

0355

## The Impact of a Successful Co-coaching Relationship Between Novice Teacher and University Lecturer.

Nichola Callander, Jonathan Webster

*Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire, United Kingdom*

### Background

The transition from trainee to newly qualified teacher in England is supported in schools by the mentoring systems of the induction year. It is at this point that the practical demands of a new teaching role can have an impact on the continued development of reflective practice. Intranor and Kunzman (2009) suggest that when the demands of simply 'surviving' in a particular teaching context take over, with the day to day management of 'practice' often eclipsing any attempt to consider 'theory', it becomes difficult for the teacher to maintain a level of reflective practice.

If we accept Intranor and Kunzman's suggestion concerning the impact of day to day teaching on a practitioner's ability and inclination to reflect on and consequently develop their practice, we might also consider the extent to which a lecturer, who is increasingly disconnected from this conflict in their own practice, can be truly authentic in their attempts to prepare a trainee for a reflective approach to their own professional development.

This paper examines the potential difficulties faced by both novice teachers and experienced Initial Teacher Training (ITT) lecturers in maintaining an authentic connectedness to reflective practice and reports the findings of a case study of the co-coaching relationship between a university lecturer in ITT and a novice teacher.

### Research Questions

McGatha (2008) suggests that the aim of any coaching relationship is to support a teacher in becoming self directed in his quest for continued professional development and independently reflective to support that quest. The transformational power of coaching, Hughes (2007) notes, is largely due to the personalised support which facilitates opportunities for personal development through self and peer assessment.

In this study both the teacher, a male graduate in his second year of teaching, and a senior lecturer in primary and early years education with 4 years Higher Education experience preceded by 15 years of experience as a classroom teacher, began with individual research focuses. The teacher was eager to develop his approach to planning, teaching and assessment in his Early Years Foundation Stage class. The lecturer had as her focus the development of approaches to supporting early writing. This paper reports on the nature of the professional relationship that successfully supported this parallel work as the teacher and the lecturer challenged and encouraged each other.

Using a qualitative approach to the research process this paper considers both the potential **impact** of this co-coaching relationship on the praxis and practice of each individual and the factors contributing to its **success**. In addition, the study aims to consider how this approach might more widely be applied as part of the professional development 'journey' of both novice teachers and university lecturers in education.

### Methods

A case study approach (Bassey, 1999) was taken in relation to the focus on the co-coaching relationship. The lecturer kept a reflective journal throughout the study which

- recorded conversations conducted face-to-face, by e mail and via SMS systems;
- summarised the development of the discussion in meetings;
- recorded the lecturer's reflections on conversations and experiences;
- included the teacher's written responses to the lecturer's reflections.

The journal recorded the development of the double strands of the action research into the participants' individual focuses but it also provided data which informed of the developing co-coaching relationship. The participants reflected periodically on the progress of this professional relationship and its various impacts through reflective conversations. They were also able to identify and reflect on the qualities of the relationship that served to make it successful.

## **Frame**

Existing research into coaching relationships identifies a continuum of support which moves from 'consultation', with the coach acting as a more experienced, more knowledgeable and skilled specialist; to 'collaboration' with coach and teacher working together towards a common goal; and finally to 'coaching' where

'... the role of the coach is to mediate the teacher's thinking through the use of intentional questioning strategies.' (McGatha, 2008:141)

Studies also focus on defining the coaching approach (Lord et al, 2008) and considering the potential benefits to the participants, both teacher and coach (Intrator and Kunzman, 2009; Ashraf and Rarieya, 2008). This study aims to explore a co-coaching relationship where the 'power' is more equally balanced between the participants and to offer further insights into the defining qualities that might make this type of relationship successful in promoting improvements to practice.

A further focus is on the nature of 'reflection' and its impact on practice. Intrator and Kunzman (2009) in particular discuss 'grounded practice' and the impact of the study on the university lecturer and her students when she is involved in working 'on the ground' in real classrooms with real teachers and taking on a teaching responsibility is considered. Ashraf and Rarieya (2008) also contemplate the nature and impact of reflective conversations on practice and this study will present further analysis.

## **Research findings**

This paper describes work in progress regarding an exploration of the impact and nature of a successful co-coaching relationship. As such it seeks to offer perspectives on how professional relationships of this type can have an impact on the quality and relevance of ITT programmes.

## **Bibliography**

Ashraf, H. And Rarieya, J. F. A. (2008) Teacher development through reflective conversations - possibilities and tensions: a Pakistan case. *Reflective Practice*. 9 (3), pp. 269-279.

Bassey, M. (1999) *Case Study Research in Educational Settings* Maidenhead: Open University Press

Hughes, S. (2007) A coaching approach to supporting reflective practice, *The Proceedings of the 17th Annual Conference of the European Teacher Education Network*, University of Greenwich

Intrator, S.M. and Kunzman, R. (2009) Grounded: Practicing What We Preach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60 (5), pp. 512-519.

Lord, P., Atkinson, M. and Mitchell, H. (2008) *Mentoring and coaching for professionals: a study of the research evidence*. London: NFER.

McGatha, M. (2008) Levels of engagement in establishing coaching relationships. *Teacher Development*, 12 (2), pp. 139-150.