

Doctor in Education
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Peer-coaching in Higher Education

**An analysis of the peer-coaching service at the Institute of
Education, exploring processes of learning and
underpinning values**

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ABSTRACT

This research explores learning and democratic values in the peer-coaching service at the Institute of Education (IOE).

The service, set up seven years ago, adopted a learning-centred model of coaching (Carnell, MacDonald and Askew 2006). An initial evaluation of the service focused mainly on benefits to the coachee (Hargreaves 2007). To date, there has been no study into how learning is understood and facilitated by the coaches.

This study builds on the work of the initial facilitators of the coaching group, Askew and Carnell 2011, by providing a detailed study into how learning is interpreted in practice.

The study is set in the context of Adult Learning. In particular, aspects of Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning are applied to illuminate the learning process. Six audio-recorded coaching conversations are analysed. A system of analysis is borrowed and developed from Conversation Analysis. The conversations are presented and analysed sequentially, before discussing approaches to learning, and values that appear to underpin practice.

Findings suggest that despite following the same programme of professional development, coaches seem to understand learning differently resulting in diverse practice. Some appear to facilitate reflection on self. Connections between current and previous behaviour patterns are explored together with developing an understanding of where embedded beliefs and attitudes have originated. In other conversations, a goal-centred approach, focusing on completing specific tasks, is dominant.

This research advances the argument for a learning-centred model of coaching leading to individual development, fulfilment and possibly better working practices.

The thesis addresses a gap in research by exploring the practice of coaching as a model for supporting adult learning, identifying democratic values that underpin and give strength to, the transformative learning model.

The thesis concludes with suggestions for coaches' professional development and thoughts for future research.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Signed

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CONTENTS

REFLECTION ON LEARNING8

THESIS STRUCTURE16

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction	18
1.2 Rationale	19
1.3 The Research Focus	22
1.4 Peer-coaching in the IOE	25
1.5 Method of Data Collection.....	31
1.6 Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching	33
1.7 The Gap in the Research	36

CHAPTER TWO – ENGAGING WITH RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction	41
2.2a Growth of Coaching	42
2.2b Adult Learning	43
2.2c Peer-coaching in Higher Education and the Institute of Education	45
2.2d Peer-coaching – some tensions	50
2.2e Democratic Values and possible links to Coaching	52
2.2f What is it to be a person	56
2.3 Transformative Learning Theory - Introduction.....	60
2.3aTransformative Learning Theory	60
2.3b Development of the Theory	62
2.3c Peer-coaching in the Institute of Education	69

2.3d Reflection	70
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY

3.1 Introduction	75
3.2 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION	76
3.2a Pilot Study	76
3.2b Sample	76
3.2c Method.....	78
3.3a Insider Research – tensions and dilemmas	79
3.3b The Context – advantages and disadvantages	80
3.3c Interpretivism and Hermeneutics	84
3.3d Other issues for consideration	88
3.4 Ethical Concerns	89
3.4a General Ethical Considerations	89
3.4b Specific Ethical Considerations	91
3.4c Dissemination of Findings	93
3.5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS	93
3.5a Selecting a framework for analysis	94
3.5b Conversation Analysis	95
3.5c Naturally Occurring Talk	96
3.5d Framework for Analysis	96

CHAPTER FOUR – PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.1Introduction	99
Conversation 1.....	100
Conversation 2	111
Conversation 3	120

Conversation 4	130
Conversation 5	141
Conversation 6	151
4.2 Further observations	161

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction	166
5.2 Findings	166
5.3 Coaching and Democratic Values.....	169
5.4 Informing practice.....	174
5.5 Further reflections on theory	178

CHAPTER SIX – CLOSING THOUGHTS

6.1 Learning from research	181
6.2 Contribution to knowledge and understanding	183
6.3 Organisational values	187
6.4 The Way Forward	188
6.5 ... and finally	189

REFERENCE LIST	190
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APPENDICES	203
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LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1 – Adapted from Turnbull 2009	34
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Reflection on Learning

"Reflection on the process of learning is believed to be an essential ingredient in the development of expert learners. By employing reflective thinking skills to evaluate the results of one's own learning efforts, awareness of effective learning strategies can be increased and ways to use these strategies in other learning situations can be understood."

(Ertmer and Newby 1996: 1)

Introduction

In this reflection, I describe how this professional doctorate provided a framework for significant personal and professional development. I hope to demonstrate how I see the two being inextricably linked.

Drawing on newly formed learning and understandings from the four introductory EdD modules, I reflect on how these preliminary studies developed my knowledge and thinking. From these, I arrived at the conclusion that exploring coaching in a more sophisticated way would be a complex and fascinating focus for future study and research. Looking in more detail at how coaching supports adults' learning would be informative for me and the coach-learning group at the IOE.

I reflect on significant learning from the Institution Focused Study (IFS) and how I took that forward in this Thesis.

I describe some of the more practical, personal and professional outcomes of my study and how they will inform future practice.

I entered this programme, having some awareness of the massive personal and professional challenges ahead; however, there really is no preparation for the transformation I have encountered. As this study has a focus on Transformative Learning, it seems appropriate to end by describing my own journey not just over the

last six years, but through changing from being a classroom practitioner to being an academic.

Throughout, I have remained determined and focused. In the end, living through the highs and lows, the struggles and frustrations has been satisfying and rewarding.

Journey through the Modules and IFS of the EdD

I began the EdD with the intention of exploring in more detail, the role school-based mentors played in developing student teachers. I was interested in how these adults were supported in their learning. I was particularly interested in why some students had negative mentoring experiences and at times felt disempowered, whereas others had positive experiences and felt empowered with their own learning and subsequent progress. Now I realise that was the beginning of my interest in how adult learning is supported. I began by writing about the professionalisation of school-based mentors.

I found the research modules particularly challenging as I struggled with grasping concepts of research – something very new to me. I began to understand I was drawn more to the interpretivist, humanist side of research as I am interested in people and looking beneath the surface at what makes them who they are. Whilst reading widely, I realised I had to focus my reading and writing more, concentrating on, not only what I was interested in, but what was most relevant to my research.

Feedback on essays commented on a lack of confidence in my writing, however this changed as my study progressed. A comment from a tutor about how they liked to see ‘which of our comments you reject’ was liberating for me. I realised I had to have more ownership over my writing. My confidence grew from that day on.

The key turning point in my interests was the psychoanalysis module. This is the module I enjoyed most. It confirmed my need to explore adult learning more closely. At the time I was in the early stages of learning to be a coach here at the IOE. It was serendipitous then, when in my personal life, I attended a coaching session at the Royal Opera House. I became curious about this word and why it was attached to such diverse contexts. This led to my studying coaching in three contexts for the IFS. From this study, I learned that I should clarify more in the thesis, the context and backdrop to the study. It was also important for me to explore in detail any underlying complexities rather than simply describing what was happening. I believe I have achieved this. The thesis explores adult learning and how coaching contributes to personal learning.

Practical and Professional Outcomes

The EdD has consumed my life but in a positive way. My confidence has grown in several areas. There is no question that my professional practice has been enhanced. I am a more effective academic, tutor, teacher educator, lecturer, colleague and coach.

For example, studying learning in the coaching context, particularly linking it to Transformative Learning Theory, has made me listen to and understand the wider contexts of coachees' lives and situations. This has also focused my questioning more closely. I believe I am a better and more respected coach. I understand one of my current clients asked for me specifically when self-referring to the IOE coaching service.

I assist in professional development of new coaches, have facilitated a number of sessions and talk about the service at Induction for new colleagues in the IOE. When I disseminate my findings to the coach-learning group, I hope new knowledge will also enhance their practice for the wider benefit of the IOE.

One of the facilitators of the coach-learning group stepped down in July 2013. My own newly acquired knowledge and expertise has been recognised by the IOE, to the extent that, from September 2013, I took over this role.

I have facilitated coaching-related workshops for colleagues in the University of Ludwigsburg, Germany, facilitated a week-long course at the IOE for colleagues from Warsaw and most recently have organised sessions for colleagues from Palestine, Egypt and the USA. Following on from one of these sessions, I have been invited to the University of Omaha, Nebraska to be a guest speaker in 2014. It has been suggested that I will bring a fresh approach to coaching and mentoring in their working environment.

I use coaching techniques when working with students and mentors and now, as a direct result of my doctoral studies, I have been invited to work with Primary colleagues and their mentors. I contribute to teaching and writing on two MA programmes. I have been approached to joint-supervise an MRes student in 2013-14.

Studying on this programme has made me become acutely aware of some of the tensions when studying in my own organisation. I would like to think I would use this knowledge positively if I was fortunate enough to work with EdD students in the future. Something I would like to do.

I have developed academic writing workshops for students and have become a member of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee as a direct result of my study.

Reading so much philosophy has ignited an interest in this area. I hope to have more time now to develop this reading. I have found it a real source of inspiration but I believe it leaves me with more questions than answers. I have become more observant and critical in thinking about everyday events and situations. I see things very differently now and question more. Coupled with this, my reading and understanding of learning has clarified for me that I have always championed holistic learning, in other words, I believe that in learning we should develop all aspects of our person – not just academic or learning for our working lives, but we must pay attention to our personal lives and our leisure time to be fully rounded. In other words we all have a right to reach our full potential.

My writing has improved enormously. As a result I am able to be more supportive and detailed when providing feedback on students' work. I am able to direct them to readings which may help them learn and engage them.

I read more, have wider interests, use more sophisticated language to develop my thinking and am more confident when engaging in collegial discussion. I am able to argue my corner more and I find people listen to what I have to say. The EdD has given me kudos!

My Own Transformative Learning

Mezirow (2000) suggests that after perspective transformation has taken place, one's life is not only seen through, but lived through a different perspective.

I have, quite significantly, reinvented myself twice in my life. Once intentionally when I changed my appearance and lost a significant amount of weight. Being overweight had affected my growing up, my confidence and self esteem. The visible transformation resulted in my being treated very differently by others, but I was experiencing the internal emotions of adapting to a new identity of being healthier, happier and being perceived differently.

Fifteen years ago, I was a school teacher and a semi professional singer. Changes to health and personal circumstances mean I no longer do either of these things and with difficulty, had to find ways of moving life forward in a positive direction. A chance meeting with an IOE lecturer presented me with an opportunity. I applied to join the IOE and become a teacher educator. Since then I have grown and developed and have now become an academic – lecturing, researching and writing. I have developed interests away from my school subject area. This has given me a change of professional identity. Twelve years on, I realise that whilst knowledge and learning can mean power, they can also be alienating. Those on the outside of this academic ‘club’ find it difficult to understand what I do now or recognise what I have achieved. I am still asked about how I spend the school holidays. I have had to recognise, and accept myself, that I am different. Mezirow (1978) suggests that for perspective transformation to take place, one has to leave the ‘old life’ behind and embrace the new perspective. I believe I have done that and I have a new and much fulfilled life.

The interests and learning I have gained over the last six years will, I hope, take me forward and perhaps the best is yet to come. I will keep contributing to life in different ways as a result of my study and the changes I have made.

Transformation can and does occur in many aspects of life. Transformation is part of life and occurs over and over again (Mezirow 2000). It should be recognised that one has to live through the phases of that transformation. I believe now, that having an understanding of the existence of transformative learning, would have been helpful in making my transitions easier in some respects. Sometimes, having to make life changes can be difficult but in the end it can be fruitful and stimulating. I would not have become an academic or completed this EdD had it not been for some significant life changes – disorientating dilemmas – which forced me to live and view life differently. I now am grateful for that but only because I recognise and understand the journey I have been on. Transformative Learning could be used more widely in life to help us understand and accept significant life changes. I saw examples of this in the Olympics 2012, in particular, the Paralympics where many athletes had to restructure their identity but seemed to do this with a positive outcome.

I have studied and read widely for this EdD and I have only used a fraction of the material I have and the notes I have made. I could go on and on about the benefits of Transformative Learning Theory and coaching; however I have had to draw a line.

One of my referees for this programme, very intuitively suggested, that I looked for learning opportunities which were within my intellectual capabilities. I think I was unaware of what these capabilities were. I have also been influenced in my life by a book given to me as a child which spoke of living life to the full and using one's gifts and talents to reach full potential and I now realise there was more to me than I thought. I believe studying for this doctorate has allowed me to achieve some of these things in my life. I have pushed myself to learn and understand. I recognise that my personal skills of tenacity and determination have been quite acutely

developed. I have of course been ably supported by friends, colleagues and students along the way.

Learning will continue for the remainder of my life – mainly due to the EdD, the skills I have acquired and the impact it has had on my confidence and in being allowed to move on and develop interests in areas which have fascinated me. It has been stimulating, frustrating and at times I have struggled for survival but I believe I have moved nearer towards reaching my full potential. It is a good feeling.

O! This learning, what a thing it is.

William Shakespeare (The Taming of the Shrew)

Thesis Structure

This thesis begins with a description of the rationale for the research. In Chapter 1, I discuss frameworks which underpin coaching conversations. I offer an account of the setting up of the coaching service at the Institute of Education and its members who are the focus of the research. I explore the meanings of coaching, mentoring and teaching before discussing the gap in the current research into coaching.

This research raises questions about the values which underpin coaching in a democratic society. In Chapter 2, I use literature to explore the implementation of peer-coaching in Higher Education. I discuss the notion that learning in coaching should focus on developing the person and should not be solely for the benefit of the organisation. I explore the aforementioned values and how we can relate these to coaching. I give a brief account of the context of Adult Learning and in particular I identify Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning as a useful theoretical framework for the research.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology underpinning this research. I describe the limitations of the research together with the tensions I experienced of being an insider researcher and the ethical issues that surfaced. The detail of the theory comes in Chapter 4 when I present the data and weave theory and practice together.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I present findings and conclusions from the research. Changes to professional development for coaches are suggested.

I conclude the thesis by describing my contribution to knowledge, learning from research and the doctoral programme overall.

Peer-coaching in Higher Education

An analysis of the peer-coaching service at the Institute of Education, exploring processes of learning and underpinning values

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction

This thesis provides an original study of the learning processes facilitated in the peer-coaching service at the Institute of Education (IOE). Values underpinning this specific type of learning conversation are explored. More specifically, six audio-recorded coaching conversations, conducted by colleagues, are analysed in depth.

This research explores the question:

What are the learning processes and underpinning values in the peer-coaching service at the Institute of Education?

In this opening chapter, the rationale for conducting this research is presented. The focus of the research and the participants are described. I describe the peer-coaching service at the IOE, together with the framework used. This is followed by a brief outline of the methodology underpinning the research. Finally, the semantics of coaching, mentoring and teaching are examined together with the gap in current research around the process of learning in coaching.

The goal of coaching research is to enhance understanding and improve practice (Kauffman and Bachkirova 2008). This research is driven by a commitment to contribute to the wider knowledge-base surrounding coaching and to share and implement the outcomes of the research.

1.2 Rationale

Whilst the IOE enjoys global recognition for its excellence, it acknowledges that, as a Higher Education (HE) workplace with around 600 colleagues, there are benefits to be gained from facilitating learning opportunities both personally and professionally (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird and Unwin 2006). In 2005 Staff Development recognised a need for an informal arena where colleagues could discuss issues experienced in their workplace. A peer-coaching service was introduced. This involves a one-to-one, confidential, learning-centred conversation with colleagues, in a supportive environment, to enable 'more effective working practices' (Carnell, MacDonald and Askew 2006: 1). Fifteen colleagues, including me, representing academic and non-academic staff, were invited to become coaches. Two colleagues (one being my doctoral supervisor) experienced and informed about coaching, facilitated a 3-day programme of professional development. Following this initial training, the group engaged in further support and development through monthly two-hour meetings. These were facilitated by Askew and Carnell (2011) who describe the group as the coach-learning group. The peer-coaching service was launched in September 2006. An evaluation, conducted after the first year, highlighted its effectiveness and benefits (Hargreaves 2008).

I now have a profile of being an experienced coach, having supported many colleagues. An integral part of our professional development includes being coached ourselves. I am therefore in the interesting position of experiencing coaching from the perspectives of coach, coachee and researcher giving me substantial knowledge and understanding of coaching in my workplace. As the peer-coaching service (described in section 1.4) is expanding, the original group of coaches assists with the selection and professional development of new coaches. Askew and Carnell (2011:

xii) describe this as a ‘cascade model of professional learning’. These experiences developed my interest in researching coaching in the IOE.

In this final stage of the doctorate, I develop and clarify a theme which emerged from earlier work in the doctoral programme – the IFS. That study explored coaching in three contexts – education, sport and opera. In particular, it was concerned with deconstructing coaching sessions to discover why the term ‘coaching’ was attached to a practice which took place in such diverse settings (Rodger 2010). The research focused on observing coaching in each context, drawing out themes, commonalities and diversities. Participants appeared to engage with processes of learning and change to enable greater effectiveness within a particular area of their lives (Rodger 2010). A Coaching Construct was devised to describe each context (Appendices 1, 2 and 3). Findings highlighted more commonalities than diversities.

Whilst disseminating the findings from this study to the coach-learning group, I became aware of how little we deconstruct the process of learning. We discuss issues arising from coaching sessions and learn new skills and techniques; however the learning process is not clearly discussed. Questions such as ‘how is learning facilitated’ and ‘why is coaching valued as a learning tool’ emerged.

Whilst working in Initial Teacher Education, I developed interests in the fields of coaching and mentoring, publishing articles on the effectiveness of School-based Mentors (Rodger 2005, 2006a/b and 2008). These interests stemmed from discovering that some student teachers experienced positive mentoring, whilst others didn’t. Tales of being left alone with no mentoring, together with the use of destructive language during feedback on lessons, seemed to dominate conversations with students. They understandably felt the negative mentoring process inhibited their

learning. To help address these diverse experiences, I joined a working party engaged in developing professional development programmes for mentors, leading to accreditation. Suggestions for mentors writing reflective journals, annotating lesson observations, engaging with academic literature, were put forward. However, a question I asked continually was ‘how can we know how effective mentors are if we don’t observe and listen to mentoring conversations?’ How can we plan professional development when we are unaware of what goes on behind closed doors? In other words, isn’t it important to get inside and find out what really happens? For me, no amount of writing or annotating tells me how a mentor interacts on a personal level with a student to develop their learning. This question has remained with me whilst developing our practise as coaches. How can we improve or facilitate an effective and consistent service if we do not actually see what colleagues are doing in practice? I began to question more what I, as a coach, was doing and how peer-coaching facilitated learning in the IOE? What are its benefits? Whilst the IFS allowed a broad study, for the thesis I decided to investigate in more detail, the relationship between coaching and learning in the peer-coaching service in my workplace. Given the confidential nature of coaching, ‘getting inside’ the sessions was a barrier to overcome.

Another interest leading to this research is that coaching is not held in the same high regard as other helping interventions, like counselling (Bachkirova and Cox 2005). Counselling is sometimes described as reactive - a remedial activity aimed at helping a person’s personal or working life and is sometimes accompanied with medication (Bachkirova and Cox 2005). Coaching is often seen as proactive, primarily performance related and, I would argue, can miss out on important personal learning. A concern with coaching is that, unlike counselling, it is sometimes denied

professional status due to lacking a theoretical position (Peltier 2001, Jackson 2008). Also, the research which explores the effectiveness of the coaching process is sparse (Bachkirova and Cox 2005). Whilst literature suggests implicitly that 'learning is at the heart of coaching' (Skiffington and Zeus 2003: 30); there seems to be little empirical evidence exploring the process of learning in coaching, particularly in relation to adult learning theories (Cox 2006, Griffiths and Campbell 2009). There is scope for this research, therefore, to contribute to the professionalisation of coaching by illuminating understanding of connections between learning theory and practice. Analysing peer-coaching conversations will have considerable value for me as a practitioner, the coach-learning group, other coaches' understanding of how they support learning and the wider knowledge base surrounding coaching generally.

1.3 The research focus

This research focuses on exploring a traditionally closed environment, to uncover the processes of learning in peer-coaching at the IOE. The IOE publication, 'Coaching and Mentoring in Higher Education: A learning-centred approach' (Carnell et al 2006) is explicit in its focus. However, the learning process, how it is facilitated and why it is valued, are not always made clear (Hargreaves 2010).

When colleagues come to coaching, it is often because they feel something has to change or improve (Cox 2013). To make a change, it is assumed that some learning - a precursor to any possibility of change - has to take place (de Haan and Burger 2005). A goal of coaching is to ensure that learning will last and any resulting change will be maintained long after completion of the coaching sessions (Cox 2013). It has to be said however, that occasionally learning could be used to avoid making a

change – coaching could be perceived as a last resort to attempt to stay the same – perhaps the initial problem is too difficult to face and any change is difficult (de Haan and Burger 2005). On a positive note, new learning can lead to more informed decisions around making a change (de Haan and Burger 2005). But what is learning? The term is one that has been explored extensively, generates considerable interest and is a contested concept (West-Burnham and Coates 2007). The word appears in a number of statements about coaching, for example, ‘Learning and change occurs through the relationship with the coach’ (Connor and Pokora 2007: 6), ‘Learning involves personal development and change’ (Lankau and Scandura 2002: 779) and ‘Learning is always the focus in mentoring/coaching’ (Hargreaves 2008/2010: 108).

I find this perspective useful in helping to understand learning:

‘By significant learning, I mean learning which is more than an accumulation of facts. It is learning which makes a difference – in the individual’s behaviour, in the course of action he chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality’ (Rogers 1961:280).

Learning is the ability to make sense of things, to understand life experiences, to explore different perspectives, to develop self-awareness (Mezirow 1991, Watkins 2001). This, for me, is pivotal to the coaching process. The coach assists the coachee’s learning to bring about new or revised ways of viewing their personal and/or professional life (Stelter 2007). Learning may lead to doing something differently – making a change. That could be a change in behaviour or a way of working, or a change in our perception of a situation or experience (Askew and Carnell 2011).

Rogers (1969) argues that learning involves the person as a whole. His ideas of person-centred learning, puts at the heart, the notion that learning is intrinsic, is ongoing and draws on the person's own ability and desires to grow and develop.

In my experience, I find coachees are surprised when I ask them towards the end of a session 'what have you learned?' Often it seems they are unaware of the focus on learning. Furthermore, many attend the first session assuming the coach will provide answers. The coach's role, however, is to empower the coachee with the ability to use what they have learned to find the answers themselves (Zeus and Skiffington 2006).

I agree coaching is concerned with supporting learning leading to change. The role of the coach is to assist in that learning process (Askew and Carnell 2011). Stelter (2007: 191) describes coaching as a 'developmental space' where with the expertise of the coach, coachees can engage in reflection to bring about renewed understanding of their experiences or relationships within a particular context.

Hargreaves (2010: 108) borrows a definition from Piaget (1970) to describe the learner as an 'active agent, who pieces together evidence from previous knowledge and experience to make ever increasing sense of the world'. The focus is on the learner's reality being unravelled, making sense of present experiences, leading to more informed decision-making in the future (Stelter 2007).

I understand learning as a holistic process - a combination of learning new skills, learning to view a situation differently, learning to think independently, learning about the self, developing self-awareness and taking more responsibility for our own learning (Illeris 2002). Learning is about reflecting on and making sense of

experiences, using new knowledge to make changes which may in turn bring positive benefits to the workplace and even the wider society (Abbott 1994).

Zeus and Skiffington (2002: 8) describe coaching as a humanist endeavour:

'the dignity and the value of the individual is uppermost and human needs assume priority over material things'

This study seeks to make explicit, that peer-coaching as a learning process, supports the individual in their personal development which may have a positive impact on their professional life (Persson 2007). Learning can be a force for good (Macmurray 1950) and coaching contributes to this.

1.4 Peer-coaching in the IOE

This research was conducted in the HE context that is the IOE. The overall intention is to gain new knowledge about the peer-coaching service for the purpose of developing practice and providing an effective, consistent service to colleagues. I now describe the set up and operation of the service.

As outlined in 1.2, the coach-learning group consists of representatives from academic and non-academic staff. Initial meetings focused on professional development - learning and practising skills, namely listening, questioning, visualisation and goal-setting. Developing these skills, ultimately allowed the group to support colleagues through a one-to-one confidential conversation.

The group continues to meet monthly, for two-hour sessions, with two new facilitators. Askew and Carnell (2011) argue there is immense value in coaches

experiencing coaching themselves, to gain a deeper understanding of the process. Together with learning new skills, time in the meetings is set aside for this important learning experience. Since its inception, the group has gradually created a safe environment where immense trust has built up in order to do this (Askew and Carnell 2011). Ground rules of confidentiality and ethics are strictly adhered to. Hargreaves (2007: 7) observes this 'nurturing' environment:

'It was a co-operative and willing group who were open to sharing thoughts and ideas and trust and whose good intention drove the learning. It felt a relaxed and comfortable environment, where people felt able to make mistakes or ask'

Group members often meet between meetings to practise, creating an ideal opportunity to hone skills, make mistakes and learn from them (Hargreaves 2007). Not only is the group experiencing several hours of practise per month, participants are able to bring any emerging issues from these sessions to the monthly meetings to extend their learning.

Gradually as the coach-learning group gained confidence, they began coaching peers outside the group (Askew and Carnell 2011). Two more cohorts of coaches have been trained, learning separately at first before joining with the original cohort. There is now one large group continuing learning together.

The service is promoted to colleagues in various ways, for example through a leaflet (Appendix 4), Induction days, Coaching Awareness Days and Learning at Work Days. Colleagues, who wish to use the service, approach Staff Development. Coaches are contacted to establish their availability. A coachee is paired with a coach; contact is made and a first session arranged. Sometimes the coachee's

preference for a coach is taken into account, however, the service is non-hierarchical. Colleagues generally are not matched according to professional roles (Carnell et al 2006). Everyone is treated with the same level of dignity and respect.

Coachees are entitled to six, one-hour coaching sessions, at mutually agreed intervals, with the proviso that should they require more; they can reapply to Staff Development. It is important that the coach and coachee review the process regularly to identify how helpful, or unhelpful, the process may be (Carnell et al 2006). Then perhaps another coach or alternative approach to solving an issue may be arranged, for example, mediation or counselling services may be more appropriate. When a coachee has completed a series of meetings, they are invited by the coach to complete an evaluation. This is sent to Staff Development for the purpose of recording the benefits of the service together with providing ideas for improvement.

Continuing professional development (CPD) for coaches is crucial to the effectiveness of the coaching service (Askew and Carnell 2011). As it is a complex activity, possibly exploring difficult and sensitive issues, it is important that coaches feel supported (Askew and Carnell 2011). A regular feature of the monthly meetings is supervision – a chance for coaches to discuss issues and develop new learning from personal experience. Bachkirova, Stevens and Willis (in Hawkins 2006: 204) concur with this:

'Coaching supervision is a formal process of professional support, which ensures continuing development of the coach and the effectiveness of his/her coaching practice through interactive reflection, interpretative evaluation and the sharing of expertise.'

Supervision gives members the opportunity to 'examine and challenge assumptions about their role, experimenting with coaching strategies and developing a deeper understanding of the coaching process' (Askew and Carnell 2011: 54).

The group developed a way of working which would mirror the process they would eventually adopt with coachees - that of reflecting on a situation, learning about the situation and the issues which led to it and exploring how it could be changed (Askew and Carnell 2011).

The promotion leaflet quotes satisfied coachees, suggesting this has taken place:

'Coaching enabled me to learn techniques for engaging with difficult situations and interactions in a way which defuses them and gives me a way forward which is productive and positive for everyone concerned.'
(Staff Development 2010 – Appendix 4).

Coaches offering the service must first agree this with a line manager (Askew and Carnell 2011). Coaches who are administrators, will be absent from their desk for considerable periods of time which can be problematic. Coaches amongst academic staff are more able to build in time as they tend to work in a more autonomous way (Carnell et al 2006). At the time of writing, discussions are taking place around building coaching into workload. This would be a positive step forward for the service.

Literature sometimes describes coaching as a learning conversation (Griffiths and Campbell 2009, Stelter 2007). Several approaches and frameworks underpin this conversation (Askew and Carnell 2011, Pask and Joy 2007). Without a framework - it stays just a friendly conversation not leading anywhere (Greene and Grant 2003). Before outlining the framework used by the coaching service at the IOE, it is useful to look briefly at other models.

Many coaches use the GROW model, developed in the 1980s from work with senior executives (Alexander 2006). GROW is an acronym for four stages of a conversation – Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap-up and is probably the best-known coaching model (Whitmore 1992). Used predominantly in the corporate environment, it focuses on performance, goals and achievement.

Tim Gallwey's work was also of interest to the coaching fraternity and the GROW model (1986). He published his 'Inner Game Theory' with the emphasis on the word 'inner'. Gallwey (1986) worked with sports people believing they were not performing to the best of their ability due to inner mental interference such as nerves or poor self-esteem. He believed these interferences prevented people from fulfilling their potential. A coach works with the person to identify the interferences, helping them learn to overcome them (Connor and Pokora 2007). In the 1990s, Whitmore (1992) developed these ideas and GROW has now become popular for use across other disciplines where coaching is practised for example, life coaching. Each coaching conversation starts with setting a goal even it is only what the coachee would like to achieve in the session. Reality involves discussing and becoming fully aware of a situation, how serious (or not) it is, and the feasibility of setting and achieving goals. Options explores what is available to the coachee, in terms of finding a solution. The coachee develops an awareness of personal resources which will help reach a solution. Finally, Wrap-up defines setting tasks to be achieved by the next session, who can help and so on.

Gerard Egan's (2006) structured conversation for helping people has three stages. The first stage is Exploration - What is going on? Here clients tell their stories and outline their problem. Stage two involves New Understanding - What solutions make sense for me? In this part of the conversation, clients are encouraged to explore

possibilities for solving their issue, finding a more manageable future. Barriers to moving forward are also explored here. The third stage focuses on Setting Goals - How do I get what I need or want? Clients are encouraged to explore various solutions, finding the most realistic way forward (Egan 2006). Like the GROW model, Egan's model is underpinned with a conversation which is both helpful and challenging; however, the key aspect is the middle stage which is about new learning and understanding (Askew and Carnell 2011).

In the IOE, the London Centre for Leadership and Learning (LCLL) has a particular model for mentoring and coaching involving six stages (Appendices 5 and 6). This has been adapted from Egan's model. The stages are - Setting the context, Identifying the key issues, Establishing ownership of the issue, Brainstorming alternative scenarios, Deciding preferred approaches and finally Committing to action. This model is also underpinned with the notion of learning through engaging in challenging and stimulating conversation and I suggest, moves away from any corporate feel towards a more person-centred approach.

Each model has a different nuance, however a common theme emerges. Conversations begin by outlining a problem or concern, moving on to learning about and exploring options for change with the final part focusing on actions for change and any learning that has taken place. The outcome of the conversations is the same – they allow for constructive change which will impact positively on the life of the client (Egan 2006).

The coaching-group at the IOE began to work with the LCLL model when learning about coaching. Following the initial training, the group decided that the six LCLL stages were somewhat unwieldy and did not focus enough on personal learning.

Whilst the peer-coaching takes place within the context of the workplace, the group felt it was important to work with a model which focused on personal development. The GROW model, which had uses for our learning, was rejected as the group felt it seemed dominated by improving performance more for the benefit of the organisation. The founders of the group, colleagues and experienced writers and practitioners in the field, used Egan's earlier work (1994) to develop a more manageable, learning-centred model which focuses explicitly on the coachees' learning. All new coaches at the IOE are provided with a copy of '*Coaching and Mentoring in Higher Education: A learning-centred approach*' (Carnell et al 2006) which contains details of the learning-centred model (Appendix 7). The model has particular relevance for the coaching in the IOE, as it is an organisation whose focus is learning. The stages are Reviewing – where the situation is explored, Learning – where the coachee tries to make sense of what is happening and perhaps identifies new insights, Applying - thinking about new learning and how to take that forward and finally, Review of the Learning Conversation – known as meta-learning where the coachee stands back and considers how the coaching session has helped (or perhaps hindered) their learning (Carnell et al 2006). The main role of the coach is to listen and facilitate the conversation, moving the coachee forward in their learning. If the coachee takes an active part in the conversation, then it is possible they will feel empowered with, and confident in, any decisions they make (Carnell et al 2006). It is this model that the group continues to use today.

1.5 Method of data collection

As peer-coaching is regular practice in the coach-learning group, I asked members to be participants in this research. With their agreement, data for this research was

collected by audio-recording, transcribing and analysing coaching conversations between group members. These conversations were set up explicitly for this research. This allowed for in-depth exploration and analysis. Members often meet up between sessions to practise (discussed in 1.4), therefore this was not a wholly unusual situation for them. They came to the sessions to discuss issues pertinent to them. The conversations were not contrived.

Given the ethical issues surrounding this research, I am indebted to the group for participating. The final thesis will be made available firstly to participants, to ensure they are comfortable with the levels of confidentiality. It will then be shared with the group. I hope that knowledge gained will be beneficial to enhancing our practice, as well as contributing to the wider knowledge-base surrounding coaching. I suggest coaching engages with different models of learning. What we don't know however, is how learning is understood and facilitated at the IOE. What approaches to learning do coaches adopt? Can values underpinning learning conversations be identified? These are important subsidiary questions I hope to answer from the perspectives of developing knowledge which will benefit the coachee, develop the practice of the coach and linking theory and practice together.

It is important to state that my findings are drawn from coaching in the IOE which uses a specific learning-centred model of coaching and should not necessarily be taken as typical. As much of this pedagogic text involves descriptive narrative, I have adopted a personal informal style. In my studies to date, I have used the terms 'coach' (C) and 'coachee' (EE) to describe and code the participants. I will retain this convention in this thesis. Details of the method and ethics surrounding this research are described in Chapter 3.

1.6 Coaching, mentoring and teaching

Despite the growth in the study and practice of coaching, debate remains surrounding how it relates to, and may differ from, mentoring and teaching (Connor and Pokora 2007, Griffiths and Campbell 2009, Ives 2008). As the literature on the distinctions is growing, it is interesting to note that the practices span a wide range of organisations, for example schools, HE institutions, health organisations and of course, the sporting context (see Winfield, Williams and Dixon 2013, Hudson 2013, Smith and Gilbert 2013).

There is a general consensus that 'individuals learn a great deal through their interactions with others' (Lankau and Scandura 2002: 779). In the workplace, these interactions, perhaps from across different disciplines, take place in forums described as mentoring and coaching (Lankau and Scandura 2002). By engaging with mentoring and/or coaching, it is believed that people's potential can be recognised and achieved (Barrington 2008).

Pask and Joy (2007) believe mentoring and coaching are inseparably linked and should be treated as a single process. I agree that mentoring and coaching are fundamentally about learning, but I believe there are clear distinctions in the way learning is facilitated and in the expertise of the coach/mentor/teacher. Essential differences seem to lie in the relationships (Turnbull 2009). I am not suggesting that one approach is more important – all have a part to play in supporting learning. It is crucial therefore to select the most appropriate learning strategy for the learner concerned (Hudson 2013).

The table overleaf is helpful in outlining some of these distinctions.

Coaching	Mentoring	Teaching
Generic helping skills that can be applied to different contexts	Expert knowledge/experience in a particular area	Often subject specific expertise
Depends upon creating a sharing trustful relationship	Relationship depends on different status between mentor and mentee	Relationship of different status between teacher and student
Avoids giving advice	Gives advice	Gives advice
Maintains a belief that people can find their own answers	Offers answers from their own experience	Offers answers from their own 'expert' position
High level of skills in precision questioning and reflecting	High level of skill in their area of expertise	High level of knowledge in their area of expertise
Coachee has ownership of change and development	Mentor provides a role model for potential change	Gives guidance on the acquisition of subject knowledge and skills
Provides a blend of support with high challenge	Provides a blend of support with advice	Provides a blend of support with advice
Takes the perspective of the whole person in order to focus on solutions	May take a focus on specific issues/tasks	May have a focus on specific subject knowledge and skills

Table 1: Adapted from Turnbull 2009: 39-41

The table, whilst useful, presents a rather simplistic approach. None of the definitions takes into account the context where the learning takes place, or any external factors which may influence learning (Hudson 2013). Nor is there any mention of age (adulthood stretches from 18 onwards), emotional state or life experience, all of which would be important to this study in particular. Generally speaking, there are similarities in terms of the desired outcome – that a process of learning and change will occur. I suggest, however, the way change is facilitated and new knowledge is generated, are quite different.

Learning in peer-coaching in the IOE is facilitated through a conversation that supports a person in making positive changes which may affect work and personal life (Carnell et al 2006). The coachee is encouraged to reflect on a particular situation, explore knowledge, skills and experiences relating to the situation and then discuss actions which will help them move forward (Stelter 2007). Coaching is seen as non-directive where the coach encourages the coachee to explore solutions without offering direct advice or direction (Greene and Grant 2003, Barrington 2008).

Mentoring also may relate to acquisition and development of particular knowledge and skills. However, it is more a sharing of expertise with a view to improving practice (Carnell et al 2006, Cureton, Green and Meakin 2010). Mentoring is sometimes perceived as instructional where knowledge and skills are passed on from an experienced person (Hudson 2013). This suggests that mentoring may be related to a career change or development of new skills, for example, in training to become a teacher (Carnell et al 2006). Workplace mentoring programmes in particular, are sometimes perceived to have a downward orientation and are therefore more for the purpose of the organisation (Ladyshewsky 2010).

Rogers (1969) describes teaching as an over-rated function. He argues it is, like mentoring, sometimes understood as instructional and a good teacher can be perceived as someone with a great deal of knowledge and expertise who then 'pours' this knowledge into learners (Grow 1991: 140). An instructional model of learning is often criticised for being less effective, as opportunities for developing autonomy and independent thought may be missed (Carnell et al 2006).

Good teaching is often spoken of in terms of 'best practice' or 'what works' (Lefstein 2005). Teaching in schools and institutions is sometimes perceived as an imparting

of knowledge by someone with an expertise in a subject area (Illeris 2002). The notion of pouring in knowledge may discourage students from thinking for themselves (Grow 1991). Pouring or transferring in information is what Friere (1968) referred to as a ‘banking’ approach. Coaching is not about banking knowledge (Jones 2009). Some coachees in the IOE understood coaching as a ‘vehicle for accumulating useful skills and information’ (Hargreaves 2010: 113). Perhaps they thought they were going to be taught about their situation and be provided with facts and solutions rather than engage in self-learning.

Some teachers do engage with aspects of coaching, for example, in the way they use the skill of questioning; however, like mentoring, the essential difference with coaching is the relationship (Turnbull 2009). In mentoring and teaching, there may be a difference in knowledge and status between the teacher, mentor and learner; however in the coaching context the coach and coachee may have similar professional status - it is the coach’s skills, which helps support learning.

This, from Schon (1987: 303) summarises this position:

‘the coach’s legitimacy does not depend on his scholarly attainments or proficiency as a lecturer but on the artistry of his coaching practice. The question is not how much you know but rather how effectively you can help others learn’.

1.7 The gap in the research

Grant and Cavanagh (2004) believe that the coaching ‘industry’ has reached a level of maturity and in order for it to become accepted as a respected profession, a solid research base should continue to grow with more emphasis on robust empirical research. A growth in research literature is encouraging, mainly due to the high demand for coaching in society generally, but this momentum needs to continue and

should be informed by questions that are both interesting to researchers and will contribute to our wider knowledge (Spence 2007).

At the present time, coaching is unregulated and this is why a solid research and theoretical backbone is required (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh and Parker 2010).

There are calls for rigorous research into what Kearney (2010: 1) describes as a ‘maturing industry’ – researchers should be mining the ‘rich depths of other related fields’ to help develop and refine knowledge of coaching.

Until as recently as 2009/10 coaching research was deemed sparse (Griffiths and Campbell 2009). Most of the papers published were opinion-based, anecdotal accounts or theoretical discussions (Harding 2009). From an extensive study into the state of coaching-related research, Grant et al (2010) provide evidence of growth in the research available. Between 1937 and 1999, 93 papers were published, whereas a total of 425 were published between 2000 and 2009. Despite this increase, research into coaching remains ‘in its infancy’ (Grant et al 2010: 13). In their study, Grant et al (2010) summarise 16 research projects from a variety of coaching contexts, for example, in areas of medicine and health work. None of the studies appeared to analyse actual coaching sessions in Higher Education or mention learning.

In the last 15 years much of the research, reporting on the effectiveness and impact of coaching in organisations has grown considerably; however the focus has overwhelmingly been on the benefits to the organisation rather than the person, particularly in the corporate environment (Day, de Haan, Sills, Bertie and Blass 2008).

Stober and Parry (2005) suggest that the lack of empirical and theoretical research has contributed to a lower perception of the practice, leading to a lack of research funding in this area. More recent studies appear to be practice-based articles or 'survey-based research about the characteristics of coaches and coachees or about the delivery of coaching services' (Grant et al 2010:13).

In the UK, over the last 30 years, the HE sector has seen significant restructuring which has had an effect on colleagues' work (Greenaway and Haynes 2003). This restructuring has seen a rise in peer-coaching schemes being implemented to help colleagues adapt to their fast changing environment (Cureton et al 2010, Cox 2012). This has also meant a rise in the literature base surrounding peer-coaching - most useful for this research. The focus on peer-coaching will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2, however I give some examples.

In their work, Showers and Joyce (1996) explore the history and development of peer-coaching teams as a powerful contribution to staff development. De Haan and Burger (2005) make a significant contribution to the development of peer-coaching with their book 'Coaching with Colleagues: An action guide for one-to-one learning'. Ladyshewsky (2010) acknowledges the development of peer-coaching as a strategy to help teachers, however, recognises the significance of using coaching techniques in other contexts for example, in the professional development of health professionals.

A problem in conducting this research was the ethical issue of professional eavesdropping on confidential peer-coaching conversations. I have, therefore, found the work of Cox (2012) particularly helpful. Her work explores the unique difficulties of maintaining trust and confidentiality when working with a peer-coaching system in an

organisation. When the coaching scheme was first introduced at the IOE, this was a concept that was discussed regularly in our meetings. When helping a colleague learn within an organisation, it may take time to build that trust and confidence (Cox 2012).

Coaching is sometimes described as a forum for learning, a platform/vehicle for learning or a model of effective learning (Griffiths and Campbell 2009). Zeus and Skiffington (2002: 30) suggest that 'learning is at the heart of coaching' but whilst it appears implicit, and despite a growth in prescriptive literature, gaps remain in the research base that examines the learning process in coaching (Griffiths and Campbell 2009). In 2011, Askew and Carnell made a significant contribution to the field by bringing learning theory and practice together in their book *Transformative Coaching: A learning theory for practice*. They used some analysis of borrowed coaching conversations to explore the learning process and related it to learning theory. This thesis builds on their work.

Although the literature-base is growing, there remains a need to gain more understanding of coaching to support adults' learning (Cox 2006, Passmore and Gibbes 2007). Kauffman and Bachkirova (2009) identify a number of categories which they believe require researching. They suggest that researchers focus more on the coach, coachee and the process. More specifically, what do coaches actually do, what choices do they make when facilitating sessions and how does the process support the coachee? Griffiths and Campbell (2009) conducted research into the theories of learning in coaching; however, their data set consists of secondary data, that is, documentation and literature. In my interrogation of the literature, other than Askew and Carnell (2011), it has been difficult to find studies where the evidence has come directly from coaching itself. This thesis seeks to address this gap in the

research. Data for this research consists of primary data – audio-recordings of coaching conversations which have been transcribed and analysed.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGING WITH RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter engages with literature across two themes – peer-coaching and theories of adult learning.

Firstly, a brief outline of the growth of coaching in contemporary society is presented.

As coaching is understood as a particular means of supporting adults' learning (Askew and Carnell 2011) this section considers adult learning as appropriate to this research. I provide an overview of the development and growth of peer-coaching together with its benefits and tensions. As the context of the research is the Institute of Education, I draw on literature to support the implementation of a peer-coaching service in response to changes in the HE landscape. Using ideas from philosophy, I conclude this section with some thoughts about the importance of developing the person together with a possible relationship between coaching in the IOE and democratic values.

Secondly, despite the growth in coaching literature, a gap still remains positioning coaching within a particular adult learning theory (Cox 2006). This study seeks to address this. There are suggestions peer-coaching could be linked to various theoretical approaches (Ladyshewsky 2010). With that in mind, the limitations of this thesis necessitates being highly selective when considering a particular theoretical framework relevant to understanding learning in peer-coaching in the IOE. Having considered various theories, and in my professional opinion as a practising coach, this section discusses Transformative Learning Theory, which reflects a particular

view of adult learning, as an especially suitable conceptual framework to help understand the learning process and possible underpinning values in coaching (Askew and Carnell 2011, Cox 2006, Dirkx 1998).

2.2a Growth of Coaching

As societies have changed over the centuries, (advances in technology drive much of that change), then so has the need for a lifelong approach to learning (Merriam 2007). Changes in social practices, shifts in beliefs and values, mean people feel pressured to 'keep up' and conform (Mezirow 1991). The current array of literature, conferences and training programmes suggests that the demand for coaching worldwide is escalating (Rostrom 2009).

Contemporary society¹ is characterised by an accelerated rate of change, particularly in the global working environment (Halpin 2003). To remain competitive, organisations are continually adapting their processes (Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner 2007). Coaching, to support learning and change in the workplace, has grown significantly in the last decade (Rodger 2010). One argument for its growing popularity is this notion of a fast-changing world and the need to 'keep up' coupled with a desire for life-long learning (Jamison 2006, Merriam 2007).

The workplace has gained attention in recent years as a 'learning space' (Illeris 2002: 191). Organisations are recognising increasingly the value of implementing a variety of learning opportunities (Illeris 2002). Developing the person rather than continuing with depersonalised costly training programmes is now seen as a more realistic way

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, I understand contemporary society to mean Western, developed countries.

of coping with change in the twenty-first century (Turnbull 2009). Coaching, therefore, has been implemented across many organisations including the IOE. It is a buzzword and is 'in vogue' (Pask and Joy 2007:1). Hopefully it is not viewed as an 'organisational fashion accessory' (Megginson and Clutterbuck 2006: 232).

2.2b Adult Learning

In this research, the workplace – a context uniquely belonging to adults - is the IOE. The mission statement explicitly places a focus on the importance of education and learning for the development of individuals and society (www.ioe.ac.uk). Adult learning, whilst complex, seems an appropriate paradigm within which to frame the learning relevant to coaching in the IOE (Malinen 2000).

Merriam (1993, 2001 and 2007) articulates adult learning as an intensely personal process, shaped by adult experiences and the cultures inhabited within society. What distinguishes it from childhood learning is that adults draw on longer periods of personal, social and cultural history with which they are familiar (Merriam 2001). They possess a more extensive repertoire of knowledge and experiences to bring to any learning situation (Hanson 1996).

Also, relevant to this study, is that adults manage many other aspects of their lives, which mostly young people do not - mainly a combination of work, home and family commitments. This suggests adults may be more capable of coping with the complexities of organising and planning their own learning (Merriam 2002).

Drawing on life experiences and personal history to make sense of the present, are important features of coaching and can be positive. However, some experiences are

negative and adults may subconsciously develop barriers to learning, particularly if it involves making change (Hanson 1996).

An influential contributor to the epistemology of adult learning is Malcolm Knowles. His theory has its roots in humanistic philosophy presenting the learner as autonomous, free and growth orientated (Knowles 1984). Knowles draws our attention to some assumptions about adults which may resonate with coaching (Knowles, Holton and Swanson 2011). The first of these is 'The need to know' (2011: 63). Knowles believes that adults feel it is important to understand the rationale for learning something before they make the commitment to learn. He observes that adults invest substantial time and energy in exploring the benefits (together with the possible negative consequences) of learning. It is, therefore, the role of the facilitator to show the value of learning in enhancing quality of life.

The second assumption is 'Learners' self-concept' (2011: 63) In other words, adults believe they are responsible for their own decisions and therefore, their own lives. Adults like to be treated as equals and determine how they learn (Cox et al 2010). They tend to resist having situations thrust upon them. A tension may emerge, however, if the adult, going back into an educational setting, reverts to how they behaved in a school context where learning was directed by the teacher. The role of the facilitator in adult learning is to encourage independent learning. This may help negate teacher dependency (Knowles et al 2011).

The 'role of the learners' experience' is the next assumption. This is the aforementioned acknowledgement that adults bring to the learning environment a lengthy accumulation of life experiences and knowledge. Tensions may arise, however, if some previous experiences have been negative. Adults may develop

barriers, habits and assumptions which prevent new ways of thinking. An effective facilitator will recognise this and tap into these experiences in order to develop learning (Knowles et al 2011).

Many adults seem keen to learn in order to cope more effectively with some life and work situations, recognising learning as a positive step in moving their lives forward (Knowles et al 2011). They may engage in learning opportunities through initiatives in the workplace, for example coaching. Much of that learning is driven by adults being motivated for their own development together with such external factors as the search for a better job and quality of life (Merriam 1993, Knowles et al 2011).

Knowles (1984) based his ideas on developing individual needs as a movement towards a democratic society – a way of life characterised by the development of the person, recognising individual worth, allowing people to make their own decisions and choices in order to live a good, fulfilling life. It is useful to see how Knowles' ideas of adult learning help develop my understanding of the participants in this research.

2.2c Peer-coaching in HE and the IOE

In recent years, the HE sector has undergone significant change and restructuring (Greenaway and Haynes 2003). In particular, a new political landscape in the UK has meant a significant cultural change in the way organisations are managed (Pring 2012). The language of 'targets', 'performance indicators', 'league tables' and 'efficiency' has crept in as a means of measuring success (Pring 2012). Organisations are competing to attract customers and the IOE is very much part of this culture (Cunningham 2012). People have simply become 'cogs in a huge

'impersonal machine' and their worth and value as individuals has diminished (Cunningham 2012: 703). The pressure of high levels of accountability and the constant drive to perform may leave people feeling a loss of control and status (Ball 2008).

Tensions in the sector have emerged. There are suggestions that a wider access to university has led to a 'dumbing down' of education and learning (Cureton et al 2010: 79). A growing student body has meant the lecturer/student ratio being reduced whilst administrative workloads have increased significantly (Cureton et al 2010). The introduction of fees means more demanding expectations from students (Kinman 2008, UCU 2009). The fast pace of change, discussed in 2.2a, suggests that skills valued in a constantly changing economy, should be delivered on demand and that the HE sector should be responding to such demands by becoming more efficient (Leitch 2006). In my own experience, the IOE has acknowledged the opportunities to be gained from the ever increasing changes in technology, by creating new and diverse ways of meeting students' demands, for example, by engaging more in distance learning to attract more overseas students. Development of such courses, contributes to a greater increase in colleagues' workloads. As a result, HE employers are faced with increased stress levels amongst their staff (Cureton et al 2010). Cuts to funding and mergers leading to job insecurity, tensions in relationships, student demands and possible litigation are additional factors contributing to aforementioned stress levels (Boynton 2005, Richards and Haplin 2006). It is at times like these that HE institutions have had to look for strategies to deal with these challenges (Bachkirova 2005). Drawing on knowledge and skills from the corporate environment, staff mentoring and peer-coaching schemes have been introduced in a number of Universities (Cureton et al 2010). Internal peer-coaching for colleagues, new and/or

experienced, can be a powerful learning experience and is being used increasingly in a variety of organisations as support for learning and professional development (Cox 2012, Ladyshevsky 2010).

This study focuses on peer-coaching as an approach to supporting adults' learning in the workplace that is the IOE. The intention being to respond to the individual needs of colleagues, both academic and support staff, by providing an informal forum to discuss, not just a range of emerging issues, but also, more positively, to consider longer term professional development needs, particularly in this period of significant change (Cureton et al 2010).

Peer-coaching involves a coach and coachee, usually of equal status in the organisation, engaging in a collaborative, supportive conversation which focuses on developing strategies for future professional development (Ladyshevsky 2009).

Reasons for seeking peer-coaching are frequently driven by the coachee recognising a need for new learning and/or to make some changes. The coach and coachee work collaboratively to achieve specific goals identified by the coachee (Ladyshevsky 2009). Ground rules are set at the start of the process formalising expectations of the participants. The role of the coach is to create an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality, where the coachee can feel free to discuss issues experienced in their workplace (Carnell et al 2006). Regular meetings take place where the coach uses a variety of techniques namely, listening, questioning and probing to help the coachee explore past and present experiences, possible actions and solutions to help them reach the specific goal (Ladyshevsky 2010). The support of regular meetings helps maintain any success gained from the sessions. Engaging with the process of coaching is usually done on a voluntary basis and relates to the specific learning needs of the coachee (Ladyshevsky 2009).

With reference to peer-coaching at the IOE, there are several factors which must be mentioned. Firstly, much of the literature around peer-coaching suggests the dominant focus is on setting goals, developing new skills and competencies (for example, Showers and Joyce 1996 and Ladyshevsky 2009). The coaching service at the IOE however, whilst being concerned with skills and competencies, takes more of a person-centred approach where there is a strong focus on learning about the self, with the understanding that developing self-awareness may in turn lead to more effective working practices and greater professional development (Carnell et al 2006). Showers and Joyce (1996) have alluded to the notion of coaching, whilst being a component of staff development, as being something which drives organisational change. This may well be true. Initially, a coachee may bring an issue relating specifically to the organisation, however a skilful coach will work with a coachee to perhaps uncover a more personal issue resulting from, or causal to, the organisational issue (de Haan and Burger 2005). The main focus at the IOE is personal learning. It is thought that this deeper learning will be longer lasting (Carnell et al 2006). It may lead to organisational change, but it is not the specific purpose of the coaching service.

Ladyshevsky (2010) points out that peer-coaching is often reciprocal – in other words participants in pairs alternate between the roles of coach and coachee, each taking the opportunity to receive coaching from an experienced colleague and coach. This is how the coach-learning group in the IOE operates in the supervision sessions as discussed in Chapter 1. However, the actual service operates differently. Peer-coaching within an HE institution has been described as ‘a collegial process whereby two faculty members voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching’ (Huston and Weaver 2008) - the coaching service at the IOE is broader

than this. Coaches don't just coach one another on a reciprocal basis – nor is it just about teaching. Coaches work with colleagues from across the IOE who are not part of the coach-learning group – hence its uniqueness. The 'peer' applies to the fact that the coaching service is about coaching peers, but from across the institution and at all levels (Carnell et al 2006). It is not unusual for members of the coach-learning group to have supported a number of colleagues, across a wide range of academic and professional positions, since the coaching service began.

Peer-coaching is usually conducted by colleagues on an equal footing (Forde 2011, Ladyshewsky 2010). This mirrors the practice in the IOE. The peer-coaching sessions are conducted in a less formal arena than that of any other staff development meetings, for example with line managers around the notion of appraisal (Carnell et al 2006). This is a strength of the service, but it means the central components of trust and confidentiality must be even more closely adhered to (Askew and Carnell 2011). As a practising coach within my own organisation, I have become more and more aware of the tensions and difficulties of ensuring trust and confidentiality. These concepts are vital to the success of any coaching relationship however even more so when the relationship is internal to an organisation (Cox 2012). If there is confidence in the trust elements of the coaching relationship, then there is more opportunity for a coachee to feel completely comfortable in dealing with any issues or when exploring the pros and cons of taking any risks (Cox 2012). I argue that an external coach brought into an organisation, may have a neutral standing, possibly being unaware of the internal politics of the organisation. Confidentiality, therefore, might seem a simpler prospect. When coaching is internal to the organisation, then the relationship can become more complex and trust needs to be worked at and earned by both parties (Cox 2012). A number of studies highlight

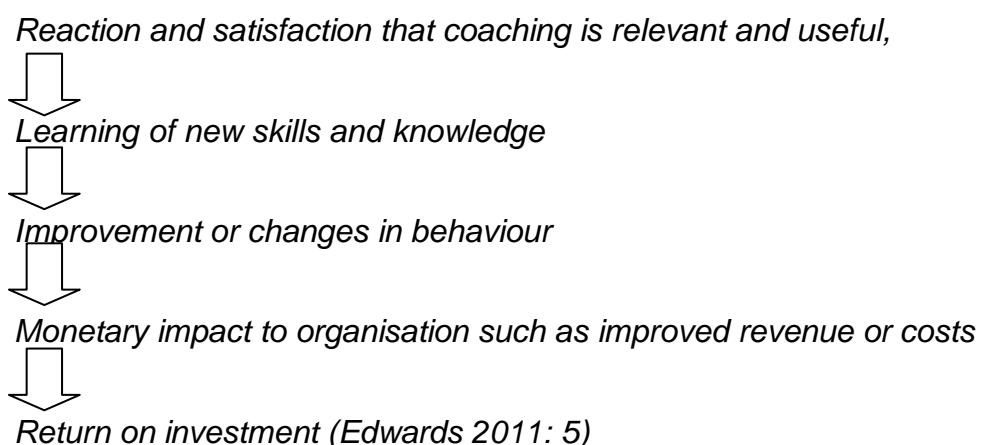
the lack of appropriate attention being paid to this vital area (Cox 2012). In particular Cox is critical of Ladyshevsky (2009) who mentions the idea of trust but appears to lack any real examination of the process. Dibben, Eley-Morris and Lean (2000) put forward the idea that trust is formed over a period of time between individuals, however, they suggest that this links to the values and attitudes of the individuals involved. This appears slightly concerning as it suggests implicitly that trust may not be adhered to. Trust and confidentiality are vital for the success of any coaching relationship and the future of the practice within an organisation (Cox 2012).

2.2d Peer-coaching – some tensions

Some organisations, who introduce a coaching service, see tensions with allowing employees a platform to air concerns. Developing the autonomous individual may distract employees from organisational goals in order to pursue their own personal goals which may be perceived as a loss of control (Fillery-Travis and Lane 2006). It may be possible that coaching can integrate individual needs with the shared organisational vision (Forde 2011, Megginson and Clutterbuck 2006). The following quotes from the leaflet publicising coaching at the IOE suggest implicitly that this is happening: ‘It has made me more self aware: has enabled me to shift perspective’ suggests self learning and ‘it enabled me to learn techniques for engaging with difficult situations and interactions in a way which defuses them and gives me a way forward which is productive and positive for everyone concerned.’ This suggests that some personal learning and development has taken place which is having an all round positive impact.

Successful organisations depend on employees to develop and upgrade their knowledge and skills to 'effectively drive growth and deliver appropriate results' (Fillery-Travis and Lane 2006: 23). Currently, the IOE is dealing with funding cuts and a possible merger, whilst still trying to remain competitive and attractive to prospective students. Many colleagues have taken voluntary severance and some others describe a feeling of vulnerability. At this difficult time, the peer-coaching service provides an arena for employees to discuss their concerns. Engaging in a process of learning about themselves and their skills is a way of developing their potential to be more attractive to current or potential employers (Hargreaves 2008).

There is a cynical view, that coaching has become popular as a way of ensuring employees become more productive and effective (Askew and Carnell 2011). In my search of the coaching literature, I found it frustrating how literature from the corporate environment, seemed to suggest that a return on investment in the form of greater performance and growth for the organisation, might be the 'raison d'être' for implementing a coaching service. This extract, presenting a flow linking coaching to results seems explicit:



Perhaps in this environment, implementing a coaching service is a subversive attempt to raise the level of competitiveness within a company.

My concern lies with the notion that in some contexts, the purpose of implementing a coaching service is to enhance organisational efficiency. If a coaching service simply encourages staff to achieve qualifications or competences for the organisation's benefit, then this is 'functional' coaching and may not be particularly motivating (Brockbank 2008). Coaching should motivate, maximize individual potential and should not just focus on correcting problems to benefit the workplace (Park, Yang and McLean 2008). Given that the coaches at the IOE give their time voluntarily, a cynical view may be that coaching at the IOE is an inexpensive method of providing personal development.

2.2e Democratic values and possible links to coaching

I find engaging with philosophy useful in presenting a broader intellectual overview of the world in which we live (Fielding 2007). These ideas have developed my thinking around what we value in a democracy and help me identify where coaching may sit in this more focused picture (Fielding 2007). Some of these ideas, supporting my argument that coaching should be underpinned with democratic values and that personal development should be central to the process, are presented. I find the perspective in Macmurray's quote below useful in establishing links between democratic values and coaching in the IOE.

'..the quality of the personal life. The passion for freedom...the sense of human dignity and personal responsibility, the love and the fellowship of equals' (Macmurray 1943: 38)

In my experience, encouraging freedom, developing independent ideas and human dignity, are values synonymous with those important in coaching.

Democracy 'is a multidimensional concept' encompassing politics, workplace, family and community (Fielding and Moss 2011: 41). It is a concept the Western world values highly, sometimes viewing it as a superior way of living rather than blindly accepting rules (Suissa 2012). We applaud the opportunities individuals have to make decisions about the way they lead their lives without interference from the state (White 2004). The limitations of this thesis prevent discussing democracy in great depth, therefore I focus on the concepts of autonomy, equality and freedom which contribute to my argument that coaching engages with democratic values.

In a democracy, we cherish autonomy – the ability to think independently taking more control over our lives (Kelly 1989, White 2004). Autonomy is concerned with personal freedom, the right to determine the course of our own lives and is essential to human flourishing and motivation (Deci and Ryan 2000). Earlier I outlined models which underpin coaching conversations. A common feature was that they worked towards particular goals. Developing and satisfying the need for autonomy seems to be a goal which people aspire to and are motivated by (Deci and Ryan 2000). Some research has shown that if people become more autonomous in their way of thinking and learning, then they are more likely to perform and behave in positive and effective ways (Deci and Ryan 2000). In my experience, developing independent thought and taking more control are what coachees strive for and are notions congruent with coaching at the IOE (Askew and Carnell 2011). It is important to acknowledge a tension - that it may be difficult for people to be completely autonomous (Pring 2012). We live and work in communities – families, religions, education, occupations, cultures and so on. People develop and grow in these communities and this is what makes us who we are (Pring 2012).

It is expected that a democratic society will provide the means by which all humans can reach their full potential regardless of their differences (Wegmarshaus 2007).

This leads me to explore another value in a democracy – being treated as equals.

For the purpose of discussing this value and its relationship to coaching, I want to think about equality in terms of equality of opportunity and treatment of people (Peters 1966, Wegmarshaus 2007). In a democracy, people are entitled to equality in the opportunities they experience and in the way they are treated (Wegmarshaus 2007). Peer-coaching achieves its aims through the importance of a coach/coachee relationship based on equality (Ladyshewsky 2009). Coaching in the IOE has been set up in a democratic way (Askew and Carnell 2011). Coaches are drawn from across the Institute and work with colleagues at all levels (Carnell et al 2006, Hargreaves 2010). Everyone has access to this opportunity regardless of their professional position (Carnell et al 2006). Coaches and coachees engage in conversation which encourages independent thinking, drawing on and developing personal skills and attributes as a means of negotiating solutions to issues or concerns (Hargreaves 2010). This conversation can be empowering (Askew and Carnell 2011). When people complain about inequality, often it is not the opportunities they are referring to, but others' attitudes (Peters 1981). The peer-coaching model at the IOE is open to all staff, focuses on the person, is non-judgemental and is based on trust and respect (Carnell et al 2006). The values which underpin the model seem congruent with the values which underpin democracy. Learning to be an autonomous individual takes place in a setting of equal footing rather than a hierarchical setting where the coach may be viewed as being in some way superior (Hargreaves 2010, Askew and Carnell 2011).

Historically, the most important achievement in Western society is our sense of freedom – to think, act and be ourselves (Macmurray 1950). Freedom can become inhibited by having to engage with the external world and live within constraints of institutions and organisations (Macmurray 1950). We cannot be completely separate from the world and the environment we inhabit – we have to learn to live and work within it (Jarvis 1987). These tensions of freedom and being constrained by the organisation are sometimes issues brought to coaching (Megginson and Clutterbuck 2006). Whilst the notion of freedom to think and make one's own decisions is appealing, the reality can be somewhat threatening, in that being free means living with the outcomes and consequences of decisions (Macmurray 1950). This is the 'paradox of freedom' and is sometimes articulated in coaching (Macmurray 1950: 19). Freedom is a choice – something that we can have if we are courageous enough to choose it (Macmurray 1950). When a coachee enters a coaching session, they may have decided to become freer and take more control of their lives.

Besides working with a coachee to develop new skills, peer-coaching at the IOE includes the important focus of developing the whole person (Carnell et al 2006). This approach to coaching aims to help the individual reach their full potential as a person (Ladyshewsky 2009). I end this section by drawing on some ideas from the Scottish Philosopher, John Macmurray, to explore what it means to be a person. I make links between coaching and learning and how they may play a part in personal development and reaching full potential.

2.2f What it is to be a person

An appropriate aim of learning is to develop potential, enabling one to fully realise oneself (Peters 1966). This potential includes a combination of intellect, character, skills and talents (Peters 1966). Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, learning is sometimes viewed as being solely for the benefit of organisations or society, where the worth of the person is seen either in their capacity to provide and consume goods and services or in how they will fill the gaps and needs in the economy (Bruner 1996, Fielding and Moss 2011).

Pring's viewpoint seems more brutal. He suggests that people who learn are seen as 'objects' to be changed for a specific purpose rather than developing in ways that are of significance and value to them (2012: 749).

Being an 'object' would be to deny the individual their uniqueness and right to flourish in society (Walsh 1993). If skills and talents are buried and never realised, then perhaps a full and flourishing life is being denied (Kramer 1964). The notion of people being seen as 'objects' rather than 'persons' is central to Macmurray's work (Pring 2012: 749). If people are viewed as 'objects' then they may be perceived to be the 'means to an end' – helping to achieve targets, grades or performance indicators discussed earlier.

Macmurray (1961) argues for the importance of the development of the individual. He discusses the fact that human beings are not isolated and need to work with and relate to others – a notion congruent with coaching:

'we need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence..here is the basic fact of our human condition'
(Macmurray 1961 in Fielding 2007: 386)

The particular relationship that Macmurray (1961) is referring to is that of strong friendships, where the relationship should be one of freedom to be ourselves and treat one another equally. We become human as a result of our personal relationships (Macmurray 1961). Coaching at the IOE, as promoted by human resources and fostered through the skills of the coach, is a trusting, caring and supportive relationship, where people are encouraged to think and speak openly and honestly and be themselves (Hargreaves 2008.) This to me has echoes of Macmurray's idea of the importance of the person as an autonomous individual.

Thinking about people as 'objects', Macmurray (1950) draws the distinction between what he refers to as 'the functional' and 'the personal' of being human. He describes 'the functional' as being these activities and relationships we engage in to get something done. Macmurray places this functional relationship within a societal context when he says:

'members are not associated as persons, but only in virtue of the specific functions they perform in relation to the purpose which constitutes the group; and the society is an organic unity, not a personal one' (1950: 54/55).

These distinctions perhaps help clarify any tensions mentioned previously, that coaching may be perceived to be 'functional' - for the benefit of the organisation and getting things done, rather than for 'personal' development in the coachee's personal or professional life. I draw on some of these ideas in my concluding discussion.

Forty years on from Macmurray, Bruner (1996) still questions that tension around 'should education reproduce the culture or should it enrich and cultivate human potential?' (1996: 80). Is the function of learning to allow the individual person to reach their full potential or is it to produce only the knowledge and skills that are

useful to further ‘economic, political and cultural’ ends (1996: 67). I find Macmurray’s and Fielding’s ideas helpful in clarifying my suggestion that coaching should focus on the development of the person and not be subservient to the needs of the organisation.

Tensions between the functional and personal remain evident at the IOE as Hargreaves (2010: 110) reminds us:

‘The IOE depends on functional relationships with market-driven intentions and the relationship hierarchy that accompanies these. Because of this, personal relationships, and the equality this implies, is not strategically prioritized across the IOE’

This may help us understand why coachees sometimes experience that conflict of *Gesellschaft*² - a notion of modern society where community values are superseded by the needs of contractual obligations – with *Gemeinschaft*³ – where the focus is on personal community and the individual (Fielding in Bridges and Husbands 1996).

In the IOE, a commitment has been made to championing the importance of learning and personal development in the workplace. A general email sent to staff on 10 November 2011 confirms this:

‘There is a structured developmental programme of support in place for high quality teaching, research and publication, management development, and personal, administrative and technical skills. It is our aim to ensure that in this learning organisation we are empowering our staff to learn’

It is encouraging that the stated aim of the programme is one of ‘empowering our staff to learn’. Whilst coaching at the IOE was initiated in 2005, the marketing

² Literal meaning ‘society’ ‘association’

³ Literal meaning ‘community’ ‘mutual participation’ Source: Cassell’s New German Dictionary.

literature (Appendix 4) does not mention that coaching is about learning. In their most recent publication, Askew and Carnell (1998) make learning, which is at the heart of coaching, more explicit. Colleagues at the IOE, who use the coaching service, sometimes seem unaware of the focus on learning (Askew and Carnell 2011). It is for this reason that I am interested in exploring how learning is facilitated and understood in the peer-coaching service in this HE institution. Knowles (1984: 17) argues that any learning environment must have a climate of 'mutual respect, collaboration, trust, support, openness, pleasure and humane treatment' and that it is the responsibility of the facilitator 'to provide a caring, accepting, respecting, helping social atmosphere'. These ideas, which might link with some democratic values, seem synonymous with coaching at the IOE.

In this chapter, I have developed an argument in four stages: The growth in coaching is due to globalisation and a fast-paced society, peer-coaching has been introduced in organisations as a response to changes and the need for personal and professional development. We live in a democracy underpinned by values of autonomy, equality and freedom. Coaching supports learning and should therefore, I would argue, be underpinned with these values.

2.3 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

2.3 Introduction

Discussion surrounding learning consumes scholars and particular to this study, all those involved in coaching (Askew and Carnell 2011, Merriam 2001). As yet, we have no definitive single theory of human learning - rather a myriad of theories, models and explanations which when combined present a knowledge-base of learning (Merriam 2001). No one theory can claim to be the most 'correct' or the one which advances our understanding of learning more than others (Illeris 2007). Askew and Carnell refer to the coaching context as 'Transformative Coaching' (2011: 6). Whilst they draw on various learning theories to support their arguments, their work highlights Transformative Learning Theory devised by Jack Mezirow (1978). Having interrogated his work, I believe that aspects of this theory provide an appropriate conceptual framework to help understand how peer-coaching at the IOE might contribute to Transformative Learning.

2.3a Transformative Learning Theory

'Transformative Learning is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance.' (Mezirow 1991: xiii)

The above quote captures Mezirow's philosophy and his work is considered to be a major contribution to the 'theoretical landscape' of adult learning (Hart 1990: 125).

Mezirow (1978) developed his theory from a qualitative study of women returning to college and the workforce. The study focused on factors that helped or hindered their return. Findings identified several phases the women experienced which Mezirow (1978) described as personal transformation. It was this seminal work, together with theories and ideas borrowed from a variety of sources, from which Mezirow devised a theory of transformation, applying it to adult learning in personal and professional contexts (Cranton 2002, Poutiatine 2009).

Transformative learning engages with change – something common to other forms of learning in terms of gaining knowledge, developing skills and changing attitude or beliefs, including crucially, towards the self (Mezirow 1990). Transformative learning theory is based on the idea that our understanding of the world emerges from our own experiences and how we interpret these experiences (Cranton and Taylor 2012).

Adults acquire a repertoire of experiences - knowledge and assumptions - values, beliefs, feelings, morals, culture, education, religion - over a lifetime. Mezirow (1997) refers to these as Frames of Reference. Stemming from personal biographies, Mezirow (1978) claims that Frames of Reference are the structures through which adults understand their world. Learning in childhood comes from parents, schooling and friends allowing us to fit into society (Mezirow 1991). We take this learning and resulting experiences as normal. We internalise these experiences and this becomes how we see the world and we expect it to stay that way. Even though we grow older and develop independent thoughts, earlier learning within a particular culture is the one we know and understand (Mezirow 1991). Transformative learning engages in the process of examining, questioning and revising assumptions which, as the result of a life event or dilemma, may have become distorted (Mezirow 2000). When we understand that some of our embedded assumptions are restricting our progress, we

may be able to engage with a process of transformative learning (Cranton and Taylor 2012). With help, focused critical reflection allows us to transform our perspectives on assumptions (Mezirow 2000). Mezirow perceives this as rational thinking. Any resulting change can have deep reaching consequences - possibly impacting significantly on future experiences (Mezirow 2000). Cultures and societies vary in the degree of reflection and self discovery they encourage (Mezirow 2012). Critics of Mezirow's theory suggest its focus is too Westernised, therefore, does not take into account cultures where learning may be inhibited and oppressed (Newman 2012).

Mezirow (1991) believed in a need for a learning theory which allowed adults to understand more thoroughly the meaning of their personal experiences.

Transformative Learning Theory focuses on how people understand and interpret their experiences and how these interpretations guide their actions, behaviours, well being and their futures (Mezirow 1991). It is a process that helps us take ownership and gain greater control over our lives as 'socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers' (Mezirow 2000: 8) - something I suggest, which may be difficult in some cultures. Transformative Learning may help individuals develop aforementioned levels of autonomy, decision making and freedom allowing them to engage more fully in a contemporary, democratic society (Cranton 2002).

2.3b Development of the Theory

Notable and most influential to the development of Mezirow's theory were Jurgen Habermas (1978) and Paulo Friere (1968). Literature presents varying descriptions of their ideas and Mezirow's subsequent adaptations; however, I have simplified the

adaptations, concentrating on those aspects of the theory particularly helpful to this research.

Mezirow worked extensively interpreting the theories of Habermas, borrowing some major concepts and adapting them for the purpose of his own theory development (Hart 1990). From his work on classroom learning and adult education, Habermas (1984) developed the idea of two major domains of learning – both with different purposes. The first being *Instrumental Learning* which engages with task-orientated solving of problems, learning how to work in an environment and with other people (Mezirow 1998). Outcomes appear to focus on developing performance. Habermas' second domain is *Communicative Learning*. Not all learning engages in how to do something (Mezirow 1990). *Communicative Learning* has a focus on understanding how others communicate with us – what do they mean? This form of learning usually involves feelings, emotions and values where learning requires developing an understanding of meanings underpinning the communication – what do people really mean, what is the truth and integrity of that being communicated (Mezirow 2012). Habermas (1984) suggests we should become critically reflective of the assumptions of the person who is communicating – not an easy task. As Habermas' work is underpinned with a basic concern for a way of life which is dominance free, it is easy to see why Mezirow found Habermas' theories useful (Habermas 1978, Hart 1990).

Mezirow focused on developing the *Learning Domains* (Mezirow 2000). *Domain one*, *Instrumental Learning*, which refers to controlling the surrounding environment or people with the purpose of improving performance. This learning has an objective focus (Mezirow 2000). Rules are established by another, for example, workplace colleagues (Cranton 2002). Instrumental Learning tends to be competence and task-related and could be associated with goal-centred coaching (Askew and Carnell

2011). Whilst focusing on goals for a specific outcome can be useful, learning may be short-term, work focused and may bypass important self learning. Mezirow (1997) points out that learning in Domain one in the adult context is common learning.

In *Domain two, Communicative Learning* is associated with personal meaning (Mezirow 1981). It is concerned with understanding and making sense of situations and the social norms we inhabit. It enables new insights and understanding about the self, through interaction and communication with another (Mezirow 1997). This is closely related to coaching in the IOE where learning has a more personal focus.

Hart (1990) points out that most learning involves engaging with the two domains. Working with someone on challenging their assumptions connected to their environment, must also include communicative learning (Hart 1990). I would suggest however, that *Instrumental learning* may be superficial if it is simply about responding to another's demands whereas *Communicative Learning* involves engaging more with one's beliefs, values and morals and may lead to deeper and longer lasting learning. In coaching in the IOE, I would argue coaches engage with the two domains. Coachees may arrive to discuss an issue connected with their working environment. However, reflecting on and learning more about themselves, and their ability to negotiate through issues without compromising their own values and beliefs, would be important learning in coaching (Askew and Carnell 2011).

Habermas (1984) did have a third domain which he refers to as *Emancipation*. Mezirow (1978) developed this as *Domain Three, Emancipatory Learning* which can lead to Perspective Transformation. This is the main focus of his work. Mezirow's theory invites adult educators to assist in making fundamental changes to the way learners think about their own world. Emancipatory learning is the product of a

reflective discussion to reach an understanding of the meaning of a prior interpretation of an embedded belief (Mezirow 1978). It has a subjective focus and can lead to greater self-awareness (Mezirow 1997, Jarvis, Holford and Griffin 2003). In other words, it involves understanding how one's history and biography shapes our world view. The learner (or coachee) may progress through different stages of critical self-reflection. They develop an awareness of how complex reasons underlying a belief or assumption have developed (Jarvis et al 2003). They may explore if these beliefs and assumptions have ever been helpful (Askew and Carnell 2011). Insights gained lead to emancipatory learning - gaining freedom from forces which have previously limited options and choices (Mezirow 1997, Cranton 1996). Acquiring emancipatory knowledge is said to be transformative (Cranton 2002). The purpose of this learning is for perspective transformation – to make a change in the way we understand ourselves and the contexts we inhabit (Askew and Carnell 2011).

To fully grasp how people socially construct and interpret their experiences and assumptions requires discourse which is a process entailing 'an active dialogue with others' – as in coaching (Mezirow 2000:14). Discourse and transformative learning will be effective if participants have emotional maturity (Mezirow 2000). In other words, awareness, ability to motivate oneself, handle relationships and clear thinking – all parallels with adult learning. Learning in Domain three, importantly, is rare.

On Page 36, I referred to Friere's notion of traditional education being seen as a 'banking' method of learning, where a teacher deposits information in students' heads (1974). This can be problematic in that the learner may become dependent on the teacher, and as a result will not develop any critical, independent thought (Friere 1974). When thinking of learning for a democracy, I suggest it should not be simply about transmitting information and memorising facts, it should be about developing

an understanding of the reason for facts and being able to evaluate the facts (Friere 1974). Friere argues that the educator's role is one of engaging in a way of thinking and learning which involves a 'dialogical relationship' between the learner and the educator' (1974: 123). This feels similar to coaching in the IOE.

Significant to Mezirow was Friere's idea that the more learners banked knowledge and relied on someone else, the less they developed critical consciousness (Friere 1974). By this he means that learners should become more consciously aware of the social, economic and political influences on their thinking and through becoming more critical thinkers they are able to take action against what he described as 'oppressive elements of reality' (Kitchenham 2008: 107). Friere (1974) argued that learning should be empowering, should reflect democracy, and that the learning which takes place between the teacher and the learner should be transformative and continue throughout a learner's life. What he argued for was an approach to learning which involves creating opportunities for analysis and discussion of problems.

'In the learning process, the only person who really learns is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby reinvents that learning' (Friere 1974: 88)

One can see therefore, why Mezirow found the ideas of Habermas and Friere particularly useful when developing his theory of learning, and how these ideas may help us understand coaching.

Mezirow locates Transformative Learning for Perspective Transformation in Domain three (Askew and Carnell 2011). This learning has a subjective focus in that it involves reflecting on the self to understand how our personal histories shape us and give us a limited view of the world (Cranton 2002). If these views are critically

explored and the learner opens their mind up to new ways of seeing things, this may transform their interpretation of the world and their place within it. Being freed from embedded restrictions and constraints in our lives is said to be transformative and can lead to perspective transformation (Mezirow 1991)

Mezirow (1978) presents us with broad phases to explain the process.

Discussing a ‘disorientating dilemma’ begins the process (Mezirow 1978). Mezirow describes this as a challenge to an established meaning structure triggered by an unsettling event or experience. There is a desire to learn something new which will help understand this situation (Snyder 2008). I have previously criticised the literature for viewing coaching as a forum to discuss only issues deemed problematic (Rodger 2008), ‘Disorientating dilemma’ seems a more useful and open term.

Meaning structure encompasses meaning scheme and meaning perspective - the difference being, meaning scheme is a belief, habit of mind, frame of reference and meaning perspective is the process of understanding how these meaning schemes have been formed – through social, cultural, parental means for example (Jarvis et al 2003). Learning in this phase involves exploring, understanding and perhaps changing our frames of reference – ‘associations, concepts, values and feelings – which seem to define our lives and have been gathered over a life span’ (Mezirow 1997:5, 2000: 8). I contend that during this phase it is not necessarily new content which is being learned but learners come to a new way of thinking. Critical reflection on meaning perspectives may lead to change and emancipatory learning. This involves becoming free of our past and building new or revised interpretations of our experiences as a guide to our future actions. This may lead to perspective transformation.

Mezirow gives more detail to the phases which follow:

Critical exploration and assessment of assumptions and beliefs. Bringing them to consciousness.

Critical self-reflection, questioning where these beliefs have come from, their importance and usefulness.

Exploration of alternative views.

Planning a course of action.

Acquiring knowledge to implement one's plans.

Revising assumptions and perspectives. Trying out new roles and integrating into one's life on the basis of transformed perspectives.

(Adapted from Mezirow 1978, 1997)

I argue, practice in peer-coaching at the IOE could be strengthened if coaches develop a deeper understanding of Transformative Learning theory.

2.3c Peer-coaching in the IOE

As the participants in this research are adults (my understanding of adults is those aged from 18 onwards), learning in this context consists of assisting those who are old enough to be responsible for their own actions and subsequent learning (Mezirow 2012). As discussed earlier, peer-coaching at the IOE involves a coach and coachee engaging in collaborative discussion to explore an issue of concern - a disorientating

dilemma - or perhaps develop new skills. Creating a safe and trusting environment, with a focus on the individual's needs, is central to the coaching context at the IOE (Taylor and Snyder 2012).

Colleagues at the IOE engage with peer-coaching on an equal footing as coaches come from across all professional levels. It is this that makes peer-coaching quite distinct. Central to any discussion (which is focused on the workplace), is the coach helping the coachee reflect on a situation together with their actions, beliefs, values and ways of thinking which may be affecting how they function. In other words engaging in what Mezirow (1990) describes as Instrumental and Communicative learning. New learning may lead to transformation and better working practices.

Peer-coaching at the IOE has a strong focus on the more humanistic approach to learning. This model of coaching focuses on developing the individual to reach their full potential (Rogers 1969). Here, coaches work with the coachee to help them understand their own unique context. Developing self-awareness and more importantly, how this relates to their work environment may help a coachee understand their personal behaviours more and the impact on their working life (Ladyshewsky 2010). Transformative learning does not have a 'one size fits all' approach, hence the need to consider the individual (Taylor and Snyder 2012: 45).

I also suggested that learning in peer-coaching at the IOE should be underpinned with democratic values of developing autonomy, freedom and being treated equally. Coaching in the IOE tries to block out power relationships which may sometimes exist in a coach/client relationship (Mezirow 2012). Transformative learning is thought to foster the appropriate skills for full participation in a democracy, for example thinking independently and speaking freely (Mezirow 2012). Creating an environment

in which a coachee can develop these skills is the goal of adult learning (Mezirow 2012).

Autonomy is when the individual feels free to speak and act without feeling constrained. Developing autonomy and becoming empowered is always linked to culture and social background (Mezirow 2012). This however, seems to me the crux of Mezirow's ideas and what we try to engage with at the IOE. When exploring disorientating dilemmas, we frequently find ourselves engaged in exploring personal, historical backgrounds to understand issues. The process of learning to think more autonomously, means engaging with personal and situational perspectives (Mezirow 2012). By understanding ourselves more we may engage in personal transformation enabling better participation in a democratic society (Mezirow 2012).

A strength of peer-coaching at the IOE is that, within a safe and trusted environment, new knowledge and perhaps new skills are gained often as a result of a strong engagement with reflection (Ladyshewky 2010).

2.3d Reflection

As said earlier in the thesis, coachees usually come to coaching as a result of an experience – something that has perhaps upset or frustrated them – a ‘disorientating dilemma’. This might be the beginning of reflecting, when the reason for the discomfort is explored.

Cox (2013) presents coaching as a process that is closely associated with reflection. If coaching is to be effective, then reflection and critical questioning should be central to the process (Askew and Carnell 2011). Furthermore, if learning is to take place,

then it is important to acknowledge that no one lives in a social or cultural vacuum – we are all bound and influenced by our experiences and relationships (Taylor and Snyder 2012). What the coaching process tries to achieve, is to create a space where the coachee can pull back from the workplace and personal life, and reflect on experiences - all with the purpose of learning and self development (Cox 2013). Reflective dialogue with another person offers the potential for exploring options and different perspectives through a challenging, but supportive, conversation (Brockbank, McGill and Beech 2002).

The acquisition of facts is a model of learning which is familiar but may leave learning at a superficial level (Friere 1974, Brockbank et al 2002). The reflective process of learning goes further, drawing on all aspects of the learner's personal and professional experiences (Brockbank et al 2002). Reflective practitioners acknowledge the importance of contemplating one's actions, identifying lessons which can be learned, to inform future actions and practice (Leeson 2011). Reflection involves considering habits, beliefs and assumptions more deeply - areas of life which may not have been explored before (Brockbank et al 2002).

Two notable writers on reflection are Kolb (1984) and Schon (1987). Schon (1987) promoted the idea of reflecting ON actions, meaning learning from an experience after the event. He felt this practice contributed to lifelong learning and was crucial to personal development. Schon (1987) also discussed reflection whilst IN action – in other words reflection whilst doing, thinking on your feet. What I suggest this process lacks however, is an appropriate time-line to reflect and discuss and could be seen to be corrective – something which has a negative overtone. Kolb (1984) suggests reflection is a cyclical process of stages with equal importance. Kolb (1984) explored how knowledge is developed from thinking about and learning from experiences.

What coaching would do would be to work with a coachee to reflect on their experiences and take any new, transformed learning back into their lives (Cox 2013). The problem with both Schon and Kolb is that the ideas seem to neglect underlying reasons for the ways people actually think and behave (Mezirow 1990, Leeson 2011). Also, both forms of reflection appear to focus on learning for developing professional practice and not necessarily personal development. Why I believe Mezirow's theory is appropriate for learning in peer-coaching is that it recognises the importance of an elongated process of thinking, reflecting and learning.

Mezirow suggests:

'Adult education strives to foster reflective learning' (Mezirow 1991: 6)

Reflection is the foundation on which Mezirow's theory is built and it permeates all phases (Wang and King 2006). Mezirow (1990: 7) suggests reflection is a 'higher order' thinking activity to explore experiences and transform thinking. Mezirow (1990) promotes deep reflection to enable change and transformation. His model of Transformative Learning, I suggest, supports developing those aspects of a person, for example, independent decision making and freedom of choice, which as I observed earlier, promote democratic values. Mezirow (1990, 1997) perceives learning to be a reflective activity, usually triggered by a disorientating dilemma, and places significant importance on the process. He describes reflection as something we do when we stop, think about and discuss a problem – a process which underpins coaching conversations. Reflection could refer to an afterthought – where the coachee gives detailed constructive thought to a past activity or event in order to learn from that and make sense of the present (Mezirow 1991).

Mezirow (1990) continued to develop Habermas' (1984) ideas by clarifying levels of reflection more clearly. According to Mezirow (1990) reflective dialogue engages in critically examining what he considers to be the content or description of a problem or dilemma, reflecting on the relevance of the problem and why it has occurred. This may be followed by process reflection – thinking about what we need to do or have done and the strategies for solving the problem (Mezirow 1991). This is referred to as conscious reflection (Mezirow 1991). Mezirow further distinguishes between two types of reflection – conscious and critical conscious. Conscious reflection can raise awareness of a perception, meaning or habit of mind – an awareness that previously did not exist (Askew and Carnell 2011). In coaching, becoming aware of perceptions and judgements would be vital in generating new knowledge and understanding of the self (Wang and King 2006). Conscious reflection relates to the 'what' is the problem and 'how' might we make changes (Mezirow 1997)?

Transformative learning, leading to perspective transformation, can only happen if we explore the reasons underpinning the problem or dilemma – in other words, the 'why' of the dilemma (Mezirow 1981). Critical conscious reflection comes about when we evaluate our judgements; explore how helpful they are to us and our way of seeing the world and we move forward (Askew and Carnell 2011). Here we engage in 'digging and drilling' to have greater understanding of the taken for granted cultural habits that determine our judgements, thought and feelings which explain our personal experiences – this would be the 'why' of the problem (Wang and King 2006: 1). Understanding 'why' is crucial to the process of perspective transformation and seems congruent with coaching which involves exploring underlying beliefs, thinking about the reality of achieving positive change (Mezirow 1997). It is only in adulthood

we are able to engage in this form of reflection hence my belief that adult learning and transformative learning theory are inextricably linked.

Of course there are problems with reflection. Reflection is an intentional process where the learner positively engages with the process, is open to discussing experiences, is willing to be challenged and where action and change has to happen. People may be unwilling to make changes or even maintain any change (Prochaska, di Clemente and Norcross 1992). A question I ask is, why do we need to change – why not be happy as we are? Perhaps this question is linked to my earlier argument in 2.2a of this fast-paced, consumerist society where we feel the need to keep up and be competitive. Reflection is possibly seen as rather self indulgent - connected to modern western society, sometimes characterised as a way of life which supports an obsessive concern with self-improvement (Weber 1985).

As our ideas and beliefs are usually culturally imposed, it is useful to see why Mezirow's theory, with its focus on unpicking these 'frames of reference' has I believe, a profound relevance to understanding coaching.

I now discuss the methodological approaches adopted for this research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The decision to focus on investigating the learning processes in coaching, suggests a qualitative study that sits within an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism focuses on interpreting happenings in a particular social context (Bell 2005, Denscombe 2003).

In this case the context is the workplace of the IOE, the research participants are members of the coach-learning group.

Firstly, I describe the methods used to conduct the research. I go on to discuss my unique epistemological position as an insider researcher conducting research in a familiar setting with my peers. Drawing on the work of Le Gallais (2003), Hockey (2006) and Perryman (2011), I explore the tensions, dilemmas and advantages underpinning this methodology. My data consists of verbatim transcripts of recordings of actual coaching conversations. I explore some questions raised when interpreting these transcripts, including how being an insider impacts on my interpretation of the data and the knowledge I have generated.

3.2 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

3.2a Pilot Study

Prior to collecting data from the group, I conducted a pilot study. The purpose was to establish if my original plan of listening to coaching sessions, analysing them and engaging in follow-up discussions, would be the best method to understand the processes and facilitation of learning in coaching. The pilot proved helpful in bringing clarity to the focus and conduct of the research. A detailed reflection on the pilot study, articulating the rationale for refining the question and for making some amendments to the original proposal, can be found in Appendix 8.

3.2b Sample

I conducted the research by recording, listening to, transcribing and analysing coaching conversations. My sample of coaches and coachees was drawn from the coach-learning group who are experienced and knowledgeable about coaching. The sample consisted of six women, three academic and three administrative colleagues, aged between 30 and 60. Some intricate issues directed me to ask this group for their assistance.

Firstly, it may have been problematic to gain, perhaps within a short time, the consent and trust of coachees who do not know me or my previous research. I am mindful of the fact that the coaching service is completely confidential. Coachees experience a variety of emotions when attending a coaching session and so making a request to record conversations for research, may have produced unnecessary complications and anxiety for the coachees. Given that the service has been in operation for over

eight years and has been positively evaluated (Hargreaves 2007), I did not wish to jeopardise its future or the benefits and worth to my IOE colleagues. Secondly, had I asked coachees outside of the group who were using the service, there would have been more complex ethical issues to consider.

The group (which currently has 12 members) has willingly taken part in my previous research. When disseminating the findings from my IFS, they acknowledged that this had deepened their knowledge of coaching, making them think more carefully about the process. With this in mind, they expressed an interest in being involved in any future research. The group articulated clearly that they felt there were benefits to be gained in terms of their own professional learning. The two founders of the coaching group and, for four years, its facilitators, also expressed an eagerness and willingness to take part in the research as they had been involved in my previous research. They participated in the pilot study and are included in the sample. This supports the ethos of the coach-learning group as one of managing dual roles of being coaches and colleagues - all being treated equally – upholding democratic values.

I acknowledge the experimental nature of the set-up of the conversations has implications for the validity of the data. These are all people who know me well, know the workings of the coaching group, have a vast knowledge and experience of coaching and who are genuinely interested in taking part in research. This may have, subliminally, had an effect on the content of their conversations. They agreed, however, wholeheartedly to being part of the research.

3.2c Method

With permission from the facilitators, I outlined my research plan to the group during one of our monthly meetings. I asked for volunteers. The newest members expressed willingness; however they felt their immediate priority was to develop their own coaching skills. Five experienced members of the group came forward via email. Pairings were selected randomly by putting 'names in a hat'. Two pairs were arranged. I spoke with the fifth person who agreed to act as a reserve. I contacted each pair, confirming by email their willingness to take part. I asked them to arrange two coaching sessions of one hour each at times convenient to them. The pairings agreed dates and times. I arranged for them to use my office as it was private and quiet. They adopted the roles of coach and coachee (deciding this themselves) in the first session and vice versa in the second. The coaching conversations from the pilot study are also included in the sample. The data, therefore, is made up of six coaching conversations from a total of six people. Once this study is completed, any unused data, generated for this research, will be stored and may be used in any follow up articles or books (with ethics approval of course).

It is important to remember, as mentioned on page 26, members of the coach-learning group do meet up between the monthly meetings to practise skills and coach one another, so this situation was not completely unfamiliar to them. Whilst it is usual for coachees to discuss an issue over several sessions should they wish, these one-off sessions, recorded specifically for this research, provided rich data, and so have integrity and worth in this research. It was a unique situation - perhaps not wholly typical of our usual coaching process. However, whilst six conversations may seem like a small sample, they captured enough data ripe for detailed analysis, which contribute to our knowledge of how the coaching process at the IOE is facilitated.

Participants signed an Informed Consent Form prior to their first session (Appendix 9). I provided and set up the recording equipment and explained how to use it. The coaching sessions took place over a two-week period in December 2011. I was not present during the sessions. I saved the coaching sessions to my computer before the participants left my office. I then fully transcribed each coaching conversation (see sample Appendix 10) and began the process of analysis.

3.3a Insider research – tensions and dilemmas

A common feature of research within an educational setting is that the researcher is a member of the community being researched (Hockey 2006). My status is multifaceted. I am the researcher, an employee of the IOE and a member of the coach-learning group whose practice is the focus of this research. A degree of prior knowledge about the people and their particular culture can be an advantage of insider research (Hayano 1979). Contrary to this view, Hockey (2006: 201) suggests a tension - too much prior knowledge may be seen as carrying 'intellectual baggage' which may have a detrimental effect on the validity and reliability of the findings. In this section I hope to address some of these concerns by presenting an insightful view of the juxtaposition of the advantages and disadvantages to this approach. Hockey (2006) and Le Gallais (2003) use the terms 'familiar settings' and 'peers'. Throughout this discussion, I borrow these terms. As an inside researcher, I am turning the lens on my peers in a familiar setting. This in turn is a process of self development. I aim to discover new knowledge which will enhance my practice - something that upholds the ethos of this professional doctorate.

3.3b The Context – advantages and disadvantages

'The member of the in group looks in one single glance through the normal social situations occurring to him..' (Schutz 1976: 108)

For interpretivist research to be successful, the researcher should understand and appreciate the experience of the participants (Sherman and Webb 1988). As I am an insider researcher from the perspectives of being part of the group being studied and an employee of the organisation, I have an understanding and appreciation of the context.

As a founding member of the 'in group', I am familiar with its history and how it operates today as outlined in the introductory chapter. Over the years I have seen the group personnel change. Some have left the IOE, or indeed the group, due to work or personal commitments. Others have joined the group. As one of the longest serving members of the group, I have coached many of my peers across the IOE. I understand I am perceived by my peers as having considerable experience and knowledge (intellectual baggage) partly due to my doctoral research. Given that I share this particular social world with the group and have an in-depth knowledge of coaching and its associated language, Le Gallais (2003: 2) suggests that an advantage of being an insider is that I will not experience any kind of 'culture shock or disorientation'. It is expected that I understand the context in a way that perhaps an outsider, or a stranger would not (Schutz 1976).

I err on the side of caution by acknowledging the tension between being an insider researcher and an interpretivist. Whilst having a good understanding of the context, my position as interpreter is a subjective one and any outcomes or claims can never

be proven (Malinen 2000). I have my own agenda. I am exploring something which is of great interest to me. I am also exploring it from my stance discussed in Chapter 2, of viewing coaching as learning for personal development rather than simply organisational effectiveness. I use tentative language – using words like ‘may’ and ‘perhaps’ as I cannot make any great claims or generalisations given that findings will be based on my interpretation of the data. It can be argued that the full picture in the data may elude me and that any belief that my interpretation is ‘true and meaningful’ will be of a highly personal nature (Malinen 2000: 85).

Advantages

I have alluded to the notion that an insider will not experience culture shock. A culture shock may be an obstacle from which I am free (Hockey 2006).

Being an insider, building up considerable trust with the group, gave me a unique opportunity to invite them to take part in the research (Perryman 2011). Had I been an outsider, a complete stranger, they may have felt particularly vulnerable in allowing me into what can be a sensitive context (Le Gallais 2003). Nukunya (1969: 19) explains:

‘Because I was one of them and not a ‘foreign intruder’ the fear and suspicion which always lurk in the minds of subjects and informants during social research in general was almost absent’

A major bonus of having the group’s trust is that, if exposed to intimate details, then I become even more appreciative of the collegial bond which allowed me to conduct the research. Professional eavesdropping on such details gives me a closer understanding of the complexities of the context under investigation (Hockey 2006).

Another advantage suggested is that the insider, familiar to the group, may become invisible when conducting the research (Aguilar 1981). I was not present in the room at the time of the recordings; however, in two of the recordings the participants acknowledged my presence as a listener. All participants, however, subsequently acknowledged that once the conversation was in progress, they became immersed, forgetting I ‘was there’ and that their meeting was partly for the purposes of research.

Disadvantages

Whilst being intimately familiar with a setting is advantageous (Perryman 2011), the insider may approach the study with ‘over familiarity’ and ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions and preconceptions which may render them blind to the potential for exploring new insights (Hockey 2006: 202, Le Gallais 2003). This may be problematic in that new insights, ripe for analysis, may be omitted. The advantage to the stranger would be their ability to be more detached from the research and possibly be more objective (Hockey 2006).

Hockey (2006) argues that an argument against conducting insider research is the possibility of bias. This has two perspectives. Firstly, from the stance of the researcher who may have a particular reason for conducting the research (Hockey 2006). I acknowledged this earlier. Secondly, whilst the researcher is privy to the inside workings of the group, the participants in the research may subconsciously withhold information during the sessions, particularly if they feel conducting the research, gives the researcher some position of power (Hockey 2006). Hockey (2006) cites Griffiths (1985) who notes a variation of this problem, in that if research participants have a notion that the research is for their benefit, this is less threatening

to them than thinking the research is only aimed at a wider more distant audience. In this research, the participants have been made fully aware the research is not only to enhance my practice but also theirs. I made strenuous efforts to communicate the possibilities and benefits of making the findings from this research available to the wider coaching community.

Another tension would be that an insider may feel particularly vulnerable when it comes to disseminating findings, particularly if anything is perceived to be negative (Le Gallais 2003). For example, findings may come under the scrutiny not only of other professionals in the field but from the group themselves who may take issue with my analysis and findings (Hockey 2006).

Being a researcher in my own organisation demands a degree of loyalty to the organisation and it may be difficult to remain unbiased (Le Gallais 2006). I argue, however, for my research to have integrity, be worthwhile and have impact, there has to be what I would refer to as dual loyalty – loyalty to the organisation as well as to the research itself. The anticipated benefits to the organisation, the group and the coaching fraternity are of considerable value. It is not my intention to cause distress to anyone in the research process.

Robson (2002) suggests that hierarchical differences may posit difficulties for the insider researcher. This is a tension I was not aware of encountering. As mentioned previously, the group consists of colleagues from across the IOE regardless of their professional position. This is both the group's uniqueness and its strength (Askew and Carnell 2011). The group consists of, and coaches, colleagues from across the hierarchical structure. At the monthly supervision meetings, my impression is that members leave their professional position behind as they enter the room. My

interpretation of the ethos of the group is one of positive, supportive, collegiality with no evidence of power struggles.

As the focus of this study developed, I felt that the most appropriate method for data collection was to 'eavesdrop' on conversations. While this presented some specific ethical issues, I believe my position as a trusted and loyal member of the group, together with my previous research, was positive in helping me gain their confidence in allowing this research to continue.

3.3c Interpretivism and Hermeneutics

The main focus of the epistemological position described as interpretivism, is on developing an imaginative understanding of the social world by closely examining and making sense of that world – coaching in this case (Bryman 2008, Charmaz 2006). I have argued that the researcher needs to 'be in' the research to have a full understanding of it. From this standpoint, my position as a member of the group puts me in a strong, privileged position. When taking an interpretivist stance, however, I acknowledge that the position presents some unique tensions for me, as any analysis may be shaped by my interests, experiences and knowledge as a coach.

Derived from the Greek word, *hermeneuein*, meaning to interpret or understand, this is an approach to interpretation which can be traced back to interpreting literature and biblical text (Crotty 1998). Today, interpretivism involves the process of making sense of text, words, narratives, recordings etc (Malinen 2000). Added to that, hermeneutical interpretation has the potential to explore and interpret written text more deeply than the author's own superficial understanding, possibly uncovering

hidden meaning (Crotty 1998). This suggests a complex relationship between the author and the interpreter of text. To understand text is to not only read what it says but understand what it is talking about (Malinen 2000).

The data collected here consists of verbatim transcripts of six coaching conversations. I am not the creator of this text, however I set up the situation from which the text transcription emerged. The coaching conversations were not contrived. What was discussed was chosen by the participants. On arrival at the sessions, participants stated they would not be role-playing; their issues were real and not fabricated simply for the research.

According to Crotty's writings, a starting point in making sense of and understanding written text, is that the researcher begins from the standpoint of being knowledgeable and having an idea of what it is they are trying to understand (1998). This supports my position of already having substantial experience and knowledge of coaching.

Athill (2008) asks some interesting questions about text – 'what part of a reader absorbs what part of a text?' She posits the answer that underneath a reader's conscious response to text will be an unconscious taking in of those parts of a text which meet a particular need. In my analysis of the transcriptions, I may have unconsciously responded more to textual segments which I hope uncover some of the hidden subtleties of the learning process as it is facilitated whilst ignoring others. I acknowledge I have made selective use of those parts of the conversations which in my judgement are germane to the research and in particular will aid answering the research question.

To conclude this section, how do I know my interpretations are correct? I don't – they are exactly that – my interpretations. Malinen (2000:142) says:

'Interpretation is an open process, which no single vision can conclude'

I hope, however, my interpretations provide enough persuasive evidence that will be useful when making sense of the learning process in coaching.

My decision to adopt an interpretivist approach is based on my desire to gain more in-depth knowledge about the complex process of coaching. I felt listening to and transcribing coaching conversations would enable knowledge to be gained in a unique and privileged way. I am aware, however, that the knowledge I present is based on my interpretation of the text.

Some characteristics of the qualitative, interpretivist researcher which resonate with me and this research are:

- *A humanistic bent*
- *Curiosity*
- *A sense of logic*
- *An ability to live with ambiguity*
- *The ability to work through problems in the field*
- *Trust in the self and the ability to see value in the work that is produced.*
(Corbin and Strauss 2008: 13).

The final characteristic makes a particular impression on me. In my introduction to democratic values and links with coaching (Page 49), I used the following extract:

'Fostering the dignity of freedom and the strength of forming one's own ideas' (Cunningham 2012: 705)

I make some further links by suggesting that being a qualitative, interpretivist researcher, has allowed me the freedom to form my own ideas about what is

interesting to research. I hope by developing a trusting relationship with the participants, I have been able to place a critical lens over the coaching service. I do trust in my ability, and my interest in people, to produce knowledge from this research that will be of value to the coach-learning group and the wider coaching community.

An interpretivist approach allows for knowledge to be gained in a more fluid and less rigid way than by adopting a quantitative approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008). It is a continuous voyage of discovery (Wildy 2003, Wallace 2007). Each interpretation requires revision and refining with the possibility of further interpretation. Each layer of interpretation uncovers the greater question of how knowledge created in this way has worth (Wallace 2007). Interpreting the transcripts provides endless opportunities to engage with and learn about how coaching works by connecting with research participants on a human and close level (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

The transcripts provided rich data; at least I interpret it as rich. They present many possibilities to interpret different stories. However, my interpretation will be one story given my standpoint as an insider and as a coach (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 13). Other researchers, whether they are insider or outsider researchers, may interpret and analyse the same data differently depending through which lens they view it (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Each interpretation may provide a greater story of the data overall. However, what will be different will be the significance placed on particular areas of interest and the researchers' relationship to the research (Corbin and Strauss 2008). By taking a particular stance, in this case exploring the learning process in coaching, it should be possible to present a more detailed analysis of the text to gain more in-depth knowledge.

This study suggests a particular form of analysing conversations from the texts created. It engages with multi-activities of listening, transcribing, reading, interpreting and writing. It involves the process of making sense of text. Central to these activities is me, negotiating the tensions which arise from the blurred boundaries of insider, researcher, listener, transcriber, interpreter and author (Perryman 2011). It is crucial to acknowledge that my personal biography – my frames of reference (Mezirow 1991) - may also have an effect on how I interpret the text and justify my contribution to developing knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

The aim of this research is to discover new understandings of the learning within coaching and the values that relate to this. Interpretation takes place at all stages of this research from deciding on a focus deemed to be of interest, to selecting the most appropriate extracts from the transcripts for analysis and subsequent support of that analysis.

3.3d Other issues for consideration

As far as the data analysis is concerned, the issue of confidentiality is one that continued to emerge. I decided not to use data if it contained something which could identify people, for example race, health etc. Concealing any information suggests then that the findings may be flawed (Le Gallais 2003). As an insider, I would not wish to jeopardise my relationship with the group. However, I have a duty to report the findings to be as accurate and reflective of the research as possible. I will be vigilant in my writing up to be loyal to both the participants and the organisation.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) ask the question about the character and the personality of the researcher. Might they be seen as an inside spy? I understand why in some research this question is asked. I have asked it myself when taking part recently in medical research. Perhaps I am naive, but the notion of me being an organisation spy has never arisen in this research. I have stepped back from the research and reflected carefully on this. It never occurred to me in the process of the research that participants might think this of me, as I do not believe they do now.

In conclusion, I think my professional integrity and my appreciation of the roles of lecturer, educator, friend and colleague have been an advantage to me in conducting this research. I think I have been able to share an understanding with the group and have forged enough links with them for them to trust me and my work. I hope that I have done their commitment and enthusiasm justice. I now move on to describing the method of conducting the research.

3.4 ETHICAL CONCERNS

3.4a General Ethical Considerations

Throughout my EdD studies, I have acknowledged and been fully aware of, how important it is to take account of ethical concerns surrounding research and in particular, the people involved in it. The British Education Research Association revised guidelines (2011) frame this study.

Bell (2005) argues that it is important to clarify the nature of any study and the expectations of those involved to all participants. They should be made fully aware of

what they may be ‘letting themselves in for’ but mostly that they have the right ‘not to take part’ and can withdraw at any time (Robson 2002: 67).

I have been rigorous in my efforts to comply with such principles as those above. As a member of the coach-learning group, I gained permission to discuss my research ideas at one of the monthly supervision meetings. I verbally outlined my proposal to the group explaining what the research was about and what it would involve for participants. I highlighted the fact that I was commended in my IFS for my sensitivity in conducting the research together with my strict adherence to ethical guidelines. I believe it was important to articulate these comments in order to continue to retain the trust and confidence I have built up with the group.

Permission to audio-record coaching conversations was sought from all participants. Confirmation of their agreement to take part is evidenced by their signing of the Informed Consent Form. They were free to withdraw from the research had they wished.

I was not present during recording. My presence would almost certainly have had an effect on the participants in terms of their conversations and behaviour.

Initially, I listened to each recording. I transcribed each recording verbatim. The transcriptions are for my use and analysis only and are stored in my office along with the recordings. Although data is presently retained, I made an understanding with the participants that when I complete my research, I will destroy all data.

All names mentioned have been changed to protect confidentiality. The IOE is mentioned. I have articulated throughout all my doctoral research, that I am not

interested in the actual content of the conversations which may be of a sensitive nature, nor is it my intention to criticise the participants.

I have carefully considered the feelings of the coaching group and the relationship I have with them. I strive in the analysis to achieve complete confidentiality. This may be problematic in such a relatively small environment. When discussing the group, or using extracts from the data, I have been careful to conceal the personnel and any information which may identify them.

3.4b Specific Ethical Considerations

Insider, collaborative research brings about some distinct ethical issues (Denscome 2005). By its very nature this research is context sensitive. Those who take part in and conduct the research are ‘insiders and stakeholders’ – positions central to this research but which complicate and challenge the procedures that ensure the research is conducted in as ethically fastidious a way as possible (Zeni 2009: 254). These insiders and stakeholders are the people ‘directly involved with the social context being researched’ (Somekh 1995: 339).

The main specific issue is that of confidentiality as participants discussed sensitive and private issues that I listened to and was aware of. I realise how sensitive this issue is and in discussion with the group, I confirmed that I would anonymise the thesis and would be careful to ensure that any content of conversations used to support and evidence my analysis will not identify the individual. Any changes to coaching practice as a result of this research will hopefully be viewed as something positive.

During transcription, I was aware of being privy to conversations which were sensitive and private. I acknowledge that my privileged position in listening to these recordings may have affected the participants' conversation, interaction and activities.

As a member of the coach-learning group and a practitioner, I share supervision and practice sessions with people who are my colleagues both in the coaching community and in other areas of my workplace – indeed one of the founders of the group is my supervisor. Any ethical issues surrounding my supervisor being included in the research was discussed fully. As she had been part of my previous research, exclusion would have seemed inappropriate. As the group consists of colleagues in multiple roles, being a coach, coachee, lecturer, supervisor seems congruent with the ethos of the group. I have throughout the research, been particularly careful to treat all the participants equally.

Confidentiality between coach and coachee is central to the coaching process. With this in mind, if I heard practice which in some way conflicted with my own knowledge and understanding of coaching, I reminded myself that I was not there to be judgemental. Constantly reminding myself helped me maintain some distance. I also used this reminder during the data analysis.

As an insider, I may have heard detrimental information about the institution. I have done nothing with this information. I have been explicit about the intended purpose of my research which is to illuminate my own knowledge of coaching, develop my practice and that of the coach-learning group and most importantly to contribute to the wider knowledge base surrounding this growing phenomenon.

3.4c Dissemination of findings.

The final thesis will be made available to participants before being shared with the group. They are aware that my thesis will be seen in the first instance by my supervisor and then by my doctoral examiners. Should I disseminate my findings to a wider audience, for example in journal publications, at relevant conferences or seminars in the future, I will return to the participants to gain their approval (Hart and Bond 2005).

I should make explicit that the findings and conclusions will be representative of coaching in this particular context and should not be taken as typical. The contribution of the coach-learning group to the research and collaborative nature of the findings, is acknowledged at the beginning of this thesis.

3.5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

When analysing data, it is important to fully represent and be faithful to the research participants (Wellington 2000). To comply with this, there are a number of noteworthy issues to draw attention to. Firstly, members of the group have experienced the same training programme therefore, it is reasonable to assume that they all practise in a similar way. Secondly, I acknowledge that I have a particular view of what coaching is and how sessions are facilitated. Whilst adhering to the fundamental framework as discussed in the opening chapter, I recognise I have developed my own style; therefore it is possible to assume that others in the group have also.

3.5a Selecting a framework for analysis

I began the analysis process by transcribing verbatim all six coaching sessions. Full transcription is highly recommended when working with qualitative data such as interviews and conversations (Silverman 2001/2007, Braun and Clarke 2006, Rapley 2007). The process of transcription focused my listening and reading.

I initially concentrated on listening in detail to the conversations, making any notes (Appendices 11 and 12) and necessary adjustments to the transcriptions. The transcriptions were reviewed to determine if the conversations could be categorised within broad themes and what kind of themes might be identified. From the outset, I was drawn to the way Thematic Analysis helped identify and analyse themes in the data and from these, describe what was happening (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Reading and re-reading the transcripts revealed more and more what was important in the text. I felt values underpinning the conversations began to emerge. I was mindful of the elements of Mezirow's theories and began to explore how theory and practice might be linked in the analysis. I examined the transcripts thoroughly with a view to seeing if they could be categorised under some of the themes embedded in Transformative Learning. I scrutinised extracts from each conversation for their links to themes. As I progressed with this, I encountered considerable difficulties and began to realise this thematic framework was problematic. I found it rather restricted my answering of the research question. I wanted to explore, analyse and annotate findings from the conversations sequentially. What I needed was a system that allowed me to report on the conversations as they happened in a more fluid way. I discuss borrowing ideas from Conversation Analysis as a framework for analysis.

3.5b Conversation Analysis

As conversation means people talking with one another (Ten Have 1999) I was drawn to the way that Conversation Analysis (CA), which involves in a very broad sense, the study of peoples' talk in action, would allow me to look at and report on the conversations moment by moment. Further reading led me to understand that pure CA explores conversation in a micro-analytic way, focusing on linguistics, examining utterances, observing people taking turns establishing when it is their turn to speak (Ten Have 1999). CA, however, can also be used in a wider and less restricted sense, to study people talking together in any setting (Ten Have 1999).

CA is particularly useful to describe 'institutional talk' where conversation may be shaped or constrained by the context of a particular institution (Drew and Heritage 1992). This can be insightful into how people conduct themselves in institutional contexts. Coaching takes place within the IOE and conversations may be influenced by this. Drew and Heritage (1992) suggest, however, that CA can be used to explore a wide range of conversation. For this reason, using CA to analyse conversation with a wider perspective is relevant to this research.

Exploring this approach further, I found that I could borrow and develop a simple framework for analysis. Whilst CA was developed in the early 1960s by Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, the work of Paul Ten Have (1999), David Silverman (2001) and Tim Rapley (2007) was helpful in giving me permission to adopt a simple version of CA for the purpose of analysis. Silverman in particular presents what he refers to as a 'crude set of prescriptions about how to do CA' (2001: 185). I adapt this set simply, using the 'prescriptions' as sub-headings in the Framework for

Analysis section, to allow me to explore the conversations through the basic concepts of turn-taking and sequence (Ten Have 1999).

3.5c Naturally Occurring Talk

Much terminology in CA refers to the talk under analysis as being naturally occurring (Ten Have 1999, Rapley 2007). Examples of this might be telephone conversations or news interviews. As mentioned previously, the conversations in this research have been set up for a specific purpose. I am, therefore, aware of a tension in presenting my conversations as naturally occurring. However, as the content and free flowing structure of the actual conversations is at the discretion of the participants, it has a feel of being naturally occurring. The content of the conversation is also natural in the sense that the coachee is free to discuss something that is useful to them at that particular moment.

3.5d Framework for Analysis

Transcribe text in detail

As CA is data driven, concerned with the content, process and sequence of the conversation, verbatim transcription is necessary (Silverman 2001). Recordings provide primary material for the analysis. Transcription provides clarification of this material making it easier to analyse (Ten Have 1999).

A decision I had to make was how to represent some of the features of the conversations. An example of an extract, showing my decision, follows. Each

speaker is identified on the left-hand side of the transcript. The number refers to which of the six conversations it was.

Coaching session 1 – Transcript 27 June 2011

Codes:

C= Coach

EE = Coachee

..= short pause

Longer pauses are articulated

Words in **bold** are when speech is particularly emphasised.

EE1 ‘*This is in complete contrast to when I have done some courses in the past, when I was younger, when I was **young** I used to leave everything to the last minute..and would often do it the night before and be up all night.’*

C1 ‘*..and you sounded a bit shocked when you said someone was just giving it in today.’*

Read and interrogate the text

Post transcription, I have read and reread the transcripts while listening several times to each conversation. I also changed any names mentioned to preserve anonymity.

Try to identify sequences of related talk

I identify what I interpret to be noteworthy segments worth considering in finer detail.

Each individual conversation will be preceded by a summary. I present extracts of sequences from the segments, discussing their relationship to learning processes in coaching.

Try to examine how speakers take on certain roles

This is not such an issue in this analysis as the roles are clearly defined. One person is the coach and the other is the coachee. What is interesting, however, is how the coach uses his/her expertise in that role to help the coachee explore the issue they have come to discuss. I note which role dominates each conversation. I describe this in the analysis.

Look for particular outcomes in the talk

This is most relevant for this study – exploring the sequences of conversation for specific outcomes, then working through the text to trace how a particular outcome emerged. I was able to look at specific segments of the conversations uncovering techniques the coach used to facilitate the coachee reaching a decision or a greater understanding of their situation.

Good data analysis is about linking analysis to theory (Silverman 2001). I believe I have linked theory and practice together to provide a deeper understanding of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.1 Introduction

I begin by presenting a short overview of the coaching conversations - each one preceded by a quote from Mezirow which I believe has particular relevance to the conversation. By paraphrasing each conversation, I identify and draw attention to important steps in the conversations, key interventions by the coach and their effect on the coachee. I draw on Mezirow's theoretical constructs and his own words to frame the analysis and understand the conversations more fully. Within the limitations of this thesis I may not do justice to his work overall. In particular, I focus on aspects of the three Learning Domains, in particular Disorientating Dilemma, Frames of Reference and Reflection.

I follow the above process for each conversation before offering some final discussion. In this, I establish links with the coaching conversations and democratic values, indicating where these appear to underpin the coaching conversations.

Conversation 1

Short overview

'Emancipatory education is about more than becoming aware of one's awareness. Its goal is to help learners move from a simple awareness of their experiencing to an awareness of the conditions of their experiencing (how they are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, acting – a reflection on process) and beyond this to an awareness of the reasons why they experience as they do and to action based upon these insights.' (Mezirow 1991: 197)

In this conversation, the coachee discusses her progress as a writer. Now that she has completed a writing course, she wishes to make sense of her progress together with exploring actions for future progress. The conversation moves in stages through the coachee reflecting on learning from the course, articulating knowledge and skills gained, to the coachee recognising that she procrastinates. The coach uses focused questions to facilitate reflection on, and understanding of, the reasons underpinning this procrastination.

The meeting concludes with the coachee developing an awareness of particular behaviours preventing her from progressing at a faster pace.

Summary

The coachee outlines what she would like to gain from the session.

EE1 *'I think I'd like a clearer picture of how I am going to continue..my learning from the year..maybe think if there is anything else I have learned I hadn't thought about. I'd like to think about what I have learned and think about what I am going to do next.'*

The coach seeks clarification:

C1 ‘..and of those three things you have mentioned, which is the most important?’

EE1 ‘What I am going to do next.’

A clearer focus is identified. As skills and knowledge gained from the course are summarised, the coach intervenes with questions, shifting the focus away from content description and anecdotes of the course, to examining how the coachee understands herself as a writer.

The coachee describes feeling good about meeting deadlines early. The coach explores this, diverting the questions away from writing skills and moves towards self-awareness:

C1 ‘..that seems to be really important to you that you’ve been ahead?’

EE1 ‘Yeah, been committed..’

C1 ‘Committed, completed..’

EE1 ‘..given that I work full time and I have got various other commitments, I think I have done well to do that..’

C1 ‘So why is that so important to you? What does that tell you about yourself?’

EE1 ‘Well, it tells me, in this particular instance..I have been very disciplined, focused and determined.’

The coachee returns to describing her experiences in the writing group. The coach differentiates the questioning.

First, there is a focus on what the coachee has learned about the process of writing. Reflection is at a conscious level:

C1 'So overall then what would you say were the key learning points for you?'

EE1 '..I feel I have learned a lot about writing..I am not sure how I have learned – there isn't a specific thing I can put my finger on..but I do feel that..my writing is much better, it is much easier..'

C1 '...what do you mean easier?'

EE1 'It's just easier to write because I know more what I am doing – whether I do it or not is a different thing, but I think I can more easily recognise what the..elements of good writing might be..'

The coach summarises:

C1 '..you have more knowledge and you are able to put that into practice?'

EE1 'Yeah..I need more practise to be able to put it into practice, but yeah..I notice that my writing now is much better than it was at the beginning of the course..'

The coach returns to asking her to reflect on what she has learned about herself:

C1 '..how do you feel about yourself achieving those huge improvements?'

By remaining focused on the process of writing, the coachee's reflection remains at a conscious level. She seems to avoid answering the question. The coach intervenes with questions to guide the reflection:

C1 '..so what has that taught you?'

EE1 'I think it has been more free..I think my writing is better when I don't try so hard, I think that is the key thing I have learned really. I just sit down and have some fun.'

C1 'So how do you see yourself now as a writer?'

EE1 'I still think I have got a huge amount to learn..'

The coach realising the coachee is still describing the process, focuses the question:

C1 '*I think that is about the process of writing..you've identified more knowledge, more awareness of it being more..like a play and all of those things..can I return to the question about, how you see yourself as a writer?*'

From her use of the term 'can I return to the question..' the coach appears to notice the coachee's avoidance.

EE1 '*Well I see myself as being a beginner..dabbling basically, in writing and I am conscious that that is not good enough if you want to write something..*'

The coach directs the coachee's thinking:

C1 '..*and why isn't that good enough?*'

When we begin to critically reflect on an issue, shifting from describing skills learned to gaining personal understanding may leave us feeling vulnerable (Mezirow 2000). A helpful learning tool and a solution to this vulnerability is to explore similarities and differences between a current experience and a previous experience (Mezirow 1991).

The purpose of this reflection is to critically analyse the previous experience to identify patterns in behaviour, understand their meaning and where they have come from. I suggest this brings learning into the consciousness. When suggesting that her pace of writing is not good enough, the coach challenges her reasoning for this. The coachee reflects on a previous writing experience. Here she begins to discuss not so much what **not** good enough is, but her belief of what good enough **is**:

EE1 '*Because I think you would never..you've got to make a whole commitment I think to do anything well, so either you are doing this or you are not doing it..it's like the PhD. I spent 17 years dabbling around and not making a full commitment, and it wasn't until that last year when I made a total commitment and I did it..every hour of the day..and I think you have to work like that if you are going to..do it.*'

It is useful to be reminded that the coachee came to review her writing course, explicitly saying she would like to think about the next steps. Through listening and questioning, the coach seems to be identifying a more important issue for the coachee - to learn specifically what prevents her from progressing more quickly. The coach is moving the conversation towards the coachee developing more self-awareness.

The next section shows the move from the writing skills towards the focus on self-learning. Keeping with the prior experience, the coach asks:

C1 '*So how did you see yourself in that last year?*'

My impression is we have reached a juxtaposition in this conversation. They have shifted away from discussing the skill of writing. The coach seems to be identifying a more important issue and is beginning to lift the lid on behaviours and beliefs. This reflection appears to encourage the coachee towards a more subjective focus – that of developing better awareness of herself and her attitudes.

Keeping with the learning from the prior writing experience, the coachee is asked to reflect on what made her finish her PhD.

EE1 '*I saw myself being incredibly determined..em..and passionate about it really, it was important to me..that's probably the key thing that it was important to me, because before that it hadn't been important to me..so what that really taught me is that I can be really determined and I can be really committed and in fact I'll be quite obsessional if I find an idea that is really important to me.'*

What has emerged is her attitude, not her writing skills. She explicitly states what the process taught her, now identifying personal attributes moving away from writing skills.

EE1 '*I just loved knowing what I was doing and getting on with it – I loved being totally committed, working on my own, I didn't want to work with someone else, I was just working on my own ideas and..I knew I could do it.'*

By attempting to keep the focus on developing self-awareness, the coach has assisted the coachee in identifying that it is her personal values of commitment and determination which have driven her to succeed, particularly when it is work she feels is important. The coach summarises:

C1 '*So you've got history..of completing something..after a long time..you have a history of completing something that you feel was very successful..*'

EE1 '*..and worth doing'*

C1 '*..and worth doing..that you were totally committed..you have that history..so what does that tell you about yourself as a person?*'

EE1 '*Well that I can do that, but I do need to find something that I am totally committed and passionate about'*

The coach decides to pursue the reasons for these attributes not happening in the current writing phase.

C1 '*..what have you learned about yourself as a writer?*'

EE1 '*Well, this isn't new, I know this already but I don't take my writing seriously, in the sense that ..I have taken the course seriously, but that is different, I don't think I have taken my writing seriously'*

C1 '*why don't you take yourself seriously as a writer?*'

EE1 '*..well, I allow other things to get in the way, that is one thing..**for Christ's sake**, I spend so much time wasting time on the internet. Actually one of the reasons, (I wanted to bring this up), **one of the reasons I was***

in heaven yesterday and I had such a lovely day, was I didn't turn the computer on. It's like once I turn it on, I am obsessed by it – it is a compulsion at the moment..an obsessive compulsion and once I turn it on then I can't turn it off again, even tho' I've got nothing to do on it..'

By using the expression (*I wanted to bring this up*) the coachee is signalling a particular focus. The point has been reached where she identifies that she procrastinates. Reflection is still at a conscious level but the coachee is beginning to understand reasons for her procrastination. The coach makes a suggestion:

C1 ..so it is not taking yourself seriously, and it is kind of my hunch, but..you need to check out whether this whole thing about the computer is a displacement activity...'

EE1 'oh, I am sure it is, yes...it displaces all kinds of things, not just my writing'

The coach challenges the obsession with the computer.

C1 'So why do you do that?'

The response is insightful - it seems that she enjoys:

EE1 '..company from the computer..'

C1 'so are you saying, writing is a lonely business?'

EE1 'yeah, and the computer is, kind of..I am looking for contact with people actually, I think that is why I keep going round and round the emails..I am looking for somebody else out there in the world..I think just to have contact really because I am on my own a lot..'

This comment suggests the coachee has engaged in reflection to the point that she is beginning to understand that writing is lonely. This is one reason behind her

procrastination – she looks to the computer for company. The conversation is moving more towards Domain three and critical conscious reflection.

The coachee highlights other issues which contribute to the procrastination. To combat feeling isolated she sometimes writes in a cafe with WiFi – the internet distracts her. Other issues include cycling, driving and difficulty parking. The coach challenges these distractions:

C1 ‘*..so it seems to me that, you know, the bike issue, the parking issue, making company issue, even going to the cafe..all of these things are what?*’

EE1 ‘*well..probably all peripheral..I should just do it shouldn’t I..I could do it anywhere really..*’

C1 ‘*..but the thing is, you are not doing it..*’

The conversation has moved away from learning about writing, to exploring more why the coachee feels she procrastinates. She has described distractors like responding to emails, not being able to park near the cafe and that she does not take herself seriously as a writer. The coach focuses the questions to unpick if there is more to the distractions than the coachee realises.

C1 ‘*I was wondering if we could just step aside a minute, from the whole writing process and what you have learned about yourself as a writer, and think about this whole issue about taking yourself seriously as a writer and what gets in the way of that ..?*’

EE1 ‘*That is very hard to answer..I kind of feel a bit stuck on that (7sec pause)..I think it is, kind of, related to who is important, yeah, what is important ..*’

C1 ‘*Who is important..?*’

EE1 ‘*yeah, who is important..and what is important..?*’

The coachee's response suggests she is becoming aware of the reality underlying her procrastination. She reveals there is a tension for her which may explain the procrastination further. The coach hones in on:

C1 'What do you mean by who is important?'

EE1 '*Well, whether I am as important as other people in my life for example.. if I was doing something for my daughter, nothing would get in the way of it..I would just do it.(12 sec pause). I think it is basically related to how important I am really; so therefore, how important anything I do kind of follows from that..'*

An important aspect of transformative learning is becoming aware of what Mezirow (1997) terms Frames of Reference (Page 61). By reflecting on how values, beliefs and judgements are moulded, Mezirow believes transformative learners will embrace a frame of reference which they feel is more inclusive and less restrictive.

'Anything that moves the individual toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable (open to other points of view), and integrated meaning perspective, the validity of which has been established through rational discourse, aids an adult's development.' (Mezirow 1991: 7)

A frame of reference which may be inhibiting this coachee is that tension between her own expectations of motherhood and her ambitions to be a writer. It seems she is saying that being a mother can interfere with other aspects of her life. In this instance the coachee seems to view her role as a mother as more important than herself and her position as a writer. She does not explain where this belief comes from, but perhaps it has been embedded for years.

Critical conscious reflection in this conversation has led to the point where the coachee realises the reality underpinning her procrastination.

C1 'So there are two things, aren't there? Are you important enough as a writer compared with how important you are as a mother..?'

EE1 'yeah,'

C1 '..and presumably other roles in your life as well..?'

EE1 'Mostly, the mother..'

For transformative learning and perspective transformation to take place, there would need to be a shift in her attitude. This question may lead to that:

C1 '..and what would need to happen..to feel important about yourself as a writer..and not be..moved from that position in relation to the importance that you see yourself as a mother?'

EE1 'Well..it's like whether your idea shifts, or whether your behaviour shifts and I tend to think it is the behaviour that has to shift and the ideas follow so I think that what would have to shift is that I would have to..make the decision..that this was very important..that if I didn't do this I would spend years and years and years, like I did on my PhD'

The coachee's response suggests she realises her behaviour needs to change otherwise her present writing experiences will remain similar to the experience of the PhD. The coach summarises the strengths of the coachee and suggests a tension between writing and being a mother.

C1 '..it strikes me that, that you have got this ambition to do it, you have got the wherewithal to do it, you have got the knowledge, you have got the experience, you have finished your apprenticeship as it were, if seems to me that..tussle for you about being important and seeing yourself as important enough, to spend that time writing, rather than be at the whim of somebody else..'

Towards the end of the session, the coachee reverts to describing the final stages of the PhD. She highlights the fact that her daughter respectfully left her alone to

complete it. It seemed the coachee was exhibiting the behaviours she referred to earlier, that of commitment, being serious and determined.

The conversation finishes with the process of meta-learning (Askew and Carnell 2011).

C1 '*I'd just like you to think about the whole learning process, what we have done today and how you feel you have responded as a learner in relation to what has been going on in this session?*'

EE1 '*Well, I think I have tried to stick with the process. I think I have tried to understand what the issues are that prevent me getting on with my writing*'

Learning in this conversation appears to be focused mainly in Domain two. The coachee came to the meeting wishing to learn about her writing. She leaves having talked about her procrastination. Through focused interaction, the coach has facilitated learning which explores the reasons underpinning the procrastination. Neither the coach nor the coachee has dominated the conversation allowing time for exploration and thought from both parties. The questioning suggests the coach decides on the direction of the conversation.

By making connections between current practice and past experience, the coachee has talked about habits and patterns which at times have been unhelpful. By touching briefly on Domain three, the coach has taken the coachee through a process of reflection on these habits and patterns which have led to procrastination. Have her premises and assumptions been explored and challenged? Perhaps new insights were reached; however, we cannot be sure of this without knowing if she stopped procrastinating.

Conversation 2

Short overview

'When we encounter disorientating dilemmas and even our most intense efforts to extricate ourselves through content or process reflection fail, we often turn to reflection on the premises behind our actions. Premise reflection may result in our redefining our problem and acting upon our transformed insights' (Mezirow 1991: 197)

In this conversation the coachee discusses a recent change in her working life. She lacks confidence in her ability to carry out a new role and would like to understand this. The conversation explores the skills and knowledge which the coachee brings to the new role. Through reflecting on previous roles and experiences in the coachee's life, a possible explanation for the anxiety and lack of confidence is uncovered.

Summary

This coachee possesses a wealth of experience acquired in the workplace and other settings over many years – decades in this instance. She begins by discussing a major change in her professional life:

EE2 *'We've been discussing my changing roles, changing identity, having once been employed in an organisation as an academic, then moving to be a freelance writer and then moving to be a consultant..so I'd like to talk about the issues around the third of those..about being a consultant.'*

Mezirow (1991) might describe this as a Disorientating Dilemma.

Being described as a writer seems a positive experience - a meaning structure she is comfortable with however she is negative about being a consultant. In this extract we

get a sense of a change to the comfortable meaning structure. She would like the session to focus on making sense of this.

EE2 '*I think I'd like to look at why I am shy..and..not very confident about being in that role..and..what happens when I am in it..and what happens when I come away from it.*

The coach begins to explore the feelings described.

C2 '*would it be useful to start by reviewing how it has gone so far..it might be interesting to get some ideas about it?*'

The coachee begins by articulating the content of her problem. She describes her attempts to adapt to the new environment which she finds unsettling. She describes in detail disconcerting emails and meetings, which represent her unease with this unfamiliar environment. She outlines her reactions and responses to a number of situations. Through interaction with the coach, she tries to understand and make sense of her new situation exploring how she might best use her knowledge and skills and feel less vulnerable. The coach steers the coachee away from the minutiae of the role and thinking about specific ways of coping with this environment. The questioning allows the coachee to examine what she brings to the role:

C2 '*..what do you feel that you have learned about this role..and yourself in the role? Let's just take what you have learned about the role first of all'*

EE2 '*I think the role is mainly one of listening and making sense..and then reflecting back to them what my perceptions of it have been, and then putting in any..points for learning..'*

C2 '*..and what have you learned about yourself in relation to doing that?*'

EE2 '*That I enjoy new challenges..that I can think on my feet..that I am not flustered..by situations..that I am a good listener..and that I have a lot of different skills to bring..'*

The coachee has identified her strengths. She describes the benefits of her interpersonal skills. She also describes how highly valued the length and range of her experiences are.

EE2 '*their response to me has been very positive, I think they like me being there..they like..I think what is a calming presence I bring..they are very young and quite inexperienced, whereas, I am **much** older than they are and have experienced a very wide range of..different settings..em'*

A coach, through questioning, is able to test the credibility of beliefs and feelings, by looking for evidence to support their existence (Turnbull 2009). The coach has a hunch there may be other issues contributing to the lack of confidence.

C2 '*so going back to the question..which was how do you feel about it at the moment..is there anything else in addition to that?*'

EE2 '*..there is one thing that bothers me a bit..and that is to do with my knowledge of the..medium..and..the whole art field. I feel I am a bit out of touch..'*

The coachee feels she lacks specific knowledge, however, she is asked:

C2 '*could you remind me again what you said your role was..?*'

EE2 '*as a consultant..and it's a consultant in relation to the evaluation of the programme'*

C2 '*but can you just remind me again what you said your role was..?*'

EE2 '*my role was to support, to listen, to stimulate their thinking, to help them see how good they are..so to help them become reassured..rather than me reassuring them.'*

The coachee confirms awareness that it is her interpersonal skills, not factual skills which are required.

When challenged further, two main points in this next extract highlight other issues suggesting discomfort with her new role. We begin to get a sense of the reality of the dilemma. She explains:

EE2 '*There is also the issue about being freelance..as opposed to..say I had still been working at the Institute and I was called on to be the consultant, which I was, I suppose the main difference is actually, not in the role of consultant, but in the role of being a freelance consultant, 'cos I'm not attached to an organisation, and if you are attached to an organisation, that brings with it huge, kind of, kudos, you are part of something that is very..important and kind of..globally famous and you know you are part of that'*

The coachee realises 'freelance' and the experience of no longer being attached to a large organisation are contributory factors to her lacking in confidence. In trying to make sense of this, the coachee compares the familiar situation of being part of a large organisation with the unfamiliar situation – that of being alone, as the word freelance might imply. Moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar seems to be disconcerting.

The coach uses the analogy of a 'crutch' to explore the dependence on the large organisation.

C2 '*..so have you talked about the Institute since you started doing this work?*'

EE2 '*No*'

C2 *(10 second pause)* '*..feels a bit like a crutch..*'*(13 second pause)*

EE2 '*..not sure it is like a crutch..a crutch is something you need when you are hobbling along..I don't think I'm hobbling along..(laughter)*'

C2 '*..but it sounds like you might start to hobble along at some time in the future?*'

By continuing to reflect on skills, knowledge and experience, the coachee realises that she does not need the ‘crutch’ of a large organisation as much as she thinks. Although she established that subject specific knowledge was not crucial to the role, pursuing the analogy of the ‘crutch’ and the lack of confidence emits the coachee’s anxiety about:

C2 ‘..being found out?’

I suggest an ideal condition for learning is that the coachee is open to critical reflection for deeper personal learning and that the coach recognises verbal clues to facilitate this. As the conversation moves on, being ‘found out’ emerges. The coach tries to establish what has been negative or, indeed positive, about this feeling.

EE2 ‘That’s been a strand throughout my academic life really..cos I never felt like an academic and I always thought I’d be found out sooner or later..’

C2 ‘..so what have you been most struck by from what we have talked about so far..?’

EE2 ‘The notion of the crutch..and also that I have fallen back on to ‘being found out’ which has continued, you know, throughout my working life’.

C2 ‘mm..and how does that notion of being found out help you?’

EE2 ‘well, no one ever found me out because there was nothing really to find out..well..I think’

C2 ‘In what ways has it been unhelpful or negative or held you back?’

EE2 (10 second pause) ‘Well I suppose it..presents..em..some kind of deficit model..’

C2 ‘..and this is a new situation again isn’t it?’

EE2 ‘..yes, it is a new situation..mm’

C2 ‘..you might be found out..mm.

Although the coachee appears to be changing her perspective on herself as a consultant, the phrase 'found out' sends a signal to the coach to probe deeper. At this point the coach tests the credibility of 'being found out' by asking for justification of this feeling:

C2 '*Where did the idea come from in the beginning? Can you remember the first time you felt like you might be found out?*'

EE2 '*Probably..if I didn't go to confession regularly, I'd be found out that I'd committed a sin and I hadn't confessed to it yet..I don't know..I don't know where it started from.*'

At this point learning has moved towards Domain three. The coachee realises that part of her lack of confidence springs from her childhood, her religious upbringing – in other words her culture - Frames of Reference.

'As adult learners, we are caught in our own histories. However good we are at making sense of our experiences, we all have to start with what we have been given and operate within horizons set by ways of seeing and understanding that we have acquired through prior learning.' (Mezirow 1991: 1)

It seems the coachee's feelings have been internalised and have always had an effect on her working life and her perception of herself. The process of critical conscious reflection and the interaction with the coach has allowed the coachee to explore below the surface of the work problem to begin to understand that some of the problem lies in deep rooted feelings instigated in childhood. This prompts the coach to make a suggestion:

C2 '*It sort of implies in some ways that you are just not good enough, doesn't it?*'

The coachee articulates further where these feelings have come from.

EE2 ‘well it might have come from my schooling, where they always felt..they always said things to me like, ‘oh your sister Miranda has always got her head in a book’ or ‘your sister Stephanie is very good at bla bla bla’. The way I was taught at school had a lot to be desired really..em.. I think they were trying to motivate you..by making those comparisons to older siblings I think..is not helpful..like you are not as good as your sisters..’

C2 ‘Mm..so therefore, when you have done well, it’s like it has been some kind of fluke..or luck?’

EE2 ‘Yes..or like it hasn’t really mattered..so what’

Our embedded beliefs may lead us to expect that past experiences may keep occurring. If we have been compared to other siblings, or have a view that we may be inadequate, this may lead to an established belief – habit of mind – and may have a long term impact on our lives (Stevens, Gerber and Hendra 2010). This excerpt suggests this may be happening. It appears that the coach is asking questions that facilitate critical conscious reflection. She points out the achievements of the coachee, suggesting that the new position has allowed these feelings to resurface:

C2 ‘Mm..interesting..when you have achieved so much..that those old feelings still kind of come back..isn’t it?’

EE2 ‘Isn’t it..but it feels like (and I have said this before)..it’s like, well if I’ve got it then it is not worth having.. you know..it’s like that joke ‘who would belong to a club that would have me as its member?’

C2 ‘but it’s also kind of like seeing everything you have achieved as being..nothing to do with you..in a way..mm interesting – so clearly what has brought up these old feelings is being in the new situation again’.

An explanation may be that it can be easier to maintain a habit of mind as it could be painful to change perspective (Stevens et al 2010).

The coachee begins to accept that she sees herself differently as seen here:

EE2 ‘well I am a consultant..I am doing it..it’s a process of being, I am actually..I am living the role..and it’s very enjoyable.. also that thing about the freelance I hadn’t..noticed before, because I am not a consultant, I am a **freelance** consultant, not that I say that, but that’s what it amounts to and that’s a very different role from being a consultant from being bought in because you are from a particular organisation.’

In some circumstances, transformative learners will reject an embedded frame of reference and move towards one that is more inclusive (Mezirow 1997). Perhaps we see the beginning of this change as the session draws to a close. The coachee begins to realise that she has the necessary skills, confidence, knowledge and expertise to be a consultant.

Returning to the analogy of the crutch, the coachee (using another analogy) describes her feelings of being without the kudos of a large organisation.

EE2 ‘The main difference I think is that you are on your own, you don’t have that crutch..’

C2 ‘which is..the status? Is it more than that?’

EE2 ‘Well it is about 600 people, rather like marching on your own, you are marching with a huge regiment, so you are less vulnerable’

The coach draws the session to a close with an acknowledgment that leaving the kudos of an organisation does not necessarily mean that learning stops:

C2 ‘..and actually, the further you get away from the Institute, you know it’s not like you are not having other experiences that you can draw on..it’s not like you have stopped when you left the Institute..and you have no other experiences to draw on..you have continued ..’

Instrumental learning is the focus at the beginning of this conversation. The coachee appears to have striven to adapt to her working environment which is changing. She came to the session feeling uneasy about the position of freelance consultant.

Engaging in supportive, and at times, challenging dialogue and critical conscious reflection, seems to have helped test the credibility of her assumptions.

Towards the end of the conversation the coachee says emphatically '**I am a consultant**'. Although she appears to have changed her perspective on herself as a consultant we would only know if this new knowledge led to perspective transformation by a change in attitude and belief in the future.

In thinking about how the coaching process has helped learning, I leave it to the coachee to describe:

EE2 ‘..well I like the connections, I like thinking about my own childhood and being a learner at school and being compared to my sisters..that was insightful..that was a powerful connection so I enjoyed that very much. I enjoyed that notion of the crutch..em..that was very powerful..(is it a metaphor..that image anyway)..em..and I liked just having the time to reflect on this one single thing, because there are not many opportunities like that where I have an hour to devote to focusing on one particular issue in my life..and of course it is multilayered and has lots of connections..professionally and personally..’

This conversation has not focused on setting goals but has engaged in self-reflection and possibly deepened self-awareness.

Conversation 3

Short overview

'In emancipatory learning, the learner is presented with an alternative way of interpreting feelings and patterns of action: the old meaning scheme or perspective is negated and is either replaced or reorganised to incorporate new insights.' (Mezirow 1991: 88)

This coachee writes extensively and successfully as an academic; however, she would like to develop her creative writing. She feels she is underachieving in this area. She sees herself as a high achiever, familiar with success.

In the conversation, the coachee's understandings of achievement and underachievement are explored. Where does the idea come from that she is a success? How does she measure that? With the coach's help, the coachee begins to construct the reality of her achievements. She recognises that achievement and success have come easily to her. Now she is experiencing something unfamiliar. By the end of the conversation she appears to shift from being disappointed in her writing achievements to saying that she should get off her own back and celebrate her achievements.

Summary

Despite being very engaged in a number of activities, the coachee feels her writing, in particular her creative writing, are sometimes pushed aside. She defines this as underachieving. She has come to the session to make sense of something that feels alien to her – a disorientating dilemma.

EE3 '*I was thinking I want to talk about..why I feel so lacking in achievement*'

The coachee believes she is underachieving to the extent that she says:

EE3 '*I recognise quite rationally, that it is completely absurd 'cos I do lots of things ..sometimes I think giving up altogether would be the thing..'*

C3 '*Giving up the writing?*'

EE3 '*Yes..not really, even saying it, it sounds ridiculous..'*

The role of an adult educator is to help a learner critically assess their beliefs and behaviours (Mezirow 1991). In this context, the coach helps the coachee explore her understanding of underachievement. By inviting the coachee to expand on what she is doing, the coach is encouraging her to build a picture of her achievements.

C3 '*OK, so lacking in achievement, but you are doing lots of things, the writing has come up, is there anything else that you are thinking..?*'

The coachee outlines her current experience. She appears to be describing substantial achievement:

C3 '*We are currently just finishing, the book on..the first draft of a book..I have started a novel..I'll do a chapter or two chapters a month..I am looking forward to January when I start a course..'*

The coach makes a suggestion:

C3 '*I am getting the feeling that you are doing lots of things but the thing that you are **not** doing as much of is..those types of writing and you want to do more of them?*'

EE3 ‘well, you know, I’ll do a chapter or two chapters a month or em, I mean it works very well with Ellen, because I am committed to her and our project, so I feel they get done..I am looking forward to January when I start a course on writing fiction..so I am hoping that that will kind of give me a bit more..a kind of metronome, or a beat that will keep me more involved..em..so all my problems may be solved in January.’

C3 ‘so you will have some kind of routine is what you are thinking..?’

EE3 ‘eh, or a rhythm, perhaps that is the word – a rhythm’

Mezirow (1991) explains that using metaphors and analogies may help extend meaning beyond what is actually being said.

Often understanding comes from finding the right metaphor to fit the experience (Mezirow 1991: 80)

Through the use of ‘a metronome’ or a ‘beat’ that will provide a ‘rhythm’ the coachee seems to be indicating that she finds structure and working in a partnership helpful in reaching goals, and ultimately achievement. Although still an academic, the coachee has begun the transition into retirement. The coach picks up on this suggesting routine is important to her.

In the following exchange, the coach establishes that writing is a dominant part of the coachee’s life. She clarifies if the coachee is not doing it, does it feel like underachievement.

C3 ‘..may be the writing isn’t getting as far on the top of the list as you think you might want it? OK em..the fact that you said this was lacking in achievement sounds like the writing is a big deal..it is a big deal of your achievement, there might be other things but at the moment, maybe because you are not doing it, it feels like you really aren’t achieving anything at all on that front?’

The suggestion allows two characteristics to emerge:

EE3 ‘I think what you have made me realise is that I probably always, kind of..I always thought that this is what I would one day do and I’d be good at it so I have had to come to terms with..actually I have to learn about it – well that is OK, I can do that – and I am quite enjoying learning about it em..and maybe it’s that, most things in my life (at least until I was 40) were hugely successful just if I did them (that sounds arrogant) but that’s life..’

Firstly, having the aspiration to be a writer – the coachee just assumed she would be good at it. Secondly the ‘underachievement’ feeling has emerged now that she has to invest time in learning something. The coachee begins to make connections between achievement, which she seems to understand as ease of ability and aspiration, with underachievement - having to work at learning something - an experience that feels disorientating.

She uses her experience of being a teacher to explain:

EE3 ‘It isn’t difficult to do really well in teaching, especially in management of teaching, apologies to teachers, but honestly, em it’s not been difficult to help teachers..’

C3 ‘and you have that skill..?’

EE3 ‘but I am a bit of an amateur at everything, I mean I never was trained as a teacher, so em..’

C3 ‘Ah, ok, so are you feeling like an amateur author..?’

Life experience is what frames our interpretation of who we are (Mezirow 1981). It is useful to question our view of ourselves by going back and reconstructing what we know and how we know it (Mezirow 1981). With the help of the coach, the coachee reflects on her experiences and understanding of achievement. Gradually she is discovering an underlying assumption - until now, she has been successful in life without a great deal of effort. By inviting the coachee to look at what she has achieved, the coach has challenged an assumption. It seems the coachee finds

creative writing difficult and seems to have difficulty accepting this. She interprets this as underachievement. A pivotal point in the conversation has been reached. The coachee has identified, even though she has always written, that creative writing is a new skill and one which requires learning. She is finding, for the first time, that she has to work at something.

So far, the coach appears to be in a supportive role, listening and occasionally asking some questions. The coachee dominates this conversation. She seems able to be reflective, arriving at some understandings herself. Reasons for feeling inadequate are gradually beginning to surface. The experience of easy success is what frames her interpretation of achievement.

C3 '*the point is just to write..so are you feeling like this is going to take some work and it's more work than you would normally..?*'

EE3 '*well yeah, I am finding that, yes I suppose so, I am used to succeeding (laughing) oh dear poor little rich girl hmm..yeah..I am needing a bit of humbleility..don't I?'*

The coach seems to ignore the coachee's suggestion that she should be more humble and makes this comment:

C3 '*..so you are not feeling like you are succeeding right at the moment?*'

This seems to encourage the coachee to reflect on some of her achievements and her learning about writing in the process.

EE3 '*I think I have got quite good at doing short stories. I had a kind of system for doing them and I still like doing them..one of the things I really like doing was revising them and doing all that very close work'*

'I started on the novel and my idea was that I would write a draft..I have only got to chapter 6. I suddenly thought I am not doing any of that nice redrafting stuff..I am quite good at it..I always used to wonder why writers made such a fuss about writing..but it's not as easy as it looks or seems'

The coach affirms that there has been achievement.

C3 *'Well, chapter 6 is still six chapters, you are not at one and two. I did wonder how far you were into it until you said that - so there has been progression?'*

EE3 *'yes, I am probably further ahead with my ideas than I thought actually..'*

The coachee begins to acknowledge her progress. She articulates positive aspects of learning to write which she previously deemed frustrating. She is realising the benefits of the slower process of learning. It is not long, however, before she dips back into saying that she feels she wants to do more. The coach challenges this idea:

C3 *'how can you say you are lacking in achievement if you..what is the goal post..why do you feel lacking in achievement..'*

EE3 *'yeah, 'what would constitute achievement' would be quite a good question wouldn't it?'*

C3 *'it would – it's a good question'*

The coachee begins to describe achievement:

EE3 *'achievement would be a number of things..I'd like to send a short story off to a competition, which I frequently do and, they close the competition down because I have clearly won, I want to astound everybody. Well actually I haven't won a single competition or got anything like..well..I did get mentioned in the last 50, as in the last 50 in one story competition, which I was clearly thrilled with as 1500 people had entered..and I want to do better actually..and I want to do better faster, I*

want to be **brilliant now..**'(said with what sounds like frustration but also lots of laughter)

Frustrations and speed of progress are expressed:

EE3 'achievement would include..getting it done or having a very good reason why not to..but this is true of all learning, you start scratching the surface of something..bugger me, there is **all this** to learn..I just thought by the end of next week I'd have got it sorted..'

Mezirow's ideas sometimes imply that 'frames of reference' are negative and inhibiting (1991). In this extract, the coachee talks about an embedded habit from childhood which seems positive in her routine work as a writer.

EE3 '..my habit of morning pages comes from when I was at boarding school and I used to get up in the morning and after breakfast I'd go up to a little turret room..I'd go to an empty classroom and I'd write my novel. Most of the novels I started, all the novels I started as a child, were never ending.. so I wrote lots and lots and lots..'

A little later, the coachee is beginning to see her achievements.

EE3 'If I think back to when I first started sort of re-engaging with writing. Well I have come a long way since then..I've learned that you don't always get your ideas sorted before you write sometimes..perhaps I am achieving more than I think..'

The coach captures this moment:

C3 'I'd like to spend the last 10 minutes thinking about that little nugget there..em'

EE3 'I wonder if there is something about learned helplessness here..that is the theory that says you protect yourself by saying 'I'm not very good' so that excuses the fact..'

This is the first indication of fear of failure – so far the conversation has focused on lack of achievement.

It is interesting how the coach steers away from exploring the root of the beliefs and stays with a discussion around skills; however, the questions become more specific:

C3 ‘do you think you are good?’

EE3 (*much laughter*) I used to..’

C3 ‘OK, are you good at short stories?’

EE3 ‘yeah, right..I have some interesting ideas..good topics people are interested in’

C3 ‘Right, are you good at novels..novel writing?’

EE3 ‘Not sure..I am learning fast..and hard’

As the session draws to a close some shifts have taken place. The coachee acknowledges that she does achieve and she ought to enjoy that more and not get hung up on completion.

The coach sums up what the coachee has achieved and suggests shifting her perception of achievement.

C3 ‘I get the feeling that short stories are great and you like them but they are finite which means you can..do the enjoyable..’

EE3 ‘six chapters are like six short stories actually come to think of it, ‘cos they are each up to five thousand words’

C3 ‘right OK, so they are not all done yet, but you have done quite well to do all of those considering..’

EE3 ‘yes, I suppose that is not bad actually, when I think of them as short stories, that’s quite amazing’

What is the plan of action for keeping up this change in perspective? The coach makes an observation:

C3 ‘..I think you might reflect on what you do but not necessarily where you have come from to get there and I think maybe that kind of conversation with yourself or with Sonia or whoever might be useful..you have successfully written books, academic books and you know how to do that but that must have been a struggle at the beginning too..it must have kind of..built to a certain level..’

They appear to set some goals towards the end. The coach asks:

C3 ‘how does that feel..whatever you have written down?’

EE3 ‘maybe I need to get off my own back a bit more and just kind of let it happen..write when I want to..find the time and space.. and not to fixate so much on the completion..I have written - describing characters, get off my own back, and may be..since I am clearly feeling that I haven’t achieved very much, I need to mark the achievements more’

C3 ‘OK..and maybe get a mentor?’

EE3 ‘..get a mentor earlier than I had in mind..maybe..my meeting with Ellen next week will produce **the** choice of agent that is going to be right for **us** and then we will have another oomph into our book as well’

C3 ‘good, so there is an oomph for that and there is an oomph coming by your academic City Lit course which will start in January so that will be another oomph for creative writing so you have actually got things set up that will keep the momentum going and keep your interest peaked and possibly give you a new rhythm for things? Does that feel..’

EE3 ‘that feels better, I think I will have to talk to that person on my shoulder..’

It is important to note that towards the end of the conversation, the coachee reviews her perception of achievement, for example, seeing six chapters of a novel as short stories. The process of examining her understanding of ‘lack of achievement’ has resulted in the acknowledgement of a long held experience - that success has always

been easy. The coachee begins to talk about her interpretation of achievement and how this constrains her recognising her current success. The final impression is one of being more relaxed and positive about writing.

I am most struck by how the coachee ends the conversation by alluding to a critical voice 'on my shoulder' suggesting that this is something she carries around with her. In another session it would be interesting to explore where this voice has come from, has it always been there and has it ever served any useful purpose? In this conversation, this is not explored explicitly; however her frustrations seem to imply that this feeling is not useful. Learning here appears to be in Domain Two (Mezirow 1981) where the coachee has tried to make sense of a situation she is unfamiliar with. New understandings about the self have begun to emerge. This interesting end to the conversation suggests the beginnings of a shift towards premise reflection in Domain Three and possible perspective transformation, where the coachee would be encouraged to critically reflect on, and gain insights into where her interpretations of achievement have developed from. Perhaps the voice 'on my shoulder' comment is a signal to the coach that this would be an area for further exploration.

Conversation 4

Short overview

'Disorientation could come gradually, or if the learner missed the accumulating signs of unease, disorientation could 'explode into awareness' accompanied by emotional turmoil' (Mezirow 1991: 177)

The coachee wishes to make sense of feelings of 'craziness' she experiences in the workplace. Her work ethic has been questioned leaving her feeling, in her own words 'irascible'. Reasons underpinning this feeling are explored.

The coachee realises the issue is a recurring one and explores previous coping strategies. She reflects on her perception of herself in this particular environment. Relevance of the issue to the wider context of work/life balance is discussed.

The session ends with the coachee believing she can take control of the situation. In the coachee's own words, coaching has taken her on a journey from 'irascible to poised in an hour'.

Summary

The first part of this conversation is dominated by the coachee talking about frustrations with workload. She mentions having explored this on a number of occasions during supervision and is now bored with it.

The coach begins to explore:

C4 *'so it sounds like you have given some thought to what we might look at in this one off session we have got here'*

The coachee begins by outlining her original idea for the focus for the session. She wanted to learn from an experience:

EE4 ‘..why has this term been so bad..so kind of crazy for me? I thought I might use the hour to unpick that a little and see if there was anything I could learn from it..that was my feeling this morning before I came to work’

On arrival today, however, something has irritated her to the extent that she changes her mind wishing to talk about it in this session.

She begins by describing being twenty minutes late this morning. By recalling timings over the ‘last few weeks’ she describes details of strategies for making up time. This suggests awareness that lateness is a habit.

EE4 ‘often I don’t know I am going to be late, I might be stuck in the tube or trying to get out at Euston..’

Her line manager has sent an email noting her lateness and asking how the time will be made up. This has irritated her.

EE4 ‘..are you planning to stay a little later,’ to obviously, cover up that time..I said ‘no but I am taking a shorter lunch break’..it wound me up..’

The conversation continues in Domain one by exploring the content of the problem with a description of the coachee’s working environment. She manages her workload within a flexible time frame. Her perception of herself is that she is hard working and committed. It seems this has now been challenged and has had a negative impact on her day:

EE4 ‘we know we work very hard, we get the work done, we do stay longer, we do take shorter lunch breaks, we prioritise our work so..we

don't take the piss pretty much..I feel really, irritated by the fact that this has happened and it has wiped out the morning unfortunately..'

C4 'because of your being wound up by it?

EE4 'yes.. it has taken me ages to sit down and just..concentrate on what I need to do..'

C4 'so it has been counterproductive then?'

The coach summarises her understanding of the issue and why, as a willing and hard working member of staff, the coachee feels angry. What is noteworthy here is that the coach elicits recognition that the timekeeping issue was fair but that the manager was 'dead wrong'.

C4 'so you have been called on something which..technically..is right..but actually, in the spirit of the way you work, is dead wrong?'

The coachee repeats her annoyance over and over. In this next extract, the coach seems to support the coachee in her frustration. There is a sense, however, that she would like to explore the reason behind the anger. This questioning from the coach elicits more detail about the coachee's role and, in particular, workload. Wider concerns begin to surface.

C4 '..is some of this to do with the manner in which it was done..by email rather than..a quick word? Does that link to the bigger irritations of the so called 'craziness' that you were talking about before, is it that..OK yeah I was wrong in the nit picky bit but for God's sake...'

EE4 'my worry is, and it always has been at the back of my mind..because the workload is so high, there will be something I have missed and that will go to a complaint or something official..I am behind with practically everything..but I had a slight panic last week..I saw my line manager in the corridor and she said, 'no don't worry, don't stress, you can do only what you can do and do that..she batted it away practically..'

C4 '..how did you respond to her 'batting it away'..it sounds like that would be quite a serious thing, it would be an indication that if you let people down, you are implicated in that letting down?'

The coach reflects back the coachee's language 'batted it away'. It is unclear how she makes the leap to letting people down. Perhaps she is drawing on intuition to understand the nub of the anxiety. The coachee acknowledges the seriousness of 'batting it away'. She is concerned that, in the event of a mistake, her line manager will not support her. The handling of this morning's issue which she perceives to be trivial, confirms a lack of confidence in her line manager in the wider issues. The coach checks this:

C4 '*so, are you feeling that if you get..pulled up for the kind of technical things that actually don't really matter in the bigger scheme of things, that..OK you shouldn't have been late, but you make up the time..that that's a kind of indication that you wouldn't be backed up..?*'

This is confirmed:

EE4 '*..it's a small thing and if it goes to a bigger thing it's likely to be the same kind of reaction..it's also knowing certain people and how they manage..so this is a small reminder that this might be the case when it happens'*

The coach checks again that she is hearing the coachee correctly:

C4 '*that's your irritation..what are the implications..that is what I am hearing from you'*

EE4 '*it is..I'm scared..suddenly that something will come up and bite me and I am sick of being..enthusiastic, willing and hard working and a mug'* (much laughter).

So far, the coachee has connected feelings of irritability with the smaller, earlier incident, to her fear around the bigger implications of her workload. Use of the word 'scared' helps the coach understand the extent of the anxieties.

With permission, the coach moves the conversation back to the use of the word 'craziness', unpicking it a little more.

C4 ‘so some of that seems to imply that you are needing to rethink how you protect yourself within an organisation or at least are ready to protect yourself..is this what the craziness is..shall we go back to the craziness..because this is obviously connected..you said you were bored with issue of overwork..’

The boredom stems from the coachee realising she is discussing the same issue, a year on:

EE4 ‘I am bored..because this time last year I must have drawn a diagram, and I remember explaining all this..I was looking forward to drawing this today and then I was looking at it thinking ‘god..’

C4 ‘..not that again?’

EE4 ‘exactly..yeah I was bored of it..’

C4 ‘so part of this is that you haven’t been able to move on..because?’

‘Because’ on the end of that statement, invites the coachee to reflect on why she still feels this way. She seems to reject this invitation repeating the long summary of her role and adding her strategy for coping with the increase in workload:

EE4 ‘I would normally have done..a few evenings a week for two or three weeks to cover exam boards’

Recognising that:

EE4 ‘there is enough in there that may have tilted the balance.’

The coach attempts to return to the invitation to explore that this is a recurring theme:

C4 ‘..you are bored with it because it keeps recurring..?’

EE4 ‘yeah’

C4 ‘but this word crazy, I want to unpick the craziness..’

EE4 ‘OK..I haven’t used that word before, I don’t think..I did use it yesterday for example..it is crazy because..everyone..is feeling very stretched, and everyone has had the same look on their face for pretty much the whole of the Autumn term, and now it is being mixed with tiredness..so that kind of situation is crazy’

The coach seems to understand the expression ‘crazy’ as indicative of something more. She checks this hunch and appears to be empathising at this point.

C4 ‘and the other is the kind of, the bigger picture within which you are trying to manage your own work, as you started to allude to, everyone is stretched, everyone is tired, em..and this place is particularly prone, it seems to me, to kind of poor relational issues and not paying attention to people when it is in a bad way..’

It is interesting to note at this point that the coach focuses on the shortcomings of the institution. Having a level of inside knowledge is something perhaps that is unique to a peer-coaching service within an organisation.

The conversation shifts from the minutiae of lateness and offending emails, to exploring the reasons for lack of confidence in the wider organisation. Whilst briefly mentioning a health issue, a tension between her commitment to the organisation and her personal life are mentioned.

EE4 ‘I know how the Institute works and doesn’t work..which is all very valuable to the team, especially because they are already stretched to certain levels. In one way I have been probably too accommodating to their needs..’

C4 ‘I am writing that down..too accommodating to the team’s needs’

EE4 ‘and..in fact to the Institute’s needs because otherwise..I wouldn’t be doing the coaching service I wouldn’t be taking on stuff, I would just have said ‘no’..I believe in what we do and therefore I do it ..but I do have moments..feeling like a mug for having done it..’

The coachee has begun by empathising with the organisation, but gradually seems to shift towards blaming it thus taking the focus away from her personal responsibility for latcoming.

The coach moves the conversation on by sharing her intuition that the real craziness stems from the coachee feeling that she is unable to do things as well as she would like.

C4 '*it is interesting that you say..‘I believe in what we do’ and we weren’t just talking about coaching, we were talking about the kind of work you do. I understood.. ‘I do it for a reason. it’s worth doing well’..so some of the craziness is that because it’s being challenged, that kind of underlying belief in the purpose has been challenged.. so you are thinking there are some things you might not do as well as you want to do, the consequence of that might be complaints..’*

By selecting a particular line of discussion, the coach seems to have clarified the underlying anxiety.

C4 '*you don’t trust the Institute not to hang you out?’*

EE4 '*yeah..unfortunately..’*

At this pivotal point, the mood shifts.

‘Imagination is indispensable to understanding the unknown. We imagine alternative ways of seeing and interpreting. The more reflective we are..the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be’
(Mezirow 1991: 83)

The coach posits an ‘imagination’ question to help the coachee see herself differently in the work situation:

C4 '*if on Monday, you came to work, and it wasn’t crazy, you weren’t bored with this issue..what would that be like..?’*

EE4 'it would be lovely..'

C4 'so what would we see you doing..talk us through it..?'

The coachee describes taking a more goal centred approach to planning and controlling her workload. It is noteworthy, that this includes arriving on time.

EE4 'OK..well, my face has relaxed all of a sudden, I can come in, I can look at my email..I can actually reply to some emails..I can decide what I need to be doing and say 'right I need to do this and this so then tomorrow I can do that and that'..and I will have accomplished, something meaningful. Some of that will include some important things, some less important things. I might have a plan for the week..and I will..have come in on time..I will have gone home on time..and I will have taken my lunch hour..in full'

This question may help the coachee reflect on and understand her line manager's position:

C4 'how would your line manager see you?'

EE4 'they would see me as being present..they would see me better than managing..doing fine in work..and a bit more relaxed..the team would see me a bit more relaxed and I wouldn't be..a little irascible with them..I would probably be a bit more patient and listen..I might be able to relieve them of some of their burden..it's not just an opposite of what I wouldn't be, it is just what I want to be..'

Might this be a pivotal moment, when the coachee realises the choice to change her behaviour and have more control in the workplace, is hers, leading to a better balance with her personal life?

C4 'in this new version there would be a little bit of time for someone to come along and say 'How are you doing...?'

EE4 'yeah..so that is pretty much how one day would look like if it wasn't crazy, and I would be looking forward to Christmas and I would have time to go and pick up some presents, and write some cards and enjoy it..'

The coach suggests:

C4 ‘..have you been in this situation before..and what did you do?’

This segment reveals some noteworthy points. The coachee understands the behaviour is recurring. When in control of her workload, all is well, when out of control, she panics. She describes her coping strategies. It appears she has a highly developed sense of how she works and what tilts the balance.

EE4 ‘this time last year I thought, just get the Autumn term over and done with, come back in January and see how things are. In January, things hadn’t improved very much, so much so, I sat down with my team leader and we had a series of meetings which really helped to kind of say ‘how am I dealing with what I have got..em’

C4 ‘I am asking, what has worked on previous occasions. You have mentioned talking things over, a series of meetings..the strategy of just waiting didn’t..’

EE4 ‘If I feel in control of the madness that I have to manage, then I feel better, it is completely psychological, it is not ‘I have a lot to do I can’t manage,’ it is ‘what can I manage within the stuff that I have to do’ and if I feel OK about it, I feel OK about it..when I don’t feel I am in control of it, that is when I..feel crazed..’

The coachee realises that taking a more positive, pragmatic approach would help her cope better. The coach uses the last few minutes to ask:

C4 ‘let’s do the scale of one to 10..how are you feeling about the whole craziness thing.? ’

EE4 ‘..I think I am feeling about 6..’

C4 ‘OK, and when you sat down..? ’

EE4 ‘..certainly 3 or something..’

C4 ‘so you have moved..so talking about it, exploring it and unpicking the craziness,..3 points is pretty good in an hour, by the rest of the afternoon you would be..doing cartwheels through the orchard..the question is what would take you to 6.5 or 7?’

EE4 ‘after this I am taking a 40 minute lunch break..then I will come back to my desk and spend 5 to 10 minutes to say ‘right the 3 things that I need to do today to feel better by the time I leave is..one, 2, 3’ and I will do them in that order..’

C4 ‘that will take you up to 7 we hope by the time you go home this evening?’

EE4 ‘possibly even 8..’

The coachee recognises the shift in her feelings throughout the session. The coach concludes by asking what has been learned. The new perspective is insightful.

EE4 ‘..I have learnt..you do need to put aside even 20 minutes, even half an hour to do these things and that is part of the work. This **is** so that you can do **that** better.I have to remind myself that it is a very good learning thing and.. perspective..this morning’s thing was a very little thing..it could have been better handled, yes, but it could have got a lot worse. I think I do handle things generally quite well. I know I am also my harshest critic..so a little bit of perspective is good..it makes you think..find your boundaries..what you are happy with, what you are not happy with and..’

C4 ‘poise?’

EE4 ‘mm, I like poise, poise is a nice word. Well we started off with irascible, and I think we are ending up with poise..’

C4 ‘irascibility to poise, isn’t that a good journey?’

Session ends with much laughter and thanks. The coachee seems to have recognised her responsibility in this morning’s incident. She also appears to be taking a more pragmatic approach to her workload, knowing what will help if it gets out of control again.

In relation to Mezirow’s framework, I am struck by two things.

Firstly, the learning in this conversation seems to remain in Domain one – Instrumental Learning. Prompted by the coach, the coachee talks mostly about how

to control her working environment, cope with the people within it and her own performance at work. Opportunities for self-reflection and developing self-awareness surface, particularly around the issues of anxiety about workload and making a mistake. However, the coach appears to direct the conversation more towards goal-centred learning. Opportunities for premise reflection and deeper learning are missed.

Secondly, I find it interesting that, contrary to Mezirow's idea that learning is triggered by a disorientating dilemma at the start of the process, this coachee did not come to the session seeing the issue as a dilemma – the dilemma surfaced as the conversation progressed. Coachee 4 arrives at the session irritated by an email about late coming, sent to her that morning by her line manager. She describes in detail practices and procedures through which she understands her own particular social setting – the workplace. Whilst at times they seem petty, the small negligible details highlight considerable frustrations. She uses her understanding of the setting to perform and behave as she does. This incident with the email has distorted her understanding and has left her feeling disorientated. She seems not quite sure how to behave now. When exploring and describing her frustrations, what emerged was her concern with the wider context. Might disorientating dilemmas not happen as a result of a particular event in a day (as we see in Conversation 4) as well as a major change in someone's life situation?

Conversation 5

Short overview

'Learning through metaphors transcends simply identifying isolated similarities. It may refer to whole ranges of similarities and associated implications.' (Mezirow 1991: 80)

This coachee feels overwhelmed with the volume of work in her current role.

Frustrations with boredom and lack of status surface. She wishes to make sense of how the organisation works but more importantly, she wants to explore her position within it together with ideas for career development.

This conversation is punctuated throughout with extensive use of analogies and metaphors. Mezirow (1991) suggests that the use of metaphors helps emphasise the depth of any frustrations.

The conversation is goal-centred, focusing on exploring strategies for career development. The coachee leaves with a written 'to do' list.

Summary

The coachee expresses frustrations with the monotony and volume of work in her current role, together with her desire for career development.

EE5 *'I have been here a year and a half exactly, and doing the same job for a year and a half, and there is a limit to how long one can go on doing this job..without it being overwhelming, because for 6 months of the year it is totally consuming, or..where or how one can have a career here..I don't expect to be doing the same thing in 3 years time really or it will drive me insane..'*

The coachee uses metaphors indicating how acute the frustration is:

EE5 '*I am going to be working for another 15 years so I really need to try and find myself a career again..and to understand how things work here at the Institute, because at the moment, I feel like I am right in a corner. I am sort of down..it is a bit of an alley..*'

The coach hones in on:

C5 '*you said, 'how do I get a career again', what's..do you feel you have been stopped or..'*

This prompts the coachee to reflect on 30 years since leaving University. She builds a picture of posts, roles and reasons for moving. In particular she highlights burnout and recessions. It becomes evident, however, there are underlying tensions contributing to her current frustration. She mentions salary but eventually what surfaces is the nub of the problem and has the feel of a disorientating dilemma (Mezirow 1991). This coachee is more familiar with being in managerial positions. She feels she lacks status and is 'down an alley' with nowhere to go.

EE5 '*..I really want to get back up there, I was sort of middle management and now I am just nothing, you know I can't even have the name Manager after my job title*'

The term 'I am just nothing' reveals the coachee's current perception of herself. The coach begins to pick up on 'Manager' as an indication of the coachee's feelings of lack of status.

C5 '*would you like to have the name 'Manager'..?'*

By reverting back to describing details of the volume of work and how time consuming it is, the coachee appears to avoid answering the question. The flow of the conversation is occasionally fragmented.

EE5 '*well, no, we are coordinators..I think doing the same thing again for the last 6 months I feel, and admittedly I will have time..a little bit of time in my day where I can actually think about my own development and what is possible. We don't have much time to think about that in the whole of the Autumn..it's the chaos that is going to be here..'*

When clarifying a dilemma, the verbal exchange can sometimes be difficult to follow (Malinen 2000).

This conversation so far is dominated by the coachee reflecting on previous roles. She explains she is used to working at a higher level and this change in her professional identity seems frustrating.

EE5 '*I'm used to having more understanding of the organisation..I know there is research going on, but I have no contact with it. I am used to having wider contact across the University. I have worked in 2 other Universities where I had a lot more contact with other departments..'*

The coach attempts to move away from discussing the status issue and begins a shift towards thinking about solutions. The coachee responds by justifying why she cannot take any action. Might an issue of procrastination be emerging?

C5 '*Have you discussed it with anybody..?*'

EE5 '*no, because the Autumn is so busy, I don't have time to do any action. If I had the discussion I wouldn't have time to follow it up..or I wouldn't be able to guarantee I would have time to follow it up'*

C5 '*so what do you think you would like to do then? Are you clear on what actions you need to take..?*'

A clear question which initially prompts a possible plan of action; however, the notion of status emerges again. Having previously been in what she describes as a 'professional area' she articulates feeling uncomfortable with the role of administrator:

EE5 '*..it is about how to understand this kind of organisation..what does a Head of Faculty Administration do? What do you do..so that in 5 years time..should somebody be leaving, that one is qualified to go for that post..when I came here for this job..I had worked in Universities before..I was always part of IT or library before, I hadn't been a pure administrator..I have been in a sort of real professional area..*'

The coachee seems to be dominating the conversation with constantly talking about her role. It seems quite difficult to shift her from this. In this next extract, the coachee reveals a little more about her attitude to the job and her status. This comes about as she compares herself to other colleagues. In coaching, it is useful to think about how other people cope in similar situations (Connor and Pokora 2007).

EE5 '*I need to try and understand how one progresses.. I work with people who don't seem to be thinking about progression, so I haven't seen anybody else move upwards either.*'

C5 '*so do you get a sense that it is actually not happening at the Institute or that they are making it difficult..*'

EE5 '*no, none of those, I just think some people don't want to and therefore haven't done anything about it.. it suits their life needs..whereas, I am used to being at a different level and having more control in some way..*'

The coach tries to help her think about progress.

C5 '*Is there a direction..directly above you, like a line manager..is that something you have explored at all?*

It seems difficult to move the coachee forward as she appears to avoid answering direct questions reverting again to justifying why she has not taken any action.

EE5 '*I haven't explored it but, the thing is because of what I actually do, I don't have time in the Autumn..to do hardly anything that isn't just actually focused on the actual job. The actual task is so..intensive..there isn't time to..you might say 'well you can make time' but..when you are getting a hundred emails a day from people..'*

At this point the coach tries to sum up:

C5 '*well, it sounds to me like you are feeling totally overwhelmed by..all the reactive work you kind of have to do..and you don't feel you have people to delegate to..?*

This, however, triggers the same response. The coachee is saying she needs to act but seems resistant to that.

EE5 '*..you have to plan your next steps..I don't have time to do it in the Autumn, if I leave it now, then suddenly another year will go by.. and I am another year older and I haven't gone anywhere and I haven't gained anything..I am just doing the same drudge.. so I need to understand..what the other opportunities might be and how one can progress here.'*

Mezirow (1981:20) says:

'We must respond to the learner's educational need, which will improve the quality of his or her self-directedness as a learner'

The coach, however, stays with the goal-centred approach.

C5 '*so what do you feel you could do to find out what the opportunities are and..have you got any..initial thoughts?*

This question allows the coachee to reflect on her professional profile and take responsibility for how she might develop that profile for the purpose of moving on. It

seems she is beginning to look at possible ways forward. However she apparently can't resist reminding the coach of how insignificant she feels.

EE5 '*well, there are 2 sides to this..one is the skills I already have that I am not using..and the other side of it is what skills are needed at a higher level..I know there is the leadership programme..even at South Bank..I was at a decent level, here..I just feel like..I am not used to being a small cog in a big wheel. I feel like a very very tiny cog in a big wheel and I earn like not a very big cog in a big wheel..I would really like to have a bit more control over my day....whereas my day is just emails..and being told what to do when you already know what to do..*'

C5 '*so the leadership course, you are definitely applying for that - how does that feel to you?*'

EE5 '*..it feels hopeful*'

The coachee continues to talk about her frustrations - '*I am a supervisor, rather than a manager*'. The crux of the problem seems to be this lack of status. They stay with a solution-focused approach to a career move.

The coachee reflects on her skills justifying why she should be in a more prestigious role. She talks about having worked previously in Europe and therefore hoping for a role with an international side. She discusses wanting to know about research.

Later in the conversation, the coach tries to steer her again towards finding out about higher positions. Questions focus on who to talk to and how to go about doing that, for example:

C5 '*.. what other things do you think you could do?*

and

C5 '*so going back to things around research and European things, what do you think you could do to find out more about that..?*

The coachee begins to write a list.

At this point, there is a slight shift in the conversation. It seems as if the coachee is now providing reasons for not applying for posts. She has described her skills and attributes and reasons for wishing a higher status post, now she seems to be saying her lack of certain skills prevents her progression.

EE5 ‘..I mean the Programme Manager job that came up the other day, the IT thing, if I had Prince I would have gone for it to be honest but I don’t have Prince..there are floors and floors and corridors and corridors of people doing things, what goes on there..where are the non academic opportunities at a level of responsibility that one can go for..?’

Ideas for people to talk with and exploring the IOE website for details of colleagues' roles, are discussed and written down. The coach punctuates these ideas with direct questions:

C5 ‘is there anyone else or anything else that you think you can do to get a better understanding of..?’

C5 ‘..do you know where to get a hold of these..?’

C5 ‘so that’s something you would be interested in getting into?’

The coachee however, continues to talk about not being in a more superior role at present. Perhaps she wishes to explore these feelings more but has not articulated this. Her use of metaphor emphasising frustrations becomes more elaborate.

‘Metaphors are the tools of communicative learning. We confront the unknown by making associations with what we know...we compare incidents, key concepts, or works and relate them to our meaning schemes’ (Mezirow 1991: 80)

Does she feel the coach hasn't understood the extent of her frustration? Or does she not recognise it herself? For example, she says:

EE5 'I am stuck on one tip on an iceberg..there are lots of other tips you can't see..it is a bit like that..'

EE5 'or like being in the Canaries when you have volcano tips and I am at one volcano..actually if you were to do a drawing..it would be like a sort of volcanic island, looking out and seeing about twenty volcanos like Hawaii, so I will think about Hawaii with all these little volcanos sticking above the clouds..and actually underneath they are all connected..but it's understanding how those connections work..'

The coachee links back to salary, keeping the conversation on a superficial level. It seems so far that professional identity has been as important, if not more, than the salary level, however it hasn't been explored.

EE5 'Every organisation is cutting back..it is almost about becoming a manager again because..in universities, in education..on the administrative side or non academic side..having the title manager usually means that you have reached a certain level..therefore you have got a certain pay rate'.

The response prompts the coach to ask about priorities:

C5 'what would you say is your top priority, imagine you reached where you want to be in two years time..what is the main thing about it that makes you feel..that's it, I have arrived at where I wanted to be'?'?

The coachee's response confirms there is more to 'manager' than salary. She is ambitious and feels she ought to have a post commensurate with this.

EE5 '..ah well, you see, I will never have arrived..always keep going..why should somebody else be higher than you..it's about being comfortable'

C5 'what do you mean by 'comfortable..do you mean financially..?'?

EE5 'no, I actually mean feeling comfortable that you are in the role that you have got..yes..feeling like the job is at a high enough level that you can think..ok..I am comfortable here now for the next 5 years'

She goes on to confirm, being happy, having variety, responsibility and power are important – all attributes of management perhaps? What she wants to escape from is the mundane activity of data entry. She enjoys reading, analysing and understanding things. She feels she does not have a job with an intellectual side.

Towards the end of the session, the coachee has drafted a plan of action. She sums up the main things she wants to achieve, how she will do this and why. What remains dominant is the feeling of moving upwards, developing personally, not feeling isolated and feeling that her perception of herself is the correct one. She is beginning to recognise that she can be proactive in this rather than finding the IOE in some way responsible for not recognising her. She says:

EE5 ‘You are sort of putting yourself above the parapet..saying ‘hey I am interested’ because I think that is really important. I have not just come to sit in this office for the next 10 years, I have a bigger plan than that..I have skills, I have experience, I have knowledge..I am willing to travel, I am willing to put myself out..I don’t want another year to go by..I have always worked with people who don’t mind being isolated..whereas I want to be part of the bigger picture..I want to know where I fit in it..’

The conversation concludes with them agreeing to review the situation in two months' time. The coachee appears happy with a 'to do' list, however some issues appear to remain unresolved – the issue of the manager and the career progression.

This conversation has remained in Domain one where the focus is on setting goals which might ameliorate the frustrations the coachee is experiencing. The coach has stayed focused on finding solutions to the 'job' issue. Opportunities to explore learning in Domain three present themselves, for example, it might have been interesting to explore the underlying reasons for the coachee's frustrations with her current professional identity and perceived lack of status. The coachee, however, has

not articulated this is what she would like to discuss. Perhaps she does not realise these issues are as important as they appear in this conversation. Might it be a lack of knowledge or experience which prevents the coach from exploring learning in Domain three? This conversation has importance for developing knowledge and practice in the coach-learning group.

Conversation 6

Short overview

'Reflection serves a purpose...reflection is different depending on whether the learner's purpose is task-orientated problem solving, understanding what someone else means, or understanding the self.' (Mezirow 1991: 15)

In this conversation the coachee summarises a previous coaching session (with another coach) which focused on her career. She wishes to focus on knowledge gained from that session. Strategies for exploring future career opportunities are discussed. A list of tasks and a timescale is constructed.

Mid conversation the coachee alludes to feeling she would like to discuss the underlying reasons for her possible career change – the return of a colleague from maternity leave. The conversation however, stays with the focus on a career change and tasks to be employed that might lead to this.

The coachee leaves with a written task list. She also expresses feeling more in control of her feelings around the maternity leave. She seems content with both the task list and the change in her feelings.

Summary

This coachee is keen to use this coaching opportunity to discuss in detail, ways of becoming focused and proactive in seeking opportunities for growth and development.

C6 *'We have been talking about various things in the past and I understand you have got something new to talk about..'*

The coachee begins by explaining her current position. There is some conflict for her in terms of contentment in a new job, but feeling she should embrace new opportunities presented.

EE6 '*I am actually quite happy in my job. I feel quite well placed to..start thinking, OK what kind of direction do I go into? I think before I felt a little bit stuck in a corner whereas now I feel there are loads of opportunities for me to grow and develop'*

'When I went to that career coaching session, what really came out of it was that I need to do a lot more exploring..I was hoping to get more focused and then at the end of it..I felt a bit like 'oh well, I am not at all focused, it is all about exploring things'

The coach picks up on the 'exploring', enquiring if this is the most important area for the coachee to learn about.

C6 '*did you look at how you can explore or do you want to talk about how you explore..?*'

The coachee reflects on some of the tasks suggested at the career coaching, for example, joining LinkedIn. What emerges however, is:

EE6 '*I have got my notes from the meeting, I have a list of concrete things to do but I haven't done them yet'*

Using direct questioning, the coach begins to unpick this:

C6 '*..so this is the crux of things really, what is stopping you from doing any of them?*'

EE6 '*yes.*'

C6 '*When was your career coaching session?*'

EE6 '*It was 5th Jan..*'

C6 '*So that was 2 weeks ago, so what is stopping you.?.*'

This last question appears to lead the coachee to reflect more closely on the career meeting. She constructs her achievements since the meeting.

EE6 ‘Well.. I did do two things..I did register in two groups..one was ARMA and the other one was Knowledge London which are two organisations I am effectively part of..’

The coach has facilitated the realisation that the coachee’s perception is quite different from the reality.

C6 ‘so it’s already better than you thought?’

EE6 ‘it is already better than I thought..that is true. That is true.’

The coach begins to make a number of suggestions to the coachee, who writes them down.

EE6 ‘Well, I would like to join some kind of coaching group..(I will just make notes as well)’

C6 ‘You would like to join the coaching group?’

EE6 ‘Yes, I don’t know which..’

C6 ‘There is a group called ‘Coaching at Work’.

EE6 ‘Is there..OK?’

C6 ‘..the Association for Coaching..You can become an affiliate member of that..and then you get all the information..and you get the emails saying there are events happening..so excuse me for strategising because I know about that and..you may need to be a member of the association before you can link to..the Association for Coaching..?’

The conversation continues with an exploration of routes for career progression.

C6 ‘..you can have a look at the websites of all these Associations of Coaching..excuse the mentoring, strategising.. you can join it on line..it’s all very slick. You can always drop me an email if there is a problem’

EE6 ‘OK then brilliant..that is great’

C6 'So what about your own profile on LinkedIn ?

EE6 'Yes, my own profile is quite basic at the moment. I need to do a bit more work on my CV, and once I have done that then I can upload it..so that's something else quite specific to do really..em'

C6 'so you are giving yourself some tasks there..'

The conversation so far is very task orientated. A little later, the coach checks some information leading to more suggestions.

C6 ..am I right in thinking you are already doing a coaching qualification?'

EE6 'Yes, I am working on.. 'Post Graduate Certificate in Mentoring and Coaching'.

C6 'Does that have any affiliation, any accreditation, does that have any links to the organisations, there's not only the Association for Coaching, there is EMC squared, that is a European Mentoring and Coaching.?'

The coach sums up the current situation keeping a tight focus on the tasks and setting of goals for a future meeting.

'To show someone a new set of rules, tactics and criteria for judging which clarify the situation in which he or she must act is significantly different from trying to engineer learner consent to take the actions favoured by the educator' (Mezirow 1981: 20)

This next extract is noteworthy as the coach is explicit that she is driving the conversation in a particular direction. Mezirow (1981) might see this as not particularly helping learning; however, in this case the coach's suggestions may be helpful.

C6 'so you are doing the certificate, you have a full time job..say we were to meet again in a month's time, are there other tasks that you are thinking about..is there some way of doing a plan of the tasks that would help you towards your career thinking..I am trying to get you to think now a bit more about..for example, the Association of Coaching or EMC squared, if you were to join it, how would you use that?'

In this next extract, the coachee begins to reveal more about her uncertainty around her career progression. She feels she lacks direction. She has had a number of jobs and seems unsure of what she likes to do. Working in different environments gives her an idea of what she likes and dislikes about a job as she explains:

EE6 '*I feel I have spent all my working life kind of trying things, trying a bit of this and that, and there is part of me that would like to feel a bit more focused, but actually, I don't know, I think maybe I just need to be focusing and thinking 'oh this is the direction I was going into' but actually you just have to go with the flow a little bit. I just don't know what I like until I have actually done it and say 'Oh I like doing that'*

The coach keeps the focus on the setting of tasks. There is another example of her giving advice. In this next statement, she seems to recognise this..

C6 '*I mean, say for example..(this is strange coaching I am doing here) you were to go to a meeting..would you go to that meeting with certain goals do you think..?*'

EE6 '*Mm, yes well I suppose there is a networking element em..'*

C6 '*so if you are going networking, how would you prepare for that session?*'

EE6 '*yes, how do you prepare for networking, bring my business cards..'*

C6 '*you might get a list of organisations where they are from in advance...that's a start, isn't it? That is a really constructive way to look at it. So that has got the next networking event thought about..'*

EE6 '*yes, it is useful to go back to my notes..'*

C6 '*Sort of developing a little action plan for each aspect, is that what you think would be helpful. You mentioned your CV earlier, how are you going about that?*'

Within the conversation, they have constructed a list of tasks the coachee has completed, together with some ideas for the future. The coachee seems to have achieved more than she thought. This is acknowledged.

C6 ‘..you thought for two weeks that you hadn’t done much..but you have done a few things already..do you have a timeframe in mind for when you might want to..be moving forward..?’

There is a shift in the conversation. The next extract reveals some underlying anxieties which might also explain the coachee’s motivation to make career changes. Despite the fact that, as she says at the beginning, she enjoys her new job, it transpires the ‘new job’ has been the result of a maternity leave. The coachee’s dilemma, which has now emerged, is that the colleague is soon to return.

EE6 ‘..The other thing which is happening..is..I was partly covering a maternity leave, and the person is coming back in April..and it has been really awkward because my job has been made permanent..and she is not quite clear what she is coming back to, but she is coming back in our team. She is also a bit more senior than me..it all feels it’s going to be a bit difficult – because, I have kind of taken the space..’

The coachee seems to reflect on her concerns, identifying several issues emerging from this situation she finds herself in. She constructs the benefits of the post in terms of her enjoying her work and the new responsibilities. At this point the coach has not intervened for some time.

The coachee is forward thinking, developing an awareness of possible problems. She realises she can take some ownership and responsibility for facilitating the colleague’s smooth return to the team. It is interesting to note, however, her feeling that if it doesn’t work out, this will be the catalyst for her moving on.

EE6 ‘I was a bit nervous about suddenly feeling..she is in charge again and I am kind of under her..but we are working through that now..I think we have got quite a healthy team and we are talking about that..and it might be that it doesn’t work out for me in which case I will need to move on..’

The coach moves back to thinking about tasks:

C6 ‘so have you got a preparation project underway?’

EE6 ‘Well, we have got a plan set up, we have got a whole afternoon set up for the whole team in February..to talk about the next six months and what we are going to be doing ..’

The conversation continues with discussing planned meetings and strategies for the return from maternity leave. The coach uses the technique of visualising the future to help the coachee prepare ahead. By the end of this extract, the coach moves to a question that ends with a focus on feelings.

C6 ‘What would you like to have in place by the time she gets back, for example? Where would you like to be, are there things you need to do, what would you like to have ready, how would you like to feel when she comes back in April?’

The conversation appears to confirm the coachee’s awareness of the reasons behind her proposed career change. She does, however, revert back to something mentioned at the start – that of feeling she might procrastinate and let things slip. From this next extract, we get a sense that the coachee is quite self-aware. She seems to be giving signals to the coach of some important, underlying feelings but has not been explicit that she would like to explore these. The coach suggests keeping strong is another task to think about.

EE6 ‘I want to make sure I am focusing on my career and what is good for me..I will make sure there is enough room for me in all of that.’

I suppose what I was worrying about most which I am less worried about now..is to lose myself and let slip..things happen, I feel I can be like that, I can be quite passive..and let other people make decisions and kind of..em’

C6 ‘so that’s another one of the things you are preparing, is that you are making sure that you are strong..is what you are saying to me?’

The conversation moves again. The coachee alludes to the notion of the importance of the organisation and her place within it. Perhaps she feels a conflict between doing what is best for her and how that fits with the needs of the organisation.

EE6 '*I am making sure I am doing what is right for me so that I am in a good position to..make the right decisions for me. It doesn't mean that I am not loyal to the Institute and what the Institute needs and what the team needs to do for the Institute, because..you know, we need to do something for the Institute..'*

Plans for the return of the colleague on maternity leave are discussed. The coach keeps the focus on the coachee, steering her away from the benefits to the organisation.

C6 '*How are you going to make sure that you make time for these things you need to do? How are you going to..for yourself and for work? How have you made time for it so far?*'

EE6 '*..that's a good question..I don't know if I have got time..*'

C6 '*what could you do to make time? This is about you..not about the job, about you..what about you..?*'

They explore ideas for setting aside time to complete tasks written down during this session. After a time the coachee seems happy.

EE6 '*That feels good..*'

This coaching session is moving towards the end. It has engaged mainly in advice giving and task setting. The session has also been a space for the coachee to articulate some of her underlying anxieties about work.

In this last phase, the coach takes time to explore the coachee's feelings.

C6 'What do you do when you have a personal objective like that? Say you couldn't do a Thursday what will you do about it?'

EE6 'I'd probably set another time. If I postpone it once or twice..it would probably be alright. If I start to postpone it more than that, then that is when I start to slip and then that's a signal 'what's the point' em..so I don't know..how to avoid that'

C6 'just a thought..speaking as a number one procrastinator..how will you feel after an hour working on yourself?'

EE6 'well, very good..most of the time it would be very good..like after a coaching session..it just feels really good..'

In the final minutes, there is a sense of a shift in the coachee's perspective on the maternity leave. It seems to have been a worry for her, but now, having focused more on her own career, she appears to be feeling more positive. She explains:

EE6 'it's interesting because it is quite subtle..I know it is obvious but because I am worrying about my counterpart coming back from maternity leave..it felt like a huge thing before Christmas and I am feeling a lot calmer about it..I think partly because I am tackling this..it just seems so obvious now..'

The coach ends by checking that the coachee has written down all the actions she will be taking.

EE6 'I need to make sure I am doing my job well, you know..taking the benefit of the opportunities I am given in my current role..'

C6 'so that's another action, when do you think you will do..what have you written..?'

EE6 'I have written, making sure I am growing in my role..I maybe try some kind of..management style stuff..which I have read about or seen done or whatever..about planning as a team..so that is something I need to do in the next couple of weeks really..I know what I have done before and it's worked before, was to kind of block time in the diary..'

The coach ends by summing up her own impression of what will make the coachee feel good:

C6 'so this is great..if we start to wrap up..you have got some discreet actions, you have got a bit of a timescale on it now..I think that helps and I get the impression that..two things, one is good for you careerwise, and also, getting something planned will make you feel good..you can pick things out of all this and ..out of your notes

This conversation has remained in Domain one and focuses on work and work-related issues (similar to Conversation 5). The coach seems to avoid more personal exploration as in Domain three. Reflection has remained at a conscious level. Assumptions remain unchallenged. Opportunities arose to move towards critical conscious reflection particularly around the 'maternity leave' issue but were not taken up. This could have resulted in deeper learning bringing about more satisfaction with her current role and future prospects.

The coachee seems to perceive the work situation in a more positive light, however, no learning has taken place around the 'maternity issue'. She leaves with a task-list. Learning has remained at a superficial level.

4.2 Further observations

'Most adult learning is multi-dimensional and involves learning to control the environment, to understand meaning as we communicate with others, and to understand ourselves.' (Mezirow 1991: 89)

The three distinct, but interrelated learning domains posited above by Mezirow, help us understand how new learning might be constructed. Each domain suggests a different mode of learning and is related to personal learning needs (Mezirow 1981).

Askew and Carnell (2011) situate coaching mainly within Domain two. Mezirow (1981) interprets this domain as that of acquiring Communicative Knowledge.

Through exploration and interaction, the coach and coachee make sense of and gain new insights and understandings of a situation.

All coachees wished to make sense of and understand situations they found themselves in. C1 assists EE1 in making sense of her learning from a writing course together with understanding why she procrastinates. C2 helps EE2 make sense of a new work situation. C3 works with EE3 to make sense of feelings of underachievement. C4 helps EE4 make sense of her 'crazy' working life and why she is so irritated that morning. C5 and C6 explore coachees' concerns with their respective careers, realising they wish to make sense of career opportunities.

The boundaries between the domains are not always rigid. In the conversations, there is some suggestion that learning might straddle other domains. I give some examples.

In Conversation one, much of the focus on learning is on developing self-awareness as in Domain three. Through the intervention of focused questions and the use of

the word 'yourself', C1 shifts the conversation towards exploring EE1's perception of herself as a writer, and the underlying cause of her procrastination. For example:

C1 '*..why is that so important to you? What does that tell you about yourself?*'

C1 '*..how do you feel about yourself achieving those huge improvements?*'

C1 '*why don't you take yourself seriously as a writer*'

C1 '*..so it is not taking yourself seriously..you need to check out whether this whole thing about the computer is a displacement activity...*'

Domain one refers to Instrumental Learning - learning to act in the surrounding environment, and is associated with improving workplace performance. This learning has an objective focus, that is, its focus is on external factors (Mezirow 2000).

EE2 wishes to make sense of her new working environment. Attempts to adapt to the environment have been unsettling. C2 suggests:

C2 '*would it be useful to start by reviewing how it has gone so far..it might be interesting to get some ideas about it*'

EE2 is invited to learn in Domain one. She describes the content of the problem, the environment, details of emails and meetings which have unsettled her. C2 could follow a goal-centred approach to think about specific ways of coping with this. However, EE2 verbally signals to C2 to explore her anxieties when she says:

EE2 '*I think I'd like to look at why I am shy..and..not very confident about being in that role..what happens when I am in it..and what happens when I come away from it.*'

EE2 discusses being uncomfortable with being freelance. When she alludes to the notion of being 'found out', C2 shifts the conversation into Domain three to unpick where these feelings have come from and if they have ever been helpful:

C2 '*mm..and how does that notion of being found out help you?*'

C2 '*Where did the idea come from in the beginning? Can you remember the first time you felt like you might be found out?*'

EE3 begins in Domain one talking about her writing experiences, trying to make sense of feelings of underachievement. She describes her structured way of working, setting goals and targets, enjoying patterns of rhythm and routine. As she reflects on past experiences in her working life, she begins to recognise that she understands achievement as ease of doing things. Her personal experience is of always being successful. Understanding and recognising these feelings has taken her briefly into Domain three. The coach realises this:

C3 '*..so are you feeling like this is going to take some work and it's more work than you would normally..?*'

EE3 '*..I am finding that, yes I suppose so, I am used to succeeding (laughing) oh dear poor little rich girl hmm..yeah..I am needing a bit of humbleility?*'

Conversations five and six appear to remain located in Domain one, where the focus is on setting goals and targets for their working life. Instrumental learning often involves predictions about events which may or may not happen (Mezirow 1981).

EE5 is anxious about what will/will not happen if she is not proactive about a career change. EE6 speculates on the effect of a colleague coming back from maternity leave. Reflection seems to focus on the content of the problem first presented.

Opportunities for more critical reflection to explore learning in Domain three present themselves, for example, EE5 refers frequently to frustrations with her professional identity. EE6 makes connections between being unsettled in her career and worrying about the colleague returning from maternity leave. Both seem satisfied, however, that they leave with 'to do' lists.

Critical reflection for deeper self-awareness does not occur in all conversations, so learning in Domain three does not always appear to be facilitated. This does not mean, of course, that it did not occur – but if it did then it was not always made explicit. This raises the question of whether Domain three learning is appropriate or possible in a work context. Learning in Domain three is important and may provide the learner with detailed self-awareness, but Domains one and two have relevance and are important when facilitating learning in the workplace (Mezirow 1981).

It is interesting to note, particularly in conversations 1, 2 and at times 3, that despite coachees achieving significant success in their academic lives, concerns with their current working practices are dominant. The systems we use to view, understand and interpret our present world are acquired as a result of socialisation in childhood through interactions with parents, schools and others in authority (Mezirow 1990). We can become trapped by these systems. It is interesting to note that through critical reflection facilitated by the coach, C2 comes to understand that some of her misgivings about her ability to undertake a new role stem from her religious upbringing and her school experience. C3 sees success and achievement as synonymous with one another. Crucial in adulthood is the process of critical reflection to establish if what we have learned and internalised is useful to us (Mezirow 1990). Transformation may occur when our assumptions are challenged. This may be

triggered in adulthood by the emergence of a Disorientating Dilemma (Mezirow 1990).

It might be safe to assume that the coaching process in conversations 1, 2 and 3 has begun to lead coachees to transform their perspectives. This is evident when C2 exclaims loudly 'I am a consultant' or when C3 shifts perspective and recognises six chapters as substantial achievement.

Transformative Learning as an agent of change is 'elegantly simple' (Cranton 2002: 64). Adopting a Mezirowian perspective has, I suggest, provided a useful framework to discover and describe learning. The framework however, has also highlighted some questions for discussion with the coach-learning group.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Despite the relatively small sample, the transcripts provided rich data. In this discussion, I highlight findings which will inform practice and be shared with the coach-learning group. Using extracts from the data, I support my idea that coaching is underpinned by democratic values. Suggestions for future professional development of the coach-learning group are presented. Finally, I offer some further reflections on Mezirow's theory which may have relevance for future research.

5.2 Findings

At this point it is useful to be reminded of the research question.

What are the learning processes and underpinning values in the peer-coaching service at the Institute of Education?

Most interesting was discovering that coaches, who trained together practise very differently, therefore perhaps perceive learning and coaching differently. Whilst there was a feel of a framework of exploring issues and ways to move forward, coaches seem to interpret the framework differently. Some focus on the issue first presented. Others look for previous patterns at work. Some support critical reflection on beliefs, origins of these beliefs and whether or not they serve any useful purpose. Others support the coachee's perception of the world, for example, that the organisation is unfriendly. Some focus completely on goals and tasks. Coaching in the IOE happens

outside of the line-management structure with coaches representing a cross-section of staff (Carnell et al 2006). They facilitate learning as they understand it. It might be fair to suppose that the service does not offer consistency.

I am aware that some coaches are academic staff who may think more about learning as their job is concerned with supporting learning. For example, the original facilitators of the group, and participants in this research, have particular views and knowledge of learning and coaching. Perhaps they are comfortable engaging in critical conscious reflection picking up signals from the coachee to explore issues more deeply.

There was a variation in who dominated the conversations. In conversations one and two, neither participant dominated. Coaches responded to verbal signals which seemed to decide the course of the conversation. For example, by using the expressions '*learning I hadn't thought about*', '*I wanted to bring this up*', '*who is important, and being found out*', frames of reference were explored to learn and understand how beliefs or attitudes had been formed.

In conversation three, EE3 dominated. She seemed highly reflective arriving at the point herself where she recognised her feelings of underachievement were due to life experiences of always being successful. Perhaps C3 recognised this.

EE4 dominated the conversation by talking about her frustrations in the workplace. Using her knowledge of the organisation, C4 seemed to collude and empathise with her, encouraging her to explore her experience and judgement of her colleague. This led to EE4 understanding that late-coming was, in fact, inappropriate. C4's interventions helped shift the conversation in a direction where alternative solutions

to frustrations were explored, leading EE4 to express she had moved from '*irascible to poised in an hour*'.

In some conversations, opportunities for learning through critical conscious reflection emerged but were not taken up. For example, EE3 alluded to feelings of failure, EE4 was concerned with people's perception of her – these issues were not explored further.

C5 and C6 both stayed with a task-centred approach - more informative than transformative - focusing on Mezirow's phases of 'Planning a course of action' and 'Acquiring knowledge to implement one's plans'. C6 particularly, adopts a 'banking-style' approach to learning in that she makes a number of suggestions to the coachee, who writes them down. Giving advice is something not often done in coaching. C6 recognises this when she says '*(this is strange coaching I am doing here)*'. Again opportunities arose for critical conscious reflection. EE6 realises that some of her anxieties surfaced as a result of a colleague returning from maternity leave. EE5 constantly refers to the notion of 'manager'. I wonder if EE5's constant use of metaphor throughout her conversation was an unconscious signal to the coach.

We cannot see learning or change taking place, and we have no evidence that any change is brought about by coaching, but a personal observation (two years on from the data collection) is that EE2, who explored her frames of reference, is currently a confident freelance consultant. EE3 recognises her writing achievements more. EE5 who stayed with goal-setting and did not explore feelings about professional identity, is still in the same frustrating post. Perhaps critical conscious reflection is, in the long term, more effective?

Most notable in the conversations is the trusting relationship evidenced by the way participants talk with openness, humour and at times a willingness to speak of some personal issues. Whilst effective coaching may have positive effects on the organisation (Douglas 1997), in Chapter 2 I argued that it should ideally be primarily for the benefit of the individual. In all conversations professional issues were discussed, however, a personal focus and its relationship to the professional issue, was dominant. Coachees wanted to change for their own progress and development. There was no evidence of change being specifically for the organisation. EE4 seemed to feel some tensions, but only EE6 briefly suggested:

'I am making sure I am doing what is right for me. It doesn't mean that I am not loyal to the Institute and what the Institute needs to do..because obviously..we need to do something for the Institute'

However, C6 swiftly reminded her '*This is about you..not about the job, about you..*'

5.3 Coaching and democratic values

I argued in Chapter 2, that a democracy should facilitate 'human flourishing' (Macmurray 1950). Dewey (1916) argues the goal of a democracy is to develop and grow the individual and that it is transformative in character. These ideas are useful when exploring links between peer-coaching at the IOE and democratic values.

Key to a democracy is the ability to think and work freely and not feel controlled or bound by duty (Cunningham 2012). When feeling controlled, people crave autonomy (Deci and Ryan 2000). 'What ought I to do? is on the path to autonomy' (Peters 1966: 192). I suggest coachees ask themselves this question prior to their first

session. Coaches help explore 'what to do'. For example, C2 helped EE2 deal with insecurities around being a freelance consultant. In conversations four, five and six, coachees seemed to feel quite constrained by the organisation. By coming to coaching they were taking the initial steps towards independent thinking and taking more control of their lives within their work context. Macmurray (1950), however, suggested that thinking independently and being free can make us feel somewhat threatened. It was interesting to note that becoming 'free' from the IOE seemed to contribute to EE2's lack of confidence:

EE2 '*..it is about 600 people, rather like marching on your own, you are marching with a huge regiment, so you are less vulnerable*'.

Macmurray's 'paradox of freedom' - living with the fallout from independence, may help understand this feeling (1950: 19).

Coachees used the sessions as a forum for exploring issues. The contemporary culture of targets, performance indicators and accountability may explain why EE4, more familiar with working in a flexible, autonomous way, was irritated by suddenly being challenged - controlled. Perhaps she felt undermined.

EE4 '*my worry is..because the workload is so high, there will be something I have missed that will go to a complaint or something official, or something a bit more formal, and suddenly this will turn all the..nice feeling that we have got..*'

People feel like 'cogs in a huge impersonal machine' if they become frustrated in a controlling environment (Cunningham 2012: 703). It is interesting to note that EE5, who feels she is not reaching her full potential, expresses this:

EE5 '*I am not used to being a small cog in a big wheel. I feel like a very very tiny cog in a big wheel and I earn like not a very big cog in a big wheel.. I would really like to have a bit more control over my day..my day is just emails..and..being told what to do when you already know what to do..'*

Conversations four and five, expose some pockets of control within the IOE, creating tensions for the coachees, however, by discussing freely, in a non-judgemental environment, ways to deal with their concerns, coachees are encouraged to take more control. By the end of the conversations, EE4 had shifted perspective and felt less irascible. In the cases of EE5 and EE6, they drafted up lists of tasks to help move forward. This may have felt like taking more control of their working lives.

Equality of opportunity is about providing opportunities for people to reach full potential (Baker 1996). Everyone at the IOE is treated equally by being given the opportunity to experience coaching. This would include engaging in developing self awareness, as in Domain three, rather than just performing more effectively. Findings have shown that this deeper learning doesn't always happen. However, the service is set up in a democratic way in that coaches come from across the IOE; all experience professional development together and coach colleagues, regardless of their professional position (Carnell et al 2006). Conversations had a collaborative, egalitarian approach. Participants consisted of academic and administrative staff – all were coached and treated respectfully.

I am aware of the sensitivities involved in presenting findings to the group. They should not be seen as criticisms.

Learning in a democracy should be about human flourishing (Macmurray 1950, Campbell 2007). Gaining understanding of our historical contexts contributes to

developing autonomy (Mezirow 1991). In the coaching conversations, some habits and beliefs surfaced. Regardless of what they were, all coaches treated them respectfully and, I believe, in a non-judgemental way. This is evidenced by participants appearing comfortable with discussing some sensitive, personal experiences and judgements (Wegmarshaus 2007). I give some examples.

A belief in the personal value of ambition may be self or culturally-imposed and can be stressful (Bachkirova 2005). Having and maintaining a profession generally approved by society can be rewarding but can be stressful (Bachkirova 2005). EE5 expresses how negative she feels about her professional identity and not being recognised as a 'manager'. I sense a tension between her wishing to reach her full potential and her perceived lack of status. Some people feel failures if they are not living up to self-imposed expectations or ambitions (Bachkirova 2005). EE3 alludes to feeling a failure as she is not achieving as highly in the writing community as she would like. Both of these coachees appear to have a strong desire, or ambition, to reach a particular position. People can become quite affected by others' judgements or perceptions of them. EE2 refers to her childhood and being compared to siblings. She seems to see her successes as a fluke. This manifests itself by her often feeling that she will be 'found out'. EE4 is particularly concerned about her workload and the possibility of making a mistake. This leads her to being concerned about how students and colleagues will judge her. Democracy is about acknowledging people and difference in a positive constructive way (McKenna 2007). All coaches were very supportive in their discussions.

Essential to being an autonomous person, is the concept of reason which may involve an exploratory conversation aimed at developing an ability to make rational, informed choices and thinking about the reasons behind choices (Law 2007). It

involves better understanding of the contexts in which we live and work and the struggle that may come with that (Pring 2012). We can see this process in conversation four when EE4 justifies her lateness.

EE4 '*we both know we should be there at 9.30 am, we both know that we need to call in if we are going to be late after 9.45 am, we also know we work very hard, we get the work done, we don't take the piss, we do stay longer, we do take shorter lunch breaks, we prioritise our work..so it is annoying.. to be kind of..ticked off..school teachery..for a few minutes lateness..'*

The coach helps the coachee understand, that her late-coming, was not acceptable.

C4 '*so you have been called on something which..technically..is right..but actually, in the spirit of the way you work, is dead wrong?’*

Developing an awareness of others, together with acknowledging and appreciating different views, can expand horizons and be an enriching experience (Pring 2012).

The coach asks how the coachee would behave if all was well, and how she might understand how others would see her.

EE4 '*..well, my face has relaxed all of a sudden, I can feel it..and my jaw is not as tight as it was when I was just talking..I can come in, I can look at my email..I can actually reply to some emails..and I can decide that day what I need to be doing if I haven't already planned it and say 'right I need to do this'..so then tomorrow I can do that..and in that day I will have accomplished something meaningful, I will have started something and finished something'..I would look at the week and say 'I need to do that in time for this'..and I will..have come in on time..I will have gone home on time..I will have taken my lunch hour..in full'*

C4 '*how would your line manager see you?’*

EE4 '*..they would see me as being present..they would see me managing..actually better than managing.. and a bit more relaxed..the team would see me a bit more relaxed and I wouldn't be..a little irascible with them..’*

EE4 now realises that her colleagues would probably appreciate her being happier, more in control of her work load and working autonomously. She seems now to understand she can make a choice to take control of her working life.

In conversation six, the coachee rationalises her feelings about a colleague returning to work. She acknowledges that she evades making decisions.

EE6 '*I can be quite passive..and kind of let other people make decisions..'*

C6 '*so that's..one of the things you are preparing, is that you are making sure that you are strong..is what you are saying to me?'*

The challenge from the coach leads her to realise that:

EE6 '*yes, exactly, I am making sure I am doing what is right for me so that I am in a good position to..make the right decisions for me.'*

Learning in a democracy involves people coming together in a trusting, respectful environment for support and growth (Hart 2007). Coaching at the IOE seems to offer a platform for exploring possibilities for change, achievement and development. I now understand that coaching at the IOE is underpinned with, and promotes democratic values.

5.4 Informing practice

Findings highlighted inconsistency in the service. What I perceived to be a strength – coaches coming from across the organisation - may present issues. As mentioned on page 167, practice may be diverse due to the variations in coaches' academic interests and experience. For example, I have been a member of the group since its

inception. Others have been members for two years. Being aware of a disparity in the range of experiences is beneficial for planning professional development.

It is useful to return to the learning-centred model which the group originally worked with (Appendix 7). Practise could include engaging more with this model as a framework for the conversations. I am not suggesting rigid use of the model but more as a guideline and prompt. This may enhance the consistency of the coaching offered and may help maximise the coachees' learning.

The data suggests that coaches understand and interpret learning differently. Some perceive setting goals, which may be short-term, as the purpose of coaching. Others respond to verbal signals from the coachee to probe issues more deeply, perhaps leading to a prolonged change in behaviour or attitude. It would be useful to understand more why some coaches appear to resist probing deeply.

In 1.2, I highlighted a concern that coaching is sometimes denied professional status due to lacking a theoretical position. This thesis identifies links with Transformative Learning Theory. I suggest it is a powerful framework in which to position coaching contributing to its professionalisation. Using the research data as evidence, I would wish to suggest the following activities and points for discussion to the group:

- Introduce the learning domains (Page 63), what they mean and how they could be applied to coaching,
- Explore when it may be appropriate to explore learning in domain three which explores beneath the surface of an issue. This would include recognising verbal signals from the coachee to probe deeper, for example the use of metaphor and analogy as a means of expressing the intensity of an issue.

- Examine the appropriateness of exploring learning in domain three in a work context?
- Engage in professional development which develops awareness of different understandings of learning and reflection and how they may relate to, and assist with, coachees' issues.
- Introduce the possible phases in the transformative learning process, particularly the notions of disorientating dilemma and frames of reference.
- Acknowledge that coaching may be the start of a coachee's journey. How do we handle the emotional experiences of coachees when dealing with change, difficult decisions or taking risks? If fostering transformative learning, how to recognise when a coachee is verging on transformation?
- Develop awareness of how a coachee's transformation might potentially affect their peers?
- Set aside time in supervision sessions to develop listening skills, checking hunches to identify what is really important. Also, practising questioning skills to guide reflection, recognising when and perhaps why the coachee avoids answering, then focusing the questions more to explore a wider range of options.
- Acknowledge that coaches are involved in transformational leadership and coachees are on a transformational spectrum.
- Introduce the notion of coaching being underpinned with democratic values as a reminder that the focus should be on empowering coachees' own decision-making.

Coachees expressed thanks at the end of each conversation, but this does not tell us if learning or change has taken place or that it is coaching that has led to any

change. Coachees are invited to evaluate the service as mentioned on Page 27. Currently the group does not see evaluations. Liaising more closely with Staff Development to receive feedback, confidential of course, for the purposes of improving our practice would be useful. Currently the evaluation form focuses on general 'satisfaction' with the service. Redesigning the form with a clearer focus on 'learning' and 'change' experienced, might provide more beneficial information.

The learning-centred model suggests the importance of meta-learning. This only happened in conversations one and two. Coaches' professional development should include developing this skill to help coachees explore their own learning. It would be useful to articulate more clearly in the IOE's advertising, that coaching engages with learning and change. Change may take time. Coaching may be the starting point.

Whilst the above changes focus on the coachee, acknowledging benefits to the coach is important. Coaches may experience transformation when learning to be a coach. I have alluded to this in the Reflective Statement at the beginning of this thesis. How we work with coachees could be mirrored in our practise sessions. We may arrive at supervision with an issue which has emerged in a coaching session - a disorientating dilemma. We may discuss with our peers, and learn through practical activities, how to deal with the dilemma. We may then perceive differently how to help our coachee; in other words our perspective on the situation may transform.

Coaches are recognised for having particular expertise. Developing these skills contributes to transforming our professional identity (Carnell et al 2006).

5.5 Further reflections on theory

Whilst I have argued that Transformative Learning is an appropriate lens through which to explore, understand and make sense of, the learning in coaching, it is useful to be aware of some issues. Critics suggest the idea of the phases is unrealistic – can't transformation take less time and effort than this? Do all the phases have to be part of the transformation (www.transformativelearningtheory.com)? Others argue the theory focuses too much on the individual and only in Western society (Kreber 2004). More specifically, Kreber (2004: 33) suggests that, whilst Mezirow borrows his ideas from Habermas, he has been highly selective in that process and therefore 'fails to maintain the essential link between the meaning of experience and the context in which it arises'. Furthermore, Mezirow's notion of critical reflection can at times seem superficial and is isolated from wider social, political and economic contexts and their influence on the individual (Kreber 2004). Mezirow developed his theory from a study of women returning to work in the 1970s. Perhaps these women were responding to societal changes for women at that time (Newman 2012), and not what Mezirow (1991) suggests was a life-changing event. Is change not just a natural process in life – why put a theory on it?

Mezirow's theory generally has a positive slant in that it encourages emancipation and autonomy; however, much of the language seems negative. Descriptions discuss 'being caught' or 'imprisoned' in our history, 'escaping' from it and 'breaking free'. I suggest these descriptions may be off-putting to coaches thinking of pursuing the theory as a means of promoting positive change.

Might coachees just use the forum as a listening ear and not come to make any change? It is important in peer-coaching at the IOE to be more specific about its purpose.

The process of transformation refers to movement over a long period of time (Mezirow 1978). Contrary to this, Hawkins model of transformational coaching suggests that for coaching to have lasting effects, the transformation should begin in the coaching session (Hawkins and Smith 2010). Within this research, it would be impossible to affirm transformation from just one session - a longitudinal study may in some way help to confirm or indeed deny this. To acknowledge that coachees are on the 'transformational spectrum' is a good starting point (Snyder 2008: 168). None of the conversations contained evidence of all phases.

Learning involves taking risks and perhaps going through periods of pain and frustration (Bion 1962). Moving from 'not knowing to knowing' can involve anxiety and risk-taking (Bibby 2009: 44). It is useful for our practice to recognise that transformative learning can be a 'threatening emotional experience' (Mezirow 2000: 6). If it forces participants to explore previously long-held beliefs and values, reframe them and move forward, participants may be left feeling vulnerable (Young and Dowling 2012). The transformational journey may also involve tensions, reverting to old familiar ways, failure and self deception (Mezirow 1981). 'The Grieving Soul in the Transformation Process' is useful in making sense of this. Transformation, put simply, requires changing an old way of thinking into a 'new way of seeing or doing' (Scott 1997: 41). It suggests leaving an old way of life behind and moving onto pastures new. This may involve 'grieving' for the old way and leaving one's old self behind, coming to terms with new ways of thinking and living life, whether professionally or personally. I have alluded to this notion in my Reflective Statement.

Although the grieving is painful and inevitable, there is light at the end of the tunnel (Scott 1997). New learning means taking steps to adapt to new situations (Illeris 2002).

Transformative learning is a qualitative change in how one views the world (Hobson and Welbourne 1998). Of course it will involve tensions and struggles as this change comes about through becoming aware of and reconstructing preconceived meanings. I argue that developing critical awareness and consciousness can have a positive effect on how adults see themselves, others and situations.

It is useful for our practice if coaches become courageous enough to engage in ‘transformative leadership’ - understanding the benefits of looking beneath the surface of a professional dilemma for the broader benefits that are to be found (Snyder 2008). I suggest coaching could be described as a Mezirowian Learning Setting (Leeson 2012).

CHAPTER SIX

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In this final chapter, I describe firstly what I have learned about the process of research. Secondly my contribution to knowledge about coaching is acknowledged before I conclude with some suggestions for future study and research.

6.1 Learning from research

This study provided an excellent opportunity to develop my understanding of research. Scrutinising coaching sessions moment by moment has been fascinating, however, it has at times been frustrating and difficult. I recognised early on that my position as researcher would be potentially problematic due to the tensions of being an employee of the IOE and a member of the coaching group. Being a coach and colleague means I have a view of coaching and how it should be conducted. I found I was writing like a coach, instead of from a more objective position. It was difficult to take my value judgements out of the writing and I confess that took some work by being constantly vigilant that I was maintaining a distance. I am also aware that by being so engrossed in the text, I may have missed some of the subtleties of what was going on.

I had to be careful with language. I realised that using a particular word or phrase could change the meaning or focus of the study. For example, ‘to what extent’ points to measurement, suggesting a more positivist than interpretivist approach. The word ‘evidence’ means different things to different people depending on their relationship with the research (Kaufmann and Bachkirova 2008). Can subjective information be

classed as ‘evidence’? I do believe that ‘professional eavesdropping’ is a useful way of gaining and adding to knowledge. In this interpretivist study, where my language was often tentative, I could not make big claims. I learned when to report fact rather than speculation, for example when EE4 said she ‘was really irritated’. Using words like ‘colluding’ suggests being judgemental – something I tried to avoid. At first I talked about ‘seeing learning’ taking place. I cannot ‘see’ learning but I can listen to a coachee telling me what they feel they have learned.

Exploring different theories and research methods provides extensive opportunities for learning. Knowing when to stop reading and deciding what is most relevant is not easy. I am now in an informed position to be more discerning in future research.

Ethical issues were overcome by being open with the participants as to what my expectations were. However, whilst they knew I was exploring the process of learning, I did not make them completely aware of the finer detail I was exploring. I felt this may have had an impact on how they conducted their conversations. For example, they may have changed their usual practice to accommodate my specific expectations.

I have heard much about my organisation. Some conversations seem focused on heavy workloads and lack of career progression impacting on job satisfaction. Whilst I believe management may benefit from knowing this, confidentiality means I can do nothing. This often feels frustrating. I can only support my colleagues in coping and perhaps taking greater control and ownership of their working lives.

I argued early in the thesis that personal learning, and not organisational efficiency, should be the priority in coaching. On page 58, I highlighted that the IOE depends on functional relationships to succeed in the market place rather than personal

relationships and that this was a tension. I have also argued that democratic values underpin the coaching process. I acknowledge these arguments are based on my own values. Other researchers may view the whole coaching process very differently. This study focuses on my interpretation of coaching and my values which underpin it. By outlining my ideas for professional development to the coach-learning group, my intention is not to impose my beliefs on them, but offer some ideas for discussion. My supervisor, by allowing me to follow up some of my own intuitions about coaching, has been pivotal in my own transformative learning.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge and understanding

In 1.4, I suggested this research would generate new knowledge about peer-coaching. This first study of the IOE's peer-coaching service contributes to debates around learning and professional practice in HE. It also provides, in more detail, a theoretical perspective of the process of learning in coaching, how the coaches understand and facilitate this learning and, to some extent, the impact personally and professionally on the coachee.

New knowledge has been generated by taking an original methodological approach – that of analysing audio-recordings of actual conversations conducted by members of the coach-learning. Whilst this process was, in some sense, artificial, it was beneficial in that the research raises a number of issues, particularly for other HE institutions – or indeed, organisations in other contexts - considering implementing such a service.

Peer-coaching, as a support for learning and change, provides positive benefits – particularly during times of constant change. What makes it unique, is being able to

coach one another without going through relationship building. Peers understand the organisation, its working and its politics. This can be an advantage as we saw particularly in conversations four, five and six. It could of course, be a disadvantage, if coaches have difficulty remaining objective and collude with the coachee against the organisation, as we saw briefly in conversation four. It is useful for, practice, to be aware of this.

External coaches may be trained in different ways. They may not be aware of the focus we have on facilitating a learning process which engages with reflection to develop a self-awareness leading to long lasting change. External coaches are costly, and are sometimes only available to Senior Management. Going back to the research question, peer-coaching at the IOE is non-hierarchical and is available to all staff, therefore I would argue, everyone is treated equally. We have a specific approach to coaching – everyone has the same opportunity to learn.

In peer-coaching, we have an approach to learning which could impact positively on the organisation. Benefits include motivating colleagues in terms of CPD, career enhancement, better working practices and generally being happier and content. Tensions might be trying to encourage colleagues that this is a worthwhile service. I am aware that some colleagues in the IOE are still a little suspicious of coaching. I would argue that peer-coaching is an excellent form of support in any environment as it responds to the needs of the individual. It is possible for anyone in an organisation to potentially become a coach – thus important CPD.

If an organisation is committed to implementing a peer-coaching service, then it is important to highlight some practical issues. I suggest evidence of commitment would be the following:

- For a service is to have integrity and worth, then CPD for coaches should take a more formal approach – it is reasonably informal at the IOE at this time. Perhaps a Coaching Code of Conduct should be drawn up, articulating clearly expectations of coaches in terms of, for example, attendance at supervision and CPD.
- Coaches should be recruited from across the board. It is therefore crucial for potential coaches to be aware of the requirements, the commitment and the potential benefits. Coaches have to be ‘away from their desks’ for considerable periods of time both to coach and to attend CPD and supervision sessions. In order to eradicate the inconsistency across practice (as highlighted by this research) supervision is fundamental to CPD and therefore should be protected.
- Peer-coaching, within an organisation, highlights issues with trust and confidentiality (Cox 2012). CPD for coaches should focus on this sensitive area. Coachees may experience difficulties when making changes within an organisational structure. Support within supervision sessions, to deal with issues arising, should be given priority.
- CPD, coaching, attendance at supervision – all these activities impinge on workload. Organisations must consider workload issues. Coaches should not feel compromised – particularly from their own Line Managers – for being part of this service.
- Being a member of the coach-learning group is a collaborative learning experience for the coaches. They may wish to pursue accreditation for this work and should be allocated time and perhaps funding to do this.

'Transformative Coaching' (Askew and Carnell 2011) has been an influential contribution to my research. I have developed knowledge further by exploring how aspects of Transformative Learning theory could be identified to help us understand the coaching context. The strength of this theory is that it provides a useful learning framework to understand more the processes a coachee experiences when learning about a situation and making changes. It is also useful to help understand the underpinning reasons why some coachees perceive barriers to making positive changes. I have arrived at this position because I now have evidence that, despite following the same training, coaching practise is quite diverse. I also suggest an original aspect of this study is my theory that, within the IOE which is an organisation that supports learning, we practise a particular approach to coaching which engages with core democratic values of equality and developing autonomy and this should therefore be the learning model of choice.

I am now in the privileged position of having shared knowledge gained with colleagues here in the UK and overseas. Contributing to the development of a peer-coaching service in other institutions is an exciting prospect.

This new knowledge provides evidence for the Staff Development Team (SDT) when arguing for the future of the peer-coaching service. Currently, there are plans for the IOE to merge with University College London (UCL). I am aware that SDT plan to extend the service to UCL and other colleges within the University. This study makes a positive contribution to that development. Critics may question the exploratory and relatively small-scale nature of this research. I believe its worth lies in that it opens a window into a traditionally closed environment. This is just a beginning and paves the way for further research.

6.3 Organisational values

Personal learning and organisational efficiency are different. One or other on its own is not sufficient for an organization to transform and be effective (Brockbank et al 2002). People can make changes to their behaviour and work goals; however, if this is not accompanied by support within an organisation then the organisation may remain unchanged and this would affect its place in the market (Brockbank et al 2002).

It was encouraging to see that participants came to the sessions to discuss issues which were first and foremost personal but had an impact on their work. In conversations four, five and six, the coachees seemed to enjoy their work here, wanted to stay but were keen to learn how to progress in the organisation.

It was interesting to note that, at the last IOE graduation ceremony, 25 colleagues graduated with Masters or Doctorates. This would suggest that whilst the IOE promotes learning amongst students, it also promotes and values learning amongst staff. I believe coaching is an additional form of learning in the IOE - additional to academic learning – contributing to holistic learning, and makes a positive contribution to the organisation overall. I contend that coaching at the IOE is primarily person-centred, and is not a subversive deliberate intervention to promote organisational efficiency. The IOE has to be applauded for introducing this service. We need to ensure this model of learning develops a much higher profile. This study will, I hope, contribute to that development.

6.4 The way forward

Kaufmann and Bachkirova (2009) offer suggestions for further research into the practice of coaching. These include, studying the coach and the process. They also suggest exploring existing theories which might help understand adult development. I believe this study addresses some of these ideas.

The conversations have provided me with data which I have been privileged to analyse. The limitations of this thesis means I have used only a fraction of the substantial amount collected. There are several areas I would be interested in exploring further for example, the more visual aspects in coaching like gestures and facial expressions. Interviewing the participants might also provide a different perspective on peer-coaching as a model of learning. It will be interesting to discuss ideas for future research with the group. I hope now to be in a stronger position to take these ideas forward.

It is fair to say that the sample has limitations. All participants are positive and knowledgeable about coaching so are not completely representative of coaches and coachees. The research is empirical. I did not interview the participants, and it does not tell me what it is like to experience coaching, what happens in the future and what participants' own understanding of the process is. The results, however, are informative and useful for further study and research.

I would like to publish articles from all my EdD work, including in sport and music journals. I would hope to take this research to BERA and international conferences.

6.5.....and finally

The word ‘coach’ dates back to the 16th century and describes a kind of vehicle that takes people on a journey from one place to another (Gray 2006). The notion of a journey towards a destination is something which resonates with me when exploring coaching. Coaching in some workplaces may be designed to help coachees improve their performance; however I have shown that coaching at the IOE goes beyond that. By engaging with developing self awareness, I believe coaching contributes to a journey towards a better quality of life and should be the learning model of choice (Gray 2006).

It has been a most informative journey for me personally and professionally, but also, from the evidence, for the participants in the conversations explored in this study.

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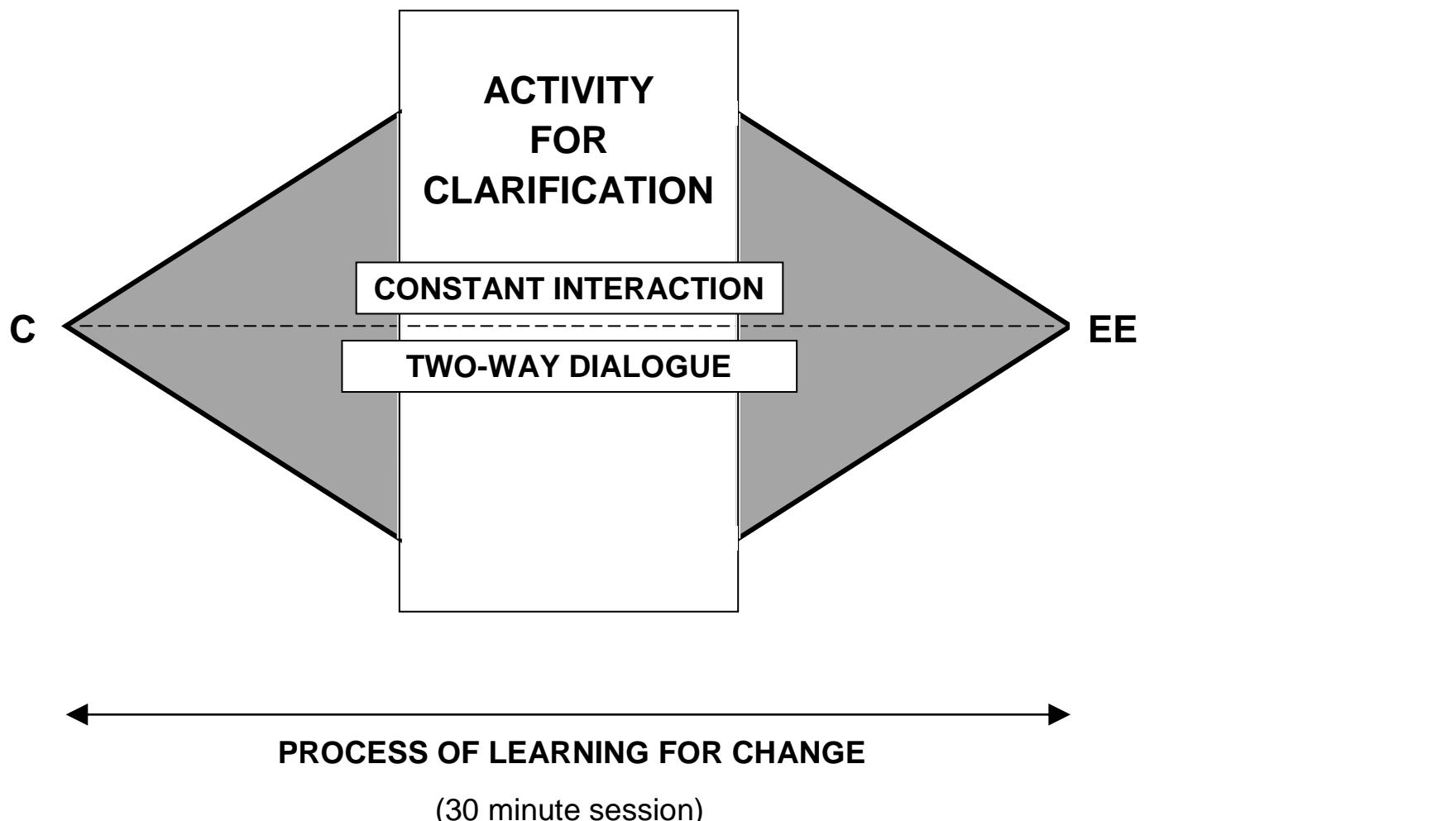
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APPENDICES:

1. Coaching Construct – Education IOE
2. Coaching Construct – Opera
3. Coaching Construct – Sport
4. Staff Development Leaflet
5. Egan and LCLL Models
6. LCLL Model – detail
7. The Coaching Cycle at the IOE
8. Pilot Study
9. Informed Consent Form
10. Sample of Transcript
11. Initial ideas for analysis
12. Initial ideas for analysis



C = Coach

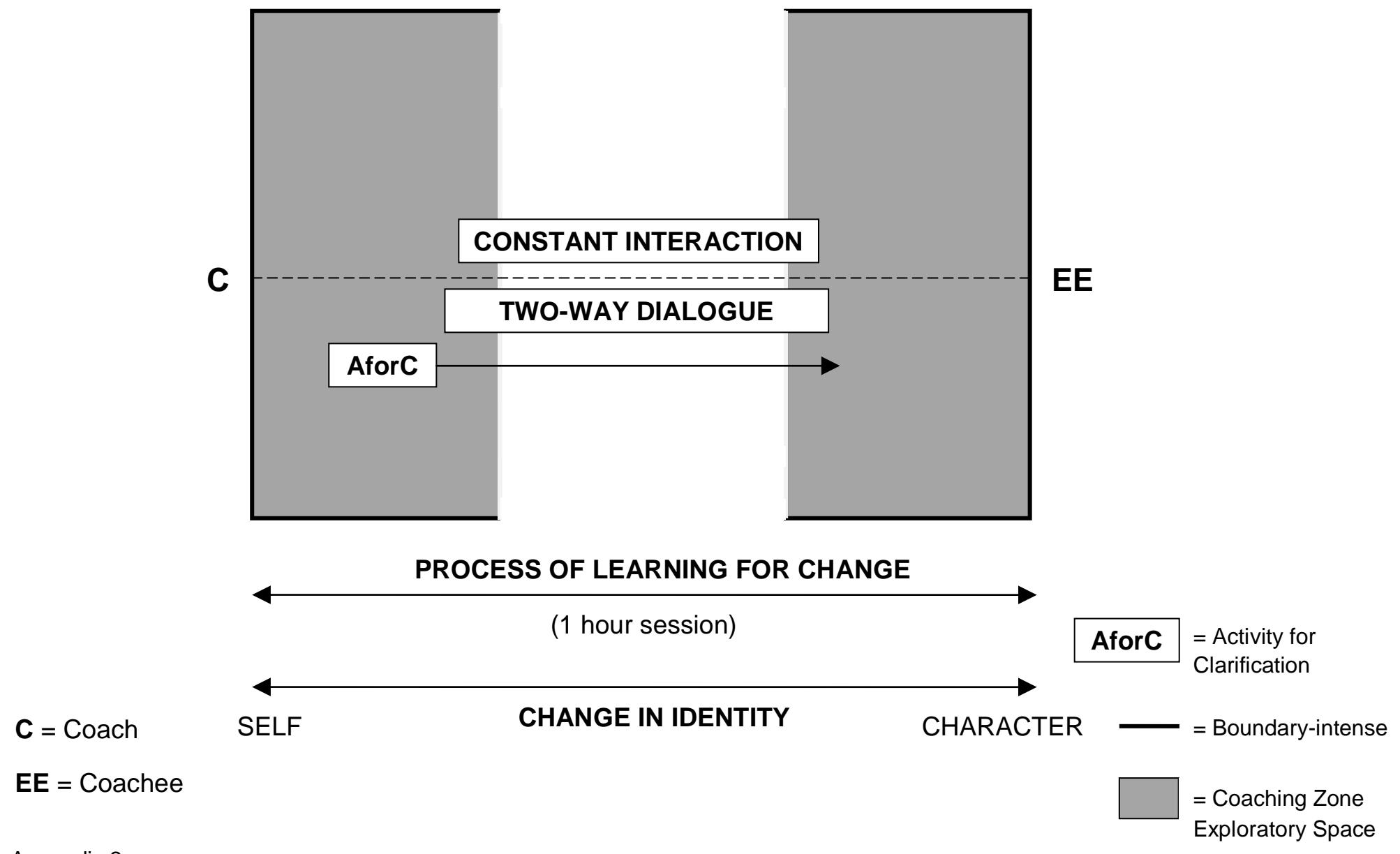
— = Boundary-intense

EE = Coachee

■ = Coaching Zone
Exploratory Space

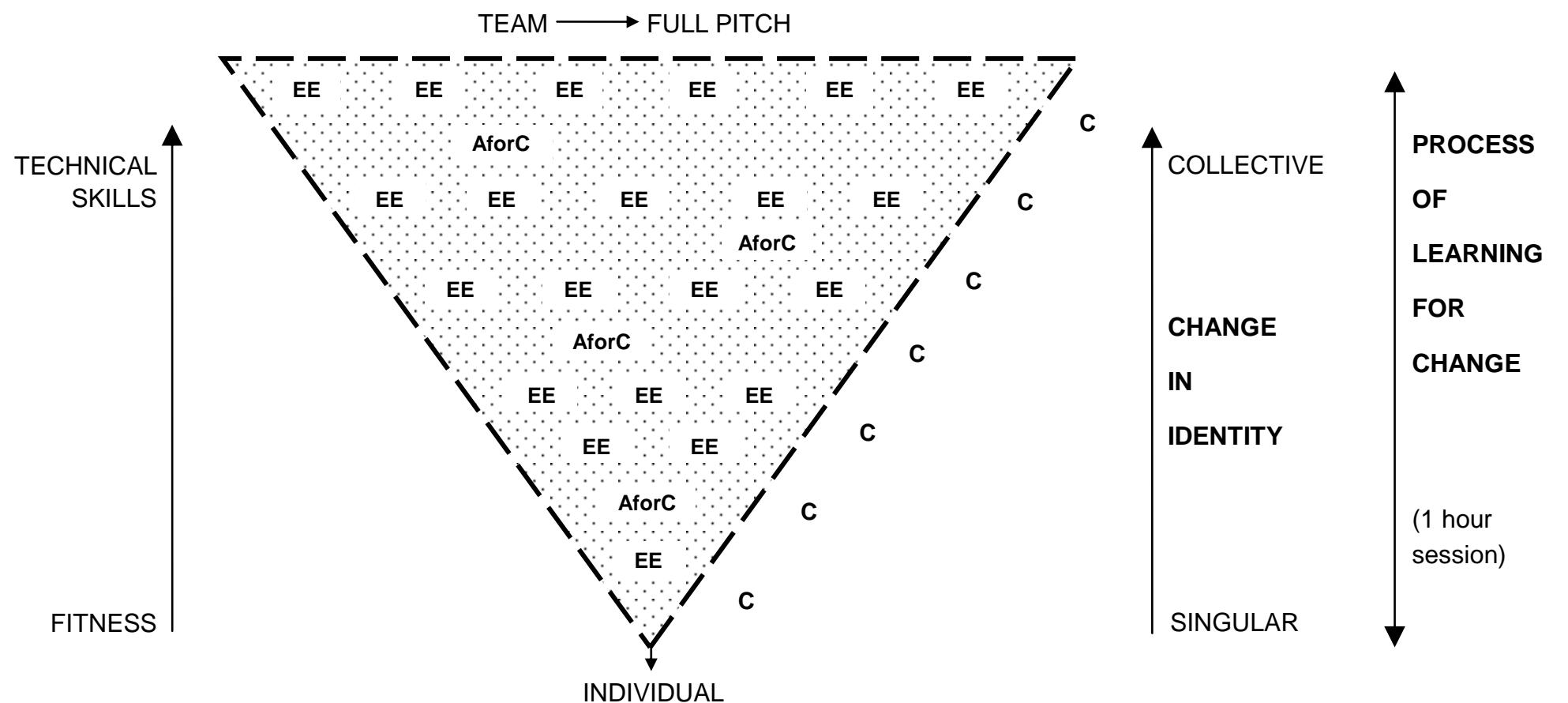
COACHING CONSTRUCT 2

OPERA



COACHING CONSTRUCT 3

SPORT



AforC = Activity for Clarification

— — = Boundary-informal

= Coaching Zone Instructional Space

C = Coach

EE = Coachee

Appendix 3

What is Coaching?

Coaching is an opportunity to have a supportive, one-to-one, confidential conversation about work with someone outside your immediate working context.

What do we offer?

A confidential service for individuals focused on specific issues relating to work.

Who is it for?

Any member of staff at the Institute of Education who:

- would like to talk over issues or concerns at work
- is facing change in their role
- would like to discuss issues relating to colleagues
- is in a new role

- is feeling stress at work
- would like support in achieving specific goals
- would simply like to talk things through with someone who is not their line manager.
- is thinking about retirement

Coaching - how does it work?

An initial session (up to 60 minutes) will be arranged for you to discuss in detail what the issue is for you. In this session you will find out what coaching involves and have your questions answered about the process.

If you would like further sessions we can offer up to five additional meetings.

We ask for a commitment from you to keep appointments, or to notify the coach at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to come.

Quotes

"It has...made me more self-aware; has enabled me to shift perspective."

"My coaching has been very beneficial. It allowed me to talk through difficult situations and plan a strategy forward."

"I had someone who knew about my work but was outside of it, to help give a more objective view – and to ask the hard questions to which I needed to respond."

"My coach was able to bring the theoretical frameworks to the challenges I was dealing with."

"[The coaching] enabled me to learn techniques for engaging with difficult situations and interactions in a way which defuses them and gives me a way forward which is productive and positive for everyone concerned."



Who are we?

We are a group of Institute of Education staff who are trained in coaching and who attend monthly supervision sessions.

The Coaching service is coordinated by Staff Development and is free of charge.

If you would like a supportive and confidential conversation with a coach, please visit the Staff Development web site: <http://tinyurl.com/mfrwat> to download the appointment form and email it to Jacqui MacDonald in confidence (j.macdonald@ioe.ac.uk).

We will attempt to make appointments at times that are convenient for you and to keep the waiting time for the initial meeting as short as possible.

COACHING

For more information contact the **Staff Development Office** at the Institute of Education.

Contact details:

*Staff Development
Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way
London, WC1H 0AL*

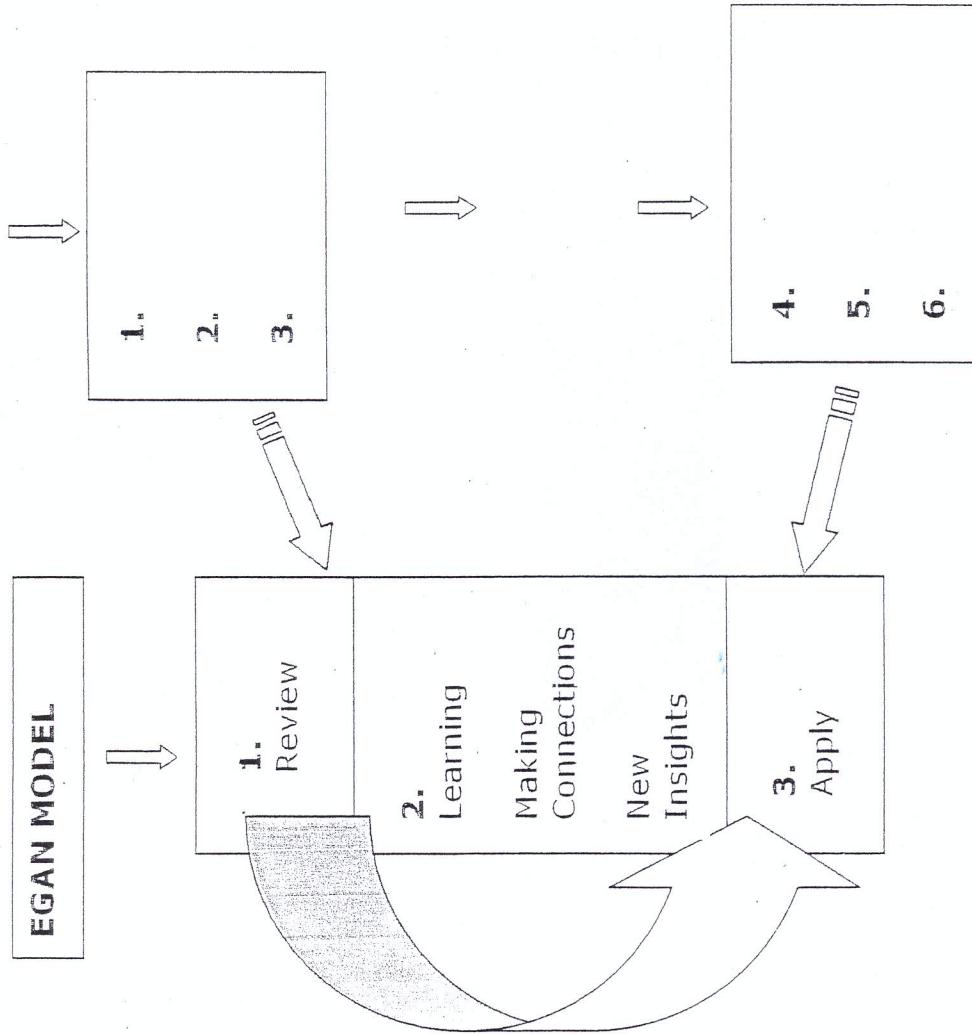
 Email: staffdev@ioe.ac.uk

 Phone: 020 7612 6353/ 5478

A confidential service for staff at the Institute of Education

A Staff Development Initiative

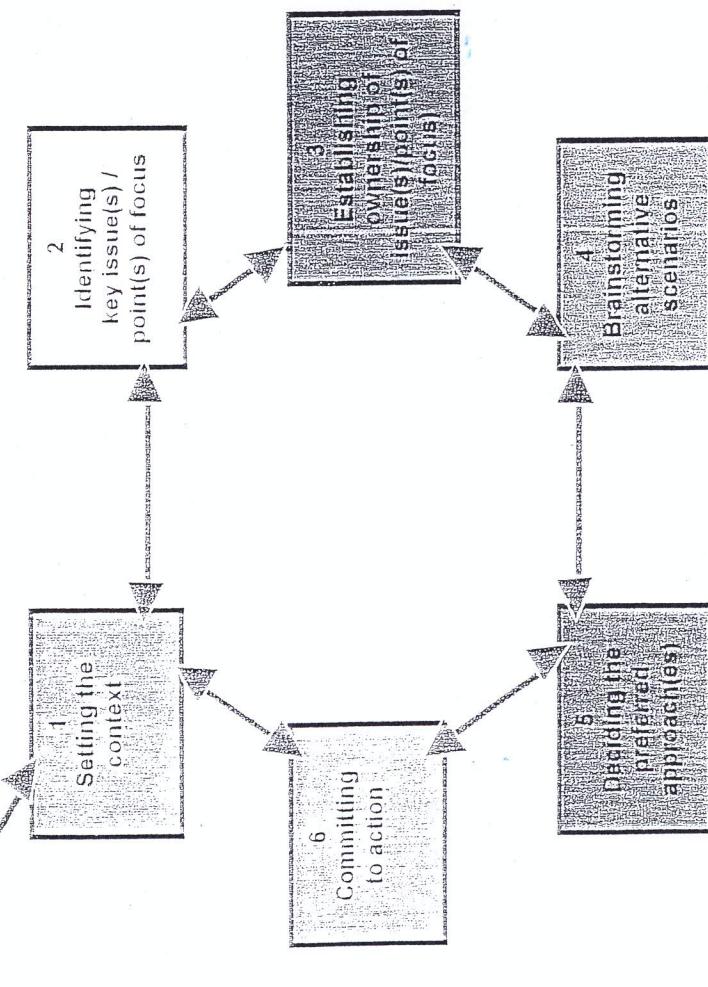
Egan and LCLL Models



Mentoring and Coaching Model

Introduction and Suggested Key Questions for each Stage

Introduction: Greetings. Brief introduction and reference to mentoring/coaching process and role of mentor-coach. Pleased to be involved. Emphasise importance of confidentiality. Refer to 'chemistry-session' nature of first meeting, the importance of compatibility and the right of the client to end the process at any point. Refer to frequency of meetings, appropriateness of venue etc. Any questions?



1. **Setting the context:** Tell me about the school. How have things been going? What have been the main developments recently/since you took up the headship? What are the key aims at present/for the future? You mentioned ... Could you say a little more about that? And with regard to ... What? Who? When? Etc
2. **Identifying key issue(s) / point(s) of focus:** Are you satisfied with the way things have gone? Are there any areas of concern? What exactly happened/happened? Can you explain that? Does/did it occur often? Can you give any specific examples? How do you feel about that? Could you explain precisely what you mean by ... ?
3. **Establishing ownership of issue(s)/point(s) of focus:** To what extent do you see this as your issue? And what has been X's/ your response? How does this affect you? You mentioned ... and its/their influence, but might you have a key role in what's happening/happened? In what way? And what do you think will happen if things don't change? What would be the implications for the pupils/staff/community...the school/your work/life/career?
4. **Brainstorming alternative scenarios:** Just imagine that you could really progress/improve things. What would you most like to change? How exactly would things be different? Share with me all the things you might be able to do to help bring about these changes.
5. **Deciding the preferred approach(es):** Which of these suggested ways forward appeals to you most/least? Is ... feasible? Would ... present any problems/challenges? Could you manage that? How? What about ... you referred to earlier?
6. **Committing to action:** What are you now going to do? And with it are you going to do first? When? How? Who will be involved? What will you need to have done before you ...? Will you need any support/approval? Whom will you approach? How can I help? How will you know if you are successful? Remember to enter any key dates/arrangements in diaries before concluding.

The Coaching Cycle at the IOE

Stages of learning conversation	Skills for coaches/mentors	Examples of prompts
• Reviewing Exploring the situation	• active listening • asking open questions • being non-judgemental • summarising	What's happening? What's going well? And not so well... How do you feel about this?
• Learning Identifying new insights and understanding	• empathising • reflecting back • sharing insights	How do you make sense of what's happening? New insights you have gained are... * Are you noticing any patterns in your learning? What have you noticed about what helps your learning and what blocks it? It seems as if...
• Applying Taking the learning forward	• establish clear, negotiated goals • planning and identifying next stages	Your next steps will be..? * What and who do you need to help you? If you get stuck you will talk to..? * When will the next review be most helpful?
• Review of the learning conversation This is a meta-learning level. Its purpose is to stand back from the conversation and consider how it helped or hindered learning	Skills at this stage are the same as those in the earlier review stage: • active listening • asking open questions • being non-judgmental • summarising	What did you notice about today's session? In what ways did you find it effective? How would you describe the changes in your feelings during the session? In what ways are you finding talking about your learning more effective? Is there anything you are noticing about my role that is helping or hindering your learning?

THE PILOT STUDY

The Original Plan

The original proposal outlined my interest in coaching and in particular my desire to deconstruct actual coaching conversations making explicit the process of learning and how it is facilitated. What seemed to be missing from current research was recording, listening to and analysing actual coaching sessions followed by a discussion with the participants. Analysis would consist of listening for evidence that coaches facilitate personal learning. The original question was:

What is the evidence, from analysis of coaching sessions, to indicate that coaching is a process of learning?

Method of Collecting Data

The method of data collection outlined in the proposal consisted of several stages. I followed this original plan for the pilot study.

Stage 1

The two pilot participants were asked to coach one another for one hour each at a mutually agreed time. I asked them to record the sessions. I provided the digital recording equipment. I was not present at their sessions. The recorder with the two coaching sessions was returned to me. It is worth noting that the time lines in the pilot were organised around the availability of the participants and me. When

carrying out the more extensive data collection, I will be mindful of the availability of the participants in relation to time scales for analysis and discussion.

Stage 2

Each of the coaching sessions was saved to my computer. Preliminary analysis consisted of my listening for evidence of learning. I had assumed at this early stage that I could recognise that learning was taking place, but the pilot clarified for me that I cannot make the decision about whether learning is happening – only the coachee will know that. What I could identify, was the coach using techniques, for example questioning, exploring related experiences and reflecting on childhood, to facilitate a process of learning. I listened to the conversations several times. At this point I did not undertake to completely transcribe the sessions. I made notes of times (possibly useful for future analysis and editing), content of the conversations and at times noted exactly what was said thinking that these comments would firstly support what I was hearing but would also be useful to talk about in follow up discussions. I also made notes of questions I would ask the participants. I highlighted on my notes what I interpreted to be evidence - questioning to explore a dilemma, reflecting on current experiences and skills, thinking about solutions etc. I then arranged a meeting with the participants to engage in the collaborative discussion.

Stage 3

I set up the computer with the coaching sessions ready to play selected sections to explore what I had interpreted to be learning being facilitated. I also set up the digital

recorder to record the discussion. I had notes with questions to prompt this discussion. We discussed each session separately. This meant each participant had the opportunity to talk about the coaching sessions from both the perspective of coach and coachee. Each discussion lasted 45 minutes and was collaborative in that all three of us took part in the exploration and analysis of the learning we thought to be taking place.

Stage 4

This stage emerged in the pilot study and was not part of the original plan. What happened at the end of the conversations about the coaching sessions, was that we engaged in a reflective discussion about the pilot study - exploring what worked and why and what didn't work and why. As the discussion felt rich and fruitful I left the recording equipment running. I have listened to that discussion many times which, for me, was helpful.

On completion of this pilot, I had recordings of two coaching sessions, preliminary analysis of these, two discussions with participants talking about the coaching sessions and a discussion of the pilot project itself. A considerable amount of data.

Reflection on the Process

How useful was the data collected to answering the question?

The first question to ask myself was 'did I get what I needed?' My interest lies in making explicit the learning – but what do I mean by learning? It is a broad field with many models and understandings of learning. In the thesis, I will clarify my position with regards to learning and how I understand its position in relation to coaching. I will also make explicit the values in society I believe underpin learning and how I think coaching facilitates that learning.

Of particular interest in the recordings was hearing how the coach used probing questions to help the coachee reflect on and explore positive and negative aspects of experiences, both past and present. The purpose of their reflection was, I believe, to look at experiences with a view to learning from them, perhaps bringing understanding to the issue they came to coaching to explore.

Having experimented with some initial analysis, I thought the data collected from the coaching sessions alone would give me the evidence I needed to explore what actually happens in coaching. The research question needed a tighter, clearer focus in order for me to apply more rigour to the analysis.

The aim of this study is to bring theory and practice together to understand more thoroughly the workings of the coaching process. It is important to note that any learning from the full study may have an impact on my own practice as a coach and that of my colleagues in the coaching group.

Logistics and follow up interviews

Planning the data collection involved some complex logistics. I contacted the two participants and asked them to arrange a date for their coaching sessions. They decided to conduct them both on the same day. Due to various work commitments, it was not possible for us to have our collaborative meeting until almost 4 weeks later. The positive side of this was that it gave me time to listen and make notes. At this stage I had not decided on the best method of analysis – I wanted to listen, take notes and focus on listening for evidence of learning and themes which may emerge. The negative side of the time lapse was that the participants needed reminding of the conversations and at times they were unsure what they had been thinking or why, however, they did find playing back some of the material particularly helpful in jogging their memories.

What I understood from this was to have a clearer idea of how to analyse the recordings before beginning the main data collection. I should arrange the coaching sessions and the follow up meetings at the same time so that we can agree the time span.

I began to use the software ‘Audacity’ to edit the recordings. It was my intention to edit down to 10-15 minutes of data selecting sections which I interpreted as learning which I would then discuss with the participants. I found this difficult, however, as when I began to listen I realised that everything seemed interesting. I arrived at the meeting with several pages of notes having not edited the tapes. This proved to be a turning point in my decision to amend the amount and format of data I required to answer the research questions.

I did not have clear questions to ask the participants. I had four pages of notes for each coaching session and spent the time scanning the notes trying to highlight the sections which might be most useful to me. I also selected randomly some pieces of the recording to play back which, as I was scanning frantically, meant I did not always select the most useful part. This meant that this interview was not particularly fruitful in giving me what I was looking for originally. Focusing the question more should allow me to edit more carefully and allow for a better, more fruitful and useful discussion which relates more closely to the research focus. I also noted when I played this recording back; I could not hear some of the conversation. I must check the position of the microphone.

Interviews

The purpose of the follow-up interviews was for me to play back some parts of the coaching sessions to the participants and to explore their notions of learning. What became clear to me was that interviewing them together meant this could be more of a collaborative discussion than an interview. I realised that the discussion was providing some interesting data.

As I began to ask questions, the coach in one session expressed that they felt their practice was under scrutiny rather than we were exploring the way they helped a person learn. It sounded at times that I was being critical of the coach. This was not my intention and I will be explicit in the ethics section that I will not be critical of the practice – it is the learning I am interested in.

I began to put words in their mouths, suggesting phrases I believed to be ‘powerful’ or ‘useful’ or ‘reflective’. What this taught me was that this was my interpretation and that my questioning should be more neutral ‘Tell me more about this’ or ‘I noticedcan you tell me a little more?’ In other words I needed to adopt a more coaching style of questioning which would elicit more information. At times I seemed to asked closed questions again with an interpretive slant, for example ‘that seemed like a valuable question, was it?’ ‘Yes’/‘No’ told me very little!

Both participants in the pilot noted that gradually we adopted a very conversational style of discussion. This made the session feel more relaxed and the conversation more free flowing.

When experimenting with some analysis from the pilot study, I began to realise that the coaching sessions alone would provide me with a large amount of data to analyse and help answer the more focused research question. Whilst the follow up discussions were interesting, I made a decision, (with the support of my supervisor and within the limitation of this thesis), to confine my analysis to the coaching sessions themselves. The remaining data will be stored and may be used in any follow up articles or books generated from this research (with ethics approval of course).

The Way Forward

What struck me most from the pilot study was how much conversation took place in coaching sessions, unpicking experiences, both in the work place and in personal lives, to help the coachee make sense of the present and inform the future.

Coachees were invited to explore experiences and articulate anything they may have learned. As each coachee discussed an experience, it appeared that beneath one experience lay another layer to unpick. I began to realise that if we don't unpick these layers then the learning in coaching may remain superficial. What does the coach do to help the coachee learn? We can't see learning, however, we can listen to what is said and how people talk about it.

The more focused question is:

How might applying Transformative Learning Theory help us understand learning and values in coaching conversations at the Institute of Education?

Subsidiary questions may be:

What really happens in coaching? How is learning facilitated?

How might a greater understanding of coaching inform and contribute to practice?

Learning through reflecting on and making connections between personal and professional experiences, making connections with the past, setting goals for the future, and realising the benefits of meta learning are strategies I observed in the pilot.

Conclusion

Writing this reflection has been useful in bringing clarity and understanding to the research focus. It has also highlighted logistics and my interviewing style and the fact that the style I adopted did not have a clear focus in helping me understand the learning in coaching. I made a now more informed decision that the coaching sessions alone would help me answer the research question. In the main thesis, I clarify the analytic framework I used.

Finally, I have noticed throughout this reflection, my language has been inconsistent. I have written about sessions, conversations, discussions, interviews, participants, coaching group, research project and study. I must decide on language and stay with it.

Faculty of Children and Learning
Head of Faculty Professor Richard Andrews

Department of Culture and Pedagogy
Head of Department Dr Jacek Brant



**Leading education
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Institute of Education
University of London

November 2011

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Director: Professor Chris Husbands

Informed consent for research project participation as part of the EdD programme.

Dear Participant

My work to date on the EdD programme has explored the practice of coaching, but from the outside looking in. I have explored the practice in different contexts to establish commonalities and diversities. A finding emerging strongly in all contexts is that coaching is a process of personal development and learning for change. It is unclear, however, exactly how that development is facilitated in coaching sessions.

The overall intended outcome is to gain more informed insights and understandings of the learning processes which can be identified in coaching here at the IOE and how it is facilitated. The purpose is to make a contribution to the wider knowledge base surrounding coaching and to engage the coaching group in thinking more about the learning process in coaching.

This study is insider research, which presents some distinct ethical issues which you should be aware of. By its very nature it is context sensitive as the research will be conducted with you – the group of people involved in coaching here at the IOE. I hope that the exploration of learning in coaching will enable us to develop our practice as coaches.

I would like your permission to include you in my research. All conversations and transcripts will be confidential.

My study will involve:

- Tape recording two coaching sessions for approximately one hour each. You will be the coach in one, and the coachee in the other. The main focus of the research will be on the learning. I will not be present at these sessions.

Appendix 9

- The issue to be discussed in the coaching session will be decided in the normal way by the coach and the coachee.
- My listening to and transcribing the tapes, identifying parts of the conversation which I believe evidence a process of learning.
- Taking field notes as I listen to the tapes.
- I will analyse the data and write my findings in the thesis.

I will not be present at any of the recorded coaching sessions. I will not be providing feedback on the coaching session. All notes and transcripts will be confidential. I will not be focusing on the content of the conversations which may be of a sensitive nature. It is important to emphasise that I am not looking at the quality of the coaching sessions; it is the learning processes in the coaching session which are the focus of my interest.

I will store all data in a locked environment and will destroy at the end of my studies

The report will be anonymous. Names of any participants will not be mentioned. The project will be written up and submitted to the EdD examiners. On completion of the study, findings and conclusions drawn will be made available. Please let me know if you would like me to send you a copy of the final thesis. You would not be expected to make any comments.

The project proposal has been approved by the Doctoral School here at the Institute of Education. This research will contribute to my thesis on the EdD programme. If you have any questions prior to agreeing to participate, please ask me or email me at f.rodger@ioe.ac.uk.

I would be very grateful for your cooperation in this research. With best wishes and thanks

Fiona B Rodger

Please sign below if you are happy to take part in this research.

Signature Print name

Date

Coaching session 1 – Transcript 27 June 2011

Codes:

C= Coach

EE = Coachee

..= short pause

Longer pauses are articulated

Words in **bold** are when speech is particularly emphasised.

Words in brackets are what sound like asides.

Session begins with opening pleasantries and hello.

C1 'Right we've got a coaching session..em what are you going to bring today?'

EE1 'I am going to start by talking about the end of my course, possibly I'll talk about what I got out of it, and where I want to go next and what my concerns are about ending, but I may think of something else, I'll see how it goes and where that takes me.'

C1 'So at the end of the hour, what do you think you want to get out?'

EE1 'Em..I think I'd like a clearer picture of how I am going to continue, and what is going to support me continuing with my writing, em..and maybe just em..my learning from the year, em just to kind of summarise that..maybe think if there is anything else I have learned I hadn't thought about. It is an end of course review really. I'd like to review it, think about what I have learned and think about what I am going to do next.'

C1 'Right, OK, and of those three things you have mentioned, which is the most important?'

EE1 'What I am going to do next.'

C1 'What you are going to do next, so the first bit, the review of what you have learned is preliminary to thinking about how you are going to move on?'

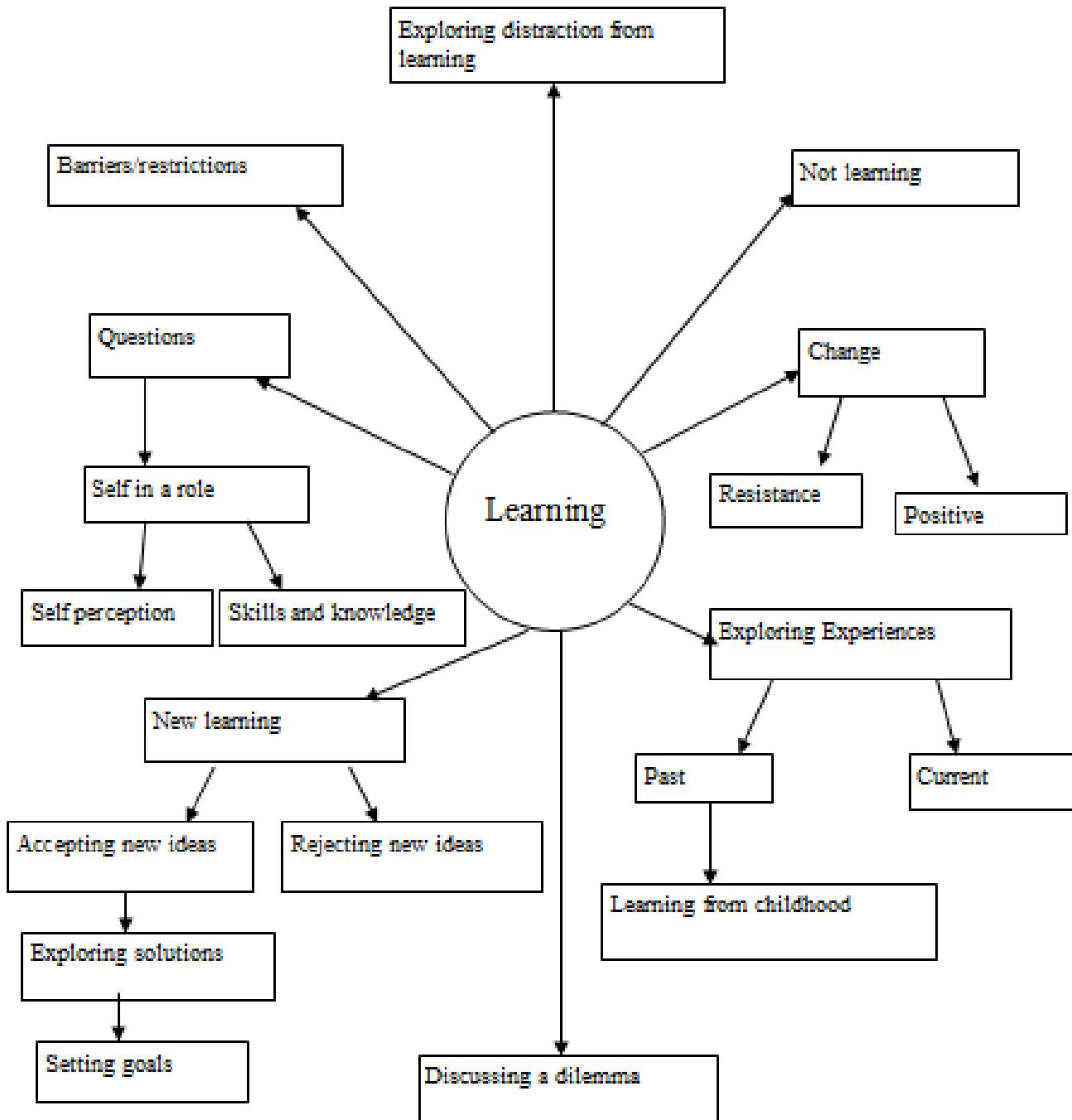
EE1 'I think so, but I have done some reviewing, I have had to write 2 essays, one at the end of the first term and one at the end of this term..so I have done some thinking already..although for the essay I focused specifically on one particular thing..em..but some other things may come up in terms of my learning.'

C1 'Ok, ok, so you could summarise really?'

EE1 'Yes, that might be a really good place to start.'

C1 'Yes, so tell me briefly..'

Some initial thoughts on analysis from listening to recordings.



DATA ANALYSIS – Coaching sessions - Initial observations - **Connections – session by session**

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
Outlining the Focus/Issue	Outlining the Focus/Issue	Outlining the Focus/Issue	Outlining the Focus/Issue	Outlining the Focus/Issue	Outlining the Focus/Issue
Exploring skills	Exploring issues	Exploring issues	Exploring tensions between personal and professional	Exploring issue – in a place professionally they are not used to being in	Exploring current career
Exploring knowledge	Lack of confidence in ability	Recognising the real issue – always been an achiever, now feeling underachiever	Lifting the lid on the problem	Exploring self worth/value	Desire to move on
Exploring personal knowledge and skills	'being found out'	Articulating understanding of achievement	Scratching below the surface of the issue	Career progression or not?	Tension of personal/ professional commitment
Exploring barriers	Childhood and school	Articulating own current achievement	Thinking autonomously	Recognising skills set	Enjoying the job but..
Exploring past experiences	Realising why the issue is there in the first place	Deciding to celebrate current achievement		Taking action	Lifting the lid – person coming back from maternity leavehow to deal with..
Making connections		Taking action		Change in seeing way forward/out	Triggering the notion to move – positive outcome
Lifting the lid		Major recognition of issue - realisation			

Coaching interventions:

Clarification

Feeding back to coachee

Articulating the problem

Affirming the correct skills

Questions:

'What if...' questions

About Learning

Childhood

Giving advice?

Other thoughts:

Learning from the past to make sense of the present

Use of metaphor (crutch, volcano, jigsaw)

Learning about self in relation to an activity/to others

Turning negative feelings to positive - confident

Personal issues which have an impact on a situation

Awareness of childhood

Tensions between personal and professional situations

Feelings of self worth

Reviewing a situation so far – before it, in it and after.... reflective