to explore the impact of setting up learning agreements with them.
- Ensuring the coachee maintains control of the learning is perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing specialist coaches. One of the key ways of managing this is through the structure and sequence of questions (both 'open' and 'closed').
- The coaches we interviewed highlighted the importance of finding a suitable place for carrying out coaching conversations. Would it be helpful to experiment with the location of your conversations to identify what works for your coachees?

Leaders in the vocational sector may wish to consider the following:

- The interviews highlighted the benefits of coaching for a range of contexts and coachee starting points. To what extent is coaching used in your college /setting? You might want to consider whether it could be used more widely with different groups of staff and students.
- In order to reap the full benefits of coaching both coaches and coachees needed to develop some vital skills. Would it be helpful to use the National Framework to evaluate the existing skill levels of your coaches and coachees, and plan ways in which these could be developed?
- The interviewees highlighted the importance of coaches having positive attitudes to change. You might want to explore with your staff strategies that can be used to help students in your vocational setting develop these attitudes.

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COACHING AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 3 Chapter 2 looked at the role coaching plays in developing skills and experience in a variety of vocational settings. But is coaching the most effective way of improving performance? Should it be used alongside other teaching approaches such as demonstration or direct instruction?

In this chapter, we take a closer look at coaching as part of a coherent set of pedagogical approaches. What are the additional benefits of incorporating coaching into a trainer's or manager's approach to developing skills, and how does coaching relate to other teaching approaches?

INTRODUCTION

Coaching in vocational education and training (VET) aims to help people to learn for themselves under the close guidance of an expert. This chapter considers the role of coaching as part of a coherent set of pedagogical approaches in VET, a range of which it naturally complements. I will examine some of the ways in which those teaching and learning approaches fit together.

Coaching can be described as a 'learner-focused constructivist experiential approach'. 'Constructivist' here means an approach that recognises students' prior knowledge and aims to build on it, complementing instructional and workplace demonstration.

It has also been characterised as a socio-cultural and cognitive apprenticeship-like technique that fosters both independence and self-directed learning (Jossberger *et al.*, 2010). Coaching is different from instructional, or teacher-directed, classroom approaches in that it involves students working in authentic dialogue and partnership with expert coaches in the vocational field involved (Jameson, 2002). Coaching encourages learners' engagement in their own learning and performance improvement. In this it differs from simply receiving and absorbing knowledge through instruction (Von Glasersfeld, 1995; Wesselink *et al.*, 2007, p. 41).

The benefit of including coaching practices in VET is that coaching provides vocational students with additional support that complements classroom instruction and workshop participation. Coaching occurs through a face-to-face relationship within a shared vocational context, with a more expert peer (Ketelaar *et al.*, 2009). Coaching allows space for both action and meta-cognitive reflection. Through these processes individuals are able to identify and address challenges and barriers to progression and develop plans to perform more effectively. As a result a reciprocal development of more advanced practice

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occurs as students learn how to direct and regulate their own learning, striving for individualised goals, including progressively higher achievement. The sections below consider in more detail the ways in which coaching complements other vocational education teaching and learning practices.

THE ROLE OF COACHING

To examine the contribution of coaching as part of a coherent set of approaches to teaching and learning, this chapter considers the following:

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- How coaching fits in with other pedagogical approaches.
- The popular image of coaching as a process which transforms learners' knowledge and practice.
- Learning from experience and reflection.
- How the coachee can learn to be coached.
- The power dynamic between the coach and coachee.
- Discussion of goals and sub-goals.
- Establishing an authentic relationship.
- Situational and problem-based learning.
- Social and cultural implications of coaching.

HOW COACHING FITS IN WITH OTHER PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Coaching fits in with other teaching and learning approaches by providing a learner-focused programme in a specific vocational area led by an expert guide, the coach. This person, an experienced advisor in the field, helps the learner to focus on achieving progressive improvements in his or her performance.

Coaching can be distinguished from purely instructional classroom-based teaching and learning approaches with groups

of students. The reason for this is that coaching tends to involve individual students working collaboratively, sometimes one-to-one, in a step-by-step process of authentic dialogue and partnership with experienced coaches who are usually experts in the field (Jameson, 2002). Coaching is an advanced extra-curricular field of practice that has little formal regulation. Coaching models are often spontaneously and informally developed. Popular models tend to derive from fields of vocational and recreational education practice mainly located outside of traditional formal teaching in the classroom, for example from the work of football, singing, martial arts, leadership and drama coaches.

The image of 'the coach' tends to assume an older, wiser, highly experienced individual who uses a range of innovative, informal strategies to achieve marked improvements in the performance of an individual coachee, often pushing the coachee well beyond the performance level for which he or she alone can aim. The coach may or may not be a qualified teacher but will almost invariably be highly experienced in the field of practice in which he or she is coaching.

In VET institutions such as further education colleges, adult education institutions or training centres, coaching is often best provided as a supplementary part of the curriculum which is tailored to individual requirements and which complements classes, workshops and tutorials. In work-based learning or training situations, coaching may be provided in sessions held in the workplace as part of an apprenticeship or other work-based training programme. Learning points or areas needing more attention can be identified using classroom, tutorial or other training programmes. Coaching sessions enable specific aspects of learning to be followed up in an individual series of sessions which are flexibly negotiated with the coach.

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HOW COACHING FITS WITH OTHER VET PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES: AN EXAMPLE

Nina is an apprentice studying for an NVQ Level 3 in Business

Administration. She attends college one day a week. She has difficulty with writing skills, and is struggling to produce formal business reports in the workplace. Although Nina finds the teacher-led college instruction in business skills useful, she is one of a large group and hardly ever interacts with the tutor. She lacks confidence in applying the communication methods learnt at college to her workplace setting. Nina is worried that her reports are too long, vague and always late. She does not know how to structure her writing and get it done quickly. Nina appeals for help to her VET coach, Ms Rabinsky. The coach takes Nina to one side and quietly talks to her in detail about report writing. She shows Nina an example of a successful report, and breaks this down into a series of small sections, so that Nina can see and learn, step by step, the way to construct a good report. Ms Rabinsky follows up the ideas in the lecture on business communication in individual sessions she negotiates with Nina. She agrees with Nina a series of learning points and time management goals that need more attention and follows these up over the next few weeks. Nina gradually gains confidence in report writing and is able to meet her targets for writing reports more quickly and effectively in the workplace.

Some types of VET coaching may take place in specialist rooms or outdoor areas, for example in sports, dance, singing and drama. Other types of VET coaching, such as executive leadership and management coaching, may not need dedicated facilities but may take place in private sessions with special types of coachees, such as principals or other senior executive leaders.

There are many different types of coaching using varied approaches to achieve specialist goals. Popular models of 'life coaching', for example, may work holistically across many fields of practice to achieve overall improvements in the life of the coachee. Other models of coaching such as therapeutic voice coaching may specialise in only one specific goal such as helping the coachee achieve a particular objective in public speaking.

The process of setting goals against which learners can gradually measure their progress during coaching sessions in college or the workplace enables people to learn for themselves in progressive, closely monitored ways, under the direct

guidance of the coach. As part of coaching, both interactive and self-directed learning can take place in a nurturing, apprenticeship-type relationship between the coach and coachee. This can enable closely supervised, holistic learning of intellectual, physical, social, cultural, mechanical and other kinds of performance-related knowledge and skills.

An advantage of the coaching approach in vocational education is that it can be specially tailored to the individual student in flexible, informal, innovative ways. These can be uniquely structured according to the coachee's needs. For example, the coach and coachee can agree on a series of sessions structured around particular areas of performance for college or work in which the coachee needs to improve. The coach acts as an advanced helper who guides the coachee towards higher levels of attainment.

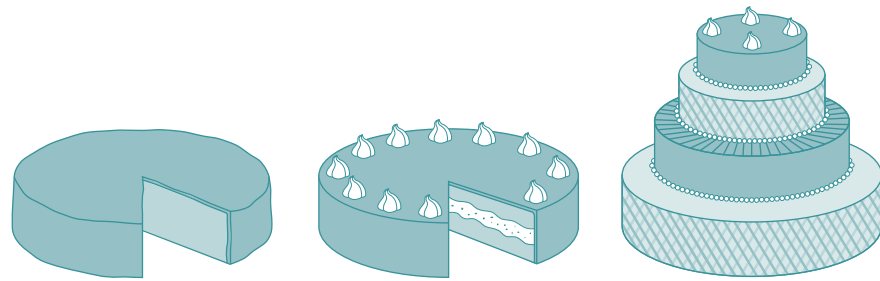
Coaching fits into a wider VET curriculum for teaching and learning as a coherent pathway towards achievement of identified goals, guided by an individual coach. It is complementary to classroom, workshop, seminar, tutorial and other teaching and learning approaches, but may also be used as a substitute for some of these approaches where appropriate.

THE POPULAR IMAGE OF COACHING AS A TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESS

Coaching is a well-established, respected pedagogical approach. It has a long, successful history, particularly in performance-related fields such as music, dance, sports, drama, public speaking, leadership and management. The coaching process has often been the subject of films and books about the lives of celebrity performers and their coaches, for example, in sports or public speaking.

In these popular examples, the coach is typically an inspirational figure. In famous coaching stories, the coach

transforms the failing performance of a nervous, naïve, debilitated or temporarily ‘blocked’ brilliant performer. The approach in such stories portrays coaching as an almost magical process, in which the coach acts as a wiser inspirational guide who enables the coachee to find and reveal his or her true self.



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Coaching can progressively transform skills

Such stories have vividly influenced the public imagination, for example by showing the ways in which coaches ‘make a difference’ in enabling the learner to achieve new heights in performance. Famous examples of such approaches to coaching include Lionel Logue, the speech therapist in *The King’s Speech*, the martial arts coach Mr Miyagi in the *Karate Kid* films, the coaching of Rita by English professor Frank in *Educating Rita*, and the dance coaching provided for the young male dancer Billy in the play *Billy Elliot* by his dance instructor, Mrs Wilkinson.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

As in the popular models discussed above, pedagogic models in fields such as physical education, martial arts and leadership tend to emphasise the role of successful individual coaches in enabling clients /students to achieve high performance outcomes (Iredale & Schoch, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2008). These approaches to learning are very different from classroom-based formal learning of theories. The key point about such models of coaching is that they involve a constructivist process of learning which is social, cognitive, reflective, closely based on experience. Constructivism is a teaching and learning approach which focuses on the ways in which individuals use their own experience to build knowledge. In the constructivist process of coaching, the coach closely guides the student through a series of individually tailored lessons in which the student gets closer and closer to achieving their goals by improving their practice. The coach empowers the coachee to perform highly motivated activity in pursuit of practical goals. Through a series of in-depth interactions, the coach shows the coachee how to achieve learning and performance improvement, challenging them towards greater self-reflection and understanding by, for example, insisting on changes in behaviour to ensure success.

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A TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH: LEARNING FROM REFLECTION AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Edison is a trainee plumber, a refugee from Somalia, on a vocational course in a college in South London. He has been doing well on his course and in his work placement with a large construction firm. However, his attendance has recently fallen off as he has experienced bullying at work. Edison lives in a mainly white working class area and some of the local young men at work have mocked him for his quiet, deferential way of speaking. Edison’s coach, Mr Daniels, notices that his attendance is falling off and talks to him about this. Gradually, over a series of meetings, Edison explains he is deeply hurt by the bullying and thinking of

giving up the course and work placement. Edison thinks it is his fault he is so shy and quiet. Mr Daniels works with Edison over some months to get him to reflect on why it is not his fault he is being bullied and help him improve his speaking skills and confidence in English. Mr Daniels also approaches the construction firm to report the bullying. The local bullies are confronted, instructed to apologise, help Edison and involve him in plumbing jobs. Edison's life is transformed in this process. He is happy to forgive the local trainees. Slowly he learns to be more confident and relaxed in speaking, both in the class and workplace. By the end of the coaching process, Edison is happily attending regularly again, joining in actively with debates and achieving good results in his work.

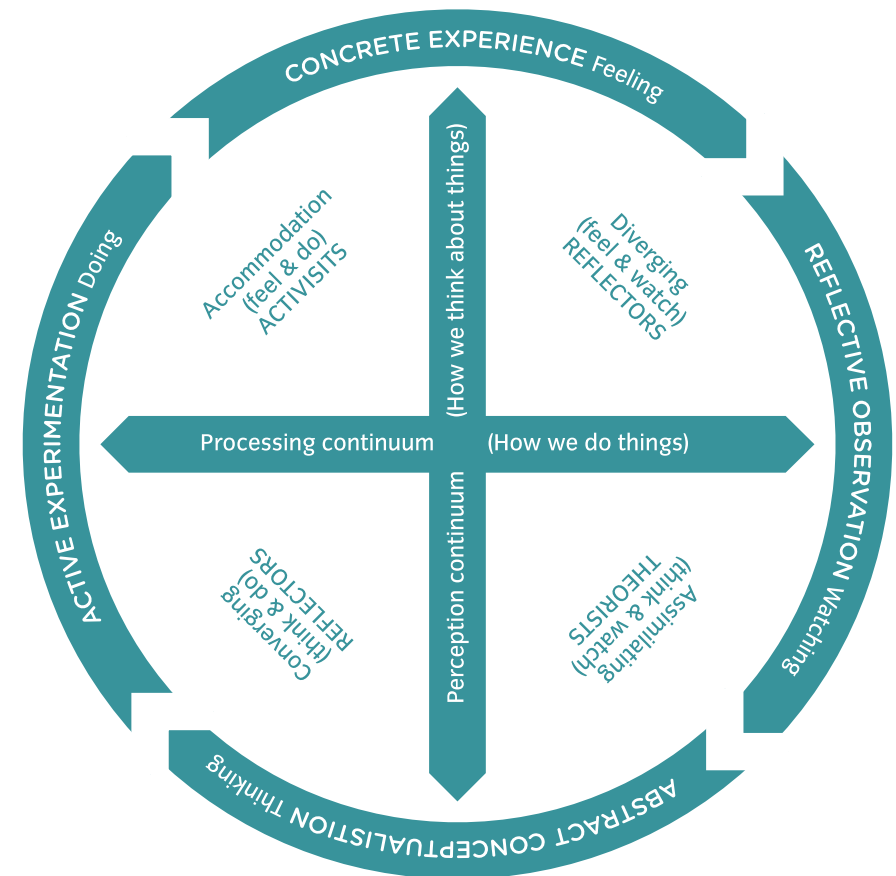
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The idea of 'reflective practice' linked to practitioner knowledge based on experience builds on the work of John Dewey (1933, 1938/1963) and Donald Schön (1983, 1987, 1991; see also Gilbert & Trudell, 1999). Dewey believed that all learning was based on and linked to reflections derived from experience (1938/1963). Dewey's theories have been highly influential in shaping educational thought during the past century. Schön, building on the work of Dewey, valued knowledge that was constructed from experience in professional fields and said this was under-rated by those who placed too much emphasis on 'school knowledge'. Schön developed descriptions for the complex ways in which practitioners could think about and improve their practice at work, including expert practice based on 'tacit knowledge' of practice that was difficult to identify and describe.

Coaching is an informal approach to learning based on experience that applies, among other learning theories, the work of 'experiential learning' theorists such as Dewey, Schön and Kolb (1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975). Many of Kolb's ideas, such as the idea that individual learners have their own learning styles, have been largely discredited. However, recognition of the importance of experience and reflection for effective learning has increased over the past decades, and is of key importance

for VET coaches, whose work is significantly related to their own practices of learning from experience in professional and vocational fields. An emphasis on demonstration, practical examples and work shadowing approaches aims to assist coachees to experience aspects of advanced work practices that are 'tacit' and cannot easily be directly taught.

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Kolb's learning cycle

HOW THE COACHEE CAN LEARN TO BE COACHED

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The coachee can learn to be coached by engaging in the process of coaching proactively and willingly, setting aside any negative attitudes. Coachees need to commit themselves to the process of coaching and to trust that the coach will help them to achieve the goals specified. The coachee also needs to be open to the process of learning and to rigorous, challenging assessment and performance review led by the coach. The coachee should engage in self-reflection and be committed to changing behaviour and to making real efforts to recognise his or her own strengths, weaknesses and developmental areas. To achieve improvement, coachees must be able to respond effectively in an ongoing way to the coach's advice and suggestions.

They also need to take responsibility for the changes in their own learning and behaviour in an increasingly independent way, to adjust to demands in the workplace. Coachees need to be honest with themselves and with the coach about any psychological, physical or other barriers to learning that they have. They also need to be willing to work very hard to overcome these barriers to allow learning to take place. This can be a developmental and even painful process, as coachees gradually become aware of the things blocking their progress in succeeding in vocational work. To be able to grow and achieve, coachees must allow themselves to be vulnerable and open, and to trust the coach. They must be prepared to overcome any difficulties and emotional obstacles that they may be faced with, and they must be prepared to stick with the coaching process to its successful conclusion.

THE POWER DYNAMIC BETWEEN THE COACH AND COACHEE

There is a natural difference in status between the coach and coachee. The coach is almost invariably an advanced practitioner who, as the guide, is more powerful and developed than the coachee in the subject area in which the coaching process is taking place. However, the coachee may also have particular powers of expertise and skill that the coach may not possess. Although the power dynamic between the coach and coachee is a relationship in which the coach has higher status and power, this may be complicated by the fact that the coachee might be a very good performer in his or her own right, even possibly able to perform beyond the level of the coach. Hence the power dynamic between the coach and coachee can include a subtle interchange of different kinds of knowledge and skills. The dynamic may need skilful negotiation on the part of both coach and coachee for continuing mutual respect and cooperation. The coachee should recognise the authority of the coach and defer to him or her about the teaching and learning aspects of coaching, but the coachee also needs to be respected by the coach for their own abilities. The power dynamic is therefore complex and may need ongoing sensitive adjustment.

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DISCUSSION OF GOALS AND SUB-GOALS

The coach and coachee need to be clear about the goals and sub-goals of the learning process, so that the coachee has a clear idea of the tasks and timeframe ahead of him or her. A negotiated discussion on goals and sub-goals for the coachee's development should take place at the beginning of the coaching process. At regular intervals, there should also be a check on progress towards the achievement of the goals and sub-goals.

At the end of the coaching process, the coach and coachee should engage in mutual reflection on the overall successes and limitations of the process, and should set follow-up goals for the coachee to take forward into the next phase of development, for example, further college courses or work settings.



ENCOURAGING



DIRECTIVE



CALM

Potential coaching styles

The process of specifying and monitoring sub-goals is particularly important, as sub-goals allow progress against realistic small targets to be identified and checked at regular intervals. The achievement of regular minor targets in an ongoing ‘SMART’ process (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) is more likely to lead to success than a generalised process that is less specific and only loosely monitored. The reason for this is that a process of ongoing achievement encourages increasing growth in the coachee’s confidence for both work and study.

ESTABLISHING AN AUTHENTIC COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

It is important for both coach and coachee that a collaborative relationship is established between them. Both should recognise that they must work together effectively. Coaching needs to be carried out in an authentic two-way relationship that establishes honest, effective communication. If the two parties cannot communicate with each other honestly in a genuine relationship, it is unlikely that the coaching sessions will be effective in meeting the real needs of the coachee. Establishing an authentic relationship can be very difficult, so both the coach and coachee should work hard to make sure that they engage honestly in an open commitment to the process.

THE COACHING POWER DYNAMIC: AN EXAMPLE OF LEARNING HOW TO BE COACHED

Rachel is a Higher National Diploma student in Digital Media and Games. She attends an FE college full time and wants to work in the digital media creative industries. Rachel is extremely talented at design and her work is very popular with other students. However, she has a gothic style deriving from punk rock and is bored with the vocational assignments she has to do at college. When the vocational design tutor fails one of her design assignments for not meeting the requirements of an employer, Rachel is rebellious. Her coach, Emma, tries to explain to Rachel that she needs to adapt her style to adjust to work requirements. But Rachel does not want to know. For the next assignment, she again hands in a ‘gothic horror’ piece, mocking the task. Again, the tutor fails her work. Rachel is now getting worried, realising she could fail the course. The coach notices she is in tears. Gently, Emma praises Rachel for her talent, but says she needs to learn to adapt her work to use multiple styles to succeed. Emma shows Rachel her own BIMAS award-winning design portfolio, confessing that in her younger years she was also a gothic artist. Rachel sits up with renewed interest, realising her coach is a noted design expert and she can learn from her. Emma shows Rachel how she adapted her designs for work, but kept her own style for private commissions.

Rachel slowly grows to trust Emma. With her help, Rachel learns how to adjust her style, change her behaviour and succeed in college and work assignments.

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A popular example of this process of establishing an authentic coaching relationship is shown in the film *Karate Kid*, when Mr Miyagi asks Daniel to undertake a series of boring chores that use clockwise/anti-clockwise hand movements, such as repetitive polishing and painting tasks. Daniel becomes very frustrated with the monotonous tasks and feels he has learnt nothing about martial arts and that Mr Miyagi is wasting his time. It is not until Mr Miyagi vividly demonstrates the usefulness of the tasks Daniel has undertaken for martial arts practice that the boy realises he has unknowingly been training his muscles to remember how to do the exact movements that are required for karate. The deeper point is that the wise and somewhat eccentric or mysterious teaching processes engaged in by coaches are sometimes not understood by coachees, leading to a need for trust and belief in the coach to be established. A trusting relationship should also include an appropriate degree of emotional support for the coachee. The coachee needs to know and feel that the coach supports and believes in him or her and is strongly committed to his or her success. The emotional support provided by the coach's declared belief in the potential of the coachee is a strong motivating influence that can make the difference between success and failure. Sometimes the belief of the coach in the coachee is hard-won, however: trainees who want to be coached by experts may need to inspire the coach with their skills and potential.

SITUATIONAL AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

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To be meaningful, especially for adults, vocational learning is best situated in relevant real-world contexts, such as practical work-based learning in VET workplaces (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). Work-based learning approaches linked to experience of practice can be highly motivating for students who find abstract theoretical lectures in classrooms too disengaged from ordinary workplace requirements. The idea of 'situated learning' is directly linked with constructivist theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Land & Hannafin, 2000), and is based on the idea that all learning takes place in specific contexts, the nature of which have an impact on the learning process (Alessi & Trollip, 2001). Abstract formal learning that is out of context may have limited value and relevance for some VET students (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996; Brown, *et al.*, 1989). Simulated environments and other practice based approaches are therefore often used to provide situated learning in colleges. These try to link institution-based learning with the real world by situating tasks in a workplace context. Situated learning tasks can take place more naturally than in a classroom, according to the demands of problems that arise in practical work. Students may find it easier to realise the value of learning from particular tasks linked to real workplace problems.

Coaches may use problem-based learning (PBL) approaches to encourage students to engage with the complexity of real-world situations involving dilemmas that cannot easily be solved (Savery & Duffy, 2001). The role of the VET coach in PBL is to encourage coachees to focus their attention on realistic solutions to the problem at hand. For this, it is important that coaches step back from offering their own solution, playing the role of a facilitator of learning, through the encouragement of critical analysis, reflection, innovation and creative problem-solving approaches. Coaches may use emerging workplace problems

as unique example case studies in encouraging useful and innovative methods that do not necessarily reflect standard solutions. This is to develop independence and confidence in coachees, and an ability to think for themselves.

By encouraging coachees to develop confidence and to outline their own solutions, coaches aim gradually to enable them to develop 'self-directed' learning rather than be dependent on the coach as a provider of solutions. Successful coaches aim to nurture independent learning approaches which develop students' knowledge and increase their level of engagement. Coaches aim to teach students to set their own goals and to think independently by emphasising the need for exploration, creativity, inventiveness and uniqueness. In this way, coaching is often a learner-centred process, in which the coachee's personal pursuit of meaningful goals through self-reflection is encouraged by the coach in numerous ways, such as reflective writing, diary keeping, development of case studies, fieldwork projects, movement practices or routines. Coachees may also be asked to design and agree their own VET learning programmes and activities with the supervision of the coach.

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COACHING AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL APPRENTICESHIP

The coaching process can be seen as an apprenticeship (Jossberger *et al.*, 2010), differentiated from mentoring in that coaching tends to involve a more closely monitored, sometimes informal, process-based, two-way relationship of greater parity involving detailed motivational guidance and demonstration. However, there is some overlap between coaching and mentoring approaches (Clutterbuck, 2004; Iredale & Schoch, 2010). In addition, both VET teachers and mentors may deliberately incorporate a coaching role within a wider set of VET pedagogical strategies. The social and cultural aspects of

coaching tend to be personalised to the relationship between the coach and coachee within the local situation. Coaches provide a social and cultural role model for the coachee, and may introduce the coachee to networks and individuals with influence in the field involved. The expertise of the coach is often valued within a wider network of social and cultural influence and it may be a badge of honour in the profession involved to be coached by a particular expert.

HOW COACHES CAN INTRODUCE THE COACHEE TO NEW NETWORKS: AN EXAMPLE

Bill is a Level 3 Aviation Operations student studying full time at college. He is good at his studies, ambitious to learn more about the aviation industry and wants to develop a good, long-term career in aviation security. However, Bill is not very good at networking: when it comes to developing contacts for work, he is clueless. Bill is very friendly and confident with his own mates, but finds it hard to see how that can be translated into opportunities to progress in the industry. Bill's coach at college, Amir, is a retired Aviation Security Manager who has considerable experience and many contacts in the industry. He manages to secure a competitive work placement for Bill at the Heathrow Terminal 4 Security Unit during the summer holidays. When college finishes, Amir takes Bill to Heathrow personally in July to introduce him and meet some of Amir's contacts over lunch. With Amir's help, Bill manages to achieve an industrial placement following his aviation operations course and develops a long-term career in the industry.

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The apprenticeship aspect of coaching is based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theories of learning, in which students work collaboratively with a more expert peer who extends their capability through scaffolding support in the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). The concept of cognitive apprenticeship focuses on situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in authentic local contexts, developing cognitive and meta-cognitive skills in addition to the kinds of physical skills and processes involved in more traditional kinds of apprenticeship (Brown *et al.*, 1989).

Coaching's collaborative process of engagement in social learning can also be linked to participation by the coach and coachee in a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice enable a range of types of informal learning in which the novice coachee is enabled to engage in 'legitimate peripheral participation' in the activities of the community, learning expert practices from more advanced peers.

This type of peer-based social learning is based on relationships with experts who guide the coachee to learn about new kinds of knowledge and skills that are relevant for the practice involved. Coachees gradually become experts themselves through the guidance provided both by the coach and from the processes of social learning that take place with engagement within the community. The community of practice will demonstrate and articulate forms of 'tacit knowledge' in types of professional expertise that are difficult to teach in the classroom. Tacit elements of expert practice may be tricky to identify and may only be observable through lengthy periods of engagement and observation in the community. It is hard to say, for example, why and how a practitioner is so good at his or her job upon first observation. After a period of observation, work shadowing, coaching and engagement in a community of practice involving other practitioners, less visible areas of tacit knowledge may be gradually revealed.

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CONCLUSION

The main benefit of incorporating coaching practices in other approaches to VET is that coaching provides vocational students with a local, tailored and flexible relationship with a more expert peer using a robust model that has been shown to have high levels of impact (Ketelaar *et al.*, 2009). Coaching allows learners to reflect on and participate actively in the development of their own knowledge and understanding. The development of more advanced practice takes place as students learn how to direct and regulate their own learning, striving for individualised goals and higher achievement.

As an approach that aims to help people to learn for themselves under the close guidance of an expert, the role of coaching naturally fits in with a range of other approaches in VET. Coaching complements classroom teaching and workshop delivery by providing a learner-focused approach in which students learn through experience in real-world situations. This naturally complements VET classroom and workplace demonstration practices. As a socio-cultural and cognitive apprenticeship-type pedagogical approach that fosters both independence and self-directed learning, coaching involves students working in partnership with expert coaches in the vocational field involved.

The development of more advanced practice occurs as students learn how to direct and regulate their own learning. In striving for individualised goals and higher levels of achievement, coachees benefit directly from engagement with a coach. To achieve the best from the relationship, an atmosphere of trust between coach and coachee needs to be established in which both parties respect the skills and knowledge of the other. Both parties need to be committed to an interactive relationship which involves a subtle balance of power, in which the authority of the coach is respected, but the coachee is also valued for his or her skills and potential. To motivate the coachee, the coach

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needs to have a belief in the potential of the coachee to achieve the goals that have been specified. Progressive developments in a series of goals towards higher achievement can be achieved by setting both goals and sub-goals. It is important for the coachee that sub-goals are clearly articulated and continually monitored closely.

The coach and coachee need to establish an authentic and honest relationship in which it is possible to achieve changes in behaviour and improve performance. The coach engages in a range of approaches and tactics to encourage learning, including using practice, real-world situations and problem-based approaches. Engagement in a community of practice may extend the work of the coaching relationship by enabling coachees to participate in a community in which they will learn more expert practices from a network of peers. As part of this, they may gradually observe the operation of tacit forms of knowledge which are not usually able to be taught directly, learning from advanced practitioners.

These activities can be linked to the coaching process and are complementary to formal learning in classrooms, seminars, tutorials and workshops. This chapter has examined some of the ways in which coaching fits together with other pedagogical approaches in VET learning situations.

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PAT STRINGFELLOW MBE

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What do you mean by the term 'coaching'?

I do executive coaching so I'm mainly working with senior managers and directors of organisations in the workplace. For me, the term coaching is really about helping individuals achieve their full potential by helping them to think through difficult and complex issues that may be personal or business-related, in order to gain clarity on different ways they might tackle the issues. The real key is helping them to work it out for themselves.

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How would you describe the relationship you have with the people you are coaching?

One of the key elements to both mentoring and coaching is: will the relationship between the two people work? There has to be a good relationship with positive intent, where both individuals respect each other and see each other as equals, even though they might have different skills. To be a coach you have to have a lot of personal credibility. It's certainly my belief that if you are coaching within the executive world, you need to understand the business world. You don't need to have been a CEO to coach a CEO, but you do need to understand the type of organisation in order to effectively coach, and for them to give you their respect.

What is the best bit of advice you have ever been given about coaching someone?

Never judge. I think it's about understanding the frame of reference of the other person. It's about the other person's view of the world, and it's not your position as

a coach to judge anybody. The flip side is understanding your own view of the world, as that will colour the way that you see other people. When I'm not coaching, I may have a view about something, but you have to leave all that stuff outside of the room when you coach somebody.

In your view how does coaching differ from other teaching/professional development strategies?

Coaching is much more personal and deep rooted, much more impactful than other ways of learning. The main reason for this is that the individual is coming to their own conclusions about things and they're going through a process of realisation about different ways of learning things.

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NURTURING MASTERY OF HIGH LEVEL VOCATIONAL PRACTICE THROUGH COACHING

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 4

In previous chapters we have looked at how coaching can be used in a range of different settings. This chapter takes a closer look at the role that coaching can play in developing high level vocational skills in particular. In what ways does coaching in the workplace promote the acquisition of the highest levels of vocational skills and practices?

This chapter looks at how coaching supports mastery in practical, cognitive and communicative skills and the role it can play in helping individuals ensure they have an up-to-date and growing knowledge base. It also shows how it can facilitate learning from professional interactions, and how it can encourage individuals to take charge of their own professional learning and development.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is upon the role coaching plays in supporting the development of high level vocational practice and it draws mainly on evidence from a pan-European study (2008–2010) of the different patterns of working, learning and support of over 1000 workers in 10 European countries as their careers and identities developed over time (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The workers were mainly in full-time permanent employment in their mid-career (aged 30 to 55), having achieved skilled worker or graduate qualifications in engineering, information and communication technologies (ICT) or health, working primarily in health, ICT, education or manufacturing. The 10 countries surveyed were France; Germany; Italy; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Turkey and the United Kingdom. The career development pathways of these workers, most of whom had intermediate or higher level skills, were traced as they responded to the challenges of continuing to develop their work-related learning, careers and identities. The careers of over two thirds of respondents demonstrated the value of learning while working as this helped them keep their skills, knowledge and competences up-to-date and maintain a positive disposition towards learning. For many highly skilled workers support from others could play a critical role in helping them make successful transitions involving upskilling, reskilling or career change. In particular, coaching could play a key role in helping individuals develop the breadth, depth and rich contextualised understanding of their vocational practice which could be recognised as mastery. Because coaching at this level is often less directive and more nuanced than in the early stages of skill development coaching it seemed appropriate to describe this process as ‘nurturing mastery’. Such coaching is also a relatively small component in terms of time but it can act as a multiplier enhancing the effectiveness of other skill development processes. For example, the highly skilled workers in the sample typically engaged in

challenging work, demonstrated very positive actions and attitudes towards learning in a wide variety of forms, including on-the-job training; self-directed learning inside or outside the workplace; learning from networks, working with clients; learning through life experience; learning through work by carrying out challenging tasks; learning from others at work; and learning through participating in seminars and conferences (Brown *et al.*, 2010).

Evidence is also drawn from studies on career adaptability (the capability to make a series of successful transitions in work and learning (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011)) and supporting learning in advanced supply systems in the automotive and aerospace industries (Brown *et al.*, 2004). Interestingly, where employers tried to institutionalise support for higher skills development in order to draw on a full range of staff capabilities they adopted an expansive view of the development of expertise (for example, through the use of comprehensive competency frameworks which seek to develop staff beyond experienced worker standards and, in some cases, the higher levels of performance are encouraged and rewarded by higher pay). These companies build up competence inventories of their staff which differentiate between:

- those who are technically able to perform a task but have very limited practical experience of actually doing so (eg they could use it in an emergency or, if necessary, for a one-off activity);
- those who have successfully performed the task on a small number of occasions (eg they could use it if they wish to develop their expertise further; in a support role or if time is not necessarily a key criterion);
- those who have performed the task many times and under a variety of conditions (ie experienced worker standard – completely reliable);
- those who have substantial experience but are also able to support the learning of others (ie they can perform a coaching role);
- those who are world class, that is they are able to think

through and, if necessary, bring about changes in the ways that tasks are tackled (eg they could be chosen as team leader for performance improvement activities) (Brown, 2009a).

The interesting point about this framework is that the two levels above experienced worker standard highlight aspects of the skill sets required of coaches who are able to nurture mastery of high level vocational practice in their fellow workers.

Overall, this chapter analyses a particular form of support for individuals at work, which may also receive implicit or explicit support from employers: coaching. It focuses upon the role of coaching in developing mastery of high level vocational skills and practice. High level vocational practice can be developed in four dimensions and in each of these the role of coaching will be examined:

- learning through challenging work (by mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes);
- updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base);
- learning through (and beyond) interactions at work; and
- being self-directed and self-reflexive.

ROLE OF COACHING IN DEVELOPING MASTERY THROUGH CHALLENGING WORK

Engagement with challenging work is one of the most powerful ways individuals become engaged with learning and development pathways, moving towards mastery of high level vocational practice. This involves developing existing skills, learning new skills and perspective transformation in how practice is viewed (Brown *et al.*, 2010). In a study of the role of adaptability in skills supply (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011) many highly skilled workers emphasised the value of challenging work in facilitating learning and development, but they were also dependent upon the quality of support they received from other people including through coaching relationships, whether or not those offering such support were formally qualified as coaches. One respondent commented how she had 'gained all my skills in the film industry on-the-job and through work experience, [as I am] willing to ask how to do things when I do not know how'.

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Coaching is built into the structure of many occupations in creative industries where the work is built around particular projects which face different constellations of challenges. How to overcome them becomes a 'craft' which is dependent upon the use of situational awareness, judgement and other qualities most effectively developed collaboratively at work. Now, what is also interesting in the context of less experienced workers is how they get access to challenging work with such opportunities for learning and development. Coaching has an explicit role in this respect where a coach is able to ensure that a qualified but inexperienced worker has the opportunity to develop through taking on challenging work which extends her or his skill set. Where a project team included one or more people with coaching skills who were able to support the learning and development of others, there were real benefits in both skill development and a sense of achievement. One respondent observed, 'Learning while working in a project has its benefits; working together

towards a concrete goal and with people and groups that are dynamic.'

The need to master high level vocational skills and practice is built into many occupations. Learning while working is a powerful driver of developing the challenges of mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and processes. Yet this can be difficult to accomplish just through accumulation of experience. The sheer range, complexity and inter-relationship of aspects of highly skilled performance which may be identified as requiring further development means that the support of someone with an explicit coaching role, or of a colleague who performs this role informally, can help an individual improve their performance. This applies to particular aspects of performance as well as holistic performance. Aspects of performance a coach might focus upon could include: task performance; role performance; situational awareness and understanding; teamwork; personal and group development; decision-making and problem-solving; academic knowledge and skills; judgement (Eraut, 2009). Each aspect can be further divided into a number of components (Brown, 2009b), whereby the coach can play a key role not only in encouraging and facilitating the development of an individual's capabilities in relation to each component which could be represented as a separate learning pathway in itself (Eraut, 2009), but also in how these separate learning trajectories intersect in moves towards holistic high level vocational practice. In the health, ICT and engineering sectors individuals sometimes engaged in reviews of performance with someone with a coaching skill set, who might be a manager, supervisor, working or peer coach. These review sessions, which themselves could be more or less formal, focused upon reflections on particular aspects of challenging work, such as coping with unexpected problems or crisis management, from the perspective of improving future performance. These reviews could take place while the task was being performed, immediately

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after the task was completed or as part of a more formal weekly or monthly review which focused upon what could be learned from considering particular cases.

ROLE OF COACHING IN DEVELOPING MASTERY THROUGH UPDATING A SUBSTANTIVE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Being able to engage with challenging work associated with high level vocational practice will invariably also depend upon having already mastered the relevant substantive knowledge base. Many skilled workers obtain vocationally relevant qualifications at the start of their careers, whether through an apprenticeship, vocational education and training or higher education (for example, a foundation degree). Many skilled workers continue to regard what they learned in their initial studies as relevant in some way to their current jobs, even when they were working in a different occupational area from that for which they had studied or trained, as they had learned particular ways of thinking and practising that stood them in good stead for the rest of their career (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The actual knowledge base itself, however, often required considerable updating and this could be accomplished partly through work activities and partly through career development activities away from work.

Certain highly skilled workers made use of formal education-based continuing vocational education and training (CVET) provision at some stage in their careers to update their knowledge and skills, while others used a mix of formal learning, learning on-the-job and self-directed learning. For example, a former craft engineering apprentice received formal teaching on a technician course, complemented by training in the workplace which involved spending six months in every department in the company – from technical drawing to pattern-making up to management. Coaching support during and after the



placements was 'very thorough' and he considered the programme 'sets you up' for future work activities (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011).

Workers in fields such as health, ICT and engineering drew attention to the need to keep up to date with their field's developing knowledge base, emphasising the value of taking a range of online courses, professional updating and similar for keeping their skills, knowledge and understanding current, while some also opted to undertake more substantive programmes of learning and development (Brown *et al.*, 2010). Such provision was regularly viewed by participants as taking their learning and development to a new level and creating a platform for future career development. Individuals, if they were able to flex their own way of working, could see development as combining processes of sense-making with re-contextualisation of the development of knowledge and understanding in the workplace after intensive periods of knowledge development and application. However, although the rationale for technological updating is clear, there can also be a challenge to fit new ideas and ways of working to current work processes. Such a challenge is not just individual, it has an organisational dimension. Both employers and employees may feel that while technological updating is essential, it is unrealistic (and probably unnecessary) to expect everyone to engage in such substantive development.

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Some work groups reconciled this desire for everyone to be updated with a reluctance of many to take part in formal programmes of development by encouraging one individual to become a de facto, if unofficial, peer coach. That is, the agreed person tended to be the first to enrol on all new development programmes associated with the introduction of new equipment and/or techniques. When the equipment and/or technique was introduced in the department the individual would then, over time, act as a working coach and show the other employees how it worked in a much less formal way than had been demonstrated in their training (Brown, 2004). However, some companies working in knowledge-intensive areas, such as aerospace, saw

such coaching roles, which involved the ability to support the learning of others, as pivotal if new ways of working were to be introduced. They considered that persons fulfilling such roles, even in an informal way, should be rewarded, as their skills were acknowledged within company competency frameworks (Brown, 2009a).

While the use of formal course provision for individuals working in technical positions was linked to knowledge development through challenging work (associated with project work, introduction of new techniques, products, technology or processes), updating formal knowledge was also linked to a range of more informal ways of knowledge development and utilisation. Coaching was particularly important in this respect because it could help address issues associated with the transfer of knowledge between contexts. The transfer of appropriate knowledge between contexts (from learning to work) is not a straightforward process, as it depends upon:

- understanding the new situation, a process that often depends on informal social learning;
- recognising which areas of knowledge are relevant to the new situation;
- focusing more precisely on what knowledge is needed for a particular decision or action;
- interpreting and/or transforming that knowledge to suit the new situation and context; and
- integrating the relevant aspects of knowledge prior to or during performance (Eraut, 2009).

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A working coach, someone working alongside their peers but with formal or informal responsibility for supporting the learning and development of others, can play an important role in helping individuals re-contextualise what they have learned elsewhere to the workplace setting (Evans and Guile, 2012). Once that knowledge updating and re-contextualisation is complete, individuals seem equipped to perform their existing role more

effectively. The mechanism here may, therefore, be that following the knowledge updating process the working coach can help less experienced workers to think both explicitly and implicitly about what constitutes effective performance in a changing context.

The search for knowledge by individuals working in technical areas in ICT, health and engineering was often broad, going well beyond just the development of technical skills (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The search could incorporate aspects of technical:

- know-how (how to apply technologies);
- know-what (where and when technologies and knowledge could be applied);
- know-who (including an active search for people who would be valuable as members of a personal network); and
- know-why (a fuller understanding of work processes including, in some cases in health, a deeper scientific understanding) (Lundvall, 2002).

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Again those with coaching responsibilities could help those seeking to master high level vocational practice with all these types of knowledge. An example of the use of these skills in supporting the development of knowledge associated with performance improvement is highlighted in the career of a chief inspector in engineering whose job was transformed into supporting change management with explicit coaching responsibilities in a small specialist aircraft and submarine engineering company employing 60 people. The ‘**change agent coach**’ had responsibility for implementing an approach to continuous process improvement that was being supported by the lead company in their supply chain network, where he had previously worked as an inspector for 10 years. The ‘change agent coach’ had a deep understanding of work processes in both companies and he had to support others in learning and applying a whole range of techniques which were new to the company and involved their application in a wide range

of contexts. This meant that the workers being coached were themselves mastering a new knowledge base which was underpinning the change in their vocational practice. Cascading the approach to continuous improvement within the company also meant that other workers were themselves developing and applying their coaching skills in a range of contexts as they too were operating in cross-disciplinary and cross-hierarchical work teams which were engaged in challenging tasks which required continuing technical development in a knowledge-intensive industry (Brown *et al.*, 2004).

ROLE OF COACHING IN DEVELOPING MASTERY THROUGH INTERACTIONS AT WORK

Working and learning are social activities with work relationships, interactions and learning influencing current and future opportunities for the development of work-relevant skills, knowledge and understanding (Brown, 2009b). Interactions with coaches increase the likelihood that individuals can make the most of other opportunities for learning and development arising from interactions at work. Many participants in both countries in the Anglo-Norwegian study of career adaptability seemed well aware of the value of opportunities for ‘learning by interacting’ – they were seen as a key component of what they saw as learning-rich jobs, where you can learn from interacting with patients, colleagues, customers, clients etc. (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011).

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‘The job at the cancer centre – you have to deal with many situations spontaneously and with the patients’ emotions ... need a good working environment and support of colleagues. There are a lot of opportunities to learn ... interdisciplinary learning.’



'We have a working environment where you learn from each other.'

The cases above illustrate rich learning by interacting, which arise from work activities that are challenging in the demands they place upon individuals. However, the first case could also be an illustration of how certain types of intensive interactions, which make heavy cognitive, communicative and emotional demands, benefit from formal reviews whereby a supervisor or colleague acting as a coach can be specifically set up to support learning and development, which includes learning to cope with the demands of the job. This case, however, also highlights the **importance of interdisciplinary learning**, which is interesting from a coaching perspective as this sometimes leads to mutual coaching, where experts in different fields give each other an insight into alternative or complementary disciplinary perspectives or ways of working. Another respondent in the career adaptability study indicated how *'in our project teams there are lots of interdisciplinary exchanges and there is a lot of learning going on. For instance, an economist will learn about operations through participation in projects'* (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011).

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Participation in and learning through interacting within communities and networks is a fundamental way for (re-) constructing a sense of the whole work process as well as a vehicle to develop expertise, including how to communicate effectively in different contexts. The interactions may be formalised as when someone with high level vocational expertise offers master classes which may include a formal coaching component. However, individuals may also make use of more informal personal networks and relationships and again some of these may contain a coaching component. Participants from the Anglo-Norwegian study of career adaptability highlighted how rich relationships with colleagues enabled them specifically to ask for support to develop aspects of their vocational practice (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011):

'I have always had people around me who have given me support and I have always had good role models around me and never felt that I didn't get support.'

'Informally, I learn a lot from colleagues. I ask several people about how they solve the problem – and then I find a solution that suits me best.'

'I keep asking questions to get information and I have found a network for women [in management], which is most helpful.'

'I was supported by colleagues and by my old and new bosses. I was pushed a little into the change.'

These processes of learning through interaction and engagement with other people honed participants' skills in a number of respects, including the development of tacit skills associated with effective communication which could be applied in a range of contexts. Some of these skills can be effectively developed through coaching, even where the multi-faceted relationship is not primarily concerned with coaching. In such circumstances, there could be complementarity in the informal learning of technical, social and networking skills that are recognised as valuable for an individual in developing high level vocational practice. Coaching is a particularly effective way of engaging with such a wide array of the skills underpinning effective skill development. The informal learning associated with personal networks is often important in many contexts over the span of a career – from hearing about job opportunities and gaining initial entry to work, through to many aspects of continuing career development, including choices about different ways of updating skills, knowledge and experience. Progress in work was often supported by spontaneous forms of learning in which informal work-based learning and self-managed competence

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development converge and where both are often at least partly dependent upon the quality of support from personal networks, including the richness of coaching behaviours in such relationships (Brown, 2005).

'Knowing who' in an organisation is useful to enable you to be effective in your vocational practice is important and help in this area is one of the more subtle aspects of coaching support. One respondent in the career adaptability study (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011) commented:

'I learned through challenging work; lots of interaction; learned about organisational cultures and management of change.'

This quote highlights that learning the importance of organisational cultures and how to bring about organisational change are processes associated with high level vocational practice. They depend upon situational awareness and 'knowing who' will be helpful to you in these processes can be an important factor in how effective an individual is in her or his role. Again a number of interviewees emphasised how important it was to have someone in the organisation who could help you identify the important processes and channels to use outside the official pathways. This role is context-sensitive and again having a more experienced colleague to support you is valuable for your learning and development.

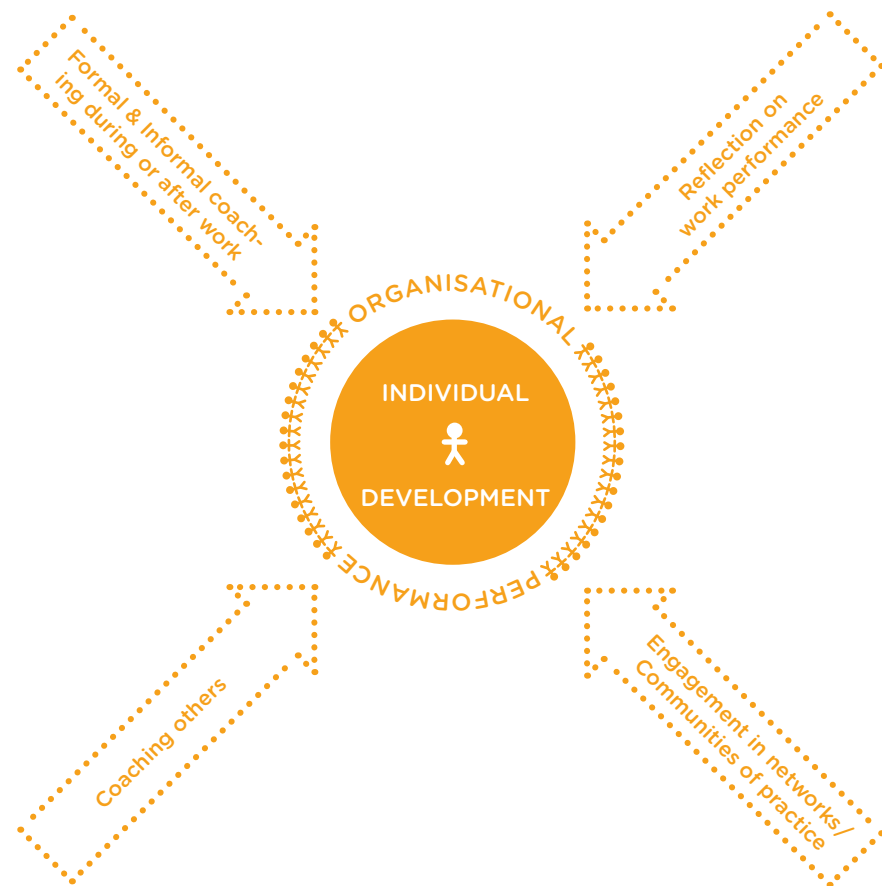
There appears to be one particular type of interaction at work which stands out as helping in the development of adaptability – supporting the learning of others (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011). Time and again in the career adaptability study, individuals identified certain individuals, often acting in a coaching capacity, as being particularly helpful in their learning and development. By the same token, some participants highlighted how much they learned themselves or gained in other respects from supporting the learning of others in a coaching capacity. Some

had responsibility for the learning and development of others on a formal basis as coach, mentor, tutor or manager, whereas others performed this role as part of their duties within a team or project.

In knowledge-intensive work and settings involving complex teamwork, many organisations of all sizes explicitly use a developmental view of expertise that goes well beyond expecting technical proficiency and a commitment to continuing improvement. These organisations pay particular attention to ensuring that their teams possess people able to support the learning of others (Brown, 2009). Organisations could create mechanisms to enhance such coaching support, peer mentoring and knowledge sharing in order to develop a culture of support for learning and development (Bryant & Terborg, 2008). One consequence of this seems to be that those with responsibility for supporting the learning and development of others become more reflexive of their own learning and development and this strengthens their capability to apply their own skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts.

Overall, the interactions associated with coaching at work can act as a driver of the development of high level vocational practice in four ways. First, there is formal or informal coaching directly associated with work itself, either during or after a particular performance. Second, there are certain types of interactions based on reviews of performance of work activities over time, such as weekly case reviews, which provide support expressly concerned with helping people think about learning, development and effective performance by reflecting upon their experience. Third, interactions associated with participation in broader communities and networks can help individuals make sense of work processes in a wider context, thereby helping them understand where they are and where they might be within occupational, organisational and broader communities – an individual may coach others in one aspect and be coached by others on another within the community. Fourth, interactions based around supporting the learning and

development of others at work can help the coaches to become more reflexive of their own learning and development. Thus there can be development arising from work activities where the individual expressly engages in some form of coaching – supporting the learning of others can be a powerful means of reflexive learning for the coach too.



Interactions associated with coaching at work

ROLE OF COACHING IN LEARNING TO DEVELOP MASTERY THROUGH SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AND SELF-REFLEXIVENESS

As argued above, challenging work, knowledge development and interactions at work are all key aspects of developing mastery at work and can be facilitated by coaching support. However, continuing mastery at work of performance of tasks and roles also depends upon the individual becoming self-directed and self-reflexive about their own learning and development. In this sense coaching has to be oriented less to providing support than seeking to progressively remove support as the individual becomes more independent in how they continue to develop their mastery. Learning and development at work depends partly on whether work offers an expansive learning environment and employers can play an enabling role in this respect (Fuller & Unwin, 2006; Felstead *et al.*, 2011). However, it is also dependent upon individual actions. People vary in their self-awareness about their goals, aspirations, motivation, personality, inter-personal skills and resilience. They also differ in their appreciation of learning opportunities and contextual understanding, and their ability to develop relationships and networks to support their learning and development. Capabilities for critical analysis, critical reflection, visualisation and organisation and the ability to switch between context and generalisation all help individuals to make the most of their learning opportunities (Brown, 2009b). In this respect, the role of a coach can itself be challenging as she or he seeks to empower individuals to take positive decisions and actions regarding their own skills development.

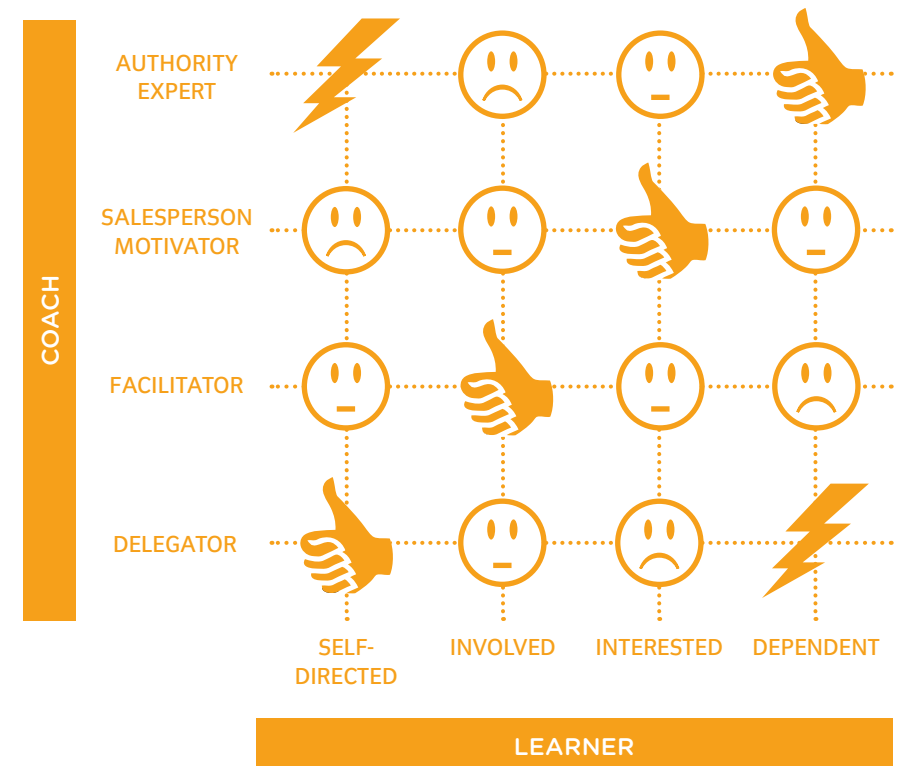
At work, being self-directed in terms of taking advantage of learning opportunities is helpful for individual development. Eraut (2009) argues it can involve willingness to engage in a wide range of activities such as asking questions; getting information;

finding key people to support you; listening and observing; learning from mistakes; giving and receiving feedback; trying things out; independent study; and working for a qualification. The plural aspect of ‘finding key people to support you’ emphasises that support does not have to be limited to a single coach. Indeed drawing advice and support from a range of people could itself help lessen dependence on a coach – it could help the individual decide about the relative weight to be given to different forms of advice, as when an individual seeks feedback about his or her performance from a range of people. A respondent from the career adaptability study (Bimrose *et al.*, 2011) commented:

‘I often learn in retrospect, how I did it in the job. You often get feedback afterwards.’

One special aspect of being self-directed relates to being self-reflexive, whereby you are able to identify your current skill set and how this might be enhanced and extended. Those individuals who see that their skills can be transferred to other contexts have significant advantages in developing a deep mastery of their tasks and roles at work over those who define themselves almost exclusively by their occupational and organisational attachments (Bimrose *et al.*, 2008). This advantage stems from the former having a dynamic sense of themselves as actively developing their own skills, whereas the latter are dependent upon the pathways linked to a particular organisation. Being self-reflexive and self-directed in relation to learning and development can underpin a mastery of performance of high level vocational tasks and roles at work which has breadth as well as depth. However, being self-directed does not mean working alone, and as mastery develops the value of the person taking on coaching responsibilities for supporting the learning of others becomes greater, although the coach too can still benefit from coaching. The processes of

self-reflexiveness and supporting the reflexiveness of others are inter-dependent in the development of high level vocational practice, with coaching support able to facilitate both processes.



Matching learner stages with teaching styles (Grow, 1991)

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has outlined some of the processes involved in nurturing mastery of high level vocational practice through coaching. Coaching involves a particular form of collaborative support for individuals at work, and the role may be informally practised by a colleague or formally recognised by the organisation. Coaching high level vocational practice can be developed by supporting learning through challenging work; updating a knowledge base; learning through interactions at work; and encouraging an individual to become more self-directed and self-reflexive. The relationship between coaching and world-class practice can be exemplified in the context of the development of expertise of skilled workers in knowledge-intensive workplaces such as aerospace. In such contexts a focus on competence in the workplace in the sense of outlining what workers did in the recent past will be an insufficient basis for preparation for future performance. Here a developmental view of expertise is taken where it is viewed as a continuing process in which coaching skills are integral to the development of world-class performance. Companies expect more than technical proficiency and a commitment to continuing improvement. For high level vocational practice competent performance of current tasks needs to be supplemented by people having the capacity to support the learning of others in performance of coaching or mentoring roles and the ability to think through and, if necessary, bring about changes in the ways that tasks are tackled (Brown, 2009a).

This approach to development of expertise recognises the importance of having a capacity to support the learning of others as well as a capacity to change the way things are done within the work teams themselves, rather than as a responsibility of supervisors and/or trainers. In this approach a team formed for a particular task may have several working coaches within it, who work alongside their colleagues and only perform a coaching role as the need arises. Thus the working coach can be seen as

even more supportive of learning and development than in the German *Meister* system, where the supervisor or team leader has training in supporting the learning and development of the team but also has other supervisory responsibilities (Brown *et al.*, 1994). Interestingly, where employers tried to institutionalise support for higher skills development by drawing on a full range of staff capabilities through the use of an expansive view of the development of expertise, they supported this through their payment system, whereby higher levels of performance, as exemplified by being able to coach others in developing their high level vocational practice, were encouraged and rewarded by higher pay (Brown, 2009a). In such cases, coaching was seen as something which they wanted distributed as widely as possible throughout the workforce, institutionalising and rewarding the ability of workers to support the learning and development of others even where this ability had been honed informally. Coaching and supporting the learning and development of others was seen as nurturing mastery through creation of a supportive and expansive environment in which high level vocational practice could develop and flourish.

A more developmental view of skills development, in which coaching support plays a key role, would also imply, rather than the focus being on individuals viewed as competent to perform current tasks at a particular level, that people could still develop in a number of ways (at a range of 'levels') in order to improve their own performance, contribute to a team or enhance the effectiveness of the organisation. The use of reflection, review, coaching and peer support could help individuals recognise that they need to continue to develop a range of skills and have a broad conception of expertise. This approach also offers, at a societal level, some possibility of moving towards a more knowledge-based society, if coupled with a more expansive view of the nature of skills, knowledge and competence development, which could address issues of transfer of skills, knowledge and experience between different settings; how

to support individuals in developing a frame of mind whereby they continually look to improve their own performance through learning and development and to support the learning and development of others; and to recognise that in any organisation a commitment to continuing growth and development of its members is strategically important. This approach could also provide the conditions in which a commitment to continuous improvement could flourish, as not only would most people believe that they needed to develop in a number of ways in order to improve their performance, but also the ‘working coaches’ so critical to supporting the learning of others would increasingly be in place.

In conclusion, in the context of national and European goals for the development of a more knowledge-based society there is a temptation to focus upon the targets (percentage of people receiving qualifications at a particular level) rather than the goal itself. **The focus upon outcomes and levels may exacerbate the problem whereby people think that a qualification marks a significant end to the learning process,** rather than simply being a marker for a change of focus of learning. The political commitment to goals and targets means that qualifications frameworks, specification of learning outcomes and hierarchical levels are likely to be retained, but **we can at least remember that these are proxies for the real goal and not devote too many resources to what is a second order issue.** Shifting attention to the need for a developmental approach to expertise, highlighting the importance of processes of learning, including the role of coaching in supporting the learning and development of others, and the need to support the development of expansive learning environments in education, training and employment, may be a more promising way forward. Nurturing mastery of high level vocational practice through coaching could be emblematic of the importance of a more general shift towards a more expansive approach to developing expertise.

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STUART BARR

Singing coach and musical director

What does the term 'coaching' mean to you?

The definition will be different depending on who you speak to in the music industry. Personally, I see singing teaching and singing coaching as two different things. Singing teaching is the technical approach, in essence the physiological approach to singing, whereas singing coaching is very much more about coaching performances out of people. It is about looking into the emotional side and the psychological side of performing.

How would you describe the relationship you have with the people you are coaching?

You have to have a very close relationship with the student. You need to know how they are thinking. I think this is more important in the performing arts than perhaps any other form of teaching because you are dealing with something which is absolutely an emotional process.

Could you describe the times when coaching has not worked?

It hasn't worked when the student doesn't go away and practise. I spent the first ten years of my teaching career assuming that everybody goes away and practises and it took me far too long to realise that unless somebody at some point in their life has said to them, 'If you want to achieve your goal you need to do bloody hard work,' then that doesn't always happen. I think particularly in the X factor generation that there is a certain expectation that you either have it or you don't have it, and if you do have it, you don't have to work at it. So my bottom line is

that I give you the tools to improve yourself. I don't get you better, you get yourself better.

Who sets the agenda for the coaching session?

We agree the agenda at the beginning of the session. It does depend on what the goal is. If there is a clear goal in mind, such as a particular audition, then the session is absolutely focused on that. The difficulty comes when you have a split focus, for example, somebody has arranged a consultation lesson with me and the day before suddenly realises they have an audition the day after. Then I have to balance getting to know somebody with needing to achieve very quick results. So a very clear goal is absolutely critical to a good coaching session.

How do you as a coach approach somebody who has got more ability than you as a singer?

That is an interesting issue. Somebody can be an expert teacher in teaching something without being an experienced performer in that field themselves. They can understand the processes, they can communicate the processes without having actually spent 10 years up on stage doing it. And every person's voice is different, so you are always in a situation where the singer can do something that you can't do.

COACHING AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

DR CHRIS DEVEREUX
Research Associate, Institute of Education

PREVIEW

One of the core attributes of coaching discussed in the first chapter is that it provides individualised feedback, and that the coach adjusts his or her approach to the development of the coachee. Can coaching can therefore be understood as a context for formative assessment? How does a coaching approach fit with the procedures for certifying competence – an important aspect of vocational education?

This chapter argues that research done on formative assessment can enrich and inform coaching approaches in vocational education. It also suggests that coaches in vocational learning contexts themselves may benefit from coaching in order to implement these new approaches to their work.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the parallels between coaching and formative assessment. Both coaching and formative assessment are characterised by a collaborative perspective in which things are 'done with', rather than 'done to', the learner. One particular approach to formative assessment, assessment for learning, has been developed, tested and successfully used in schools in the UK. This chapter considers whether formative assessment strategies, outlined in the assessment for learning approach, can be used to improve coaching within vocational education contexts.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, amongst others, were influential in introducing a particular understanding of formative assessment which they called assessment for learning. They say:

The term 'assessment' refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, *and by their students in assessing themselves*, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. *Such assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet their needs.* (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p.2, their italics.)

The Assessment Reform Group comments that research on assessment for learning 'indicates that improving learning through assessment depends on five, deceptively simple, factors':

- the provision of effective feedback to pupils;
- the active involvement of pupils in their own learning;

- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;
- a recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial to learning;
- the need for pupils to assess themselves and understand how to improve. (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, p.5.)

Thus assessment for learning is a two-way collaborative process in which learners increasingly take charge of their own learning. Ecclestone and Pryor (2003, p.472), for example, point out that this collaborative process is a key difference between formative and summative assessment, stating that, '[w]ithout a specific link to learning and motivation, formative assessment can be little more than conscientious summative feedback, interim testing and prescriptive target setting designed more for quality assurance purposes than for learning.'

In the words of a number of researchers into assessment for learning, Black *et al.* (2002, p.1) highlight that,

'[A]ssessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence.'

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So assessment for learning (formative assessment) means that the learner becomes engaged in their own learning and is able to master and assess their own work. But to do this, the learner needs help. In particular, they need feedback that they understand and know what to do with, that inspires and enables, and helps them understand how to improve their performance.

The relationship between assessment for learning and coaching is a strong one. Just as coaching 'provides specific information ... geared to learning intentions' (Cordingley *et al.*,

2005, p.3), assessment for learning provides feedback perceived as useful by the recipient. The common ground between the two is that:

- they involve two-way dialogue which is perceived as helpful by both
- they are both focused on improving learning
- they need to be sustained over time.

In order for assessment for learning to be effective, there needs to be what Torrance and Pryor (2001, p.617) call 'divergent assessment', namely assessment which aims to discover *what* the learner knows, understands, or can do rather than *if* they know a narrow set of technical skills. Ecclestone and Pryor (2003, p.482) describe how this works:

'Meaning was constructed through dialogue, where teachers were intellectually curious about the understandings of the learners, and in turn, the learners were receptive to teachers' feedback.'

This summarises not only assessment for learning but also the practice of good coaching. Both processes are two-way and intent on improving learning and understanding. In what follows, assessment for learning, and by implication, coaching, is situated in what Wiliam (2006, p.8) calls the 'pedagogy of contingency', namely, the idea that coaching and assessment for learning is dependent on, and constantly adaptive to, the learner's needs.

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Existing performance is the basis for coaching

LINKING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH COACHING

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There are of course difficulties in the real world in implementing coaching and formative assessment. For example:

- Tutors simply may not have the time when trying to balance their myriad teaching commitments.
- Professional development opportunities may be short and not sustained and so the potential for developing coaching skills are not available.

Any coaching intervention needs to be over a sustained period so that a relationship between coach and coachee has time to

build up. In the vocational context, the learner's supervisor, or potentially their assessor, is likely to be that key person. The vocational training context provides an extremely varied environment because of the wealth of qualifications on offer and the differing environments in which such work takes place, which exacerbates the difficulties in embedding pedagogical changes across a whole institution. However, despite these challenges, there are benefits to be had for learners and trainers alike by embedding coaching approaches into vocational training. The motivation for the integration of assessment for learning into the school environment provides a useful reference point for this.

In developing a theory of formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (2009) attempted to open up new ways of enabling teachers (and coaches) to implement assessment for learning more effectively. The authors recognised five key strategies:

- *'Clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success*
 - *Engineering effective peer discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of learner understanding*
 - *Providing feedback that moves learners forward*
 - *Activating learners as instructional sources for one another*
 - *Activating learners as the owners of their own learning.'*
- (Black & Wiliam 2009, p.9.)

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Could these key strategies, based as they are on a considerable body of research, provide an agenda for coaching to improve performance within a vocational setting? To achieve this, a key priority is to develop a sustained trusting relationship between the learner and the coach, who may be a supervisor, a tutor, an assessor, or all of these.

The two examples below focus on how coaches have taken steps to encourage reflective skills in their learners. They are drawn from interviews conducted with a private training

provider which has taken on coaching approaches as a central part of its training. They are useful extracts in that they emphasise, in very straightforward terms, what the practical application of some of the factors outlined above may look like. The first example is in a classroom setting in an FE college and the other is from a work setting for a learner engaged in a Level 2 NVQ.

‘It doesn’t involve me being at the front [of the classroom], but involves me going round seeing them individually and helping them out individually, and taking time and trouble to explain things to them individually, and she obviously appreciated that because she said, “You know, I’ve never had anyone sort of explain it to me in this way... you explain things in more than one way, you know, you’ll explain it three or four times in different ways.”’

Hidden behind this simple exchange is the sensitivity of the coach/trainer who is adapting his or her explanations in ways that make sense to the learner. Similarly, in the example below, the coach was working with a group of students and promoting both discussion and reflection to enable peer coaching within the group. Students discussing their experience noted:

‘But when you are in a discussion with a group and [the trainer] is [there – and he] will point out things like, “Why do you think that was a problem?” or, “How would you deal with it if you was in this, like, sort of situation?” And he might ask me [or my classmates] so it gives you all different kind of views.’

As these examples show, in addition to technical competency, soft skills, relationship building and thinking skills (among many others) are equally important in extending learning. Much of this activity is oral and aural but is often not captured for those qualifications that largely depend on written summative assessment. However,

the workplace coach or assessor can capture the behavioural aspects of learning at work through what has come to be termed ‘the professional discussion’.

The notion of the ‘professional discussion’ is an assessment conversation based on the activities the learner has been engaged in. It involves an explanation by the learner, encouraged and assisted by the coach, of how work activities have demonstrated capability and what more the learner feels they need to know or do. The ‘professional discussion’ in vocational qualifications appeared first in the 1996 Customer Service Standards and was described in the following way:

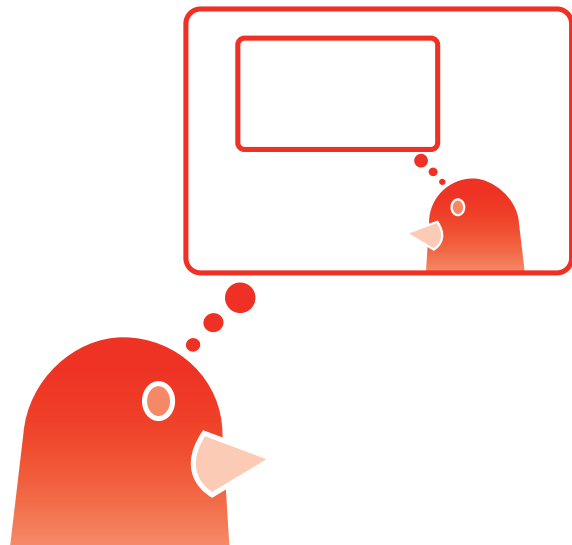
‘A professional discussion between assessor and candidate [implies] a recognition of the different skills, experience and understanding of customer service that each bring to the conversation.’ (Devereux, 1997, p.7.)

These iterative feedback loops which form a central part of the process are integral to utilising coaching approaches as a formative assessment tool, as Sadler (1998: 84) emphasised:

‘By quality of feedback, we now realise we have to understand not just the technical structure of the feedback (such as its accuracy, comprehensiveness and appropriateness) but its accessibility to the learner (as a communication), its catalytic and coaching value and its ability to inspire confidence and hope.’

This describes what the professional discussion should be in terms of the feedback it offers. It can be seen as a form of coaching that integrates very closely with assessment for learning and is particularly appropriate for a large number of vocational qualifications, opening up coaching opportunities in what increasingly become expansive – rather than restrictive – learning environments (Fuller & Unwin in Evans 2006, pp.27–48).

The professional discussion can also be seen as a ‘learning story’ that the learner brings to an assessment conversation. It involves bringing incidents and events, written in bullet form, that the learner believes illustrate aspects of his or her learning. The discussion is digitally recorded as evidence for summative and verification purposes. Written action points resulting from the conversation are recorded by the learner about what he or she needs to do next to improve his or her learning. The professional discussion links both coaching and assessment for learning, especially in terms of feedback, clarifying learning intentions and activating learners as the owners of their own learning. It is the skill of the coach that makes the professional discussion flow, by being able to bring out the best from learners in terms of self-esteem and an understanding of what they have achieved thus far, what they need to do next and how they might get there. For trainers, the challenge is in finding out how to provide the sort of feedback to their learners that those individuals find useful and motivational and are able to subsequently act upon.



How far to take reflection?

TRAINERS AS COACHES

How do trainers begin to take up formative assessment in their work? An enabling programme of coaching and peer coaching within the training organisation is essential to provide an understanding of how to put assessment for learning into action. This section outlines a variety of interviews with practitioners which present some of the challenges but also the successes in the utilisation of assessment for learning approaches within the vocational setting.

The discussion below is taken from an interview with a senior manager who was largely responsible for leading the coaching programme in her training organisation. She presents her case for the integration of coaching and formative assessment, particularly emphasising the added value to trainers’ technical competencies:

‘They’re industry specialists and experts and they know everything there is to know about their subject but they don’t always recognise how to pass that knowledge on to others and that’s the biggest part of being able to coach as trainers. We have to check they are engaging everybody and that they are actually learning something.’

Interviewer: How do you do that?

It is individual coaching. It is observation and coaching. It’s really [about] having a learning officer. A real mentor in the organisation who actually just goes around and works with others. It’s amazing when you actually start to release in people their opportunity to think ... then they come on in leaps and bounds. So it’s that time spent with them initially and suggesting ways of doing things and opening up different ways that is so important.’



It may be that the manager is integrating mentoring and coaching on this occasion, but as another trainer said, in order to raise the self-esteem and reflective capacity of trainers and their learners 'you do whatever floats their boat' (Devereux, 2010). This motivation lays the groundwork for integrating coaching approaches and formative assessment more broadly.

'It's about the activity I've seen you do and being a critical friend and saying 'You could have done it better because...? Would it have helped if...? So people are not afraid to try and do things. It's being allowed to practise something and get it wrong because you'll learn from it. So a big part of coaching and supporting people is for them to be able to recognise when they've made mistakes and what they could have done to make it better, rather than simply telling them all the time. It's the skill you want them to take into work, not the qualification. But it's the qualification which provides the structure.'

This passage emphasises the necessary integration of formative and summative assessment. The coaching relationship that has developed provides the context for feedback throughout the learning process. This feedback is linked to the fundamental requirement for a summative assessment of practice.

From the extract below, taken from the point of view of two vocational trainers working with a cohort of learners in a motor vehicle maintenance qualification, it is clear to see how they have embraced the practical meaning of assessment for learning, both by being coached from within the organisation and by peer coaching each other months into the process. The trainers understand assessment for learning in action:

'So I like to check what they have learnt. And share the responsibility for assessment – it is the learner checking

where they're up to and asking them what their next targets are, what do they think they can achieve for the next review.'

To take an example from a wider national context, The LSIS National Subject Learning Coach Programme is an example of a large programme which can provide a stimulus for coaching within the system. A trainer within one agricultural college was working with a group of students and the inherent danger of operating chainsaws meant that he needed both discipline and organisation in his work. Before the coaching course he said he had 'got into a bit of a rut having taught the same thing in the same way for years and years and years':

'It's a bit of a brave move to sometimes go away from what you know and do something that's a little bit outside the box. But now I'm being a little bit more experimental sometimes, it's actually paying dividends.'

He began to explore aspects of assessment for learning using sustained coaching from outside the college with his subject learning coach, combined with sharing experiences with the help of colleagues. The result of his ongoing reflection and experimentation with his own teaching was that he began to expect far higher standards of skill and responsibility from his own learners, and himself. This included them taking a much more active role in their own assessment. He recounts the execution of a local contract by his learners.

'There were a couple of trees growing with some branches which were growing over a road which was adjacent to the site. And they said, "Which branches do we take off?" and I said, "Well you've got the specification, you are up the tree, we are over a road here, which branches do you think you want to take off?"

"Well that one and that one and possibly this one."

So they actually had to stop, think and put themselves in the position of whoever was writing the specification and think, "Well which branch is going to be a problem?" Obviously the ones that are hanging low over the road. And they didn't need me then to say, "This one, this one and this one."

It is not easy to introduce the coaching role and assessment for learning to trainers who have high level technical skills in a particular vocational area but who are often only used to summative assessment practice. From these exchanges it is clear that tutors themselves need coaching in order to coach and although integrating this into practice is challenging and potentially time-consuming, the impact on the learner, as well as the coach, can be extremely positive.



Developing self-directed learning

LESSONS FOR THE SYSTEM

This chapter has explored the potential for formative assessment to provide an agenda for coaching in the vocational education and training sector. It has also highlighted that it is essential to develop in trainers the knowledge and skills to be able to implement coaching effectively.

Sustained coaching and formative assessment practice has been a success in the school arena. Vocational education and training already provides examples of outstanding coaching and there is no reason to think that introducing it more widely would not have an equivalent impact in the vocational sphere. The professional discussion is one way of bringing coaching to the fore in the assessment process. Sustained programmes along the lines of the Subject Learning Coach Programme could be channels through which some of the successful assessment for learning research could be put into action on a broad scale.

Assessment for learning recognises ‘the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial to learning’ (Assessment Reform Group, 1999, p. 5). The summative assessment required in order to certify vocational competence has sometimes been emphasised at the expense of formative assessment. Increasing the role of formative assessment through coaching could improve the ability of trainers to coach individuals to achieve higher levels of skill in their chosen field. Summative assessment which reflects this improved performance is clearly still an essential part of the system.

The examples in this chapter indicate that taking coaching and peer coaching seriously over time can create a more effective learning experience. Combining formative assessment with summative assessment develops relationships between learners and trainers and supports learners’ reflective capacity. It improves the performance of trainers and, most importantly, their learners.

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How would you describe the relationship you have with the people you are coaching?

It's one of complete and utter mutual trust, one of respect. It has to be non-hierarchical.

Could you describe the times when coaching has worked exceptionally well?

There is a three stage process. Our model is mainly about the pre-observation, getting to know the teacher and establishing a true coaching relationship which is supportive. We would then go into the session and video their practice. They would use that video to self-reflect and to identify their own strengths and areas for development. The coaching conversation that happens afterwards is about using your coaching skills of effective listening and probing questioning and also challenging the teacher to identify what they do well and what they don't do so well and what might be the solution to that problem. In good coaching this means that they are more likely to embed it into their practice, rather than just do it to please you.

Could you describe the circumstances in which coaching works best?

Coaching works best when the person being coached genuinely wants to improve their practice so where we have found it really effective is in our initial teacher training programmes, because the teachers are new and they want to learn and be the best they can.

Who sets the agenda for the coaching session?

[The agenda is] driven by the coachee. They are so sick of things being done to them and that's the problem with the education system ... we force our will on to others all the time.

What is the best bit of advice you have ever been given about coaching someone?

The best bit of advice to improve my own practice would be shutting my mouth and listening.

What does the person being coached gain?

They gain great sense of value and worth because for the first time somebody is taking time to listen and value their opinion and this empowerment not only helps them gain new skills, but also helps them to feel so much better about themselves.

Have you as a coach gained from the experience?

Yes, definitely. I think I am a better teacher and a better manager because of my coaching skills. I think I am much more prepared to deal with difficult situations because I can use my coaching skills to diffuse the situations. I think I can get the best out of my team members by using coaching techniques and supporting them in their practice within members of my team.

PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO INTEGRATING COACHING INTO TEACHER TRAINING AND CPD

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PREVIEW

We've discussed the value of coaching, how it fits with other teaching methods, how it can be used to develop skills at the highest level and how it relates to formative assessment. Chapter 5 touched on the idea that coaching can itself be used to equip practitioners (whether they are teachers, trainers, tutors, assessors or managers) with the skills to put coaching into practice. How can this be done?

This chapter provides a set of practical models for coaching practitioners who are developing their teaching skills and for continuing professional development (CPD). The models also have broader application to other coaching contexts.

CHAPTER 6

This chapter explores how coaching provides a powerful tool to support both the new vocational education practitioner and the experienced teacher in their professional journeys. Coaching is explored as a tool for enhancing the confidence of those working in a vocational education context. The chapter describes a range of coaching tools and provides examples to show where coaching approaches have been applied to a vocational context with resultant improvements in teaching and learning.

The commitment to using coaching to support teachers and trainers finds its roots in the work of Joyce and Showers (1996) who proposed a link between coaching (when used in teacher training and staff development) and the achievement of improved learning outcomes. Furthermore, coaching offers opportunities for dialogue: Freire (1996), for example, argues that coaching is a key factor in creating positive change in learners.

The theory of coaching in teacher training and CPD derives from a variety of multi-disciplinary sources which have emerged from debates around the emancipatory power of language and reflection. Peer coaching, as advocated in this chapter, is derived from the work of Robbins:

'Peer coaching is a process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices: expand, refine and build new skills: share ideas: conduct action research: teach one another: and problem solve within the workplace.' (Robbins, 1995, p.24.)

In practice, teachers training to teach in the UK school context have long been allocated a mentor to support them in their training journey. Coaching principles and coaching methodologies have also been introduced as an important tool to create transformational change in the further education sector (Browne *et al.*, 2008). From 2002, the UK Government invested large sums by contracting with private and public sector organisations who were then charged with improving teaching and learning in

vocational education, with the intention of reforming the quality of student experience. The consortium of providers who were successful in winning this contract adopted an approach with coaching at its heart. First known as the National Teaching and Learning Transformational Programme, three enablers were created to drive change in the sector. These were:

- the teaching and learning materials produced by experts in their fields, on a subject-by-subject basis,
- the networks – these covered nine separate regions and were the ‘power house’ for bringing staff in the sector together to engage in coaching conversations to determine the philosophies, practice and procedures for reform,
- the subject learning coaches training programme, designed to introduce participants to the teaching and learning materials, to engage them in the networks and provide them with the opportunity to achieve university level accreditation for their work.

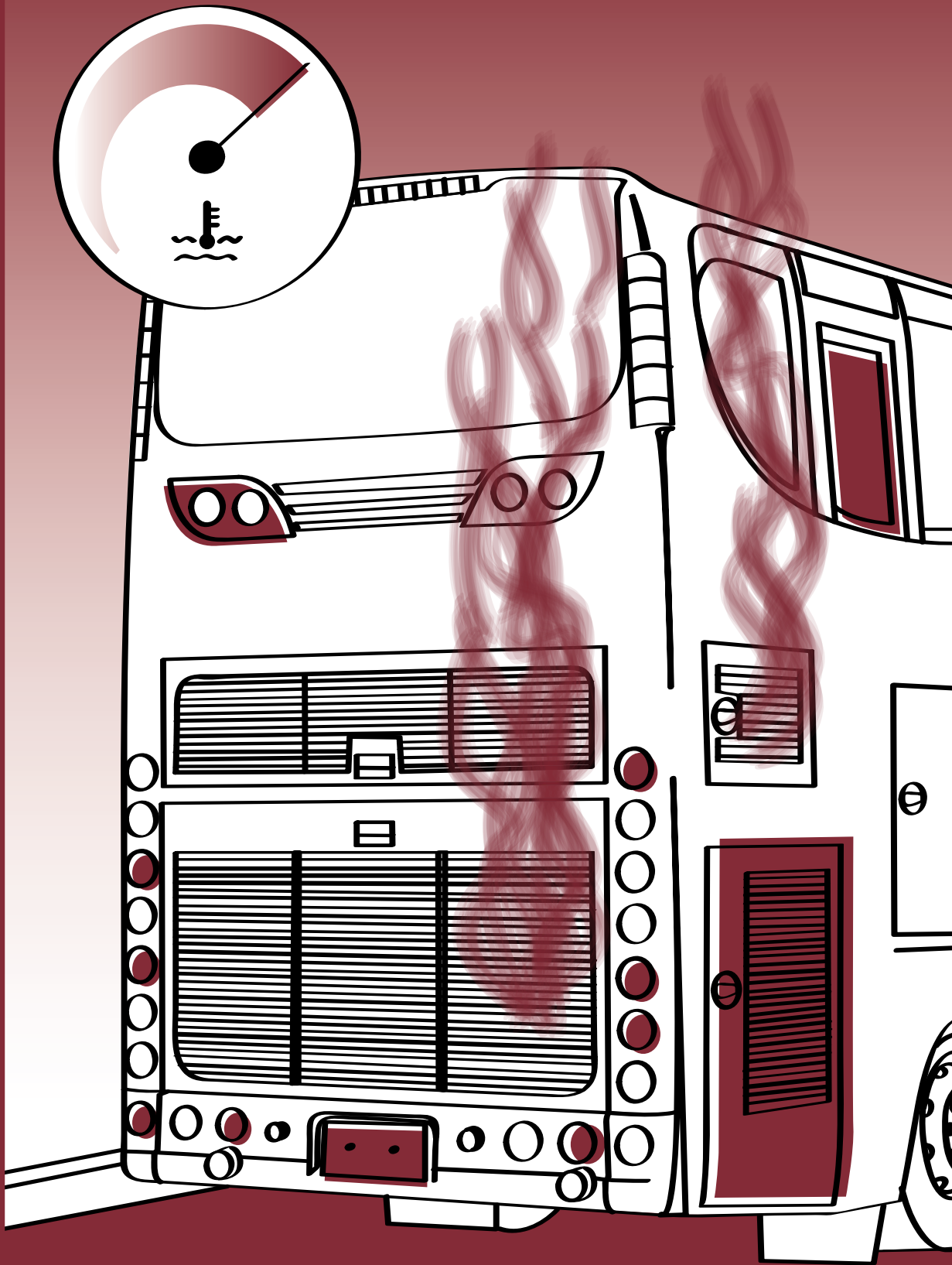
The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), as the sector agency responsible for the Lifelong Learning Quality Framework, still, at the time of going to press, supports the training of subject learning coaches, and many teacher educators rely heavily on coaching approaches to enhance the training of new teachers. Efforts have also been made to embed coaching into teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD) for the sector.

Coaching plays as central a role in developing teaching skills as it does in developing other types of skills. The sections that follow explore a number of different coaching approaches, examining the context in which they have been found to be effective, and providing some guidance on how to put them into practice.

HOW DO COACHES ENCOURAGE THEIR COACHEES TO FIND SOLUTIONS?

There are a number of tools traditionally used in teacher training and programmes of CPD to encourage and support coaching activities. A selection of these tools are described here with examples to show how the tool may be applied during coaching sessions and can be used to benefit trainee and experienced teachers, as well as their learners. The five approaches discussed are:

- 1 **Critical incident identification**
- 2 **The training journey**
- 3 **GROW theory**
- 4 **The iceberg model**
- 5 **The teaching square**



1 Critical incident identification

What is it?

Based on a commitment to reflective practice, this approach encourages trainees to think about their practice in distinct parts, breaking events down to identify where, for example, their lesson management might be improved or changed to create a better outcome. Critical incident identification encourages trainees to reflect on specific moments in training delivery to identify occurrences which have had a major impact on the success or failure of that particular session or on longer term plans.

When might it be applied?

The approach is used in many teacher-training programmes as part of the assessment process. For example, trainees might be required to discuss three specific examples of real events that occurred during their lessons. They then deconstruct the events that led up to these incidents, assess how they dealt with them and identify a future intervention to prevent further occurrence.

When might it be appropriate?

Although used as a formal assessed requirement in teacher-training programmes, critical incident identification could be used in a variety of contexts that might be related to behaviour management or perhaps concept learning. So, it might be used as part of a team discussion where staff are experiencing behavioural problems with one cohort of learners. Equally it could be used to identify a training approach that worked well that could then be shared more widely. It is important to note that critical incidents can be those that have positive outcomes as well as negative ones.

How do you put it into practice?

Many trainers enter the FE environment from a business or technical background and find the leap from implementing skills to imparting skills a difficult challenge. During this time, working alongside a coach is a potentially empowering experience, in that the newly qualified trainer has the opportunity for reflection and a 'sounding board' for issues that arise. A particular challenge is pedagogical development, and through the critical incident approach, trainers are able to:

- pinpoint particular challenges that have emerged during training sessions,
- discuss the critical factors which have driven these challenges,
- discuss these challenges with their coach to draw on their experience to identify approaches to combat these issues and create a positive outcome for both the learner and the trainer,
- after implementing change, discuss the effectiveness of the approach taken and continue to adapt practice on the basis of these changes.

Trainee teachers using this coaching method become adept at reflecting critically on their practice, seeing the complexities associated with human behaviour and constantly reassessing their approach to addressing challenging situations. Critical incident analysis has many uses and applications and has particular application for trainee teachers as it encourages them to reflect critically on how their actions impact on the achievement of their learners. Using these experiences to reflect with an external party is an effective learning tool for individuals as they develop their skills.

2 The training journey

What is it?

The training journey is a coaching model which asks trainees to look at their personal progression from early engagement in their occupation towards final professional formation and qualification. The use of the term 'journey' when applied to teacher training has been borrowed from the approaches adopted by life coaches concerned that their coachee be given the time and the tools to reflect on where they are in a specific situation and where they need to be. The strengths of the model are the focus it gives to individual progress and development, in allowing course participants time to reflect on the skills they have developed and the competencies they have mastered.

When might it be appropriate?

The approach is illustrated here in a teacher-training context but could be used in any variety of professional areas and particularly within the vocational learning context. The training journey approach also has transferable potential for use with students as they prepare to apply for jobs, produce a CV or practise interview technique.

How do you put it into practice?

In the example below, the exercise was conducted with a group of trainee teachers who were about to be subjected to an OfSTED inspection. The aim in this case was to encourage the trainees to think about how participation in a teacher-training programme had impacted on their practice. The approach is based on a storytelling model, applied here to reflective practice. The activity requires four stages:

Stage 1: Representation

Participants are asked to draw their training journey. The type of tools which are useful for this are mind maps, flow charts – any representation which shows movement, dynamism and progression.

Stage 2: Discussion

This stage requires discussing the picture with a partner, enabling the participant to articulate what s/he has presented in words through verbal communication. This activity involves describing what each element of the picture contains and why.

Stage 3: Consolidation

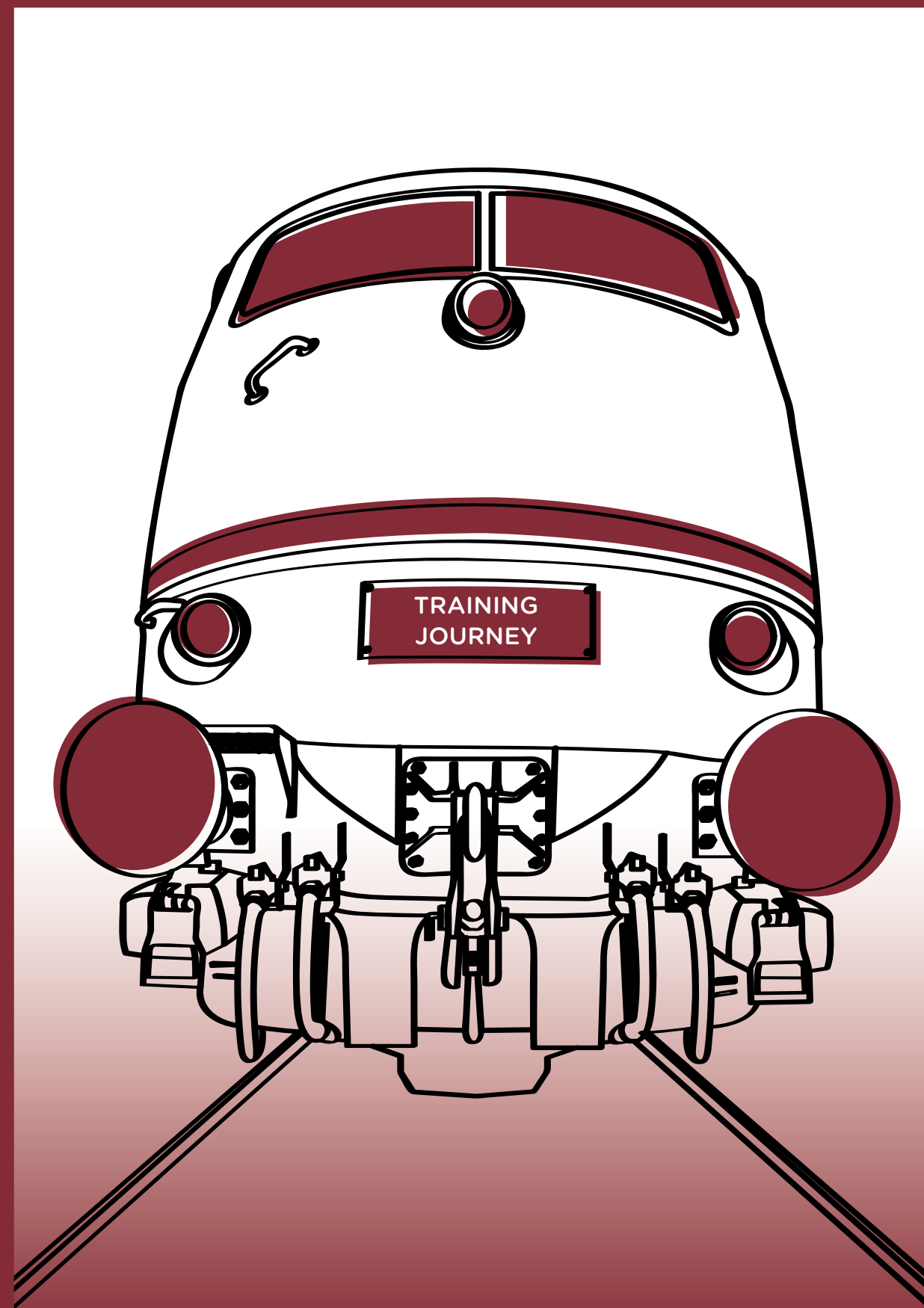
In this stage learners work alone and write four sentences to describe their training journey. An example of what might be written in a teacher-training context is offered below:

Box A

- I now know how to differentiate the needs of my learners
- I am better at time management
- I structure my lessons better to challenge learners better
- The white board is my friend, not my enemy

Stage 4: Reflection and translation into practice

These sentences are then shared with a partner and discussed, with learning journeys compared and dissected. The next stage in the journey requires the participant to work with a different partner and agree four words that sum up their journey. These are then formalised by participants as the final stage in the process and provide a reference point for individuals as they go back into the classroom. The four sentences in Box A become translated into the words in Box B, below.



Box B
Learners
Time
Challenge
Technology

The written card is a particularly useful memory tool aimed at encouraging trainees to focus on what they achieved during their training period, and shows how the coaching relationship can help practitioners to reflect on their experience and articulate their learning.

3 GROW theory model

What is it?

Many coaching relationships adopt the GROW approach to coaching. This model is used in the vocational sector to encourage an outcomes-focused approach to teaching and learning and was first developed by Sir John Whitmore for use in industry (Whitmore, 2012). GROW uses a sequence of questions focusing on the following:

Goals
Reality checking
Options
What, will – next steps

When might it be applied?

This model could easily be adapted for use with learners on vocational programmes, particularly at the start of a course or when a new module of learning is introduced. GROW can be used with teams of people, and with groups that are not working well together, to encourage better understanding of individual needs and perspectives. It also works well in a one-to-one relationship.

How do you put it into practice?

Coaching can start at any of the four stages of the GROW model. A coachee might begin by discussing something he or she wants to achieve (Goal), a current problem (Reality), a new idea for improving things (Options) or by outlining an action plan (What). It is recommended that coaches follow the coachee's lead initially by asking a few questions to elicit more detail, then move on to the other steps in a relevant sequence.

The four stages below describe a GOAL model in action when used to structure a coaching session. This illustrates how GROW can be put into practice.

Stage 1: Establish the goal

First, define and agree the goal or outcome to be achieved. The coach can help team members define a goal that is SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timebound). In doing this, it is useful to ask questions like:

- 'How will you know that you have achieved that goal?'
- 'How will you know the problem is solved?'

Stage 2: Examine current reality

Next, the team (or one of its members) need to describe their current reality. This is a very important step: Too often, people try to solve a problem without fully considering their starting point, and often they are missing some of the information they need to solve the problem effectively. As the discussion develops, the coach gleans more about the current reality and the team may gradually start to find a solution. At this point coaching questions can be applied:

- 'What is happening now?'
- 'What, who, when, how often?'
- 'What is the effect or result of that?'

Topic (optional addition to model)

Tell me about ...

What would you like to think/talk about ...?

Give me a flavour in a few short sentences ...

Goal

What do you want to move forward on ...?

What can we achieve in the time available?

What would be the most helpful thing for you to take away from this session?

Reality

What is happening now that tells you ...?

Describe the current situation ...

What made you realise that you need to do something different?

Options

What could you do to move yourself just one step forward ...?

What are your options ...?

How far towards your objective will that take you ...?

Will

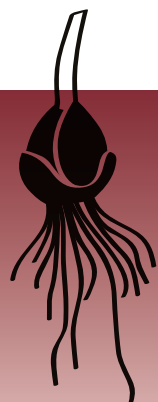
What will you do next ...?

How, when, with whom ...?

What do you need from me?



T



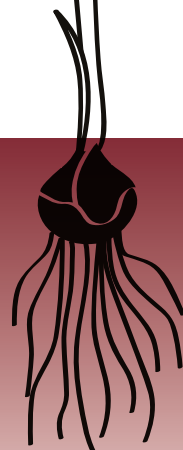
G



R



O



W

Stage 3: Explore the options

Once coachees and/or the team have explored the current reality, the next step involves exploring all the many possible options available for solving the problem. The coach may support this activity by asking probing questions and challenging the coaches to think more about the issues. Typical questions may be:

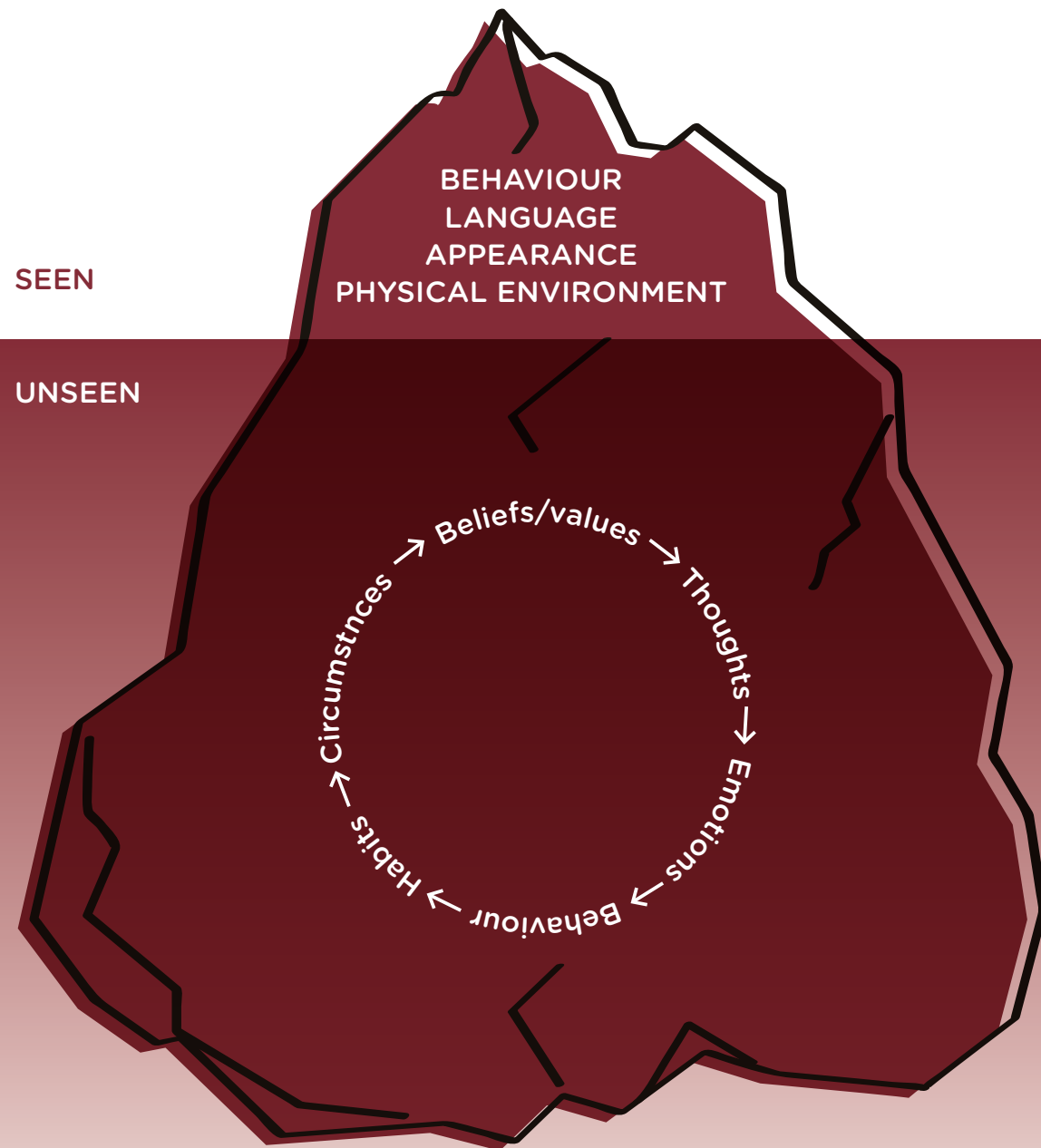
- 'What else could you do?'
- 'What if this or that constraint were removed?'
- 'What are the benefits and downsides of each option?'
- 'What factors will you use to weigh up the options?'

Stage 4: Establish the will

By examining current reality and exploring the options, the team members now have an idea as to how they might improve matters. This requires a coaching conversation which encourages a positive outlook on addressing the issue. The coaching questions used in this case would be, for example:

- 'So what will you do now, and when?'
- 'What could stop you moving forward?'
- 'And how will you overcome it?'
- 'Will this address your goal?'
- 'How likely is this option to succeed?'
- 'What else will you do?'

On the previous page is an overview of what is involved in the GROW model, this time introducing a 'T' (for Topic) into the process.



4 The iceberg model

What is it?

The power of conversation as a tool for coaching has already been identified. The iceberg model approach recognises our inherent human complexities and illustrates that we often reveal to others only a limited part of who we actually are.

Beneath what might be a hard exterior there are other elements to our identity about which even the individual may not be aware. The self or ego may be visible to others but personal traits are constituted by a range of factors such as beliefs, values, behaviours and emotions as identified in the diagram. These are unseen most of the time but are all equally influential in what makes us who we are.

When might it be used?

The iceberg diagram might be used by a coach as s/he prepares for a coaching session. It might equally be shown to a coachee to illustrate the many dimensions of the self that influence our professional behaviour and competence.

It is through coaching that individuals can be enabled to understand their own skillsets better, find greater empowerment in this knowledge and perhaps better understand their own limitations. It is through coaching that we might become more aware of 'below the water-mark' complexities and in knowing them, learn to use them to our advantage.

How do you put it into practice?

Consider a learner who is failing to submit work on time and at risk of failing his or her course. The programme leader could use the iceberg diagram to prepare themselves for a discussion with the student. Using the diagram as a reference, the programme leader, in the role of a coach, could ask questions which gently explore the student's circumstances, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and habits, and how these might be impacting on the student's ability

to complete work. This approach can potentially help coaches develop a more open and trusting relationship which could make further interventions more effective.

5 The teaching square

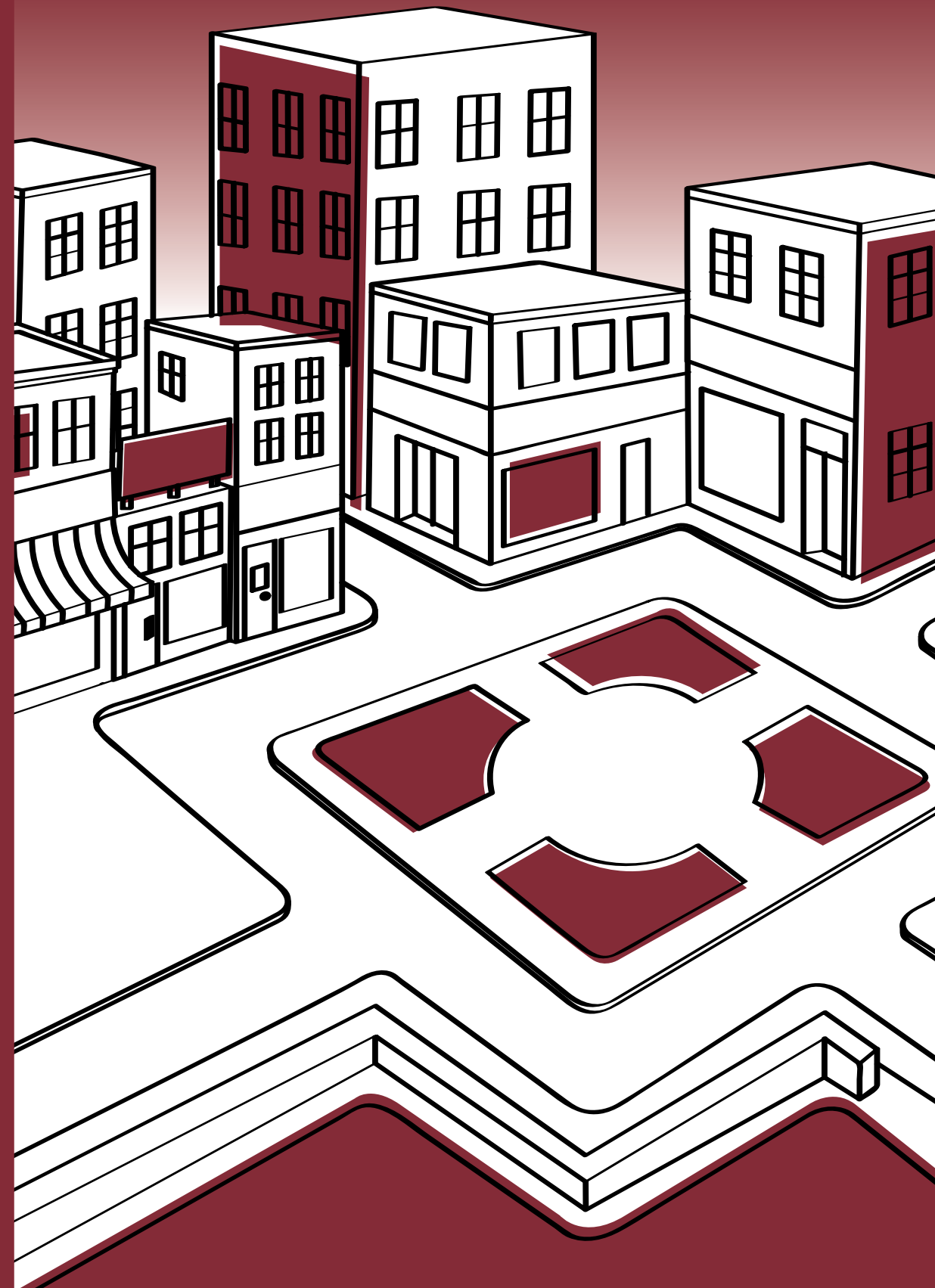
The coaching models described so far have focused on the one-to-one nature of coaching relationships. It is, however, possible to use coaching approaches which involve a larger number of participants, as shown in the teaching squares approach attributed to the work of Morse *et al.* (2006).

What is it?

Teaching squares are intended to encourage the sharing of good teaching and learning while fostering the dissemination of new ideas and approaches. Squares involve a reciprocal process of classroom observation followed by supported self-reflection. They can be operated cross-faculty or department, or be located within one department. They require four willing participants who agree to visit each other's classes over the course of a set period and then meet to discuss what they have learned from their observations.

When might it be applied?

The aim of the teaching square is to allow the teacher to become a student again and experience what it is to be in the classroom. It allows a member (or members) of staff to become a learner in their own institution, providing the opportunity for reflection and constructive discussion. It might be used to disseminate a new initiative, to share good practice or to drive improvement across an organisation.



How do you put it into practice?

Each teaching square consists of four members. After an initial meeting to discuss logistics and establish expectations, each square member commits to visiting the other members' classes at least once.

Each group determines its own schedule and starts by agreeing the ground rules. When all observations are completed, the square meets again to discuss what they have learned.

Teaching squares are meant to spur personal self-reflection rather than peer evaluation. Participants focus their conversations on what they've learned about their own teaching from the observation process and avoid direct commentary on their colleagues' performance.

The goal is to encourage a respectful, safe, mutually supportive experience for all involved. Participants are encouraged to approach the process in a spirit of appreciation – even celebration – of the work of their colleagues.

There are many other approaches that could be discussed and the reader is recommended to look at some of the suggested reading listed below to identify additional examples for practical application.

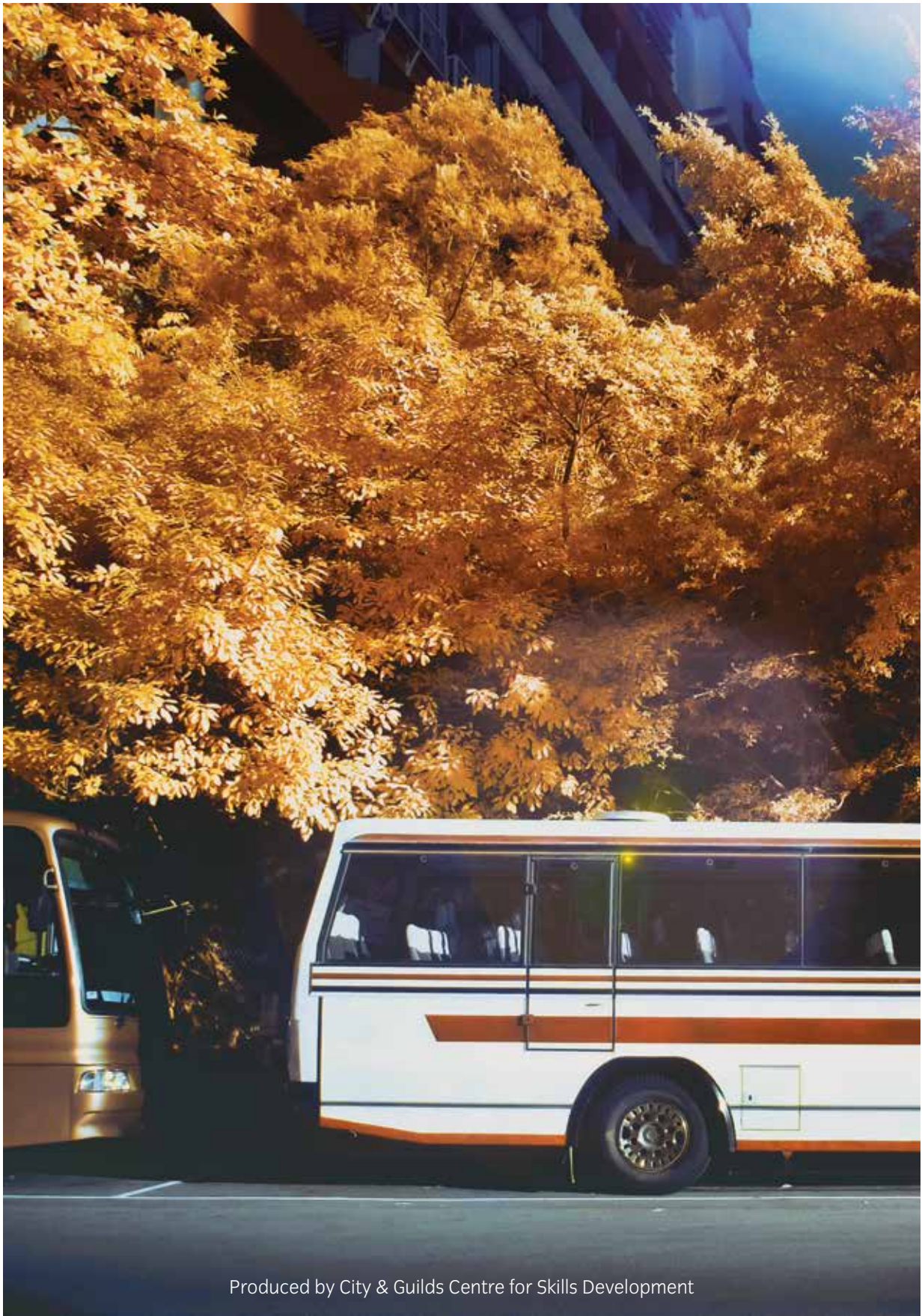
This chapter has focused on using coaching as a powerful tool to enhance vocational teacher training and CPD. A range of coaching tools have been discussed to demonstrate how coaching can potentially enhance the practice of experienced teachers, the newly trained and those new to teaching. Many of these tools have transferable use for application with vocational learners but what is required throughout is the development of a coaching relationship with trainees or learners, to ensure that non-judgmental discussions within an open and honest environment can occur.

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