Teachers' experiences of an introductory coaching training workshop in Scotland: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Abstract

Objectives: This study sought to explore teachers' experiences of a coaching psychology intervention — an introductory coaching training workshop that included a positive psychology intervention and episodes of narrative-collaborative group coaching.

Design: A qualitative design was applied to explore the participants' experiences. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Method: The study took place in Scotland, where revised teaching standards require school leaders to use coaching skills. The participants were five teachers who had attended the workshop. Data collection was through semi-structured interviews.

Results: Two main themes emerged from the analysis. The first theme, 'Learning with others — the value of collaboration', had two sub-themes: 'Working with a partner made it real' and 'Feeling part of the group'. The second theme, 'Reflection — the value of time to think' had three sub-themes: 'Myself as coach and coachee', 'Coaching and other people', and 'Making plans to start coaching and sharing'.

Conclusions: The participants reported that their learning was enhanced by collaborating with others and having time for reflection. The limitations of the study are discussed and areas for future research are proposed.

Keywords: coaching in education; coaching psychology; coaching training; GROW; interpretative phenomenological analysis, narrative-collaborative group coaching; positive psychology, Scotland, teacher.

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Introduction

Coaching psychologists would do well to strive to combine the needs
for both high impact relevance and academic rigour in their work,
thus meeting the call for more pragmatic science that genuinely
serves the needs of researchers and practitioners while also adding to
our knowledge corpus. (Linley & Harrington, 2008, p. 52)

This study strives to follow Linley and Harrington's advice by addressing the gap in our knowledge about teachers' experiences of taking part in coaching training programmes. Such knowledge is especially relevant for practitioners in Scotland, where the study took place. From August 2014, the General Teaching Council for Scotland's (GTCS) revised system of professional update for teachers (2013) has required all school leaders to use coaching and mentoring to support colleagues with professional review and development (PRD). Therefore it could serve the needs of researchers and practitioners to know more about teachers' experiences of learning how to coach. This study explores five teachers' experiences of an introductory coaching training workshop.

The topic of the study is coaching, at the non-directive end of the directive—non-directive continuum (Pask & Joy, 2007 p. 246), and not mentoring which is more directive (Ives, 2008, p. 100).

This paper reviews the literature on coaching in education and identifies the need for the study. The method section includes a description of the phenomenon, details of the research design, and the rationale for selecting interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) for data analysis. The results are summarised and discussed, drawing on the literature review and introducing relevant new literature. Limitations of the study are described. The paper concludes by suggesting implications for practitioners, and proposing further research.

Literature Review

The review of the literature considers evidence about the benefits of coaching in education. The context of coaching in education in Scotland is then described.

Coaching in Education

Coaching in education involves both educators and learners and has been defined by van Nieuwerburgh (2012) as:

> a one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate. (p. 17)

This literature review looks at the coaching of educators only, and not the coaching of learners.

UK guidance on coaching has evolved from definitions of coaching and mentoring (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education, 2005; Department for Education and Skills, 2003), to advice and resources for practitioners (Creasy & Paterson, 2005; GTCS, 2014a, 2014b; Lofthouse *et al.*, 2010; National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014; Scottish College for Educational Leadership, 2014). For example Creasy and Paterson (2005) have advised school leaders 'first develop yourself' (p. 23); and Suggett (2006) has commented on the importance of coaching being sponsored by senior leaders (p. 13). Lofthouse *et al.* (2010) have acknowledged that long-term resourcing is required (p. 36).

Peer-reviewed research on professional coaching for educators is somewhat limited (Grant *et al.*, 2010, p.153) and three examples are given next. First, evidence has shown that coaching has the capacity to improve learning and teaching, the core business of schools, through peer coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1996, p. 15), and through 'instructional coaching' (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The second example relates to a study of high school teachers who were coached using a cognitive behavioural, solution focused framework (Grant, 2003), and the coaching process GROW (Whitmore, 2009, pp. 53—57). In this study, Grant *et al.* (2010) have found that coaching can lead to enhanced self-reported leadership and communication styles (p.162). Third, in a review of research into coaching in education Cornett and Knight (2008) have found evidence that coaching after professional development leads to improvements in implementation rates (p. 209).

Increasingly, coaching approaches based on positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) are used in education. Positive education (Green *et al.*, 2012), embracing positive psychology and coaching psychology, aims to use coaching approaches and curricular programmes to enhance resilience, positivity, engagement and meaning. Seligman *et al.* (2009) have described evidence of its success. Fredrickson (2001) has shown that positive emotions broaden people's thought—action repertoires (p. 224), which could be of interest to coaching in education.

In line with broader leadership literature about the power of conversations (Cavanagh, 2013; Jackson & Waldman, 2011), Gross Cheliotes and Flemming Reilly (2010) observe that coaching conversations need not be formal. Referring to the solution-focused nature of coaching, they have pointed out that 'coach-like' conversations have the power to transform school cultures (p. xiii).

Coaching in Scottish Education

This research study is set in Scotland, where the 'distinctiveness' of education has been noted (Arnott & Ozga, 2010; Bryce & Humes, 2008; Ozga, 2005; Raffe, 2004). Experiential learning as a form of teacher learning in Scottish schools has increased in prevalence for two reasons. First, HM Inspectorate of Education (2009) have found a reduction in the number of externally-offered professional development courses being offered, caused by budget cuts, requiring schools to find innovative approaches to teacher learning (p. 18). Second, there is now an understanding that historic informal teacher learning activities such as collaboration and the 'listening ear' are powerful approaches to teacher development (Forde, 2011, p. 18). Therefore experiential methodologies such as coaching, mentoring, peer-supported learning and

professional learning communities have become more widespread. One example is the Flexible Route to Headship (Education Scotland, 2014), a leadership development programme for aspirant head teachers which includes support from a coach who is also head teacher of another school. Exploring the role and experiences of these coaches, Forde *et al.* (2013) have described their 'multi-faceted role' of coach, mentor, tutor and assessor (p. 106).

In his major review of teacher education — *Teaching Scotland's Future* — Donaldson (2010) has recognised the value of flexible approaches to professional learning (p. 96). Among its recommendations, the review has established the necessity of a refreshed system of professional review and development (PRD) based on self-evaluation against standards, where it is a professional requirement and an entitlement to engage in career-long learning. The Scottish model of PRD is not a performance review, and is not related to competence and discipline matters. The reviewer (school leader) and the reviewee (teacher) meet to discuss the impact of the teacher's professional learning experiences during the previous year, then plan learning for the next year, building on the teacher's self-evaluation and taking account of their learning aspirations and the priorities of the school improvement plan. From August 2014, the system of Professional Update (GTCS, 2013) requires the reviewer to use coaching and mentoring approaches in this meeting, consistent with the revised Standards for Leadership and Management (GTCS, 2012, pp. 12—20). In addition, teachers are required to confirm every five years that they regularly self-evaluate their practice against the professional standards, and engage in ongoing professional learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review of the literature has found an upward trend in the use of coaching in education, and evidence of its benefits. In Scotland, a coaching approach to leadership and management has been embedded in professional standards and professional update, which is likely to lead to an increase in teacher demand for coaching training. However, this review has not found any literature about the individual experiences of teachers who are learning how to coach.

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Method

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The study is a phenomenological inquiry into five teachers' personal experiences of an introductory coaching training workshop. This section describes the workshop and the sample. The rationale for using IPA for the study is explained. The process for collecting and analysing data is given, and reflexivity is explored.

The Phenomenon

The phenomenon was a two-hour introductory coaching training workshop for teachers, covering basic coaching skills and the GROW model (Whitmore, 2009, pp. 53—57). In September 2013 the workshop took place seven times to accommodate teachers (both school leaders and unpromoted teachers in mixed groups) taking part in the area's pilot programme

for revised PRD procedures, as described in the literature review. Group size ranged from 5 to 26 people. The workshop facilitator was the researcher.

Stelter *et al.* (2011) have suggested that narrative-collaborative group coaching could be used by teachers to reflect on professional challenges. The group coaching design of the workshop aimed to encourage collaborative meaning-making about coaching, recognising that the presenter did not have a monopoly on knowledge (Stelter, 2013). Written by the researcher and peer-reviewed by an experienced former colleague, the content included:

- icebreaker to generate positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001);
- coaching definitions and evidence of impact;
- how coaching can be used in PRD meetings;
- a short unrehearsed demonstration, where the facilitator used GROW to coach a volunteer from the group on a real issue;
- practising coaching with a partner;
- planning next steps; and
- invitation to participate in the research project related to this study.

The Participants

Eight workshop participants expressed an interest in taking part in the research and were given a letter of invitation and consent form, and the opportunity to ask questions. Of those eight, three chose not to proceed, and five were recruited as participants for the study. Table 1 gives a profile of each participant.

Table 1 — The participants in the study

Partici-pant	Post	Teaching Experience	Promoted Post Experience	Ethnicity	Gender	Coaching Experience
P1	Primary teacher	2 years	-	White Scottish	Female	None
P2	Primary teacher	6 years	-	White Scottish	Female	None
P3	Secondary teacher	6 years	-	White Scottish	Female	None
P4	Primary head teacher	19 years	14 years	White Scottish	Female	Had been coached
P5	Primary head teacher	29 years	18 years	White Scottish	Female	Had used solution-focused approaches in previous school

The Choice of IPA for Data Analysis

IPA aims to explore and understand the meaning of an experience from the participant's point of view (Smith & Osborn, 2004). This matches the intention of the study — to gain a rich idiographic account of the participants' individual experiences. Although social constructionism is relevant — participants were influenced by interactions with others, as they engaged with the group coaching approach — the overriding epistemological position for the research is phenomenological, acknowledging that each participant had a unique and valid perception of the workshop.

First, a qualitative approach was chosen over quantitative. Qualitative research aims to access the participants' world and meanings, while quantitative research takes a realist epistemological position (Coyle, 2007, p. 12).

Second, IPA was chosen over other qualitative approaches. Braun and Clarke (2006) note similarities between thematic analysis and IPA (p. 83). However, while thematic analysis is descriptive, IPA is highly interpretative. Therefore IPA is more suitable for gaining deep insights into participants' experiences, for example in the studies by Bramley and Eatough (2005); Gyllensten and Palmer (2006); Gyllensten *et al.* (2010); Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000); and van Nieuwerburgh and Tong (2013). In addition, the study did not intend to direct the analysis towards theory development, as required in grounded theory (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

IPA recognises hermeneutics (Smith *et al.*, 2009, pp. 21—29), the skill of interpreting the participant's words and behaviour during the interview. There is a double hermeneutic because, while the participant is interpreting their own experience and putting it into words, the researcher is making their own meaning of the participant's words while attempting to resist influence from their own experiences. To address the risk of bias, emerging themes were repeatedly checked to ensure they were represented in the transcript (Jarman *et al.*, 1997).

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The researcher met each participant individually, with interview length ranging from 59 minutes to one hour 44 minutes.

In order to give participants the opportunity to tell their own story in their own words (Brocki & Weardon, 2006, pp. 90—91), retrieval cues were selected to help them access their episodic memory of their experiences (Tulving & Pearlstone, 1966). They were invited to look at the presentation slides again individually. For each slide they were asked the main question in the interview schedule: *What were you thinking and feeling at that time?*, then given time to think (Kline, 1999) and to reply. There was a potential risk that this set of cues would not help participants' recall, especially if they had encoded the information in a different way (Watkins & Tulving, 1975), for example through the sights, sounds and smells of the workshop venue. However, since it was not possible to return to the venue, the presentation slides were offered, and participants were given a choice about using them.

After each interview, notes were taken in a journal, reflecting on initial impressions of interaction with the participant (Smith *et al.,* 2009, p. 73).

The researcher transcribed each interview, adding non-verbal data about pauses and laughter. The transcript included start and stop times for each interviewee comment, line numbers and page numbers, and wide margins for exploratory comments and thoughts about emergent themes.

Analysis

Analysis — reflective journal. Throughout the analysis, reflective notes were made in a journal. The notes evolved throughout the process, covering the researcher's reaction to thoughts about themes which might be emerging.

Analysis — exploratory comments. While being read and re-read, each transcript was analysed individually (Smith *et al*., 2009, p. 82). Exploratory comments were added on three levels — descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual coding which was often interrogative (Smith *et al*., 2009, p. 84, p. 88).

Analysis — emergent themes. The exploratory comments for the first transcript were reviewed and patterns were explored to compile a list of emergent themes, which were noted on post-it notes on a board to be clustered into provisional superordinate themes and sub-themes. These emergent themes and related quotations were also collated in a spreadsheet, with further reflections. As recommended by Bainger (2011) the script was re-read to ensure that the themes were represented in the transcript, and not a result of the researcher's bias (p. 37). Relevant missed quotations or themes were added. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that themes should 'capture something important in relation to the overall research question' (p. 82), so themes were not necessarily dependent on prevalence. A concept map of the participant's provisional superordinate themes and sub-themes was compiled. The above process was repeated for each of the transcripts individually. Cross-references and clusters of themes were sought by examining the five concept maps, the display board and the spreadsheets of quotations, until two superordinate themes and their sub-themes were identified.

The results. Quotations were selected to illustrate the results. The analysis continued during the writing phase (Smith, 1995, p. 24).

Ethical Principles

Throughout the study, the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) was followed. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London.

Reflexivity

Creswell (2003) stated, 'One cannot escape the personal interpretations brought to qualitative analysis' (p. 182). The researcher had previously been a school leader, had written and facilitated the workshop, and would also conduct the interviews. Therefore, it was essential to take actions to minimise the effect of bias, congruent with Corrie's (2013) observation that evidence-based practice is most helpful when understood as 'a context for learning and discovery, rather than justification'.

According to the 'simultaneity principle' of appreciative coaching, the act of asking a question effects a change (Clancy & Binkert, 2010, p. 15). Therefore interview questions were neutral. Throughout the study, reflection on conscious and unconscious construction of the data was supported through the use of a reflexive journal, and regular discussions with the researcher's supervisor, checking that analysis was well-founded on the transcripts. After completion of the study, individual meetings with participants confirmed that the findings reflected their experiences. Acknowledging the difficulty of total bracketing of bias, the reflexive journal was maintained until the report was complete.

Results

The results are presented through the themes shown in Table 2.

Table 2 — The themes in the coaches' experiences

Superordinate Theme	Sub-theme
1. Learning with others — the value of collaboration	Learning: Working with a partner made it real Learning: Feeling part of the group
2. Reflection — the value of having time to think	Reflection: Myself as a coach, and myself as a coachee Reflection: Coaching and other people Reflection: Making plans to start coaching and sharing

1.   Learning with Others — The Value of Collaboration

All participants commented on the significance of collaborating with other people to make meaning, for example sharing narratives, practising with a partner and learning as a group.

Learning: Working with a partner made it real. All participants reported that working with a partner helped their understanding and consolidated their learning.

> I remember feeling, kind of accomplished after it. ...I think until you do something, you don't really understand how it's gonna [*sic*] work. (P3: 1403—1465)

> Seeing it, you learn about it. But actually doing it yourself, it kind of cements that for you. (P2: 1504–1505)

When practising, participants realised that listening and non-directive questioning give responsibility to the coachee. They saw the coachee accept responsibility and feel confident about the outcome.

> Actually I didn't do anything. I just asked the questions that were there and she did it all. It was quite good to help her to help herself. …She seemed really confident about it after[*wards*]. (P1: 961—964)

Four of the participants reported noticing difficulty with listening attentively to their partner.

> It was really hard being quiet…it was a bit of an eye opener. (P2: 410—412)

One participant experienced a 'critical moment' (de Haan, 2008, p. 92) while working with a partner who displayed good listening skills.

> I thought, 'You are not listening!' …So yeah, that made me think. (P5: 1044—1056)   When we changed places...she was very good at listening…didn't interrupt...sort of encouraged me with her body language, but didn't intervene. And I thought, '...I'm learning from you.' (P5: 1064—1071)

Two participants observed that being in a coaching conversation had given them confidence that equality would be respected in PRD conversations with their reviewer. Although previously being doubtful, they found the practice coaching conversation convincing.

> [*before practice session*] I remember being quite doubtful.....
> Sometimes you feel if it is your boss, they are...more expert than you. (P3: 922—924)

> [*after practice session*]   Both people in the conversation being equal — I believed that…by then. I didn't really believe it before. Having done it, and experienced the conversation.' (P3: 1587—1598)

Learning: Feeling part of the group. Four of the participants reported enjoying learning as part of a group sharing a goal.

> Because we were...there for the same goal…it was quite nice. (P3: 364—365)

One participant was explicit about the value of collaborating with people from other schools.

> The opportunity to engage with colleagues. And I did like the fact that I didn't know these people. (P4: 1524—1525)

When being interviewed, participants used language illustrating that they had felt part of the group. For example, one participant spoke about the group sharing an insight while they all watched the demonstration.

> Everybody was like 'Ah!'... Once we saw it, we were all...'I get it now.' (P1: 885—890)

2.   Reflection — The Value of Having Time to Think

Throughout the workshop, participants thought about what it would be like in future to be a coach, and to be coached. They also began to plan next steps.

Reflection: Myself as coach and coachee*.* While reflecting during the workshop, participants compared their own behaviour with the coaching skills and processes being discussed. Reflecting on their role as coach, they became aware of their desire to listen more, and to be less directive when working with colleagues and learners.

> What I got out of that night was I actually don't listen. I look as if I'm listening. (P5: 1063—1064).

> It also made me a bit more aware of maybe times where I have been more directive in the school, and I maybe shouldn't have been. (P2: 792—795)

Reflecting on their role as coachee, they recognised that they too would benefit from the thinking time they afforded to learners.

> We give the kids thinking time, but we don't give ourselves it. So I think it makes you question it yourself. (P3: 976—978)

When thinking about non-directive questioning using the GROW model, one participant noticed that being given responsibility for the outcome could challenge the coachee.

> When I look at these questions there's no hiding really. It puts a lot of responsibility on you. (P1: 727—729)

However, participants were enthusiastic about having responsibility, and felt encouraged by the non-judgemental approach to concepts of right or wrong.

> But it seemed as if there was no right or wrong answer. It was just what you thought. (P2: 290—291)

One participant noticed the 'fit' between coaching and her own values. Comparing the practice coaching conversation with her experience of previous non-coaching PRD meetings, she experienced an insight about both people in a coaching conversation being equal.

> This fits better with the way I kind of see the world…. We should treat other people the way we would want to be treated. (P2: 533—535).

> This idea that what I brought to the conversation was just as important, was really enlightening to me. (P2: 1104—1113)

Reflection: Coaching and other people*.* During the workshop, participants reflected on links between coaching and other people in school. They related the workshop content to real situations with colleagues and children.

> I couldn't help but relate what you were saying to the situations that I was dealing with in school. (P5: 676—677). I've been so busy leading, directing and fixing in this school that I haven't used the coaching model at all. (P5: 966—967)

They began to think that goal-setting and non-directive questioning could benefit teachers and learners alike.

> Being allowed to set our own goals…we do that with the children … If you dictate to the children…they are not going to be as motivated. (P4: 864—868)

> It started to get me thinking about how this wasn't just for staff…. It's for staff to pupil, or pupil to pupil. (P1: 507—512)

In particular, they identified with the concept that people could use coaching skills and GROW to help one another, reporting that coaching was more supportive and nurturing than the previous model of PRD.

> Coaching's a bit more nurturing. (P2: 217—218).

> It was more of a supportive environment than…the previous model. (P3: 1243—1244)

The discussion about using coaching as a support led to participants reflecting more widely about helping others. One participant had mixed feelings, speaking initially about the benefits of collegiality, then later about the difficulty of obtaining support from others.

> Reminded me that we can have a collegiate approach to things. (P3: 441). Sometimes I thought, actually, it's more quick [*sic*] if you're on your own. (P3: 532)

The concern about accessing support was echoed by another participant who was worried about relying on her line manager's coaching skills.

> Just the worry that, em, the success of this might land on the ability of the other person… (P2: 690—691)

Reflection: Making plans to start coaching and sharing. Participants thought about how they could use coaching skills beyond PRD conversations, for example when target-setting with learners.

> Made me think about the target-setting I do every month with the kids. …the wording that I could use, to make it…more encouraging for them to speak. (P3: 791—796)

They also reflected on how they could introduce coaching when working with current and future colleagues.

> I do have a student [*student teacher*] coming…so I've been thinking about it…in terms of how I can help her. (P1: 1082—1084)

One participant reported feeling an urgency to resume using coaching.

> It's quite a strong tool…one you'd have to practise. That's what I was thinking. 'I need to get back into this, I need to use this.' (P5: 721—723)

Participants with line management responsibilities considered how they could engage with teachers in school, and how coaching skills and GROW could be used with colleagues, parents, and children.

> I remember thinking: this actually would be a good approach to share
> with the whole staff. So that even if they were working with parents,
> or a student, [*teacher*], or having to have possibly an uncomfortable or
> difficult conversation with someone, …not the least bit confrontational,
> …win-win situation. (P5: 608—610)

Although overall the participants felt optimistic about their next steps, one participant reported feelings of anxiety about how she would do this.

> By the end of the session I was really positive, really motivated about
> going back to school…A bit anxious in some respects, if I'm honest….At
> the end of it I thought, '…I know it's a learning curve for everybody.' (P4:
> 1475—1492)

One participant reported that she had started implementing her plans the day after the workshop. She recalled that using GROW with a colleague had resolved a long-standing problem.

> Came in the very next day. Put it in place. Used the GROW model, and it
> happened. And I'd been struggling with that for months...Because you
> had demonstrated the GROW model. And I thought, 'Right, I'm doing
> that tomorrow!' [laughing]. (P5: 291—306)

Discussion

The study set out to enable teachers to explain from their own perspective, their experience of an introductory coaching training workshop, where they learned basic coaching skills and GROW, and explored their role as a coach and as a coachee. This discussion compares the findings with the literature review, and introduces further relevant literature. The limitations of the research are identified, and proposals for future research are made.

Because the literature review on coaching in education did not find any literature about teachers' experiences of undertaking a coaching training programme, the results of this study are explored with reference to the research into coaching in education in general.

Definition of coaching. Participants' experiences concur with van Nieuwerburgh's (2012) definition of coaching (p. 17). They reported enhanced learning and self-awareness as a result of the one-to-one conversation when practising coaching (P2: '…more aware of…times where I have been…directive in the school, and I maybe shouldn't have been'). They felt supported and challenged by the open questioning and active listening (P3: 'It was more of a supportive environment than…the previous model'; P5: 'She was very good at listening'; P1: 'When I look at these questions there's no hiding really').

GROW for leadership development. Other findings in the study are consistent with the literature described. For example, one participant reported success when using GROW for a colleague's leadership development the day after the workshop (Grant *et al.*, 2010, p. 162).

First develop yourself*.* Creasy and Paterson's (2005) advice to school leaders 'first develop yourself' (p. 23) was not followed. Instead, the actions of all participants, whether teachers or school leaders, were congruent with the principles of coaching; they showed interest in *pulling not pushing* coaching through the school (Whybrow & O'Riordan, 2012, p. 216). They were keen to move quickly so that the whole school community could learn together (P5: 'a good approach to share with the whole staff'), and could begin embedding 'coach-like' conversations in school (Gross Cheliotes & Flemming Reilly, 2010). The participants who were unpromoted teachers displayed enthusiasm for putting their new knowledge and skills into practice with colleagues and children (P1: 'I do have a student [*student teacher*] coming…so I've been thinking about…how I can help her'), and did not plan to wait until their line managers became skilled. It was clear that the participants who were head teachers would be advocates for coaching, in line with Suggett's (2006) recommendation that coaching is 'sponsored' by senior leaders.

Implementation of coaching*.* In the workshop section *What action should I take now?* participants were encouraged to coach one another after the workshop ('co-coaching') to work on their plans for coaching, and to increase the chance of implementation (Cornett & Knight, 2008, p. 209). The workshop did not devote time to the arrangements. When being interviewed up to four weeks later, none of the participants reported that they had set up a formal arrangement. This raises a question about whether participants would have set up the co-coaching arrangement if this section of the workshop, instead of simple encouragement had used a coaching model that included a maintenance stage, for example GROWTH (Growth Coaching International, n.d.), or Skiffington and Zeus' (2003) four-stage model. Cornett and Knight (2008) state that 'one-shot professional development without coaching follow-up does not lead to wide implementation' (p. 209). The participants did say that they planned to continue practising coaching, and they did not express concern about taking small steps. This concurs with Amabile and Kramer's (2011) research into workplace motivation, in which they highlight the importance of small movements towards a goal. Arnold (2014) reports that these 'microresolutions' build confidence because they are more doable, so more likely to be implemented.

Positive psychology, critical moments and insights*.* The workshop began with a listening exercise intended to illustrate Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (2001, p. 219). The findings do not include an explicit link to positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), but we could speculate a link between the positive emotions exercise and participants' later experience of the workshop. During coaching practice, participants experienced 'critical moments' (P5: 'I thought, "You are not listening!"'), defined by de Haan (2008, p. 92), as an 'exciting, tense or significant moment' in a coaching conversation. While reflecting outwith the practice coaching session, they also experienced insights (P2: 'This idea…was really enlightening to me'). Colloquially called 'Aha! moments', insights are sudden comprehensions that can result in a new interpretation of a situation and can point to the solution to a problem (Kounios & Beeman, 2009, p. 210; Sternberg & Davidson, 1995; van Nieuwerburgh, 2014, p. 160). In a study measuring brain activity, Subramaniam *et al.* (2009)

found that participants were more likely to solve problems with insight if they were in a positive mood, than if they were in a neutral or negative mood.

A coaching approach to professional review and development (PRD). The participants responded positively (both as coach and as coachee) to the requirement that school leaders use coaching skills to support professional review and development (GTCS, 2013). They looked forward to the coaching conversation giving them more responsibility for their own learning (P2: 'I loved this idea of equality'). However, they recognised the responsibility (P1: 'When I look at these questions, there's no hiding really'), and they also reported disquiet that their experience of PRD relied on the coaching skills of the reviewer (P2: 'Just the worry that, em, the success of this might land on the ability of the other person'). This concurs with Donaldson's (2010) vision of teachers having a professional requirement to engage in career-long learning, as well as an entitlement.

Wider uses for coaching. The participants also reflected on wider uses for coaching with colleagues or learners (P3: 'Made me think about the target-setting I do every month with the kids…the wording I could use'). Participants did not report thoughts about using coaching to work with colleagues directly for improving teaching and learning, for example instructional coaching (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012), which had not been covered in the workshop.

Fixer or Multiplier. Throughout the workshop, participants experienced both 'reflection-in-action' (while they completed an action) and 'reflection-on-action' (evaluating past action) (Schön, 1987). When reflecting-on-action, thinking about her behaviour with others in school, one participant became aware of a feature of her behaviour with colleagues; she had chosen to keep 'fixing' and had no time to coach (P5: 'I've been so busy leading, directing and fixing in this school'). Like Reeves' (2010) Fixer, she had stopped giving people the opportunity to struggle with challenging problems (p. 52). The workshop led her to believe that a non-directive coaching approach to leadership and management gives responsibility to colleagues who then develop their own problem-solving and analytical skills. To use Reeves' (2010) term, she wanted to revert to being a Multiplier.

Limitations of this Study

The study has several limitations and they should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. The researcher designed and facilitated the workshop, designed the interview schedule, invited participation in the study, interviewed the participants, and conducted the analysis. The researcher is also a former head teacher and committed to coaching. First, it is possible that the participants may have consciously or unconsciously emphasised positive experiences over negative because of the positive relationship built up during the workshop. Second, the participants were all volunteers interested in talking about their experience of the workshop, so they may have been unconsciously biased. It is possible that non-volunteers interviewed by a third party would have given different answers. Third, there is a risk that bias affected the collection and analysis of the data, despite attempts to conduct the study scrupulously, including supervisor discussions and reflective journaling. Fourth, the study could not be replicated in exactly the same context. The workshops took place in September 2013 as

part of a pilot programme, when teachers were preparing for the introduction of new procedures in August 2014. If the workshop were repeated in Scotland, the new procedures would already be in place.

A further consideration relates to the use of IPA. It was appropriate for interpreting the idiographic accounts of the participants' experiences, which are of interest in themselves, and it does not permit generalisation. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, (2011, p. 758) advise that, rather than generalising IPA findings, we consider possible transferability of findings from group to group. However further research is needed.

Implications for Practice and for Future Research

The findings of the study act as a foundation for further research on teachers' experiences of coaching training. The study could also help construct one or more hypotheses for quantitative testing.

Four suggestions are now made which could extend our knowledge. First, a hypothesis could be tested quantitatively — *it is hypothesised that participants will experience more insights if the workshop begins with an activity to generate positive emotions.* Second, a longitudinal study could look at the extent of implementation following introductory training workshops. The study could compare settings with and without formally-arranged follow-up co-coaching, relating closely to Cornett and Knight's (2008) findings that coaching after professional development led to improved implementation rates. The third suggestion might be of interest to educators attempting to increase access to coaching training for teachers who find attendance at face-to-face workshops difficult because of scarcity of finance or supply teachers. If the workshop were delivered through an alternative model, for example online video conferencing and interactive forums, which helped participants feel they were interacting with other people (Okita *et al.*, 2007), the educators may be interested to know if participants' experiences followed the same themes as those in this study. A mixed method or qualitative study would also reveal any additional experiences that were not manifested in the face-to-face workshop. The fourth suggestion relates to the matter of line manager coaching in the PRD process, which is outwith the scope of this study. Teachers' experiences of coaching training could be explored with specific reference to their context — either as a reviewee who will be coached by their line manager, or as the line manager coach who will conduct the review.

Conclusion

> I remember feeling, kind of accomplished after it. ...I think until you do something, you don't really understand how it's gonna [*sic*] work. (P3: 1403—1465)

The study aspired to respond to Linley and Harrington's (2008, p. 52) call for more pragmatic science that genuinely serves the needs of researchers and practitioners. It has presented five individuals' experiences of an introductory coaching training workshop. Participants noticed

that collaborating with others through practice and shared meaning-making enhanced their learning, which was further enriched by time for reflection. They experienced coaching from both sides of the conversation, and as an observer. Reflecting on their own skills and behaviours, they began to plan their next steps. Further research is needed to build on the findings of this study.

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