LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Issue 10

CollectivED Working Papers

Working Papers from
CollectivED; the Centre for
Mentoring, Coaching and
Professional Learning

March 2020

A University Research and Practice Centre
where collaborative conversations create powerful
professional learning.

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Author surname, author initial (2020), Paper title, CollectivED [10], pages x-xx, Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University.

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LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Editorial Issue 10

by CollectivED Director Rachel Lofthouse

This is the tenth edition of our working papers. CollectivEd: The Centre for Mentoring, Coaching and Professional Learning is a research and practice centre based in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University. Our aim is to support professionals and researchers in a shared endeavour of enabling professional practice and learning that has integrity and the potential to be transformative. In our work we are interested in all voices, we aim to learn from many experiences and we engage with and undertake research.

Between December 2017 and March 2020 we have published, as an open access resource, ten issues of CollectivED working papers, which now encompass over 150 papers with UK and international perspectives.

The working papers are an opportunity to connect educational practice, policy and research. They are written with a diverse audience in mind: teachers, governors and school leaders, academics and students, members of grassroots organisations, advocates, influencers and policymakers at all levels. The working papers enable a diverse range of informed voices in education to coexist in each publication, in order to encourage scholarship and debate.

To achieve this, we publish a range of paper types. Research working papers are typically summaries of empirical research, case studies, action research or research vignettes, and include a consideration of the implications for practice and/or policy at an appropriate scale. Practice insight working papers focus on aspects of educational practice, and offer readers insights into its particular features, its context and the decision-making that shapes it. Think-piece working papers offer opportunities for writers to share opinions, reflections or critiques of education practice, research and/or policy. As our working papers have evolved we have included book and conference reviews, interviews and summaries of CollectivED research symposia. By contributing to our archive of working papers, our writers have helped to create a quilt, with each paper adding a new unique patchwork piece, and the whole representing lived experiences of professional development in education offered through a number of lenses.

As the director of CollectivED and editor of our working papers, I have a natural pride in them. Some schools and universities use them in journal clubs, or to support reflection and decision-making in and about continuing professional development, and some papers

are cited in peer-reviewed journals. What matters is not just that additional relevant online content is available to those working to develop evidence-informed policies and practices for teacher education and professional development, but also that we acknowledge the value of a wide range of evidence and how this is both deliberately created and engaged with as a knowledge-base in the field. The working papers have supported our intention to create a new space shared by practitioners and researchers (and of course many of us wear both hats), and as such have contributed to the creation of an inclusive professional education community by giving legitimacy to multiple voices. The original thread is now joined by many more threads illuminating and connecting ideas between the papers and into wider professional and academic lives: a virtual embroidery of personal reflections and conversations that contribute to creating a networked society in education.

In Issue 10 we have grouped our papers under several themes:

1) Coaching in education

2) Lesson study

3) *Developing new roles and practices to enable learning and development*

4) Professional enquiry from Carnegie School of Education

5) People and events

As always, these papers are authored by a wide range of contributors, and you can find out more about them on page 67-68.

Coaching and mentoring for school leaders; going beyond the training model.

A research working paper by Victoria Carr

Context

This working paper is a review of literature and policy in relation to headteacher training and coaching. It forms part of doctoral research related which sought to answer the question, *To what extent does a structured programme of peer coaching support newly appointed Primary Headteachers?* A subsequent working paper will be published related to the specific research approach and findings.

Introduction

There are great discontinuities between the underpinning, holistic ideologies of sustainable leadership and the grim realities faced by primary schools in the market-place, the possibilities of implementing these proposals will be addressed in the forthcoming section. This could be attributed to values of sustainable leadership being resolutely about the authentic long-term development of staff and schools, which is not in harmony with the castigatory New Managerial educational landscape established by successive governments of the last 40 years. McBeath, Gronn, Opher, Lowden, Forde, Cowie, and O'Brien (2009) state that, "Multiple accountabilities, audits and reporting to a range of bodies were seen as primary factors in diverting heads from their valued priorities." p. 5. Grant (2015) further exemplifies this very public and politicised lack of understanding with one example from Whitehall.

"In 2013, the then education secretary, Michael Gove, accused heads of being "critical

but not constructive" at a conference when they voiced anguish about the culture of bullying and fear. He told them they could like it or lump it: "I thank you for your candour but if you don't like it, one of us will have to leave ..." It was Gove who left, but the combative approach remains." (para. 8)

 NAHT (2015) state: "The language of criticism and failure deployed by successive governments is a serious deterrent to recruitment and retention". (p. 2). So is authentic leadership actually sustainable given this climate?

Leadership training

The shortage of suitably qualified and experienced Headteachers has been well documented over several decades as previously highlighted. In response, the government developed a national training programme. The NPQH, introduced in 1997, and made compulsory in 2009, by successive New Labour governments, was part of a drive to professionalise the role of headship and was designed to provide specific training for those wanting to become Headteachers. The idea to resolve the shortage through training, it could be argued, completely missed the point of what caused the recruitment situation, since the educational imaginary illustrates that due to policy implemented by Westminster and underpinned by market ideology, all Headteachers can do in any situation is simply respond pragmatically, in the best way that they can.

Despite this, the DfES (2009) outlined the commitment of New Labour to increasing the

skill set of prospective Headteachers by using the Education Act 2002 to mandate the requirement that all newly appointed Headteachers had to be in possession of, or in the process of completing, the NPQH. At that time, the course was fully funded and designed to provide a range of skills deemed a requirement in strategic leadership. Potential Headteachers had the opportunity to examine their leadership style, learn about textbook generalised challenges of headship, and through a range of learning experiences were able, in principle, to modify their leadership style before undertaking their first headship. As the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) presided over planning, delivering and evaluating the qualification process, it was inevitable that the training was limited to the parameters of government expectation rather than encouraging critical thinking, or engagement with myriad situations that pose real-life challenges to Headteachers from a sustainable leadership perspective, none of these can be quantified with ease and measured to pass or fail candidates, or judge them in their future role.

The coalition government, under Cameron, removed the mandatory requirement for Headteachers to undertake this training in 2012 and this marked the end for compulsory professional training for Headteachers per se (and the NCSL who met their demise in 2017) and in true neoliberal style left it to the individual, and, or, the school to choose whether they required a business leader, or an educationalist to lead the school and, whether a professional qualification was even required. The outcome of this is that the pattern of engagement in this programme has been variable across the country. It was, and is, incumbent upon existing Headteachers, and school governors, to choose to allocate funding from budgets already under pressure to allow prospective leaders to complete

NPQH or facilitate some sort of training on the job, knowing that they are likely to leave and pursue the headship elsewhere. NCSL (2006) discussed this and found, "It is a very altruistic system – schools and LEAs have willingly developed teachers knowing that they are likely, indeed encouraged to move to another school or LEA. Collaboration between schools has prevailed, rather than competition." p. 40; as did the NAHT (2015) "The market failure in the development of senior leaders, especially Headteachers, is the school that benefits from their professional development is often not the school that pays for it." p. 2. This moral dilemma is ever present, as discussed in the previous chapter, and is directly affected by market forces.

Developing distributed leadership, whereby initiatives can be distributed to staff within the school who are empowered to make decisions and be accountable for those decisions, as discussed earlier, is endemic in primary schools now. This has two clear advantages: it enables a number of projects to simultaneously run, developing leadership and management skills which may manifest in increased capacity; and literally sharing out some of the myriad tasks which now befall the Headteacher, which may involve less pressure for them and potentially keep them in the job. There is, naturally, a third inferred benefit: one of Ofsted's measures when inspecting schools is their capacity for improvement and distributed leadership.

Governance at all levels, from Whitehall to school governing bodies, demonstrates that many schools, appear to have lost sight of the evolving social, national and local contexts in which education is situated. The current educational imaginary seeks to serve and gratify very narrow numerical definitions of success and produce citizens who will work

and generate economic success for the elite in the country.

Despite a teaching qualification no longer being a pre-requisite for headship, having usually been through the teaching profession and gained significant experience, most Headteachers understand that nurturing staff and sharing difficult experiences helps not just the Headteacher problem solve, but also develops awareness and skill in the staff who share. Former SoS for Education for the new coalition government, Justine Greening, outlined her support of distributed leadership on a formal level (Greening, 2017), but formal leadership development is just one aspect which essentially needs to be part of a wider strategic approach to developing future leadership capacity, aptitude in newly qualified leaders and that of more experienced leaders as they move school or face contemporary challenges posed by policy impact on social services, healthcare and education.

With the backdrop of ever-decreasing budgets and ever increasing accountability, measured by testing, formal professional development has become a contentious area for schools both in subject, and also in leadership, specific fields. Therefore, sharing the expertise of more experienced staff and being offered on the job opportunity to develop is crucial.

"I want to stress that…I believe that the real key to improvement … will be to invest in the great home-grown teaching talent that is often already there…So it's about … committing to the highest-quality CPD throughout a teacher's career", (Greening, 2017, para. 63).

Whilst there is no disagreement about the sentiment, and there are innumerable companies offering professional training and support, the reality is that there is no CPD

specific to the role of the Headteacher on offer, and little money available if there were. Pain (2017) states that the time has come for "…school leaders to really seize the narrative and the agenda here – this is the difference between 'effective leadership' (great for serving a system) and transformational leadership amongst this generation of school leaders." (para. 6). But I would argue that this is easier said than done with financial constraints and workload barriers.

Schools are under immense and relentless pressure to perform. There is a recruitment and retention crisis for teachers and this has an impact on the number of professionals choosing to become Deputy Headteachers and Headteachers (NCSL, 2006; HC, 2017; NAHT, 2017), especially true in challenging schools. There is very little money for training due to budget cuts; there is little time in the teaching week for staff to be out of school when high stakes testing is privileged over professional development (HC, 2017); but schools need Headteachers to perform their duties and the discourse around leadership is that to be transformational you need to make a difference and be innovative, whilst simultaneously being squeezed by the neoliberal machine.

"The emotional toll of dealing with challenging behaviour from vulnerable children, and sometimes staff, was vast. And I felt alone. It is difficult to show any vulnerability when – as a result of the "accountability" culture – your every word is interpreted and translated into the language of either "capable" or "incapable" (Grant, 2015, para. 4).

Training for teachers, as established by the House of Commons Select Committee, HCSC, (2017) is concentrated in their Initial Teacher

Training (ITT) phase, there is no mention of specific training for Headteachers. Whilst this report advocates that continuing professional development (CPD) should naturally follow on from ITT to enable improvement over time in practice, it acknowledges that, whilst desirable, the reality is that there is no entitlement to CPD in England, we actually have a weaker commitment to CPD than many countries perceived as high-performing. They also suggest that there are a number of barriers preventing CPD taking place including time and accountability constraints. This is no different for Headteachers, and yet the HCSC (2017) states that, "CPD improves teaching practice, professionalism, and can help improve teacher retention." (p. 24). It could be argued that whilst knowing what would help recruitment and retention and therefore sustainable leadership, policy makers are unable, or reluctant to take action, presumably because this would change the focus from efficiency to investment of more money into education.

The CPD for teachers is specific to initiatives for subjects, classroom management, special educational needs, and safeguarding, as these form the majority of the work done by teachers, and much of it is quantifiable in terms of output in children's attainment. The natural correlation made by neoliberal ideology is that if teachers have accessed good training in areas that the government feel important and done their job properly then all children will also have had the important information of the day disseminated to them and be able to produce it in tests as a safeguard. Prospective leaders may be coached by more experienced leaders in school, or develop skills on subject leadership courses, if funding, time and internal dynamics allow. There is to date no specific training, mandatory or available in the private sector, for Headteachers who wish to

develop skill in their role in school. It is the conjecture of this research that this is because of the innumerable complexities of the daily job of a primary school Headteacher and the unique cumulative pressures that this brings; simply transferring business applications of management training are not enough, nor are simply the supervision models of social care. Grant (2015) suggests that,

"What's needed is emotional support and a space for Headteachers to reflect on how well they are doing the job and what they could do better…In the absence of such support, heads wear a mask to give the impression that they are coping. Sometimes this means they can turn into a bit of an automaton: always giving, coping, running on autopilot." (para. 10).

The call for coaching and mentoring

It is clear from a range of research,, much of which encompasses the view of serving and retired Headteachers, that there is value in coaching and mentoring for supporting all staff, but in particular Headteachers, at all stages in their role. "…mentoring plays a vital role, particularly during the first year when Headteachers want help and advice" (NCSL, 2004, p.3) with another suggestion of an "increased focus on formal or informal coaching and mentoring programmes". (NCSL, 2006, p.13)."There also needs to be … mentoring and coaching that is delivered by experienced practitioners". (NAHT, 2015, p. 2). The NCSL found that the more progressive organisations acknowledge the value of personal development as a retention instrument, hoping possibly that teaching would be considered progressive and an investment made into retention – this did not happen.

Harris and Muijs (2002) suggest that developing high quality leadership is premised upon the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth. One of the three main activities they believe will support improved educational practice is through coaching, mentoring and leading working groups.

"New Heads should have access to formal induction. Leaders need practical and emotional support, as well as opportunities for peer support (such as coaching, mentoring and shadowing)." NFER (2017) p. 2. This resonates with the view of Grant (2015) and McBeath et al. (2009).

When comparing leadership in a range of organisations, NCSL (2016) discovered that feedback, coaching, mentoring showed significant developmental potential. These findings were built upon those by McCall (1998) in which positively transformational leadership experiences were sorted into four groups: workplace assignments; collaborating with experienced staff; enduring hardship and setbacks and therefore building resilience; and 'other' which included programmes and experiences outside of the workplace such as coaching.

"Multiple Headteachers – some who are happy in the role and others who are considering leaving or have left – felt that there should be more support and induction for new Headteachers, including opportunities for mentoring and coaching. There needs to be a much clearer system of mentoring and coaching and induction for any Headteacher who is new to post or new to any school in a different authority or context." (NFER, 2017, p. 30).

This was mooted in Scotland by a report commissioned for the Scottish government by McBeath et al. (2009). "The support of coaches and mentors, where available, and the quality of mediation and support offered…were especially important for Headteachers." (p. 10), presumably as the report identified that there were several reasons why this support may be required, stating that headship was, "emotional work" clearly merited by responses of … "fire fighting", "battles", "murder", "ground down", "frazzled", "crumbling", "washed out", "being hammered", "getting kicked", "sucking people dry". (p. 4).

Whilst it must be acknowledged that Headteachers who are confident in themselves and their role may seem more proactive at seeking support, others may find it hard to ask fearing that it will show 'vulnerability'. (NFER, 2017, p. 30) That same fear is communicated by Grant (2015), an advocate of coaching for Headteachers, "I felt alone. It is difficult to show any vulnerability when – as a result of the 'accountability' culture – your every word is interpreted and translated into the language of either 'capable' or 'incapable'…" (para. 4)

Oliver and Vincent (2000) completed a survey of 60 UK companies attempting to ascertain the most effective ways of developing people at work. Their findings showed that in addition to projects in the workplace and internal training, coaching was in the top three most successful strategies, so it has long been known that coaching is not restricted to one field, but has applications to multiple areas.

Coaching, when directly related to problems that have arisen in work, removes the issue of transference of knowledge and assimilation of

skills, and done effectively it does not require major investments in training or blocks of time away from work where other people would be required to step in and cover. As with any CPD, there are issues about how effective coaching is, (NCSL, 2006) but Fullan (2003) makes an interesting observations which taken in conjunction with the issue of effective coaching could provide a solution in that he believes that learning with other leaders, both inside and outside school would create an excellent climate for learning in leadership.

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Sustaining a Vital Profession; the impact of Leadership Coaching in schools

A research working paper by Rachel Lofthouse and Ruth Whiteside

This paper summarises some of the aspects of a recent research study of headteacher coaching. The full report, including executive summary and recommendations can be found here https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/schools/school-of-education/sustaining-a-vital-profession--final-report.pdf?la=en

Introduction

We hear a lot of the difficulties faced by headteachers in England, but rarely hear of potential evidence-based solutions. At a time when the challenges in the education system are becoming acute it is essential that we find approaches which support school leaders and allow them to contribute to sustainable school cultures. New research by CollectivED demonstrates that coaching can provide an effective approach to support headteachers' wellbeing and their capacity to manage the complexity of their roles. The research was a year-long study of headteacher coaching provided by Integrity Coaching which was funded by the National Education Union (NEU). The NEU also funded the evaluation which this research is based on.

The coaching programme

The coaching programme was designed to support headteachers to meet the challenges of their role. The coaching was provided by Integrity Coaching (an Independent coaching organisation) and was led by its director and former Headteacher, Viv Grant. Headteachers were invited to take up fully funded places on the coaching programme and all participants were volunteers and self-referred. The cohort of headteachers in the programme for 2018-19 was 39.

The coaching model adopted by Integrity Coaching is described by its director Viv Grant, as follows,

"Our coaching model has an ontological root, in that it has been designed to enable headteachers to lead with integrity out of who they are."

The intention of the coaching programme approach is that

- *The headteacher remains at the centre of the coaching conversation.*
- *The headteacher always sets the agenda.*
- *Their coach helps them to make meaning and find depth of purpose in their own leadership journey, by taking account of key themes as and when they arise.*

Prior to one-to-one coaching the headteacher coachees engaged in introductory training to develop their understanding of coaching and were then coached by coaches with whom they were matched.

The NEU funding allowed Integrity Coaching to provide six two-hour coaching sessions to each headteacher on the programme across the school year. There were check-in phone calls or skype calls available in between these sessions. Integrity Coaching coaches recognise central themes that often need to be attended to in the coaching process. These key themes are detailed below.

1. What matters most to you?
2. Your lived experience of leadership
3. Your values, your school
4. Growing through the challenges
5. Your identity as a leader
6. The authentic self

The personalised nature of the support on offer, meant that these themes could be addressed in the manner that was most appropriate for each individual, as and when they arose within the coaching conversations.

A detailed discussion of the specialist nature of the coaching approach is given in Issue 9 of CollectivED (Lofthouse and Whiteside).

The research

The purpose of the research was to establish the efficacy of the NEU funded headteacher coaching programme. The research investigated the impact of coaching as perceived by the headteachers. These perceptions were considered in relation to the expectations of the impact of coaching held by the coaching provider and coaches. The main research questions set up at the start of the evaluative research project were:

- How does participation in the coaching programme affect headteachers' perceptions of their leadership role?
- How does participation in coaching affect headteachers' self-efficacy?
- In what ways does participation in coaching influence headteachers' decision making and capacity to meet the challenges of leadership?

Additional questions that were intended to be explored through the lens of the participants' perceptions are:

- What (if any) are the contemporary challenges of school leadership that coaching helps to address? Is there a need for coaching in schools?
- What impact can/does coaching have on wider school improvement and pupil outcomes?

- What is the impact of coaching on the individual, their personal life and well-being?
- What are the barriers that can prevent school leaders from pursuing coaching?

In the busy life of a headteacher it may be difficult to separate out the impact of coaching from other influences on their capacities in their role, but the research design offered opportunities for the participants to focus on their experiences of coaching at several key points across the year. Data was collected through

- Questionnaires completed by headteachers being coached,
- Telephone interviews with a sample of headteachers being coached,
- Telephone interviews with a sample of coaches,
- Focus groups with headteachers.

The research highlights the vulnerability that some headteachers feel and was the first of its kind to explore the relationship between coaching, wellbeing and leadership effectiveness amongst senior school leaders in an English context.

Wellbeing and vulnerability of headteachers

Headteachers give so much of themselves to support teachers and to make a positive

impact on children and young people, and yet they experience some of the highest levels of stress in the system. Headteachers participating in the research used the words "difficult" and "turbulent" to describe their school year, and one said that he felt it was not always easy to think far enough ahead about the implications of any decision he had to make. It also confirms that role of head teacher as a lonely job that leaves them feeling isolated. This was reinforced by a coach who had previously been a headteacher who said that "In my own experience of headship I felt extreme isolation and loneliness and I always had a sense I was going to be judged."

This loneliness is an interesting phenomenon because during the focus group one participant made the point that it is "rarely recognised that during any day headteachers have hundreds of interactions and that most often people want something or to tell you about a problem in their lives". He went on to describe how this has an impact on the headteachers, saying that when he had left one school he felt a relief because he realised "how much of peoples' lives you carry, and every time you see a child in the playground you know something about that family". He expressed this as an "emotional weight, which unless you manage it, erodes your resilience over time".

How coaching helps

The research demonstrates that headteachers who had coaching feel able to better manage these significant demands and address the common feeling of isolation. They also report a positive impact on their self-belief and confidence. Coaching helps them to place a greater priority on their physical and emotional health.

While coaching is not offered as a 'quick-fix' this research indicates that it can start to have positive impact from the outset. These impacts were illustrated through the responses to the interim questionnaire which was sent to headteachers after one term of coaching. 70% of the headteachers responded to this questionnaire and the key findings from this showed a clear relationship between the personal and the professional benefits:

"The goals are centred around work-life balance and this impact on professional performance and resilience."

"Coaching will continue to enable me to tackle challenging circumstances and scenarios in a calm way that will mean I retain a sense of optimism in the solutions I am constantly working on."

"I am learning that my priority is the children in my school and helping staff to be the best they can be, so that our children are happy and learning."

Coaching creates a protected and sustained and supported space which gives headteachers the time to prioritise the issues that need resolving. As such coached headteachers report that they have developed greater work-life balance and a heightened level of self-confidence in their leadership role. They state that they had an improved ability for developing staff within their schools, managing difficult issues and improving working relationships, and an enhanced capacity for problem-solving, strategic thinking and the need to cope with continuing demands of the job, including emergency management. One headteacher stated that "I am more emotionally resilient and can cope with the major decisions and issues that daily come my way".

A success criterion offered by a coach was that coaching would help the headteachers "to be good solid leaders able to lead schools with confidence", and to "feel like they are a good head". In a focus group one headteacher stated that they had gained "confidence to implement some very quick wins". In one questionnaire a headteacher wrote that having greater confidence since the coaching meant a greater sense of direction and purpose, both professionally and personally.

In an interview one headteacher indicated that coaching had enabled them to

"recalibrate self and goals". Another headteacher suggested he felt that through coaching he was "a more human and humane leader" as he had become better able to work with his staff to focus on the values of the school. Another headteacher referred to the fact that coaching allowed him to stay more balanced and less reactive with his staff. In the final questionnaire one headteacher stated that coaching "helped me come to terms with changes I had no choice in and therefore I am in a better mental place to begin to make the plans we need to".

Unlike other forms of support or training that can be made available to headteachers the coaches did not enter into the contract to give specific advice, information or guidance for the leadership role. However the headteachers' evaluation of their experience of coaching was that it had supported them in building their capacity for managing the complexities of school and had had an influence on the work of their colleagues. In the focus group several key outcomes were shared on with the discussion leading to a consensus that the following impact were common:

"Having time to prioritise the issues that need resolving."
"Normalising the intricacies of relationships in the school."

"Competence; developed decision making, strategic ability, soft skills to influence others"
"Allowed me to work through key challenges"
"Contribution to empowerment of staff"

As already demonstrated, the emotional impact of headship can be huge. In interviews two headteachers said that the coaching had helped with the emotions they experienced in what had been a tough year for them, both professionally and personally. The coaching allowed one respondent to "remind myself that this is my school, I can take control" (as previously, this respondent had begun to feel the school was lurching *out* of her control), and the other said "coaching focused my attention on what I can take responsibility for, and what I can't control".

As coaching of headteachers supported their health and wellbeing it also supports retention. One headteacher wrote a comment in the focus group "I am managing my health and balancing my work/life much more healthily now". Another stated "I'm still in the job of headteacher – at the start of coaching I didn't think I would be" and a third focus group participant stated that coaching was "Keeping me in the job – time to reflect on positives rather than only hearing the negatives". Further evidence of this emerged from the final interviews with one head

teacher describing the job as "a millstone round my neck" but continued that they had found the energy and drive to carry on because of the coaching. In the same way another headteacher said they had been sceptical about coaching because they were very close to quitting the role, due to "the pressures of the job". That headteacher is now still in role and very much more positive, having found the coaching to be "supportive emotionally".

These impacts on retention should not be overlooked. One head teacher in the focus group wrote "sustainability" on his card. During the resulting discussion he talked more about this. He had been a headteacher for more than ten years in several schools and he was proud of his new found "ability to deal with the job". He contrasted this with what he perceived as the current common "systemic problem of single-use heads", in other words of headteachers who were not in post more than a few years and did not progress to subsequent leadership posts.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that specialist coaching can make a real difference in the professional and personal lives of headteachers. As such, amidst the growing recruitment and retention crisis amongst headteachers and school leaders, the research also provided evidence that coaching could be an effective strategy for helping to keep headteachers in the profession and create greater sustainability in the school workforce.

References and information

The full research report can be found here https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/schools/school-of-education/sustaining-a-vital-profession--final-report.pdf?la=en

For more information on Integrity Coaching please see their website https://www.integritycoaching.co.uk/.

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Incremental coaching as a vehicle for transforming teaching and learning

A practice insight working paper by Tracey Rollings

I think every teacher in the country has felt the dread of a pending lesson observation. During a lesson observation window, the entire school goes into lockdown for two weeks. Every member of staff becomes an anxious sceptic.

Which class is going to be chosen?

The fear that it might be your difficult year nine class on a Friday afternoon. The injustice that some select teachers seem to always be chosen to be observed with their top set for what appears to be purely political reasons.

Who is going to observe me?

Overthinking reasons behind why it might not be your line manager. The worry or joy that you feel when you find out who is observing you. *Shouldn't all observers be the same?*

What am I going to teach?

The build-up starts the week before when you begin to plough hours of precious time into 5-page lessons plans; colour coordinated seating plans; class data and that's before you've even started colour printing and laminating hundreds of resources- card sorts; exit passes; lolly pop question sticks; various style post-it notes and so on. This is not to say that any of this doesn't have some value used in the correct way over time, but the whole falsehood of the 'bells and whistles' lesson observation process is exhausting for all.

It doesn't matter what your job title is, or how long you have been teaching. If you care about your job then you cannot help but mirror the behaviours outlined.

It's unrealistic and certainly not a true reflection of the day to day diet of students. The lesson observation process helps no one. Once the two week window is over, it's back to normal and very few staff think about their targets until the next window a few months later. Even the most conscientious of staff who strive to improve often do not have the tools to make that change without support and nurture. I will point out at this stage that generic whole-school CPD on topics such as questionning and challenge are not the type of specific support and nurture that make a difference. It needs to be something that is tailored to individual needs.

Thinking differently

At Woodside, we do not carry out formal lesson observations or learning walks. We value our staff as trusted professionals who strive to improve their practice without the high stakes accountability measures that merely detract from the task at hand- providing a world class education for our students.

In order to facilitate this process we run a whole-school incremental coaching programme. This includes both teaching staff and teaching assistants, anyone that is in the classroom working with the students. Every member of staff is coached on a fortnightly basis, by one of our 17 trained teacher and teaching assistant coaches.

The programme is loosely based on the concept of marginal gains which was famously the methodology used by the British cycling team in preparation for the London Olympics in 2012**.** Sir Dave Brailsford explained the idea of marginal gains to the BBC. He said: "The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of, that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by 1%, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together. They're tiny things but if you clump them together it makes a big difference." (BBC, 2015). The marginal gains theory is concerned with small incremental improvements in any process, which, when added together, make a significant improvement. It is as relevant to sport as it is to teaching within the classroom.

How incremental coaching works

The Programme

Making a shift towards using incremental coaching meant that we needed to make fundamental changes in our ethos as a school; one of the major changes involved the removal of teaching and learning from performance management reviews. We couldn't expect to create a culture of trust and nurture if we also used teaching as a pay related benchmark. A second shift came from how coaching would be perceived within the school. To make it happen, it absolutely has to be a priority for all staff. To foster this we timetabled periods that could not be used for other purposes. Coaching supersedes meetings, cover and all other activities that happen during the school day.

Coaches meet with their coachees on a two weekly cycle during a mutually agreed time slot. The meeting lasts for fifteen to twenty minutes. It provides space and time for

professionals to reflect on their practice and set themselves small action steps for development. The coaching conversations are very much centred on action-based research which is driven by the coachee. Using action-based research means that the coachee along with their coach can explore what works and what doesn't work within the classroom. They are able to reflect on their practice and evaluate the impact of strategies that they implement.

Lesson drop-ins are used as a tool to assess the effectiveness of these action steps in the classroom. A ten to fifteen minute lesson drop-in takes place between coaching meetings. The coach randomly selects which lesson is visited.

Due to teaching and learning being separated from performance management, a high level of trust has been created which means that coachees are very open about their areas for development and needs. Very early on in the incremental coaching process we found that coachees would invite coaches into what they perceived as being their most tricky class. They welcomed the non-judgemental support.

Confidentiality is key. Coaching logs are kept to document the progress being made with teaching and learning, however, these logs are only shared between the coach, coachee and me, as the Deputy Head with designated responsibility for teaching and learning. My overview allows for CPD needs to be met as they arise.

The Coaches

The programme has a flat structure which means that coaches are not just middle or senior leaders; in fact there is a broad range of coaches including lead practitioners and excellent classroom practitioners. It is so important for the success of the programme

that status is not allowed to permeate the coaching process. We have classroom practitioners coaching middle leaders and senior leaders; status is irrelevant. We take this a step further in ensuring that coaches are not involved in the line management of the coachee. We do not want any blurred lines.

Coaches are given a protected timetable allocation to coach; this amounts to 2 hours per week. During this time they carry out drop-ins and complete scheduled coaching meetings with four coachees.

The coaches themselves are not coached. It is clear from the process that they learn a lot about their practice by coaching others. They were chosen as coaches because they were able to reflect on their practice and improve, they certainly want to walk the walk! Their professional development comes from the coaches meetings. Coaches meet half-termly to share best practice and ideas about action steps. They hold each other to account for their coaching practice and discuss ways in which the programme can continually develop.

The Coaching

We have developed our own in-house Woodside coaches training. This is something that has evolved over time as the expertise of the team has exponentially increased and the programme has developed. Fundamentally, our coaches employ instructional coaching methods. These are based on the concept of deliberate practice. A step for improvement is identified, followed by the coachee practising within their lessons over a short period of time before the impact on learning is viewed.

During the coaching sessions, coaches have been trained to use the 'Six Steps to Effective Feedback' (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p 78)

(1) Provide precise praise: Start off the meeting with one or two pieces of precise praise from your drop-in

(2) Probe: Ask a targeted open-ended question about the core issue.

(3) Identify problem and concrete action step: Identify the problem and state a clear, measurable, observable action step that will address the issue.

(4) Practice: Role-play or simulate how the teacher could have improved the class.

(5) Plan ahead: Design or revise upcoming lesson plans to implement this action.

(6) Set timeline: Determine time by which the action will be accomplished

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Particular attention is paid to step 3- Identifying the problem and the concrete action step as it involves a high level of coaching skill. Coaches work relentlessly to ensure that this part of the process provides a good level of challenge for the coachee, whilst ensuring that coaching does not lead into mentoring unless absolutely essential.

The coachees 'ability to be reflective and metacognitive will determine what level of scaffolding she needs to provide' (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p 81)

Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) identifies the scaffolded levels outlined in the box below.

A powerful vehicle for driving change

Incremental coaching is a very powerful vehicle for supporting staff in focusing on and developing areas of priority for the students in our school.

There is an understanding amongst the coaches that behaviour for learning is always the priority classroom focus, this always remains until we are sure that this is secure and that the environment is conducive to learning.

A whole-school coaching focus enables collective responsibility for driving change in an area of priority. For example, termly focus areas such as challenge; questioning; underachieving groups; feedback; whatever the gap analysis tells you that you need to work on. This can be very powerful. For the entirety of the term, all coaching conversations revolve around closing the gap. Coaches share best practice with each other, in turn they then share this best practice with their coachees. Coachees talk informally to each other in their offices and staff rooms about what they are working on. Everyone is on the same page.

Level 1 (Teacher-driven)- **The teacher self-identifies the problem:**

Yes. What, then, would be the best action step to address this problem?

Level 2 (More support)- **Ask more scaffolded questions:**

How did your lesson try to meet this goal/objective?

Level 3 (More leader guidance)- **Present classroom data:**

Do you remember what happened in class when _____ ? What did this do to the class/learning?

Level 4 (Leader-driven; only when other levels fail)- **State the problem directly:**

State what you observed and what action steps will be needed to solve the problem.

Impact

We have been running the programme since September 2018 and the impact is evident.

Qualitative Impact

An external reviewer, who met with both coaches and coachees, provided the following narrative of these meetings (Woodside High School, 2019)

- Teachers enjoyed sharing good practice, saying that they "want to learn from as many books as possible". Coaching was said to be "positive and non- judgemental, supportive", because "we're all in the same boat, your coach is being coached also, (it is) much more inclusive".

- Teachers also benefited from the developmental nature of coaching, saying that "the system is not rigid, people are free to not stagnate, they can change, it is fluid".

- One commented that "this is the best training I have ever had". Her own class exam results have improved greatly due to the coaching programme: 81% achieving grade 4+ (28% in 2018) and 48% achieving grade 5+ (15% in 2018).

- Another teacher stated that teachers "can discuss the positives, it is so refreshing, it feels good, I'm doing this every time".

- Another teacher remarked that "hand on heart this has helped me to improve as a teacher, it came at the right time, when I needed it".

Our internal staff surveys and feedback have been incredibly positive about the programme; with staff unanimously stating that they want it to continue.

We have also noticed an impact on recruitment and retention of staff. We have seen the lowest staff turnover in recent history, as staff who are coached see the coaching programme as key to their development and those who are incremental coaches see this as a career progression step.

Quantitative Impact

In the past year there has been significant improvement in achievement and progress in the school's GCSE results. The headline measure of English & Maths at grade 4+ has improved significantly; with an increase of 12% on the previous year's outcomes. Our progress 8 score has improved significantly to +0.38 (from +0.27) which is well above the national average (Ofsted, 2019).

The improvement in teaching and learning, generating greater consistency in practice has helped to close the gap in key areas of priority. The gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students has reduced significantly (by 9%) at grade 4+. Outcomes for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) have improved significantly, with SEN (K) students outcomes increasing by 23% at grade 4+. Similarly, outcomes for other key groups have improved significantly; the number of Black Caribbean students achieving grade 4+ in English and Maths increased by 22.3% and the number of Black Somali students achieving grade 4+ in English and Maths increased by 20.64%.

Although we cannot say that incremental coaching alone is the direct cause of the improved results, it is clearly evident that it has played a significant role.

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Teampreneurship and coaching successful teams. A case study in Tampere University, Finland.

A research working paper by Jonathan Doherty

Abstract

This reports on a recent Erasmus visit to Tampere University in Finland to experience team learning and coaching and an innovative approach to enterprise. Teams are integral to modern organisational success but it is not only the construction and dynamics of teams that enables them to perform highly, it is how they learn together. The role of the coach is pivotal in promoting this and in this study I reflect on my observations of how coaches in this organisation enact their role as team coaches to develop effective teams. The research takes a case study approach and concludes with key findings and implications for practice.

Introduction

Tampere University of Applied Sciences is an institution of higher education in Finland with over 40,000 students and strengths in multidisciplinary education, creativity and a strong international dimension. Vision and values are at the core of the work in *Proakatemia:* trust, courage, doing, learning and success and these became very apparent

for the teams and in the coaching of the teams I observed over the week.

Since its beginnings in 1999, *Proakatemia* (TAMK), as an academy of knowledge, has sought out new ways to develop team learning, entrepreneurship and leadership and work in the local community. Students come mainly from Business Administration and Entrepreneurship and Team Leadership programmes, and each year around 100 students enrol on the programmes, supported by14 coaches. To date, over 30 learning enterprises have been established by teams of *Proakatemia* students and most are still operating successfully. Learning enterprises are companies which the students form in their role as "teampreneurs"- working in teams. Each company comprises on average 15 teampreneurs and each company has a designated coach. Learning on the programmes comprises practical elements including forming a vision and a mission statement, marketing, human resources, budget projections, customer interfacing and company meetings. Underpinning these, and facilitated by the coach are weekly team

learning and coaching sessions, seminars and theoretical input.

The programme for the week in Tampere for colleagues and myself included sessions led by the team coaches which included-

- Utilising diversity within teams
- Team learning methods
- Project based learning
- Working in learning organisations
- Coaching as a pedagogical choice

and the opportunity to visit two companies in the local community to see the teampreneurs in action in the companies they had created. One company was a café in a community park and the other a high street retail shop. The final product for teams is the establishment of a successful company and coaches support and guide this process for beginning to end.

Research questions

Three research questions formed this small scale study:

1. What does team learning look like for the teams of students and what is this experience for them?
2. How does team coaching in the context of *Proakatemia* operate?
3. What are the implications for this approach outside the organisation?

Methodology

The methodology for this study was case study. Stake's early definition is research that is "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (1995, p.xi) which was appropriate to understand the organisation and capture the views and experiences of team players and coaches.

Creswell et al. (2007) captured the depth and breadth of a case study's features and described it as, "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes" (2007, p245.). The case to be researched was the real life setting of *Proakatemia* and consistent with Creswell above, my methods of investigation included interviews, observations and documentary analysis of work portfolios, so that as a researcher I could explore and understand participants' perspectives and get close to them in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013).

Teams and team learning

Teams are a common structure in most organisations today and familiar to many. What is less well known is how a team's ability for high performance takes place to create a high quality output that consistently meets or exceeds a team's goals (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss, & Hackman, 2008). From their review of the literature, Peters and Carr (2013) reveal a number of specific factors that influence team performance. These factors included:

- Communication (incorporating cohesion, interdependency, feedback)
- Collective intelligence
- Decision-making and information sharing
- Team learning
- Team and interpersonal conflict
- Positive organisational behaviour

In *Proakatemia* the generation of knowledge took place in and through teams and team innovation. Individual learning was a by-product. My observations showed clearly the distinction between a group and a dynamic team. Teampreneurs were more than merely groups of individuals. They worked as cohesive teams units. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), a team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. Teams were learning teams, working collaboratively on projects in ways akin to project-based learning (PBL), with students experiencing and solving real world problems (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). The three elements of the team were obvious in the teams observed. They were highly motivated and worked to a common purpose to establish and sustain a successful company. They were clear about that the respective goals and understood that the responsibility and accountability for the projects rested with them. SMART targets were agreed upon in the planning stage and regularly returned to and reviewed. What was also evident was that the teams rose to and met the inevitable challenges they faced underway in forming their companies. By understanding each team member's skills and planning to optimise these, better teamwork resulted. What was also evident was the fun the teams had in their learning.

One teampreneur commented,

"We believe that inspiring ideas build up in a fun and creative atmosphere. Everyone is responsible for their own progress and learning with support from the team and our coach".

Katzenbach and Smith argue that in successful teams 'performance is both the cause and effect of teams' (ibid). Such a way of working integrated both performance and learning.

There was a common commitment in how they worked and an inter-dependence on each other (Kettley & Hirsh, 2000): coming together to share information and new insights; to make decisions that helped each member do his or her job better and to reach high standards of performance in their product. The focus was always on team goals and accountability. Teampreneurs used group discussion, debate, reflection and shared decision-making and produced outputs through the joint contributions of all team members. The teams were more than the sum of the parts. From their point of view, they valued the freedom and responsibility in this model of learning.

One teampreneur commented, "It gives us a lot of freedom which we like. It's a lot up to you".

The important role of the coach in team coaching

The evidence base for individual coaching in business and education is growing but the evidence for team coaching in the workplace is not so prolific. The latter is not team building nor one to one coaching. Team coaching differs from individual coaching because in team coaching, it is the team as a whole that is the client and the collective performance of that team as a unit which is the goal. Team coaching uses the coach's skills

to improve a team's performance. Frameworks do exist (see for example Brown & Grant, 2010; Stainer, 2016) but the three common factors presented by Clutterbuck (2018) I feel helpfully reflect the role and function of team coaching at *Proakatemia:*

- An acceptance by the team and the team coach that a coaching approach is appropriate and beneficial
- A focus on performance
- An emphasis on conversations between team members aimed at making more effective use of collective skills, knowledge and interests.

The coaches at *Proakatemia* played an important role in team learning and in steering teams to success with their projects. There was a clear distinction between a lecturer or tutor's role and that of a coach. I was soon aware that the coaches were not team leaders and certainly had no line management role. They acted in a way described by Clutterbuck when he talked of the role as a touchline manager, not part of the play directly but observing, providing feedback and bringing teams together for reflection. This allowed the coaches to bring a wider perspective to thinking and decision-making. The former is typified by speaking, judging and assessing and has a high degree of specific subject knowledge. Coaches in *Proakatemia*, by contrast were characterised as being listeners, asking questions, they did

not assess formally and had generic coaching knowledge and skills.

Coaches assisted with and helped review Learning Contracts set at the start of each project which were then reviewed every six months. The following questions were used to frame the contracts and thinking-

Where have I been?

Where am I now?

Where am I going to?

How do I get there?
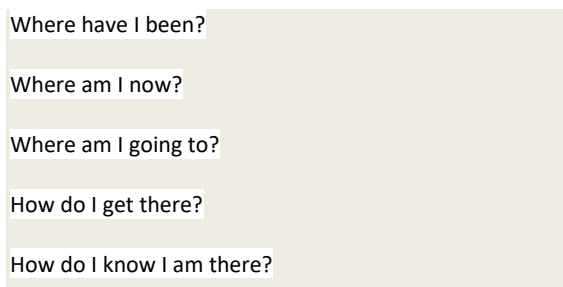
How do I know I am there?

Figure 1. Questions used in Learning Contracts

The time scales vary from team to team. For some teams it is a semester and for others it is the end of the project, which is concluded in two years maximum.

I observed how dialogue was used extensively by all coaches in the coaching sessions. These began with a check-in question to raise thinking about a topic and ended with a check-out question which gave feedback on the team's learning in the session. Examples of this were, "What did you take from this session today?" Team company meetings of four hours take place twice weekly. Topics may be decided upon by the team and the coach facilitates the discussions and either recommend further readings or sets tasks for development. Commonly these take place in

learning circles to open up debate or explore work in assignments or expand upon wider reading. This was interesting as the learning environments in the academy building were designed deliberately to facilitate discussion by being open plan layouts. Cushions and soft seating replaced formal chairs and desks. There were shared spaces for coaches and teams to work together and selected books and other resources were available but minimised. There was a palpable ethos of guided working, trust and respect. Coaches meet with each teampreneur every semester for 1-2 hours to review learning and progress and teampreneurs can ask for additional 1:1 coaching. Each coach can set challenges when h/she feels the team would benefit from this. Challenges are used to evaluate how the team is developing professionally. The GROW model was a key coaching tool.

Feedback or *Motorola* was a valuable part of the coaching process. Teampreneurs were keen to receive feedback from their coach. The following simple questions were used by coaches to encourage deep thinking and self-reflection.-

1.	What went well?
2.	What could be improved
3.	What did I learn?
4.	What am I going to exploit in practice?

Figure 2. Questions used in feedback sessions

From the coaches' point of view greater freedom of learning brings greater responsibility for each teampreneur.

One coach pointed out, "It makes teams very motivated and more determined to succeed".

Conclusions and implications for practice

The team learning model is evolving in *Proakatemia* and has a successful track record based on retention figures and numbers of completed projects since its beginnings in 1999. Elements such as continual self-reflection and adherence to the core values of the organisation contribute to this.

Team learning is an effective way of harnessing the power of teams. There was an energy and commitment observed from teampreneurs in all aspects of their project work.

The role of the coach and their skills had a significant impact on the success of teams and projects. Teams place high value and trust in their coaches.

The approach to team learning and team coaching provides opportunities for more research to build up the evidence base on how teams work in real work settings.

There is much potential to adopt similar ways of team working in higher education across disciplines and make more use of a coaching methodology to support student teams alongside formal teaching.

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Coaching in schools: how hard can be it?

A Practice Insight Working Paper by Roger Higgins

Introduction

In January the National Federation for Educational Research (NFER) in partnership with the Teacher Development Trust (TDT) published a report suggesting that:

- Teachers perceive themselves as having less autonomy in their roles compared to other similar professions;
- Teacher autonomy is strongly associated with improved job satisfaction and a greater intention to stay in teaching;
- Increasing teachers' reported influence over their professional development goals from 'some' to 'a lot' is associated with an increase in intention to stay in teaching.

The TDT also produced helpful guidance on goal setting to accompany the report. Given that we want to retain and develop colleagues, and with recruitment not getting any easier, this blog looks at implementing a coaching approach to underpin teacher professional and performance development. After all, *how hard can it be*?

Why consider Coaching?

Professional development requires follow-up support to help teachers embed what they learn during training in their classroom practice. Coaching represents one form of follow-up support. Last year saw a helpful challenge to the 'best bets' for effective professional development, summarised by the Developing Great Teaching (DGT) systematic review. Harry Fletcher-Wood and Dr Sam Sims questioned the reliability of some of the research included in DGT and hence its key findings. What I took most from the ensuing debate was that Fletcher-Wood and Sims view the evidence on the need for follow-up support as relatively strong, and interpret the evidence specifically for 'Instructional Coaching' as being particularly strong. Others contest the robustness of the evidence for this specific form of coaching.

Generalising, the need for follow-up support for teachers to enact and sustain professional learning and development seems relatively uncontested. At our school, back in 2015 we were aware that our existing forms of follow-up support were not aligned with teachers' professional development goals. We also knew that some staff lacked self-efficacy. Some staff lacked self-efficacy: i.e. the belief in their own ability to effect positive change, particularly with certain pupils e.g. disadvantaged.

Was coaching something we could adopt to address these issues? We first needed a better understanding of what coaching actually is.
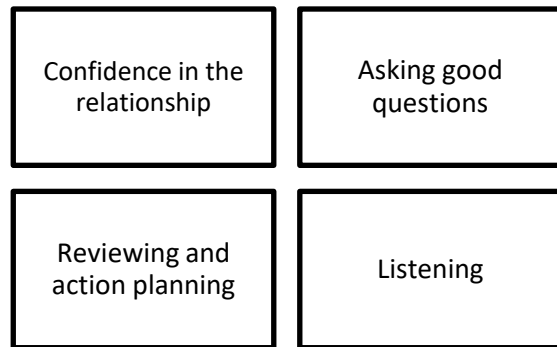
What exactly is coaching? Dig beneath the headline

Everyone I speak to has heard of coaching, and most have a sense of it involving skilful questioning and listening. We went back to the CUREE National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching (2005), which we found helpful in distinguishing between different forms of coaching and mentoring. More recently, we've found van Nieuwerburgh and Lofthouse's concept [7] of both Coaching and Mentoring being on a 'conversation spectrum' helpful:

	Specialist coaching or Co coaching	Instructional coaching	Mentoring
Metaphor	Facilitator	Partner	Expert-apprentice
Teacher knowledge	Has the answers, just may not realise it yet	Has valuable knowledge but may need other knowledge to improve	Must implement new knowledge to improve
Decision-maker	Teacher	Teacher	Expert
Approach	Sets aside expertise	Shares expertise dialogically	Advocacy

The CUREE framework identified that all of these forms of support relied on the following, which we started to think about as the 'essential behaviours' (which we'd now call 'Active Ingredients') that we needed to see when colleagues supported each other's professional development:

Confidence in the relationship	Asking good questions
Reviewing and action planning	**Listening**

How did we prepare? Considering readiness and creating a baseline for evaluation

We could see the potential merits of:

1. Training a small group of specialist coaches who other staff could elect to use.
2. Re-structuring our teacher CPD model around a co-coaching approach.
3. Enhancing the quality of feedback given to teachers following lesson observations, whether it be mentoring or coaching in nature.

However we simply didn't feel like we were ready to implement specialist coaching initially: we knew we lacked the required **innovation-specific capacity** [8], even before trying to develop a plan:

Implementation readiness = motivation + general capacity + innovation-specific capacity

We therefore reined in our ambition, and decided to focus on (2) and (3), involving and consulting teaching staff on the proposed

changes. We 'baselined' our teachers' perceptions of their CPD and experience of quality assurance processes prior to implementing changes, by introducing Teaching and Learning surveys. We also altered how we set appraisal goals for teachers, to make prioritisation and ownership of professional learning a priority, making appraisal reviews more focused on evaluating teachers' fidelity to some principles of effective professional learning (challenging one other through good questioning; listening to one another when discussing implementation challenges; action planning and later reviewing together).

Where are we now heading? Cautious scale-up

Over time, positive trends in teachers' perception about appraisal and professional development (as seen in our surveys) have given us the confidence that our coaching-inspired changes are having positive impact. This coincided with us becoming a Research School, and the release of the [EEF Implementation guide](#).

In 2018 we decided to 'scale up' our use of coaching, by piloting specialist coaching as a professional development tool for both teaching and support staff, and felt that we needed external expertise to help with this. Employing a coaching consultant was a significant investment; however it has helped

us to refine our 'Active Ingredients' whilst ensuring that a small pool of specialist coaches was highly trained. We've worked hard to develop a common understanding of those active ingredients with all of our staff, for example through training events and the creation of guidance documents.

How will we evaluate our scaled-up investment in coaching?

We are open to the possibility that our increased investment in coaching will not have a positive impact, and have chosen to frame our related implementation using an inquiry question:

"Does fostering a 'listening school' culture at Notre Dame over a three-year period (introducing specialist coaching, improving co-coaching, basing quality assurance feedback on coaching principles) improve pupil outcomes, via improvements to staff self-efficacy, and in how staff implement and evaluate change?"

To help us answer this question as best we can, we've set up evaluation mechanisms including:

- Self-efficacy statements added to our staff surveying, to allow us to look at trends over time.
- CPD portfolios for staff which become the focus in appraisal meetings with line managers.

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- Teachers trained in realistic ways to evaluate the impact of their choices on pupil outcomes.

In summary

We'd love to hear from other schools who are implementing a coaching approach to staff professional development. For any schools who are thinking about it, we hope the following prompts we wish we'd had at the start of our journey prove helpful:

1. Do you have a clear understanding of what your current problems are with staff professional development?
2. Have you scratched below the surface of coaching, such that you understand the key principles and implications for your school of utilising it?
3. Are multiple sources of data all pointing to coaching being an appropriate thing to adopt, in response to your current problems?
4. Can you plan to 'start small' and 'scale up' later?
5. How will you evaluate the impact of implementing a coaching approach?

The EEF's implementation guide, updated in Dec 2019, now provides a rich set of resources to support schools looking to implement changes like this.

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Dysfunctional Collaboration – When Lesson Study collaboration needs help!

A practice insight working paper by John Mynott

Collaboration is great – except when it is not!

It is very easy to tell people that we need to collaborate, but for some the idea of working together will evoke terrible memories of group tasks where one person ending up doing all the work. Or where the arguments between the team members meant that little learning was achieved – apart from maybe a shared distaste for future group work.

It is therefore important to have a closer look at dysfunctional collaboration – through the context of Lesson Study. This is partly because, I think, unless you can recognise dysfunction, you can't start to address it. I also think that dysfunction can look different in different contexts, and as I am unlikely to have experienced all of the types of dysfunction you might experience in a Lesson Study, this blog just hopes to provide some insight into dysfunction you may encounter.

I suppose a suitable spoiler at this point is: Simply putting someone into a team does not mean that their collaboration will be effective, efficient or kind. There are a lot more considerations that are important, and if you neglect them dysfunctional collaboration can occur and this could be quite damaging to any future collaboration you do.

What does dysfunction look like?

Dysfunction is when the Lesson Study team – within the participants – collaborates in a way that is more difficult, disruptive or unpleasant. When I recently framed dysfunction in Lesson Study (Mynott, 2019) I suggested it might look as outlined in the table on the following page.

Under each heading of Time, Collaboration and Expertise you can see some of the qualities that might make a Lesson Study dysfunctional.

In the rest of the paper, I am going to focus on egos and their impact on collaboration.

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Outcome 2: Dysfunctional Dissonance		
Dissonance is present but its impact causes dysfunction and/ or disruption to the Lesson Study cycle		
2.1 Time	**2.2 Collaboration**	**2.3 Expertise**
• Planning does not always include all participants • Participants arrive late/ leave early • Lesson Study cycle might end in an unplanned way • Time is used unproductively by focusing on specific or individuals not related to Lesson Study's enquiry focus	• Insecure or dominant egos affect collaboration • May focus on an individual and their perceived failings/ successes • Safe space for professional discussion is not established • Lesson Study protocols (Dudley, 2014) are not followed • There is a lack of joint endeavour • May need external facilitation to support collaboration	• Conflict leads to dissonance but this is not professional or helpful • Expertise is drawn on but dysfunctional approach means it is not used effectively • Observation skills are underdeveloped • Feedback skills are underdeveloped

Extract from Lesson Study Outcome Framework (Mynott, 2019)

Types of egos

There are always egos. Egos can be big and they can also be small. One of the things I have learnt about egos is that you cannot be entirely sure of the root of someone's ego and what they ego might look in a Lesson Study context, until you start. This is because confidence can be bluster, and equally what might look like uncertainty could be masking detailed knowledge. What is important is that in a Lesson Study team, particularly as a facilitator, you need to be prepared for all types of ego.

A dominant ego might belong to someone who wants to consume the collaborative space. This is an individual who has a lot of words to say (these might be brilliant and inspiring words) but they are dominating the space and therefore they are not necessarily giving others space to explore their thinking and also giving themselves time to reflect on their own learning. This kind of dominant ego can be addressed through the facilitator or chair of a Lesson Study team ensuring that all members are heard in relatively equal amounts. Of course, that might mean at times asking this dominant talker to take a turn listening.

The uncertain ego. The individuals who appear uncertain can be very tricky in a Lesson Study dynamic. They are tricky because they might genuinely be uncertain, in which case they need time and encouragement, or they might be self-deprecating in order to appear a certain way to the rest of the team. The danger of

spending time in a Lesson Study team building the confidence of these individuals is that the team might end up being dysfunctional because it has been drawn into affirming the egos of these uncertain individuals. Again, structure can help. If the facilitator gives specific tasks such as asking each individual to comment on the planned learning in the group, it deflects the focus of the collaboration away from the individual and back to the learning, meaning that the individual can find certainty in their thinking, even if it takes longer to feel it in themselves.

The 'I'm right' ego. Sometimes, learning can cause a significant amount of threat to an individual. This is often felt strongly if the belief challenged is something the individual feels passionately about or has worked hard on. At other times an individual might have more experience within a subject, topic or year group than other members of the group. This can lead to heated exchanges within a Lesson Study team. If this occurs it is important that the facilitator or chair returns to the protocols of the Lesson Study (see Dudley, 2014 or Stepanek et al, 2007 for more information on protocols). It is also important to remember that if a large amount of cognitive dissonance occurs for an individual, a break, might be a really good idea. This break might give an individual time to process and reflect on their learning, but also come to terms with what they now think, without

taking their frustration out on the rest of the Lesson Study team.

It is also important to recognise that the 'I'm right' person could be correct, but can the rest of the group see this from their own reading, observing and notes. If not, it might be that reflection and revision of the learning so far are needed to help understand the differences of opinions within the group. The facilitator needs to help this understanding grow, and this might mean they need the break to re-plan and re-shape the discussion focus to revisit previous work in more detail, or draw out more evidence from the current work to support further discussion based on learning, so it does not become solely focused on opinions or preferences.

The 'non-sharing' ego. There are a few individuals who do not share freely in collaborative structures. There reasons are not necessarily linked to the above egos but are more culturally tied to the way the school system works. These individuals cannot see any benefit in making others better, because if they do, then they will have to be better themselves in order to continually be perceived as better than someone else. Therefore, in collaboration they might only provide lip-service to the process, and never discuss or share anything of depth. This kind of ego is very challenging, because essentially there is a real fear behind this ego, that in helping someone else be better they will be

perceived as becoming worse. The fact that any teacher can feel like this is heart-breaking, because it is never a message that they would teach to a child. Yet, in a high-stakes accountability structure if you perceive yourself only through comparison this can be hard to change. This barrier can stop schools and individuals working together and a facilitator has to work hard to ensure that each participant is contributing. Again, the structure of how a session runs will need to make sure that everyone has both opportunity and space to contribute and that it is expected that everyone will bring their observations of the learning to the review meeting.

Reasons behind the egos

When someone is projecting fault or failings onto another, the team is not working together in collaboration. In that moment of challenge, it can be easy to blame the individuals, but actually, each challenging ego needs to be considered in their context, their history and within the dynamic of the Lesson Study team. Some of the contexts or reasons have been outlined below.

Lack of experience with observation

If teachers are only used to being observed in formal systems of accountability, they will think that observation is a critique of the teacher rather than a discussion of the learning. This is dangerous, because it means

that the observers are only thinking about a person within the team, not the essence of the collaborative work. It can be all too easy to fall into a trap of criticism of an individual when actually it is important to remember that Lesson Study work is exploratory, and therefore unlikely to be perfect. Dudley (2014), Stepanek et al (2007) all suggest that it is important to ensure that the Lesson Study team understand that their collaboration is a joint endeavour and therefore when they talk about a lesson, they need to shift their pronoun usage to 'We' and 'Our'. For example, it would be: Our lesson did not quite go the way we planned it! The dominant and uncertain egos are likely to be influenced by the previous experience of the observation system and it might mean that prior to the Lesson Study cycle starting its research lessons, time needs to be taken to practice and build observation skills.

Not being prepared to work collaboratively

Secondly, if teachers have not been sufficiently prepared to work together, they may be threatened or anxious about sharing their thinking or work. Teachers are too often working on their own and this means that they have to work to traverse their own individualism to work with others. This is where the old issue with group tasks also plays a part, because while the value of learning from others will not be denied, it is

often more straightforward to just get on with the task at hand.

Not usually working with others can also make collaboration scary as the teachers might be uncertain about their own practice. Not feeling safe to fail, is a good way of describing this, and while we spend a lot of time ensuring that pupils feel that they could and should learn from their mistakes, this philosophy is often denied to teachers. And sometimes as teachers we can be our own worse enemies. I will always recall a primary languages, non-specialist, teacher posting a resource online (a good few years ago now) that was then ripped apart by language teacher colleagues, as it was deemed imperfect. That is an example of dysfunctional behaviour, because in all likelihood, that person hasn't posted another resource again, and probably felt less confident teaching languages. If you are worried that is how you will be treated with your own teaching work then it can make you reticent to try.

This is even more the case if you have already worked hard to develop something in your own practice, but in the collaboration proposed you are being asked to freely share it and allow it to be critiqued. You might need to have sufficient time to explore this in the collaboration, or if an individual is taken into a team because of their knowledge, should they be a team member or are they a knowledgeable other? Whatever is decided it

is important that the collaboration is clear and explicit from the beginning: the collaboration needs a purpose.

The purpose will focus the work, the learning and the whole project. The stronger and clearer the purpose the easier it is to navigate different egos. What are you developing? What do you need to find out? If the purpose of the Lesson Study is clear then using protocols like those offered by Dudley's (2014) Handbook are going to support the discussion away from individuals and towards joint exploration.

Providing Structures

Creating a safe space is vital. This stems initially from the protocols set at the beginning of any Lesson Study work. I have started writing this up on a piece of large paper, with each individual team taking ownership of the precise working of their protocols so they become the governing rules of the individual Lesson Study team. Being on a poster, means they are easy to refer back to and whenever there is a need to address an aspect of dysfunction within the collaboration, reference to the protocols is then visual, simple but also understandable by all members of the team. In establishing your team's protocols, you set out the basic expectations of how the team will interact, and this in turn helps create a safer space to

work in, fail in, and to exchange thoughts that are still forming.

Using a facilitator or a chairperson. I am sure in some Lesson Study teams it is possible for the team themselves to facilitate the whole process, but I find it increasingly useful to use a facilitator in the meetings to help guide the discussion, to keep time and to help everyone have a section of space. How the facilitator can work effectively will be the subject of another blog, but as I have written this blog, I have shown how the facilitator can counter any aspects of dysfunctional egos.

Maintaining purpose. It is really important to maintain the purpose and focus of a Lesson Study cycle. Revisiting your question regularly, summarising what you know and what you have learnt at the end of each session and starting the next session with this summary is a good why to keep focused. I like to use the question: What has been in your minds this week linked to the Lesson Study work? It is a good way to bring everyone back to the learning from a previous session, but also see what reflection has taken place outside of the Lesson Study structure. There is always something, someone has read something, someone has tried out an idea, and this question allows it to be valued, drawn into the cycle and then if useful integrated into the shared work.

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The experience of facilitating lesson study in Brunei Darussalam

A practice insight paper by Vincent Andrew

As a facilitator at the Brunei Darussalam Teacher Academy, one of my duties is to design and conduct quality professional development. I decided to introduce a more specific form of Lesson Study called Learning Study as a professional development course for teachers. Learning Study is chosen because it is the one that I have the most experience in, having completed a doctorate focusing on lesson and learning study (Andrew, 2011). The first two Learning Studies in Economics and Commerce held in the Academy were considered useful and relevant by the participating teachers. These teachers came from all over the country to engage in two cycles of action research. However, I wanted to reach out more and support teachers within their schools. I asked six principals if they were willing to let me work with their teachers. Three responded in the affirmative. Over a period of one year (June 2019 to March 2020), I worked with three groups of teachers in their respective schools providing instructional support using the Learning Study framework for Business Studies (n=4), Economics (n=5) and Commerce (n=5). These subjects are examined at O-level every year.

The difference between Learning Study and Lesson Study is that the former uses a theory of learning, usually the variation theory of learning, to inform the design of lessons (Lo, 2012). The premise in learning study is that people learn from difference rather than sameness against a background of invariance. Trying out something new can be challenging. Using variation in lessons means the lesson structure is changing for the teachers. Evidence suggests that working with variation in students' ways of experiencing the object of learning can help teachers move from a transmission-oriented conception of teaching to a more student-centered conception of teaching (Davies & Dunnill, 2008). Moreover, this new lesson structure needs to be tested in the classroom. Did it work? What worked? What did not? It can be a daunting experience for teachers who are new to this arrangement of collaborative, theory-framed action research work.

Despite these concerns, the evidence shows that when teachers are supported and are given time to apply and test variation in the classroom, learning outcomes improve and teachers report that they have gained valuable insights from engaging in learning

study. For example, in a learning study on profitability ratio (Andrew, 2019), a teacher said she found the process of finding out what students did not know very helpful as a basis for planning lessons.

The very first thing I learnt from this is that you cannot assume students to know what you know .. because our understanding is different to what they see things .. different perceptions and conceptions so I guess I learn the hard way that you need to do the pre-test to see what they know and what they don't know so from there you can actually design your lesson because usually what we do we just jump into the lesson, teach what we think they don't know but then it doesn't always work.

Finding out what students do not know means that teachers are now more aware of what students need to learn. What they need to learn are called the critical aspects. They are not obvious. Knowing the critical aspects can help teachers define the object of learning for the lesson in a more precise manner. An object of learning is an insight, skill or capability that teachers wish to develop in their students during a lesson or a limited sequence of lessons. Having an object of learning provides focus and removes the temptation to teach everything which can make a lesson seem chaotic.

One of the most difficult part, finding focus because even for teachers there is too much that you want the students to know, it's difficult for us to actually see the bigger picture, that one is a bit difficult, even during the planning session our focus actually shift back and forth that was hard

Once the object of learning is confirmed and teachers have a sense of what students need to learn, they design the lesson using variation as a design tool. When teachers plan collaboratively rather than in isolation, more ideas are bounced off each other until the discussion rests on something that the teachers agree on. A useful principle for a learning study facilitator during planning is to help teachers to see this - to help learners discern an aspect, that aspect should be varied while keeping all other aspects invariant (Marton, 2015). One teacher reflects on the experience of planning using variation this way:

when we are looking at the bakeries for one you just changed the sales, for another you just change the variable cost, so they can see what affects the profit. So we actually saw in their comments they were actually talking about variable cost, some of them were talking about fixed cost so you can see that they were actually looking at these things which actually affect the profit. That's what we wanted them to see, isn't it? It's not just

the cost that affects the profit but it's also the sales. You can see the students are gaining. So I think a few more work along the same structure and more students should be able to see the factors that affect the profit.

The review part of a learning study is a critical part of the learning study. It is an opportunity for the teachers to give their thoughts about the lesson – what they observed, what they heard students were discussing, difficulties students encountered, if aims were achieved, if they would change anything in the lesson, and what the next steps may be. In a review on a lesson on *insurance*, what caught my attention was the subject teacher's comment about the group of students (4 boys) who were normally disengaged in her lessons. They would normally be seated at the back and according to the teacher, they were not interested. The learning outcomes, however, show that three of the four students showed an improvement in the post-test. They have learnt from the lesson! The teachers said this could be due to the presence of teachers in the classroom which encouraged them to work harder. In a reflection piece, one teacher said the way the lesson was designed encouraged this group and others to contribute towards the lesson. The starter activity encouraged everyone to have a go. The three cases encouraged everyone to work on the tasks. The subject teacher recorded

their responses on the board and encouraged them to clarify their response. The teacher gave the class the opportunity for everyone to listen to others. It was powerful reflection by one of the teacher participants. The implications are clear. Future lessons should have such opportunities built within the planning. No student will therefore be excluded from the opportunity to listen, to make sense of their and others' response, and build their own understanding of the subject. As another teacher noted in her reflection, 'When I change the way I plan and write it down in my lesson plan, I notice the differences'.

The review is also an opportunity to think about the need for a second cycle of action research. The teachers found that the first research lesson on insurance made a marginal improvement on learning outcomes. As a result, we looked at some video segments of the lesson and the post-test responses to try and understand what the students were not discerning. In the first cycle insurance lesson, we found that students did not understand risks and how they arise even though they could say that premium is related to the level of risk. However, the teachers concluded that saying this does not mean the students understood what risks mean. This led us to consider more carefully the nature of risks. In a cycle 2 lesson, the teachers addressed this

by getting students to consider the risks likely to be encountered by a house owner, a business and a car owner. During the lesson the teacher asked: Think of all the things that can happen to a house owner / a business / a car owner. What is the worst thing that can happen to him? What risks should he insure himself against and why? By exploring their responses, the teacher provided a platform for students to listen to the variation in answers. It also helped the teachers to try to make sense of the variation in responses. The post-test showed a marked improvement in the understanding of the nature of risks.

From a facilitator's point of view, I have found the following ways of working with teachers to be effective: engaging teachers by focusing on the variation in student understanding of the object of learning, planning lessons using variation as a pedagogical tool and encouraging teachers to share how they teach the object of learning. By opening up opportunities during the lesson study in these dimensions, there is a greater likelihood that teacher learning will occur. Wood and Rovio-Johansson (2019) suggests that the path of learning for teachers is contrast-

generalisation-fusion. Contrast refers to teachers finding out what needs to be learned (the critical aspects) from the students' perspective. Generalisation refers to the path where teachers vary the teaching so that they can see the effect of the new design on the learner's experience of the object of learning. Finally, fusion refers to the path when teachers see that to be effective, teaching must be focused on evidence of the object of learning for the learners. Preliminary evidence suggests that the teacher participants in the learning studies reported here are experiencing the path of learning contrast and generalization.

I feel privileged to be a facilitator of lesson study. The work is exciting even when lesson designs do not work well in the first cycle. It gives the lesson study team the impetus to look deeper into the object of learning and search for what is critical. It is not just about consuming knowledge and reading about other people's work but also producing knowledge together with the teachers and making a difference in the quality of their teaching and student learning outcomes.

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A transformative professional learning journey of a teacher through lesson study

A practice insight working paper by Laura Formosa and James Calleja

For Laura, being a teacher for the past twelve years and teaching students in a primary school has been a very rewarding and fulfilling experience. Seeing students' smiling, happy faces daily, eagerly wanting to learn and experience new things, makes her appreciate and reflect on her role as a teacher and the potential impact she has on her students' lives. As an Art teacher, young students look up to her as their inspiration to get creative; the teacher who motivates them and encourages them to develop their artistic skills; and the teacher who seeks to offer stimulating learning opportunities.

The school context

Students' expectations as well as the school context in which Laura teaches, bring with them a myriad of challenges and opportunities that she encounters on a daily basis. Whereas primary school teachers usually form part of a team of teachers within the same grade level, Laura is the only primary school Art teacher in her College. Moreover, due to a rigorous and restrictive timetable, it is very unlikely for her to participate in professional development opportunities or collaborative practices with other Art teachers. Indeed, for Laura, lesson planning and preparations are done in

isolation. Although there is robust research evidence that advocates the importance of having teacher educators and teachers working together within professional learning communities to bring about change and improvement in teaching and learning (Vescio et al., 2008; Brown & Zhang, 2017), Laura always feels that she is at a disadvantage and lacks opportunities of forming part of such a professional learning community. Hence, when she was approached to take part in a lesson study, she did not think twice. Laura took the decision with the intention and commitment to form part of a learning network which could provide her with the possibility to work collaboratively with others and to improve her teaching along the way.

The lesson study initiative

Lesson study is an ongoing professional learning model widely used in Japan and often attributed as an important approach for the improvement of teaching (Huang, Takahashi & da Ponte, 2019). In a lesson study teachers work together and engage in ongoing cycles to study, plan, teach and observe, and evaluate a research lesson. This ongoing lesson study process involves a number of crucial steps, namely: (1) selecting what to

teach, which class to teach and when to teach; (2) identifying the learning goals of the lesson; (3) engaging in research and a study of teaching materials; (4) planning the lesson; (5) involving knowledgeable others acting as critical friends; (6) teaching and observing the lesson; and (7) doing a post-lesson discussion to get feedback from observers and other knowledgeable others.

In Malta, lesson study was first introduced with a group of mathematics teachers in 2017. Since then, Collaborative Lesson Study Malta (CLeStuM – www.clestum.eu) was set up. The idea behind this project is to support schools to learn about, initiate and sustain collaborative lesson studies. James, the second author and the CLeStuM team leader, approached Laura with the idea of doing a lesson study. In this lesson study, James supported Laura to enable and assist her with the lesson study process. Knowledgeable others were involved to provide feedback, at the planning stage and following the teaching of the lesson. The Art lesson study was planned for a group of 12 boys in Grade 4 (aged 8 years) and focused on students' understanding of the concepts of foreground, middle ground and background and their application in an art work. We sought to provide students with opportunities to observe, think critically and discuss how foreground, middle ground and background are used in images. Students also

experimented and applied these concepts while creating their own collage artwork.

The lesson study process, challenges and tensions

Laura was aware that the lesson study would be a rigorous process and that challenges would be encountered. She was concerned that her timetable was too restricted, giving her no time to meet, discuss and plan with the lesson study facilitator. She was also preoccupied that she is the only Art teacher in her school, and so has no other teacher with whom she could plan or share ideas about the lesson. Considering that, in other circumstances, a lesson study would involve a group of three or more teachers, in Laura's case some modifications had to be made. The ongoing lesson study process required time, commitment and dedication. Indeed, face-to-face meetings were held after school hours and several online conversations were also held between Laura and James. The focus of the lesson study, which class to teach and when the lesson study would be held, were identified. Research and an in-depth study of what teaching materials and resources could be used to address the lesson objectives followed.

Conversations were not only based on asking for help or sharing materials and strategies but involved joint work. Through joint work, 'the degree of interdependence' between

Laura and James was evident (Van Gasse et al., 2017). To enlarge the community of professionals working together in this initiative, an Art education expert was also invited to give his support and professional feedback during the lesson planning stage and post-lesson trials. During these post-lesson discussions, other knowledgeable others were also invited to share their insights on what they observed during the lesson with a particular focus on student learning.

The lesson study process brought with it instances where Laura felt disheartened and disappointed, and she experienced internal conflicts and frustrations. During the planning phase, she was convinced that the activities that she and James had been working on were the 'best' choice available to address the lesson objectives and to reach the desired student outcomes. As a facilitator, James challenged Laura's thinking about her existing practices. When James proposed alternatives to the lesson plan, replacing the close-ended questions and tasks with more open-ended ones, Laura felt stuck. She perceived this change and the proposed questioning techniques as an unattainable challenge for her students, particularly in grasping the art concepts inherent within the suggested tasks. Based on her existing knowledge of the students, Laura was convinced that students would give up. Since she teaches mixed-ability students, Laura tends to use more guided instructional strategies, where she offers

constant support to those who struggle to understand new concepts or find difficulty learning. For this reason, she tends to rely more on asking closed and direct questions. The use of more open questions and tasks implied that Laura needed to rethink and change her lesson planning approach but also her way of doing things in class. To address this, she needed to step back, reflect and deconstruct her own teaching practices. For Laura, the facilitator was asking her to move away from her comfort zone and to reconsider her decisions, teaching strategies and practices.

A transformative professional learning journey

Throughout the lesson study process, Laura found herself engaged in continuous, deep reflections on her role in the classroom, about herself as a teacher, the way she plans and structures her lessons and the reasons why she adopts certain classroom practices. The frustrations and concerns that Laura encountered, along her lesson study journey, were necessary for her to take a leap forward and start taking risks. This experience has helped her move out of her comfort zone, and to research and test out 'new' instructional strategies for her Art lessons. With support from her knowledgeable others, Laura was willing to try out different techniques of grouping students and assigning more open-

ended tasks. Her experience in this lesson study also helped her believe more in her students' capabilities. She has become more aware that her sense of care and overprotectiveness over her students were influencing, and restricting her planning strategies and her approach in class. Her ongoing reflections and discussions with the lesson study facilitator enabled Laura to understand her existing practices of over guiding and coaching students. Following this lesson study experience, she is now more willing to take risks, set higher cognitive challenges for her students, ready to challenge student thinking, to allow them to think critically, and to use more collaborative work. Indeed, from what she has observed in both lesson trials, the students (even those who usually struggle to learn the more complex concepts) managed to grasp, understand, discuss and apply successfully the new concepts learned, through their art work.

When looking back at the whole process, Laura sees herself as transformed and acknowledges that this lesson study served as a professional learning experience for her. She has experienced the notion of learning and working collaboratively within a team of professionals who were willing to share their insights and feedback with her with the aim of challenging her thinking while also offering continuous support. This was possible because the whole lesson study experience was built around trust, mutual respect and a safe and supportive learning environment. The negotiation of her existing knowledge coupled with ideas from those involved in this lesson study served as an example of how high-quality lessons can be developed. While Laura was humble enough to see herself as a life-long learner, she has learned to adapt herself and her practices, to evolve and challenge her deep-rooted thinking habits, and to be ready to challenge, inquire, examine and reflect on herself and her teaching practices. For the first time, Laura was ready and confident to open her classroom door for observers. The learning emanating from this experience has led Laura to seek collaborations with other teachers and staff members with a disposition towards professional learning. For Laura, those with a passion for teaching and learning should consider engaging in models of professional learning such as lesson study as this was for her a transformative professional learning journey that rendered endless benefits.

Final comments

Through lesson study, learning for Laura was co-created with the support of knowledgeable others. A key aspect contributing to this were the collegial relationship and the mutual support that were cultivated and sustained through the lesson study process. The lesson study process, thus, enabled Laura to create knowledge about teaching that evidently led

to change. Using the classification of professional development models offered by Kennedy (2014), we find that this lesson study enabled teacher autonomy and transformative practice. For the teacher, this professional learning journey brought with it concerns, tensions and frustrations. Indeed, an important aspect of this lesson study was the opportunities it provided for Laura to ponder pedagogical challenges and their potential solutions through an ongoing process of negotiation, reflection, knowledge sharing and development. Lesson study had this potential on Laura; it has transformed her ways of seeing and acting as a teacher and as a life-long learner.

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Pyjamas-wearing Mentors? Dissolving the Inclusion/Exclusion Divide in Professional Development

A think piece working paper by Claudia Gilberg

How to choose a mentor, Penny Rabiger asked (2019), proceeding to reflect on comfort versus challenge based on a prospective mentor's personality and professional traits. Whilst any choice can add to professional development, just as any expertise can be perceived as enriching or even empowering, ontologically and epistemologically speaking, there will be no shift in any direction within educational settings other than a desired progression in the direction of Becoming A Professional Part of A Professional Body. Rabiger acknowledges this by underlining the significance of context and the courage required to pose inconvenient questions. But ultimately, she maintains, mentoring per se will not produce much change unless something during such a process occurs with the power to challenge at the systemic level. To me, systemic change in education has always been an express goal because I understand education as a vehicle for change towards genuine belonging, towards inclusion as a human being, towards social cohesion and full participation. Echoes of my thoughts are succinctly found in Slee's reflections:

'I had accepted 'belonging' as a conceptual and practical precondition or element of community and inclusion. Ergo, I had assumed that inclusive education embraced a commitment to dismantling exclusions that formed the foundations for the oppression of vulnerable individuals and population cohorts.' Roger Slee (2019, p. 909)

What if some mentors were so-called vulnerable individuals? What if mentoring encompassed vulnerabilities, fragilities and such perplexities for which education, and society, require answers that remain elusive? What if dismantling injustices cannot be accomplished by those privileged enough not to be affected?

Making Sense of New Realities: Sharing is Caring for the Benefit of All

After a life-changing event that left me severely disabled, my sense of professional belonging to education and education research was initially a little shaken, then cracked, and finally collapsed in a dizzying and all-encompassing cloud of dust speckled with

theoretical concepts. Echoes of collegial debates, memories of conferences on inclusivity, and teacher education programmes' didactic practices that repeatedly hit me on the head, flew into my gaping mouth, making me gag with painful, situational irony, and finally disappeared, leaving me disorientated and, intellectually and as a human being, almost broken for a couple of years. Witnessing one's own exclusion can inflict traumatic injuries whose healing partially depends on how others learn from it. A sense of belonging needs to return.

As I gradually entered my new reality as a disabled person, my learning curve, mostly fed by new knowledge derived from the interdisciplinary field of critical disability studies and political philosophy, felt like a comfort blanket, wrapped in which I reasoned my way towards insights experienced by many before me. Concerning chronic disease, I found metaphor-rich literary descriptions of new dimensions, such as drifting away from the shore of the land of the non-disabled, with disease described as a foreign land, and health as a privilege reserved for all those legitimately entitled to embody valid knowledge and therefore genuine teachings.

In my own life, and before I knew it, I was through the looking glass and behind The Divide:

- Healthy/ill,
- Abled/disabled,
- Deserving/undeserving,
- Trusted/suspicious,
- Knowing/ignorant,
- In/out.

No longer privileged to hypothesise about disability and social justice issues in seminar rooms, my experiences of exclusion forced me to understand disabled children's and parents' struggle from their vantage point. The prospect of growing into adulthood to the right of the /, the multiple layers of interlocking social injustices institutionalised from an early age and perpetuated by institutions predicated on deficit-focused assessments supposedly to facilitate living, hit me hard because I also realised that many teachers, head teachers and university lecturers base their teachings and world views on the left of the /.

Teaching is perceived as an able-bodied activity. Everyone to the right of the / is 'special', 'diverse', 'other', and must learn to please, appease, adjust, but most of all prove their worthiness 'despite themselves.' They must learn to 'overcome', regardless that that which must be overcome has been artificially constructed by those on the left of the / with the power, albeit limited on the personal level, to change things, but also the power to acknowledge the existence of the divide and

to reject it as a moral imperative. Those to the right of the divide cannot reject it as there is no power there to do so. They must obey and observe.

Disability As the Subject and Object of Knowledge

Educators driven by a social justice agenda should make conscious efforts to focus on the dissolution of the divide in education. It has no place in education, it serves no purpose, and it makes no sense unless inclusivity were undesirable after all. That, then, would be a painful question to ask in other contexts outside this paper. Here, I hold that teaching and professional development must encompass disability and disease. The choice to move away from comfort, choosing a mentor to the right of the divide entails a potentially transformational shift at the personal *and* systemic level. Institutions and organisations can become proactive in allocating worth to the right of the divide, especially if they notice a shift in attitude from non-disabled teachers who consciously make different, unexpected choices, e.g. a pyjamas-wearing mentor who can conduct meetings only via Skype. The pyjamas and the format of such a meeting do not render the mentoring an unworthy professional activity. There is validity of what is to the right of the divide, no matter how it looks. Welcoming the pyjamas and the courage of their wearer is an

ontological and epistemological step towards the dissolution of the divide, while also teaching, by doing, that disability need not be limiting provided it is respected on the disabled person's terms. Concerns about the difficulties of inclusive pedagogical leadership will be taken more seriously by the pyjamas-wearing mentor because they have skin in the game of education and life. They care, knowing people's lives depend on inclusive societies.

Embodiment of otherness and the power of disability representations in education is crucial in educational settings. Choosing comfort in mentoring is not a viable option in an education system provided we do know that disabled children grow up into societal structures that force them to learn individually how to overcome the divide for their own good.

Ill and disabled educators putting themselves forward to mentor offer something so valuable, so rare, that it might go unnoticed even by those prepared to listen and learn. Their sparse personal resources towards creating a modicum of justice within/without education systems cannot be overstated. Slee maintains that not much has been achieved in terms of inclusivity and clearly, whatever we are doing, it has not been enough. Educators choosing disabled mentors choose to cross an ontological and epistemological chasm but

once they have arrived, the de-mystification

process of disability and genuine participation

can commence.

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Re-valuing the role of the Personal Tutor: Face to face meetings to engage student teachers in professional conversations

A research summary working paper by Ruth Sutcliffe, Rachel Linfield and Gaynor Riley

The context

The National Student Survey, (NSS) provides data for UK university league tables. It is completed by final year students at all publicly funded Higher Education Institutions in England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and the majority in Scotland. In 2014, there was a particularly low satisfaction score relating to feedback given by students on the BA (Hons) Primary Education programme, leading to Qualified Teacher Status at Leeds Metropolitan University, (now Leeds Beckett University). In a desire to understand why students did not value feedback that we as lecturers otherwise considered rigorous and helpful, nor always recognise the range of what underline could constitute feedback on a degree course which includes professional placements, we began to investigate. Informal conversations with staff and anecdotal comments from students encouraged us to undertake an ongoing longitudinal study to inform our understanding of what students perceive to be helpful feedback.

The research

Our key questions were:

- What do students perceive as 'helpful feedback'?
- Is there a notion of 'readiness' for students to engage with and understand feedback?
- How can tutors provide *effective support* to enable students to *engage* with, and *use,* feedback?
- Is it possible to achieve 100% student satisfaction with feedback in Higher Education?

Data was collected at the start of the students' second year of study, (Level 5 students), when they had already experienced receiving feedback from one year of the course, using a questionnaire. It was then repeated with the same cohort of students at the start of the third, and final, year of their undergraduate degree, (Level 6), in September 2017. The questionnaire asked for both quantitative and qualitative responses regarding feedback.

The Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the questionnaires from year one of the study showed an overall 75% satisfaction rating for 'helpful' feedback and this rose to 91% in the second year. What could account for this important increase?

Whilst the longitudinal study addresses a range of research questions, key to this 'think piece' is the increased number of qualitative comments which valued oral, face-to-face feedback and discussion. We believe this, in part, is a result of strengthening the role of the Personal Tutor in helping students to access, engage and use feedback. This role was strengthened in two ways. Firstly, an additional one hour per student per year was given, for the express purpose of exploring feedback in greater depth. This additional time augmented the existing meeting times allocated across the academic year. Secondly, this was supported by the introduction of a focussed Academic Action Plan. It was designed to scaffold and enable students to engage with, understand and use, feedback received cumulatively over the course. The proforma encourages students to recognise both positive elements of received feedback as well as areas for development. Crucially, there is an expectation that students will prepare for a scheduled Personal Tutor meeting by engaging provisionally with the action plan; this preparation can ensure more

effective dialogue. For example, students are encouraged to explore their interpretations of academic language used within the feedback. In this way, subsequent informed conversations with known tutors, *"brokers the space between the meta-language of feedback in all its forms … and the meaningful developmental messages it contains."*
(Sutcliffe et al, 2019)

Strengthening the role of the Personal Tutor underpins the improved overall satisfaction ratings. There are additional considerations, however, important for a professional course such as those which lead to Qualified Teacher Status where written feedback on assignments is a relatively small proportion of the wide range of feedback provided. In Year 1 of the study, comments on feedback tended to relate to summative written feedback following an assignment. For this reason, prior to completing the research questionnaire in the second year, students were reminded explicitly, to recognise that feedback was not only this but also significantly, verbal and written feedback from professional teaching practice placements. We suggest that this recognition also contributed to the increase in overall satisfaction ratings between the two years of our longitudinal study.

We hoped that this improvement in overall satisfaction with feedback within our internal study, would impact on responses given to

the formal, National Student Survey. Results from the NSS in 2018 do indeed seem to bear this out, with an increase from 2017 to 2018 of 24%, resulting in an overall score of 84%. It is suggested that the increase in overall satisfaction with feedback in both this longitudinal study *and* the NSS score is clearly related. Students are now supported more effectively in understanding their feedback through the enhanced Personal Tutoring system and appreciate that feedback, on a professional course such as teaching training, goes beyond mere written comments on assignments.

Conclusions

Our research and broader findings show that rather than search for a perfect type of feedback (oral, written, peer) to improve student satisfaction, we should work towards changing the way that students engage and respond to the variety of feedback offered. An extra hour at designated times across an academic year and structuring the meetings through the use of an academic action plan, appears to have had a significant impact. As was concluded within **The Search for 100% satisfaction with feedback**, (Sutcliffe, Linfield, Riley, Nabb, and Glazzard, 2019) *"… ensuring positive engagement with a range of feedback through active discourse with students on this professional course, forces the notion of student 'readiness.' … Speaking with students is key in helping them to reflect upon the variety of feedback, understand its relevance and consequently to act upon it in practical ways.'*

Face-to-face, Personal Tutor meetings are key in providing a valuable space for nurturing professional conversations which may ultimately lead to increased growth and development, both academically and professionally.

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What even is 'fun'? – An investigation into nursery children's views of fun.

A research working paper by Samantha Shires

Abstract

This research aimed to collect data about nursery children's views of fun. The research discussed was conducted with 5 children and 3 members of staff in an urban nursery of 48 children aged between 3 and 4 years old.

The research was carried out in three stages; stage one involved structured interviews with the children and nursery staff, consisting of asking what they believe fun to mean, what the children do for fun, and what they believe to be positive and negative aspects about having fun. A later question was added about what stops children from having fun.

The second stage was observing the children's daily activities and how they engaged with them emotionally and socially, and how much fun they were appearing to have.

Finally, the third stage was discussions with the children about the photos taken of them in the observations, relating them to fun and comparing their perceptions to my own.

This paper reveals the children's views, and more specifically, how much their perception of fun differed from the perceptions of the staff members and my own. I also discuss this research in relation to my own practice and wider literature, and provide suggestions for further practice and research.

Finally, I conclude this paper with a working definition of fun, put together based on the themes that the children highlighted.

Introduction

The term 'fun' is often used in our everyday vocabulary, and regardless of whether this is used by adults or children, instinctively, we think that we know what it means, or at least we have never thought about it enough to question.

I was an SEN teaching assistant for four years, working 1:1 with children with complex needs. In this time, I began to see the challenges that were faced by the children, the parents and the staff, brought on by (amongst other things) the views held upon the children which primarily reflected the deficit model of disability, in that it was the children who were perceived as the 'problem'.

This view of the children quite often left them in a position of being silenced, they were only seen for what they could *not* do, and I found myself and the SENCO often having to fight their corner in challenging staff assumptions

and speaking up about what they *could* do, though this was seldom heard.

This led me to pursue a degree, to become a teacher so that I could have more influence in challenging this. Being a Teaching Assistant, unfortunately, allowed me little influence in this particular case. My degree was primarily themed around children's active participation and learning about children's rights. I realised how not only were children with SEN facing these challenges of being silenced due to adults' perceptions of them being 'unable', but *all* children were in some shape or form. Despite trying new approaches, and being more informed and vocal in my setting to challenge the views to further support the child I was working with at the time, nothing appeared to change so I quit my role to focus full-time on my education.

It soon came to me that any influence made with regards to enabling children's voices was not going to be achieved by me being a teacher alone, it needs to be many teachers who work together if any prominent change is going to be made, so I pursued my MA, and now my PhD in order to teach in universities, and teach, particularly, our future teachers.

In my MA degree, my research stemmed from my undergraduate learning, where the question came up; "is having fun being naughty?", asked by a child in a discussion carried out in Pahl and Pool's research (2011. p. 30). This, and a comment made by a parent about her son misbehaving at a newly visited tourist attraction, only for her confusion when he thanked her because he had had so much fun, had captured my curiosity about what fun means to children. The combination of the above then, and my passion for wanting to give children a voice, is what came together to form my research question.

I had particularly chosen the nursery setting as advised by my supervisor for two reasons; first, although research with children were developing in recognition, less so was research with nursery children. Second, this would be out of my comfort zone; I had worked previously in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, but as a professional, I wanted to broaden my own experience. The nursery was an urban nursery in Yorkshire attended by 48 children aged between 3-4 years of age.

The research discussed was carried out with 5 children and 3 members of staff using a mixed-methods approach. In stage 1, I carried out structured interviews; both interviews being the same for both children and staff as a means of a direct comparison. In stage 2 I observed the children carrying out their everyday nursery experiences; including times of play, carpet times (times of teaching) and milk/lunch times, taking photos of the children and observing their emotional and social responses, and how much 'fun' they appeared to be having. The final stage enabled the children to discuss the photos I

had taken with semi-structured interviews. The structured aspect enabled for a direct comparison to my responses in the observations, with the flexibility to be expanded on for more detailed analysis.

I include the children's direct responses within this paper to ensure that their voice is heard, being aware that my key findings are summarised through my own interpretations which, if not entirely correct, could defeat the whole idea.

When asking the children what fun meant to them, their responses were as follows; "[Pause]…to be mummy's" (Sparkle, G, 3), "Happy"(Sparkle), "To be happy" (Little Red Riding Hood, G, 4), "[Pause]…sharing from me and playing outside"(Little Red Riding Hood), "It means play and be happy"(Bing, G, 4), "…you really enjoy it"(Bing), "…very good" Star (G, 3) and "Fun!" Flash (B, 4).

Fun here was perceived as being social (being Mummy's and sharing) and being content (several instances of mentions of being 'happy'). Play also appeared as a prominent theme of fun later on when asking children what they did for fun; "Play Mummy's" (Sparkle); "Play[ed] in the sandpit" (Little Red Riding Hood) and "…play" (Bing), and there appeared to be a prominence in children's desire to play with family members; particularly with 'Mummy' and siblings.

When asking the children what they believed was good about having fun, their responses were as follows; "With Mummy" and "…Happy" (Sparkle), "We play with … with all things … everything in the world" (Bing) "…playing with friends" and "…it's very happy" (Little Red Riding Hood), "running" and "playing" (Flash) and "…I like the children" (Star).

Star's response particularly struck me. She was one of the younger children in the nursery and was inconsistent when it came to being settled in; one day she would appear happy, and the next very distressed – though it could be argued that she was not necessarily 'happy' in those moments and it was simply a mask. This comment struck me because she often played alone. Was it then that she meant it was fun playing with other children? Or simply observing them as a mechanism to make sense of what was going on around her?

When asking the children what they believed was 'bad' about having fun, the responses were as follows; "…when we go to the park" (Sparkle), "…sometimes … people like doing fun things … and we all do it" (Bing), "I'm fighting" (Flash) and "…I be sad" (Star).

Unfortunately, when asking this question, I had found myself unintentionally altering the question to 'is there anything bad about having fun?', but in these instances, the answer 'no' was given.

I was intrigued by Bing's answer about "we all do it". I interpreted this to mean that people do bad things, and others follow. This is something that can often be seen in young children, particularly where teasing is concerned.

In my observations, I had made note of whether the experiences carried out were adult-led or child-led and asked the children in stage 3 whether these same experiences were 'very fun', 'a little bit fun' or 'not fun'. Adult-led activities, of which there were 17 discussed, including carpet times, snack time and lunchtime, showed to be fun (either very fun or a little fun) by 82%, compared to 18% of those activities being deemed as 'not fun'.

For child-led experiences, of which there were 13 and included outdoor play and home corner, 93% of these were deemed as fun in some way, compared to only 7% that were not.

When asking the children what stops them from having fun, I received the following responses; "[being] sad" (Sparkle), "going to bed" (Bing), and "...when I sad" (Star).

Unfortunately, the same is said for this question in that I had unintentionally asked 'does anything stop you from having fun' which resulted in the rest of the responses simply being 'no'.

It did not come as a surprise however that sadness played a part in what stopped them from having fun. I had questioned earlier on in the research about whether it was possible to have fun when you are sad based on an observation of Star who was playing with a toy car, yet appeared to be sad, while at the same time enjoying her activity. There were however 8 instances where children said that they were sad during an experience, but 88% of the time said they were still having fun to some degree, compared to only 12% of the time when they were not. A further question posed here then was whether an activity is fun if it leaves a child feeling happy, or whether an activity can be fun even when a child still feels sad afterwards. This would require a degree of before-and-after observations per activity.

It could also be argued that "going to bed" was not necessarily the bad experience, but the lack of choice to go to bed, for example, if a child is having fun and they are having to stop because of bedtime. The same can be said when going back to negative attributes to fun, where Sparkle thought that going to the park was bad. Initially, it could be seen that the park itself is a place where she does not have fun, equally so it could be argued that it is the lack of choice to go to the park that takes the fun away.

Jo (G/6) in Hopple's (2018) research outlined how different children's and adult's perceptions can be when seeing children having fun, stating that

"you don't have to be smiling to have fun, because my trainer always picks on me, 'cause she says, 'You're allowed to smile!' because I am really concentrated when I do it". (p. 41)

One form of analysis I carried out was comparing the nursery staff's views with the children's in Stage 1.

When discussing definitions of fun, happiness was a common theme that was consistent with both adults and children, however, the differences came in that the children saw play as a prominent factor – including outdoor play. The adults however differed in views in that they believed fun to be something that makes you laugh and to be with friends and family.

When discussing how fun makes children feel, the common views were that of positive wellbeing; being happy, feeling positive and feeling good. Some of the children however shared how fun can make you sad and sleepy, unlike the adults who believed fun made the children feel engaged and more able to learn.

When discussing what children did for fun, playing together and playing outside were common themes between the two but for the most part, the differences were vast. The children described how they played in the sand, role play, with ribbons and play dough, they drank milk, played with Mummy, were happy and laughed. The adults, however, expressed how the children had fun by

running around and getting chased, exploring, took risks and did activities that required no goal at the end. However, the use of language used creates a much bigger divide between the two than perhaps there really is. The activities that the children mentioned could well easily have come under the comments of 'having no goal' for example. Let's take the playdough activity; does the child do that for fun because there is no goal? If a goal is added, does this detract from the fun had?

Next, I compared the views about positive attributes to fun. Interestingly, there were no differences from the adults at all. Both adults and children believed that fun is social and provides positive wellbeing. The differences came from the children, in that they saw fun as positive because it provides opportunities for play, including playing with others (particularly their mothers) and playing with "things" (Bing).

Finally, I compared the views about negative attributes to fun. The views for this were entirely different other than one; that nothing was bad about having fun. The differences then came in the form of children believing fun to be bad because they would fight and because of having to go to the park, but the adults saw fun as bad when children get over-excited and tired, that it is often had at an inappropriate time, and when the children have to be stopped to do something that they don't want to do (although this could be

argued that children do view this too as it would come under the aspect of 'choice' as mentioned earlier).

I also took the opportunity to analyse the differences between my views and those of the children's through the discussion of the observations. I felt it important to see my own limitations and subjectivities, so this allowed me to see how 'in-tune' I am with the children that I was working with.

When comparing our views about how fun the activities were for the children, out of 30 observations, 40% of our answers matched, leaving 60% that did not. Equally so, when looking at children's emotional responses to the activities, out of 28 observations made, only 18% matched, and a huge 82% did not.

For my own professional practice, this was a highlight of the research as it showed very clearly the division between my perceptions compared to those of the children's. It has made me much more sensitive now to taking the time to reflect on things that I observe and emphasises my initial thinking about the need for children's voices to be heard.

Suggestions were made from these findings about not coming down too hard on children who are trying to have fun, particularly with their peers, and when seeing organic fun arise or seeing a child completely engrossed in a 'fun' experience, particularly one that they have created themselves, we need to step back and allow this to happen and try not to allow the worry of a particular job needing to be done to interfere with the experience observed.

It is important to add however that these suggestions are subject to context and may be challenging for some forms of children's services such as schools, where structured routines are prominent and relied upon.

The suggestions were something to reflect on particularly in my own practice towards children as someone coming from a school background. Alongside a full-time PhD, I also provide children's Science parties, and even there, where it is expected for children to be loud and having fun, I have found myself falling back to this old mentality of needing to 'move on' to the detriment of abruptly ending a fun experience. This has been an area of improvement since, being much more flexible when seeing that an experience is being truly enjoyed by the children.

I have also started my PhD specifically to extend on this research and I am taking on some teaching in the university, primarily on modules that can relate either in whole, or somewhat to children's participation, where the findings on the comparisons between the children's and adults' views in my research can be a prime example as to the importance of children's participation.

I am currently looking into links with transitions, particularly between Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and if my research can contribute towards enabling much smoother transitions between the two curriculums – of which the leap from play-based learning to teaching is prominent. This will be including further analysis of what stops children from having fun; this was included in the end stages of my prior research, but much more could be done. Quite often we see research that revolves around 'how-to', as opposed to 'how-not-to'; this may bring with it more – albeit complex – dimensions to how we encourage more fun experiences for children.

The question as to whether fun can be had when a child is sad is also a poignant issue. Mental health is on the rise regarding the acknowledgement of the pressures placed on children in education, so is worthy of being researched.

This research also leaves opportunities to be replicated with different age ranges, allowing for an analysis of how the views of the children, and the impacts of fun, differ between different age groups.

Conclusion

In this paper, I discussed my research about investigating nursery children's views of fun. I talked about the methodologies used; using mixed-method approaches through observations and interviews.

I discussed how children defined fun and how they had fun, the views they had on the positive and negative attributes to fun, followed by a discussion on the links between fun being had between child-led and adult-led experiences. I also spoke about what stops children from having fun and discussed my analysis of the differences between the views of the children and their nursery teachers.

Finally, I discussed the research in relation to my own practice and suggested some action points based on the children's responses, and the further extension of this research that I will be pursuing in my PhD.

Fun is something that is considered an essential part of childhood, or perhaps of life even for adults, and so is worthy of the time and attention of researchers. However, how this is to be done remains a conflict between researchers, as fun is complex, multi-layered and more so, an idiosyncratic phenomenon. It was clear to see throughout my research the differences of views and the many layers that make up fun between both the children themselves and between the children and adults.

I have aimed to bring together all of the children's views to find common themes which can come together to form the basis of a working definition. The children's working definition that I conclude with then is this:

Fun is a play-like, organic concept; mostly

spontaneous and autonomous, and often with

others, which brings a form of happiness and

positive wellbeing to those who experience it.

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'It starts with a question'

Conference review and Sketch-note by Fleur Hoole

On Friday 13th March 2020, I was enormously fortunate to attend **"It Starts with a Question",** an event billed as "A national conversation to shape practice in professional learning across the Scottish Education System" It was hosted by Education Scotland's Professional Learning and Leadership Team, the General Teaching Council of Scotland, CollectivED and the University of Strathclyde.

My invitation to this event was through my involvement in Education Scotland's Supporting Teacher Leadership Programme which has been a journey of exploration beyond my classroom and into the territory of facilitating professional learning through encouraging and supporting practitioner enquiry. An additional, optional challenge was to use Sketch-notes to share this learning and, as a fan of the concept of dual coding, I have recently started experimenting with this mode of recording and interacting with information.

So I arrived at "It Starts with a Question" armed with my coloured pens and a huge enthusiasm for the discussions in consideration of the future for Scotland's professional learning.

Professors Kate Wall and Rachael Lofthouse launched the day with a fascinating dialogue contextualising their journey into their research around practitioner enquiry and professional development.

I was struck by the key concept of "Belong + Become" which promotes inclusion, collaboration and cultural diversity to build a community foundation for our aspirations in education. Within our cultural and educational "landscapes" we can then start to develop capacity for sustainable, cultural changes in educational practice – such as developing enquiry models that "bridge" theory and practice and simultaneously bring benefits to pupils, students and practitioners.

The day concluded with Professor Lofthouse's reflections on the "Legacies of Learning" that our conversations are building. Her eco-system metaphors (hence fish) left me contemplating the beauty of our diverse experiences in education and in the world. It is exciting to consider that by asking "Why?" and being curious about our own corners of the world, we could each create tiny, positive changes and a ripple effect. But a simple Sketch-note cannot express the wonder of the far-reaching positive effects that could potentially be achieved….

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Note from Fleur "Live Sketch-Notes May contain spelling or other errors."

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