



# CollectivED Working Papers

GCI Conference 2023

Special Issue

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

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

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## Introduction to CollectivED and Issue 17

### GCI Conference 2023 Special Issue

*by CollectivED Director Rachel Lofthouse*

CollectivED The Centre for Mentoring, Coaching & Professional Learning is a research and practice centre based in The Carnegie School of Education. We form a community of professionals, academics and students with shared interests. Our aims are to;

- Encourage and enable collaborative conversations which create powerful professional learning
- Build capacity of educators to create contexts which support inclusive career-long and profession-wide learning
- Remove barriers to professional development
- Increase opportunities for educational change through enhanced professional agency and well-being

The research undertaken by the CollectivED community relates to formal and informal professional learning and practice in all sectors of education. Our research focuses on

- teacher education and professional learning at all career stages

- learning through mentoring, coaching, digital pedagogies, workplace and interprofessional practices
- teachers' and leaders' professionalism, identity, wellbeing, self-efficacy and agency
- educational policy and partnership

**In this special issue collated for the GCI 2023 conference we have selected existing papers and blogposts which link to CollectivED contributions to the conference.** These are themed by our conference session titles. These four sessions, led by Professor Rachel Lofthouse, Dr Trista Hollweck and Jasen Booton, explored coaching with purpose.

#### ***Addressing dilemmas of inclusion through coaching***

Educators experience dilemmas related to the complexities and challenges of their roles and can also learn from such dilemmas. A model of 'dilemma-based coaching' will be introduced and explored. This model has been developed through a European research



project on promoting inclusion in education which stimulated two further collaborative action research projects in the UK.

### ***Co-constructing pedagogic expertise through coaching***

Coaching approaches used to enhance teaching and learning repertoire and expertise will be shared. Approaches and evidence from several case study research projects related to enhancing both oracy and metacognitive teaching will be introduced and explored. These approaches have resonance with instructional coaching.

### ***Creating conditions for school improvement through coaching***

The potential of coaching to create the conditions for school improvement will be explored based on research into models of 'contextual coaching'. This research

developed a conceptual connection between Collaborative Professionalism (Hargreaves and O'Connor) and two international multi-school cases of coaching practice and evidence indicates aspects of coaching approaches with make a difference.

### **Ensuring representation and voice through coaching**

Coaching creates opportunities to be heard and to explore and articulate values and ideas in relation to our roles in education. Coaching can empower and enable people to meet their potential. Using a range of examples, we will explore how teachers and school leaders who experience coaching can change educational opportunities for learners and communities.

**In addition, we include a new paper Jasen Booton, Trista Hollweck and Chris Munro.**



# **Mentors Who Coach - Coaches Who Mentor: Accompaniment and Stance as Unifying and Liberating Concepts**

***Jasen Booton, Trista Hollweck and Chris Munro***

## ***Introduction***

Learning described as a ‘journey’ is a well-worn metaphor in education, however its frequent use has led to it seeming tired and clichéd. Yet, when it comes to educators’ professional learning and development, there still remains a sense of forward momentum - learning as a growth-oriented process. How to support educator growth and who is best positioned and equipped to accompany them on their learning journey remain important questions. For early career educators, mentors have been shown to play a pivotal role in teacher development and professional growth. The use of coaches is also gaining popularity in schools to support educator growth. But questions remain. What is the difference between a mentor and a coach? What does it mean to be a mentor and/or a coach? Are these roles fixed or fluid? Can mentors coach and can coaches mentor? How does our understanding of the terms influence our work?

This ‘think piece’ represents a meeting of three minds around a shared interest in the tensions and nuances of language and what it means to be engaged in “collaborative-based professional development”, such as coaching and mentoring. Although each of us have been thinking deeply about our own mentoring and coaching work with educators in different settings and geographical contexts, our connection through social media and previous contributions to CollectivED papers led us to consider how a collaborative writing process might move our own collective ideas forward. Our chosen structure and writing style for this piece is intended to convey the unfolding of our thinking over time. We hope that it helps others grappling with the same nuances that we have been struck by.



### ***Our shared intent and beliefs***

A shared bond and common thread through our discussions has been our desire to support others to get better at doing what they do in the most respectful ways possible. Here, respectful means treating educators as thinking professionals and acknowledging and empathising with the complexity of the work that they do. We share the view that these respectful interactions should be positioned as partnerships based on equality, humility, dialogue and autonomy.

Two key concepts triggered our initial interactions and catalysed our decision to collaborate:

the concept of a ‘continuum’ of professional learning conversations and the implications of this for the ‘stance’ of those initiating or leading learning conversations (Munro, 2020); and the intriguing term ‘accompaniment’ (Hollweck, 2022).

### ***Why accompaniment?***

We believe the term *accompaniment* offers powerful potential for those of us working in the mentoring and coaching field.

### **Defining accompaniment**

According to Merriam-Webster, accompaniment has two key definitions: In music, it is described as an instrumental or vocal part designed to support or complement a melody. It can also be understood as an addition intended to give completeness or symmetry to something, in the way potatoes accompany a main dish or a tie complements a suit. In this think piece, our interest in the term draws on Trista’s recent work for the Leadership Committee of English Education in Quebec (LCEEQ), and its 18-month pilot project that she leads called “*Accompaniment: Practice and Research*” (see the project description [here](#)).

In this work (Hollweck, 2022), Trista posits that accompaniment is best understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of collaborative-based professional development, and where educators work alongside one another in a variety of formats, such as mentoring and coaching. Accompaniment is a process of change and transformation whereby educators work together to improve their practice day by day, and become more confident and competent in



their professional life. Yet, accompaniment is a reciprocal learning journey; an excursion in which people from different backgrounds and experiences can work together and move forward respectfully as equals. Ultimately, accompaniment designates an approach to collective mobilization. It is about moving forward with a focus on improvement and growth and embodies the idea of someone who joins another to go where they are going, at the same time, neither too far ahead nor too far behind.

### **Roots of accompaniment**

At the risk of introducing another new term into an already crowded space of edubabble, it is important to note that francophone educators in Quebec, Canada are very familiar with the term ‘*accompagnement*’ and it first appeared in the professional and organizational literature around the 1980’s (Chouinard, 2014). The term is often used in connection to teacher induction or ‘insertion’ in French (Tardif & Borges, 2020). In the English-speaking educational community, accompaniment was first introduced in 2002 as part of a 6-year Research Accompaniment Training project

(Lafortune, 2009) that was launched to support educators with systemic change and a new curriculum reform. In the LCEEQ Accompaniment Project, Trista and colleagues build on the already established work in the province and define and develop the concept further. Accompaniment is now understood as a way of being and a lens through which system improvement is viewed. The ultimate goal for the LCEEQ project is that every teacher and leader— no matter their career stage— is ‘well held’ through the process of accompaniment.

Beyond Quebec, accompaniment also has links to the Spanish verb ‘*acompañar*’ which means ‘to accompany’, and Latin America’s ‘*acompaniment*’ movement rooted in social liberation theology (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 2010). In the last chapter of her newest book, *Atlas of the Heart*, American researcher Brené Brown (2022) revisits the theory of ‘*acompañar*’ that emerged during her doctoral studies as an approach to explain how helping professionals build and maintain connection with the people they serve. In unpacking what she means by ‘*practising the courage to walk alongside*’, Brown poses an important question: ‘What does it mean to be other-focused,





to use language in the service of connecting, to be compassionate, empathic, and nonjudgmental?’ (p.261). Certainly this question resonates for those of us who work as mentors and coaches. In answering the question, Brown sees accompaniment as integral and how as an approach it is ‘a commitment to be with people – not pushing them from behind or leading from the front, but walking with them in solidarity’ (p. 262).

### **What does accompaniment offer the mentoring and coaching world?**

One of the most important contributions of the concept of accompaniment is that it provides an alternative term to describe how mentors and coaches practice the courage to walk alongside others with curiosity, empathy, nonjudgement and compassion. Both the terms mentoring and coaching are understood and practised in different and sometimes conflicting ways in different contexts and can be fraught with misconceptions and assumptions. For example, we can see how coaching and ‘instructional coaching’ in some international contexts is being implemented in a much more prescriptive, rigid and performative manner than its original conception and current

understanding (Knight, 2007, 2017, 2022). Using an umbrella term like accompaniment makes space for different definitions and conceptions of mentoring and coaching, but also signals the importance of collective mobilization, reciprocal learning and being other-focused. The term accompaniment also offers educators the opportunity to explore the different ‘stances’ that they take when working collaboratively with a colleague.

### ***Exploring the concept of ‘stance’***

Language helps us to think and act together (Mercer, 2000). For this reason, it is important to explore the language that helps make sense of the concept of stance in the context of accompaniment. Firstly, we need to reflect on the fundamental language of coaching and mentoring, as these terms can often be used synonymously, causing confusion for educators. Jasen’s personal story helps illustrate this very common experience:

*My introduction to coaching and mentoring was as an ‘Advanced Skills Teacher’ (AST) in primary schools in England. Acknowledging the problematic title, my role was to support vulnerable teachers, often working in schools that*



*had failed a government (Ofsted) inspection; the teachers were under intense pressure to improve, with some facing competency procedures. AST status was awarded in light of my expertise in learning and teaching, but the truth is, initially I had no idea how I was meant to behave with the teachers I was helping. I had no concept of how I was meant to be! As an AST, I felt confused as to whether I should be coaching or mentoring. Even though exhausted and sometimes bruised teachers welcomed mentoring with the sharing of models of practice, they also required a sense of agency that I associated with coaching. My own experience of receiving coaching professional development emphasised that the role of the coach was only to ask questions, and never provide answers. So when guiding teachers to take ownership of solving their own problems through coaching, did this mean that I should never provide an opinion? Was it wrong to explain my own approach? This sense of confusion led me to doubt my capacity to coach; I wasn't sure which hat to wear! Having spent years facing and reflecting upon these dilemmas, I welcome Trista's explanation of accompaniment as a 'reciprocal learning journey'; a responsive*

*relationship, respectfully meeting the person at their point of need. "I wear many hats" - was my cliched introduction to Chris, in an effort to describe the varied roles and approaches I adopted when facilitating teacher development. Having been on a similar journey himself, Chris tactfully challenged my thinking, by offering the alternative perspective of 'stance'. Our connection and collaboration led me to unpack the concept of stance and explore how I perceive it to align with accompaniment. This process has been transformational and liberating.*

Grappling with role titles, expectations and needs when trying to support the professional learning and growth of educators is a familiar theme in our work. In Trista's research (Hollweck, 2017, 2019) on the work of 'mentor-coaches' she used a mobius strip to represent the multi-faceted and fluid nature of their work, seamlessly moving between coaching and mentoring in response to the needs of the collaborating teacher. Chris's CollectivED working paper (Munro, 2020) builds on previous representations of the range of approaches that may be required of a coach or mentor (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Downey, 2003), presenting these as a continuum of professional learning



conversations moving between less-directive and more-directive stances. The continuum concept is intended to convey the need to subtly 'shift' stance in conversations rather than be constrained by a particular role. Three key stances are described along this continuum: a facilitative stance - based on inquiry; a dialogic stance - balancing inquiry and suggestion; and a directive stance - advocating approaches.

### ***Defining stance***

Dictionary definitions of the word 'stance' offer two meanings, both of which are appropriate in this context. The first, a way of standing or being placed, or our posture or pose, could mean how one *literally* positions oneself during the conversation. In relation to the concept of shifting stance along a continuum, we need to interpret the word more *figuratively* as how one positions oneself in terms of our contribution to the conversation as it unfolds. This may be influenced by the second meaning of the word: stance as an intellectual or emotional *attitude* or way of thinking about something. Stance in mentoring and coaching conversations is a combination of how we consciously

'show-up' and what we do in order to support the thinking and progress of our conversation partner.

### **What does stance offer the mentoring and coaching world?**

The idea of coaches shifting stance can also be seen in the work of Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2014): the coach as listener/clarifier (facilitator); learning partner (collaborator); and guide (consultant). As listener/clarifier the coach 'offers an ear', listening without interruption. As a learning partner the coach offers a thought, the merging of minds. As a guide the coach offers a hand, providing suggestions and pointing the way forward. The coaching stance depends upon the level of resources that the coachee has at that moment in time. Resources may be levels of knowledge, skills and understanding as well as confidence and even energy. In a sequence of learning (a coaching cycle) the coach's stance aligns to the needs of the learner (coachee). The coachee trusts that the coach has the capacity and competence to form different stances according to the contextual need. This view of the coaching (or mentoring) relationship aligns perfectly with the



notion of accompaniment. The concepts of stance and accompaniment also align naturally with the principles of partnership by valuing and respecting lived experiences and human connections. Jim Knight (2022) makes a compelling argument for coaches to ground their work in seven 'Partnership Principles' which support and foster what he calls 'mutually humanizing learning conversations'. In a collaborative coaching relationship, forming a stance requires the coach to notice, refigure and respond. The collaborative relationship is embodied, agile and in the moment. The coaching conversation is alive!

***One further thought (or shift?) on the language we use***

Jasen's particular fascination for the affective/emotional quality of words led to a further teasing out of the verb 'shift'. 'Shift' is not wrong, but with an emphasis on embodiment and emotional intelligence he pondered on alternative verbs and proposed the term 'refigure'. The coach responds and *refigures* to the appropriate stance, reflecting the needs of the coachee. Refigure gives a sense of 'figuring out' the best fit stance. The word 'figure' gives a sense of human figure,

form and embodiment. Shift is perhaps more mechanical, like shifting through the gears - refigure might convey more of a sense of being in the moment – a human connection. We'll leave that one with you to ponder.

***Concluding thoughts***

Arguably, certain language may be heard and said so often that its meaning becomes assumed. Intentional and nuanced use of language is at the heart of effective coaching and mentoring. It may seem somewhat ironic then that the terms coach/coaching and mentor/mentoring are not always well defined and understood by those on either side of these relationships. Where definitions or role descriptions *are* clearly defined, they can sometimes lack nuance - 'a mentor shares their expertise and wisdom' or 'a coach never gives advice', for example. Absolute, rule-bound language may initially provide some security and certainty for coaches and mentors but it can also create tensions. Their lived experience of the roles, especially in education settings, tells them that there are times when the rules or terms of their role do not seem to fit the needs of the person in front of them -



they have come up against a role boundary. They may feel the need to provide a bit more direction or alternatively, they begin to see that they have been dispensing *too much* of their wisdom and creating a dependency. We should provide an important caveat here. We *all* have an unhelpful tendency towards advice giving (Schein, 2011) and doing the thinking for people. When we see someone stuck or seemingly asking for our help, we invariably default to providing answers or giving unsolicited suggestions. However well-intentioned this help is, we may end up doing the thinking work for our learning partner. In this case, some 'rules' and directives can help us to manage our 'advice monster' (Bungay-Stanier, 2020). Professional learning on coaching and mentoring can play an important role here in raising self-awareness and deepening understanding of the dynamics of adult learning conversations.

In this think piece we have proposed the concepts of accompaniment and stance as helpful ways to think about coaching and mentoring that take account of nuance and alleviate some of the tension

between these forms of learning partnership. We do not seek to replace the terms mentor or coach but to offer a couple of overarching concepts that may be illuminating and possibly even liberating for coaches and mentors working in educational contexts.

Sometimes, in the process of sensemaking and exploring nuance we can tie ourselves in metaphorical knots that leave us feeling more intellectually overwhelmed than we were at the start! As experienced mentors and coaches, the three authors of this paper are comfortable in this process and enjoy working through it. However, we do appreciate that in trying to unpick concepts in an attempt to make them clearer, we can inadvertently make things seem more complex or harder to apply. With this in mind, we'd like to finish with some words of reassurance for any beginning coaches and mentors out there. Regardless of your title or role, if you are showing up for others in the spirit of accompaniment and partnership, and have a genuine attitude of benevolence and faith in your partner, you will not go wrong. Role clarity, process, skills and way of being develop over time supported by a



process of critical reflection as our experience grows. It is fair to say we can all become more intentional and confident in our coaching and mentoring conversations.

### Some final reflective questions:

- How would you describe your *default* stance?
- What have you noticed about yourself as you have read this paper?
- What might you need to do or be *more* of?
- What will be *different* as you engage in your next coaching or mentoring conversation?
- What will be the small signs of that?
- What might your conversation partner notice?

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# Exploring and learning from educational complexity through dilemma-based coaching

*Rachel Lofthouse*

This paper takes an original blogpost and edits it with updates on the development of Dilemma Based Coaching.

Some of the joys of my role are being able to join dots, cross-boundaries, propose and test out ideas and build communities of interested people. As an academic I am committed to sharing ideas with others who might find them useful in practice, and as director of CollectivED I take a stance to be as collaborative in knowledge-building as possible.

So, first let me join dots in the proposition and sharing of a new idea. One of the recent Erasmus+ projects that I was part of was the PROMISE project 'Promoting Inclusion in Society through Education: Professional Dilemmas in Practice'. The focus of PROMISE is the professional development of educators and the promotion of high-quality and innovative teaching in a range of educational sectors,

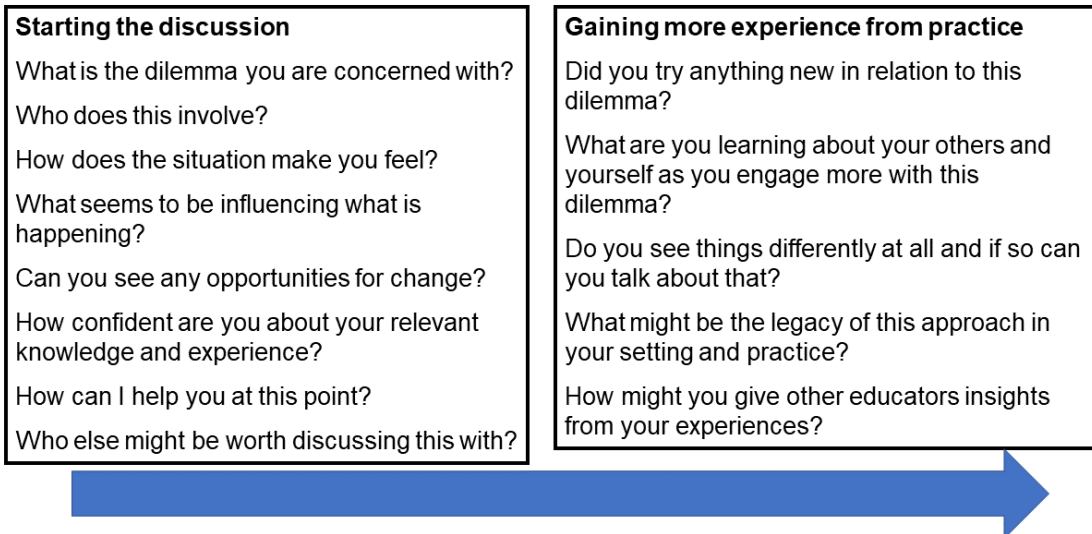
with a recognition that many of the challenges or professional dilemmas facing educators are embedded in issues related to inclusion. At an online European learning event we introduced a model of '**dilemma-based coaching**', giving participants (educators from across phases and roles) an opportunity to engage in coaching-type conversations which were stimulated by sharing a specific dilemma they were experiencing. We framed this with my current definition of coaching, although acknowledged that the learning event created an episode rather than a sustained opportunity.

*'Coaching in education is an inter-personal and sustained dialogue-based practice. The coach works with a coachee to facilitate self-reflection, decision making and action in the context of their own personal and professional challenges.'*  
(Lofthouse et al, 2022, p157)





## A two stage coaching cycle for professional dilemmas



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The questions in the two-stage coaching cycle above are offered to as a means of exploring dilemmas that are emerging and being worked through over time. They position the 'coachee' as the individual bringing a live dilemma to the conversation and the coach as an individual who can help them to tease out some of its dimensions and to start to consider potential responses to it. When appropriate the link back to professional learning from the dilemma is also explored.

In a paper based on the PROMISE project

*'[...] a new approach to professional learning for inclusion should be adopted. This approach must take as its starting point the complex professional dilemmas*

*that educators articulate rather than viewing them as discrete issues that can be addressed separately. The learning that will arise from this approach will be non-judgemental, collaborative, and interprofessional where much of the agency for the focus of the learning is undertaken by the educators themselves.'*

*(Beaton et al. 2021, p.13)*

While the dilemma based coaching approach was only tentatively explored in PROMISE these conclusions show the alignment between the coaching approach and the wider project outcomes.

Following this first experience of using the dilemma-based coaching approach I was able to offer it to our current students on



the PGCert in Coaching and Mentoring for Education Practitioners as a workshop activity in which two participants held a conversation using the given structure. Both they and their fellow students (who observed the conversation) gave positive feedback about the nature of the dialogue and its potential applicability in their contexts, which span primary to higher education settings and include special education and international schools.

These two early opportunities to introduce dilemma-based coaching offered me pause for thought. They indicated that the dilemma-based coaching approach had legs. They also demonstrated an interest from educators in a range of settings to talk about how and why it might be of value. And so, two new collaborative research projects evolved as way of continuing to test ideas and to share the experience of the approach with others.

In the first instance a group of educators from early years, primary, secondary, further and higher education settings met online over four sessions to experiment with the approach, provide feedback and

explore the degree to which it offered comparable or unique learning opportunities. This project was co-led by the colleagues from Leeds Beckett and Aberdeen Universities who had been participants in the PROMISE project. In the second instance the approach is underpinning a year-long inclusion network hosted by Leeds Learning Alliance and led by colleagues from Leeds Beckett and Leeds Trinity Universities and Carr Manor School.

What both these projects have in common is the deliberate bringing together of teachers, leaders and other educators from across education phases or sectors and at different career stages and with different roles. It seems that dilemma-based coaching provides an accessible structure for new forms of conversation, reflection and response. In particular participants have indicated that it allows complexity and authenticity to be brought to the fore which allows a deeper consideration of how educators can respond to situations which do not have straightforward solutions.



Original blogpost [www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2021/04/exploring-and-learning-from-educational-complexity/](http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2021/04/exploring-and-learning-from-educational-complexity/)

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## **Developing a model of Contextualised Specialist Coaching to support school improvement**

***Rachel Lofthouse and Anthea Rose***

### **Introduction to the SSIF project**

A recent policy adopted by the Department for Education (DfE) in England has been the use of Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) grants which have promoted the targeted use of evidence-based practice in areas of defined need. The DfE state that

*The SSIF fund targeted resources at the schools most in need to improve school performance and pupil attainment, to help them use their resources most effectively and to deliver more good school places. The fund supported a broad range of school improvement activities including, leadership, governance, teaching methods and approaches and financial health and efficiency. The fund supported medium- to long-term sustainable activities across groups of schools with a preference towards support provided by schools, for schools. (DfE, updated 2019)*

The SSIF funding stream is now closed.

This working paper focuses on one SSIF project led by the Swaledale Teaching Alliance in North Yorkshire to introduce metacognition into mathematics in primary schools. ‘Metacognition and self-regulation’ is a relatively common term in the current teaching and learning discourse and has been adopted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Previously these approaches might have been described as ‘teaching thinking skills’. The inclusion of ‘teaching’ emphasises an active instructional and facilitative role of the teacher. The Swaledale SSIF project funding bid was based on the high relative position of ‘metacognition and self-regulation’ as one of the effective teaching strategies in the EEF Teachers’ Toolkit.

The SSIF project, in which specifically employed lead practitioners took coaching approach allowing them to focus on the importance of the role of the teachers, ran for five terms from



September 2017 to April 2019. Ten primary schools in North Yorkshire participated in the project, the schools were characterised by a predominance of Service Children (having at least one parent serving in the Armed Forces). KS2 data shows that outcomes for pupils at these schools has been below the national average for some years. Attainment and progress in maths has been particularly weak. One of the main issues with these pupils is their mobility. Pupils do not often stay in one school for very long and enter or leave school at times other than usual, often at short notice as whole regiments are moved.

### **Evaluation approach**

The aim of the SSIF project was to empower pupils to understand their own learning and to develop skills to enable them to take more responsibility for their own progress. An independent evaluation of this project was conducted by Rachel Lofthouse and Anthea Rose of CollectivED, a research and practice Centre in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds

Beckett University. The evaluation was focused on the following critical aspects of school improvement:

- how the school improvement project was designed,
- how the school improvement practices were carried out,
- what the evidence is of the potential legacy of this school improvement project.

This paper focuses on the coaching dimension of the evaluation. The underlying approach to the evaluation was that the SSIF project was based on a 'theory of change' held by the Teaching School Alliance and individualised in each school. In the broadest terms, the project's theory of change was that effective development of teachers' practices to create more metacognitive learning and support greater self-regulation by pupils in maths could enhance the achievement and progress of pupils and help them to overcome some of the challenges associated with high mobility between schools. This proposition had particular relevance for the children from service families, but the



project leaders were always clear that the pedagogic approaches being used would not be specifically targeted towards these children, but that the project was about whole school improvement, albeit starting from a very specific subject and pedagogic base. The fact that the project had this implicit theory of change meant that it was appropriate to use a methodology aligned with this.

As such, the overarching method is an evaluation of the theories of change underpinning the project design and implementation, which was addressed both holistically and at individual school level. Laing and Todd (2015) state that ‘a theory of change articulates explicitly how a project or initiative is intended to achieve outcomes through actions, while taking into account its context’ (p.3). This method allowed an evaluation of the way that the SSIF project was implemented, and also a recognition that the context, (e.g. policy, school and community contexts), are integral to the degree of success achieving change. This paper focused on what the evaluation approach revealed about the coaching model which

evolved as the work of the Lead Practitioners developed.

### **The Role of Lead Practitioners**

The project had a staffing infrastructure which drew together the Teaching School Alliance, the staff appointed to the project and senior leaders and teachers in each school:

- The Strategic Lead who was the Head of the Alliance who held the funding.
- The Project Manager who was responsible for the day-day running of the project.
- The Headteachers at each of the ten participating schools who ensured that the project was delivered in their school and sat on the Project Board that oversaw the project and met regularly.
- *The Lead Practitioners (LPs). These were three experienced teachers Hannah Munro, Claire Barnes and Kirsty Davies who were specifically appointed to deliver the project in schools and to work with a designated teacher in each.*



- The Lead Teachers (LTs) who were the designated teachers appointed by the school to work with the LPs.

The three Lead Practitioners each worked part-time making up the equivalent of two full-time posts (which the jobs were originally advertised as). They were in post from January 2018 until Easter 2019, starting in the second term of the funded project. Their work over each term can be summarised as follows:

*Term 2 (Jan-April 2018):* LPs undertook training to understand metacognition before going into schools to work with their designated LTs after February half term for one day a week. Delivery was focused on mathematics. LTs set up termly network meetings.

*Term 3 (May-July 2018):* LPs continued to work with their LT one day a week except for the last week of every half term when they had time out of school to come together for a time of sharing, reflection, continued professional development (CPD) and an opportunity to organise the next half terms delivery. LPs introduced

cluster observations and ran network meetings.

*Term 4 (Sept-Dec 2018):* LPs continued to work with the LT and began the process of helping them roll out the metacognitive approach to other teachers in their school. The LPs ran network meetings and a new school year re-launch conference.

*Term 5 (Jan-April 2019):* LPs continued to work with their LT one day a week and roll out the initiative through staff training. Final round of cluster observations and network meeting. End of project conference.

### **Specialised Contextualised Coaching**

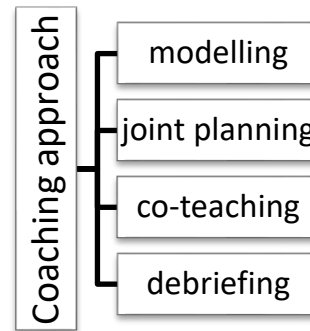
This Lead Practitioners in the SSIF project adopted a model of coaching which might best be described as ***contextualised specialist coaching***. As the LPs were experienced teachers, but not themselves experts in metacognition at the start of their employment, the pedagogic approaches they developed were designed with the needs of the project's teachers and pupils in mind. Their



approach was also contextualised by the individual challenges in each school, the different year groups in focus, the different levels of experience and the different roles of the LTs they were working with. To support this, the LPs continually gathered data, reflected on how and where the project was going and adapted their delivery model and pedagogical approach accordingly. Consequently, the coaching approach included modelling, joint planning and co-teaching and debriefing with the LTs. The LPs offered specialist insight of metacognition and also of primary teaching and learning more generally. This was not a 'clean coaching' model, but had some elements of mentoring, guidance and feedback integral to it in it, aligning it with the 'specialist coaching' approach defined by CUREE (2005).

The contextualised specialist coaching had 4 main components (figure 1).

**Figure 1. The core components of the Swaledale coaching model**



Teacher coaching has a strong history and evidence base in the practice of enhancing metacognitive teaching. For example, in the Newcastle University Schools-based Research Consortium Teaching Thinking Skills project funded by the Teacher Development Agency in the late 1990s and early 2000s coaching was embedded alongside other forms of teacher CPD (Lofthouse, 2018). The coaching in that project was influenced by the work of Costa and Garmstorm (2002), and also drew on the Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education (CASE) approach to supporting teachers to develop metacognitive practices. Models of coaching have also been adopted in other SSIF projects, as illustrated by Ashley and North Star TSA (2018) in their CollectivED paper. Like many uses of coaching in education, the Swaledale SSIF project aimed to 'close a gap' in attainment and





contribute to improving school performance.

### **Making sense of the impacts**

Although the coaching undertaken in this project may not have the same definition as other forms, it corresponds with research by Lofthouse (2019) that demonstrates the significance of building good working relationships and developing productive dialogue in the coaching, and the structures and protocols that support that. Coaching is suited to helping individuals dealing with authentic challenges, professional interests and dilemmas experienced in complex educational settings, which even the smallest primary schools are. This coaching approach, which evolved over the duration of the project was valued by the lead teachers who the Lead Practitioners worked with, with one LT stating that

*Usually for the training sessions, you get half a day after the Christmas or summer holiday, whereas with this you get continued support. Other training sessions*

*are an hour here and an hour there and there is no one afterwards to help you or check on you or to discuss it with. The difference between this project and anything else we've done in the past, is the support.*

The Lead Teachers also liked the fact that the project was tailored to meet the needs of the individual schools, with one LT commenting 'often it's a one model fits all' and that does not work. The LTs reported from early on that the LPs had been very supportive and committed to the project.

The relationship between LTs and LPs was extremely positive. The LTs felt part of the project and that the LPs valued their input; they did not feel that the project was being done unto them, but rather with them, in full partnership.

*It's certainly been a positive experience having the Lead Practitioners there to support us through it. We know that the project is really good and we've done the research but having been left to our own devices to push it thought would have been quite a challenge. It probably*



*wouldn't have been as effective. Having other people on it and having someone to work with you once a week I think has been really helpful.*

*I like that the Lead Practitioners have just got involved in the lesson and picking out points that we can do and it's something I've been more conscious about doing.*

*What's been nice for me is having a professional conversation. I know that in school, we like that but we don't have time anymore [...] a proper professional conversation with somebody who actually knows what they are talking about and can actually say: "well I don't know that, but I'll find out for you or I'll look into that". When we started this process I had no idea what it was about - but I've never felt de-skilled. I've been through many processes in my teaching career that I have felt de-skilled by things and this has not been one of them.*

As a result the LTs felt that being part of the project had made them more reflective practitioners. It has also changed how they approach and deliver lessons and that as a result their teaching

for metacognition has improved over time. By the end of the project, some reported having a 'very different questioning technique' in the classroom and that the questions they asked the children were now very different to before. They also now give their children a lot more opportunities to have 'purposeful talk' in the classroom.

An interesting aspect of the project was the expansion of a supportive professional network creating new ways in which the lead teachers in the ten schools began to work collectively. This involved network meetings through which the teachers were to visit each other in project schools and see good practice during cluster observations; something they, as a classroom teacher, do not often get the opportunity to do. The LTs valued this opportunity which provided them with new ideas of how they might deliver metacognition. They found these particularly helpful, stating that,

*It's actually quite nice to get out there and see what everybody else is doing and magpie ideas.*



*Being observed was really good because it reinforced the fact that I was doing it right.*

Both the LPs and the LTs themselves reported a growth in LT confidence as a result of being involved in the project. An example of this was given by one of the LPs who told how one of her LTs had held a leadership role several years ago. However, she disliked the role so much that she went back to being a classroom teacher. Her linked LP commented, 'it is through this project that she told me her confidence is back and she feels that she could actually go back to leadership.' Given that one of the original Key Performance Targets (KPIs) for LPs was around developing leaders, they believe the project has been successful in achieving this.

The coaching approach adopted here corresponds with the suggestion that coaching is a valuable means to deploy the expertise of experienced professionals (the LPs) to support teachers and contribute to school improvement. Alongside the specific coaching itself a coaching culture (Campbell and van

Nieurwerburgh, 2018) has begun to emerge within the project. This was achieved through the network meetings of LTs where the LPs offered a networking space to share the practices that were being developed and trialled across the schools. With the different year groups being included as focus classes this led to a broad consideration of teaching and learning and the impacts of metacognition and self-regulation. Despite some initial nervousness from some teachers, the cluster observations provided a further means by which teachers became more engaged, more open to new ideas and more confident about sharing and reviewing their own and each other's teaching practices. Whether this emerging coaching culture can be embedded in the schools will depend on how successfully they can 'transfer what is powerful about one-to-one coaching conversations into everyday culture of [the] schools' (Campbell and van Nieuwerburgh, 2018, p. 110).

When they started planning their work for the SSIF project the Hannah, Claire and Kirsty, the Lead Practitioners adopted the



motto of 'Think big, Start small'. This was an important underpinning philosophy for the coaching; emphasising that embedding new pedagogic approaches takes time. One LP commented: 'for [the Lead Teachers], they will go into

leadership roles and think, change does not happen overnight. They are going to have that mind-set and that's a fantastic place to be in moving forward and moving schools forward.'

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Lofthouse, R and Hollweck, T (2021) *Contextual coaching: levering and leading school improvement through collaborative professionalism*. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*. Eprint open access at <https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/7874/>

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## ***Supporting children’s speech and language development through inter-professional coaching; a case study of collaboration***

***Rachel Lofthouse***

This paper draws on my work with Jo Flanagan and Bibiana Wigley. They are speech and language therapists working in primary and nursery schools in Derby, with whom I have worked over a number of years to develop a video-based coaching approach to support teachers in creating more communication-rich pedagogies. It is a case study which will illustrate the themes of inter-professional learning in complex landscapes of educational practice.

So, let’s recognise the challenge that this inter-professional coaching is aiming to address. The universal service that almost all children experience is school; starting with early years’ education. There, they and their families start to rely heavily on teachers and teaching assistants to support their development and learning.

The National Curriculum assumes children start school with necessary speech, language and communication skills, ready to learn and to develop quickly using reading and writing as the

vehicle for demonstrating measurable competence.

However, Law et al (2017) provide evidence that 5–8% of all children in England and Wales are likely to have language difficulties; and there is a strong social gradient, with children from socially disadvantaged families being more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with a language problem. Disparities in child language capabilities are recognisable in the second year of life and clearly have an impact by the time children enter school, where their language skills play a key role in their progress, attainment and socialisation and consequently their life chances.

Language skills are widely accepted as the foundation skills for learning and it is recognised that most children with SLCN have some difficulty learning to read and write.

This raises the problem of appropriate provision. Ainscow et al (2012), for example, found in a Manchester-based



study, that teachers were missing around half of children's SLCN. To compound this problem, Gascoigne and Gross (2017) reported that teachers who worked in areas of high disadvantage were often 'norm-shifting', meaning that they considered children who were at age related expectations to be above average.

These dimensions create genuine challenges as SEND reforms call for schools to develop a robust offer to children at universal, targeted and specialist levels. Most teachers would need considerable training to identify speech, language and communication needs accurately and early on in a child's educational life, but this training is rarely offered to them. Most children only meet a speech and language therapist if their needs are acute, or if their concerned parents are able to persuade the gatekeepers to provide the access. If a child does have access to speech and language therapy, a secondary problem emerges. The child is now between two professional domains. Speech and language therapists and teachers address children's speech, language and communication needs in different ways and each profession has its own cultures,

learning experiences and methods for evaluating and researching new ways of working.

Most recently the 'Bercow; Ten Years On' report published by ICAN (2018) reminds us that

'The most fundamental life skill for children is the ability to communicate. It directly impacts on their ability to learn, to develop friendships and on their life chances. As a nation, we have yet to grasp the significance of this and as a result, hundreds of thousands of children and their families are suffering needlessly.' (p.4)

This short description just scratches the surface of the complexity of the professional landscapes that teachers work in; looking at just one feature of child development, the potential of related special needs or delay and the challenge of the current curriculum and assessment regimes. But even though it is just one part of the jigsaw we have to start somewhere to change outcomes for children and young people, especially those who are most vulnerable. As Speech and Language Therapists Jo Flanagan and Bib Wigley did just that.



They started with what they knew and could change.

***A working partnership focused on inter-professional coaching***

I have been working with Jo and Bib, firstly as a critical friend and consultant to help them develop the coaching dimensions of their new business as Clarity (independent speech and language therapists), and as our working relationship evolved through what we recognised to be collaborative action research.

The research was undertaken across both primary and early years' settings in Derby where high concentrations of children with speech, language and communication needs attend schools in socially deprived wards, and many of these schools also serve populations of children whose first language is not English.

We used a Theory of Change Methodology as an evaluative tool, basing our work on the approaches developed with my former colleagues, Karen Laing and Liz Todd at Newcastle University, Research Centre for Learning and Teaching. Our working hypothesis

was that specialist training and coaching could mobilise the knowledge and skill sets of both the teachers and speech and language therapists to better enable the teachers to critically reflect on their practice (Laing and Todd, 2015).

This was a three step process. Jo and Bib first audited the school environment and sampled some lessons. They then led short group training sessions for teachers and teaching assistants in the settings. The training covered theoretical models from education and speech and language therapy research; including ages and stages of speech and language development appropriate to the age range of children that the teachers worked with. Practical speech, language and communication based classroom approaches were highlighted and the teachers were also introduced to basic coaching theory.

This then led on to the specialist coaching stage. Jo and Bib took short video clips of dialogue-based teaching in the teachers' own classrooms. As soon after the lesson as possible the teacher watched the clip, followed by the speech and language therapists. Each made notes, for example reflecting on their perceptions of the





child or children's age and stage of development, the pre-planned language learning opportunities created and the oracy and language learning interactions deployed to support the children's vocabulary development. In addition, aspects such as children's turn taking and social communication skills, attention and listening skills, understanding of language, use of grammar and sentence structure and narrative skills were noted. Interesting extracts from the video were chosen both by the teacher and by Jo and Bib, and these were then used to then frame the coaching conversation. In total, each teacher (and some teaching assistants) engaged in a series of three video-based coaching sessions with a speech and language therapist, creating cycles of critical thinking and reflection on live practice, enacted in a non-judgemental creative learning space.

### ***Theorising the process of change***

In working in partnership with teachers in this way Jo and Bib confirmed their basic premise; that the teachers' knowledge for effective pedagogies might be enhanced by drawing on the specific expertise that they held because of their own professional expertise as speech and

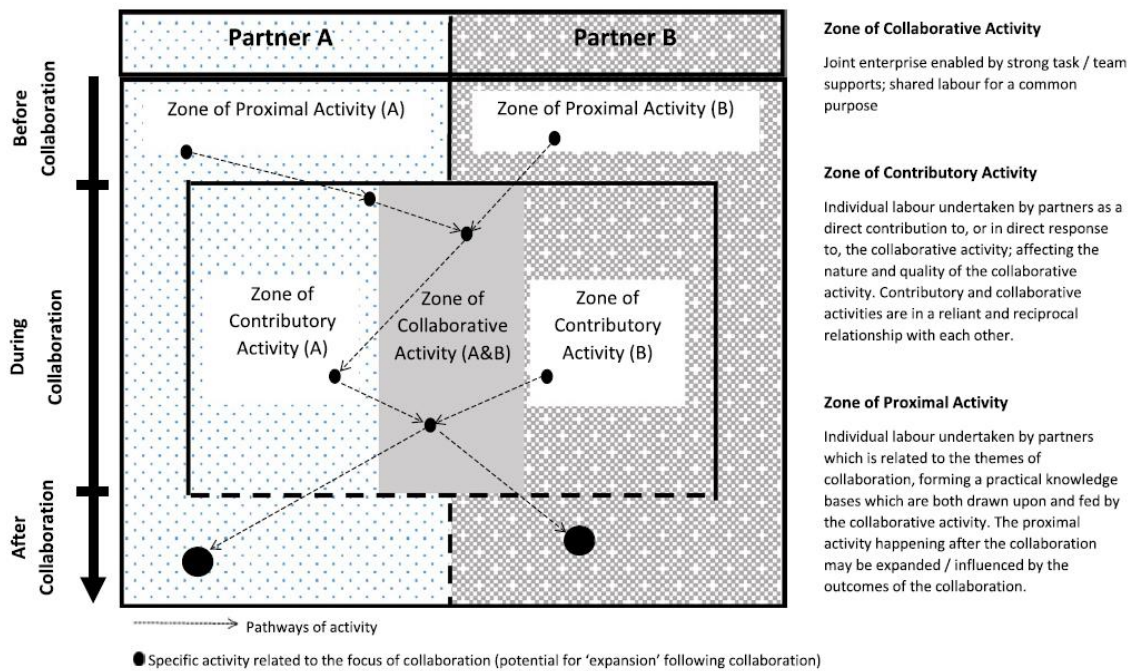
language therapists. They found the training and coaching to be a means to support teachers' professional learning which was suited to the complex and particular contexts in which they worked.

Through our action research and using the Theory of Change approach we were able to demonstrate that this form of coaching can bring speech and language therapy research and expertise into the practice domain of teachers. This was a dynamic, reciprocal and co-constructive relationship through which both parties, from the two professions, extended their knowledge base and developed a more nuanced understanding of relevant evidence for, and in, practice.

One of the research outputs derived from this study was a new model of collaborative action research (fig. 1), which drew on the reality that this work was only ever part of our working lives. The model was developed through reflection on the collaboration between myself as a teacher educator and researcher, and Jo and Bib as the speech and language therapists. However, the same model has resonance for the processes of inter-professional learning as illustrated by this case study. This



Fig 1. Activity zone model of collaborative action research



model offers a way of conceptualising interprofessional learning through time, and of recognising the importance of the partners' zones of proximal, contributory and collaborative activities in sustaining change and knowledge-creation (Lofthouse et al., 2016).

The model can thus be used to consider the ways the partners working to develop new practices might undertake a form of collaborative enquiry, which might take the form of coaching conversations about practice. The model indicates two partners (who might be individuals or groups of people sharing common roles). In this case let's take Partner A to be the

teacher, working in their primary or early years setting. Partner B is thus the speech and language therapist. The teacher has a huge and multi-faceted role and has to pay due regard to the norms and routines of the setting, the needs of all the children, the expectations for their learning in relation to the curriculum, and the felt responsibility for their progress and attainment. The teacher also mediates the relationship between the family and the school, and is expected to recognise which children may benefit from targeted pedagogic or clinical therapeutic interventions. They do all this for each child while only knowing that

child as one of probably thirty children they have responsibility for.

The speech and language therapist may provide one of those interventions, if a teacher has identified a need, and if provision can be funded. They usually arrive at the school just before their scheduled session with a designated child, which is perhaps one of up to ten similar sessions that day. The speech and language therapist rarely has opportunities to talk to the teachers, has time to pass on only scant records, but will return for more sessions with that child.

Following each session, the child returns to the classroom, absorbed once more into the melee of learning, and the teacher hopes that the speech and language intervention will start to rub off on the child's capacity to access the curriculum and make progress.

In quite simple terms we have a problem. We cannot expect the speech and language therapists to use their half hour session to re-introduce a week's learning to the child in a way that overcomes the impact of their speech, language and communication needs on their progress.

Neither can we simply transfuse the expert knowledge that the speech and language therapist has of that child into the working knowledge of the teacher – it does not happen by osmosis.

So, what if we change the ways that partner A (the teacher) and partner B (the speech and language therapist) interact? What is acknowledged is that in their normal, but separate, working lives the speech and language therapist and the teachers are undertaking individual activities, both with the aims of improving the child's learning experiences and outcomes. Instead of seeing these as separate activities, what if we see these as proximal activities? In other words, these are nearby activities which can form two essential practical knowledge bases.

We then need to find a way to bring these proximal activities into the same space and time. We need to create a collaborative activity. In our case study it is the video-based coaching which occurs in the zone of collaborative activity. Here, over time, the participants experienced strong task and team support, through their shared focus and labour around their joint enterprise of developing more



communication rich pedagogies to better suit the needs of all children. So far, so good. But it is possible to recognise a third zone, that of contributory activity. This is the individual labour undertaken by each partner as a contribution to, or as a direct response to the collaborative activity of coaching. This contributory activity might include the teacher requesting to attend a training course now that she is more aware of an area of practice that she wishes to develop. Perhaps the contributory activity occurs when the group of teachers being coached in a setting designate specific planning time to consider how to adjust a scheme of work based on their growing confidence in supporting speech, language and communication development. Maybe, a coached teacher reads a news article about the effect of social disadvantage on school attainment with a more informed understanding.

But it is not just the teachers who undertake activities that might be considered contributory activity. Perhaps the speech and language therapist now accesses policy guidance on curriculum and assessment because the coaching conversation with the teacher gave them

insights they had not previously had, and that they feel they need to make more sense of. Perhaps during a meeting with a parent the speech and language therapist feels better able to understand the significance and possible causes of the parent's concerns about their child's school anxieties.

These contributory and collaborative activities are thus in a reliant and reciprocal relationship with each other, and indeed form a permeable working boundary with the proximal activities. They also develop through time, with an inevitable before, during and after phase. Financial and time constraints mean that the capacity for ongoing collaborative activity (like coaching) is likely to be limited, but if the collaboration has created a genuine opportunity for new professional learning to impact on practice, future practices are different to those which came before.

Coaching as transformative activity Here, I want to propose that it is possible for inter-professional learning to be transformative. Kennedy (2014) described coaching CPD models as 'malleable' rather than 'transformative'. However, our collaborative action



research and analysis of the impacts of the coaching suggests that this model of inter-professional coaching has transformative qualities. This potential is realised if the coaching is co-constructive and collaborative level (Lofthouse et al. 2010). As such it can act to alter the conditions for teachers' learning, helping practitioners to position themselves in a culture of democratic professionalism rather than what Sachs (2001) refers to as managerial professionalism, and thus help to promote the teachers as agents of change.

This transformational potential is well illustrated in the following quote from a headteacher in a nursery setting in which Jo and Bib worked:

“There is a definite shift from individual specialist coaching to a staff coaching culture. The setting is open plan and I now notice teacher and teaching assistants commenting to each other while they are working with the children, referring to commonly understood concepts which support speech, language and communication. Because staff are more informed their conversations with parents about this are also more meaningful.”

In addition to the impact on professional learning, practices and conditions already described, there was also evidence of impact of the more communication-rich pedagogies on teaching and on the children's outcomes. While it is not possible to demonstrate a direct, singular causal relationship between the interprofessional coaching practices and pupils' attainment data because the coaching cannot be isolated from other changes with the settings, one teacher described the initiative as part of 'the big push' through which they were focusing on children's speaking, guided reading, roleplay and asking good questions in a more focused fashion.

These primary and nursery settings in disadvantaged and multi-lingual communities are typical of the complex 'black box' environments for which traditional education evaluations are poorly suited. This is why the Theory of Change interview methodology was used to try to establish the multiple mechanisms at work. One teaching assistant indicated this in her interview as follows:

“The discussion with the speech and language therapist about my video



clips was very reassuring. They found things I do well which I see as natural. They asked me questions about my practice, they focused my attention on things I had noticed and gave me advice. This worked because the video coaching came at the end of the audit and training, so I got to know them and felt comfortable with them. I trusted them and accepted their feedback. I felt more confident and reflective.”

Each head teacher and coaching participant interviewed was able to highlight noticeable changes in both pedagogy and in children’s outcomes. In the nursery, a teacher was conscious that she was making more rapid and reliable assessments of children’s language skills and that this led to more productive conversations between herself and colleagues about how to meet their initial learning and support needs. In the primary school, the children in Year Three, whose teachers had been coached, were commended by visitors to an assembly for their ability and willingness to articulate good questions in standard English (outstripping Year Four in this respect). In the same school, another teacher reflected that:

“My children are now choosing to share ideas, they have more confidence and can articulate their ideas better, modelling good language to each other. They are also developing better social skills, because they can now explain themselves and experience less conflict with each other and with staff.”

Perhaps the most passionate advocate of the impacts of the work was the long-established nursery head teacher who was working in her final year prior to retirement. She had indicated in the initial Theory of Change interview that she was hoping that all her children (most of whom were learning English as an additional language) would demonstrate two points of progression in speaking and listening in the year, which had not been achieved before in the setting. During the return interviews she stated that every child (including those with special Educational needs) had achieved this, and that beyond this the attainment data in every area of the curriculum were ‘amazing’. This progress was highlighted in an Ofsted inspection that year, which upgraded the nursery school from Good to Outstanding, with grade 1 for all areas (including pupil achievement and quality of teaching), and which stated that:





“Staff are reflective and have an excellent understanding of how young children learn; through their involvement with a project they are developing further their understanding of language development and how their practice effects on this skill. This has led to even more detailed and accurate assessments of this area of the children’s development.”

So, what can we learn? Well, it seems to us that video-based coaching is one of the inter-professional working approaches which allows what Forbes et al. (2018) advocate as ‘co-practice’ which allows the professionals from each field to place the child at the centre of activity through which professionals invest their time and expertise.

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# Putting context into coaching; creating an understanding of the value of contextual coaching in education

*Rachel Lofthouse and Trista Hollweck*

## Introduction

Our recently published research paper (Hollweck and Lofthouse, 2021) is opening up a further exploration of what we termed contextual coaching in education. The research was a multi-case study (Stake, 2013) which drew on two bespoke examples of contextual coaching in education and uses the ten tenets of collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018) as a conceptual framework for abductive analysis. Data from both cases were collected through interviews, focus groups and documentation. The findings demonstrate that effective contextual coaching leads to conditions underpinning school improvement. We found patterns of alignment with the ten tenets of collaborative professionalism. These findings are summarised in this working paper. The paper also outlines the relevance of understanding the relationships between contextual factors defined by Hargreaves and O'Connor as the 4Bs 'before, betwixt, beside and beyond'.

When we think about contextual coaching the following key ideas are relevant:

Gregory *et al.*, 2009; Johns, 2006.

- In the field of executive and organizational coaching, 'contextual

coaching' is described as a process that emphasizes the importance of an organization's environment or context on its leadership development work

Valentine, 2019

- 'a knowledge of the system-level factors that inhibit or support coaching work, and the ability of an individual or group to sustain behavior change over time, would be useful in creating the conditions that are most conducive to accelerated organizational learning and development' (p.94).

Munro, 2017

- 'when we come to implementing coaching in schools, context is everything' (p.38).

Proffitt, 2020

- Coaching can also shape its educational context, for example fostering enculturation and building a strong dialogic platform focused on teaching and learning

These introduce the idea that coaching sits within, and is influenced by context, but also has the potential to shape the context both in the present and the future.

## Two cases of coaching

The two cases of coaching analysed in this research can be summarised as follows:

**Case 1 Swaledale, England**  
**Teacher coaching for metacognitive pedagogies (maths focus)**

Where?	10 primary schools in a Teaching School Alliance (TSA) in rural north England, with significant numbers of children from military families. Coaching was part of a Strategic School Improvement project (SSIF) funded by the government Department for Education (DfE)
Why?	Teachers to gain greater expertise for teaching maths through metacognitive pedagogies, to raise pupil attainment. Teachers to be able to subsequently lead development in school.
When?	SSIF project ran for five terms from September 2017 to April 2019. Lead practitioners began working directly with Lead Teachers (LTs) in each school using contextual coaching from January 2018.
Who?	Coaches were 3 experienced teachers newly appointed as lead practitioners by the TSA for the SSIF project. One SSIF designated LT per school was coached. The LTs were selected by senior leaders. Each coach maintained a coaching relationship with 3 or 4 schools over project.
How?	Specialised contextual coaching occurred regularly during scheduled visits by coaches to each school. Coaches worked with LTs using modelling of teaching, joint planning, co-teaching and debriefing. DfE funded Strategic School Improvement project budget paid salaries of lead practitioners (coaches) and release time for LTs to work with coaches and attend network meetings.

**Case 2 Western Quebec**  
**Teacher coaching for professional learning (induction with mentor- coaching)**

Where?	1 large mixed-socioeconomic secondary school with two campuses: a junior high school (7-8) and a high school (9-11) in an urban setting in Western Quebec, Canada. Mentor-coaching was a mandatory part of the Teacher Induction Program (TIP) established in the school board in 2010 for first year teaching fellows (TFs). The school developed its own required coaching process for second year TIP TFs. The school also had developed a bespoke peer coaching approach.
Why?	Teachers in all stages of their career to be supported and have access to a self-sustaining professional learning process that focuses on meeting the needs of children in their care.
When?	TIP coaching for first year TFs began in 2011 with the school-developed TIP coaching for year 2 TFs introduced in 2017. The first cohort of peer coaching started in 2015. The study visit was on October 31, 2018. All coaching models continued beyond the study.
Who?	2 lead coaches (LCs) were full-time teachers, selected by the school principal as in-school support for coaches. The 15 TIP coaches were full-time experienced teachers in the school who worked with 7 first year TIP TFs and 6 second year TIP TFs. The 16 peer coaches were full-time experienced teachers.
How?	The TIP used a contextual coaching model that included goal setting, reciprocal classroom observations and debriefing, preparation of a Reflective Record, co-planning, and modelling of instructional strategies.

### Understanding the coaching contexts

To further understand the coaching contexts the ‘before and betwixt’ elements of collaboration were evidenced using the research data.

In case 1 the teacher coaching for metacognitive pedagogies was developed within a Teaching School Alliance and funded by the DfE. Teaching schools were first established in 2011 and were part of a drive toward a policy ambition of a “school-led self-improving system” (see Greany and Higham, 2018). Each TSA was expected to lead “school improvement initiatives based on school partnerships” (Gu et al., 2015, p. 17). SSIF grants supported TSAs to focus on particular improvement needs identified through national performance data and use approaches considered to be evidence informed. In this case, the SSIF project involved 10 primary schools, some of which had been partners in previous collaborative projects. The funds were awarded for three key reasons. First, the 10 schools served military communities, where children typically underperformed. Second, the project prioritized mathematics, which is considered a learning priority and is used as a key indicator of school performance. Third, it focused on pupil metacognition and self-regulation, which is considered “high impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence” (Quigley et al., 2018, p. 4). A model described as

contextual specialist coaching” (Lofthouse and Rose, 2019, p. 24) was developed alongside a wider SSIF project infrastructure which evolved over the duration of the project. Three lead practitioners were employed and acted as the coaches for an LT in each of the 10 schools. The SSIF project also funded pedagogical resources, staff training and a virtual platform that could be used to share project materials, teacher reflections and examples of pupils’ work. These provided a common foundation and experience for teachers engaged in the project. There was also a steering group which consisted of head teachers and deputy head teachers from the schools and external advisers.

In case 2 coaching for induction and teacher development was developed and implemented by the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB), an English language school district in a mainly French-speaking province. The WQSB’s Teacher Induction Program (TIP) was first established in 2010 as a response to the challenge in the school district in attracting and retaining effective new teachers, especially in rural and northern schools. All teachers new to the district – called teaching fellows (TFs) – were paired in their first year with experienced teachers who supported them as mentor-coaches (MCs). Case 2 focused on a secondary school, where there was initial resistance to the TIP. Over time, school leaders and staff saw how the TIP

could be useful to support both new and experienced teachers in their school and thus developed more bespoke coaching provision for TFs in their second year. This peer coaching model complemented another coaching programme implemented through an external partnership with the OLEVI Alliance in England. LCs in both programmes worked together to establish monthly informal “coaches” breakfasts’ which gave all coaches an opportunity to meet before school to share experiences, ideas and best practice.

### **Abductive analysis of coaching using the 10 tenets of Collaborative Professionalism**

There are ten key tenets of collaborative professionalism identified by Hargreaves and O’Connor and data from the two cases of coaching were analysed in relation to these using an abductive approach:

1. Collective autonomy: Teachers’ professional judgment is valued, and they have relative independence from top-down bureaucratic authority but less independence from each other.
2. Collective efficacy: Teachers believe that together they can make a difference to the students they teach, no matter what.
3. Collaborative inquiry: Teachers routinely explore problems, issues or differences of practice together and make evidence-informed decisions to improve or transform what they are doing.
4. Collective responsibility: Teachers develop a mutual and moral obligation to help each other to become better in order to serve all students in the school community
5. Collective initiative: There are fewer initiatives in schools but more initiative by communities of strong individuals committed to learning with and from each other.
6. Mutual dialogue: Teachers’ collaborative work is characterized by meaningful, respectful and constructive dialogue and feedback.
7. Joint work: Teachers engage in thoughtful and productive work to examine and improve professional practice facilitated by structures, tools and protocols.
8. Common meaning and purpose: Teachers articulate and advance a common purpose that is greater than test scores or even academic achievement and aims to make a difference in the lives of young people, so they can thrive and flourish as whole human beings.
9. Collaboration with students: Not only are students the focus of the collaborative work but they are also actively engaged with their teachers in constructing educational change together.
10. Big picture thinking for all: Teachers and school staff as well as school and system

leaders see, live and create the big picture together.

Over six months, we took time to revisit and work with research evidence from the two cases in order to familiarize and defamiliarize ourselves (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). This involved sharing notes, initial codes and categories (Saldana, 2015) as well as emerging ideas and then going back to rethink, reword and reorganize. Findings were recorded and grouped into categories representing similar phenomena and ideas.

### **Outline findings**

In both cases coaching were responses to the policy challenges and opportunities in their specific settings. The approaches were adapted over time, with changes largely being the result of co-construction between coaches and/or coachees in the contexts of the schools. Analysis of the cases of coaching in relation to the collaborative professionalism tenets revealed the significance of the contextualization of the coaching. The research findings can be outlined as follows:

- effective contextual coaching leads to conditions underpinning school improvement
- there are patterns of alignment with the ten tenets of collaborative professionalism

- contextual coaching is founded on mutual dialogue, joint work, collective responsibility and collaborative inquiry
- in more mature coaching programmes, collective autonomy, initiative and efficacy emerge
- there is also evidence that opportunities exist for contextual coaching to be further aligned with the remaining tenets
- the study also offers insight into how school improvement can be realised by the development of staff capacity for teacher leadership through contextual coaching

### **Making meaning and implications**

The key conclusions were drawn from this study are summarised as follows. The impact of coaching in education is enhanced by recognizing the importance of context and the value of iterative design and co-construction.

Contextual coaching relies on deliberate yet flexible designs and structures of support:

- The self-determining and iterative element of contextual coaching increased its sustainability and enabled collaborative professionalism to flourish across and beyond the active coaching cohorts. The professionals involved began to take responsibility for shaping the coaching structure and design as a collective.

It is necessary to enable responsiveness to school culture and context:

- Coaching programmes can not simply be inserted into schools and expected to work in isolation; they must be part of a broader programme design so that the intelligence gathered through coaching can feed back to the wider system and vice versa.

Participants in coaching are helped by a shared purpose and understanding:

- In both cases the teachers understood the pedagogic 'why' and 'how' underpinning the focus of contextual coaching which led to greater buy-in, engagement and commitment.

Teachers need autonomy and leaders need to ensure capacity for coaching:

- Although externally initiated, participants in both cases were given sufficient time,

space, resources and agency to co-construct ongoing coaching delivery and design. Individual teachers also set their own coaching goals based on the areas of improvement and innovation that they had identified as important for their students.

Long-term commitment and resources

- To build and sustain coaching impact there needs to be long term commitment and investment in the necessary resources.

The research suggests that the principles of contextual coaching are generalizable but models must be developed to be bespoke and aligned with each setting. It also indicates that collaborative professionalism might offer a useful framework to better design and implement contextual coaching programmes.

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**This research is also part of two peer-reviewed papers:**

Lofthouse, R.M., Rose, A. and Whiteside, R. (2021), "Understanding coaching efficacy in education through activity systems: privileging the nuances of provision", *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Vol. 11 [2] pp. 153-169. Eprint open access at <https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/8028/>

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CollectivED Blogpost and video on contextual coaching

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2021/12/contextual-coaching-from-curiosity-to-concept/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eghj9g5LWFg>

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## Coaching for creativity – Think about it!

*Jasen Booton*

"I am going to be honest – as an education coach, I have often struggled to explain the concept of creativity to teachers and leaders. I consider myself to be a creative thinker, but when asked to unravel what this means and looks like in practice, in the school context, I have struggled to be clear. I have frequently treated the words 'creativity' and 'innovation' as synonyms, unsure of how to define the difference. In terms of curriculum design, I know that I have found it easier to align creativity with the arts, guilty of perhaps marginalising the concept.

I must admit that it has taken the sad passing of Sir Ken Robinson to spur me into researching the nuances of creativity, so that I might feel more confident in amplifying his voice and vision. I have a particular interest in whether coaching can help foster creative thinking and support teachers and leaders to find creative solutions. Ken Robinson always spoke with such clarity and sincerity; I hope that I can mirror his tone in this short piece.

So, what is creativity? Ken Robinson defined the concept as "a process of having original ideas that have value" (Azzam, 2009, p.22). In truth, I have also found the concepts of 'originality' and 'value' tricky to unpick with coachees, highlighting the importance of constructing shared vocabulary and meaning in coaching conversations. For me, I have found it easier in the context of education to view creativity as a cognitive style or preference (Drapeau, 2014), in simple terms – a thinking skill.

As a coach, I find it helpful to focus on 'creative thinking', as opposed to exploring the broader concept of creativity. In my experience, coaching conversations that foster creative thinking, often generate more possibilities and creative solutions. It's fair to say that a cycle of coaching and frequent discussion are needed if creative thinking is to become a habit of mind. But again, I am conscious of the need for clarity, and should therefore address questions such as: How does a coach facilitate creative thinking skills? What does this look like



and sound like in a coaching conversation?

In pursuit of offering practical support for a 'coaching for creativity' model, I find the work of Paul Torrance particularly useful. Paul Torrance, commonly known as the "father of creativity", identified four creative thinking skills (1987): fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.

- Fluency relates to generating many ideas – often associated with 'brainstorming'
- Flexibility relates to generating a variety of ideas
- Originality relates to generating unique, novel and unusual ideas
- Elaboration relates to extending ideas – providing greater detail

As mentioned earlier, I often find the creative thinking skill of 'originality' an obstacle to moving forward in coaching conversations, especially in the early stages. I have found that a fixation on coming up with a unique and novel idea or solution can often lead to frustration and may not actually be necessary. This does not mean that I dismiss exploring originality, it is just that from experience, novel solutions tend to occur when coachees are in a secure position with a

confident state of mind and are able to be bold and more comfortable taking risks.

This is a likely reflection that much of my coaching occurs within schools under scrutiny, often supporting practitioners who are struggling to see the wood for the trees.

When teachers and leaders are charged with finding solutions, I find it productive to pose coaching questions that generate possibilities. Simply posing the question "how many ideas can you think of?" fosters the thinking skill of fluency. The aim of creative fluency is to generate many ideas, freeing the coachee to explore and then reflect upon which ideas are interesting and pertinent, and sometimes more importantly – which ones are not! When a coach poses questions to foster creative fluency, the coachee is given opportunity to think more deeply about the content and situation. Posing the question "how many different ideas can you think of?" fosters creative flexible thinking, again allowing the coachee opportunity to think deeply, sometimes considering different points of view. It is important to highlight that coaching questions to foster the thinking skill of elaboration are typically asked when a coachee is comfortable and

confident with generating 'many' and 'different' ideas. By posing the question "tell me more about..." permits the coachee to 'run with an idea', add detail, paint a more vivid and believable picture of the possible solution. Fostering creative elaboration is important in coaching conversations, but perhaps is not the first creative goal to achieve.

In summary, I believe that by asking a sequence of strategic questions, a coach has the capacity to foster creative thinking and expression within a coachee.

Focussing initially on simple questions to develop creative fluency and flexibility

seems to enhance a coachee's depth of processing and understanding.

Subsequent elaboration questions may then be better placed to facilitate rich narrative descriptions of possible solutions. I personally find it interesting to consider creative thinking within the domain of metacognition, thus aligning with the concepts of self-regulation and agency. Arguably, a coach poses questions to empower a coachee to ask those questions of themselves. This internal creative dialogue may indeed then lead to the formation of Ken Robinson's 'original ideas' that have 'value' for the coachee. Much to think about – creatively!"

**This paper was first published as a blogpost at**

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2020/09/coaching-for-creativity/>

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## Re-imagining a positive direction for education through narratives and co-coaching

***Rachel Lofthouse, Diana Tremayne, Mhairi Beaton, Meri Nasilyan***

Can a focus on pandemic education narratives and the development of co-coaching help us to engage thoughtfully and open up dialogue about our future practices in education?

This is one of the questions that we are grappling with in 'RAPIDE' a pandemic response Erasmus+ project led by Leeds Beckett University. The work is situated in the context (but reaching beyond) the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education globally. The challenges that the project is addressing include an awareness of the professional dilemmas faced by educators, the necessity of working inter- and intra-professionally to address these challenges, and the opportunities that co-coaching can bring. The project thus has the following objectives:

an increase in educators' ability and confidence to provide effective and inclusive digital learning opportunities

an increase in educators' ability to manage change in their working practices

an increase in the ability of the wider community including parents, carers, other family members and other interested professionals to understand and support both educators and students in digital learning contexts

### **PANDEMIC EDUCATION NARRATIVES**

Within the project we have been interviewing teachers in the partner countries about their pandemic experiences and creating accessible 'narratives' from each contribution.

An example of a narrative from a class teacher is as follows:

*There were a lot of ups and downs during Covid and remote teaching, because there was so much pressure. Children were stuck at home, classes were done online but sometimes with irregular schedules and content, but teachers still somehow had to carry out usual assessments and be prepared for evaluations.*

*First, I attended an eight-week course on well-being to make sure I can keep up with the pressure and take care of my well-being in school and outside of it.*

*Secondly, it was all very much about being open and talking to your colleagues was very much one part of that. You have to be open. You have to be, otherwise it is.*

*You have to be very open with how you feel, and what is going on.*

*I decided to work out a strategy with me participating actively in the matters of well-being and communicating about it especially when I saw some colleagues not adapting to the situation and the changes. And because of this they started to do more work and it created more problems with well-being, consequently.*

As we analysed the narratives we started to note that their common features included the realities, the responses, immediate and later reflections and re-imaginings of future education. These became themes we could then explore across the project, as exemplified in a previous CollectivED blogpost.

## **FROM NARRATIVES TO CO-COACHING**

With narratives like this as a starting point we are also working on a model of learning conversations which we are framing as co-coaching and have started to test these out in a range of international settings.

In co-coaching we encourage educators to be curious, creative and supportive. Through co-coaching educators are invited to explore their experiences, existing and emerging opportunities and feelings. Sharing narratives as the basis for co-coaching promotes authentic teacher voice, reflection and a sense of solidarity between educators for whom there is a familiarity in the accounts. Finally we suggest that co-coaching supports critical thinking, developing new perspectives and decision making for actions.

## **DEVELOPING CO-COACHING**

In developing co-coaching we have generated a number of questions which we offer as a scaffold rather than a script. We will be refining these and publishing them in the final project open access resources. Between them the questions return the co-coaching participants to the focus of realities, responses, reflections

and re-imaginings. They include questions such as:

- What did you notice?
- How did you react at the time?
- What might be the consequences of your response?
- What new ideas are emerging?
- How could this work?

Finally, it is important to note that when engaging in co-coaching there are some principles to follow. To start a co-coaching conversation you should create a safe space, encourage the sharing of stories, ask questions to support reflection and listen for understanding. It is essential to avoid making judgements, offering unwanted solutions, breaking confidentiality or acting as a therapist or counsellor. Applying these principles will help you build a co-coaching relationship which is based on trust, allows

participants to be authentic, compassionate and open to learning.

## **PROJECT PARTNERS**

The RAPIDE work is located within CollectivED The Centre for Coaching, Mentoring, Supervision and Professional Learning with colleagues from the Carnegie School of Education, Mhairi Beaton (project lead), Rachel Lofthouse, Meri Nasilyan and Diana Tremayne joining the international team members. Our project partners are from National Education Institute, Slovenia, Seminar für Ausbildung und Fortbildung der Lehrkräfte (Gymnasium), Germany, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, Universidade Aberta, Portugal, PLATO, University of Leiden, Netherlands, Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen, Belgium, University of Aberdeen, UK and Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary.

**This paper was first published as a blogpost at**

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2023/01/re-imagining-a-positive-direction-for-education-through-narratives-and-cocoaching/>

## Links to blogposts and videos related to themes 1-4

### Coaching in education video (Themes 1-4)

[Coaching in Education \(vimeo.com\)](#) [Coaching in Education \(vimeo.com\)](#)

Lisa Stephenson (Theme 2)

[Collective Creativity and Wellbeing through story | ACE \(creativityexchange.org.uk\)](#)

Rachel Lofthouse (Theme 2)

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2022/01/here-be-dragons---myth-busting-instructional-coaching-for-teachers/>

Rachel Lofthouse and Trista Hollweck (Theme 3)

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-education/2021/12/contextual-coaching-from-curiosity-to-concept/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eghj9g5LWFg>

Jasen Booton (Theme 4)

[Transforming Education: Building Forward Together and Teaching Differently – Curriculum Foundation](#)

## CollectivED resources - working papers, blogposts, videos, research, podcasts

[https://padlet.com/r\\_m\\_lofthouse/collectived-resources-working-papers-blogposts-videos-research-d4dhe4e7q46glcyg](https://padlet.com/r_m_lofthouse/collectived-resources-working-papers-blogposts-videos-research-d4dhe4e7q46glcyg)

## Contributing a CollectivED working paper

### Introduction

CollectivED publish working papers written by researchers, practitioners and students on the themes of coaching, mentoring, professional learning and development in education. We publish these at <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/collectived/working-paper-series/>

Contributors to the working paper series are given Carnegie School of Education Professional Associate status making them eligible to use the Leeds Beckett University library facility (in person or online). They can also apply to become CollectivED Fellows.

### Purpose and audience

The CollectivEd working papers are intended as an opportunity to connect educational practice, policy and research focusing on coaching, mentoring and related forms of professional development. They are written with a diverse audience in mind: teachers, governors and school leaders, academics and students, members of grassroots organisations, advocates, influencers and policy makers at all levels. We intend that the content and audience is national and international. The working papers will enable a diverse range of informed voices in education to co-exist in each publication, in order to encourage scholarship and debate.

### Invitation to contribute and article types

We invite academic staff, research students, teachers, school leaders, and members of the wider education professional practitioner communities to contribute papers. This is chance to share practice, research and insights. All papers submitted should demonstrate criticality, going beyond descriptive accounts, problematizing professional development and learning practices and policy where appropriate and recognising tensions that exist in the realities of educational settings and decision making. The following types of contribution are welcome, and some flexibility will be built in around these:

- **Research working papers:** These might be in the form of summaries of empirical research, case studies, action research or research vignettes. These will normally be about 2000-2500 words in length, and will be fully referenced using Harvard Referencing. Please limit the amount of references to those which are absolute necessary to the understanding of the article, and use the most recent references possible. Research papers should include a consideration of the implications for practice and/or policy at an appropriate scale. Research papers should be accompanied by an abstract (max 250 words). Abstracts should outline the research undertaken, methodology and conclusions drawn.
- **Practice insight working papers:** These will be focused on aspects of relevant professional learning and development practice, and should communicate its particular features, its context and the decision making that shapes it. These will normally be 1200-1800 words in length and should reference policies or research that influence the practice.

- **Think-piece working papers:** These offer opportunities for writers to share opinions, reflections or critiques of relevant professional learning and development practice, research and/or policy. These will normally be 750-1250 words in length. They may include responses to previously published working papers.
- **Book or conference reviews:** Reviews are published of events or books which relate to the themes of coaching, mentoring or professional learning in education settings. These often include personal reflections from the author as well as elements of reportage. These will normally be 750-1250 words in length.

## Writing style and guidance

In order for the working paper series to be inclusive and become a platform for a range of voices we would expect a range of writing styles. However, we do need to maintain the following writing conventions.

- Papers will be written in English, which should be accessible and clear to a range of readers. Text can be broken up with subheadings, bullet points, diagrams and other visuals.
- Papers cannot be submitted anonymously. The names of author(s) should be clearly stated, and where appropriate their educational context should be made clear (secondary teacher, PhD student, education consultant, ITE tutor etc).
- Names of schools, universities and other organisations can be included, and we require authors to confirm that they have consent to do so.
- Children and young people may not be identified by name and every effort should be made to ensure that their identities remain confidential.
- Adults (such as colleagues, and professional or research partners) may only be named with their consent, and where appropriate we encourage joint authorship.
- A limited number of images may be submitted with the papers, but please note that we will use discretion when including them according to formatting limitations. Please be clear if the inclusion of an image (such as a diagram or table) is critical to the working paper.
- No submitted photographs of children will be published, although the Carnegie School of Education may select appropriate images from stock photograph libraries.
- While we will not publish papers written as a sales pitch we are happy for papers to be written which engage critically and professionally with resources, programmes, courses or consultancy, and weblinks can be included.
- Each paper should state a corresponding author and include an email address, and / or twitter handle.

## Submission and review

Papers for consideration for CollectivED working papers should be submitted via email to [R.M.Lofthouse@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:R.M.Lofthouse@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

They should be submitted as word documents, Arial 11 font, 1.5 line spacing, with subheadings included as appropriate. Each word document should include the title, names of authors, context

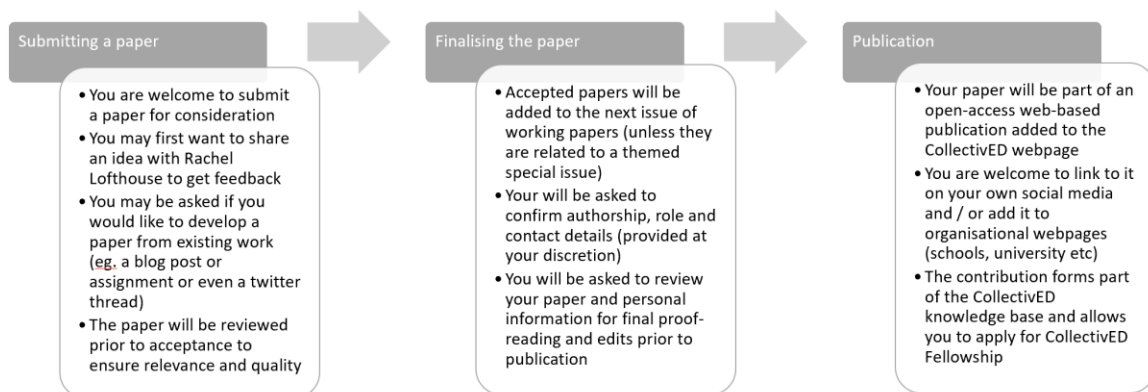


and affiliations of the authors. Essential images should be embedded in the word document, and discretionary images should be sent as attachments.

Each submission will be reviewed by the working paper series editorial team. Decisions will be made in a timely fashion and any guidance for resubmission will be communicated to the authors. Once an issue of CollectivED is collated authors will be asked to undertake final proof-reading prior to publication.

## CollectivED Working Papers; route to publication

The CollectivED Working Papers form an invaluable open access resource. Their focus is practice, policy and research on coaching, mentoring and professional development. The content and audience are national and international. Working papers give a voice to practitioners, researchers, and members of professional and grass-roots organisations. They enable scholarship and provoke debate.



<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/collectived/working-paper-series/>  
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***Professor Rachel Lofthouse***