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Editorial

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This sixth Special Issue presents the proceedings from the Oxford Brookes University Coaching and Mentoring conference, held on 19 January 2012. The IJECM is pleased to continue to provide a platform for early career researchers in the field, as well as for newly established evidence-based practitioners, to disseminate their research findings among a wide audience of experts, academics, and alumni.

Students who study for the MA in Mentoring and Coaching Practice or the Doctoral Programme at Oxford Brookes University are not traditional students. They are almost always professionals, often already with an established coaching or consulting career who, in looking to develop their professional knowledge, combine working life with study. This gives most research a distinctive personal practice orientation. However, as coaching takes place in a wide variety of organisations, students come to their research projects with hugely varied interests and research inquiries too; this Special Issue is testament to this.

As the coaching conference was a research conference, presenting students were asked to dedicate a good part of their presentation to research methodology. In the case of Wendy Wilson, her presentation was focussed on her methodology in a study on global mindedness. She therefore starts this issue off with a detailed description of 'doing' constructive grounded theory chronicling her own journey as a novice grounded theorist and reflecting on the choices and challenges faced at each stage of this type of research process. The purpose of the research study itself was to explore the concept of global mindedness and to assess the existing awareness and interpretation of the global mindedness construct from within the domain of the coaching profession.

This issue includes a number of articles which share an overarching theme of *coaching in a certain context*. Eva Kiss conducted a heuristic research placing the phenomenon of expatriation into a developmental context and explored how cultural relocation may contribute towards individuals' post-conventional ego-development. The expansion of the phenomenon due to the accelerated process of globalisation has resulted in an increasing need for a better understanding of cross-cultural transitions. The research initiated a qualitative observation of six expatriates' transition and developmental experiences. It proposes a holistic developmental approach to coaching expatriates, including characteristic developmental themes identified in the research participants' stories

Paul Duncan's original topic looks at the beliefs of Christian coaches and how these influenced coaching practice. To explore this question, a qualitative research method based on an Interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) was used and data was collected from five coaches using semi-structured interviews. Four master themes were identified through the analysis of the data: the sense of personal identity of the coach, having a Christian worldview, additional resources brought to the coaching session and finally, the unique pressures that were experienced. An implication arising from this study is a required awareness in current coach-training practice of identification and possible integration of the beliefs, values and worldview of the coach.

The concluding article within the theme of coaching in a certain context is that of Claudia Filsinger who explores the influence that maternity coaching has on how women re-engage with their

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career development after maternity leave. The study is based on a case study of maternity coaching in three UK based private law firms. Three key career re-engagement factors were identified: 'work', 'relationships' and 'role models'. Maternity coaching was found to influence these factors by supporting women during the return to work phase at an emotional level, a practical level and through long-term career development reflections.

A second overarching theme is that of a particular *approach to coaching*. The next four articles look at existentialism, strength-based coaching, the change paradox and psychometrics, respectively. Anne Kongsted Krum combines existentialism and coaching to explore work-related stress. Stress remains a significant problem in contemporary society causing people to take sick leave and early retirement. An existential approach can enhance coaching for people who experience work-related stress. It reports on an action research project involving six participants in coaching over a four month period. It was designed to explore how a coach can develop and sustain an existential attitude and learn from the use of interventions derived from existential philosophy. Findings suggest that existential coaching can be a way of reducing stress by helping clients understand that openness to experience is a way of gaining insight into their need for control.

Kathy Toogood's particular approach is strengths-based coaching. She observes that whilst there is evidence that focusing on strengths is beneficial, there is scant research within a coaching context and literature offers limited practical guidance. This phenomenological analysis study investigates six executive coaches' beliefs about the practice and impact of strengths-based coaching. The findings reveal what motivates the coaches to focus on strengths, including a high sense of coach authenticity, suggesting that there might be benefits for both client *and* coach. The paper also discusses the coaches' beliefs about the unique contribution to coaching outcomes and offers insights into the strengths-based coaching 'recipe'.

Research shows that a desired change, even when attempted is not always sustained; this is the change paradox. Using a heuristic methodology Roz Munro's study focused on the experiences of six co-researchers as they explored their own change paradox within a coaching setting using the Immunity to Change process. The findings were fused into a synthesis of all the experiences where this dynamic "flow of change" incorporated the emergent themes: recognising the need for change; the familiarity of this change; methods of support needed for maintaining the change.

The coaching approach theme ends with Tina Buckle's research, which explores the coach and coachee's experience of psychometrics in coaching with specific reference to the conversation and the relationship. Three coaches and three coachees were recruited and IPA informed the data collection and analysis. The results indicate that psychometrics affect the speed at which issues are accessed, the depth at which coach and coachee work and the nature of their discussions. The relationship emerges as the most critical aspect of the coaching and potentially a pre-requisite to the introduction of a psychometric.

Two articles on coaching from an *identity perspective* are those by Joy Butcher and Alice Stapleton. Joy Butcher explored the beliefs and assumptions executive coaches hold about their coachees' identities and how they perceive that this affects their coaching practice. The research explored how coaches approach the construction of personal identities through the life narrative. The methodology adopted was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). The findings indicate that coaches recognise that their coachees hold multiple and shifting identities including professional, social and personal identities. Coaches tended to see identity as a "subtext" to their coaching practice.

Alice Stapleton's article is on the subject of the prominent experience of the quarter-life crisis to increase coaching knowledge in this area. This study develops the understanding of the quarter-life crisis by challenging the potentially outdated work of Erikson (1980) and Levinson (1978). Effective coaching approaches and tools for quarter-life clients are also explored. A qualitative survey was

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conducted using semi-structured interviews, which found that the prominent challenges this group faces are around identity; experiencing independence; pressure from self and others; and feelings of uncertainty and depression. Effective coaching approaches and tools are those that offer the client direction and focus; the opportunity to set goals, action plan and learn new skills; that seek to develop the client's self-awareness, develop their confidence, their ability to view the situation from an alternative perspective and to reflect on a regular basis.

Finally, we are very pleased to include two articles by students who have just completed the Doctoral programme. Both articles approach their topics within *coaching a certain professional group*. Joan Reid's thesis looked at coaching medical doctors. Recent changes to medical career pathways have resulted in the introduction of a range of career support activities by medical education organisations. This research took a case study approach to consider how coaching can support doctors to make career choices. Data was collected through interviews with 18 participants. The findings have been combined into a career coaching framework for working with doctors.

Linda Neal's PhD took a client perspective and a grounded theory approach to investigate how new secondary school headteachers use coaching and mentoring. Six newly appointed headteachers in England were interviewed three times during their first year in post. The article reports one aspect of the findings, namely how newly appointed secondary school headteachers access their coaching and mentoring support. Member checks undertaken with experienced coaches indicate that research findings could be transferable to other circumstances and sectors.

Birgit den Outer, June 2012.