

Australian Journal of Teacher Education

Volume 38 | Issue 4

Article 2

4-2013

Literacy Coaching Roles in Diverse Contexts of Teaching and Learning: New Ways of Working

Lisa J. van Leent

Education Queensland, lisavanleent@yahoo.com.au

Beryl Exley

Queensland University of Technology, b.exley@qut.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), and the [Other Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

van Leent, L. J., & Exley, B. (2013). Literacy Coaching Roles in Diverse Contexts of Teaching and Learning: New Ways of Working. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(4).
<https://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n4.1>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol38/iss4/2>

Literacy Coaching Roles in Diverse Contexts of Teaching and Learning: New Ways of Working

Lisa J. van Leent
Beryl Exley
Queensland University of Technology

Abstract

As the demands placed on the literacy coach have evolved, so too have the roles of these educational providers who are often responsible for working with school teams to turn around student performance on standardized literacy tests. One literacy coach based in a Queensland primary school recounts her experiences via open-ended interview over a two year period. We offer a theorisation of the newways of working as a literacy coach in a context of teaching and learning marked by diversity.

Despite the number of departments of education throughout the world appointing school-based literacy coaches (see Rennie, 2011), the research literature reports that ways of working as a literacy coach are varied and complex. The confusion is so resounding, a large-scale survey of literacy coaches from across the United States called on state education providers to rethink the depth and breadth of preparedness for working as a literacy coach before assigning high performing teachers to the position (Dole, Liang, Watkins & Wiggins, 2006). Another large-scale survey from across the United States documented that many school-based literacy coaches were expending 'a great deal of energy trying to create an identity' (Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2008, p. 122). Rainville and Jones' (2008) qualitative case-study also records the inherent tensions as literacy coaches negotiate their varied identities with different stakeholders. Another research study undertaken with 31 literacy coaches over a two year period by Walpole and Blamey (2008) found that 'what coaches should do on the job is the matter of intense debate and very little scholarship' (p. 222). Similarly, Australian-based educators Gill, Kostiw and Stone (2010) report on the 'anxiety' associated with 'diverse interpretations' of the literacy coaching role (p. 52). The experiences of one literacy coach, which are explored in this paper, add to the developing concept of the literacy coaching role in Australia by sharing new ways of working when faced with diverse contexts of teaching and learning.

To better understand the range of ways of working as a primary school literacy coach and their varying implications, we introduce one newly appointed literacy coach from Queensland, Miss Leigh Tracey (pseudonym). We present experiences from Miss Tracey as a result of dozens of informal interviews over a period of two years. The next section offers a brief introduction to the educational context, Miss Tracey's professional background, the professional development program for newly appointed literacy coaches in Queensland, and information about the school site where Miss Tracey undertook her first literacy coaching assignment. We then recount the first year of Miss Tracey's assignment where she implemented the departmentally sanctioned literacy coaching model, a dialogic cycle of activity of leading the teachers through multiple phases of building rapport, communicating intent, modelling explicit teaching, reflecting and sharing. We then focus on the second year of her assignment where Miss Tracey and a group of teachers start to inquire about socio-

cultural aspects of literacy teaching and learning, in particular the notion of literacy identities. Miss Tracey publically declares the limits of her professional knowledge as it applies to this diverse context of teaching and learning and with the approval and support of the school Principal and senior leadership team, extends her role into new ways of working to coordinate professional development sessions with the teachers and three outside educationalists. The literacy coaching role, in this account, has expanded to draw on Miss Tracey's extensive professional networks and her ability to orchestrate a new cycle of communication, teaching and reflection. The paper concludes by re-theorising the new ways of working as a literacy coach.

The theoretical perspective is based on research in the field of literacy coaching, particularly instructional coaching. The accounts of one literacy coach practicing in a Queensland contexts provides a qualitative reflection on current coaching research and supports a re-theorisation of a coaching model enacted by one Queensland literacy coach. The revised model takes into account the literacy coach's experiences via ongoing open-ended informal interviews. The interviews reveal new ways of working for coaches that involve external educational providers. Links are made between literacy coaching research regarding models of coaching and reflected within the discussion of the interviewee and her experiences. Finally, a retheorisation of a coaching model is presented. We are interested in sharing 'new ways of working' as an instructional coach with the broader education community.

The Australian Educational Context

In the Australian context, school-based literacy coaches are by and large a new addition to the landscape of teacher professional engagement. There has been a burgeoning increase in the number of literacy coaching positions, promulgated by the recent Australian Government's Literacy and Numeracy National Partnerships Program which ran from October 2009 to December 2012. The program in which Miss Tracey took part was a combined Commonwealth/State Government initiative launched by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). In the state of Queensland, this initiative funded 90 literacy and numeracy coaches across 175 government schools selected because their 2009 National Assessment Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (hereafter NAPLAN) results were identified for improvement.

By way of background, NAPLAN's implementation was, and continues to be, highly controversial. Instead of lending itself to educators as assessment for learning, NAPLAN is discursively constructed as a race, where states and territories, schooling systems and categories of students continue to be pitted against each other in the media and by the Government itself on the 'my school' website. Queensland was positioned as coming 'an appalling second last' (Chilcott, 2009b), a result described in the state's daily newspaper as 'disastrous' and the sign of an 'education system in crisis' (Chilcott, 2009a). In many classrooms, especially those in disadvantaged school communities where average test results were measured and publicly reported as below the national average, NAPLAN became the de facto curriculum (Chilcott, 2009c). The issue of accountability is dominant; teachers and literacy coaches are held responsible for producing better test results. In this performance orientation, student 'learning' is equated to improvements in NAPLAN results.

Miss Tracey's Background

Miss Tracey has worked as a classroom teacher in Queensland for over a decade and has a history of being assigned to low socio-economic multi-cultural multi-lingual contexts. Miss Tracey managed a project in central office which focused on supporting relationships between Indigenous families and schools. At the end of this project, she briefly returned to a classroom teaching position whilst applying for one of the literacy coaching positions in 2009 in order to expand her professional knowledge and skills. Although Miss Tracey identifies as a white Australian, she respects the challenges of working in contexts marked by socio-cultural and socio-linguistic diversity.

The selection of Miss Tracey to represent a literacy coach's experiences is embedded in the 'new ways of working' concept itself. Because Miss Tracey moved beyond the departmentally sanctioned coaching model to engage external providers, namely researchers from a university and a cultural expert, the opportunity to share on-the-ground learning was supported by the university practice of scholarly production. The partnership between Miss Tracey and the external providers was supportive of sharing research in practice with the wider education community in both a practical and theoretical manner. It appeared practical for an 'on the job' coach to critically reflect on a theoretical model which was being implemented.

The Sanctioned Coaching Model

After her appointment as a literacy coach in October 2009, Miss Tracey and all of the newly appointed literacy coaches attended a three day training program prior to engagement with their assigned schools. Two points worth emphasising are the brevity and decontextualised nature of the professional development program for new literacy coaches. The program, developed by the Teaching and Learning Branch of the state's public education department, introduced the sanctioned coaching model, and a brief overview of techniques for facilitative questioning, deep listening and leadership skills as well as content specific sessions such as guided reading. Over the next 27 months, the core role of the literacy coach was to work shoulder-to-shoulder with teaching colleagues in classrooms with the express goal of improving students' literacy outcomes in the 2010 and 2011 NAPLAN rounds and semi-regular school-based assessments. The coaching model, developed for the coaching initiative in 2009 and published on the department's website as Sheehan (2010), is presented in Figure 1. This model is used as a tool for reflection by Miss Tracey. It is constituted by several dialogic components: build, communicate, teach, reflect and share. The dialogue between the components is represented by the double-headed arrows.

Coach Model

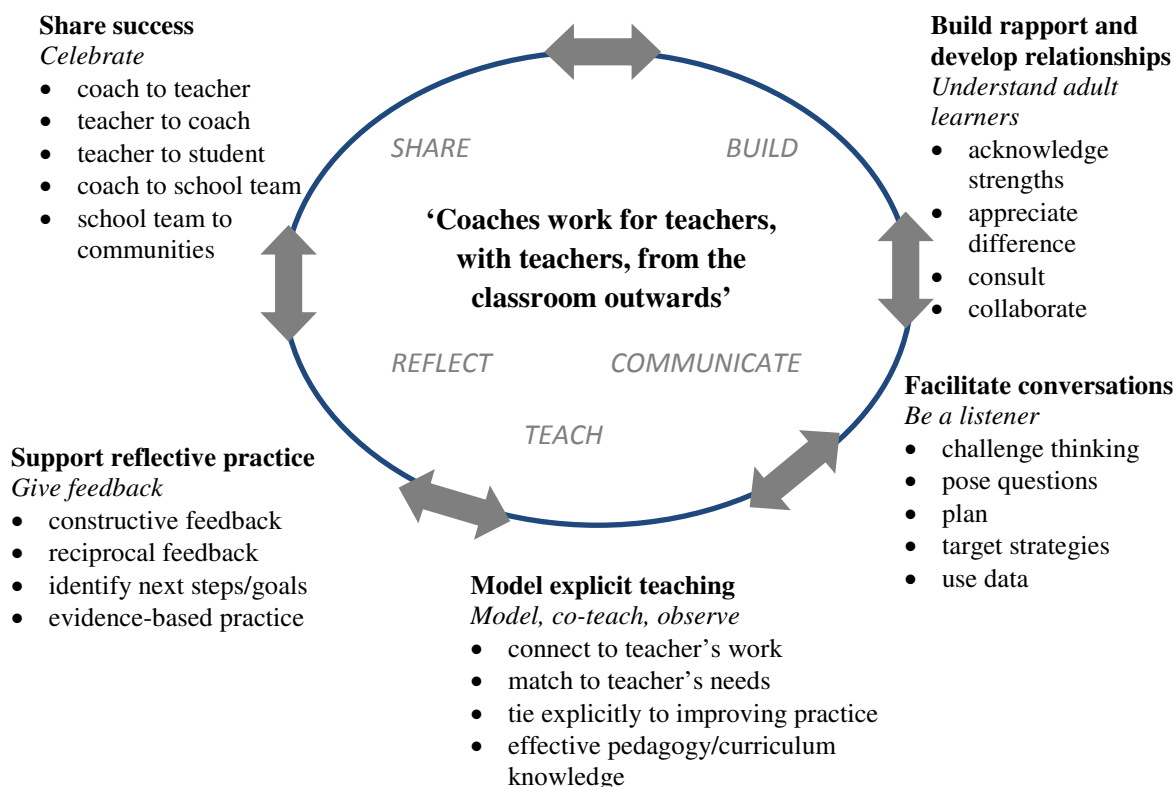


Figure 1: Coach Model (Sheehan, 2010)

The Schooling Context: Oceania State Primary School

After the three day introduction to the literacy coaching role, Miss Tracey attended her assigned school, a large multi-cultural low socio-economic status site, Oceania State Primary School (pseudonym), located immediately south of the state capital of Brisbane. School enrolments hover at approximately 1000 students, making it a very large primary school by Australian standards. According to school enrolment data, approximately 17% of students nominate as having English as a Second Language (ESL). Although the data is not systemically collected, Pasifika students make up approximately 30% of the school’s population at any point in time. The term ‘Pasifika’ is not in widespread use in Australia although dozens of Australian schools have more than 20% Pasifika students enrolled. The New Zealand Ministries of Education and Pacific Island Affairs define the term Pasifika as applying to ‘people of Pacific heritage or ancestry’ (Ministry of Education, 2009). We use the term in this paper not to homogenise and render invisible cultural or linguistic difference, but to recognise a diverse range of peoples from the South Pacific region or those who have strong family and cultural connections to the islands of the South Pacific other than Australia and New Zealand.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) publicised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2010) identifies that more than one third of the students at Oceania State Primary School come from families in the bottom socio-economic quarter, a third and just under a third in the two middle quarters and just over 5% in the top quarter. The NAPLAN data from 2008 and 2009 indicates

achievement in literacy, defined in this case as reading, grammar, spelling, punctuation and writing, for students in Year Three (aged eight years), Year Five (aged ten years) and Year Seven (aged 12 years) is close to the performance of schools with a similar ICSEA score but below or substantially below the average of all Australian schools. The school Principal and senior leadership team were deeply committed to an improvement agenda, but not at the expense of other important social justice imperatives which could also aid the foundation of improving students' literacy outcomes. Following the thesis of Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006), the Principal also declared her belief that teacher self-efficacy is part of the foundation for building teacher knowledge and skill. She demonstrated this commitment by supporting an environment of professional trust and encouraging rather than decrying public declarations of professional strengths and 'challenges'.

The First Year

As the newly appointed literacy coach, Miss Tracey was responsible for laying the foundation for building genuine working relationships between herself and the teachers and amongst the groups of teachers so as not to replicate the resistance encountered by Kate in Rainville and Jones' (2008) recount. Without trusting relationships, teachers would not feel safe and comfortable in actively engaging in de-privatisation of their practice and a deep reflective process (Tanner & Vains-Loy, 2009). Thus, there is strong evidence in the literature that without a strong foundation in building relations, further stages of the coaching cycle were unlikely to be successful. Knight (2008) describes these relationships as 'a partnership approach between coaches and teachers.' (p. 31). Miss Tracey recalls how some forms of resistance broke through relatively quickly once the teachers realised that she held a high level of professional respect for the staff and that her role was not a latter day reiteration of the system of teacher inspections. She developed these relationships into the 2010 school year through a genuine interest in the teachers, and their trials, tribulations and successes in teaching reading as a major sub-set of skills for advancing literacy learning outcomes. In this phase, Miss Tracey's role was to be a deep listener in order to provide feedback and support the teachers to make reflections and set teaching and learning goals (Carrington, 2009). Key conversations revolved around reflection and analysis of systemic (NAPLAN), school (Progressive Achievement Test in Reading, PAT R: an Australian normed assessment tool for reading comprehension (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013b)) and individual (PROBE: reading comprehension assessment (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013a)) data. Other teachers were either occupied with their own workloads or somewhat passively resistant, taking more than a year to appreciate and enquire about the new pedagogical approaches that were reaping modest but increasing results in school-based assessments for students in some teachers' classes. In her interviews with us, the three points that Miss Tracey kept emphasising about the start up phase were: the build component could neither be forced nor rushed; building genuine working relationships takes effort and time on everyone's part; and, teachers come to work with the literacy coach at different times and through different circumstances.

Due to the limited professional learning opportunities with a focus on coaching skills, Miss Tracey relied on her previous work and study experiences to work closely with the leadership team to support the coaching initiative. During this first year, a number of school-based projects were conceived in collaboration with the Principal and the leadership team, enacted and internally evaluated. These projects included a whole school approach to internal data collection and analysis, a whole school approach to a balanced literacy block and the implementation of guided reading (Thompson, 2005, Tompkins, 2010) in all year levels.

These projects were all conceived and instituted through multiple cycles of the 'build', 'communicate', 'teach', 'reflect' and 'share' phases of the sanctioned coaching cycle.

In the interviews sessions, Miss Tracey emphasised the necessity of recycling the earlier phases of the literacy coaching model. She also noted that reflection was a mainstay of the entire experience; it was not defined to a linear position in the coaching cycle. As Miss Tracey worked in partnership with teachers, consideration of ideas for reflection on both parties was imperative for reflection on choosing effective strategies for students (Knight, 2008). For example, Miss Tracey found that teachers would spontaneously offer reflections throughout every cycle of the project as well as take on Miss Tracey's ideas and through collaboration were able to make informed decisions. Although there were specific times negotiated for teachers and the rest of the team to meet to discuss student data, curriculum and pedagogy, often teachers would come to Miss Tracey's shared work space or call out as she passed their classrooms. Teachers would have quick discussions with her about particular skills demonstrated by a student or the success or downfall of a lesson. The relationships Miss Tracey had developed in the 'build' and 'communicate' phases ensured the teachers felt comfortable if she undertook an impromptu visit to a classroom to see how matters were progressing or where the teachers might want to direct the 'teach' phase. Miss Tracey reported that this more open relationship was advantageous for her time management. For example, she was able to capitalise upon both formal and informal class time when and if someone else cancelled or if she had a gap in her timetable. This arrangement also allowed her to gain a deeper sense of how initiatives were unfolding in classrooms and in turn, re-activate the 'teach' component if need be. To be clear, the 'teach' component was not always a reprimand; at times, outstanding lessons were identified and time was scheduled for other teachers to observe their colleague.

Miss Tracey's interview comments indicate that supporting reflective practice both for individual teachers and for the teachers amongst themselves is a complex process. Individual teachers had particular preferences for working in particular ways, so multiple templates for recording reflections and feedback were provided. Reflection templates were provided in the initial three day training session however, Miss Tracey sought further resources and developed her own reflection templates to support the coaching process. Throughout this project many formal meetings were held where teachers were able to record their thoughts and reflections. It was sometimes difficult to fulfil such templates during every 'reflection' component. Whilst appreciating the need for templates, she reflects that it was impossible to capture the impromptu reflections between teachers. As was the case in Rennie's (2011) research that examined the ways of working as a literacy coach, change happened for the better; the teachers benefitted from the professional learning activities, guided reading lessons had more structure and purpose, students were more engaged in reading lessons and teacher/student success could be celebrated because it could now be identified and measured.

Interestingly, sharing success was the most difficult part of the process. This particular phase of the coaching cycle was briefly discussed during training and limited resources were provided. Miss Tracey hypothesised there was something peculiar about the culture of teaching in Australian classrooms that worked against the notion of public recognition for a job well done. Miss Tracey also felt that celebrating success can be difficult for a number of reasons: teachers sometimes feel embarrassed in front of peers despite being comfortable in front of an audience of children; some teachers feel that they are 'just doing their jobs'; and, some teachers are quite simply quiet achievers. Other teachers probably think that they're doing what other people already do. Miss Tracey acknowledged that literacy coaches are in a privileged position in which they are able to spend significant time with teachers and are able to temper teachers' self-evaluations, nurturing them into enjoying the

rewards of sharing their practice. With effective teaching and learning strategies as part of Miss Tracey's skill set, she was able to provide critical feedback to teachers.

What is salient about the departmentally sanctioned literacy coaching model is the way that it assumes the literacy coach has the knowledge and skills to facilitate teacher development in effective teaching and learning strategies regardless of the adversity or diverse context. Other coaching models discuss professional development for coaches as imperative to the success of the coaching model. For example, Knight (2008) outlines the importance of both knowledge of the 'coaching process' and their 'professional skills' but the model assumes coaches know how to access professional learning for themselves. If the coaching model is so successful for teachers, perhaps a similar professional learning model would work for coaches. Similarly, Kinkead (2007) discusses the role of a coach to 'support teacher implementation of best-practices' but does not explore how coaches are to keep up to date with 'best-practices' as research continually informs the education community. Sheehan's model constructs the literacy coach as already possessing all the tricks of the trade, holding them at the ready as the situation demands.

The Second Year

However, the second year presented something different for Miss Tracey and the teaching team. A small group of three middle primary school teachers were particularly diligent in meeting fortnightly to converse on the topic of the teaching of reading. Miss Tracey used this network to tap into the collective but *hitherto* unrecorded professional knowledge of these teachers. She also wanted to respect and capitalise upon the many years of experience some of the teachers had in this particularly challenging context. Miss Tracey was committed to facilitating the culture of a professional learning community where the teaching team met regularly with each other and the team and individually with herself. In both formal data reflection meetings and informal teacher reflection meetings, the collaborative conversations supported the goal to improve pedagogical instruction to drive student improvement (Kinkead, 2007). One conversation kept coming to the fore; the teachers were consistently commenting on the variable progress of the Pasifika students. Teachers were supporting some of the students to be among the top-performing students at Oceania State Primary School whilst many others continued to be challenged by the processes of teaching and learning. An inquiry question was borne: 'What do we know about the language and literacy skills of our Pasifika students?'

Facilitating conversations with teachers about the Pasifika students' learning needs took on a new level of importance. Miss Tracey and the group of teachers theorised that the Pasifika students were 'hidden' ESL/ESD (English as a Second Language/Dialect) students, something unrecognised by current educational department processes. Departmental policy had recently changed to be more inclusive of 'other' definitions of ESL, for example, recognition of students who may have English as a second dialect (ESD) (The State of Queensland, Department of Education and Training, 2011). However, resources and professional learning for teachers had not yet filtered into schools. The nomenclature of 'hidden ESL' described students who do not identify with a first language other than English but have a variety of Standard Australian English (SAE) experiences. Their strength in SAE appears to be not equivalent to students who are Australian born with SAE speaking parents and extended family members. An example of hidden ESL is when a family identifies as speaking English on the school enrolment forms, but the student's experiences are limited to, for example, speaking the English that their caregivers learnt as English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in the Pacific Islands. Because the family did not tick the ESL box

on enrolment forms, the student's ESL needs are neither accounted for in systemic data nor does the student receive specialist support from an ESL teacher.

During the ongoing conversations, Miss Tracey and the teachers discussed their collective observations that the Pasifika students were better at talking with and listening to SAE than reading or writing SAE. They also had evidence that the students' skill level, vocabulary and experiences with English as a social language (commonly referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills – BICS, Cummins, 1979) was better developed than their English for schooling purposes (commonly referred to as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency – CALP, Cummins, 1979). It was this latter form of English that appeared to be limited, in particular the students' use of technical content-specific words. All of the teachers could recite the grammatical elements with which the students were having difficulty (e.g. pronoun references, subject/verb agreement, etc).

Despite some success in the 'communicate' phase, the process came to a standstill as attempts were made to map out the 'teach' phase. The context of shared professional learning was conducive enough that Miss Tracey could also publically declare what her teaching colleagues had been encouraged to publically declare over the last year or so: she was now at the limit of her professional knowledge on this particular topic. This is not to construct her and her practice as deficit in any way; the very best of teachers encounter and recognise the limits of their professional knowledge.

The initial barrier appeared when looking at school benchmarking data. The school mapped year level data on large boards to look for trends and celebrate improvements. During each year level data reflection discussion led by Miss Tracey, she noted the teachers' public declarations: there seemed to be a large proportion of Pasifika students in the lower levels of student reading achievement. Teachers chorused that these students were not achieving in reading because they were not classified as ESL and were not receiving extra support. This discovery prompted further investigation by Miss Tracey.

Miss Tracey researched about teaching Pasifika students in the mainstream, but encountered further barriers such as an absence of a relevant policy and resources specific to Pasifika students' cultural and language learning needs. The training Miss Tracey participated in, provided by the employer, had not prepared her for this kind of barrier. Miss Tracey realised that if the school wanted to address this issue, they needed external, additional resources. The school Principal licensed Miss Tracey to develop new ways of working so she introduced the teachers to some consultants from her professional network: a local university lecturer/researcher, a departmental ESL specialist and a community liaison officer. The external consultant was able to support Miss Tracey by working side by side with her in the school, coaching the coach to support the professional learning 'on the job'.

The project was funded via a range of avenues. The literacy coach and cultural liaison officer were federal government funded positions via the National Partnerships initiative. Other participants in the project were standard state education funding; however, the critical friend was engaged through school based funds allocated to teacher professional learning. The school annual professional development budget is aligned to internal school strategic planning. A key strategic focus for the school was to address improving reading outcomes for all students. As a large portion of Pasifika students were below reading age expectations, this data became the focus and impetus for Miss Tracey's proposal to the leadership team and principal for funding external resources. Added to her responsibilities was the coordination and infusion of multiple external personnel to the literacy coaching model, funded through a \$5,000 budget made available by the Principal.

The university lecturer/researcher had theoretical and empirical experience in onshore and offshore cross-cultural pedagogy and had visited and undertaken teaching and learning consultancies in Pasifika countries. She adopts a socio-cultural approach to curriculum,

pedagogy and assessment. The ESL specialist was well versed in identifying and planning for the social, cultural, language and academic adjustments of recently arrived immigrant students and would be able to draw on this experience for the project. The community liaison officer was a proud Pasifika woman and a highly qualified teacher with a deep and sustained commitment to the liberating principles of a mainstream education in Australia. Although not entrenched in the school's Pasifika population yet, she was able to draw on her and her husband's decade long experience of bringing their four daughters to Australia and successfully nurturing them through the mainstream Australian schooling system.

The 'communicate' stage was extended and broadened to now include communication with these extra personnel. With the approval of the school Principal, they decided to infuse the *hitherto* strategies based approach of literacy coaching with some strong socio-cultural underpinnings and investing in understandings of personal literacy identities and how these change across time and space for different populations and individuals within these populations. Drawing from theorisations developed by Exley (2004, 2005), the activity involved the teachers recounting their personal literacy histories. Each of the three target teachers and the community liaison officer entered into dialogue with the university lecturer/researcher and Miss Tracey during formal interview sessions. Each teacher and the community liaison officer were provided with information regarding the types of questions they would be asked and their rights and responsibilities in participating in the interviews. They agreed to be interviewed and gave permission prior to the recording of the interviews. The community liaison officer and Miss Tracey joined in when available. The process of revealing literacy histories aimed to be transparent as the purpose was to learn from each other's experiences. These semi-structured interviews were based around questions such as:

- 'How do you know you are literate?'
- 'When did you realise you could read?'
- 'Who taught you to read?'
- 'How have your reading habits changed over your lifetime?'
- 'What is your preferred mode of text use at the moment?'
- 'Do you speak any other languages?'

The interaction was captured as moving image and then edited to produce a summary of the multifarious literacy identities of the teaching group. This resource became a stimulus for further discussion and reflection amongst the group. This exercise revealed one teacher's childhood experiences of being mainstream Australian but growing up in a Pasifika nation and learning about the importance of oral communication. Another teacher revealed he didn't become a 'serious' reader until his university years and is now an avid reader of the sorts of fantasy novels his most engaged students are reading. The community liaison officer provided a compelling recount, detailing her unquenchable thirst for reading despite living in a household with only one book, the bible. Also starved of writing materials, she would practise writing in the sand at low tide. In her own words, 'it's catch up time now. I write poetry and short stories and I've just completed my first novel'.

Whilst on one level, these activities and explorations may have been seen to be a distraction to the explicit and measurable goal of student performance on standardized literacy tests, the variability of experiences and how they played out throughout a lifetime provoked the teachers to enquire about the students' own literacy identities. The enquiry activity was repeated with the student cohort with a particular focus on the Pasifika students. Students' revelations included reading as relaxing, being able to speak and comprehend their mother tongue (but not read and write), using a different language of communication for each parent and extended family members, knowledge about the phonological differences between their mother tongue and SAE, the different technology resources available in the home context, the number of students whose families accessed the local library and other students

who use social-media for family communication, particularly students whose immediate family members are still living in the Pacific. These insights were more than mere fascination; they were the stimulus for thinking about the student as sophisticated language and literacy users and the consequences of context for displaying literacy competencies.

To deepen the teachers' knowledge about the students' literacy capabilities and what they could do and what needed more support, it was decided that Miss Tracey and the teachers would use the ESL Bandscales (Department of Education and Training, 2011) to map the Pasifika students' reading, writing, listening and speaking practices. The university lecturer/researcher provided the initial expertise for conducting the ESL Bandscales assessment and the ESL specialist and community liaison officer supported the coach and teachers in finalising the assessments for the target students. The focus was on teacher capacity building rather than the university lecturer/researcher or the ESL specialist completing the assessments and providing the ratings. Of particular importance was the cultural knowledge of the community liaison officer in clarifying misconceptions for the teachers. For example, points of discussion focused on the use of pronouns in Pasifika languages, the completely different ways of being mathematical (for example, counting patterns) and the absence of a need for a suite of prepositional words in a culture where communication was predominately oral and immediate. During the process, Miss Tracey used the 'communicating' platform to help the teachers analyse the information they already knew about students, listen deeply to identify teachers' professional needs and develop this into effective planning and teaching (Carrington, 2009). It was only by tweaking the modalities of practice in the 'communicate' phase that new directions were set upon in the 'teach' phase. Specifically, the mainstream teachers articulated their raised awareness of the Pasifika students' strengths and challenges for reading, writing, listening and speaking SAE.

In the original coaching model, the 'teach' component privileged modelling explicit teaching, co-teaching and observing. However, Miss Tracey and the teachers took their new found knowledge about the Pasifika students to their planning for teaching work. They used the information to refine the plans for a the next English unit on advertising by developing an overview, lesson objectives and assessment tools that recognised and respected the students' diverse literacy identities. For example, in the unit on advertising, students were able to choose a target market that reflected their own cultural knowledges. In the reading and writing activities, teachers were more attuned to minimum levels of achievement for individual students as well as their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). By analysing one student's PROBE data it was possible to discern that the student was more competent in the reading of narrative *vis-à-vis* non-fiction texts. Through analysis of the PROBE, the literacy coach, teacher and critical friend, hypothesised that the student might not have an understanding of relating verbs and this may have inhibited the student's comprehension of the non-fiction text. The teacher was comfortable to discuss his/her limitations in knowledge and understanding regarding relating verbs. The critical friend was able to provide professional learning which was further supported by the literacy coach in a co-teaching situation. Miss Tracey noted the importance of not making assumptions about a teacher's knowledge base. Rigorous, reflective conversations about teacher knowledge and supportive, practical contexts for building on current knowledge were most salient to her practice. By this stage, the teachers had a strong sense of ownership and a high level of confidence as they began to teach the new unit. Miss Tracey continued to drop by the classrooms to continue to build relations with the teachers in the 'reflect' phase, and keep the 'communicate' phase active.

As in many short term government funded educational experiments such as that supported through the National Partnerships Agreement, hard data is seen as the only acceptable measure of success or otherwise. Evidence collected as part of the school-based

assessment data bank shows that the reading outcomes of the Pasifika students are improving. For example, in one class, the reading age of the Pasifika students, assessed using PROBE, improved from two years below 'standard' to reading at age level or at most, six months behind age level. In her interviews with us, Miss Tracey stressed the difficulty of holding one person or one initiative accountable for changes in the literacy learning outcomes for students. In reality, a multitude of factors influence a student's progress, the most important of which, according to Miss Tracey, was the burgeoning growth in teacher confidence and recognition of the impact planning and pedagogy had on student performance, notions reinforced time and again in Hattie's (2012) and Darling-Hammond's (2000) empirical studies. Hattie's work in particular highlights the effect teachers have on student outcomes are directly related to 'the attitudes and expectations that teachers have when they decide on the key issues of teaching – that is, what to teach and what level of difficulty, and their understandings of progress' (Hattie, 2012, p. 23). By using Bandscales and unpacking literacy histories of students, teachers were able to value what students could already do, not what they couldn't do and thus identify what to teach next and the level at which to pitch teaching and learning. Bandscales provided a tool to track progress specifically for identified students. Miss Tracey knew there was a knowledge gap regarding Pasifika students' literacy experiences and by working outside the sanctioned coach model, she found new ways to support teachers in improving student outcomes.

We have thus tweaked the departmentally sanctioned literacy coaching model to represent the changes to Miss Tracey's way of working. After seeing the success of student and teacher outcomes as a result of working outside the model we wanted to develop the model to share with other educators. Although not the intent of the initial project, upon reflection, it is an important outcome. The clarity of the coaching role is often 'vague or nonexistent,' (Knight, 2008) and expansion of the Sheehan model provides permission for coaches to clarify ways of working as a coach including accessing external human resources. For example, the original Sheehan (2010) model included 'seeking effective pedagogy and curriculum knowledge'; we've extended this concept to specifically include both internal and external knowledge in the model's explicit teaching phase. The Sheehan model implies that effective pedagogy knowledge is known to the coach or at least available to the coach internally within the school or education department. This extension acknowledges that effective pedagogy/curriculum knowledge may not exist within internal resources or processes and external avenues may need to be explored. In the 'communicate' phase, facilitate conversations is extended to highlight the potential to communicate outside of the school. The Sheehan (2010) coach model encouraged sharing success within schools and the local school community. The 'share' success phase now includes sharing success outside of the school-based community, for example, at association professional development events, both state-run, national and internationally through teacher professional publications. The model now includes consult externally and network in the 'build' phase to highlight the option for coaches to seek outside experience, other research findings or internal school/government resources. The 'reflect' phase now includes reflection with external critical friends.

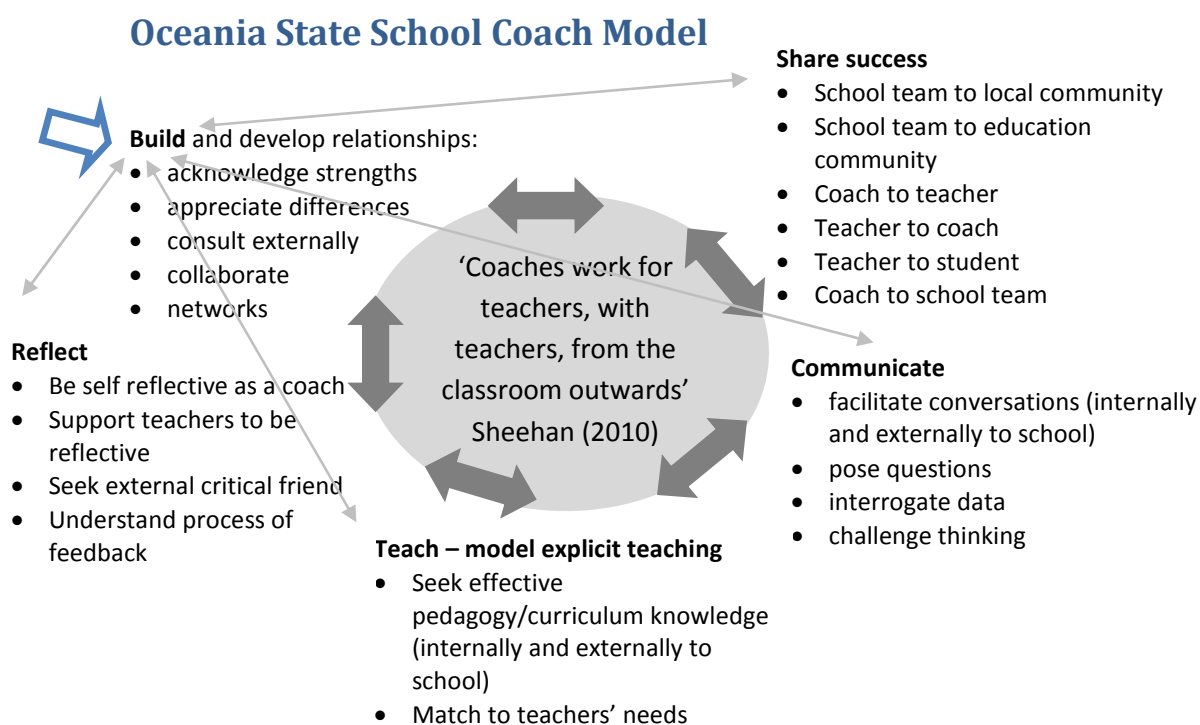


Figure 2: Oceania State School Coach Model (adapted from Sheehan, 2010)

In Conclusion: New Ways of Working

We do not want to oversimplify what has happened during the two years of Miss Tracey’s assignment as a case for or against literacy coaches working in new ways to bring professionals together to address context specific teaching and learning needs. As is often the case with short term small scale reform experiments in education that then have to be scaled up to a system level of implementation within the next election cycle, there is immense pressure to identify which model has most chance of masquerading as a ‘one-size fits all’ theorisation. Instead, we view both models of practice as offering something significant to teachers’ professional engagement whilst also appreciating the implications for practice vary across the models. Rendering visible affordances and challenges of disparate models of literacy coaching practice is more instructive to the empirical work in diverse contexts of teaching and learning and we have attempted to do this throughout the recount and analysis.

References

- Australian Council for Educational Research. (2013a). Probe 2: Reading comprehension assessment. New Zealand: TRUiUNE Initiatives.
- Australian Council for Educational Research. (2013b). Progressive achievement tests in reading PAT Reading (Fourth ed.): Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2010). My School. Retrieved 25 February, 2012, from

- <http://www.myschool.edu.au/TermsAndConditions.aspx?SDRSchoolId=47341&DEEWRI d=0&CalendarYear=2011&RefId=NdzWZbqnbyGyqzG3FBVUdA%3d%3d>
- Blamey, K. L., Meyer, C. K., & Walpole, S. (2008). Middle and high school literacy coaches: A national survey. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(4), 310-323.
- Burkins, J. M. (2009). *Practical literacy coaching: A collection of tools to support your work*: International Reading Association, Inc.
- Carrington, N. (2009, October). *Literacy and numeracy national partnership coaching program workshop*. Paper presented at the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership: Coaching Program Workshop, Queensland.
- Chilcott, T. (2009a, May 21). Government had early warning on school test failure. *The Courier Mail*.
- Chilcott, T. (2009b, September 12). NAPLAN test results lift thanks to teachers. *The Courier Mail*.
- Chilcott, T. (2009c). Schools accused of test threats. *The Courier Mail*.
- Cummins, J. (1979). *Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age questions and some other matters. Working papers on bilingualism, No. 19*. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Cummins, J. (1981). Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada. A reassessment. *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 132-149.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education policy analysis archives*. 8(1). Retrieved 13 June, 2012 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1/>.
- Dole, J., A., Liang, L., A., Watkins, N., M., & Wiggins, C., M. (2006). The state of reading professionals in the United States. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(2), 194.
- Exley, B. & Hedemann, M. (2004) Teachers' Literacy Identities. *Literate Futures: Reading (Professional Development CD)*, Education Queensland, Brisbane.
- Exley, B. (2005) Teachers' professional knowledge bases for offshore education : Two case studies of western teachers working in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology.
- Fullan, M., Hill, P., & Crévola, C. (2006). *Breakthrough*. Melbourne.
- Gill, J., Kostiw, N., & Stone, S. (2010). Coaching teachers in effective instruction: a Victorian perspective. *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years*, 18(2), 49.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. New York: Routledge
- Kinthead, S. (2007). *Improving instruction through coaching*. Washington: Centre for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington.
- Ministry of Education. (2009). Pasifika Education 2009-2012. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/PasifikaEducation/EPKeyMessages2011.pdf> .
- Rainville, K. N., & Jones, S. (2008). Situated identities: Power and positioning in the work of a literacy coach. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(6), 440-448
- Rennie, J. (2011). Learning to read: a professional learning journey. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 38(2), 221-238.
- Sheehan, T. (2010). Teaching and learning roadmap. Retrieved January 5, 2012, from http://www.learningplace.com.au/uploads/documents/store/doc_764_2770_NP_resource_Coach_Model.pdf
- Tanner, P., & Vains-Loy, D. (2009, October). *Building teacher capacity through professional learning conversations*. Paper presented at the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership: Coaching Program Workshop, Queensland.

The State of Queensland, Department of Education and Training. (2011). Details removed for blind review.

Thompson, L. (2005). *Guided reading: years 5 to 8*. Wellington, N.Z: Learning Media.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Tompkins, G. E. (2010). *Literacy for the 21st century: A balanced approach* (5th ed.): Pearson Education.