

Coaching for improving teacher practice
within a professional development
initiative

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management

Unitec Institute of Technology New Zealand

2010

ABSTRACT

This research set out to find how coaching was being used to support professional learning and development of teachers in a specific professional development context. The focus was to look at the coaching process from the perspectives of those involved, namely principals, coaches and teachers who were being coached, referred to as coachees. The research was driven by the questions “why use coaching and what are the links between coaching and performance appraisal?”

The literature indicated that there was often confusion associated with the terminology of coaching and mentoring. There were other issues that surround coaching such as the links between coaching and supervision, change management, the role of leadership in coaching and the implementation of coaching.

A qualitative methodology was used and the sample population was purposive because it was based on a cluster of schools, which were involved in an Extending High Standards Across School (EHSAS) professional development initiative, that had identified that they would be using coaching as part of their project. All seven primary schools in the project took part in the research. Each principal was interviewed individually and two focus groups were held, one for seven coaches and one for five teachers from four schools.

The findings show that it is the nature of the relationship between coach and coachee that is important. A balance of power needs to be established, regardless of the positional authority the coach may hold, where the responsibility and ownership for learning lies with the teacher. There needs to be clear understanding by all parties in identifying the role of the coach in terms of coaching and supervision.

The recommendations are that those in leadership positions need to establish a culture of learning to support the coaching process and that all involved need a shared understanding of the language of coaching and supervision. Further research needs to be done to identify the links between coaching and improved outcomes for students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Professor Carol Cardno, for her patience, persistence and understanding in supporting me through the process of writing this thesis. I have learned that the growth for me has not been so much of the product of writing this thesis but the process. Carol's critical questioning has challenged me and been an integral part of my development.

I would also like to acknowledge my family. While I have tried to model what good learning looks like to my children, they have had to become more independent in finding for themselves as I fritter away in the study. My husband had been a source of support and also inspiration. As he completed his MBA, we were able to share ideas and critically review each other's work. He has been encouraging when I have hit the doldrums of despair.

This research could not have been done without the support of my principal, who has given me advice and encouragement and made this an active part of my professional learning as a leader in our school. I would like to thank all the principals in our cluster, who have been encouraging and cooperative. I would like to thank them for their willingness to answer my questions with enthusiasm. The passion for their schools and what they do is an inspiration. I would also like to thank the other participants for sharing their beliefs and understanding in such an open way.

I would lastly like to acknowledge the friends, family, colleagues and even neighbours who I neglected as I buried my head in this project.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This researcher holds a leadership role and is dealing with the complexity of learning and leading others in their learning. She is aspiring to become a principal and according to Fullan (2002) “the principal of the future has to be much more attuned to the big picture, and much more sophisticated at conceptual thinking, and transforming the organisation through people and teams” (p.9). This researcher is focusing on recognising the importance of developing people, and maximising the opportunities available, particularly for teachers. A principal has to ensure student achievement and Hattie (2003) tells us that it is the teacher who makes the most significant difference to student learning. A principal needs to know how to maximise the opportunities for teacher learning. Coaching is purported to be a means of enhancing professional learning among teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2003; Robertson, 2005a). While doing some preliminary research on the subject this researcher found that there is some confusion surrounding the terminology about coaching.

Currently our local cluster of schools is involved in an Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) contract where we are using *coaching* as a means to improve teaching practice. Coaching and mentoring are purported to be a means of fostering deep growth in professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2003). Coaching is a term that appears to be being used more and more frequently and schools are beginning to implement coaching as part of their professional learning and development programmes. The term appears in professional development courses, brochures and conferences, however, there still seems to be some confusion surrounding the terminology. The term coaching is associated with development of a short-term skill and mentoring is seen as a long-term relationship where someone in a senior position supports the learning of someone new to a role (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). Within our cluster of seven schools this researcher was

becoming aware that among the different schools people were having different experiences and trying different models. This researcher was also aware that coaching might be perceived differently from the perspectives of the various role players, the principal's, coaches and teachers who were being coached often referred to as coachees in the coaching process in this project.

Robertson (2005) quotes Hargreaves (1994) as saying “the quality, range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work is closely tied up with their professional growth – with the way that they develop as people and as professionals” (p4). Schools are expected to provide professional development opportunities to enhance teacher knowledge in order to improve outcomes for students (Ministry of Education, 1997a). However, there needs to be a link between professional development and professional learning (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Professional development needs to be more than just going on courses. Fullan (2002) calls going on courses information gathering and to turn this information into knowledge one needs to base it in a social context where the learning is shared. He further states that to get real growth and development and value this information needs to be part of a process that ensures deep professional learning, which needs to be sustainable and become embedded in the teacher’s practice. Once a teacher has been on a course they return to their classroom and can become isolated in their own classroom and what happens here can be independent of the organisation (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung 2007). When teachers work in a collaborative manner and use coaching strategies they allow themselves the opportunity to question and reflect on their own practices and ground the values of their teaching in an understanding of what constitutes best practice (Showers & Joyce, 1996b). Coaching and mentoring can be used as a means of fostering that deep growth in professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Showers & Joyce, 1996b).

Context

Influenced by theorists who recommend site based learning for professionals (Fullan, 2002; Timperley et al., 2007) the New Zealand Ministry of Education has launched a number of professional development initiatives that involve contestable funding. One such initiative offered to schools is the Extending High Standards across Schools

(EHSAS) initiative. The purpose of which is to raise student achievement by promoting excellence through developing professional learning networks across schools (Ministry of Education, 2009). It is an initiative that makes contestable funding available to schools to develop these networks, using evidence-based processes and practices, which contribute to improving student outcomes. The key principles behind these projects are to promote excellence in the school's system and to support high standards. The objective is to assist schools to improve their practice through sharing effective practices with other schools.

Documentation downloaded from the Ministry of Education website (www.minedu.govt.nz) lists the following intended outcomes for EHSAS.

- Strengthening professional learning communities of schools and increased collaboration
- Improved student outcomes
- Improved teaching quality
- A developing knowledgebase of models of effectiveness and examples of practices and processes that can be used to enhance school performance
- Increased opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to inquire into and strengthen their professional knowledge and practice.

Each contract runs for a four-year period, with regular reports about progress being submitted to the Ministry of Education. Each cluster of schools submits an extensive application indicating how they will meet the key principles of the contract.

The cluster of schools in which this research has taken place, was successful in the second round of applications and were in their third year of the contract, when the data for this research was gathered. Their submission was based on the following objective, to develop the academic performance of students who are performing well in each of the schools but who could be performing better. The key here is that by improving teacher effectiveness, they could improve outcomes for students. The application was based on this premise. As the data needed to be evidence based they focused on the collection of data based on student outcomes in reading and maths and also gathered data on teachers using a self-assessment tool, which was designed by these schools. This self-assessment tool was based largely on the work of Black

and William (1998) requiring teachers to use assessment for learning strategies.

The first difficulty this cluster encountered was gathering robust data that was comparative across all the schools in the cluster. To date they had been using different tools for measurement. The second challenge was building the knowledge of teachers and lead teachers about what works to support student learning. It was felt that to achieve this development of teachers, coaching of teachers would be used as a means to improve teacher knowledge and skill in the use of assessment for learning strategies (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Timperley et al., 2007).

The context of this study was based in this cluster of schools, which are involved in the EHSAS contract, which had identified that they would use coaching as a means to enhance the professional learning and development of teachers in order to improve their effectiveness. What follows is some background information about this cluster of schools.

There are seven schools involved in this cluster project. Six have students from five to eleven years of age and all of these six schools transition their students into the one intermediate school, which is part of the project. Each school is situated within a relatively small geographic area and all seven are decile ten schools. Each school while different has many areas of commonality. Another reason for selecting this particular cluster to do my research in was that each school has chosen to implement coaching based on their previous professional development programmes established independently in their schools, and according to the specific needs of their students and teachers. This afforded me the opportunity to research seven different strategies for setting up coaching within a primary school.

In doing my research it is important to find out how coaching was implemented from the perspectives of all the role players in the process. While I did not meet or interview every single member, I proposed to select representatives from each of the categories of people involved in the coaching process. I intended to interview the principals individually, and run focus groups with the coaches and teachers being coached (coachees).

Participants

The following information is not about the participants themselves, this information will be given later in the methodology chapter, but rather about the considerations that need to be taken from each participants point of view.

Principals

There are three main issues when looking at coaching from a principal's position firstly whether coaching is an appropriate tool to use. There is an assumption that coaching is a means of improving the effectiveness of teachers. This assumption is supported by literature (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996b). The second issue is what can a principal expect to achieve by using this tool. The third issue to consider is what resources, and background developments need to have been established in order to make this tool effective.

In the first instance leaders are looking for ways to maximise the outcomes for professional development and simultaneously they are looking for a tool that will improve a teachers performance. Coaching is offered as a tool that is effective and works (Blase & Blase, 1999; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Showers & Joyce, 1996a). There is an implicit link between teacher development and teacher's performance, as mandated in the Ministry of Education guidelines on appraisal (Ministry of Education, 1997a). However, these links have been compromised through the introduction of accountability requirements of the professional standards for teachers (Piggot-Irvine, 2002).

There are similarities between performance appraisal systems and coaching. Taking appraisal in its originally intended purpose of having both a developmental and an accountability component, there is a direct comparison with coaching, which also has development and accountability as its purpose. Other similarities include goal setting, observation, feedback and self-review. There is literature that warns of the difficulties that might arise as a result of mixing performance appraisal systems and coaching systems (Showers & Joyce, 1996b).

Principals have a variety of experiences with the concept of coaching, they attend conferences, and workshops and some have had whole day courses on coaching or have heard about coaching. Some have even had the experience of being coached as part of the development process in becoming principals. It would appear that to some principals coaching is becoming a popular choice for bringing about change and development in schools. By introducing coaching, principals may be able to meet the requirements of a performance appraisal system and avoid the pitfalls that have been more recently associated with the way appraisal is perceived as a result of the checklist process against the professional standards. Once again there is an implicit assumption that coaching “works”. According to Keller (2007) it is an educational fad that is becoming the tool of choice for principals. It is therefore important to find out what principals’ prior knowledge and experience with coaching is that leads to successful outcomes for coaching in schools.

The schools in this EHSAS cluster have been using coaching as a tool for two years and have found that there are different models for coaching and it is far more complex than they first believed. Each school has taken a different approach and yet have had similar issues getting coaching started and sustained in their schools. Each school has a facilitator who is responsible for working with other facilitators, ensuring the contract runs smoothly within their school as well as the cluster of schools. They bring the voice of each school to the table and ensure that there is a level of consistency across the project. As one of these facilitators I have been able to take part in these discussions but did not have the opportunity to ask the other role players in the various schools what their perceptions of the process are. It appears that there needs to be a certain amount of groundwork before embarking on coaching for teachers. As a leader the principal needs know what has to be taken into consideration before this approach is taken. Principals need to set their schools up to get the best out of their investment in coaching and to maximise the benefits for bringing about change and improvement in the professional development of their teachers, in order to maximise outcomes for students. They also need to ensure that this development is sustainable in the long term.

Coaches

The expectation is that coaches will carry the responsibility for development of progress and improvement in performance. This is a vital role in the coaching processes and coaches need a certain skill set to be able to achieve the goals of growth and development of the teachers (Barnett, 1995; Fielding, 2003). Decisions need to be made about who the coaches are and what training they need to fulfil this role. The options are to employ coaches externally or internally. There is a greater cost involved in using external coaches and when the contract is over there is a strong likelihood that the momentum in progress that has built up will falter or stop (Hawk & Hill, 2003). When selecting coaches internally, there are other considerations to take into account; such as what are the prerequisites for being a coach; what skill set do they need before training; what training do they need, and what are the implications for staff that will be coached. These may involve the matching of coach to coachee.

Teachers

There are many questions associated with the teachers being coached. From the start we can ask what the selection process was for selecting teachers to be coached. Teachers who volunteer to be coached are the ones who are most often the ones who are already taking responsibility for their professional learning (Basile, Olson, & Nathenson-Mejia, 2003). They are self-starters and probably already use self-reflection practices. On the other hand there are teachers who need to develop strategies for self-reflection. They are not naturally self-reflective and therefore may not recognise their need to further develop their professional learning. These are the teachers who are less likely to volunteer for coaching.

Coaching relies on an understanding of self and on the setting of goals that are self-chosen. The motivation for growth needs to be internal and not external (Basile et al., 2003). Herein, lies a conflict, those teachers who want to be coached are probably already employing coaching strategies and those teachers who do not want to be coached are the ones who need to be coached.

Rationale for this study

The research on coaching has to a large extent focussed on leadership coaching and the coaching of teachers who are just establishing their careers as teachers. Only recently with the focus, particularly in the United States on literacy coaches, has there been more research done on coaching of teachers who could be considered experienced teachers, needing to enhance their professional learning.

In New Zealand the recent research on professional learning of teachers only focuses on coaching peripherally. There appears to be very little research into coaching of teachers as a professional learning tool. For the most part the research is on leadership coaching. Jan Robertson is a leader in this field, with research that she has done both in New Zealand and overseas. As more principals use coaching within their schools it is important to establish their reasons for doing so. It is also important to investigate some practices of coaching of teachers in New Zealand, in order to establish the value of coaching and the impact on outcomes for students.

There are many issues to consider when examining coaching. There is confusion over the language used to describe coaching, as well as the concept of coaching. What is coaching and what are the implications for professional learning? Another issue is the prior knowledge and capability a principal needs personally and in the systems within the school to be able to establish a coaching culture. There appear to be links to appraisal and coaching may impact on systems such as the performance management system.

Professional learning is an integral part of the professional development of teachers, which has links to the appraisal system. The question is; what effect does coaching have on this relationship and how can it be maximised to the benefit of the individual as well as the organisation, without resulting in overlap and confusion.

The main concerns that seem to be arising out of these queries lies with the concept of coaching; what is it; and how can this tool be used to improve outcomes for students and what are the links to appraisal. What knowledge, skills and dispositions, a term used by Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009), does a principal need to effectively

manage the professional learning of teachers in order to improve outcomes for students and the performance management of teachers. There appear to be some big questions as to the understanding the principal needs; the implementation process such as the selection of coaches and coachees, and the purposes of coaching.

The purpose of coaching would be to develop teachers' professional learning and growth. Appraisal systems are also a means of recognising teachers needs and developing these teachers in their professional careers. A clear understanding of the links that can be made between appraisal and coaching systems; how a principal might use these to the maximum benefit of teachers and the organisation, in order to improve outcomes for students through improving teacher effectiveness, needs to be established, and the impact of these on previous systems.

There is no one size fits all answer to coaching. Different schools have tried different strategies. While it may appear that coaching is a simple concept, it is far more complex than first believed. Everyone has at some stage experienced coaching in some form or other, be it through sports coaching or coaching at school. To fully appreciate the value of coaching, a clear understanding of what is involved is needed. There are those people who are natural coaches and use coaching in their everyday practice. Teachers should all use coaching strategies to get the best performance out of their students. However, while we know what works for students, we do not always apply the same philosophies with teachers. We may recognise that adults learn differently to children, it is only recently that we are examining how teachers learn (Timperley et al., 2007) and the impact this has on students. Coaching is purported to be an effective means of ensuring growth and development of teachers and according to Little (2005) "coaching provides educators with a chance to utilize a natural support system at their school" (p. 83). I would like to examine the understandings of those involved in the coaching process and find out if coaching is meeting these expectations.

Research aims and questions

Aims

1. To critically examine understandings of coaching.
2. Investigate practices related to teacher coaching in a cluster of schools within an EHSAS project.
3. To examine the links between coaching, improving teacher effectiveness, and performance appraisal, in seven primary schools.
4. To recommend strategies for improving coaching effectiveness.

Research Questions

Primary Question

Why use coaching as means to improve teaching practice?

Secondary Questions

1. What do the principals, coaches and teachers understand about the nature and purpose of coaching?
2. What practices related to teacher coaching are occurring in each of the seven primary schools to be investigated from three perspectives (principals, coaches and teachers)?
3. What links exist between teacher coaching and performance appraisal in these seven schools?
4. What strategies can be recommended for improving outcomes for teacher learning through the coaching process?

This research followed a reiterative process. When initially the literature review was done the information offered in the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) on School Leadership (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009) had not been published. The initial literature review indicated that there were links to leadership and coaching. As a result when I reviewed the literature review I included the BES research as I felt it had significant relevance and used this information to structure the discussion on coaching.

Summary

In order to have a clear understanding of the scope of this thesis I created a concept map (Figure 1.1) to outline the path I expected to follow. The first three sections fit into Chapter 1, which begins, with the context at the top. The next bubble identifies that this research project is based on coaching to improve professional learning and development of teachers and is underpinned by the research aims. Chapter 2 shows that this project in turn is supported by the literature which identifies three themes: The apparent confusion over the language that surrounds coaching and mentoring, the purposes of coaching in education and the identified gaps within the literature which indicates that very little research is available in New Zealand surrounding the professional learning of teachers who are not either beginning teachers or who hold a leadership position. This is followed by descriptions of various models of coaching and a discussion on the themes that have emerged from the literature surrounding coaching. These three themes are teacher professional learning and development, supervision and appraisal and the role of leadership associated with coaching. The map shows that the methodology is qualitative and that the data gathering methods would be interviews and focus groups. More detail can be found in Chapter 3. The findings from the interviews with seven principals and focus groups with coaches and coachees are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings and a discussion of the findings. In Chapter 6 Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

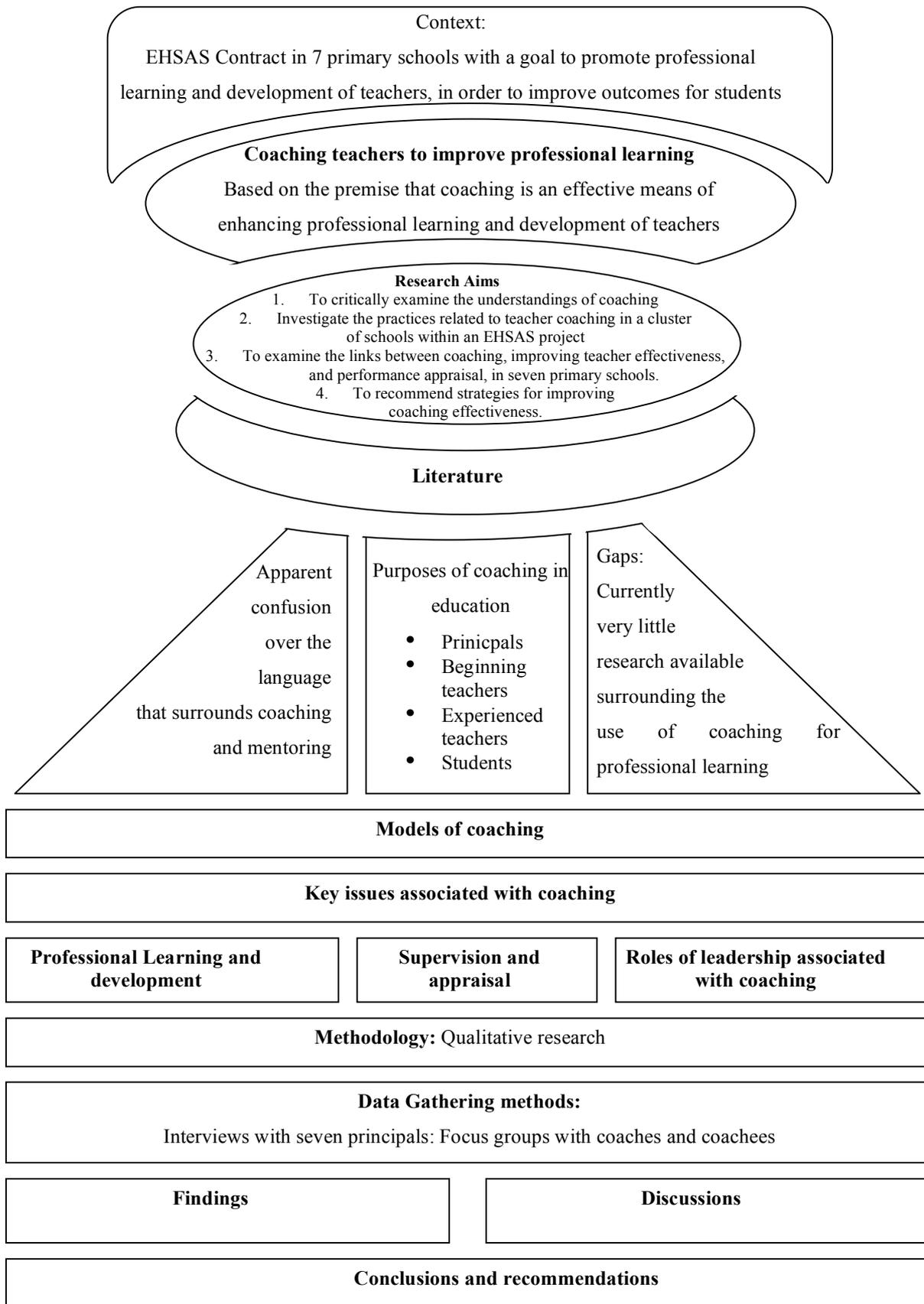


Figure 1.1: Concept map of thesis

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While Chapter 1 outlined the direction of this research, this chapter focuses on what the literature reveals about coaching and the associated concepts, such as supervision, teacher learning and the role of leadership in establishing a coaching culture. An examination of the definitions, and purposes of coaching is made. Coaching and mentoring are very closely related terms, which are often used interchangeably, definitions are offered and the two concepts are distinguished from one another, a review of what the literature reveals about the models of coaching follows, with a discussion on the main themes surrounding the literature on coaching; namely coaching and supervision, coaching as change management, and coaching and leadership. Finally, the challenges that have been identified by the literature, when implementing a coaching programme within a school, are identified.

What is coaching?

Coaching is a term that is used to describe a variety of activities from sports coaching, life coaching, leadership and executive coaching to team coaching in organisations. It is largely used when a person or organisation is working towards some change in growth and development, and improving performance (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Ritchie & Genoni, 2002). The term coaching is sometimes used synonymously with the term mentoring, although the terms are distinctly different and can be defined according to the specific activity that is taking place and the role of the players (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

According to the literature coaching is a skilled activity with a focus on the development of a performance and skill, it also has organisational focus, whereas mentoring is often associated with induction, career and personal development and

personal change (Cameron, 2007; Clutterbuck, 1998; Garvey, 2004). Coaching is about the building of relationships to enhance learning and is not about counselling or therapy (Bossi, 2008). Through the promotion of reflective practice, with the coach as a facilitator, the coachee is able to identify a vision and develop a goal for the improvement of a particular area of practice and with appropriate guidance is able to achieve this goal successfully (Robertson, 2005b).

The literature deals with two main aspects of coaching. On the one hand the literature deals with the technical side of coaching, in other words, the concept of coaching, what is it about and how it works (Basile et al., 2003; Robertson, 2005a; Showers & Joyce, 1996). On the other hand the literature also deals with perceptions and expectations of coaching (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Basile et al., 2003; Keller, 2007), answering the question “does it work?”

Definitions

In the literature, the words “coaching” and “mentoring” are sometimes used interchangeably (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Timperley et al., 2007). Brockbank and McGill (2006) state that it is the purpose and outcome that defines whether the activity is coaching or mentoring. For the purpose of this paper mentoring is seen as a long term relationship which begins as a hierarchical relationship where a novice is coached to develop a set of skills and knowledge but as time progresses the relationship may change to one with a reciprocal relationship with equal status (Altman, 2007; Clawson, 1996; Clutterbuck, 1998; Ritchie & Genoni, 2002). Also mentoring can be regarded as a function associated with someone new to a position and may involve coaching practices. In the recent Best Evidence Synthesis by Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) they investigated the effectiveness of various forms of professional learning. In some cases coaching may have formed part of the professional learning particularly if it continued over a period of time. Joyce and Showers (2003) suggest that a programme of coaching and mentoring may be used to sustain and embed on going professional development.

Hobson (2003) defines mentoring as a term that is “generally used to refer to a process whereby a more experienced individual seeks to assist someone less experienced, and ‘coaching’ is used to refer to forms of assistance relating more specifically to an individual’s job-specific tasks, skills or capabilities” (p. 2). While coaching may form a part of mentoring, it has a narrower focus and is for immediate short-term improvement related to specific jobs, tasks or skills (Altman, 2007; Hobson, 2003). Mentoring may be for longer-term career development, where a teacher would move from being a novice to expert under the tutorage of another teacher who could be considered master in their field (Bruce, 1995). This indicates that mentoring is more long-term, while coaching has a short-term focus for immediate change and development, either learning a new skill or a change in organisational practice.

Coaching and mentoring have many benefits; they can be a useful tool for meeting the needs of the organisation, for managing change and for achieving improved outcomes for students (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Garvey, Alred, & Smith, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2003; Keller, 2007). They can be seen as meeting the needs of an organisation by helping members of the organisation align themselves with the core values of the organisation. This is necessary when members are new or there has been a redevelopment of the core values. Change in schools is most often related to changes in practices and policy initiatives based on new research and findings. Currently the main change in schools in New Zealand is the need to implement the national curriculum and for schools to develop their own local curriculum that meets the needs of the community, as well as complying with the implementation of the National Standards (Ministry of Education, 2009). This is a huge change for some schools as the key competencies are introduced because they have a central role in the curriculum where as the related essential skills of the previous curriculum had a more peripheral role because the essential learning areas were central. On top of this, the introduction of the National Standards will create situations where teachers will need to up skill their knowledge of assessment and interpretation of data to a standard that they might not be familiar with. Coaching and mentoring are tools that can help facilitate this change. Redshaw (2000) states, “when good coaching is widespread, the whole organisation can learn new things more quickly and therefore adapt to change more effectively. Individuals not only learn new skills they are coached in, they also become better and proactive learners” (p. 106).

In education coaching it is largely used to induct new teachers into their role of teaching or induct new or aspiring principals into their role as principals (Brockbank & McGill, 2006; Cameron, 2007; Robertson, 2005a). More recently coaching has been recognised as a means to improve and embed professional development in classroom practice. It allows teachers to reflect on their practice as they trial newly learned knowledge or skills, with the support of another person who acts as a sounding board for this development (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 2003; Timperley et al., 2007). According to research by Robertson and Murrhiy (2005) New Zealand school principals are less familiar with coaching as part of the professional development process, compared to principals in the same study in England.

Purposes of coaching

While coaching has been used for many purposes, it can be a means for developing learning in context. Coaching is about learning, where two individuals participate in a deliberate act (coaching) to enhance the learning of each other (Robertson, 2005a). In his research on leadership learning in Canada, Fullan (2002) identifies the role of coaching in knowledge sharing. Fullan (2002) further describes how “learning in the setting where you work, or learning in context, is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (literally applied to the situation) and because it is social (thereby developing shared and collective knowledge and commitments)”(p. 14) A coach acts as a sounding board, challenges thinking, stimulates creativity and builds confidence (Altman, 2007).

There are particular contexts where coaching has been used: the development of beginning teachers, leadership coaching, organisational change and professional development. These will be discussed in the following sections.

Beginning teachers

Teachers new to the profession, in New Zealand known as Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRT) all undergo a two-year programme of advice and guidance. An associate teacher mentors and coaches them until they receive full registration. Similar programmes are followed with beginning teachers throughout the world. There is some

evidence to show that the relationship between the mentor and mentee is a complex one, with considerable effort required for both (Fielding, 2003). Fielding (2003) believes that while the associate teacher provides coaching for the beginning teacher, they too need to be coached in this role, as it is vital for the further development of teaching as a profession. The criticism is that often teachers are appointed to the role of associate teacher without the necessary training and development. Just because a teacher is good at what they do does not necessarily equate to being good at sharing this knowledge with others. Fielding (2003) identifies the need for coaching of the coaches. Fullan (2002) would agree with this but would state that this coaching would need to occur in context of the coaching process and not prior to becoming an associate teacher as suggested by Fielding (2002), or as is the case in aspiring leadership coaching.

Leadership coaching

Coaching has been used as a means for inducting new principals into their roles (Eddy, 2007; Hobson, 2003; Robertson, 2005a). In New Zealand this has taken place with programmes such as the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) and the First Time Principals Programme (FTPP). In the United Kingdom the programme of leadership development has been run through the National College of School leadership in their development of head teachers.

Leadership coaching is situational and is best practiced by occurring in the context of the leaders everyday working situation. It is practicing and developing on the job and is often referred to as “just in time learning” (Bossi, 2008; Clutterbuck, 1998; Robertson, 2005a). Robertson (2004) suggests, “coaching also provides opportunities for affirmation and validation of practice, which is important in leadership development” (p.7).

There is evidence to show that leaders who undertake coaching development programmes often use these strategies with others and so are able to identify and promote the potential of others through using coaching strategies that they have experienced (Robertson, 2005b). It is important for leaders to learn in authentic contexts as they progress through their daily challenges. According to Bossi (2008) this kind of learning is based on Vygotskian theories where learning is rooted in social context

through the participation and assistance of others (Bowman & McCormick, 2000). This view is backed up by the research done by Fullan (2002) in developing a knowledge sharing culture in schools.

Professional learning and teacher development

Research shows that where whole school professional development is focused on using peer coaching as a means to draw the professional learning of teachers together, teachers become less isolated in their classrooms and become more willing to share their learning with others (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Crickmer, 2007; Hawk & Hill, 2003). Often this leads to a greater understanding of organisational values and the development of an inclusive schooling culture. Teachers become more self-reflective, take risks and are more willing to share the workload (Hawk & Hill, 2003).

Where coaching is used as a tool for enhancing professional development it needs to be theory based, practical, and relevant and target identified needs of the organisation and the individual (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2006). When teachers observe each other and hold professional discussions about what works and what does not work for students, in a trusting environment, which is non-judgemental, then effective professional learning occurs (Showers, 1985). This learning needs to be double-loop and deep (Argyris, 1977). Piggot-Irvine (2003) describes double loop learning, where the trainee is able to correct mismatches in action or errors in ways that challenge their underlying assumptions and values, resulting in change in action. If the person being coached changes the principles and values of their teaching based on the reflection process and the actions that they have taken, double loop learning has occurred (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Double loop learning is considered deep learning.

Effective professional development takes place when the learning is relevant; where teachers are able work together; to focus on instruction and student outcomes; have opportunities to experiment in their practice; take risks and are able to engage in feedback on these opportunities with professional peers both within and outside the organisation; where the learning is deep rather than shallow (Hill, 2001; Piggot-Irvine, 2006; Showers, 1985) . Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) indicate that when professional learning takes place using a teacher inquiry model than the learning

becomes more relevant to both the needs of the student and the teacher as a learner. They advocate the use of a teacher inquiry model, which is replicated in Figure 2.1. In this model the teacher learning is focused on the identified needs of the students and then determining what the teachers learning needs are. Once these have been established learning tasks or experiences are identified to meet these needs. These may be in the form of professional development or actions a teacher might take to develop their professional learning. The teacher will then apply these in the context of their classroom and will perform certain teaching actions, which will indicate the level of success in their learning. The next phase in the model is an evaluative phase whereby the teacher will monitor the success of what they have learned, by measuring the impact of the changed actions against the results of the students. This then returns to the beginning point of identifying the next steps in the needs of the students and the learning needs of the teacher. This is a reiterative process.

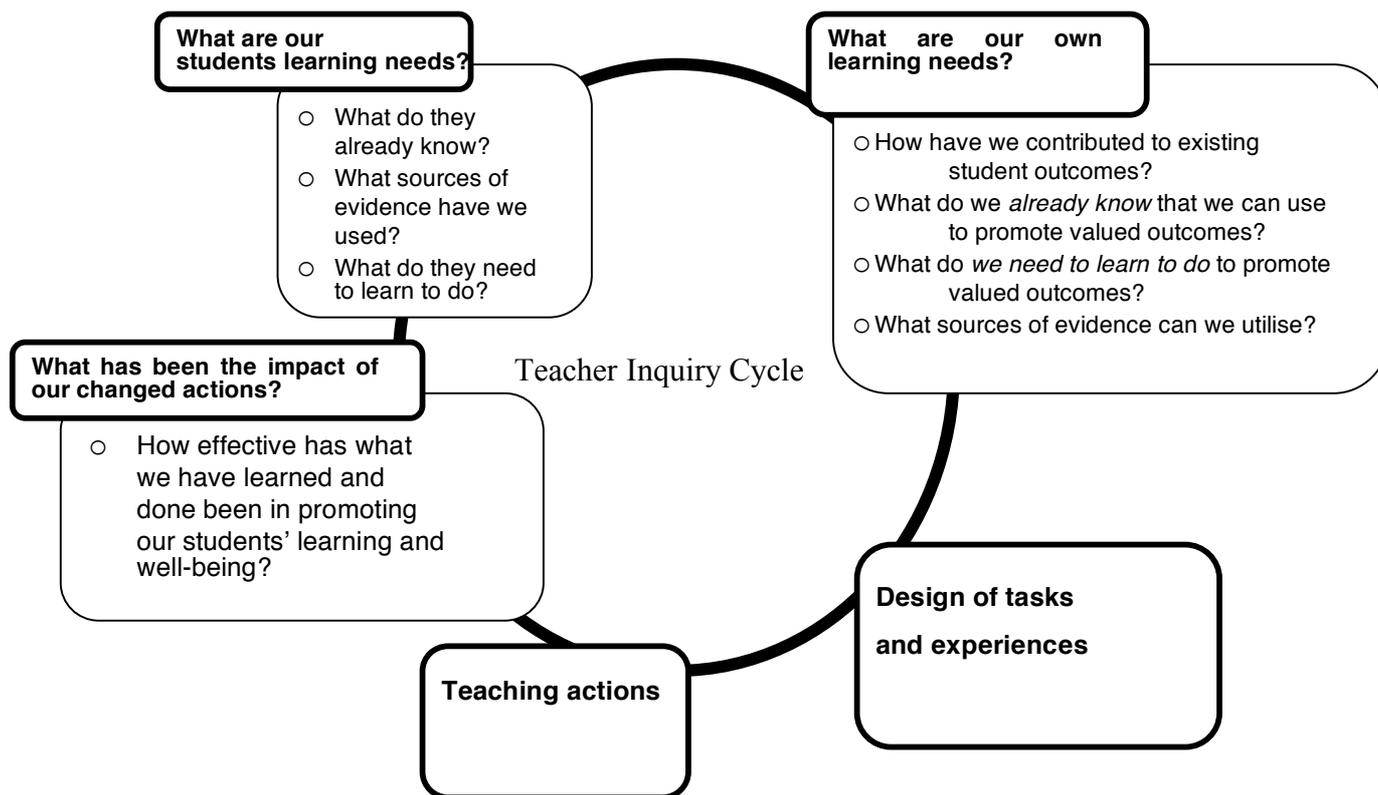


Figure 2.1 Teacher Inquiry Diagram

Source: Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2007,

Coaching and mentoring

Mentoring has most frequently been used in programmes to support student teachers, beginning teachers and principals who are new to the role (Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1995; Garvey et al., 1996; Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). In this process a mentee or protégé is considered to be a novice and is linked with a person who is skilled or considered to be an expert in their field, for the purposes of induction and professional learning. There are distinct phases in the mentoring process whereby the mentee grows from a position of dependence into a position of personal autonomy in their new role. It has also been used to induct a person into the culture of the organisation (Barnett, 1995; Garvey et al., 1996)

The mentor has characteristics, which the mentee can draw on. These can include professional knowledge and experience, which they have gained in the process of their development. Mentors also need to have a well developed range of communication

skills (Bruce, 1995). It is said that experts even think and behave differently to novices (Barnett, 1995; Bolam et al., 1995; Harrison et al., 2005). A mentor can pass this knowledge on to their protégé. They do this through a process of reflection in action. They support the person by asking reflective questions that enable them to solve their problems in a way that supports them rather than giving them set solutions (Altman, 2007; Bruce, 1995; Little, 2005). This allows for the context to change and more appropriate solutions to develop that may suit the current situation or context. This method enhances the protégé's capacity for problem solving.

A novice has more than just a knowledge base to develop. They need to have certain skills and be able to apply the knowledge to different situations. The mentor's role is to be able to assist the mentee to bridge the gap between theory and knowledge through reflective questioning (Barnett, 1995; Bolam et al., 1995). They are able to help them solve problems in the context of their own experience. Reflection is the process of making sense of what we learn so that we are better able to understand and apply our new knowledge.

As a novice moves through the stages of development from initiation to personal autonomy the role changes and the mentor becomes more of a coach, using the strategies of coaching. The relationship then becomes more reciprocal. This does not mean that while the novice is learning that the mentor does not gain skills and knowledge. There is growth of both mentor and mentee during the process. There is a certain amount of empowerment for the mentor, as they watch and assist the growth and development of their protégé. While a mentor asks reflective questions that encourage them to focus on the underlying principles of what they do, these questions also stimulate the mentor to have a clear understanding of what they do and why they do what they do (Barnett, 1995; Garvey et al., 1996; Harrison et al., 2005). The mentoring relationship takes time to develop and may develop into a relationship, which is built on trust and respect. While the benefits to the protégé seem obvious these would include the improving of self-confidence, the settling into a new role and in the case of new principals the reduction in the feeling of isolation (Robertson, 2005a).

Coaching is a learning relationship between two or more people based on the establishment of goals that lead to improvement in practice (Basile et al., 2003; Ellinger

& Bostrom, 1999; Robertson, 2005a). While mentoring usually involves a hierarchical base for mentor and mentee, in coaching the relationship may be between people of equal status.

Coaching has been associated with concepts such as leadership coaching, cognitive coaching, reflective coaching, peer coaching, technical coaching, team coaching, and collegial coaching (Basile et al., 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996b). It is also associated with reflective practice (Hawk & Hill, 2003), critical reflection (Costa & Kallick, 1993), action research (Robertson, 2005b), learning in action and double loop learning (Argyris, 1977).

Various authors (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Little, 2005; Peyton Farrell Buzbee, 2005; Robertson, 2005b; Showers & Joyce, 1996b) suggest characteristics of coaching. These have been listed below:

The key characteristics for coaching are

- It requires a commitment to professional learning
- It focuses on practice in context
- It requires a commitment to setting goals and achieving them
- Coaching supports lifelong learning through continual improvement by focusing on small achievable goals
- It focuses on collaboration
- It is self directed

Coaching requires that there must be an element of trust between those being coached and the coach. When this happens then the grounds are set for double loop learning to occur.

There is growing evidence to suggest that there is a need for in-school professional learning support for teachers which is based on classroom practice and meets the needs of the individual teacher (Ward, 2007). However, a warning needs to be issued that when one teacher is supporting another in their growth there can sometimes be confusion of their roles. The roles of coach and supervisor need to be clearly delineated

(Showers & Joyce, 1996b).

Models of coaching

There is confusion over what constitutes a model of coaching. In some literature the models are referred to by acronyms that describe the process that is being followed, for example the GROW and FLOW models. These models are usually found in the “how to coach” literature.

Other literature that takes more of a meta-cognitive look at what lies behind the model, describes these models as functionalist coaching, engagement coaching and evolutionary coaching (Brockbank & McGill, 2006) or problem solving (Robertson, 2005a). Coaching can also be determined by the purpose, and function of the coaching. Both functionalist and engagement coaching are identified by single loop learning where as evolutionary coaching requires a far more in-depth learning, which is relationship driven and involves double loop learning (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

Functionalist and engagement coaching are based on models of observation, discussion and response. Which is also considered to be a reductionist process as it limits the possibilities for action. These are used for short-term skill development. Another type of coaching, where the person being coached is given the opportunity through reflective questioning to problem solve the situation, is called a problem solving approach (Basile et al., 2003; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Robertson, 2005a). In this situation when a person is being coached they are empowered through a questioning technique to solve their problems themselves.

This problem solving approach is more effective as it allows the people to grow and develop in the context of their own experiences and recognises the complex nature of teaching. They are given the opportunity to apply the theory in action and then are able reflect on the process with the support of a colleague. This is a non-judgemental activity and each participant is able to learn through the process (Showers, 1985).

Brockbank and McGill (2006) have done extensive research on the different models of coaching. They identify a variety of models and categorise them into three main models with slight variations from these.

The GROW model is based on the acronym of the word GROW. Each letter represents a stage in the process. It is a model developed by John Whitmore (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). A brief description of this model follows and an identification of each step of the process is explained next to the letter that makes up the acronym.

G – The goal is established. If the coaching is skills or functionalist based, then the goal is chosen by the coach, however, if the coachee chooses the goal then there is a move to evolutionary or double loop learning.

R – This stands for identifying the current reality. This can be established through questioning of the coachee or through observation of the coach.

O – In this stage the coach and coachee work through the options that are available. This is done by the coach listening and asking questions of the coachee.

W – In this stage the coachee needs to commit their will to achieving these goals. The coach has to identify for the coachee what makes it worthwhile to achieve these goals.

An alternative of this model is the GROWTH model, which is used by Growth Coaching International, which includes the letters: -

T – Where the coachee identifies what tactics would be used to achieve the goal. This is the when and the how of achieving the goal.

H – Where the coachee focuses on what habits need to be developed to achieve this goals or which habits need to be addressed, which are stopping you from achieving this goal. This focuses on the need to identify how the coachee will sustain their success.

The next model that Brockbank & McGill (2006) identify is the FLOW model. James Flaherty developed this model in 1999. He warns of the danger of categorising people through testing and other means, stating that this “fixes” them and does not allow for growth and development. His model works on the premise of a flow of stages with five stages being evident.

These stages are:

1. Establishing a relationship
2. Recognise an opening
3. Observe/assess
4. Enrol client
5. Coaching conversations

The next model that Brockbank & McGill (2006) identify is the SOS model, which was developed by Parsloe and Wray in 2000. This model is based on the coach focusing on the **S**ituation, which could refer to the issue, task or project; how **O**thers feature in this project, and how the **S**elf can act to progress the situation.

The Jenny Rogers model (Brockbank & McGill, 2006) is most suitable to coaching where long term or double loop learning are the expected outcome. While it includes the development needed in skills to achieve the outcome, it also focuses on the whole development of the coachee and the need for the coachee to be a willing and active participant in the coaching process. This model promotes the use of concepts of being, doing and the awareness of change drivers that influence the coaching process.

The final model that Brockbank & McGill (2006) identify is Egan's skilled helper model, where there is a three stage process involving an action that is leading to a valued outcome. These three stages, the present scenario, the preferred scenario and the strategy for getting there, this may also have substages within them. This model is suitable for evolutionary coaching as well as skill development coaching.

It appears that the key to the selection of the model to use is not as important as the establishment of a safe culture that promotes professional learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). The key to the selection of a successful model of coaching is one which meets the needs of the school and results in the best outcomes for student learning (Hawk & Hill, 2003).

Themes surrounding coaching

Four themes can be identified from the literature. These are coaching and supervision, coaching as change management, the role of leadership associated with coaching and the challenges of implementing a coaching programme.

Coaching and supervision

Teacher supervision as a part of an effective performance management system which needs to take into consideration a variety of aspects, including statutory requirements for teachers registration, appraisal and assessment of staff and the professional development of staff (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; Ministry of Education, 1997b; Piggot-Irvine, 2005). Supervision can be also defined as the relationship between a teacher and their direct line report person. It may also be referred to as the process of teachers who may not be meeting the minimum standards and who might be involved in a support and guidance programme. Coaching is a non-judgemental activity, which contrasts that of the role of supervisor (Showers, 1985). The role of the coach is to act as a mediator to support the coachee in their learning and not as director or evaluator of the other's performance (Bruce, 1995). Often the role of a supervisor is related to aspects of appraisal. When there is a system of teachers observing teachers there is confusion as to the role of the observer (Showers, 1985). They may slip back into taking a judgemental role. Showers and Joyce (1996) warn that coaching should not be linked in any way to the appraisal system.

Appraisal is a complex activity that is focussed simultaneously on accountability and the improvement of organisation, as well as the development of the individual (Piggot-Irvine, 2003). The similarities to a coaching system become evident. Coaching also focuses on the development of the individual. According to Cardno (1995) when there is a conflict between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation then this leads to a dilemma in the management of appraisal systems. However, if these dilemmas are managed effectively through the use of collaborative and critical dialogue, using productive reasoning techniques, where discussions are open to testing and frank, then appraisal can be used both for formative and summative purposes (Piggot-Irvine, 2003). This aligns strongly with the purposes of a coaching system and the two systems can therefore be used concurrently. Research by Bowman and McCormick (2000) found

that peer-coaching dyads achieved far greater depth in achieving targeted objectives than traditional supervisory observations. This was because when a coaching framework was established that identified clear skills for pedagogical reasoning and greater understanding was established between coach and coachee.

It is through meeting the needs of the organisation that we can see the role coaching can play in the management of change. Basile, Olson and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) cite Showers (1985) as saying that coaching is a powerful strategy for implementing change that is related to training but is separate from supervision and evaluation.

Coaching as change management

Coaching is an effective means of managing change in a school. When the whole school agree on the goals that are required for new change to occur and then set up a system for teachers to support each other in this new endeavour, coaching can occur. By coaching each other through the changes teachers can support each other in their new learning (Basile et al., 2003; Showers & Joyce, 1996b). They can work together, share the load and reflect on their own development as the change occurs. However, Showers and Joyce, 1996, recommend that this change be measured, to ascertain its impact on the organisation. It is by establishing measured goals that teachers have a target to work towards and to be able to confirm the success of their new learning. Robertson and Murrphy (2005) suggest that if real change were to occur, not just change in skills and attitude but a change in behaviour, then coaching would be the most important development process to implement, because it has deep-rooted focus on learning.

The role of the leader in managing this change is imperative. It is the attitude of the leader who will reflect the culture of a learning organisation, which will bring about effective change (Hobson, 2003).

Role of leadership associated with coaching

Effective leadership that promotes concepts of coaching, results in having a positive influence on classroom teaching. Research by Blase and Blase (1999) suggests that when there are effective principal-teacher relationships, which build on processes that

involve inquiry, reflection exploration and experimentation, teachers build repertoires of flexible alternatives rather than collect rigid teaching procedures or models. This is in line with principles of coaching and mentoring where teachers learn to use problem solving in their current context through reflective practice rather than learn set patterns of teaching behaviours (Basile et al., 2003). The research identifies that one of the main strategies, which promote professional growth, is developing coaching relationships among educators. Showers and Joyce (1996) have concluded that effective peer coaching occurs when those that are coaching each other are on the same level of development. However, it is the principal that sets the scene for this to happen. As the leader of the school the principal encourages an environment where teachers are able to support each other in their learning (Holmes, 2003). According to Piggot-Irvine (2007) “it is the leader in the school who fosters a climate of collaboration, collegiality and commitment to development. If the principal models an ethos of self-development, learning and inquiry, they almost always enable the development of others (p.2)

Hobson (2003) indicate that coaching is often successful but too frequently it is established in an ad hoc way. It is important to take a more strategic and systematic view of coaching in order to maximise its potential. It is the principal as the leader of a school who sets the strategic direction and enables a culture of learning to occur. Research by Robertson (2005b) indicates that when a principal has experience effective coaching in their development they are then able to transfer this knowledge and effectively coach others in their development.

Challenges of implementing coaching

There are challenges that a principal faces when setting up a coaching process in a school. Firstly decisions need to be made about who the coaches are going to be, which teachers are going to be coached, which model of coaching to use and of course the funding issue about how this is going to be resourced. Sometimes there is a natural climate for coaching that exists, where there is an environment of trust and respect among staff and principal. Often in this situation the principal acts as the coach and is able to develop the staff through their leadership skills. Holmes (2003) states, “this success (of coaching) is often achieved despite an ad hoc process but if coaching is to have maximum impact as a potent tool for transforming schools, schools need to take a

more strategic and systematic view”

When identifying “who” the coaches will be, coaches can be selected internally and externally, each solution has its own strengths and weaknesses (Hawk & Hill, 2003). The options are to use an external coach, i.e. someone who is employed to coach teachers, to use one expert coach, to use several coaches or to have a system of partnered peer coaches (Hawk & Hill, 2003).

The findings show that when external providers are used then when the professional development programme has run its course, very often the development is not sustained, as the driver is no longer there (Timperley et al., 2007). The next alternative is to select coaches from the staff. These coaches need to be trained in the principles and practices of coaching themselves (Fielding, 2003). Research shows that there are two approaches that schools use. The first option is to use those in leadership roles to do the coaching or to select peer coaches. The pitfall, when using those who hold leadership roles, is that there is a tendency to confuse leadership roles and supervisory roles with coaching roles (Showers & Joyce, 1996b). The option to use peer coaches shows that this approach is difficult to monitor and while all teachers will be coached, the unmotivated teachers seldom make significant progress (Hawk & Hill, 2003). Peer coaching enables teachers to learn through the natural support system at their school (Little, 2005). It is important when setting up a coaching system to carefully select the people who will be the coaches. Simply selecting a teacher to be a coach based on their seniority is not good enough. They need to have the right skills and need to be coached through the process of being a good coach. (Fielding, 2003; Robertson & Murrphy, 2005)

Summary

According to Hattie and Biggs (1996) a key factor that is important in promoting student learning is the teacher. The overall aim of a leader would be to develop their teachers and help them learn. This has the maximum benefit for improving student outcomes. Coaching has been shown to be an effective means of improving professional development as it is based in the context of where the teacher is working. According to

Holmes (2003) successful coaching has three generic features, it is focused on learning, it is results orientated and its purpose is to develop skills, competencies and attitude.

Coaching is successful when it is embedded in a positive school culture where there are shared values between coach and learner, the learning is consensual and there is a common understanding of the direction of the school. There needs to be an openness to discussion and a willingness to reflect on practice with a common language of learning (Holmes, 2003). It is important that a relationship of trust is established between the coach and the learner and that both partners accept their role of responsibility in the partnership (Holmes, 2003). However Robertson (2005b) warns, “too often the word coaching is used ubiquitously and as a catch cry, losing all relevance and meaning, as participants have no understanding of how to coach. With these skills, leaders may then develop new ways of thinking and leading. It is part of the ideal of professionalism but it seldom occurs in any depth in education, unlike in the professions of medicine and law” (p 16). The need for coaching is increasing steadily and this has resulted in too many leaders put into the position of coaching without the necessary training and as a result they fail to meet the expectations of those being coached (Altman, 2007). The research seems to imply that coaching can be an important factor in the growth and development of teachers. However, it would appear that it is the background and development that principals get that will reinforce the development of a learning culture. Robertson (2005b) states, “Coaching places the responsibility for self-assessment, growth and accountability, back in the hands of the learner ” (p. 16)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explores the framework and method used to collect data based on the perceptions of three different groups of people who are involved in the coaching process during the Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) contract in particular cluster of schools, namely principals, coaches and coachees. The methodology used was qualitative, rather than quantitative because the data that was sought was based on personal perceptions and views. Data was collected through structured interviews and focus groups. This chapter further outlines the rationale when selecting this approach and ethical considerations taken with regard to this research.

Methodological approach and rationale

The research aims and questions sought to understand the perceptions of coaching from the various participants' viewpoints. When an understanding of the participants in the research process is sought, qualitative research can be considered to be an appropriate form of research (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). With this consideration the research method used was a qualitative method using interviews and focus groups as the means of data collection. An interpretative stance was taken.

Education research falls under the social sciences branch of research. Traditionally research was based in the scientific field and therefore required the need to use a quantitative approach. A quantitative approach uses exact measurements and measuring tools. Research in the social sciences led to a positivist approach and sought to, understand an objective reality by formulating hypotheses from a theory, testing the hypothesis, through measurement and then analysing the results (Anderson, 2004). It was adapted from the physical sciences field. Criticism of this method in the social sciences resulted in the evolvement of a post-modernist approach that sought to

understand values and perspectives of its research subjects and acknowledges the interpretative stance of the researcher. This approach was considered to be a qualitative approach (Anderson, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). The discussion that follows identifies the aspects of qualitative and quantitative research that shows why the approach I took was appropriate to use a qualitative method.

Qualitative research

A qualitative approach has been taken for this research. The reason for adopting a qualitative approach is that it is seen as the most appropriate approach for collecting information that will provide data that provides insight into the perceptions of those involved in the coaching process. By the nature of the data it is mainly empirical data, which was collected, by nature this is qualitative data. Bryman (2004) indicates that it is difficult to identify exactly what a qualitative approach is with out indicating what it is not, this is often done by contrasting it to quantitative research, which is easier to define, as it relies mostly on a collection of quantifiable variables which can be translated into a numerical figure. Anderson (2004) describes qualitative research as a “form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them” (p.119). By applying this statement to the research that I needed to do, I could see that I needed to explore the phenomena of coaching within the context of this EHSAS contract, from the perspectives of the different participants. The setting was the seven schools that participated in this contract and each of the participants in the research process had to be able to describe their experiences from their own personal view. This process matches with one of characteristics of qualitative research namely that an understanding of phenomena in a particular context and then to create a rich description of the situation.

Another characteristic of qualitative research is the role of the researcher. Unlike quantitative research where the researcher can take an objective stance, the researcher has to take a subjective view and be able to describe the phenomena from their point of view. Each of us brings our own interpretative stance to a situation based on our own life experiences. Owens (2004) indicates that a process of phenomenal knowing is necessary, whereby the researcher uses methods of finding out how others feel about things by asking them. In this case interviews and focus groups were held. It was the

research question: “What do principals; coaches and teachers understand about the nature and purpose of coaching?” that suggested that qualitative research, using an interpretative stance was an appropriate method of research.

Interpretive stance

When considering which stance to adopt there were three approaches to consider, normative, interpretative and critical. In this context it was important to interpret the understandings of the various participants in the coaching process. Bryman (2004) identifies characteristics of qualitative research as being inductivist, constructivist and interpretivist. While he states that not all researchers subscribe to all three qualities, it is these that characterise this research of coaching as qualitative. When investigating the perceptions of those involved with the coaching process, the information that can be gathered would be interpretivist as it is the interpretation of the participant’s reality that is being explored. This is finding out what the teacher’s or coaches perceptions of the coaching process are. This is confirmed by the claim of Bryman(2004) that the stress of the interpretivist approach is on “understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretations of that world by its participants” (p. 266). It can also be considered constructionist, as the participants are able to construct their own reality of the situation. An inductive view may also be taken as the theory may be generated by the research rather than the other way around.

Data collection method

Data was gathered using interviews with principals and focus groups with coaches and coachees, a similar interview schedule was used for both the interviews and the focus groups. This ensured the replication of the research method. These interviews and focus groups were run over a three-week period.

Semi-structured interviews

The principals from the seven schools involved in the Extending High Standards Across School (EHSAS) in one cluster of schools were interviewed using a semi-structured interview approach. A set of questions had been prepared prior to the interview but

allowance was made for the interviewer to delve further into any areas that needed further exploration. Hinds (2000) suggest that it is appropriate to use an interview when more in-depth information is required, when the information may be of a sensitive nature or when issues may benefit from further clarification. Flexibility of the semi-structured interview assisted me in clarifying some of the questions, as it became apparent that due to the nature of the confusion over terminology, particularly when discussion coaching, mentoring, appraisal and supervision, the questions posed might have been misinterpreted.

A further reason to have a semi-structured interview would be to allow for a clearer focus and to be able to replicate the questions at the different schools. These questions were provided to the principals at the interview. I did not want to put the principals in a position where they had to prepare for the interview, prior to the interview. Giving the questions to them at the interview also meant that they were more likely to provide answers that were based on their own perceptions and beliefs, which would further support the interpretative stance. Permission was sought from the participants to record the interviews. Once the interviews were completed the recordings were transcribed and these were sent back to the individual principals for them check, which allowed for corroboration of the account and ensured credibility. This is what Bryman (2004) calls respondent validation.

Focus groups

A focus group is an interview with a group of participants rather than one participant at a time. Two focus groups were held, one with coaches from each of the schools involved in the EHSAS project and one with five teachers from four schools. There were two main considerations when selecting focus groups as a tool for gathering data. The first factor was time. There was the amount of time available to interview the participants, the length of time for the interview process and also the length of time to transcribe each interview, all this become prohibitive. Using a focus group, a group of participants could be interviewed at the same time and this also reduced the time needed to transcribe the interview. However, this had some limitations that will be discussed later.

The second factor in choosing a focus group was the comfort of the participants and to reduce their anxiety. While a group interview using a structured set of questions would give each teacher or coach the opportunity of being heard without them feeling as if they were under the spotlight. They would also be able to hear each other's answers, which generated additional ideas. The drawback was though that because of this, ideas were not explored in too much depth, as the interviewer did not want to influence the direction the discussion was taking.

Interview sampling

The sample population of this research study was limited to the principals, coaches and teachers of the schools that are in this EHSAS cluster. This meant a potential total of twenty-eight people, consisting of seven principals who would be interviewed individually, and focus groups were held for seven coaches and fourteen teachers who were being coached. However, this number was not achieved as will be explained further. As reflected by Creswell (2007) using multiple sites allowed for different perspectives to be revealed. It also allowed for what Bryman (2004) calls the building up of a thick description. The selection of the principals was self-selecting, as there is only one principal in the school.

The sampling for this research can be described as purposive (Cohen et al., 2007) because the schools who were selected to do the research in were using coaching as a means to support the professional development of teachers. These schools were also selected based on accessibility geographically, which can also be considered cluster sampling (Cohen et al., 2007). The principals were selected by virtue of their positions in the school. Volunteers from the schools were requested for the two focus groups from the population of coaches and coachees within these schools. Two coaches and two coachees were requested from each school. Unfortunately only one coach from each school volunteered to participate and five teachers from four schools were willing to participate, so no further selection process for participants was undertaken.

The principals had all been approached telephonically and given details of the research proposal. I e-mailed them the information sheet and the consent to participate form. All the principals in the cluster gave written consent to participate and for me to approach

their staff and ask for volunteers to participate in the focus groups. I was asked to e-mail the participant information sheets and consent forms to the schools. These were forwarded onto the teachers who then contacted me via e-mail, indicating their willingness to participate in the research. I also e-mailed them further details of the research proposal and offered to explain it to them telephonically, if they wished. I assured them that their responses would remain anonymous and that they had the option to withdraw from the project at any stage up to two weeks after receiving their transcripts. Only one volunteer asked for further clarification and was still willing to participate. The interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. All participants had been assured that I would be the only one who would have access to this information. This information is stored on a local hard drive, which only I have access to.

Interview technique

Initially I intended to have three interview schedules, one for the principals, one for coaches and one for the coachees. When putting the questions together I felt that the questions of the coaches and coachees were very similar and that the same schedule could be used. Appendix A was the interview schedule use with the principals and Appendix B was the interview schedule used with the coaches and coachees during the focus groups. The way that the principals responded to the questions, particularly the initial questions was so in-depth that some of the questions appeared to be repetitive and unnecessary. Where a principal had already answered a question in a previous response these were left out, unless further clarification was necessary.

The interviews and the focus groups were recorded so that accurate recording of responses could be made. The permission of the participants was sought prior to the interviews. The recording device that was used was small and unobtrusive. During the initial stages of the focus group, the participants were aware of the recording device, however as they relaxed they forgot about it. This resulted in parts of some of the responses being difficult to hear as two people spoke at the same time. This did not happen often and did not seem to affect the quality of the responses. Once the interviews were completed the recording was downloaded onto my computer and

transcribed using a digital device for transcribing audio. This enabled me to slow the recording and stop, start and rewind quickly and easily so that accurate transcriptions could be made. These were sent to the participants so that they could confirm the validity of responses. Only two participants requested changes to the transcripts, one due to minor grammatical and spelling errors and the other requested a paragraph removed in case it identified a particular staff member.

Each of the principals was interviewed in their own schools, at a time suitable to them, over a two-week period. The focus groups were held in my office, as it was central to all and could be considered neutral territory. Food and drink was supplied to the participants in the focus groups in order to encourage a relaxing atmosphere. The majority of the participants in the coaching group were familiar with each other, while the participants in the coachee group did not know each other so a short period of getting to know each other was held. The coachee group gave feedback afterwards that they enjoyed the process, as they did not often get to talk to other professionals.

Data analysis process

The interviews were semi-structured and the questions for all three groups had strong similarities. The questions were based on information derived from the literature review and were developed to meet the research aims and questions. This similarity of the questions of both schedules enabled the responses to be compared directly. The transcripts were compiled on one schedule on a question-by-question base. These were read several times and similar responses were noted. Patterns were sought and responses that were similar were identified. A grid was made showing which group of respondents have contributed to these. The grid had four columns. The first column was the list of similar responses. The next three columns were labelled, principals, coaches and coachees. Each question was read again and next to each of the common responses in the appropriate column the participant was identified who made that response. What was noted was the number of participants, which had mentioned a particular concept and not how many times a concept was mentioned. Some participants mentioned similar concepts several times, possibly indicating an enthusiasm for this. While others may only have mentioned it once or in the case of the focus groups, one respondent mentioned it and the others might have just nodded their heads. Initially I began

reporting findings on the question-by-question basis. This proved to be too cumbersome and had a lot of repetition. What emerged though was that across the questions there were similar issues that could be identified and that these similar issues had strong links with the information from the literature review. The responses were then analysed on this basis and the findings were reported based on the issues that emerged, namely the importance of coaching, coaching as teacher learning, coaching as appraisal, challenges associated with coaching and training for coaching. Under each of these heading another grid was created and a summary of the issues was made by adding each of the responses from the individual questions up together, for example improving teacher effectiveness was mentioned both in question one and question three by respondents, then the number of responses was added together to give a total.

Reliability

Reliability has a more appropriately association with quantitative rather than qualitative research. However, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), qualitative research reliability is associated with terms such as credibility, neutrality, confirmability, dependability, consistency, applicability and trustworthiness. It is also associated with replicability. In other words if the methodology, data collection and analysis techniques are robust enough, can this study be replicated in another setting. I addressed this issue by a careful selection of the types of questions, in order to ensure they were based on information derived from the literature review and that they could be applicable in another setting. They needed to be specific enough to get the information from participants but not so specific that they could only be applied in that context.

Reliability was also taken into consideration when transcribing the responses from the participants. For accuracy these were recorded and transcribed as soon after the interview as possible. These transcripts were sent to the participants in order to verify the validity of the information presented. Only two participants responded, one with minor grammatical and spelling errors and the other wanted a part taken out, out of concern of identifying a member of the school. However, the paragraph that was removed did not have implications for the rest of the data that was gathered. Cohen,

Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggest that reliability “can be regarded as a fit between what researchers records as data and what actually occurs” (p.149). In this case, as the respondent validation indicates there appeared to be a close fit.

An endeavour towards consistency was achieved; by using a semi structured interview schedule and having the same person administer the interviews. This meant that when clarifying questions were asked the interviewer could seek out similar information from all respondents.

Validity

There are a variety of types of validity. In this research the types of validity that would apply would be external validity, which refers to the degree to which this research can be generalised; internal validity and triangulation. External validity could be achieved by using the same methodology, question schedule, data collection method and analysis. I have attempted to be explicit enough to enable this process. Internal validity was achieved by having the participants check the transcripts for accuracy. I felt that while triangulation is usually achieved by using different methods in data collection in the same study (Cohen et al., 2007), asking the same questions of the different groups of participants, namely principals, coaches and coachees, in both an interview and focus group settings and receiving a consistency of responses presented a form of triangulation.

Ethical considerations

All participants were given full information about the research project. They were all asked to participate on a voluntary basis and were given the option of withdrawing from the research project two weeks after receiving the transcripts.

All information has remained confidential and data is stored in a safe place. Participants were assured that they would not be identified in any report. The only form of harm that I could identify that could affect any participant would be in the form of stress. An awareness of work pressure was taken into consideration when setting the interview times. These were done at a time of the year where it was relatively quiet and limited

stress was imposed. Interviews and focus groups were arranged at times suitable to the participants.

There were no anticipated cultural or social issues, however consideration was made that, should any arise than the appropriate sensitivity would be applied. No cultural or social issues arose.

In all instances participants were fully informed of the process and the requirements. However, it must be noted that this information could not be at the expense of other participants. All intellectual and cultural property ownership has been acknowledged.

There was a possible conflict of interest in that I am a member of this cluster of schools and was a facilitator of this project within our school, ensuring that the requirements of project were met. However, as I gathered the data I took the role of researcher. I did not and still do not exert any overt influence over any of the participants, in this role. I had called for volunteers in order to gather the data for this research. While I hold a leadership position in my school there exists the possibility of a power relationship imbalance. The members from my school, who participated, volunteered to do this, of their own accord and in order to get a rounded picture from the whole cluster I accepted their willingness to participate. The members from my school who participated were the principal, one coach and one coachee. At our school we practise open communication through by using critical dialogue and work towards saying what needs to be said, regardless of how difficult the conversation maybe. This is not always easy and does not always happen, however these three participants are particularly good at open communication and are more likely to express their opinions openly to those in a hierarchical situation than someone on equal standing as they are. I felt that this minimised the risk of a power imbalance. Some of the participants, particularly the coachees had never met me prior to this research. I had to build up the trust for coachees from other schools because they did not know me and assure them that I would keep their information confidential.

Summary

The research methodology was qualitative and the sampling population was purposive as the schools involved were all using coaching as a means to improve the professional learning of teachers in order to improve their effectiveness. Data gathering was achieved through individual interviews with the seven principals and focus groups were held for one coach from each school and five teachers from four schools. Data was analysed by reading and identifying and coding of similar issues. Using the same question sheet and technique with each of the principals and using the same questions for the coaches and coachees established reliability. The coach and coachees questions were similar to those of the principals. Validity was established by giving each participant a transcript of the interview in order to establish reliability of interpretation of comments. Ethics were taken into considerations and the proviso of do no harm was adhered to.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings of the data gathered during the research process. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with seven principals and two focus groups with coaches and coachees from the schools involved in this Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) contract. There is a brief description of the participants and the data analysis process. During the initial analysis of the findings, this researcher found that there was repetition in the findings when the analysis was done on a question-by-question analysis, five significant issues emerged, namely the importance of coaching, coaching as teacher learning, coaching as appraisal, challenges associated with implementation of a coaching programme and training for coaching. This chapter reports the findings under those headings and concludes with a summary of the main findings.

Participants

All the participants came from the seven primary schools in the study. There were nineteen participants altogether. Data were gathered through individual interviews with seven principals, and two focus groups. The first focus group was held with the coaches, one from each school and the second with five teachers, representing four of the schools, who were being coached. There were fewer participants in the second focus group because it was difficult to get volunteers for a coachee from each school.

Data analysis process

Initially the data was analysed on a question-by-question basis. Each of the responses was collated under the heading of the three groups, principals, coaches and coachees. Comparisons were made and patterns were sought. Common issues were identified and

what emerged were the significant findings from each question. When these were compiled together there was repetition across the questions and five significant issues emerged, namely the importance of coaching, coaching as teacher learning, coaching as appraisal, challenges associated with implementation of a coaching programme and training for coaching. It made more sense to report these findings under these headings, in order to avoid repetition and overlap of responses.

Significant findings

The findings will be reported under the headings, which have been identified as the significant issues reported, the importance of coaching, coaching as teacher learning, coaching as appraisal, challenges associated with coaching, and training for coaching. The responses of each of the groups or participants, namely the principals, coaches and coachees will be discussed under each heading.

1. Importance of coaching

On the whole, the majority of respondents in all three groups identified that the professional learning goals for coaching focused on developments in effective pedagogy, with three schools making literacy and numeracy the key focus areas for development. However, in the discussions the participants identified other benefits of coaching that indicated the importance or value coaching has in an educational setting.

Principals

All seven principals identified the professional learning goal for implementing coaching, as developing effective teachers. With three principals making the link between effective coaching and improvement in outcomes for students. The comment from Principal F encapsulates the view of the majority of the principals:

The professional learning goal is to improve teaching, so the kid's learning improves. It's all about improving learning opportunities for kids and coaching the teachers to be better teachers (Principal F).

Included in the responses from principals was also the need to improve performance management in schools through a system that offered sustainability, and was self-managing as a result of individual ownership. They recognised the need for the

individual development of teachers that had a step-by-step approach rather than a focus on huge goals that became meaningless over a yearlong period.

All the principals felt that coaching was working in their schools. However, three principals felt that they could not make direct links between the success of coaching and the improvement in student outcomes. Principal E made this statement:

There are so many variables; it is very hard to say this can be attributed to that. It is complex. We have not made the bridge (to student achievement) we have not tried hard enough to see that it does but it feels right (Principal E).

On the other hand two principals felt they had very clear evidence to show the links. One principal even showed how teachers were able to present their own data in a performance appraisal setting as evidence to show what they have achieved throughout the year. He made the following statement to support this:

I am able to answer this question because we have just done this review. I gave all the teachers an evaluation sheet. Data speaks for itself. In 25 years of principalship I was blown away with the evidence the teachers gave me to show how they were able to improve student achievement (Principal C).

Each principal was able to give other examples of what had been achieved through the coaching process. These can be listed as follows:

- Ownership of development
- Personal affirmation of growth
- Evidence based development
- Improvement in goal setting
- Links to key competencies
- Modelling of life long learning by teachers for students
- Personalised learning of teachers
- Movements in attitude of teachers
- Authentic development of teachers
- Deeper learning

This is a brief summary of some of the statements that the principals made that supports the above list.

We used the same methodology so the leadership team were part of the process not leading the process. Actually the benefits have been huge because we are part of it. And it is all part of that ownership thing (Principal A).

What is positive is everybody wants to be involved, including all the technology teachers, because remember it started just as a maths and literacy focus. They want to be part of it because it is an exciting affirming growth process (Principal B).

We know that it is working if you just use teacher enthusiasm as a gauge and that is huge. Because it is the only thing that we have done really that has had universally achieved acclaim (Principal E).

There is an adult-to-adult rather than adult-to-child relationship. I think that has been enormously important because people see that they are given the responsibility and there is also a very nice link with all the reading about the curriculum and the Key Competencies, how important it is that we model this as life long learners, you have to take responsibility and be seen to be doing that. So why would we be spoon-feeding people professional development (Principal E).

I would suggest that the movement is more authentic in the sense that it is deeper, rather than superficial (Principal G).

Coaches

The responses from the coaches were remarkably similar to the principals. Once again the focus was on developing effective teachers with two of the coaches identifying the need for this to be evident in improved outcomes for students. The comment from coach D supports this statement:

The goal is that everybody was making a shift in their practice or improving what they were doing for the benefit of the kids and we were seeing that through the children's achievement levels and progressions in learning (Coach D).

There was congruence between what the coaches were saying and what the principals were saying, in terms of the positive impact coaching has had on teacher effectiveness. However, one coach stated that coaching was not working for two teachers at their school. This appeared to be the exception rather than the rule. The one teacher did not want to change and yet through the coaching process had made small changes in their performance and the second teacher wanted to be supervised rather than coached. They viewed the role of the coach as a supervisor. The distinction being that a coach guides you through the learning process, where as a supervisor is more directive and enforces the desired behaviour.

Coaches made the following supporting statements.

What has definitely been achieved for us is that we look much less now at improving writing, teaching in maths and we talk about pedagogy all of the time (Coach B).

One other thing that has been achieved is not just the development of teachers but the relationships (Coach F).

We were doing it independently and then we came on board as a cluster and we all started talking the same language and we all started implementing the same sorts of things and our biggest fear was how would get buy in from our staff. Because we know that if we don't get them on board we will not make any progress and I think that in the current period of time we have a staff who accepts the need for change and have a desire to want to improve their practice, have developed very positive relationships with the people they work with and their teaching practice and what you see in the classrooms is infinitely different than what you saw in their classrooms four years ago (Coach A).

You can't argue with research and if its common sense and they understand it then they will automatically start to implement some of those changes. And that is what we have seen happen and I think that the coaching process has been quite a catalyst to that. It is going to be the thing that embeds this in the school and keeps it going (Coach A).

There is one huge positive that coaching brought that was never really seen before and that is that you actually get to sit down with one person and you have quality time with that one person for however long the coaching session may last for (Coach A).

Coachees

All five coachees identified the professional learning goal as needing to improve their own practice. Some had narrowed this down to improving practice in a particular area. One coachee made the following statement:

To help better student achievement and to move children and try new things that would make us more effective (Coachee A).

The coachees identified that some of the goals were school wide goals and some were more personal. Coachees A, B, C and E had stated that their goals were personal, based on their own professional developmental needs. However, Coachee B had said that they started off as personal goals but had been encouraged to link their goals to school wide goals.

All the coachees were very positive about the coaching process. There were links to statements the coaches had made about using a common language with common understanding and also to the importance of relationships in the process.

The following statements from coachees supported their positive views on the process:

It has been really lovely to work as a teacher and have a relationship and it has been invaluable. The feedback, the ability to ask questions, she is a great listener and it has meant I can pop in and see her and say ... its all informal coaching not the formal stuff and that has been just wonderful (Coachee B).

I feel really positive about mine too. Partly because she is not in my team and this gives me a different group of people to bounce ideas off. I am not always sure that she is coaching, some people just have the lingo and they know how to draw from you what your needs are, what your next steps are and how to record it (Coachee A).

I think it is a great programme because it makes you really think about yourself and it gives you time to reflect because I don't think we really get much time to really think about our own practice. When you talk to someone about it, everything gets verbalised and things come out that you don't sometimes know are in there. So you really get a chance to really think about moving forward and how you can be more effective (Coachee C).

Within our team we all know each other's goals and we feed off each other because one of our teams goal is time management and we all make sure we are on time and that flows off onto all of us and we say "Yes we have had a really onto it day" and we are all saying yes. And in our team we are boosting each other up and we are talking about what we are doing (Coachee E).

A further benefit that the coachees identified was that they felt that the reason that coaching was being implemented was because its purpose was to improve communication and to encourage the professional language. One coachee made the following comment:

To open lines of communication. To make our talk in the staff room more professional – teacher talk (Coachee A).

2. Coaching as teacher learning

Principals

All the principals concurred with the view that coaching is an effective means of improving teacher effectiveness. At least four of the principals acknowledged that they had researched to varying degrees the concept of coaching, and felt that this was a

promising method of meeting the professional learning needs of teachers. Two principals made the following comments to support this:

I am convinced that the key component in increasing teacher effectiveness is a sustainable coaching programme (Principal A)

I believe it (coaching) is the most superior way to assist people to grow personally and professionally (Principal C).

The principals felt that coaching was based on developing adult-to-adult relationships, where teachers assume the responsibility for their own learning and development. This is supported by the comment made by Principal C.

I now talk to the teachers and staff here about your personal and professional growth is your responsibility. Your performance is your responsibility, not the schools responsibility. The schools responsibility is to set the scene for that to occur and in coaching, I believe you have the paramount scene because you are addressing individuals as adults (Principal C).

They felt that because the onus for learning lies with the individual, the teachers themselves drove it and this led to individualised learning programmes, which contrasted with a one-size fits all programme of professional development. Principal D and Principal E's statements supported this:

The ownership of the whole process has shifted back to the person who has got to do the improving, who wants to do the improving and the outcomes are probably more embedded (Principal D).

It is personalised learning for teachers, so it is really targeted for teachers in a personalised way that has enormous appeal to teachers (Principal E).

As a result coaching was considered to led to personal accountability and responsibility because the power lay with the teachers. This was considered to be more effective in

bringing about sustainable change in professional learning, which was felt to have a positive effect on student outcomes. The statement made by Principal G supports this:

We think it is long term and it is based on developing a relationship that is more likely to encourage the person being coached to be reflective and to be open and to share. It will evolve because of confidence and the rapport that is built up between the two people (who are involved in the coaching process) (Principal G).

Coaches

Coaches felt that when good relationships had been built between teacher and coach then there were deep shifts in teacher development and learning. The following comments reinforced this statement.

It gives the teachers the opportunity to be in control of their learning. You know it's new learning because often in the past if you looked at appraisal, teachers often chose something... a goal that they could actually already do because they saw it as threatening, the whole appraisal process. They did not want to be seen to be inadequate (Coach E).

There appear to be parallels between student learning and teacher learning. These are implied in the association of concepts such as personalised learning and formative assessment strategies such as feedback. Both of these concepts are usually discussed in terms of student learning and yet here the coaches and principals are using them in discussions about teacher learning. This is reflected as another similarity with the views of the principals and those of the coaches. The following comment about coaching was made Coach B indicating this:

I think that there is an interlinking because it is differentiated and made for you (Coach B).

Coach D offered this statement as a reason for using coaching.

In our school it ran with formative assessment. Having done the formative assessment contract, the teachers got used to other teachers coming in and giving them feedback as to what they were doing. So it was a natural progression to have a coaching model flow on (Coach D).

Coachees

In their discussions, the coachees indicated that coaching was more focussed on individual learning. This is a view that was echoed in the principals and coaches responses. This coachee offered the following response:

It is more focused towards individuals because it is focused on goals you want to improve and not a whole staff thing. It is more individual (Coachee D).

Coachee C supported this view:

You have a series of teachers, some who are experienced and some like myself who only got registration last year so our needs are different. And our classroom strategies are different but we are all working on a common goal to better our education and the knock on effect to students. We all have different needs so one size does not always fit all when it comes to PD but coaching does (Coachee C).

3. Coaching as appraisal

Principals

The principal's expressed a dissatisfaction with current mechanisms for improving teacher practice and identified the need to find a method or system that ensured, long term growth, both personally and professionally in teachers that resulted in deeper learning and sustainable change in order to improve outcomes for students by developing teacher effectiveness in a personalised way (Principals A, C, D, E and F).

Four of the principals had felt that the appraisal system was meant to meet this need and had failed. According to the principals a tension arose, as a result of different purposes of appraisal. On one hand appraisal was seen as a way of supporting and developing

teachers, much like coaching. This view was supported by the following comment from Principal A:

We have always viewed appraisal as being a developmental exercise not a checking exercise and therefore it fits in with that model of assist and develop rather than point out issues (Principal A).

Principal's A and C had recognised the commonality between appraisal and coaching. The two main common points were that both systems were goal orientated and led to accountability. Principal C made the following statement:

We did major work on putting together an appraisal process, and at the time it was based on setting goals and if you look at it, it is actually quite coaching focussed (Principal C).

On the other hand, at least four of the principals identified weakness in the appraisal process. They commented that teachers treated it with suspicion because it appeared to be driven from the top down. It was viewed as a checking exercise that pointed out teacher's faults. The statement made by Principal C supported this:

Never once have I felt that it was achieving anything of consequence in terms of moving people both personally and professionally forwards and if it doesn't do that then it is a waste of time. All it did was provide a platform for suspicion and negativity, judgement and issues that arose (Principal C).

Most of the principals acknowledged that there were links between performance appraisal and coaching. They indicated that appraisal had two components, namely a teacher development aspect and a compliance aspect, which they viewed as attestation. They have indicated that there is a commonality of purpose between coaching and the teacher development aspect of appraisal but have also indicated that a tension exists when the compliance aspect is introduced. The following statement made by one of the principals supports this:

I would say they both purport to have the same end point but it is the mechanism with which you are getting to the end point that is the difference between the two. So from that point of view, performance appraisal was trying to achieve improvements in teacher practice. But it got overridden over time by the accountabilities process. It became a dominant influence in it and because it focused in that way, it tended to appear to teachers as being a top down driven sort of model (Principal D).

Six of the principals identified that they managed this by separating the two systems completely. Most of the principals indicated that they no longer use the term appraisal but rather focus on coaching as the teacher development programme and attestation as the compliance aspect. Principal B used the term summative appraisal to describe the appraisal/attestation process. Three of the schools identified that it is either the principal or the senior management team who deal with the attestation aspect of the appraisal process and not the coaches. It appeared as if the principals used the terms attestation and appraisal interchangeably.

The reason they gave for separating the two systems was that they recognised that there was a threatening element in appraisal. This contrasted with the need for good relationships built on trust to be built between coach and coachee. Two principals indicated that there is also a conflict of information, about teachers perceived shortcomings, which may willingly be revealed in a coaching situation, feared to be held against them in an appraisal process. This impacts strongly on teachers identifying their weaknesses in a coaching situation and then working towards improving their practice. They felt that teachers would not be open and honest in a developmental capacity if they felt that this information might be used against them in an attestation process. The following statement supports this view.

What you are doing when you appraise a person who is in a coaching programme, you are asking for the confidentiality of that program to be marginalised (Principal B).

Principal C indicated that coaching was their performance appraisal but they no longer called it a performance management system. They had changed the focus to recognise

the need to have a teacher development programme and have now called the system a performance development programme. He made the following statement:

We don't talk about performance appraisal at this school now. If you like our coaching is our appraisal. What we have developed for the school is performance development and the emphasis is not on performance management at this school because management is managing someone else's task and it is top down. We have changed the name to performance development. The emphasis is on development and therefore it puts the responsibility for improving performance on the person who is responsible and that is the person themselves. So the climate that we set up is based on coaching, classroom support visits, teamwork and support and attestation. Four of those things together are meant to lead to professional learning, great teaching and student achievement at the top of the pyramid (Principal C).

This principal recognised that attestation conflicts with the coaching programme and indicated that they have managed this by having a system that is based on a form of self-reflection based on a model of appreciative enquiry. He gave the following statement as an example of what they do:

Most people will work better from that appreciative enquiry. Think about yourself at the beginning of the year and the person you are today. How have you changed? Now think beyond your goals and your work as a member of a greater community, what achievements are there? To make yourself even more effective in the future what do you want to continue to do, do more of, do better, do differently (Principal C)?

When it comes to the time to fulfil the requirements for attestation, teachers are asked to provide evidence of their performance growth. The onus is on the teacher to provide the evidence and therefore they may choose to use the information from the coaching process. This eliminates the conflict of sharing information between the two processes. Two principals indicated that they recognised the conflicts between appraisal and coaching and were still in the process of working these out. Neither had felt they had found a satisfactory solution.

Coaches

There appears to be a common belief between coaches and principals that there is a need for an alternative to the appraisal process. The view of the principals that there was dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the appraisal process is mirrored by the comments the coaches made. There were views expressed by four of the coaches that indicated this dissatisfaction and that they considered appraisal to be a check box exercise that was carried out twice a year without showing any development in teachers.

The following statement by Coach C supported this:

I think because appraisal has been too heavy, top down and it's been a tick box thing. You have done it and gone out of the room and then life has gone on as normal whereas coaching really develops each teacher and I have certainly seen shifts, quite deep shifts in each teacher including myself (Coach C).

They felt that previously teachers chose goals that were either easily achieved or already achieved because they did not want to appear inadequate. The feeling among the coaches was that coaching provided a supporting environment for growth. Appraisal was seen as top down and coaching was seen as allowing the control to lie with the teacher.

I think the difficulty with appraisal was that it was something that was done to you but with coaching it is something that you are taking part with somebody else and you have developed a relationship and hopefully there is trust there and you will work together on moving forward (Coach A).

I think also that appraisal is always like a one off thing that always used to happen. You would have a meeting, choose a goal and then that would be it. Then there might be a follow up meeting later in the year. Whereas coaching you will be having regular meetings at least every two weeks with your coach. So there is a lot more improvement and it actually allows teachers to improve at your own pace. And it is also improving relationships (Coach F).

The coaches offered another reason for using coaching, which can be viewed as criticism of appraisal. This was the view of equality in the role-players in the coaching

process. They spoke of coaching as having “adult-to-adult” relationships where teachers are not treated as children. Where everyone has goals and they are all learning, teachers and people in leadership roles are all considered learners with no one considered superior to the other. The following statements back up this view:

It is encouraging those adult-to-adult interactions rather than adult-to-child which is what was happening before when we had the appraisal system (Coach G).

I also think that the fact that we all have a goal, it is not just seen that the management don't have any goals at all and they're doing nothing over there. Even though I am with Coach E for my coach because we are seen to have a goal and are meeting people too, people think it is more, as you say, fair and equitable. It is not just top down you lot down here and we're up here and we know it all (Coach C).

The coaches identified similar issues to the principals. Their discussion was more a pragmatic view of how to resolve the issues and once again there were the two different approaches. One where the appraisal system had been altered and adapted to suit the coaching programme and the other where the two systems are kept completely separate and where the coaches focus on development and the leadership team focuses on appraisal. The following statements were made to support the need for two separate systems.

We have tried to keep it very separate. I guess the hard thing is that you still have to be judged against a set of professional standards and the principal is still responsible for that compliance issue (Coach A).

Attestation is completely different. Attestation is compliance and is legal and coaching is separate because we want to see every teacher in our school being the best they can be. So the documentation for attestation is completely different (Coach D).

Coach B made the following statement, which shows how they have merged some aspects of the two systems.

We said that data that is collected through your coaching could be used to help with you attestation and most of the time if you structure that attestations document well enough you will collect enough data (Coach B).

Coach B qualified though that:

But not visa versa so you could never fail an attestation through coaching. If your coach says actually I am worried about the person's performance then we have an attestation process to fall back on that is much more minimal and much more performance driven against the standards (Coach B).

All the coaches agreed that it was a trial and error process and that they had not come to any perfect solution yet. The following statement from Coach C indicated this:

We are working on that document, the attestations document, trying to tie it into coaching document to make it more user friendly. We have four models at the moment and we have not agreed on one yet (Coach C).

There was a discussion held about the similarities between coaching and appraisal. The coaches indicated that they both had a teacher development aspect to them but that teachers felt that they were being judged against the professional standards and therefore they needed to be dealt with as a separate issue in order not to damage the integrity of the coaching model. One of the coaches made this statement:

I think in time there will be (unity) but I think that's a situation that will occur once the integrity and trust of the coaching system is imbedded into your school (Coach A).

Coach F felt quite strongly that while coaching and appraisal were usually considered as separate entities that they should not be. The following statement was made to support this.

I don't think that they should be (separate) and part of it is that you said that people are still not convinced that coaching is the way to go and my feeling is that it should replace appraisal because the ultimate aim of appraisal is to have good effective teacher and that is what coaching is achieving (Coach F).

Coachees

There was quite a bit of discussion from the coachees that indicated confusion about the concepts of appraisal, attestation, coaching and requirements of the EHSAS programme. There was difference of opinion because what one coachee called coaching the others felt was appraisal.

The coachees mostly identified that the different processes were separate but had said that in some schools the senior leadership team dealt with appraisal and attestation and the coaches dealt with professional development. In other schools the same person may perform all these processes but they were performed separately and that what is said in a coaching relationship could not be used or held against you. The following statement was made to support this.

Mine have completely severed them and have said that it (coaching) is definitely not part of the appraisal process. It is not something we are going to hang on a hook and hold it against you. This is ongoing personal P.D. Your appraisal is completely separate and we have a different pathway for that completely (Coachee C).

The coachees also recognised the links to appraisal and contrasted the appraisal process with the coaching process.

As opposed to the old appraisal it means that you have a targeted discussion as opposed to somebody coming in and just generally looking at the classroom and making a general report about what is going on and what they like (Coachee B).

4. Challenges associated with coaching

While analysing the findings, the participant's discussions revealed some challenges associated with implementing a coaching programme. The principals noted a range of challenges from minor ones to major considerations. These ranged from the need for a school to be ready for change, getting the coaching process off the ground and sustainability, professional development for coaches, the need for inclusivity and embedding coaching into the culture of the school, to the more pressing concerns of time and resourcing.

All three groups identified time, as being an issue. However, the concept of what time meant to each group was slightly different. The challenges can be summarised as follows and will be reported under each of these subheadings: time and resourcing; not having a clear understanding of the differences between coaching and mentoring; method of implementation; selection process of coach and coachee.

a. Time and resourcing

Principals

All the principals identified time, as been an issue, the need to allocate sufficient time for coaches and coachees to work together, either for observation or for meeting. This would mean that one or both parties would need to be released from their normal duties in order to fulfil this requirement. Time was linked to resourcing because of the need to employ additional personnel, in order to give time for teachers to coach others. Some principals had identified that it was easier to use teachers, who were already released for other duties such as learning leader or syndicate release. This was highlighted as a challenge in that it created a perception of hierarchy, which was contrary to the ideology of coaching and the principal's view of having an adult-to-adult situation.

One principal made the following statement to support this:

One of the obvious challenges is around time and committing sufficient time for the process to work as intended. And whilst we have not got it perfect, we are actually pretty comfortable with what we have got. We have created situations for it to allow time for it to happen. If you dump it on top of teachers other

commitments, then you are asking for trouble because it then becomes a chore (Principal A).

Principal D made this supporting statement:

You have to be relaxed about the time and to put it into context of the realities of what the job is all about (Principal D).

Another principal's view, which relates to the need to embed coaching as part of the culture of the school, also shows that it needs to be done. He made this statement.

So I think one of the real challenges is to make it a living breathing, part of the fabric of the culture and that has got to be encouraged by everyone (Principal E).

Principal F echoed this view by saying that you need to give coaching status. Three of the principals identified the need to give coaching value by programming it into the organisation of the school, by giving it time not only the time for the programme to develop but also to allocate sufficient time to make the programme work and to value the people for the work they are doing. One principal made this statement to support this:

One of the key strategies is about coaching for success. So that it is about establishing the mana of the process to enable it to become engrained in what you do because it is seen to be adding value to individuals (Principal A).

Two principals highlighted the need to have a strategic view by having a clear understanding of what the next steps for coaching would be. They felt that while schools had got off to a good start they needed to progress from this point. This related to other views of needing to embed coaching in the culture of the school and to provide opportunities for all staff and not just a select few.

Training was another key concern. Indicating the need to ensure that the coaches had the skills needed to be coaches and ongoing training followed on from this. So a focus

on the professional development of coaches was important. This will be covered under the heading of training for coaching.

Principal G concluded that while time and resourcing were issues the benefits far outweighed the disadvantages. He made this statement.

If you look at it from a professional development point of view it is cheaper than sending someone away to a fairly expensive course with sometimes negligible or arguable results (Principal G).

Coaches

The major concerns for coaches were teacher buy-in, training, time and resources. They felt time to meet their coachees was an issue. They also highlighted the skill development and training that the coaches needed in order to fulfil their roles. The third consideration was that they felt there were not enough coaches. The more coachees a coach worked with the less quality time they had for each one. This became a vicious cycle because the more coaches you needed, the more release time was needed and the more trained coaches were needed, this led right back to funding. The funding issues in this instance were further compounded by the fact that the funding for this contract was withdrawn before the contract was proposed to have concluded. The statement by this coach highlights their concerns.

We needed to look at a way that we could embed it better and give it both the time it needed and the resourcing it needed. To make it an effective part of our professional development programme (Coach A).

Coachees

The coachees primary concerns lay with the challenges of time. They viewed time from a different perspective. They identified that time was needed for research, and trialling some of the ideas before you could feel that you have achieved your goals. The following statements support this view.

Time to make sure you action your goal, especially if you are trying to do something quite different to what you usually do and you might have to alter

things in your programme to do something. So it is getting your head around it. And also making sure you allocate time to do it (Coachee D).

It is not only time with my coach but also time to research what methods are out there. By the time you do get home... Just getting the research done and finding the right path for my children and me took longer than I expected (Coachee C).

Another coachee looked at the time issue from a different perspective. She made the following statement:

Making it (time) for yourself and making it regular and to say this is what I am going to do and do it every day if I can. I have found it hard to make it a regular part of every day (Coachee E).

b. Implementation of a coaching programme

The method for implementation of a coaching programme can also be considered a challenge. Each of the participants shared the implementation process from their perspective and this reveals some of the considerations and pitfalls, which may need to be avoided when implementing a coaching programme.

Principals

Five of the seven principals had identified that they had used a trial and error process in implementing coaching within their schools. Some had identified that they had done this deliberately as is indicated by the following statements.

We felt that what we needed to do was take it in small chunks and make it successful which would then create the demand to continue with the process and expand it (Principal A).

A couple of coaches started working with people on the management team. Just to practice and to work out where all the cobwebs were and where all the pitfalls were that could not be foreseen (Principal G).

All schools started with a small group of coaches receiving the training, working with one, two or three coachees, in the first year and then expanded in the second year, by training additional coaches. Two principals stated that they had all the full time teachers being coached from the start. Three principals said that in the second year all full time teachers were being coached. In five of the schools the leadership team were trained first and then this was rolled out to the rest of the staff. These five schools also had the leadership team as the coaches. Two principals clearly stated that they deliberately did not want the leadership team as coaches because of the conflict involved with the appraisal process. The following statement supports this view:

The second thing that was really the most important thing to us is, I did not expect the senior staff in the school to be coaches. So it was not about senior teachers. And I had to manage that because some senior teachers would have asked the question, why not? But the reality is that some of them, like myself haven't been in a classroom for twenty years and why would we be coaching people. Where is the credibility even though there is a trust at our school that I know something about curriculum and pedagogy? It would seem to me to make sense that people could share practice from the perspective of being involved in that practice, which is where the tension comes from the appraisal because the management suddenly has a role in a process that actually does not count on management as a role (Principal B).

Four principals identified that the whole staff had some form of introductory training explaining what coaching was about. After this introductory explanation of coaching four schools got their staff to nominate people in the school whom they thought would be good coaches. Three schools then allowed their staff to nominate two to three people who they felt could be coach them.

Three principals identified the conflicts faced with resourcing, in the time that coaches needed to be able to make observations in classrooms to be able to support their coachees. They managed this by having the leadership team do the coaching because they already had release time allocated to them. Two schools did this from the outset but a third school identified that the coaching system evolved into this in the second year because of these conflicts.

Principals A, E, F and G indicated that it was important to have a clear understanding of what coaching means in the context of the school that it is being implemented in. This is evident in the following statements by principals:

Each context is different but I think that you have to define what you mean by coaching and I think that you have to decide whether you are coaching and mentoring, or you are just coaching, what is the difference between mentoring and coaching. In our case we decided not to mentor, because there is a different engagement, a different process (Principal B).

Principal E identified the need for a common understanding of all staff and that *there needed to be open communication with the bigger group and all the people involved (Principal E).*

The training of the individuals and the understanding of the differences between coaching, mentoring and supervision is absolutely critical. That needs to be understood first (Principal F).

Principals felt that it was important to ensure adequate training of the coaches and to test and trial the process with a small group of people first, in order to ensure the success of the programme. However, while the trial is running to keep all staff fully informed, so that clear understandings are established so that when the roll out to the whole staff happens, there is buy-in. Principal G summarised these three themes:

There has to be a degree of buy in, from the person being coached and therefore schools need to intelligently, reasonably promote coaching as useful professional developmental model. So I guess there's three things. The delineation between coaching and appraisal, there's getting the coaches appropriately trained and there is the selling coaching as a good professional development model (Principal G).

Principals A and D identified the need to ensure that the culture of the school was in a position to ensure the success of the coaching process. They identified the need to have

good relationships among staff that were built on trust. They felt that it was key to the success of the programme to ensure that there was a climate where feedback was received in a supportive environment. They indicated that, people became more comfortable taking risks, when they were able to share positives and negatives in a risk free setting. The following comment supports this.

You need to be able to gauge the culture of the school and the relationships and interactions within the school. Because I can think of some settings where I would not even attempt this at this point because they are just not in that frame of mind. They don't work that way. We are lucky we have got a situation where people work together. That is not always the case so you have to have the fertile ground on which to start the process off. But I think it is absolutely important that you start it off (Principal A).

There were other aspects that principals commented on that they felt were important to replicate in the coaching process. A key message that has come from responses is echoed here is the need to go slowly. Be prepared to trial and test out assumptions before expecting coaching to be fully successful. This message goes hand in hand with the need to recognise that coaching is a growth process and it is important to involve everybody in the developmental process, allow for opportunities for feedback and to stop along the way to review how it is going. There is no one size fits all approach and it needs to be adapted to the context of the people and the organisation. Another consideration is to provide adequate resourcing in terms of time for coaching. This meant time for coaching observations and time for coach and coachee to reflect on these. Some principals felt strongly that the leadership team should not be involved in the coaching process whereas others felt they should. Principal C felt that it was important that the principal be the head coach as they were responsible for leading the change. Another principal felt that if the principal did not have the necessary skills then they could employ someone who did. The message here was not to assume that the Principal or any of the leadership team had the necessary skills just because they held a leadership role. Principal C indicated a need to continually review the programme. This fits in line with other principals using trial and error as a method for implementation.

Coaches

The responses of the coaches echoed those of the principals, particularly about the schools who trialled coaching, the number of coaches who were trained initially and if only part or the whole staff was coached. The main point of difference between the principal's responses and the coaches' responses was the way that time for coaching was managed. In later responses time for coaching was identified as a difficulty with the coaching process. There are two aspects, which cause conflict; the first is the time needed for a coach to observe the coachee and the second is the time needed for the coach and the coachee to meet and reflect on the coachees practice. Each school had managed this in a different way. Two schools had set the coaching process up so that the leadership team who already had leadership release were given the responsibility for coaching. They coached their own teams and were able to merge the responsibilities of leadership with coaching. After a year a third school found they had difficulty with managing time and also moved to this model. Another school managed it by having cycles where some teachers are fully on the coaching programme while others are in maintenance mode in the background, this way sharing the release time among the different teachers throughout the year. Another school managed this process by employing a reliever for the coaches on a one day per week. The complication was that there was not enough time for the coach and coachee to meet and reflect so another reliever was employed on the same day. Another school would use the deputy principals to release the coaches in order to facilitate time for observations. This was needs based.

The second aspect to time allocation was the time needed to meet between coach and coachee. Two schools allowed the coaches to manage their meeting times and to fit them in as they saw necessary. The other four schools dedicated certain staff meetings or team meetings for coaching feedback sessions. This appeared to be the more successful option.

Coachees

The coachees' responses were similar in some ways to those of the principals and coaches but their responses indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of the decisions that had been made. They had all said that they had some introductory professional development about coaching. At least two coachees said that they had

identified who would be good coaches and then chosen whom they would like to work with; but that when the coaching programme had begun they did not get the choices they asked for and they did not understand this. Four of the coaches said that it was the leadership team who had the training and they expressed disappointment, that they had not all had the training. They felt it would be beneficial to their teaching.

This led to the complications and challenges that arose when matching teacher to coach.

c. Selection process for matching teacher and coach

As one principal stated there are many different models for matching teacher to coach. However, the one that most schools used was to get the teachers to identify who they would consider to be a good coach and then to nominate from a list of names the people who they felt they could work with. Criteria had been set that while there needed to be a good relationship with the people they were selecting, it could not be based on friendship. However, this method seemed to be flawed and from the responses of all the role players at least two of the schools had moved away from this in the second year. The statement of one coach identifies the reasoning behind this move:

We needed to make sure we were able to give time to coaching and the only way we could give time to coaching was to give time to learning leaders for release to do some observations or walk throughs and to develop that information they needed to carry on that process. Really we were almost forced into that process by trying to cope with the manageability of the coaching programme because that was our biggest barrier at the end of last year (Coach A).

This caused some consternation among the teachers in that they had felt they had made choices and then those choices were changed for reasons they were not sure of. The following statements backs this up:

I chose one of these team leaders and a reserve and I did not get either. So I don't know how it was formulated behind closed doors. I don't know (Coachee C).

Senior leadership teams then matched coach to coachee based mostly on personality and relationship strengths. Teams were either set up with this in mind and coaching took place within teams or coaching was done across teams. One school set the process up so that it was needs based, where a coach was selected based on the identified goals of the coachee. For example one coachee wanted to develop skills in using an interactive whiteboard and then a coach was selected based on the skills they had to be able to support this person. While the discussion from the coaches showed that an expert was not necessary it was important to at least have an understanding of the area of development for the coachee.

One principal felt strongly that the matching process had to be based on trust and that “the choice must lie in the hands of the people” (*Principal C*).

d. Training for coaching

Principals

Five of the principals indicated the need for professional development for the coaches. There was a need for the coaches to be coached in an ongoing programme. The reason being that coaching is different in each and every context and because of the rich dynamic of different organisations the coaches need support in their own current context. Principal A indicated:

I think there is a significant component in actually coaching people to be coaches. It isn't something that necessarily comes automatically and I don't think it is necessarily something that happens by osmosis. So there is an absolute role in coaching people to be coaches. So I think one of the strategies needs to be around having an ongoing development programme. So that you can address some of those needs and sometimes they can be hard to predict (Principal A).

Coaches

The two key features of the response of the coaches were the need for ongoing professional development of coaches and coachees and the need to establish a culture of collaborative understanding with openness and honesty at the core. They felt that if

everyone got the coaching training than there would be a common understanding. This statement was made:

You must share all the information so that they have got everything that they need because if it is going to work in your school its got to be something that you all do together. Even though you have some as a coach and some as a coachee. Even the coaches are coachees. The principal coaches me. It is the momentum that is still going. I think that everybody needs to have all the information and I think that it is important for it to be successful (Coach A).

Coachees

The coachees echoed the need for everyone to undergo the training. They also saw the value in clusters of schools working together. One coachee had been opposed to coaching in teams but once she had heard how it was working in another school, felt that it could be beneficial. This indicated the need for shared communication within the school and within the cluster.

As only one coachee had previous experience with coaching they were able to contrast the different experiences of coaching. This triggered a discussion among the coachees about who was trained to be a coach and who was not trained. The coachee who had had previous experience with coaching had been in a situation where everyone had been trained to be a coach and they were buddy coaching each other. This contrasted to the experiences of the other coachees. There was a feeling among the coachees that the process was meant to be a two way process for learning but the fact that only the coaches had been trained had led to a hierarchical situation, which they felt had the potential of undermining the situation.

Principals D, E and F identified that it was as a result of workshops at conferences that had influenced their decision to use coaching, as a means of developing the professional learning of teachers. All the principals and most of the coaches that were interviewed had attended a workshop run by Australian Growth Coaching International at the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) conference in Sydney in 2007. This was the first year of the EHSAS contract. While this was not the catalyst that triggered the need to use coaching it was the unifying professional development

opportunity among all the schools that triggered a round of further professional development opportunities within their schools over the next two years. The one principal made the following statement:

I had decided that coaching was a productive way forward. So the EHSAS thing came along and it slipped into it in a timely way. The timing was right both at a principal level and at a school level. That coaching was going to be something that we were going to do before we even got the EHSAS contract underway. A group of us went to Australia to the ACEL conference in October 2007. And we went to a workshop that was run by the Australian growth coaching with Mandy O'Brien and we all got fairly energised by that so that was sort of why (Principal D).

One coach admitted that they were a little anxious but has found the coaching experience very positive. Coaches C and E also revealed that their schools had begun to implement coaching between the two schools for those in management positions. So the management team in one school coached the management team in the other and visa versa.

All the coaches were able to take previous leadership learning and apply this knowledge to the coaching model and looked on it positively. The following statement reinforced this belief:

I had had the experience with the four-minute walk through beforehand and I am grateful that I had because we had a lot of theory that went with the four minute walk throughs to get us to buy into them. It just made the coaching seem like the next natural progression. So it was a good way to go (Coach G).

The coaches also felt that the conference in Sydney was a catalyst in the development of coaching within the schools. The following statement was made and was supported by the other coaches:

I think that when we went to the EHSAS conference in Sydney and when we went to hear about the Growth Coaching model that was what really interested me as

well. And see we could actually apply it to teaching and I think that was a big thing (Coach D).

In the discussion that follows, what emerged were the need for a clear understanding of the theory base and the need to recognise the differences between coaching and mentoring. The coaches felt that there might be some scepticism from teachers as there usually is when something new is introduced. One coach made the following statement:

I think as teachers we tend to be automatically sceptical of new things because things change such a lot in education so quickly to when you are introduced to something new you do try find all the flaws in it and you are sceptical about it until it is kind of proven itself to you (Coach A).

They felt that initially there was confusion about how coaching fitted in with other processes that were implemented at the school but that it had proven itself over time. In response to the question “do you think it has proven itself?” Coach G said:

Yeah, I do I think it is a much fairer and much more honest way of developing people (Coach G).

The principals identified that a group of coaches from each school had undergone training through a service provider Growth Coaching International (GCI). The principals and some of the coaches had attended a workshop at the Australian Council for Educational Leadership conference in 2007 run by this organisation. There appeared to be symmetry in the message that GCI were presenting and what the schools in the EHSAS cluster were trying to achieve. The principals used the funding from the EHSAS contract to bring a facilitator, Pauline Beverley from GCI, Australia to New Zealand to run professional development workshops on coaching for coaches from each school. This has been done in two phases with the first group of coaches receiving training in the first year and a second group of coaches receiving training in the second year. There were plans to roll this out further when this research was being done. One principal has undergone a coaching accreditation course through GCI.

This built on professional development opportunities the schools had previously run, either as whole school development or leadership development or a combination of both. Three schools had identified Jan Hill from Learning Network New Zealand as this service provider and the fourth identified Tony Burkin from Interlead. All schools had identified that they had also had on going in-house development with the whole staff, lead by outside facilitators, principals, coaches or a combination of all three.

When this question was asked of the coachees, the responses indicated that they were not exactly sure of the nature of the training of the coaches but they did feel that they thought everybody should have had the training. Firstly they saw the training as beneficial to all and secondly they felt the training created a “them and us” situation where there should have been equality.

What follows is a summary of the significant findings in table format. The responses that were similar were grouped together and counted. The table represents the number of responses of the significant issues across all the questions.

Table 4.1 Summary of findings

Common issues found in responses	Principals	Coaches	Coachees
1. Importance of coaching			
Participants viewed coaching as a means of improving teacher effectiveness	12	8	6
Participants viewed coaching as a positive process that helped to improved relationships	10	20	13
Coaching allowed for individual ownership for development	6	7	1

Common issues found in responses	Principals	Coaches	Coachees
2. Coaching as teacher learning			
Coaching improved reflective practice	2	1	2
Coaching promoted deeper learning	6	1	2
Coaching provided opportunities for personalised learning	3	3	3
3. Coaching as appraisal			
Participants recognised commonality between appraisal and coaching	8	5	1
Participants indicated dissatisfaction with appraisal system	10	5	2
4. Challenges associated with coaching			
Participants identified time and resourcing as a challenge	22	19	5
Participants identified implementation issues and ways that they had been resolved	26	20	10
Participants indicated the need for training	8	3	3
Participants indicated the need for a shared understanding coaching and mentoring concepts	30	18	10

Summary

The issue that had the most responses was the need to have shared understanding of the concepts of coaching and mentoring. This linked to the issues surrounding the implementation process. Respondents indicated that it is the development of a coaching culture based on honesty, openness and shared understanding, the need for inspirational goals with a clear focus and clear expectations, and the need to provide forums for collaboration. All groups reflected on the idea that it was worth giving it a go and to jump in and work out what suits the organisation as you go. That with a good mechanism for review the continual tweaking and improving was important. This played a vital role in the implementation of coaching.

A feature from the responses from the principals was that a coaching programme is not something that can be taken from one school and applied to another. It is a tool that needs to become embedded in the culture of the school and needs to be unique to the culture of that school. Each school has its own unique culture and even though there maybe commonality between them, each needs to develop the programme based on their own individual needs. This statement from Principal F supports this view.

Other schools are all at different stages and phases of implementing whatever they are doing and even in our area, where we are relatively homogenic, there is still a huge range between where we are at and what we are attempting to do. (Principal F).

It was felt that it is important to establish a culture based on honesty, openness and shared understanding. These were part of the implementation issues that were discussed.

This links to Principal B's view that an effective framework needs to be established to support the coaches because they need to be valued for the role they are taking. A framework also needs to be set up that indicates what good coaching looks like for both the coach and the coachee. Showing what the potential for the coaching programme for each individual teacher can be. He also asked this question:

In the coaching programme how do we let coaches know what is sustainable good practice so that people can go and enjoy it (Principal B)?

The responses from all three groups indicated that coaching is a worthwhile programme that supports the professional learning of teachers. It provides opportunities for teachers to take ownership of their own developmental needs in a manner that is non-threatening and is personalised. The locus of power for a teacher's professional learning needs lies with the teacher and leads to personal accountabilities. It needs to be part of the culture and fabric of a school and needs to be based on honest and open communication. Coaching leads to the development of strong relationships between coach and coachee. The resulting outcomes from the coaching process indicate that coaching builds effective pedagogy and that there may be some links to improving student achievement. However, these links are not explicit. The understanding of the concepts of appraisal, coaching and supervision are an issue, which need to be made clear at the outset of a coaching programme. The teacher development aspect of appraisal fits comfortably in the coaching process. However, the recommendation from principals is that it needs to be kept separate from the compliance aspect of appraisal, namely attestation. There are different methods for implementing coaching programmes and this needs to be matched to the context of the individual schools. Principals recommend establishing a trial, in order work out difficulties to ensure success. Training, time and resourcing are important considerations to manage. Coachees felt strongly that everyone needs to be trained from the outset. Value needs to be given to the programme by ensuring enough time and resources are allocated to it.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the significant findings that have emerged throughout this investigation. Links are identified between the literature review and the findings. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the participants and where coaching fits in with the Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) contract. Following this there is a review of the themes that have emerged from the literature. The discussion that follows falls under the headings of the three themes that have emerged from the literature review and shows the links between the literature and the findings from the interviews and focus groups with the research participants involved in the coaching process in the seven primary schools in this particular EHSAS contract. The structure of the discussion particularly on leadership is based on information in the recently published Best Evidence Synthesis on School Leadership (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). This had not been published when the initial literature review was published but this researcher felt that they offered significant information linked to leadership within the context of coaching for teacher professional learning and as a result felt it was pertinent to structure the leadership discussion around the information in this document.

Participants, coaching and the EHSAS contract

The seven primary schools involved in the EHSAS contract form a cluster of decile ten schools, which are located in close proximity to each other and who have worked, together on various projects in the past. Prior to this contract it was mostly, the principals or deputy principals who collaborated together. There are strong ties between these schools and relationships had already been established prior beginning the

EHSAS contract. Through this project there is increasing collaboration among the schools between leadership teams and teachers. An example of the type of collaboration is that professional development days have been organised together. One professional development day involved conference type activities where practitioners from each school have shared their practice through workshops. This professional development conference day included every member of staff, including administration staff, teacher aides and groundsman. Several other professional development days have focussed on coaching training. Growth Coaching International ran the coaching training over a two-year period where the cluster pooled resources together and employed trainers from this company to come to New Zealand. Without this funding and the collaboration between these schools this type of professional development would be financially impossible for a school on an individual basis. Initially a small group of teachers from each school participated in the training. In the following year additional teachers were sent on this training experience. This proved to be a bone of contention from the point of view of the teachers as there was a feeling among the coachees that all teachers should have been given the same training. The cost of which would be prohibitive. According to Showers (1985) when all teachers are given coaching training this allows them to engage in peer coaching opportunities within teams by developing collaborative problem-solving sessions. However, she does state that coaching does not have to be exclusive to one particular group, such as teachers and that principals and supervisors can coach too (Showers, 1985).

The participants in this research project were the seven principals from each of the schools, who were each interviewed individually. Seven coaches, one from each school and five teachers representing four schools, who were being coached, were interviewed in focus groups. It was disappointing to have so few coachees as this was an opportunity to give them a voice. Many reasons can be given for the lack of volunteers, from the time factor to the fact that they did not know anyone else who might be participating, or a general reluctance to participate in research. The other option could be that they were stating their views by not participating. There are too many unknowns here to speculate and not enough evidence to suggest a reason other than the time factor.

While the interviews gave each respondent the opportunity to answer the questions individually, the focus groups did not. This did not therefore indicate that if the

participant had not mentioned a particular concept or issue than it did not exist. What were revealed though were the understandings and perceptions of coaching from the different respondents from their personal perspective. In the findings it became clear that each group held views that were directly related to their role or position in the school. For example, principals' views centred around day to day running of the schools as well as on strategic, big picture issues, where links were made between a variety of aspects of the running of a school, such as performance expectations for students and staff, finance, and professional growth of staff. This is an important part of the role of the principal in leading change (Fitchett 2009). The contrary was the teachers who did not understand some of the decision making process and in some cases freely admitted that perhaps they did not need to. Their focus was based on how decisions that were made affected them personally. If a particular respondent felt strongly about an issue than it may have been mentioned more than once. This was not included in the analysis. What were identified were the understandings about the issues around coaching and not how strongly the respondents felt about these issues. Some participants were particularly passionate about their experiences and the successes they were enjoying as a result of the programme.

The goal of the EHSAS contract was to improve the effectiveness of teachers through professional learning and development in order to improve the outcomes for students. It is important to measure the success of professional learning programmes by the impact it has on students (Piggot-Irvine, 2006; Timperley et al., 2007). Coaching was implemented in these schools as a means to improve effectiveness of teachers based on the premise that coaching is an effective means of enhancing professional learning and development of teachers. The purpose of this research was not to confirm nor deny this premise. The purpose of this research was to explore the understandings and experiences of the participants involved in this contract. The participants were identified as the principals, the coaches and the teachers who were being coached, referred to in this research as coachees.

The decision to finally use coaching was confirmed after the principals and the majority of the coaches had attended the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) conference in Sydney. They had targeted a workshop on coaching in order to get a shared understanding of the concept. Prior to this the principals had independently been

researching alternative means of improving teacher effectiveness through improving their learning and development. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) identify that it is important for leaders to participate in professional learning and development opportunities in order to establish shared understandings. In this case the shared understanding was with fellow principals and potential coaches, who would be working on this contract, rather than with their staff.

The findings could be categorised into three issues, which align directly with three of the themes found in the literature review in Chapter 2, namely supervision and appraisal, the role of leadership associated with the coaching process and professional learning and teacher development. The discussion of the findings will be presented in terms of these three themes. While the literature also focused on coaching and change management this area did not feature as strongly in the findings and as a result is not included in this discussion.

Discussion of findings

The first question that this researcher asked each group of participants this was, “why use coaching as a means of improving teacher practice?” Contrary to the original premise of this researcher that coaching was considered a buzzword, the principals had researched the concept. They had identified a need to use an alternative form of teacher development rather than the current appraisal system and through the EHSAS contract had identified these links to an improvement in student achievement through improving teacher effectiveness. This is supported by the views of Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) who indicated that the purpose of appraisal and professional learning should be to enhance outcomes for students.

The question also elicited an interesting response from the three groups who were asked this question, namely the principals, coaches and coachees. There was concurrence in the responses from the principal and coaches who it appeared had some form of leadership role. It would also appear as if they were singing from the same song sheet indicating that the purposes and reason for doing so had been clearly communicated or that they had faced similar leadership issues. From the responses it would appear that

the development and learning of teachers was an important consideration. There were two issues that they were hoping coaching would resolve. The first was the need for learning and development based on the teachers individual needs. The context of their classroom and the students they were working with would have an impact here. The second consideration was that the locus of control for professional learning growth and development needed lie with the teachers. The first will be discussed under the heading of professional learning and teacher development. The second issue has associated links with appraisal.

1. Professional learning and teacher development

The main reason principals gave for wanting a coaching system within their schools is that their focus was developing teachers. While they had been sending teachers on professional development courses they felt that a system of embedding this professional learning in teacher's practice so that it had an impact on outcomes for students was essential. Ongoing professional development of teachers is an important consideration when examining the effectiveness of schools in improving outcomes for students. In research by Kane and Mallon (2006) on perceptions of teachers and teaching found:

The data reveals that the key to professional development appears to lie in ensuring individual teachers' commitment to ongoing learning with the goal of enhancing performance. This commitment has to be matched, however, with adequate support and opportunities throughout the teacher's career. The school environment is critical as it influences the extent to which professional development is valued by management and colleagues and is facilitated for teachers. (p.viii)

In this research all three groups recognised the need for ongoing learning and development but indicated further that it was important to have an individualised learning programme for the teachers and saw coaching as a means to achieve this. Piggot-Irvine (2006) indicates that there are a variety of variables in the developmental stage of the learner and that there is no "one size fits all solution" to professional development. Coaching is suitable as a means for achieving improvement in short term

skill development and can focus on the immediate short term needs of a particular teacher in a particular context, with students with specific learning needs (Altman, 2007; Hobson, 2003). Teachers felt that their learning needs were different because they were at different stages in their development as teachers.

The following comment from Coachee C supports this view:

You have a series of teachers, some who are experienced and some like myself who only got registration last year so our needs are different. And our classroom strategies are different but we are all working on a common goal to better our education and the knock on effect to students. We all have different needs so one size does not always fit all when it comes to P.D. but coaching does (Coachee C).

They also felt that when matching their learning needs to those of their students this also drove the need for individualised learning programme based on the context of their own classroom. When teacher learning needs are linked to the learning needs of their students then there a greater chance of improving outcomes for students (Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007).

Teachers indicated that through the coaching programme they were able to try new skills and used the coach as a sounding board in developing these skills. This is supported in the literature as an appropriate use of the coaching process (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 2003; Timperley et al., 2007) In a discussion about the challenges of coaching the time to do this was seen as a difficulty.

While the participants indicated that they thought coaching met the individual learning needs of teachers, they made further comments that the learning was much more long term and led to deeper learning. This is supported by the views of (Piggot-Irvine, 2006), who suggests that effective development programmes “need to be long term, embedded in practice and context, professionally informed and sustained” (p.483). Indicating too that the learning needed to be appropriate to the individual teachers situation. They felt that short-term courses did not meet these needs because they were generic. However, a coaching programme where a teacher is receiving support within the context of their

own classroom and they could see the knock on effect to improving outcomes for their students, was making a difference. This view is supported in the literature (Timperley, 2008) by the following statement:

As they take more responsibility, and as they discover that their new professional knowledge and practice are having a positive impact on their students, they begin to feel more effective as teachers. Like greater expectations, heightened responsibility is developed most effectively when teachers observe that their new teaching practices are having positive impacts on their students.
(p.9)

The comment made by Principal E when asked, “How do you think coaching is working?” supports the view of Timperley (2008):

We know that it is working if you just use teacher enthusiasm as a gauge and that is huge (Principal E).

Referring back to the literature on models of coaching, the process that the participants indicated that they followed was based on an evolutionary model of coaching, where a reiterative process of observation, discussion and response was followed. In the discussion part of the coaching process the participants indicated that they set goals using the GROWTH model as advocated by Growth Coaching International. This model is very similar to the Jenny Rogers model (Brockbank & McGill, 2006) is most suitable to coaching where long term or double loop learning are the expected outcome. While it includes the development needed in skills to achieve the outcome, it also focuses on the whole development of the coachee and the need for the coachee to be a willing and active participant in the coaching process. The principals indicated that they wanted the locus of control for the learning and development of the teachers to lie with the teachers. This has links to supervision and the perceptions of coaching and appraisal. These will be discussed in the next section.

2. Coaching and supervision

The relationship between coaching and supervision is complicated and can be examined from different perspectives. In this research the aspect of supervision that was focused on was appraisal. In the findings of this research three issues emerged. There may be other issues related to supervision but this researcher will only focus on those that arose during the research process. The first issue was related to the perceptions the participants had of appraisal, the second issue was the concept locus of control and the third issue was the nature of hierarchy in a supervisory situation. All three are interrelated but for the purpose of examining their relationship to the findings and will be dealt with separately.

Perceptions of appraisal

Supervision of teachers in New Zealand schools is managed through performance appraisal under the mandated guidelines for appraisal (Ministry of Education, 1997a). The principals had felt that the appraisal system had a two-part focus, teacher development and an accountability focus. There is an expectation that there is meant to be a balance between these two components (Ministry of Education, 1997a; Piggot-Irvine, 2002)

However, they also felt that once the attestation process was introduced, this compromised the developmental process. The attestation process required an element of evaluation. According to Showers (1985) “the evaluation of teachers typically implies judgement about the adequacy of a person, whereas coaching implies assisting with the learning process” (p.46). The principals recognised the need to have an alternative system for promoting the professional learning of teachers that was not impeded by conflicts of evaluation and judgement. While they felt that it was an important requirement to ensure that teachers are meeting the standards for teachers, there were negative connotations associated with appraisal, referred to by principals, coaches and coachees as a “big brother” view where admitting weakness or areas for development could be held against you. Showers (1985) indicates that when evaluation is the end product of supervision than, teachers will present well tested procedures even though they may be flawed, rather than take risks with something new. It would appear that the

principals and coaches had thought that the appraisal process was meant to fulfil a developmental role but had failed because of this compliance aspect. The statement from Principal A supports this:

Because we saw the appraisal process as developmental, the attestation process is not. It is a checklist basically (Principal A).

The teachers were suspicious of appraisal because they regarded it as judgemental and that it was something that happened once or twice a year and that did not really support what was happening in their classrooms.

Findings by Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) indicate that some of the other reasons that appraisal systems fail is because there are assumptions that appraisal is used to evaluate teaching and not a teachers ability to promote student learning. When appraisal is connected to student outcomes there is greater chance of improving teacher effectiveness and improved outcomes for students (Robinson et al., 2009).

All three groups made comparisons between the appraisal process and the coaching process. The principals and coaches talked about teacher buy-in of coaching and this researcher was not sure if this is how the concept of coaching was “sold” to the teachers. In other words that the idea of coaching was promoted because it was considered separate from appraisal and that appraisal was being dealt with in a different way or by a different person. It appeared that teachers had been told that the appraisal system was out and that coaching was used to replace it. Because of the disparate nature of coaching and appraisal as teacher evaluation, these two practices should and need to be treated separately and cannot be combined (Showers, 1985).

Locus of control as it relates to balance of power

The nature of the balance of power in an appraisal relationship compared to a coaching relationship was another consideration. The responses from the principals indicated that when selecting a system of teacher development, they recognised that successful change would not happen if it were driven from the top down and they wanted a system where

the locus of control lay with the teacher. One of their criticisms of appraisal was that the balance of power lay with the appraiser. They felt if teachers did not have ownership of their learning then the developmental part of appraisal would fail. The coaches also held this view. They used phrases such as “adult-to-adult” relationships. Showers (1985) indicated that where there is a balance in power in a coaching relationship, then coaching is compatible with supervision.

There appeared to be an importance placed on the concept of adult-to-adult relationships being established through coaching by all participants. With coaching they felt that there was an opportunity for teachers to be treated as adults and for the balance of power be restored. When this happened teachers would be able to take responsibility for themselves and their own learning and development. A statement by Principal E indicates this view:

I think that has been enormously important because people see that they are given the responsibility and there is also a very nice link with all the reading about the curriculum and the Key competencies, how important it is that we model this as life long learners, you have to take responsibility and be seen to be doing that. So why would we be spoon-feeding people professional development (Principal E).

Teachers viewed appraisal as threatening and coaching as non-threatening. The coaching process is confidential to the coach and the coachee, so any weaknesses that a teacher may identify as an area for improvement could not be used against a teacher during appraisal. This meant that teachers were able to identify strengths and weakness and the need to develop themselves led to personal accountability. According to Showers (1985) “coaching teams measure their transfer of skills into the workplace and study the effectiveness of their teaching skills and strategies with their students. In this sense, everything is evaluated” (p.46).

Impact of hierarchical structures

The relationship that is developed is one of equals, with teachers having personal responsibility and accountability. However, there appears to be some confusion between

this view of equality and with hierarchy, particularly with the links to supervision. In a supervisory role there is a clear hierarchical structure but in coaching there is an expectation that there is a balance in power in the relationship. One of the challenges that were identified by principals was the time available for coaching observations. The way this was resolved was to use the people who were already released from classroom responsibilities as coaches. These people however were already in leadership roles with an existing hierarchy. It is the power balance in these relationships that need to be managed. When there is a balance of power in these relationships than coaching is compatible with supervision (Showers, 1985).

The way some of these schools had managed the incongruity between the appraisal systems and the coaching process was to have the senior leadership team deal with the attestation process and the rest of the leadership team operate as coaches. In doing it this way they were separating the two aspects of appraisal, teacher development and accountability, without compromising either. The principals and coaches had indicated that a person, who was under direct supervision due to competency procedures being invoked, was not suitable as a coaching candidate. This process was managed separately. Piggot-Irvine (2002) refers to this as a discipline process and stresses the need for someone other than the appraiser to carry out these procedures. This research suggests that the coaching relationship should not be introduced into these proceedings either.

Within a coaching culture the responsibility for growth and development lies with the person being coached. They become accountable to themselves and as a result are accountable to the organisation and the commitment to their professional development.

The idea of the coach is not to come top down, not to tell but to nurture the reflection and to question the reflection, to a deeper level and to act as an accountability side of things (Principal C).

3. Role of leadership associated with coaching

There are many aspects of leadership that could be focussed on when establishing coaching within a school. There is the leadership role that the principal takes, the leadership roles that the deputy principal and middle managers take. The role of the principal is key in establishing and leading a coaching culture. It is the principal who has the big picture view and who will lead the change. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) provide a statement made by Educational Review Office that indicates the importance of the role leaders play in professional learning. They state:

In recent studies, ERO found that where school leaders took an active role in leading and managing professional learning and development, this resulted in well-informed professional discussions based on shared understandings about new practice and new knowledge. One of the most important determinants of schools' effectiveness in managing teaching and learning is the extent to which school leaders know that their investment in professional learning and development is necessary to change teacher practice and improve student outcomes. (Robinson et al., 2009)26

In this Best Evidence Synthesis (BES), Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) identified leadership dimensions and calculated their effect sizes. The five leadership dimensions that have the most impact on the outcomes for students support some of the findings of this research. The leadership dimension that has the most impact on student learning was identified as, “promoting and participating in teacher learning and development”. This dimension is reported in the BES (2009) as having an effect size of 0.8. In this research on coaching of teachers in these seven primary schools, the principals and coaches reported that the success of the programme could be attributed to the fact that everyone was considered a learner. The comment by Coach C indicates this:

I also think that the fact that we all have a goal, It is not just seen that, oh the management don't have any goals at all and they're doing nothing over there. Even though I am with Coach E for my person because we are seen to have a goal and are meeting people too, people think it is more, like you say, fair and

equitable. It is not just top down you lot down here and we're up here and we know it all (Coach C).

If we look at the other four leadership dimensions in order of their effect size, we can see that “establishing goals and expectations” and “planning, coordinating, evaluating teaching and the curriculum” both have an effect size of 0.42. In relation to this research it is the principals who have established the expectation that all teachers take responsibility for their own development and that they work toward improving their practice, in order to improve outcomes for students. The leadership team is responsible for the continued planning, development and review of the programme. It became clear in this research that the participants were well aware of the need for trialling the coaching programme, reviewing and adapting where necessary. The participants indicated that it was important to make sure that every member of the programme had a clear understanding about the concepts of coaching, mentoring and supervision. These three concepts can cause confusion and this confusion can compromise the success of the programme.

The next leadership dimension was “resourcing strategically”, which had an effect size of 0.31. When asking the principals “what the challenges were when introducing coaching?”, they all had indicated that resourcing was one of their biggest challenges. It is the principal who holds the key role in resource distribution in the school (Piggot-Irvine, 2006). Resourcing fell into different categories. The need to ensure that adequate time was allocated to coaching and the need to ensure adequate personnel were available. In order to achieve the goals coaches needed to be released from their normal duties to perform observations to be able to support their coachees, coachees needed time to observe their coaches and other practitioners, coachees and coaches needed time to meet and reflect on these observations. This time could not be done out of school hours and so additional personnel needed to be employed to release these teachers from their normal classroom duties. This had financial implications for the school. The principals had managed this by using the personnel who were already released in some way. However, as previously discussed this was not optimal. They were also funding this from the EHSAS the contract and they were funding the professional development for coaching training with these funds, as well. They were all well aware that the contract would come to an end and in order to sustain the growth they had begun each

principal was trying to find ways to manage this. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) made a comment on resourcing, which supports the problems these principals, have encountered.

Concern is often expressed during improvement projects that, to sustain new practices and gains in student outcomes, continued access to resources is required. Provision of these resources is a bottom line, but meeting it can be problematic when the extra funds associated with a project run out and continued work must be funded from the regular school budget. (p. 115)

Showers (1985) indicate that creative problem solving solutions between principals and teachers can help to overcome these obstacles but without the active support of principals, teachers are unable to establish this themselves.

The fifth leadership dimension that has been identified as having an effect size of 0.27 was “ensure an orderly and supportive environment”. The participants had indicated that it was important to create an environment built on trust, where relationships can be built that ensures the success of the programme. It is the leaders of the school who create this environment. Principal B made this statement:

So there an input required from the leadership perspective about how we can increase the valuing of those people and their growth in the coaching model (Principal B).

A further comment from Principal D indicates how the learning environment is beginning to fit together and connections are being made:

I think for the first time some of the feedback that we have had here is that for a lot of our staff they are seeing all the jigsaw pieces are coming together. That there is a connection between all sorts of things that we are doing now, rather than having a whole lot of stuff happening in sort of side silos and they don't quite know why they are there. Now we have got quite good feedback and good feed-forward going on in the classroom. We have our kids talking about their learning. We have parents

understanding about what that it is all about. We have teachers who are now having conversations amongst themselves about using that same sort of process. And the coaching just builds onto that as well (Principal D).

Piggot-Irvine (2007) states, “It is the leader in the school who fosters a climate of collaboration, collegiality and commitment to development. If the principal models an ethos of self-development, learning and inquiry they almost always enable the development of others”. (p.2)

Summary

The findings show that there a congruity between the themes that have emerged from the literature and the issues that been revealed in the findings. The nature of supervision relationships is an important factor to take into consideration. It is the purpose of supervision that would indicate whether it is compatible with coaching or not. Where a balance of power exists between coach and coachee or teacher and supervisor, and ownership of the learning process lies with the teacher than the two are compatible. However, when the purpose of supervision is evaluative and judgemental than coaching is not compatible with supervision. Showers (1985) emphasises the need to keep these two aspects separate. This does not take away the accountability process but rather allows the accountability to lie with the teacher. Not indicating that leadership needs to abdicate from the role of accountability but rather that they need to have a nurturing and supportive focus, while ensuring personal accountability.

It is the leader of the school who has the greatest influence in establishing a learning culture. Not only do they ensure the prioritising of resources, effective planning but they also led by example. It is the principal who ensures that the programmes for learning and development are linked to the strategic goals of the school (Piggot-Irvine, 2007). It is by planning and participating in the learning and development programme, resourcing effectively, and developing a supportive environment that principals ensure the success of the programme. The focus must remain on improving the outcomes for students.

Professional learning and development that focuses on the outcomes for students should drive the focus for teacher growth. The teacher engagement in the learning process is imperative (Timperley et al., 2007). There needs to be a two-way focus, teachers need to be given the opportunity to hold the power for growth and development and they need to engage in the process of learning. Without both of these there exists an imbalance of power and true growth and development will not take place.

This chapter shows how the data from the findings has revealed the congruence between the issues that were raised in the findings and the themes that emerged in the literature. In the chapter six these will be linked to the research questions presented in chapter one and conclusions and recommendations will be drawn.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter reviews the aims and research questions, summarises the findings in relation to these. Identifies the benefits of coaching and the implications of this for professional learning and leadership. Limitations of this research are discussed and recommendations are made for using coaching as a process to support professional learning and development of teachers.

Aims and research questions

The following is a reminder of the original aims and questions in this research, with an explanation of the structure of this chapter.

Aims

1. To critically examine the understandings of coaching.
2. Investigate practices related to teacher coaching in a cluster of schools within an EHSAS project.
3. To examine the links between coaching, improving teacher effectiveness, and performance appraisal, in seven primary schools.
4. To recommend strategies for improving coaching effectiveness.

Research Questions

The primary research question that is being asked is “Why use coaching as a means to improve teaching practice?” When beginning this research this researcher felt that the word “coaching” appeared to be a buzzword that was being used more frequently at conferences, and in brochures offering professional development opportunities. The principals in this cluster had identified coaching as a means to achieving the aims of the

Extending High Standards Across schools (EHSAS) project. This researcher wanted to know what the underlying principles for this decision was. As discussions with the principals evolved, it appeared that these principals had researched the concept of coaching and did not appear to be swayed by the frequency of the concept being published but rather looked carefully at the concept to see if it would meet their needs for developing the teachers within their schools. Piggot-Irvine (2006) suggests that it is appropriate that programmes for development should be “informed by research and literature” (p. 478). One or two principals admitted that they had been looking at coaching for a long time. From the discussions it appeared as if they were looking for a tool that would move teachers forward in their understanding of certain pedagogies, in this instance Assessment for Learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998), while not being impeded by previous perceptions of mistrust as a result of performance appraisal systems.

The primary research question was supported by four secondary questions, which relate directly to this context.

Secondary Questions

1. What do the principals; coaches and teachers understand about the nature and purpose of coaching?
2. What practices related to teacher coaching are occurring in each of the seven primary schools, to be investigated from three perspectives (principals, teachers and coachees)
3. What links exist between teacher coaching and performance appraisal in these seven schools.
4. What strategies can be recommended for improving outcomes through the coaching process?

The secondary questions contribute to the understanding of the primary question “what is the value of using coaching as a means of improving teaching practice”. Each of the secondary questions will be discussed under the following headings: 1: Participant’s perceptions of coaching, 2: Implementation of coaching, 3: Coaching and performance

appraisal, 4: Strategies for improving outcomes through implementing the coaching process.

1. Participant's perceptions of coaching

This answers the first question: What do principals; coaches and teachers understand about the nature and purpose of coaching? When collecting and analysing the data this researcher realised that the perceptions of the participants had a great impact on their attitude towards coaching. Their perceptions were related not only to their understanding of coaching and what coaching was but also to concepts related to appraisal and their attitude towards professional learning.

The language and terminology that surrounds coaching is often misunderstood because the terminology of coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably (Brockbank & McGill, 2006; Timperley et al., 2007). It became apparent in the focus group with the coachees that there were different understandings of coaching from the different schools. The comments that were made indicated that there were different perceptions of coaching, mentoring and appraisal. What teachers at one school felt was appraisal, teachers at another school called coaching. It appears that all participants reported success of coaching even though different schools have different understandings of what coaching and appraisal were. This indicated that it was important that those who are working within one coaching system have a shared understanding of the concepts involved and that they had shared understanding of what they viewed coaching to be.

Comparisons had been made between coaching and appraisal and the principals had decided to use coaching because their research of coaching indicated that it was a means of developing teachers. There were clear indications from all participants that there was a general dissatisfaction with current appraisal systems, which were meant to develop teachers professionally. It appeared as though it was this negative perception of appraisal that made coaching seem more acceptable. The principals indicated that there was a commonality between the purposes of coaching and the purposes of appraisal, both had a teacher development focus. Coaching did not have the negative connotations associated with evaluation and judgement and the impact on their financial remuneration. Piggot-Irvine (2002) indicates that there is a "current trend in associating

promotion with appraisal” and that this may lead to a sense of injustice. Coaching allowed the teachers the freedom to trial, experiment and reflect on changes in their teaching practices, in a safe forum based on trust. It also facilitated the development of deeper learning.

The participants made comparisons between appraisal and coaching. They identified areas of commonality. They found that both appraisal and coaching have a teacher development focus and that setting goals drove both activities. The participants recognised that there were differences between appraisal and coaching. Firstly they saw appraisal as evaluative and judgemental. This led to teachers setting goals, that were achievable or already achieved, because they did not want to seem to be failing. On the other hand coaching was seen as non-judgemental and this led teachers to take risks in the goals that they set, which led to real growth and deeper learning. Appraisal was seen as top driven and that the onus for learning and change lay with the supervisor. In a coaching relationship the responsibility for growth and development lay with the coachee. The result of this is that the coachee takes personal accountability for their own development. Because teachers perceive appraisal, to be driven from the top there is an imbalance of power in the relationship between the teacher and the supervisor. In an appraisal relationship the authority lies with the supervisor. Therefore the accountability lies with the supervisor. Teachers feel as if they are being told what to do and that they can be punished through remuneration if they are not able to meet the standard, which they feel is subjective and depends on the nature of the relationship with the supervisor. This leads to fear and mistrust. In a coaching relationship there is a balance of power, which is trust based. The onus for development lies with the individual and so does the accountability. Appraisal is based on developing the needs of the organisation where as coaching is based on developing both the needs of the organisation and also the needs of the individual within the organisation. The following table is shows this comparison of the perceptions between coaching and appraisal based on the discussion of the participants.

Table 6.1 A comparison of the participants perceptions of coaching and appraisal

Appraisal	Coaching
Has teacher development focus	Has teacher development focus
Goal based	Goal based
Evaluative	Non-judgemental
Hierarchical indicating imbalance of power	Adult-to-adult relationships indicating balance of power
Onus for learning and development lies with supervisor	Onus for learning and development lies with individual
Fear or mistrust based	Trust based
Based on organisational needs	Based on contextual needs of individual within the organisation

2. Implementation of coaching

The implementation approach of schools answers the question “what practices related to teacher coaching are occurring in each of the seven primary school to be investigated from three perspectives (principals, teachers and coachees)”. The indications from principals were that the implementation process needed to take a softly-softly approach. In order to ensure the success of the programme some schools has started coaching with a trial approach, working with a small group of teachers first. This helped to develop shared understandings about coaching with the whole staff as they shared their learning. The principals had wanted to iron out any difficulties before rolling out coaching to the whole school. All principals recognised that relationships needed to build on trust in order to ensure the success of the programme.

The principal’s focus was on teacher development and seeking ways to improve the effectiveness of teachers in order to enhance outcomes for students. This is consistent with the literature on teacher professional learning and the process can be seen in Figure 2.1. In their discussions they wanted a process where the locus of control lay with the teacher. In this way principals recognised the need to build relationship trust by addressing the imbalances of power between those in leadership roles and the teachers

(Robinson et al., 2009). They had agreed with researchers such as Kane and Mallon (2006) who state, “the key to professional development appears to lie in ensuring individual teachers’ commitment to ongoing learning with the goal of enhancing performance” (p. viii). This commitment to learning needed to give teachers ownership for their learning. A complicating factor was that the implementation strategies that these schools used to resolve the financial restraints of employing additional staff to release coaches, was to let the people who were already in leadership positions become the coaches. This confused the coaching role with the supervisory role in the existing hierarchy. The schools solved this by ensuring that different people carried out different roles, in other words your supervisor was not your coach or by having clear delineation of the difference processes and the outcomes expected from each. This meant that a coach who was also a supervisor had to ensure that the teacher they were working with clearly established the role they were taking in discussions. They might start a meeting by saying “as your supervisor....” or “as your coach tell me....”.

Comments from the principals indicated that they felt that coaching was not a programme that can be transported from one school to another. They felt there were many contributing factors such as the culture of the school, leadership style and contextual situation, which led to the success of the programme. All schools in this cluster had participated in previous professional development opportunities, which they felt, had led into coaching. An example that was given was Assessment for learning professional development where teachers were observed and given feedback. They felt that this had made teachers accustomed to the observations and feedback cycle used in coaching.

3. Coaching and performance appraisal

This answers the third question, namely what are the links between coaching and performance appraisal. Performance appraisal is a tool used in the evaluation of performance, which falls under the umbrella of supervision. In the previous chapter three areas relating to supervision were discussed. These were the participant’s perceptions of appraisal, the concept of the locus of control and the nature of hierarchy in a supervisory situation. As indicated by Showers (1985) there are some similarities between the purposes of coaching and appraisal. While coaching has a development focus, appraisal has at its core the dual purpose of development and accountability.

According to Piggot-Irvine the mandated guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1998) gave status to the accountability process and separated it from the development process. This document over emphasised the evaluative process lending itself to be a checklist against a set of standards rather than a developmental tool for which teachers could improve their performance based on the outcomes for students. As Showers (1985) indicates this evaluation judges the adequacy of the person not the impact the teacher is having on student outcomes. She further reiterates that when there is a partnership of which the expected outcome is development of teachers and that the relationship offers a balance of power then coaching and supervision are compatible.

It is this balance of power in the relationship relates to the concept of locus of control. In this research the principals wanted to establish a system where relationships were considered adult-to-adult, and where the locus for control for learning and development lay with the teacher. In this instance appraisal can be successful if the evaluations that are made are based on outcomes for students, that teachers hold themselves personally accountable to these and that they base their professional learning on the needs that will improve those outcomes. However it must be noted and possibly explored further in additional research, that the differences between coaching and appraisal may not necessarily lie in the purpose or process of appraisal but rather in the terminology and the perceptions surrounding that terminology.

4. Strategies for improving outcomes through the coaching process

This question was asked directly of principals; what strategies can be recommended for improving outcomes through the coaching process? Their indications were that there is no simple solution and that coaching in one school cannot be imposed on another. It is a process that needs time to evolve and develop, and to become part of the culture of the school. However the nature of the leadership team and in particular the principal has an important role in ensuring the success of the coaching process. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyde (2009) identify several leadership dimensions that have impact on outcomes for students. The dimension with the highest impact was for leaders to promote and participate in teacher learning and development. This research sees examples of leaders

being coached themselves and even peer coaching of each other in order to promote teacher learning. Their purpose was to improve outcomes for students through improving teacher effectiveness, which they were doing through coaching. Some principals indicated that they felt that the link between coaching as a means of improving teachers effectiveness and student outcomes was somewhat tenuous but that they had a gut feel that it was there. One principal encouraged the teachers to show how the outcomes from student performance were evidence in the success of the coaching development. This was also used as these teachers' performance appraisal indicators. This researcher felt that further development was needed to support teachers in linking their developmental goals to improving outcomes for students. That links between students outcomes and goal setting for teachers needed to be more explicit and have a short term development focus. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) advocate the use of a teacher inquiry and knowledge build cycle in order to promote valued student outcomes. This has been presented in Figure 2.1. in chapter 2

The findings of this research show that teachers' professional learning is enhanced when it is based in the context of their classroom, when they are given opportunities to reflect on their practice in a safe trust-based relationship. Coaching can be used as an appraisal tool provided that the evaluation focus and development focus are dealt with separately, preferably by a different person or in a different process. A recommendation would be to design an appraisal tool where there are clear links between student outcomes, teacher development and accountability using an inquiry cycle.

In this research three cycles have been identified which impact on outcomes for students. These are the teacher inquiry cycle based on a teacher inquiry model (Figure 2.1) as advocated by Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007), presented in chapter 2, an appraisal cycle and a coaching cycle. All three cycles are not mutually exclusive to one another and can be developed to support each other. The appraisal cycle can sit behind the cycle of teacher enquiry, where the teacher's developmental needs are clearly based on those of the students and their outcomes. When the organisational goals are based on outcomes for students then these can also inform the strategic goals of the school and also the appraisal goals of teachers. According to Piggot-Irvine (2006) the link between strategic planning and teacher development lies in appraisal and should

be aligned and resourced appropriately. Once these appraisal goals have been set a teacher needs to work with their coach to design a developmental plan with tasks and experiences that will support the teachers learning.

As a result of these tasks and experiences goals that will be set where the teacher indicates what strategies they will use within their classroom. This may take the form of an action research cycle (Piggot-Irvine, 2006). The coach acts as a mirror enabling the teacher to reflect on their practice in a structured way that focuses the impact on the outcomes for students.

Limitations of research

While a tremendous amount of rich information was gathered during this research and the participants indicated that it was a positive process there were some limitations. The first limitation was time. If each participant was interviewed individually than a comparative analysis of the data between the different groups of participants could have been made. However, due to time constraints focus groups were selected as a tool for interviewing the coaches and coachees. This proved to be the biggest limitation. Using focus groups gave the participants the opportunity to feel comfortable in answering questions and also enabled them to generate further thinking. However, because of the nature of a focus group, a statement from one participant could and did lead the discussion off at a tangent. This did not enable the researcher to explore ideas further and some of the concepts that were covered were covered superficially. Also when a participant voiced an opinion on something there was no clear indication of the consensus of ideas. Nodding of heads cannot always be assumed to be agreement. So this researcher could not identify how many participants had views on a particular subject or how strongly they felt about it. Another limitation was that the participants had different motivations for participating in this research. Some indicated that they were so enthusiastic about their experiences of coaching that they were happy to talk to anyone about it. Other participants seemed more reserved and possibly sceptical. This tended to influence the line of discussion particularly with the coachees. However, all participants in the focus groups expressed their satisfaction with the process and indicated that they

did not often get to talk about their practice with practitioners from other schools, where the express purpose is to talk about their practice. Usually they met on a social basis and did not want to “talk shop”.

Recommendations

There are three main recommendations that are relevant to particular audiences. The first recommendation has four part sub-recommendations.

Recommendation 1

This is a four part recommendation is for principals. Firstly it is important to have a clear understanding of the role that leadership plays in planning and implementing a professional learning programme for teachers. While the principal plays an important part in planning and implementing programmes within the school, the greatest impact on student learning is for the principal to take an active role in not only the planning but also participating in the professional development programme.

Secondly, it is the principal who sets the scene for giving teachers the opportunity to hold the balance of power for growth and development and so that they are able to engage in the process of learning. Without teachers taking ownership for their learning true growth and development will not take place.

Thirdly it is the principal that establishes a learning culture in the school. For coaching to be successful there needs to be a culture of trust and respect. It is by planning and participating in the learning and development programmes, resourcing effectively, and developing a supportive environment that principals ensure the success of the programme.

The fourth recommendation is about transparency. Principals need to ensure that the process when introducing coaching is transparent, particularly when it comes to decisions about who will be coached and who their coach will be. While these decisions ultimately are the prerogative of the principal in order to build trust these decisions need to be transparent.

Recommendation 2

The next recommendation is for any person involved in a coaching programme. This recommendation lies in the language that surrounds coaching, mentoring and supervision. It is important that all participants have a shared understanding of the concepts surrounding coaching.

Recommendation 3

This recommendation is for future researchers. Further research needs to be undertaken to explore the links between coaching and outcomes for students. While participants indicated that they felt that the coaching programme was working, the link to student outcomes is still rather tenuous. The success of the coaching programme has been reported during this EHSAS project, has been measured by outcomes such as teachers demonstrating teacher engagement, reflective thinking, changes in teacher practice and enhanced quality of teaching and learning. Piggot-Irvine (2006) indicates that it is important to evaluate the success of a programme based on multiple sources of information that focuses on outcomes for students.

Final word

Teachers report that coaching has helped them focus on “teacher talk” that is based on pedagogy and improving their effectiveness by focusing on outcomes for students. Coaches and principals report that coaching has moved the culture of the school closer to learning centred environment where teachers are passionate and enthusiastic about what they do and are willing to share this enthusiasm with others. As principal E stated

What we have achieved is more to do with personalised learning setting our selves up for a culture of coaching and having far more natural discussions of teaching and learning, that is far more focused on and relates to life long learning for students and staff (Principal E).

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Principals

1. Why use coaching as a method for improving teaching practice?
2. Had you had any exposure to coaching prior to the EHSAS contract and if so, how did this influence your decision to implement coaching?
3. What was the professional learning goal you hoped to achieve through using coaching?
4. What links (if any) have been identified between teacher coaching and performance appraisal. Where links have been identified, how have you managed this?
5. How did you implement coaching in your school? Please describe the process followed.
6. What procedures would you replicate?
7. What training have the coaches had?
8. How well do you think coaching is working in your school and what positive outcomes have been achieved as a result?
9. What challenges did you face in achieving your professional learning goal(s) through coaching?
10. What strategies can be recommended for improving outcomes through the coaching process?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. Why is coaching being used as a method for improving teaching practice?
2. How is this being implemented?
3. Had you had any exposure to coaching prior to the EHSAS contract and if so, how did this influence your situation?
4. What professional learning goal(s) did you expect to achieve through coaching?
5. What links (if any) have been identified between teacher coaching and performance appraisal. Where links have been identified, how have you/your school managed this?
6. How was coaching implemented in your school? Please describe the process followed.
7. What was the selection process for matching teacher to coach?
8. How well do you think coaching is working in your school and what positive outcomes have been achieved as a result?
9. What challenges did you face in achieving your professional learning goal(s) through coaching?
10. What strategies can be recommended for improving outcomes through the coaching process?