School Leaders Who Coach:

Exploring the Effect of Coaching on

Their Leadership, Learning, Self-Efficacy

and Professional Agency

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DECLARATION

I David Porritt confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This interpretive, mixed-methods research explores the experiences of school leaders who coach. Located within International and UK Schools, it uncovers the effect that being a coach has on school leaders' leadership, learning, self-efficacy and professional agency. The topic is approached through a framework of Bandura's self-efficacy and agency theory, critically exploring the coaching experiences of school leaders and a small sample of leaders working in adult learning settings. Fieldwork includes a two-part online survey blended with twenty-one semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

Findings reveal that along with elevated levels of self-awareness, school leaders who coach experience the benefits of generativity, coupled with increased knowledge, understanding and skills in coaching and leadership. Furthermore, leaders develop increasingly patient listening, more profound reflexivity, increased abilities in posing resonant and relevant questions, enhanced attentiveness to others' needs, greater empathy in building rapport and trust, and the capacity to develop emotionally safe environments in which colleagues can develop. Coaching appears to contribute to the leaders increased levels of self-efficacy belief, which acts as both a catalyst and a reinforcing mechanism for their agency.

The thesis addresses a gap in research by exploring coaching in schools from the perspective of the coach, noting that there is little or no difference between the experiences of school leaders who coach and the sample of leaders who work in adult learning environments. The research advances the argument for school leaders to develop and use coaching skills in their work with colleagues. Using coaching as a tool to support the development of others, appears to sustain leaders who coach in their leadership and mitigates the pressures and challenges of their professional

work. The thesis concludes with suggestions for an increase in knowledge, understanding and skill development of coaching and a wider uptake by school leaders.

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IMPACT STATEMENT

This research aims to make a positive contribution to the profession's understanding of ways in which school leaders can bolster personal resources with which to handle the pressures of their work. It uncovers fresh insights for enhancing leaders' self-efficacy beliefs, which promote professional learning and foster professional agency.

Within the field of coaching, research rarely looks at the impact of coaching on the coach. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of school leaders at all levels who coach in International and UK contexts. The research makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the field. It identifies that when leaders adopt coaching in their work, the process appears to contribute to increased levels of self-efficacy belief, which in turn, acts as both a catalyst and a reinforcing mechanism for strengthening their sense of agency. Furthermore, the research identifies seven enhanced aspects of effective professional practice, listed as:

1. increased levels of self-awareness,
2. increasingly patient listening,
3. more profound reflexivity,
4. increased effectiveness when posing resonant and relevant questions,
5. enhanced attentiveness to others' needs,
6. greater empathy in building rapport and trust; and,
7. the capacity to develop emotionally safe environments in which colleagues can develop.

At the time of writing, Covid-19 has changed the world. Although school leaders at all levels are used to handling pressure, the recent intense uncertainty and elevated workload have been unprecedented. The question of finding ways to bolster school leaders' leadership agency is now, more than ever before, of critical importance. Coaching can be part of the answer.

Dissemination

The outcomes of this research will be shared across the Council of International Schools (COBIS) network via online webinars during 2020-2021, at the annual conference for school leaders in 2021 (600 attendees) and via the regular professional development updates sent to all 270 schools in 80 countries. The reach of this network includes 80,000 teachers, many of whom are working in school leadership positions. Furthermore, outcomes will be shared in an advanced coaching skills programme developed by the researcher in partnership with a UK based professional development company (KAA) in their work across the UK and internationally via blended learning, online coaching workshops, via the monthly KAA leadership podcast and at international conferences organised by COBIS and other educational member associations.

The researcher will develop a proposal for an article in a peer-reviewed journal for the EMCC and for Buckingham University, subject to the successful defence of the thesis. Furthermore, the researcher will develop a proposal for a book and a chapter proposal to the editors of the Complete Handbook of Coaching (Cox, Bachirova & Clutterbuck, 2014).

The research had a profound impact on my learning. It restored my professional belief in my ability to make a difference to students and staff. It has helped me to listen more, speak less, ask powerful learning questions, to reflect and to be. It has made me more aware of not only what I can do, but of who I am.

500 words

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REFLECTION ON LEARNING

Introduction

In this reflection I describe my professional learning journey through the EdD.

For as long as I can recall, I have been interested in leadership and leaders, seeking to understand what constitutes effective leadership. I have been curious to understand how and why some leaders do well, why others do not, and I have wondered why some leaders are effective in one context but are less so in another? Most recently, I have become fascinated by adult professional learning and leadership development through coaching, which I understand as an intentional and nuanced conversation which facilitates personal transformation and/or situational change in another, and a learning mechanism fundamentally concerned with helping others to improve themselves (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014).

Nine years of classroom teaching and Twenty-three years of Head teaching in five schools and four countries has formed my understanding that leadership effectiveness and school outcomes are strongly linked (Harvey, 2011; Leithwood et al. 2008). The leadership of teaching and learning matters enormously (Ardley, 2019; Ng, 2015), and there is a strong correlation as evidenced in two wide ranging pieces of quality research by Robinson, 2008 and Leithwood et. al, 2008, 2010, between teaching, student learning efficacy and teachers' professional learning despite the mono-cultural paradigm in which they were undertaken. Furthermore, professional learning is an important determinant of what it means to be a Professional (Hallinger and Heck, 2010), a discovery I made in the first EdD Module, 'Foundations of Professionalism', which forced me to reflect on my learning journey from the earliest

days of my career. Considering what being a professional educator and leader means to me has occupied my life ever since.

My Leadership Journey

As Acting Head in a school which was part of the Dorset Healthy Alliance project - a family-teacher-social work alliance to reduce truancy and delinquency (Pritchard, 2001) - I learned that the moral imperative of school leadership is the development of a healthy, decent and sustainable society. I determined that authentic leadership was concerned with building legitimacy through honesty, relationships, openness, a truthful self-concept and strong ethics (George 2003). I found that quality happens when you make it happen (West-Burnham, 1997), and what matters most for a school to become a place of high-quality learning is the extent to which all the stakeholders care about what they are doing. (Stoll and Fink, 1995) I was drawn to understandings of leadership expressed by Greenleaf (1977) in which I learned that leadership is about serving others. More recently, work by Kouzes and Posner (2017) and Scouller (2016) on leadership, and Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, (2014) on coaching have inspired me to rethink previous assumptions.

When studying for an International MBA in Educational Leadership, Brighouse and Woods (1999), MacGilchrist (2004) and Hopkins (2001) informed my thinking about what makes schools places of excellent learning. I became increasingly convinced that educational achievement was due in no small measure to the success of school leaders' leadership. My research findings indicated that effective school leaders exhibited a clear sense of vision, coupled with a deep commitment to understanding and serving the needs of their communities. They were people of moral integrity, tenacity and courage, people worth following and people who put the needs of children first. They motivated and mobilised staff to develop shared leadership skills.

They worked to create a professional climate in which all stakeholders could flourish and achieve the highest educational standards possible (Porritt, 2004).

Facilitation, Coaching and Mentoring

While training as a National College of School Leadership (NCSL) facilitator, I encountered coaching and mentoring in the pilot Middle Leadership Development Programme (MLDP) and in work by Clutterbuck (2004). The MLDP drew on principles and practices from what was then the recent National Framework for Coaching and Mentoring (2005). It identified key concepts that have become increasingly important in my professional life: that coaching is a process designed to foster powerful learning conversations, deep relationships, requires trust and agreement to work, concentrates on the construction of shared, challenging personal goals and serves to promote growth in the coachee's self-direction. It is fair to note that I am an enthusiastic proponent of coaching. While there are advantages in this; namely that my interest and passion for coaching helped sustain me through difficult moments during the research process, I am aware that the positive view I hold can make me uncritical.

NCSL facilitation training introduced me to ideas of human development expressed by Erikson (1963), to Kolb's (1984), theory of experiential learning and Cunningham's (2012 p.56) formula of 'Do, Review, Learn, Apply' concerning mentoring. Although there was an ongoing debate about the differences that existed between coaching and mentoring, researchers understood that what mattered most within both, was the quality of relationships between the coach/mentor and coachee (Clutterbuck, 2012). Coaching and mentoring, I discovered, appeared to direct reflection toward the lived experiences of the coachee through five key processes; active listening, questioning, summarising, probing and reflecting.

I began, however, to question whether the coach/mentor, when exposed to coachee perspectives, might reflect more deeply and hear their inner voice through the dialectic, conversational interaction with the coachee and with the self. Coaching appeared to embody a process of learning from experience, observation, reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations, testing out the implications of the concepts in new situations and movement towards action; all aspects of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle.

To understand the theoretical underpinnings of coaching and explore how coaching might promote human development I studied for an ILM Level 7 Certificate in Executive Coaching and Leadership Mentoring. I was curious about the dialogic process that appeared to be taking place in coaching sessions and keen to investigate the range of tools coaches use. Conversations with my boss led me to consider an EdD and then, when meeting Professor Riley, my thinking was cemented – I believed she could provide both the drive for academic rigour and the healthy professional scepticism that 'non-academic', enthusiastic coaching practitioners, like me, need.

When joining the EdD, I explored what it meant to be a professional international school Headteacher in 'Foundations of Professionalism' as I engaged with work by Freidson (2001). I concluded that my professionalism was concerned with:

- A sense of openness to new learning from the regular collection of 'live' data
- A high level of intentional transparency and sharing of knowledge collegially
- An understanding of the changing values of society and the parent community
- An appreciation of the legal basis and rational argument for the moral and socio-economic importance of education for a better society
- A willingness to engage with knowing about the most rigorous understanding around pedagogy
- An adherence to agreed standards along with work to shape those standards

- The relentless pursuit of equality and success for all learners so that every child achieves as well as they can.

Through Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2 I drew on Narrative Inquiry (Creswell, 2013), which helped develop my ability to ascertain meaning through interviews. I investigated the extent to which peer coaching was a beneficial activity when assisting middle leaders in developing their understanding of self and their leadership effectiveness. Findings indicated that when located within a leadership development programme, peer-coaching provided participants with opportunities to reflect on themselves as leaders, to find answers to leadership problems, to help each other, and to receive feedback on their leadership skills. As one middle leader participant in MOE2 described:

> *They asked questions to make me think and to open up, and that's probably the first time since I have been at university - which is a long time - that I have truly said how I feel in my deepest recesses, in my heart and my soul…about what I am as a professional.*

I concluded that peer coaching reinforced and sustained personal learning when leaders reflected on leadership experiences. Consequently, I set about introducing coaching into the International school where I was Headteacher. This work segued into the Institution Focused Study, which set out to address a gap in the literature concerning the lack of understanding about how and why peer-coaching worked to promote leaders' development.

Findings indicated that when teacher-leaders reflected on their experiences and subsequently reflected on their reflections, they made sense of their world in a way that helped them make new connections with their intentions, their behaviours and the outcomes of their leadership activity. Peer coaching as described by Ladyshewsky (2014), fostered personal learning conversations, which helped people

to engage with personal leadership challenges supporting Cox's (2013 p.159) view that 'when experience becomes articulated it acquires meaning'. Peer-coaching allowed coachees' space and time to stand back, to become critically evaluative of self in a way that fostered their drive and determination to succeed. Stronger professional relationships and a deeper understanding of shared challenges were evident. Furthermore, findings indicated that colleagues who had adopted a coaching role developed equally, if not, stronger reflective skills, fortified their decision-making abilities, enhanced their confidence and strengthened their leadership effectiveness.

This unanticipated finding became the focus of my thesis upgrade in which I developed a proposal for a more in-depth research project to ascertain the extent to which self-efficacy beliefs and agency may be enhanced in school leaders who coach. Writing the proposal was challenging because it took place following a period of professional overload and a sudden international relocation. I noticed, however, that despite the associated feelings of self-doubt and what I now look back on as a time of low self-efficacy regarding my leadership in schools, coaching others was helping me to reflect and learn about my leadership and had the effect of contributing to the restoration of my 'self'. Consequently, I understand that 'my' thesis, has been as much about me as a professional and the leadership journey I have travelled as it has been about the bigger picture of leadership, coaching and schools.

Undertaking the EdD has been intellectually taxing, frustrating and yet fulfilling. Learning from members of the cohort, and meeting up with them in London, Dubai, Belgium, and the USA has led to long-lasting friendships. My supervisors have helped me make sense of my learning and guided me along the pathway of discovery. Deep and searching conversations helped me develop an initial conceptual framework, the research questions and the research process. However, following an intense period

of coaching coachees, of facilitating three coaching programmes for international schools and too many hours travelling and waiting in airport lounges, I determined that analysing the data and writing it up was too big a task while working full time. Taking six months off was one of the best decisions I made along the journey. In some respects, it was an outcome of enhanced self-efficacy beliefs and an illustration of my self-agency. Saving up and planning for the season of writing without an income took courage, planning, understanding and agreement from my family. They supported my self-agency and their encouragement *of* me, and *for* me is something that means more than almost anything else in my adult life.

The process of the EdD has forced me to reflect more deeply on coaching and leadership at conceptual and theoretical levels and learn about the importance of self-efficacy beliefs and agency. The journey through my IFS and my thesis has shown me that one powerful way for leaders to engage with the renewal they need to sustain their agency and foster their resilience when faced with ever-increasing workloads is to become coaches. Coaching offers leaders the opportunity to engage with generativity, which is 'associated with a wide range of benefits including low levels of anxiety and depression, high levels of self-acceptance and life satisfaction, capacity for leadership… along with a sense of belonging and fulfilment' (Berk, 2004, p.513).

The EdD has reframed my understanding of not only what it means to be a professional school leader, but what it means to be a person who is trying to make a positive difference in the world.

1993 words.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is an original study of the coaching experiences of school leaders who coach in International and UK schools. It builds on my interest in professionalism, leadership, and coaching in schools, and the unanticipated findings from my Institution Focused Study (IFS). The topic is approached through a framework of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy and agency theory, critically exploring the coaching experiences of school leaders and a small sample of leaders working in adult learning settings. Specifically, the study uncovers benefits for school leaders' leadership, learning, self-efficacy and agency, as an outcome of their coaching experiences.

The research adopted a mixed method (Creswell, 2014) approach in which a survey of 42 school leaders coupled with 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews was analysed. School leaders and colleagues who work with school leaders accounted for seventeen interviews. A further four interviews took place with leaders working in adult professional learning settings and who use coaching.

I use the lower-case 'school leader' to refer to all leaders, at all levels working in the school and the capitalised phrase 'School Leader' to refer to the person in charge or who has statutory responsibility for the educational setting in which they work. A list of job titles of all school leaders who responded to the survey and/or participated in the interviews is included in Appendix v.

The research explores the principal question:

- **To what extent does being a coach support school leaders' self-efficacy and professional agency?**

Supplementary research questions are:

- To what extent does using coaching skills promote self-reflection and build self-awareness supporting school leaders' understanding of their leadership strengths and weaknesses?

- Do leaders who coach perceive changes in their professional agency?

- Do colleagues who work with leaders who coach perceive changes in the leaders' professional agency?

In this chapter, I define key concepts explored in the research (Table 1), explain the rationale, discuss the research focus, describe the participants and the background in which International and UK school leaders work. I refer to the Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, the theoretical lens through which I explore the field of inquiry, and discuss gaps in the current research concerning coaching and school leaders who coach. The chapter ends with an outline of the methodology underpinning the research.

Table 1. Concepts and terms used in the research

- **Self-Efficacy:** people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1997).

- **Agency:** one's own ability to act, 'to intervene in the world', to 'make a difference' (Giddens, 1984 p.14), the 'capacity to act in the context in which one is located' (Hewson, 2010), the 'power of leaders to shape the spaces within their organisations', to 'help create organisations which are places of inclusion' (Riley, 2017).

- **Professional Agency**: 'the exertion of influence, action, and decision-making in ways that affect both the work of the professional as well as their identity as a professional' (Vahasantanen et al., 2016).

- **Coaching**: 'a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools, and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders' (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014 p.1).

- **Learning:** 'the extension and clarification of the meaning of one's experience' (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2011 p.11).

1.2 Rationale

There is growing evidence suggesting that international and UK based school leaders experience increasingly demanding and complex professional challenges, exacerbated by sustained, excessive workload (Riley, 2017; Blatchford, 2014; COBIS, 2018). It is, therefore, not only essential to find ways to support and sustain professional school leaders' capacity and capability to cope and lead well amidst these challenges, but also to understand more about what school leaders can do for themselves to increase self-efficacy and to enhance agency. Agency is a complex, but useful concept which can be adopted to understand both the *doing* and *being* of leadership. Riley's (2017) and Robinson's (2018), research helpfully discusses agency in professional school leadership contexts arguing that it is concerned with the ability to make a positive difference in securing successful learning outcomes for children and young people.

Although the notion of agency has gathered momentum in the education profession in recent years as evidenced in both the enhanced International Baccalaureate Curriculum[i] and OECD Education Development Goals for 2030[ii], unless the school has adopted one of these curricula, it is not a commonly used term with which school leaders are familiar. Furthermore, I recognise, from my professional experience, that exercising agency is not always as simple as it may sound, nor as I or other school leaders may want it to be.

For example, as school leaders enact their agency so as to make a difference, they experience financial, academic, behavioural, political and personnel-related challenges, and increasingly contend with the post-modern, internet-aware parent's relentless and often unrealistic expectations regarding outcomes for their children (Porritt, 2014; Robinson, 2018; Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2010).

Meeting these educational challenges, exercising one's agency therefore, requires professional knowledge, understanding, energy and personal inner strength (Porritt, 2014; Morrish, 2016).

Specific educational challenges faced by the profession were identified by Wigdortz and Toop (2016) when exploring issues surrounding reduced recruitment and weak retention of teachers and school leaders in the UK state sector. Similar challenges are experienced by school leaders across the international school landscape, (COBIS, 2018). Wigdortz and Toop (2016) claim that school leaders not only work within a professional context lacking a culture of reflective practice but also suffer from a dearth of professional feedback, patchy coaching and insufficient mentoring. Despite attempts at developing a National Framework for Coaching and Mentoring (2005) or a critical inquiry model for mentoring and coaching in schools (Burley and Pomphrey, 2011) or Porritt and Earley's (2010 p. 140) findings that 'coaching was an effective CPD practice' building 'a positive organisational culture through peer support and team work', the application of coaching in schools is underdeveloped. Consequently, the scope of leaders' attempts to sustain growth through professional learning opportunities are limited, which, is a significant long-term issue because a lack of sustained professional development contributes to pushing leaders out of the profession (Wigdortz and Toop, 2016).

Further problems exist for those remaining in the profession irrespective of whether the school leaders work within International or UK schools. Continued exposure to excessive workload and concomitant feelings of being overly burdened can reduce mental functioning (Alred, 2016). Sustained pressure, if left unchecked, can lead to diminished concentration, loss of memory and poor decision-making coupled with a lack of emotional self-control, a loss of a sense of perspective, and to 'finding it

increasingly problematic to remain present in the moment' (Alred, 2016 p.5). School leaders, facing myriad challenges are, therefore, at risk of succumbing to the adverse effects of sustained pressure. While professional challenges do not necessarily impact school leaders negatively, as my professional experience testifies and as Bandura (1997), an authority on self-efficacy and agency argues, continuous pressure, in whichever form it is manifest, can turn professional challenges from ambitious goals that inspire, to deep-seated problems, which erode self-efficacy beliefs and diminish agency. Equipping school leaders with personal resources to enhance self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to make that difference, and foster the drive and determination to exercise agency is, therefore, both a challenge and opportunity the profession must face.

I recognise that as a long-serving School Leader, I have a keen interest in exploring Headteacher or Principal Leadership. But, despite the importance of studying the leadership of School Leaders, it is my view that it is at least as important to study leaders at all levels in schools. If Wigdortz and Toop (2016) are correct in their assumptions regarding teacher recruitment and retention, the school leaders of today will not become the School Leaders of tomorrow unless they are supported and challenged to grow professionally into the robust, capable people the profession needs.

Although my professional experience as a Headteacher and Principal endorses the view that the person identified as being 'in charge' of a school may shoulder the ultimate challenge of leadership, School Leaders tend to work collectively, distributing leadership challenges amongst their colleagues (Harris, 2014). Collective leadership is, to all intents and purposes, a form of bounded collectivism; bounded within a hierarchy which falls under the purview of the School Leader and is an outworking of

their willingness, ability and confidence in delegating and distributing leadership across the school. Consequently, school leaders at all levels experience, a sense of responsibility to, and accountability for, the school's outcomes (Blatchford, 2014; Robinson 2018; Woods and Roberts, 2018), despite the somewhat traditional hierarchical leadership structures schools adopt.

Of all the many and varied responsibilities international and UK school leaders experience, the recurrent financial challenge of maintaining a sustainable income stream is perhaps one of the most significant irrespective of whether the school is set up to make a profit for shareholders, has charitable status or is state-sponsored. As labour intense institutions, a considerable proportion (as high as 85%) of the school's income is spent on personnel. As income streams are, for the most part, tied to student numbers, downward fluctuations in the schools' roll can have a negative impact on financial sustainability. When income drops, cost-cutting is required to balance the budget. School leaders' work, therefore, becomes more challenging because, despite the decrease in revenue, the expectation is that academic standards will be maintained (at least) and ideally improved. As Robinson argues from a wide empirical base, 'The pressure has never been greater on school leaders at all levels to improve outcomes for students' (2018 p.8). The challenge in both international and UK schools is, therefore, to find ways to support school leaders as they exercise their professional leadership agency to do more, with less.

Although coaching could be one mechanism to support leaders, programmes in which school leaders receive coaching (Porritt and Earley, 2010; Ng, 2012) and attempts to introduce coaching at a system level (Ng, 2012) have not yet led to sustained professional growth despite the benefits school leaders experience individually (Robinson, 2010; van Nieuwerburgh *et al.,* 2020). This research, therefore, explores

a new question asking how becoming a coach (not becoming a coachee) could lead to sustained professional development and growth.

1.3 Leadership Challenges

1.3a Particular Leadership Challenges in International Schools

Although it is not uncommon for international schools to educate the children of wealthy expatriates, it is understood that despite high levels of income and opportunity, expatriate parents can be relatively absent from the lives of their children as they focus on their demanding professional, global roles (Van Reken, Pollock and Pollock, 2010). Consequently, school leaders in international schools become part-time stand-in parents. International school leaders, therefore, must find ways to build a robust sense of belonging in the community (Riley, 2017), also providing a counterbalance for the superficial friendships associated with highly mobile school populations (Van Reken, Pollock and Pollock, 2010). Furthermore, international schools sometimes experience limited access to meaningful Health and Social Care services, to counselling services and limited external provision for child protection as well as having to pay a high cost when engaging external consultants to deliver professional development (PD) support. School leaders know that without high quality, relevant PD, staff quickly lose their up-to-date knowledge, which for professionals who want to remain current, hinders the school's retention policy. With high quality PD, while staff may develop, the budget comes under increasing pressure. The Leadership challenge is, therefore, to find an equilibrium that satisfies staff needs and meets financial expectations. Coupled with their numerous responsibilities as educators, business managers, counsellors and medical advisors, the pressure school leaders feel to be everything, to everyone is significant.

1.3b Particular Leadership Challenges in UK Schools

School leaders in the UK face equally demanding challenges compounded by a prevailing culture of politically driven short-term ambition, increasing pressure of externally imposed performance targets and a growing expectation that schools should quickly provide the answers to society's large-scale problems (Tierney, 2016). Thom (2018), writing from a practitioner base argues that 'it is time to control the mad theology of speed that is damaging the teaching profession: to press pause and reflect on an educational system that is being stretched to its limits.' (2018 p.14). Unchecked, unrealistic and politically motivated expectations drive an agenda that diverts school leaders from the delicate and complex work of promoting long-term student success, wellbeing and growth, towards a culture of the quick fix (Tierney, 2016). The pressure leaders experience and the excessive workload they face in leading communities not only reduces their agency but can, in a growing number of cases (Meredith et. al, 2019) lead to significant stress (Perkbox, 2018) and ultimately to a loss of personal wellbeing (Skinner, Leavey and Rothi, 2019).

1.3c Personal Interest

My experience of leading schools in the UK and internationally, and of facilitating leadership programmes for professional educators, resonates with claims made by Leithwood et al. (2008, 2010) and Robinson (2008, 2018) that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as a source of school success. As Woods' and Roberts' (2018) research indicates and Munby's (2019) reflections on a career in educational system leadership testify, it was the combined creativity and determinedly skilled work of all the staff and all the leaders who worked collectively toward a common goal which led to student success.

1.3d Institution Focused Study

Collective leadership success was exemplified in an international school I worked in as Headteacher and undertook my IFS. Middle and senior level leaders worked collaboratively and adopted peer coaching as an occasional tool to promote collaboration, professional learning and agentic action. In a similar way to Boyd's (2008), study of peer coaching in Australian schools, findings indicated that peer coaching contributed to the schools' overall shared leadership culture (Porritt, 2016), which included:

- enhanced professional learning

- reinforced collaborative professional relationships

- fostering the professional learning community, and

- contributions to the collective efficacy of school leaders.

An unanticipated finding for school leaders who acted as coaches, however, was that peer coaching appeared to foster their confidence in decision making, provided more precise insight into the context of the school and appeared to nurture self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, findings indicated that peer coaching promoted a stronger sense of agency for the school leaders who coached, expressed as their determination to accomplish goals and push against the myriad pressures they faced in their work. Coaching also played a role in creating compelling opportunities for school leaders' reflection, a point Coates (2015) makes when arguing that along with the coachee, 'every coaching session should be a learning experience for the coach as well' (2018 p.185). While it is not part of this research, an exploration into the extent to which peer coaching supports or promotes collective decision making and fosters shared leadership in schools would constitute a fascinating inquiry.

Despite the positivity I experienced within my IFS school setting regarding peer coaching, the ensuing investment in a training and certification process for a team of peer coaches a culture of coaching and has not yet been embedded. Similarly as is seen in Chapter 5, one research participant attempted to introduce a coaching culture in her international school but was unable to achieve the success they hoped for. Both examples echo Clutterbuck's (2009) earlier report on the embeddedness of in-company coaching and mentoring which also support the notion that despite the substantial benefits coaching and mentoring brings, its application in schools is still work in progress.

1.3e Establishing a Leadership Development Programme

A further source of personal interest arose from an earlier leadership role when I helped develop a programme of professional leadership learning for a group of international schools. As part of the research to determine the programme's learning objectives, I conducted 20 structured interviews with school leaders to explore the processes by which school leaders believed leadership knowledge, understanding and skills could be acquired. Findings indicated a strong correlation between learning from reflecting on personal leadership experiences and reciprocal peer coaching with colleagues. The notion that school leaders had learned to lead by coaching others and by reflecting on the experience supported the unanticipated findings from my IFS. It led me to want to explore more fully potential benefits of professional reflection and learning that might arise when leaders adopt a coaching approach in their work with their colleagues and whether reflection might lead to enhanced self-efficacy beliefs and increased agency.

1.3f The application of coaching in educational settings

Eastman's (2019) extensive review of coaching papers published in the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education (IJCME)* between 2012 and 2018 spanned time, culture and a wide variety of contexts informing my understanding of the state of coaching in education. Studies included, but were not limited to; coaching with pre-service teachers in the UK (Salter, 2015), scaffolding for teacher development (Collett, 2015), CPD in Qatar (Chaaban and Abu Tineh, 2017), teacher innovation in Singapore (Ng, 2012) and Headteacher coaching (Houchens *et al.,* 2017). A range of coaching models were noted within the studies and references were made to various programmes adopting cognitive behavioural coaching approaches with children in a study by O'Rourke et al, (2016). Eastman (2019, p. 217) concluded that irrespective of the 'geographically dispersed and contextually bound studies' three themes emerged: trust, identity and confidence.

Along with these themes, Eastman (2019) highlighted that while academic rigour concerning explorations into coaching practices and programmes was increasing and much stronger evidence to substantiate the claims made concerning professional and personal development existed, it was evident that coaching was most commonly driven forward by enthusiastic individuals. An example of this is found in the *'Viva Go' Quick Values Led Solution Focused Coaching*[iii] programme for school children. While there have been benefits for individual pupils in the school in which the programme is located, the coaching programme is not yet embeded across the Academy Trust of which the school is a part. This example and the review by O'Rourke et al, (2016) suggests that coaching in schools is commonly dependent on the individual enthusiast. School coaching does not have the universal understanding, acceptance or adoption as other school practices such as; booster groups, social skills groups, student councils, nurture groups, STEM projects or wellbeing initiatives.

1.3g Self-Reflection: Sustaining Productivity and Promoting Capacity Building

Two aspects of professional practice have shaped my understanding of the importance of self-reflection. Firstly, Hellier's (2013) view that self-reflection is an essential professional activity helping leaders sustain productivity. Secondly, that self-reflection promotes capacity building and reinforces the sense of control leaders need as an underpinning of their self-efficacy beliefs and agency (Bandura, 1997; Wang, Zhang and Jackson, 2013). I acknowledge, however, that self-reflection does not automatically lead to stronger self-efficacy beliefs nor enhanced levels of professional agency (Riley 2017; Vahasantanen et al. 2016; Shows and Scriber, 2013).

Having worked in a variety of leadership roles for more than 30 years both in the UK and in international schools, witnessing many respected colleagues succumb to the harmful effects of continued personal and professional pressure and having experienced this myself, I acknowledge that this study is not only a professional exploration but is also one of significant personal interest. While the focus of the research is to explore the extent that being a coach may support school leaders' self-efficacy and professional agency, it is also my aim to use the study as an exploration of the self. A professional doctorate is about the meanings I draw from the research as applied to my leadership and my learning. For this reason, I agree with Clarke and Wildy (2010) who argue that it is important for professionals to look to themselves to find ways of sustaining their leadership. Not only do I want to find ways to help school leaders, but also to improve myself as I continue my career as a professional School Leader. My aim is for this research to make a positive contribution to the profession's understanding of ways in which school leaders can bolster personal resources with which to handle the pressures of the work they engage in, to uncover fresh insights for enhancing leaders' self-efficacy beliefs that foster their professional agency and promote their - and my - continued professional learning.

1.4 The Research Focus and Theoretical Underpinnings

Schools are social institutions and so a theory which aims to understand self-efficacy, agency and social modelling is relevant. Given that Bandura's (1977, 1997) social learning theory is understood to be a theory of human agency and personality functioning, when coupled to his later work on self-efficacy beliefs, I concluded that it would provide an appropriate lens through which to view school leaders' personal development and learning in four areas: vicarious learning, emotional regulation, verbal persuasion and mastery experience (Bandura, 1977, 1997). I have used each source of learning as part of the conceptual framework I explain in chapter three.

During the process of developing the conceptual framework for the research I considered several theories of learning. Each have underpinnings in Dewey's (1938) learning cycle. Two examples were Lewin's experiential learning model as discussed in Burnes and Bargel, (2017) and the Experiential Learning cycle developed by Kolb (1984), which as Landsberg (2015) argues, underpins the GROW coaching model, so evidently in use by school coaches, evident in Chapter 4. I also explored Dreyfus' (1980), five stage human development model, examined Honey and Mumford's (1982) work on learning styles and Kirkpatrick's (2007) impact evaluation process, although it is not, strictly speaking, a model of learning. Finally, I considered Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 1990) as used by Rodger (2014).

While the previously mentioned theories and models are relevant to studies of coaching, none, specifically focus on the self-efficacy beliefs of learners. Given that my research concentrates on the self-efficacy beliefs and agentic experiences of school leaders I deemed Bandura's (1977, 1997) theories to be of most relevance. They are known to be appropriate mechanisms by which one can develop

understanding of the range of conditions that help individuals better shape their lives and achieve changes that they desire (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

1.5 Gaps In The Research

Although school leadership has been widely studied and theories of self-efficacy and agency are well documented, in contrast, empirical coaching studies are relatively scarce. This is particularly the case in schools, especially when attempting to understand coaching as a process of learning from the coach's perspective (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck 2014). While several studies have concentrated on exploring the conditions required to establish coaching systems, have examined coaching processes and models, or have explored the impact of potential benefits received by the coachee, understanding how coaching might impact the coach is rarely investigated (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014).

Coaching literature reflects a field of practitioner-led inquiry, where the overwhelming emphasis has been to explore different aspects of coaching processes, systems, and models from the perspective of the benefits coachees receive. For example, studies have examined: coaching systems (Gottesman, 2000; Peterson and Hicks, 1996; Anderson and Anderson, 2005; Boyd, 2008); managerial models used within organisations (Ratiu, David and Baban, 2017); recommendations for the evaluation of coaching systems (Osatuke, Yanovsky, and Ramsel, 2016); perceived coachee benefits (Eastman, 2016; Passmore, 2017); the value of coaching practice and the deployment of experienced professionals (Lofthouse, 2018); or the conditions needed for effective developmental coaching interventions (Earley and Porritt, 2010; Tshannen-Moran, 2010; Cox, 2013; Haan and Burger, 2013; Rodger, 2014; Schalk and Landeta, 2017). Potential benefits for the coach are rarely examined except within studies that focus on the coaching relationship itself (Hardingham, 2004;

Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2005; Kaser and Halbert, 2009; Thornton, 2010; Clutterbuck, 2011; Spaten, O'Broin, and Løkken, 2016), and although benefits are noted, they are not fully explained.

In further examples of coaching studies in schools, one recently investigated the potential positive impact of coaching for the coachee across a national education system, noting that it could be, but wasn't always, a helpful tool for leader's growth and development, (Wise and Cavazos, 2017). An earlier study explored how coaching helped Headteachers (in the coachee role) cope better in challenging circumstances (Watts, 2012), and a further study concluded that there are significant benefits to coachees' professional learning when receiving solutions-focused coaching (Ellis, 2013). Although coaching had powerful effects and led to benefits, in all these studies, however, the emphasis of the inquiry was firmly located around the coachee's learning, not that of the coach.

In a study of School Leaders who coach, Swain (2016), noticed how the coaching process fostered a distributive leadership structure which led to higher levels of leadership self-efficacy and confidence in a senior leadership team, uncovering a statistically significant relationship between the School Leader's behaviours and the sense of leadership self-efficacy within the senior staff. In a different study by Netolicky (2016) school leaders who adopted coaching were understood to have helped to change the culture of the school from one of leader-teacher evaluation to 'self-authored learning experiences' (Netolicky, 2016 p.79). Neither of these studies, however, focused on the benefits school leaders received as leaders, as an outcome of their coaching experiences.

The gap in coaching research is perhaps not so surprising, because as a confidential process, coaching is complicated and difficult to explore. Furthermore, despite the development of thirteen theoretical coaching frameworks and twelve coaching genres, no single overarching theory exists to explain the process (Cox, Bachirova and Clutterbuck 2014). Although it would be convenient for researchers if an overarching theory of coaching existed, instead, as a relatively new field of applied practice, they must accept that coaching draws upon multiple theories within spheres of adult learning. These include; human development, social psychology, existential and phenomenological philosophy, organisational development, cognitive development, and cognitive behavioural and person-centred learning. Although all contain assertions concerning ways that people change and grow within coaching interventions, ways that human change is facilitated and the nature of what being human constitutes, the theoretical emphasis is placed firmly in the boundaries of the coachee's learning and development. The learning that coaches gain from coaching is at best, underexplored.

Although Starr (2014), identified three benefits leaders experience when mentoring other professionals; increased focus, clarification of ideas and views and feelings of adding value to others her work was not specifically concerned with coaching. Similarly, Lofthouse (2018), explored mentoring within schools and higher education, and earlier, with student teachers (Lofthouse, 2014) as an educative process from which both mentor and mentee benefit. Despite the similarities and overlaps that exist with coaching and mentoring (Garvey, 2014), my working understanding is that no empirical research has attempted to connect themes of leadership, self-efficacy, agency, and coaching in schools, from the perspective of the coach.

1.6 Method of Data Collection and Participants

The research design adopted a sequential 3-stage mixed-method procedure. Following a review of the literature, the emerging themes were explored in the opening stage of the field work through an online survey. However, despite working for more than 30 years within international and UK education, I was unaware of a specific database of school leaders who coach. Consequently, I sought to develop a database by utilising my professional network, thereby creating a convenience sample which I am aware introduced an element of bias. Survey outcomes were used as a filter to refine my ideas and streamline the field of inquiry so that I could explore the emergent themes in semi-structured in-depth interviews. This process generated a series of questions which were followed up through two sets of semi-structured in-depth interviews as described by Creswell, (2014).

Stage one (online survey) provided both an opening and a supporting role in collecting quantitative and attitudinal data (Creswell, 2014). Stage two (interviews) provided the main emphasis of the research overall. It took the form of a progressive qualitative inquiry via semi-structured in-depth interviews because they are understood to be a valid method of identifying shared ways of interpreting experiences, of examining the underlying essential features of the phenomenon being studied and of inductively exploring the multiple realities of participants (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2014). Interviews, therefore, uncovered the essential features, subtleties, and complexities of being a coach as perceived by the participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). Furthermore, the interviews served to capture the experiences of being a coach and extracted qualitative data which has added a 'rich vein of colour to the analysis' (Collins and Hussey, 2003 p. 43).

All respondents taking part in the survey worked in school leadership roles, the majority, internationally. Although most of the participants taking part in the interviews worked as school leaders, four worked as leaders in adult learning contexts. As findings show, there was little or no difference in leaders' experiences of using coaching, whether working in schools or adult learning contexts.

Stage three (follow-up interviews) was undertaken with a smaller, more focused convenience sample of school leaders in two international schools and two UK schools. Participants were invited to comment on their colleagues' professional behaviours, which may have changed or developed because of their use of coaching skills. This helped me to explore agency from the perspective of colleagues who work with coaches. All participants who volunteered to take part in the follow-up interviews were either coaches, coachees, or both.

Gaining access to experienced school leaders who coach and who were willing to talk about their coaching experiences, be they positive or negative, proved to be a challenge. In my experience, it is rare to find people who use coaching but who disagree with its tenets or who find it unhelpful. Those who do not appreciate the benefits of spending lengthy amounts of time coaching a coachee have, for the most part, given up on its use. In contrast, school leaders who use coaching regularly and who are willing to talk about the benefits they experience, tend to be people who are positive and enthusiastic about coaching. There is, however, a tendency for enthusiastic coaches to overstate the returns 'their' coaching yields for coachee learning and reflection. As evaluators of their personal coaching work, coupled with the need to protect the confidentiality of their coachees, enthusiastic coaches often protect themselves by heavily filtering what they say, becoming uncritical of their work and of coaching generally.

Keeping the potential for uncritical views of school leaders who coach uppermost in mind, therefore, I recognise that because the conceptual framework I have developed for this research begins with the school leader who coaches, an element of positive, enthusiastic bias exists at the starting point. Furthermore, by interviewing school leaders who coach and who willingly took part in the research, not only is the sample convenience based, but is also predisposed to discuss coaching positively. School leaders who do not coach or who do not value its potential were not interviewed.

Although it may have been interesting to undertake a comparative study of school leaders who do not coach and it may be a topic for future research, exploring the reasons why some school leaders do, or do not use coaching as a process in their work was not my aim.

1.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed where my interest in the research originated. I described the pressure that school leaders experience, shedding light on the potential negative consequences for individuals and the profession. I outlined some challenges school leaders face when working in either international or UK schools, explained the research focus and noted that Bandura's (1977, 1997) theories of self-efficacy and agency provides the theoretical lens through which I explore the research questions. I briefly explained the gaps in research into coaching in schools, described the methodology adopted for the study and declared my awareness of bias. In the following chapter, I engage with literature across four themes, relevant to the research: leadership, coaching, self-efficacy and agency.

CHAPTER TWO - ENGAGING WITH THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the place of conceptual and theoretical frameworks in research and explain the overarching conceptual framework I developed. I explore four themes, relevant to the research, namely: school leadership, coaching, self-efficacy and agency, explaining how each can be viewed through the theoretical lens I adopted to explore coaching with school leaders who coach.

2.2 Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

Although some researchers use the terms' conceptual' and 'theoretical' framework interchangeably, I have adopted the position taken by Ravitch and Riggan (2017), Anfara and Mertz (2015) and Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018) as to their use. Each argues that while overlaps exist, conceptual and theoretical frameworks play different parts in research. The position I adopted is that the conceptual framework [(fig.1)] explains 'the relationship that exists between the main variables' or concepts within the study (Adom, Hussein and Agyem, 2018, p.440) and the theoretical framework identifies the theoretical lens through which I view the field of inquiry (Anfara and Mertz, 2015). In this research, the theoretical framework is used to theorise the process of being a coach in relation to school leaders' reflection, learning, self-efficacy beliefs and agency. Consequently, I developed a theoretical framework as shown in a diagram [(fig.2)].

The conceptual framework has three purposes in this research as described by Marshall and Rossman (2011). The first purpose (Chapter 1) identifies the significance of the study and its contribution to ongoing discourse and problems of practice. The second purpose (Chapter 1), explores gaps in the research which this

study aims to narrow. The third purpose, explored in Chapter 2, is to uncover and understand the critical, intellectual and theoretical traditions underpinning the research. This is particularly relevant because the EdD is designed for 'experienced professionals' who not only want to engage in developing research skills but also want to 'extend their professional understanding' and engage with 'evaluation and high-level reflection on practice' (IOE, 2020). As an experienced professional, practitioner-researcher and enthusiastic coach, I agree, with this aim (IOE, 2020).

2.2a Constructing frameworks: bias and the influence of literature

Ravitch and Riggan (2017) argue that when reviewing literature, although the choices made about which sources to include and which to reject shapes the thinking of the researcher thereby introducing an element of bias, the literature reviewed helps identify relevant theories through which the field of inquiry can be explored. Consequently, when constructing the conceptual framework, I both engaged with theory and sought to adopt a theoretical lens through which to focus and explore the research questions (Ravitch and Riggan, 2017). Engaging with theory raised awareness of my bias, contingent on my professional experience, perceptions and views concerning leadership and coaching, and my white male Christian worldview of education.

Anfara and Mertz (2015) caution researchers to be aware that the experiences they bring to research are a form of bias. Consequently, when exploring the IOE database for relevant literature I was aware of personal bias concerning the search choices I made, the subsequent selection of sources I deemed relevant and the extent to which the content resonated with my professional experience.

2.2b Conceptual Framework

The context in which this research is located, (international and UK schools) is one of complexity. Although every school has a context, every context is different. Schools and school leaders are, therefore, treated at a conceptual level. For this research, school leaders who coach are the primary source of field data. As the research investigates the effects that being a coach has on the school leaders who use coaching, explores the extent to which coaching may foster reflection, and considers the extent to which this may underpin learning, self-efficacy beliefs and agency, each is considered conceptually as a variable. The crux of the research, therefore, is in the interrelationship of the concepts shown in a conceptual diagram [fig.1].

2.2c Concepts and Variables

School leaders who coach are the independent variable, as not all school leaders use coaching skills. Isolating those who do, creates the independency. The diagram [fig.1] therefore, starts with the school leader who coaches, shown as a shaded box in the left-hand top corner.

There are four dependent variables (reflection, learning, self-efficacy and agency) set out in sequential boxes indicating that reflection can underpin learning, which can influence self-efficacy beliefs. The thick arrow is used to indicate the cumulative effect of the previous three boxes as it connects to the agency box. Each is a dependent variable because it is activated by the leader who coaches, when they coach.

The level of skill, knowledge and understanding about the coaching process is a moderator variable because this affects the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The greater the level of skill and the deeper the knowledge and understanding of coaching (shown as a box on the lower left-hand

side of the diagram) the stronger the effect on reflection, learning, self-efficacy and agency.

The number and range of coachees who are being coached, the frequency and length of coaching sessions and the coaching models used, are mediator variables. This is because they are integral parts of the cause and effect relationship and describe the mechanisms by which the independent variable produces changes on the dependent variables. This is shown as a box next to the moderator variable box.

The level of skill, knowledge and depth of understanding school leaders who coach have of the coaching process moderates the effects of coaching on their reflection, learning, self-efficacy and agency while the frequency and number and range of coachees with whom the coach interacts mediates the overall effect. In other words, a highly skilled and knowledgeable coach who uses coaching once a year experiences reflection, learning, self-efficacy and agency differently to a moderately skilled and quite knowledgeable coach who uses coaching regularly. Both the level of skill, knowledge and understanding, and the frequency of use of coaching are important in the model.

The contexts in which school leaders work and the level of challenge and pressure school leaders experience however, cannot be considered a control variable because it is not something about which I, as the researcher, have any ability to influence or can easily measure. While I am inferring that the opportunities, challenges and pressure school leaders experience has a 'value' in their lives, it is not the purpose of this study to measure this 'latent' variable.

Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram: School Leaders Who Coach

Conceptual Diagram showing the relationship between the concepts of School Leaders who Coach, Reflection, Learning, Self-Efficacy, Agency and School Contexts.
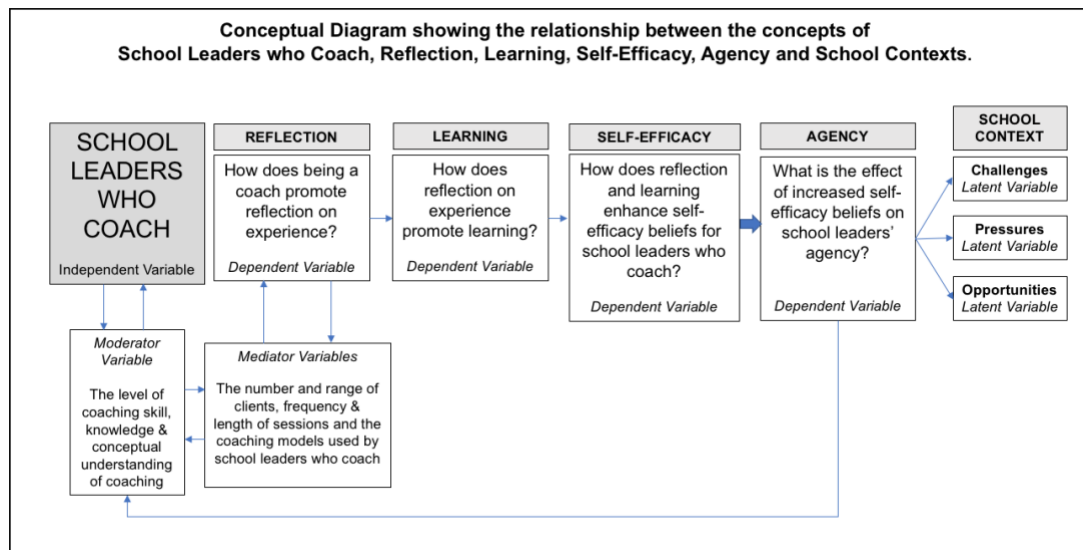
Four arrows emerge from the agency box. Three flow to the school context boxes. This is because it is the school leaders' agency which determines the extent to which they seize opportunities, tackle challenges and find ways to counterbalance the myriad pressures they face. The lower arrow, flows back to the moderator variable box, indicating that the agentic actions of the school leaders who coach affect their level of skill, knowledge and understanding of coaching.

2.2d Defining Coaching and Selecting a Theoretical Framework

Coaching is a relatively new field of practice drawing from numerous theories of adult learning (Cox, Bachirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014). No single overarching theory exists which provides a theoretical lens for coaching research. Take, for example, Cox, Bachirova, and Clutterbuck's (2014), comprehensive coaching handbook which contains thirteen theoretical coaching frameworks and twelve coaching genres (Appendix iii) or Bluckert's (2009) earlier work, which argued that coaching draws from theories of 'psychology, psychotherapy, organisational development, leadership theory, adult learning and so on' (2009 p.xi). Each could provide a useful basis or lens for inquiry. Although it would be helpful for practitioner researchers if there was one single definition and theoretical perspective with which to engage, the reality of the emerging

understanding of coaching is that there is no commonly accepted or precise definition of what coaching is nor agreement about which theoretical tradition it is most closely allied to, irrespective of whether the literature is sourced from practitioners or academics, (Bluckert, 2009; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014). Some agreement exists, however, concerning coaching as being an influential method of promoting adult learning (Lee, 2003; Peltier, 2010; Askew and Carnell, 2011; Fehring and Rodrigues, 2017). This suggests that a theory of learning is an appropriate lens for the research. Before selecting one, however, it is important to search for a working definition which describes coaching.

My working understanding of coaching, developed as an outcome of professional coaching practice and the findings from my IFS, is that it is a process which helps the learning, development and enhanced performance of another person (Porritt, 2016). Consequently, I support the arguments proposed by West-Burnham and Coates (2005), Brennan and Hellbom (2016) and Tolhurst, (2010) that coaching can be an effective, personal learning strategy, which helps people develop greater depth in their understanding of self and of context and can be a powerful method of leveraging leadership development.

My experience confirms Lee's (2003, 2014) view, which describes coaching as an enabling process for people to reflect, understand themselves more fully, confront obstacles and concerns, nurturing a sense of drive and ambition. He also suggests that coaching can be a useful mechanism to help people channel their creative energies towards personal and organisational goals (Lee, 2003, 2014). Cox's description of coaching as a 'facilitated, dialogic reflective learning process' (Cox, 2013 p.1) resonates with my experience and supports the view of coaching as a process to facilitate learning amongst teacher leaders as explored in my IFS.

Despite the generally optimistic perspective of coaching expressed in the literature, in the real-world of human interaction, coaching is not always so positive (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014). Take, for example, Thornton (2010), Clutterbuck (2012) and Haan and Burger (2013), who all point out that problems occur in coaching when the coach is either unskilled, undertrained or when coaches restrict the coachee in searching for pathways that lead to differing solutions to the problems and challenges they are experiencing. Poor coaching can open lines of inquiry that coachees are not ready to talk about (Clutterbuck, 2012; Thornton, 2010). Coaching can be frustrating and fruitless if it is not handled well or if it is located within an organisational culture that is not ready to cope with the way coachees learn or ways in which they may change (Haan and Burger, 2013). As coaching is, therefore, so strongly connected to human learning a theory of learning provides a relevant theoretical lens for this research.

2.2e Coaching and Theories of Learning

Cox (2006) held the view that coaching was a compelling practical application of learning theory in practice, if learning is understood as an 'extension and clarification of the meaning of one's experience' (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2011 p.11). However, despite Cox's (2006) pronouncement that coaching had, therefore, reached its zenith' when understood as a mechanism to promote adult learning (2006, p.195), Lofthouse and Leat's (2013) research has not found evidence to support the claim in schools. Although they acknowledge that coaching has the potential to positively impact professional learning, the dominant discourse of performativity does not provide the conditions in which it can flourish. The fact that coaching *can* be a powerful influence for professional learning, does not mean that it *is*.

Hoult (2005), when writing from a coaching practitioner base, argued that coaching was an instrument which facilitated learning with adult coachees when educing answers to problems. This view tends to suggest that learning only occurs when a problem has been identified and is being solved. In contrast, Early and Porritt (2010), and Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran (2010) argued that coaching could be a useful mechanism for the development of a professional learning community, not only as a tool for problem solving. Rodger (2014), exploring peer coaching in the IOE, supported this view, concluding that coaching is more than a problem-solving tool. Despite the small sample, her findings strongly indicated that coaching had been a powerful process of transformative learning for the participants. Although Van Nieuwerburgh (2012), straddling the academic and practitioner divide, argued that within educational settings coaching not only becomes a tool to promote sustainable change in behaviours and ways of thinking but also serves as a powerful mechanism to encourage development and adult learning, it is unclear if this view is based on research, his practitioner perspective or a combination of both. Never-the-less, each of the views noted in the previous section connect coaching and learning which suggests that a theory of learning is a useful lens through which to view this research.

There are, however, numerous theories of learning. For example, Behaviourist, Cognitivist, Humanist and Constructivist theories could relate to coaching. It would not be unreasonable to consider Behaviourist theories since the academic and practitioner coaching literature refers to coaching as a process which attempts to help a person change their behaviour. Similarly, Cognitive theories could be applied, given that coaching is also understood to be a process that supports a person's thinking and reflection. Since much of coaching is focused on helping people focus on their best self, Humanist theories could apply. Alternatively, when exploring coaching from a process perspective, it could also be argued that when the coach and coachee

engage in dialogue, a constructivist episode is happening in real-time, which would suggest the relevance of Constructivist theories.

My research explores the learning that school leaders construct when socially engaging with coachees as coaches in their school environments, which suggests a theory of social constructivist learning. Among the range of theories in this genre, Bandura's (1977, 1997) social learning theories have most relevance because they are understood to explore human agency and personality functioning, investigating mechanisms by which adults learn in the environment in which they operate. Furthermore, because his theories concentrate on four sources of learning, each contributing to the development of self-efficacy beliefs and human agency and which I argue occur during coaching interventions, they are, therefore, an appropriate choice. I did, however, explore Kolb's (1984) theory of learning in depth as an alternative for this research given that it attempts to explain learning from an experiential perspective via a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualization and experimentation. I deemed it of insufficient use for this research however, because while it might help to explain a coachees learning cycle, it does not go deep enough to unpick what is happening within a coaching conversation from the coach's perspective. I also considered adopting Mezirow's (1990) theory of transformational learning, a theory used to good effect by Rodger (2014) in her Doctoral Thesis. I rejected it only on the basis that it does not specifically focus on self-efficacy beliefs and agency.

2.2f Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy and Agency

Bandura (1977, 1997) defined self-efficacy as the beliefs people hold about their capabilities to better realise desired futures, and agency as the process by which people influence the course that their lives take. Although he is regarded as an

authority on self-efficacy, Marzilla and Eastman, (1984) for example, cast doubt on his research methodology and the usefulness of the application at theoretical and practical levels. Bandura (1997) however, continued to respond to these early criticisms, noting that theory should be contested and continually reviewed as more learning occurs. Ergo, Bandura personified the notion that having a high level of self-efficacy belief in one's ability to continue to succeed in the field in which one is engaging.

Bandura (1997) was interested to understand how the complex systems and competencies within a created social system had developed, postulating from informal observations that a large part of human learning comes from social modelling within social environments. As schools are social environments, in which coaching can be used as a process to support the learning, self-efficacy beliefs and agency of the coachee and potentially the coach, his theory is, therefore, relevant for exploring some of the conditions which help individuals better shape their lives and achieve the changes they desire. The themes of self-efficacy and agency resonated with my professional experience of school leadership and the findings of my IFS in which I noticed that the extent to which school leaders believe in their ability to lead, affects their agency.

Bandura (1997) argued that his theory was a useful way of exploring aspects of human flourishing [Table 2] which he discussed as being concerned with personal development and sustainable life-long learning. One aspects of human flourishing is related to the aims of coaching as described by Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014) [Table 2], in which they refer to personal development as being concerned with desirable, sustainable change in the coachee and as fostering an increase in the coachee's belief in their ability to perform actions more effectively in the future. These

ideas resonate with Bandura's (1997) definition of self-efficacy, adding further weight to the relevance of his theory in my research.

Table 2. Human flourishing and coaching

Aims of Coaching Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014)		Human Flourishing Bandura (1997)
Promoting desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee; Fostering an increase in their belief in their ability to perform actions more effectively in the future; Achieving results and optimizing effectiveness.		Personal Development and Sustainable Life-long Learning

I now review the extant literature in school leadership, coaching, self-efficacy and agency, which contribute to the overarching superstructure of the research [(fig.1).]

2.3 Leadership

Although this research explores the experiences of school leaders who coach and my primary concern is to uncover the effect that being a coach might have on their self-efficacy and agency as a professional, it is important to; clarify the importance of school leadership, understand what school leaders do, examine the types of school leadership known to be effective, examine the qualities school leaders model which influence their communities, understand how they learn to lead, and reflect on their leadership.

2.3a The Importance of School Leadership and how it connects to theory

Fundamentally school leadership matters because it is concerned with securing the moral purpose of education (Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris, 2011;

Higham, Hopkins and Matthews, 2009; Tierney, 2016), which as Schleicher (2018) argues, is not only about preparing young people for the world of work, but is also about equipping them with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens. Similarly, Blatchford (2014), based on a lifetime of practical experience, argues that the essence of the school leaders' agency is to safeguard the development of young people as they 'grow into autonomous, morally-literate human beings who become valued members of society' (2014 p.28).

Understanding school leadership is also important because as Masters (2008), Leithwood et al. (2010), and Robinson's (2018) extensive research as indicated, it is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student outcomes. In earlier work, Leithwood et al. (2008), noted that the quality of leadership was fundamental to achieving outstanding student learning outcomes, overall effectiveness and continuous improvement in schools. It might be argued however, that despite the high quality of their research and the strong evidence to back up their claims, the research was located in and sponsored by the national state school systems of two countries with similar democratic values and cannot be overly generalised.

Given then that school leadership is important, Fullan and Kirtman (2019) combined Fullan's coherence framework and Kirtman's seven competencies for Highly Effective Leaders to describe effective school leadership, exploring how leaders implement leadership goals through management, how they consider future developments, how they hone leadership skills and focus attention on leadership for deep learning. Their claim is that through the coherence in the structure of leaders' behaviours, effectiveness is found. Lynch (2012), adopting a more theoretical approach devotes reviewed ten applicable theories of effective school leadership: Transformational, Instructional, Distributed, Ethical, Emotional, Entrepreneurial, Strategic, Sustainable,

Invitational and Constructivist noting that while each has benefits and drawbacks, the blend of, and appropriate deployment of leadership in relation to context is where effectiveness is experienced. Lynch (2012, p ix) supports the notion of the importance of school leadership stating that 'in the current environment of dramatically shifting educational policies and divisive, competing theories, the role of the school leader is more important than ever'.

Owens (2014) review of educational reform highlighted the connections between organisational behaviour and the need for school leaders to develop a theory and practice which draws from what is known and understood in relation to organisations. Leader behaviours deemed as effective included examining assumptions, beliefs and behaviours which have been internalised. Owens' (2014) points out that school leaders must develop higher levels of self-awareness and understanding of theories located in organisational design as well as leadership so as to act with the greatest agency.

Riley (2017) explored leadership from the perspective of inclusion and belonging, arguing that leadership is the process that sets up and sustains the professional climate within which students and staff can flourish. Moreover, she argued that it is 'how leaders think, decide, act and reflect, and draw on their knowledge to create a roadmap of possibilities', which is 'critical to the well-being of children and adults' (Riley, 2017, p.7). This perspective of leadership focuses on the successful promotion of the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge young people need to contribute to the uncertain world they enter as adults powerfully captured by the OECD (2018). Tierney (2016), a retired Headteacher, agrees with this position but recognises that while effective leadership may lead to successful student outcomes, when leadership is ineffective, students suffer irreparable loss in their learning. Unless, therefore, a clear

understanding of the types of leadership which are likely to promote and or hinder student success is known, leaders' professional learning in leadership cannot be directed towards what makes schools successful.

To understand what types of leadership underpin successful school outcomes, Hill, Melon, Baker and Goddard (2016), interviewed 411 School Leaders and members of school staff. They concluded that the most effective type of school leadership was concerned with three elements of professional practice: capacity building, sustained growth and professional development. Furthermore, not only were these three elements essential for effective leadership, but they were also understood to have a long-lasting, positive impact on the schools sustained success.

This overview suggests that school leaders at all levels, therefore, must ensure that the school in which they lead builds a sustainable capacity for improvement, articulates and promotes social and moral values, has a respect of others 'irrespective of their class, sex, race, religion or heritage tongue' (Blatchford, 2014, p.25) and is a place of inclusion and belonging (Riley, 2017). But what is it that leaders do, to achieve these outcomes?

2.3b The Functions of Effective Leadership: What do School Leaders Do?

Attempting to synthesise what has been learned about effective leadership in organisations generally, Yukl (2012 p. 66) defined leadership as 'being concerned with influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives'. Taking a chronological approach, beginning around 1960 he reviewed significant literature to gather an understanding of leadership behaviours. He identifed two domains of effectiveness; first, task-oriented behaviours and second, relations-oriented behaviours.

Yukl (2012) notes that leadership behaviours in the task-oriented domain are commonly concerned with; planning, clarifying, monitoring and problem-solving whereas the relation-oriented behaviours concentrate on supporting, developing, recognising and empowering others. He also notes that there are several leadership behaviours associated with promoting change (not improvement) as described by Robinson (2018), but nonetheless include; advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation and facilitating collective learning. Finally, Yukl (2012) notes that effective leaders also engage in external leadership behaviours which include networking, external monitoring and representing their organisations.

The leadership behaviours Yukl (2012) identified resonate with the ten dimensions of effective Headteaching (UK National Standards for Headteachers, 2020) [table 3]. The standards also include seven principles of public life; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. School leaders are charged with embodying leadership behaviours which develop a positive school culture; sustained, high quality teaching; a structured coherent curriculum which is assessed for its effectiveness in enabling all students to achieve as well as they can; the promotion of good behaviour; holding high expectations for all students; a strong engagement with professional development; effective organisational management; promoting continuous school improvement; working in partnership with agencies beyond the school and understanding the importance of effective governance and the acceptance of accountability.

Table 3. Connecting Yukl's (2012) review of effective leadership behaviours with the National Standards for Headteachers 2020.

Yukl's (2012) review of effective Leader Behaviours	National Standards for Headteachers (2020) Leader Behaviours
Task-Oriented Planning, clarifying, monitoring and problem-solving	• School Culture • Teaching • Curriculum & Assessment • Additional and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities • Organisational Management
Relational-Oriented Supporting, developing, recognising and empowering others	• School Culture • Teaching • Behaviour • Additional and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Change Leadership Advocating change, envisioning change, encouraging innovation and facilitating collective learning	• School Culture • Teaching • Curriculum & Assessment • Additional and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities • Professional Development • Continuous School Improvement
External Leadership Networking, external monitoring and representing their organisations.	• Working in Partnership • Governance and Accountability

It is important to note however as Yukl (2012, p. 80) explains that 'leadership behaviours are not the same as skills, values, personality traits or roles'. Although they are useful mechanisms for understanding effective leadership, they differ in that they are not observable behaviours. While Yukl's (2012) review is helpful in charting the types of behaviours associated with leader effectiveness it does not speak directly to schools, nor does it claim to do so, or attempt to discuss the quality of the behaviours and the extent to which they lead to organisational effectiveness. Yukl (2012) argues that to properly assess leader effectiveness multiple criteria and multiple stakeholders perceptions should be evaluated in relation to measures of work or organisational performance.

Hendrick (2017), concerned to bridge the gap between the worlds of academia, and general themes of effectiveness and school-based practice explored stakeholder perceptions. He garnered contributions on leadership effectiveness from twenty UK and international schools. He advocates that creating 'the best possible classroom conditions in which the students can flourish' (2017. P.11) is both the core of what school leaders must engage with and the chief function of their leadership. Eyre's

(2016) longitudinal research found that effective learning outcomes for all of the children and young people who attend the school building is key and when coupled to the importance of building a community of engaged stakeholders (Riley, 2017; Munby, 2019) and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Hattie, 2012; Robinson, 2018; Jones 2018), influencing positive teacher attitudes and building organisational trust (Waters et al., 2003; Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson, 2010) the picture of what leaders should engage with becomes clearer.

Woods and Roberts (2018) anti 'standards agenda' perspective argues that school leaders must promote relational freedom, because it is this which enables all those working in the school to enact self-direction as individuals and social beings and experience meaningful connectedness (Woods and Roberts, 2018). Their well-argued view suggests a symbiosis of relational freedom and meaningful connectedness. Riley's (2017) research into leaders' agency supports this perspective, by indicating strong links between connectedness, relational freedom and belonging in school communities as leaders work to shape the 'views and perceptions of staff and students' and 'the norms, beliefs and expectations of members of the school community' (2017, p.30). Based on my professional experience and learning through the EdD it is my contention that to fulfil these functions, school leaders require an understanding of both transformational and instructional leadership theories.

2.3c Transformational and Instructional Leadership

Although the wide-ranging study by Leithwood et al. (2010) of effective school leaders was located in one national education system, the research indicated that regardless of contextual factors, effective school leaders tended to draw on a common range of

transformational and instructional leadership practices in their quest to secure effective outcomes for children and young people.

Transformational leadership practices included scoping future possibilities and setting direction, accepting accountability for one's actions, shaping shared values, driving ambition, adhering to agreed standards along with working to shape those standards, doing the right things, mobilising others and re-culturing the organisation and have been documented over an extended period by other researchers such as Bono and Judge, (2004); MacGilchrist, Mayers and Read, (2004); Robinson et al., (2008); West-Burnham, (2009); Dimmock, (2010); Harris, (2014); Riley, (2017). Instructional leadership practices were focused on; responsive teaching (Wiliam, 2011, 2018), learning from the regular collection of 'live' data (Christodoulou, 2017); engaging with the most rigorous understanding around pedagogy (Coe, 2016, 2020); and the relentless pursuit of equality and success for all learners so that every child achieves as well as they can (Day et al., 2009; Hallinger, 2011; Porritt, 2014, 2015). Whereas in the past, school leaders may have tended to focus on either transformational or instructional leadership, current research indicates that it is in the intersection of transformational and instructional leadership practices where the moral purpose is secured and excellent student outcomes are achieved (Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014).

2.3d Leadership Influence and Qualities of Leaders

Irrespective of the practices school leaders engage with, Eyre (2016), maintained that effective school leaders must work collaboratively and consistently to create a culture in which people who have firmly held convictions become willing to change in response to understanding new sets of circumstances and the differing needs of children, young people and teachers (Eyre, 2016). She suggested that schools need

to be places of mutual support where all colleagues work together to solve problems and improve outcomes. Not only does effective leadership influence positive teacher attitudes, but it is also a significant factor, as indicated in my IFS, in promoting organisational trust. Both are important aspects of school effectiveness. As Waters et al., (2003); Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Whalstrom and Anderson (2010) found, without positive teacher attitudes and trust, schools rapidly decline. While influencing a school culture in which positive teacher attitudes and trust are sustained may be the aim, it is not, however, always the reality (Tierney, 2016).

To be effective, leaders across all sectors, not only schools, must also demonstrate a deep understanding of the situation, needs and potential of the constituents being led (Kouzes and Posner, 2017). Effective leaders respond appropriately to the situations in which they lead with relevance to context, (Vroom and Jago, 2007; Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2008; Yukl, 2010). Jones (2018), writing from an evidenced based paradigm defines what relevance to context means for school leaders by arguing that what matters most in schools is the implementation of practices based on well-researched evidence within an ethical framework. Although Jones (2018) argues that effective leadership is concerned with exercising one's agency - doing what is required and what works - it must be based on sound evidence. He also argues that leaders must communicate clearly across the organisation so that goals are understood and shared. But, as he proposes, it is leader credibility that provides the foundations for others to believe their leader can be trusted (Jones, 2018). When examining leader credibility in a global non-profit faith organisation, Cochrum's (2013), doctoral thesis identified ten behaviours associated with effective leaders based on 80 interview responses from global leaders and the outcomes of the GLOBE study by House (2004) [(Table 4)].

Table 4. Ten behaviours associated with effective leaders

1. patient listening
2. empathy
3. bringing emotional and social healing
4. having personal and situational awareness
5. understanding how to be persuasive without coercion
6. demonstrating foresight
7. having the capacity to engage in conceptualisation
8. showing wise stewardship of human and practical resources
9. demonstrating commitment to others and to purpose
10. focusing energy on building community

Cochrum (2013), (Adapted)

While Cochrum's (2013) empirical research was not located in schools, his findings are relevant because they are all aspects of leaders' behaviour that matter most in relation to building community and in sharing the power of decision making and are, in my professional view, applicable to school settings.

Although focusing on the corporate sector, Sharma (2013), argued that organisational success is built and sustained by leaders via an intricate process by which a person influences colleagues to accomplish a mission or objective efficiently and effectively making the organisation more rational and coherent. This idea is supported by Fullan, Quinn and McEachen, (2016) when writing about schools. Their longitudinal research led them to argue that school leaders must engage with the notion of coherence making because of the complex challenges school leaders face. Consequently, they identify three essential qualities that the modern school leader must exhibit [Table 5].

Although Fullan, Quinn and McEachen (2016) identify the mobilisation of people as being an important aspect of leadership, it is in work by Kouzes and Posner's (2017) where the constituent elements of effective mobilisation are described. After Thirty years of empirical research including more than 400,000 annual survey responses in

a wide range of professional and voluntary sectors, they propose that effective leadership is never a solo action and leaders do not make extraordinary things happen by themselves (Kouzes and Posner, 2017). Instead, effective leadership is a both an outcome of the way leaders enact their agency, and a feature of the way in which leaders role model desired behaviours.

Table 5. Three qualities modern school leaders must exhibit

Exhibited Quality	Determining factors
Adaptability	• Responding to rapid changes in context • Integrating and adjusting leadership behaviours to form new strategies relevant to context • Maintaining clear sightlines to the foundational purpose and goals of the organisation
Agility	• Responding to the enormous uncertainty associated with rapid societal change • Setting a clear directional vision • Identifying and adjusting strategy to align and mobilise the people so that learning is enhanced • People learn more from thinking about what they have done than from thinking about what they might yet do
Pivot-ability	• Understanding the importance of the change journey leaders move through and the significance of the numerous tipping points which can accelerate progress or cause derailment or decline in an organisation.

(Fullan, Quinn and McEachen, 2016) (Adapted)

2.3e Leadership and Role Modelling

The notion of role modelling is understood to be concerned with mechanisms by which leaders have influence on motivating others to set, reach and evaluate ambitious goals, and although there is no single definition of the Leader as Role Model there are echoes of coaching efficacy in this understanding. Gauntlett (2002,

p. 211) attempts to offer a definition of a role model as being 'someone to look up to and base your character, values and aspirations on'. There is little doubt that role models matter to communities. Under the correct circumstances, they can have numerous positive effects on other stakeholders (Armour and Duncombe, 2011) and may help to overcome stereotypes (McIntyre, Paulson and Lord, 2003).

Given that leaders strongly shape follower beliefs (Gachter and Renner, 2017) it could be argued that leaders who coach enact a form of role modelling by legitimising listening, helping and supporting others to solve their own problems and dilemmas. When leadership role modeling is positive, it can contribute to fostering positive pro-social beliefs in others. When those beliefs center around leadership which is perceived as being ethically sound and supportive of others, leadership contributes strongly to morale (Gachter and Renner, 2017). School leaders who coach might, therefore, have a positive influence on establishing culture of coaching in their schools.

While the influence of the leader as role model appears to have a strong effect on the organisation, it is, however, not the only factor at play. Other aspects of organisational life affect goal attainment; chiefly the other people within the organisation themselves (Hoyt, Burnette and Innella, 2012). Individual beliefs, important for self-relevant outcomes are exemplified in the debate concerning whether leaders are born or made. People who hold the view that leadership is learned are more likely to be influenced by a leader role model who is engaged in professional learning than co-workers who believe that leaders are born, not made (Hoyt, Burnette and Innella, 2012). My professional view, born out of experience suggests that despite the disposition some educators have towards becoming a school leader, leadership is learned and developed over time.

2.3f Leadership and Professional Learning

Although leadership can be learned developed, nurtured and supported, it is important to recognise that school leaders do not simply learn how to do leadership and then having done that, get on with the job and be successful (Riley, 2017). Learning to be a school leader who exhibits the qualities described in the previous sections is analogous to being on a journey of ongoing discovery (Woods and Roberts, 2018).

Among the most common ways of learning, many school leaders, at differing points of leadership maturity and experience, attend leadership training courses face-to-face, or online. Other school leaders explore leadership literature, learn on the job or learn through appraisals and performance management reviews (Lynas, 2011). Other learning processes including supported self-analysis and reflection activities are sometimes underpinned with psychometric testing, peer learning, job-shadowing, coaching and mentoring or a dynamic combination of all the above (Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell, 2001). Irrespective of the learning mechanism leaders experience, it is the process of reflection by the learner that appears to be the catalyst for both extended and deep learning outcomes (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018). Hattie's (2012) earlier meta-analysis and extensive review of research studies argued that there is a powerful correlation between a young person's investment in their learning and the impact it has. Within Bandura's (1995) theory, the notion of a young person investing in their own learning and reflecting on the self is important because it is deemed to foster an affirmative sense of efficacy and supports a person's psychological well-being (Bandura, 1995). How, therefore, might learning and reflecting affect adults?

2.3g Leadership and Reflection

The combination of reflection on context and reflection on self is understood to be a powerful force in promoting learning for adults (Mezirow, 1990; McGill and Brockbank, 2006; Wenger, 1998), especially for school leaders (Dimmock and Lam, 2014). The attention a person pays to what is happening around them determines not only what is learnt but also how much learning takes place (Levitin, 2014). When the focus of reflection is one of critical evaluation, the examination, justification, validation or rejection of notions that one takes for granted are surfaced (Mezirow, 1990). As McGill and Brockbank, (2006) argue, reflection in the moment (knowing in action) and post-experience reflection (reflection on action) is also understood to be an essential part of interconnected elements of human living and underpins the development of mental models.

As Wenger, (1998) noted, mental models have influential causal effects which Moldovenau and Martin, (2008) argue is particularly relevant for leaders as a result of the power and influence they have over communities. School leaders, they argue, must learn to reflect on their mental models because by doing so, they are well-placed to sharpen their understanding of self (Moldovenau and Martin, 2008). Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993), writing much earlier however, understood reflection to be a more nuanced process than the perspective Moldovenau and Martin (2008), promote considering that reflection on learning - from the perspective of exploring barriers which inhibit learning in relation to self - is a far more indirect and complex process than one might wish it to be.

2.4 Coaching

Although the use of coaching as a tool for professional growth gathers momentum in the commercial sector, it is still short of ubiquitous in schools (van Nieuwerburgh and

Barr, 2017) and when compared to studies of school leadership or classroom practice, it is relatively under-researched (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014). One of the reasons for this is that coaching has tended to be a practitioner led process rather than the subject of academic scrutiny (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014).

2.4a Working assumptions of coaching practitioners

The working assumption that coaching practitioners make is that the coach requires knowledge and expertise in the coaching process, not the coachee's area of expertise (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck 2014). The coach makes use of appropriate tools and coaching models, based on their ongoing assessment of the coachee's needs and the issues and topics the coachee brings to the coaching conversation. Consequently, the coach's role is to focus on the coachee's agenda, support the coachee's self-actualisation, foster self-knowledge and develop fresh insight, which may fortify multiple pathways that lead to lasting, sustainable change (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck 2014). Coaching, therefore, involves dyadic and dialogic processes in which the differing perspectives of the coach and coachee provide an opportunity for both to develop understanding. This is achieved by exploring contrasting perspectives within a dialogic space as a socially enacted mechanism that fosters self-awareness in the presence of another (Bakhtin, 1992).

The literature indicates that the purpose of the coaching process is to develop a relationship which provides the opportunity for a supportive but challenging conversation (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck 2014). This, it is argued, enables the coachee to move beyond their current state of equilibrium, in a place of safety, security and certainty, and which leads to shifts in the perspectives they hold of context and of self (Cox, 2013). Coaching works by being a process that supports

coachee reflection on life experiences and can enhance the level of will power a person requires to accomplish future tasks (Landsberg, 2015). Coaching could, therefore, be understood as a helping strategy that specialises in supporting the development of increased levels of awareness of thoughts, actions and feelings in and around the world the coachee experiences. What follows is the coachee's engagement with the self in a way which fosters their ability and will, to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own actions, feeling and thoughts (Landsberg, 2015; Rogers, 2016), and which may contribute to their self-efficacy beliefs. As Haan and Burger (2013), two respected practitioner researchers, concluded, the stronger the working alliance, the stronger the self-efficacy of the coachee.

Despite this positive perspective, it could also be argued that coaching can have a negative impact on a coachee's efficacy if it is not done well or if the coaching is manipulative (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2005). Although coaches are unlikely to 'knowingly lie to coachees', or intentionally cross over professional and personal boundaries as Brennan and Wildflower (2014 p. 434) argue, 'we must count on the coach's impulse not only to 'do no harm, but to work conscientiously towards positive results for the coachee'. When coaches use the coaching process unthinkingly, promise unrealistic outcomes, or lose sight of the positive regard for their coachee, ethics are also called into question (Rogers, 2016).

2.4b Defining Coaching

Although no single agreed definitive definition of coaching exists and the search to find *the* answer is not unlike following an asymptote on a graph, coaching has, however, been described as a process which exists to support the improvement and learning of a coachee, (Hardingham 2004; Clutterbuck and Megginson 2005; Kimsey-House and Sandahl, 2011). Grant and Greene include self-directed learning in their

definition (2003) and more recently the definition has been refined as a 'human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote, desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee' (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2014 p.1). Van Nieuwerburgh and Barr (2017), added to the definition arguing for coaching to be understood as a facilitative intervention, which is designed to support people in taking responsibility for making changes to their own behaviour or to their ways of thinking in order to achieve meaningful objectives. Rock's (2006) thinking underpins this notion suggesting that coaching is about developing the whole person so that they are more able to exercise their agency, to handle and positively influence their surroundings, their social groups, their workplaces and themselves.

The emerging consensus is that when coaching in schools is done well, it can have positive results for school staff at all levels by supporting them in both setting meaningful objectives and achieving behavioural change (Robertson, in Kaser and Halbert 2009; Hardingham, 2004; West-Burnham and Coates, 2005; Thornton, 2010; Brennan and Hellbom, 2016). However, when coaching is handled poorly or becomes transactional in nature or is disconnected from the purposes of the organisation, studies have shown that little strategic value is realised even though those being coached may enjoy the attention they receive (Cavanagh and Grant, 2005; Anderson and Anderson, 2005; Tolhurst, 2010).

2.4c Coaching and reflection

The literature suggests that coaching can be a powerful mechanism for supporting leaders' systematic reflection, leading to increased personal performance and achieving organisational goals (Lee, 2003, 2014). This is because the process of supported reflection helps leaders' professional learning by nurturing their sense of

'drive and ambition' helping them to 'confront obstacles and concerns', as well as providing a mechanism to foster creativity (Lee, 2003 p. 1). Cox (2013), adds to these ideas by proposing that coaching and reflection are symbiotic elements of the learning process, which provide leaders with an opportunity to 'meet the fullness of their experiential dilemmas, stand back and observe that experience through the use of a reflective space', which has the effect of 'transforming their reflections into learning' (2013 p.160). Although leaders can reflect via other processes, Cox (2013) identified that the coaching relationship provides the basis on which the coach and coachee 'work together to identify plans and opportunities' (Cox, 2013 p.160), noting that it is the strength of the relationship coupled with the process of coaching, which enables people to turn reflection into learning, subsequently integrating learning into future performance.

Reflection in relation to coaching has been explored by McGonnagill (2002), and Grant and Greene (2003), who describe it as process through which people can begin to understand themselves more deeply. Their argument is built on by Jewett and MacPhee, (2012) and Vogel, (2012) who each conclude that it is the dialogic process experienced within coaching which fosters a sense of collaboration, and supports reflection by both the coachee and the coach, leading to the development of a shared narrative which enhances understandings of the self. Grant (2016), widely recognised as a pioneer of coaching psychology explored reflection in coaching, determining that coaches engage with reflection post action but when conducting coaching sessions, engage with enhanced reflection. This view was supported by Kovacs and Corrie (2017), who also concluded that the act of coaching helps leaders enhance their reflective skills. However, as Cornford (2002) suggested earlier, simply reflecting critically is insufficient in and of itself to be of practical usefulness and does not automatically lead to 'effective procedural action' (Cornford, 2002 p.228).

Cox's (2013), research in coaching explores the theme of reflection arguing that deep learning emanates from the clarity of the coachee's description of a problem, before the coach follows up with lines of inquiry, imagination and possibility thinking, unless the institution itself is perceived as the problem. Although coaching may help with reflection, and may help a person to work out how to overcome problems and define future success, it may not be enough by itself to avoid people censoring their own words and aspirations, unintentionally setting limits for their learning (Cox, 2013).

Cox (2013) identified five key processes coaches rely on to foster reflection. They are active listening, questioning, summarising, probing and reflecting. Each is understood to direct reflection toward the lived experiences of the coachee as they uncover their perspectives. When the coach is exposed to the perspectives, it is not only the coachee who reflects but also the coach, by hearing their own voice through the dialectic, conversational interaction with the coachee and with the self (Redman and James, 2017).

From reflection, coachees and coaches gain a new perspective and a deeper understanding of the power they have over their future actions (Cox, 2013; Rodgers 2016). Coaches improve their thinking and deepen their understanding by not only asking questions of others and themselves but also by projecting the consequences and possible impacts of doing one thing or another, or doing nothing at all into the space between the coach and coachee, so that it can be discussed (Cox, 2013; Porritt, 2016). This process helps the coachee and the coach determine the action steps which may follow (Rodgers, 2016). This is what may lead to the development of their agency.

If Grant and Hartley's (2013), argument that coaching skills are a necessary capability of successful leaders is true, it makes sense for school leaders to have developed a level of competence and usefulness in deploying coaching skills with their colleagues. As Hardingham (2015) argues, coaching skills are important tools for leaders to deploy, contending that the use of coaching skills acts as a catalyst for self-understanding, which as Creasy and Paterson, (2005) proposed, is that which helps leaders raise their level of self-awareness and self-regulation, and it is that which they must focus on before they can develop others.

Lee (2014), drawing conclusions from extensive experience as an executive coach and consultant proposes that integrating learning into one's performance as a leader is significant. Leaders have positions of power and influence and can be sources of misdirection just as strongly as they can be of empowerment and community flourishing. Lee (2014) argues that the capacity a leader has to integrate new knowledge into their work is dependent on their level of self-awareness. If this view is true, it suggests that coaching leaders is not only about helping them to reflect on practical aspects of their work but also must be about assisting them to reflect on their learning at a personal level (Lee, 2014). Individual learning is enhanced when the reflection on self is supported and leveraged through coaching because the process can enable leaders to not only engage with successes but also cope more strongly with personal failures and self-deceptive thinking (Page and Haan, 2014). The process of reflection through coaching can hone leaders' vision, lessen feelings of conflict, invigorate the desire for teamwork, enhance accountability, augment the capacity to achieve desired results and increase satisfaction and happiness (Arbinger Institute, 2010).

2.4d Benefits for Leaders Receiving Coaching

Boysen, Cherry, Amerie and Takagawa (2018) assessed benefits for leaders who receive coaching by reviewing organisational coaching studies, claiming that leadership coaching has the potential to improve the ability of leaders to inspire and impact people in their organisation. Their understanding supports earlier work by Joo (2005), who suggested that coaching benefits people by fostering enhanced self-awareness, behavioural change and executive performance. Stokes and Jolly (2014) further support these ideas proposing that coaching can bolster the assessment of current effectiveness, and challenge and support leaders as they set objectives, which may lead to behavioural change and increased wisdom while coping with the demands of their professional work.

Although Robertson's research in schools (2008) found that coaching could be a powerful and beneficial tool to help sustain leaders in the demanding task of school leadership, when it was handled poorly, or when the motivation behind coaching was to overly direct or even to coerce, there were unhelpful consequences for those who engaged with it (Tolhurst, 2010). In contrast, when the motivation for coaching was both ethical and moral, when the aim was to empower and to serve, coaching appeared to bolster self-efficacy beliefs and supported a person's ability to overcome self-limiting beliefs, which if left unchecked were understood to inhibit a person's ability to learn from experience, diminished productivity, reduced positivity and impeded agency, (Haan and Burger, 2013; Kegan and Lahey, 2009).

2.4e Coaching - why does it work?

To provide some answers to the question of why coaching works, Rock and Page (2009), attempted to connect the emerging understanding of the human brain, together with the developing understanding of coaching. Earlier, Rock (2006) had

proposed that understanding the brain would bring coherence to the various theoretical basis of coaching that had, up until then, been based for the most part on models constructed from observable behaviour. While Rock (2006) was not turning his back on psychology, he postulated that brain-based theories of coaching and leadership could be built upon tangible and physical evidence of brain activity, which could be seen in various forms as a result of the development of brain scanning technology.

The field of neuroscience had begun to show that reflecting, thinking and feeling were neurobiological processes taking place within the complex networks that the brain developed over time as a person experienced life (Witherspoon, 2014). Rock and Page (2009) argued, therefore, that coaching could be understood as a powerful process for brain development because it is centred on the enhancement of a person's thinking, reflection and an exploration of their feelings (Jay, 1999; Rock and Page, 2009). Furthermore, neuroscience had begun to show that willpower was an aspect of brain's neurobiological functioning, as much as it was an aspect of the mind. However, neuroscience was also confirming that human change is much harder than had previously been understood (Eagleman, 2015; Mareschal, Butterworth and Tolmie, 2013). While scientists were beginning to observe not only behavioural responses to various stimuli, but also simultaneously notice the brain's electrochemical network activity by using fMRI and EEG scanning technology (Eagleman, 2015), the understandings of what happens in the brain when it experiences coaching have rather revealed how much is not known rather than confirming what is.

2.5f Coaching – Summary

The literature reviewed indicates that coaching is a process which is not only concerned with promoting human change but more importantly, is focused on

promoting human improvement. As a result, coaches are, in effect, psychosocial agents of change. As Orlinsky (2007) argued, coaches, within a coaching process, can be understood as people who take on the role of constructive and facilitative instruments of human transformation. The literature supports the notion that coaching helps people to reframe problems by unpicking or unravelling what was previously held as being a coherent, connected, understanding (Haan and Burger, 2013). Coaching then helps people reform their thinking towards a new mental equilibrium by invoking reflection and by fostering the possibilities for reconsidering positional, practical and experiential knowledge (Haan and Burger, 2013).

2.5 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as being a person's belief in their ability to accomplish specific tasks in specific situations (Bandura, 1997; Greene, 2018) and can be affected by four contributory sources of human learning: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and cognitive/emotional state (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is distinct from self-esteem (a person's view of their self-worth) and self-concept (a person's view of their overall strengths and weaknesses).

2.5a Self-Efficacy in Schools.

Recent studies have explored self-efficacy in relation to schools. Greene (2018), for example, concluded that self-efficacy is a meaningful concept for individuals and although her research focused on students in classroom settings, not school leaders, what mattered most for efficacy beliefs to grow, was the person's (students') experience of success. By adding that teachers and school leaders must help students view their success as an outcome of their agency, she connected self-efficacy and agency in a causal loop. This work is underpinned by Tschannen-Moran,

Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy (1998), who developed a conceptual model of teacher self-efficacy to analyse and explain the correlation between teacher's perceived self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to influence student learning and outcomes. As Hattie (2012) has noted with some contestation, teacher self-efficacy has a significant impact on the learning of the students; the stronger the self-efficacy beliefs the teacher has in their ability to teach the students in front of the teacher, the better the learning outcomes are likely to be.

Kurt (2016), built on Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy's (1998), model to explain effectiveness when examining distributed leadership and organisational learning, noting that distributed leadership positively affected the self-efficacy perceptions of leaders and teachers, even though the early evangelism concerning distributed leadership as a solution for school effectiveness has been largely debunked (Woods and Roberts, 2018). Uiterwijk-Luijk's (2017) work, added that although leaders' self-efficacy matters, leaders' mentalities were considered as equally essential areas of leadership capacity building because both had an impact on the agentic activity school leaders engage with. However, in a different randomised design case study of a principal leadership development program, Jacob et al. (2015), found that although school principals self-reported increasingly efficacious feelings as a consequence of their training and professional learning, staff feedback confirmed that there was no noticeable improvement in the instructional climate, nor was there any impact on increased student attainment. Consequently, this case study appeared to indicate that although professional learning led to increased self-efficacy, self-efficacy alone was a doubtful source of expanded agency (Jacob et al., 2015).

Ham, Duyar and Gumus (2015), explored diminishing self-efficacy in relation to potential impacts on levels of agency by examining the OECD's 2008 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). Findings indicated troubling results amongst the 672 School Leaders and 11,323 teachers in the four OECD Asia-Pacific countries who had taken part in the survey. When levels of self-efficacy dropped the consequence was a decline in agency. These findings therefore may challenge Bandura's (1997) earlier observations, that when collective efficacy - the combined effects of the multiple self-efficacy beliefs of a team or group - is increased, so also is student learning success.

Although the literature indicates that while negative self-efficacy may lead to less agentic activity, positive increases in self-efficacy can, but does not necessarily lead to increased agentic activity. Consequently, it is important to understand what sources of learning might affect self-efficacy and agency.

2.5b Four sources of self-efficacy beliefs

Although there are four critical sources of self-efficacy beliefs as espoused by Bandura, (1997) it could be argued that there are more aspects of human learning at play in a person's self-efficacy growth. Self-efficacy appeared to be most strongly affected by a person's actual performances in the tasks they are working on and the way in which they interpreted the outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy was also influenced as an outcome of vicarious learning; the way in which a person learns from noticing and observing others' experience and success (Bandura, 1997). Physiological and emotional states, such as anxiety and stress, also affect self-efficacy. While it can be affected by forms of social persuasion, the mitigating factor in this respect is the extent to which a person allows the persuasion to impact their beliefs. The important point however is that it is how the person interprets all four

aspects of self-efficacy in combination, which leads to the change in self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

One of the main arguments for working with self-efficacy beliefs, is that they are understood to be strong predictors of future outcomes for learners, including motivation (effort and persistence), learning, self-regulation and achievement (Schunk and Pajares, 2009). However, while it is argued that positively influencing a person's self-efficacy may lead to stronger outcomes, it is also understood that a high level of self-efficacy cannot compensate for lack of ability (Bandura 1997). Never-the-less, as Bandura (1997) argued where two people have similar abilities, the person with the higher self-efficacy (so long as it is not unrealistically high) is likely to achieve at a higher level of performance. On this basis, self-efficacy beliefs could be argued therefore, to be affected by four sources of learning, be useful predictors of future success and important aspects of capacity building for leaders.

2.6 Agency

Agency Theory was originally developed by Mitnick and Weiss (1974) and built on by Jensen and Meckling (1976) as a way of exploring the complexity of an interrelationship between two 'actors' in organisations. It was described by Giddens (1984:14), as being concerned with one's own ability to act, 'to intervene in the world' and Mitnick (1982), as a social theory of relationships. Since that time, it has been understood as a way of understanding how people make a difference for and on behalf of others. Shapiro (2005), Heath (2009) and Hewson (2010), for example added to the definition when studying how people act as producers, service providers, managers and leaders noting that when leader's agency is diminished, breakdowns in production, services or leadership control quickly follow.

Vahasantanen et al., (2016), recently refined agency theory discussing the ways professional educators exert influence, act and make decisions in ways that affect both their work and reinforce their professional identity. Echoing Greene's (2018) work on self-efficacy and agency, Vahasantanen et al., (2016), noted that when leaders enact their agency, the effect is not only one of reinforcing what they do as leaders, but also who they are. Riley's (2017), application of Agency theory focuses on the notions of place and belonging in schools. She argues that it is a way of understanding how leaders can make a positive difference in their communities. Furthermore, her innovative work in equipping and enabling school students to become researchers in their own settings captures the true essence of what agency is about. Rather than students waiting for others to make a difference, the students enact their agency and begin to make the difference for themselves.

Agency can, therefore, be understood as the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power over others (Giddens 1984) or as an instrument of change in relation to a person or thing through which power and influence are exerted, action is taken, and ends are achieved (Hewson 2010).

For professionals, agency is exhibited dynamically through multiple ways in which goals are defined; decisions are made, colleagues are influenced and as a mechanism that supports the continual defining, or re-defining as Vahasantanen et al. (2016), argue, of leaders' professional identity. Consequently, agency theory can be adopted as a way of thinking and talking about how leaders make a difference in their schools, specifically concerning ways in which school leaders exercise their capacity and ability to positively influence the children, young people and adults' learning in their school community (Riley 2017).

Having reviewed the literature across for themes, having explained the overarching conceptual framework and illustrated this in a conceptual diagram, (fig. 1) I now examine the place of theory within this research and discuss how the four sources of learning Bandura (1997) described may connect with the process of coaching used by school leaders who coach.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

To illustrate how Bandura's (1997) theory connects with the coaching process and provides a lens through which to explore the effects of coaching for the coach, I developed a theoretical model (fig. 2) shown diagrammatically. It begins with the left-hand frame, representing the school leader who coaches. The frame includes four inner boxes each capturing a cluster of coaching skills, knowledge and understanding which the literature, and my professional experience, identifies as fundamental elements of coaching efficacy. They are; questioning and listening skills, the appropriate use of coaching conversational models (appendix ix) and tools; the continual assessing of the coachee's ongoing needs and the process of building rapport and trust with the coachee.

Beneath the frame illustrating the coach's role is a frame which depicts the role of the coachee in the coaching process. Here, the coachee when prompted by the coach, explores their lived experiences via a dialogic exchange within the coaching conversation. Four arrows connect each of the four clustered elements of coaching listed in the previous paragraph to the coachee's frame, because each has a role in supporting, promoting and challenging the coachee to reflect on and learn from their experience.

In the middle of the diagram, a central column is shown containing four boxes, each representing one of the four sources of efficacy beliefs as described by Bandura (1997). A column is chosen because it depicts the supporting nature of the four sources of efficacy beliefs in the coach's learning process. A brief description of how the belief relates to the experience of coaching by the coach is shown. As described in the previous section, each source is thought to contribute to the growing sense of self-efficacy a person experiences in their daily lives (Bandura, 1997), which affects the extent to which they enact their agency (Flammer in Bandura, 1997).

Bandura argued that 'the stronger the sense of efficacy, the bolder people are in taking on problematic situations that generate stress and the greater their success in shaping them more to their liking' (1997 p. 9). Therefore, a box entitled 'Increased Levels of Agency' is shown. Each of the four sources of efficacy beliefs connect to this box by an arrow indicating that each has a role to play in enhancing the agency of the school leader who coaches. Furthermore, the floating block arrows pointing to the right, and the silhouette of the school leader who coaches illustrate that increased agency acts as a counterbalance to the external challenges and pressure leaders face.

Figure 2. Theoretical Framework Diagram: Coaching, Self-Efficacy and Agency
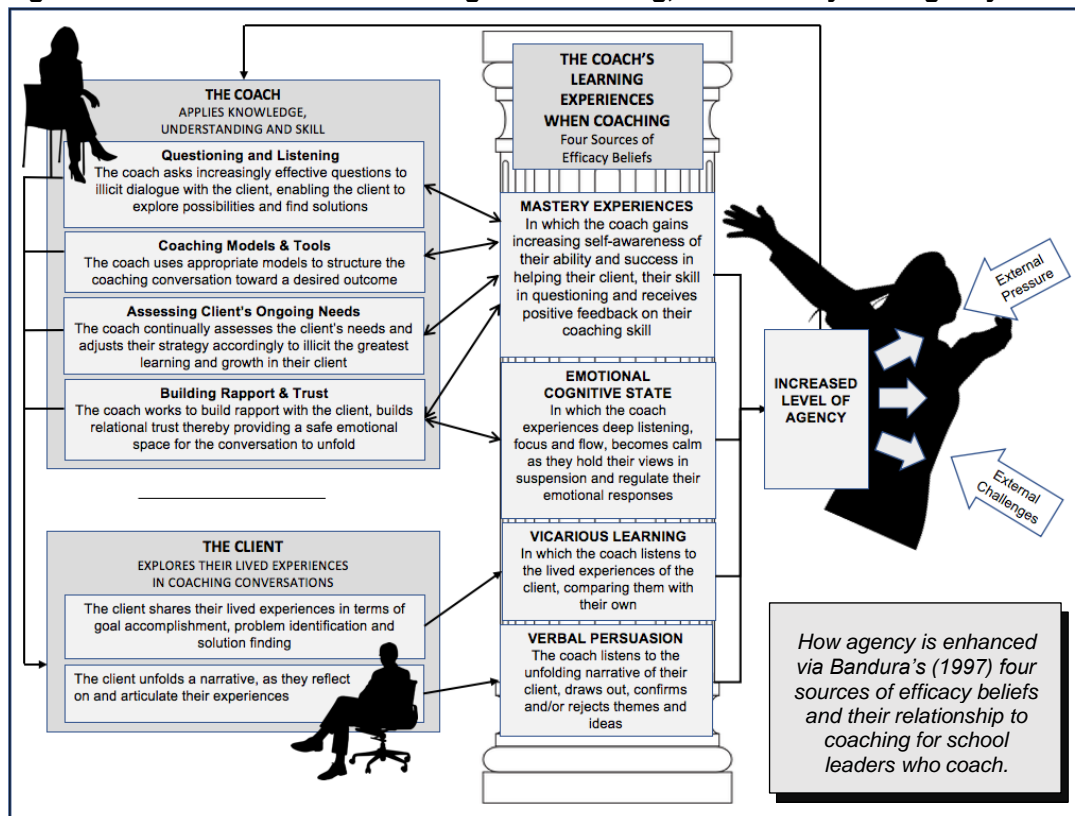
The diagram includes sixteen interconnecting arrows. First, four arrows connect the four clusters of coaching skills, knowledge and understanding with the coachee because each relate to the coaching process in which the coach and coachee engage. Four double headed arrows connect the four clusters with Mastery Experiences because as the coach continues to coach, each cluster is drawn upon and through purposeful, conscious practice, is developed. One of the double headed arrows connects the cluster entitled 'Building Rapport and Trust' with one source of learning, Emotional Cognitive State. The act of building rapport requires raised levels of conscious awareness of self which has the effect of regulating the coach's emotions.

Two arrows connect the coachee frame with two sources of learning. This is because in the coaching process, the coachee shares their lived experiences which has the effect of enabling the coach to learn vicariously as they listen and compare what they

are hearing with their own experience. The second arrow indicates that as the coachee unfolds a narrative, there is a connection with the source of learning known as verbal persuasion. When the coachee unfolds the narrative of their experience, a form of 'self-persuasion that relies on cognitive processing' takes place as the coach experiences a process in which they draw out, confirm or reject espoused themes and ideas from their coachee (Bandura, 1997 p.11).

2.8 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed indicates that leadership is a key driver of school effectiveness and an important aspect of securing high-quality learning outcomes for children and young people. Coaching is identified as being a form of reflective practice. Without reflection, leaders can struggle to cope and adapt to the changing leadership challenges they experience. Coaching is also understood to be an influential tool for personal and professional learning and reflection. Reflective practice may underpin learning, which in turn may support the development of self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy beliefs are identified as being powerful forces which serve to positively reinforce leaders' view of self, predict future success and, which can lead to enhanced levels of professional agency. Agency is understood to be a concept that is helpful as a way of explaining what leaders do and who they are, as they work to make a positive difference.

As a School Leader and professional coach, the literature has challenged, confirmed and added to my current understanding of coaching. It has begun to shed light on the research questions I identified for this research indicating that coaching may be a process in which leaders who receive coaching may experience learning from

reflection via four sources of learning espoused by Bandura (1997). While there is little to indicate that during coaching, school leaders in the coaching role, benefit in similar ways, each source of learning could apply to the coach. Testing this assumption, therefore, is part of the next stage in this research process, which I describe in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the philosophical underpinnings of this research, state the research questions, and explain how my professional experience and assumptions both contribute to and cause bias. I explain how an exploration of formal theories has both shaped the research and led to the methods chosen through which the data is collected, and the research questions are investigated. I discuss the research procedures, examining issues related to the field work, the analysis of the data and the adaptations I made throughout the research process.

3.2 The philosophical assumptions and position of the research

This research is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm as described by Denscombe (2003) because it seeks to explore and interpret the experiences of school leaders who coach. It investigates not only what is happening to leaders, but also, what is happening within leaders. I adopted Creswell's (2013) overarching, integrated questioning approach, which I combined with a series of sub-questions to assist me in problematising the field of inquiry. This process led me to adopt an exploratory, dynamic, mixed-methods, 3-stage procedure for the fieldwork. Mixed methods allowed me to integrate quantitative survey data with qualitative semi-structured in-depth interview data. Although both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the fieldwork were designed to find answers to the research questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009), the quantitative data was used as an opening to the fieldwork and as a filter to narrow the lines inquiry, which I later followed up in the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. It was also used in a supporting role when analysing the interviews (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 The research questions

The Principal research question was as follows:

- **To what extent does being a coach support school leaders' self-efficacy and professional agency?**

Supplementary questions were as follows:

- To what extent does using coaching skills promote self-reflection and build self-awareness, supporting school leaders' understanding of their leadership strengths and weaknesses?

- Do leaders who coach perceive changes in their professional agency?

- Do colleagues who work with leaders who coach perceive changes in the leaders' professional agency?

3.4 Interpretation and understanding meaning

The foreshadowing of *a priori* themes drawn from the literature review coupled with themes drawn from earlier EdD assignments and my IFS, informed the deductive aspects of data analysis. By combining deductive thinking with an inductive analysis of the interview transcripts, the construction of meaningful conclusions was reached through a process of data integration and the continual seeking out of patterns of meaning. I recognise, however, that interpreting and understanding meaning is an act of subjectivity.

My interpretations of meaning concerning self-efficacy and agency are both subjective and multifaceted. I acknowledge that subjective meanings are developed within context and are socially co-constructed. Mirroring the way that leaders who coach, negotiate and construct meaning with their coachees, I, as the researcher, have constructed meaning with the interview participants through questioning and

discussion. Moreover, I am aware that in contrast to forms of research which pursue the narrowing of a single conclusive idea, I aimed to expand my learning by uncovering multiple and complex meanings as expressed by the participants (Creswell, 2013; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Rosenthal, 2018).

I acknowledge that other researchers are likely to interpret the data differently, given that the theoretical lens through which they may view the field of inquiry is contrary to my own (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Furthermore, I recognise that when analysing data, the emphasis I place on what I deem to be significant and the assumptions I make about its meaning will be different from the emphasis and assumptions of others, even if their general interest in the topic is similar to mine. I recognise that as a white, male, English, Christian and enthusiastic coach the worldview I hold has an influence in the aspects of the participants narratives that catch my attention. Although my intention has been to explore what is present and draw meaning from it, rather than look for what I am expecting to find, I am aware that my position in the research means that the outcomes are tainted with my perspectives. However, since this study is an EdD in which I am expected to bring my professional experience to the process my contention is that being as aware of my assumptions as possible is the most realistic place from which I can build my understanding.

Clarifying my philosophical assumptions helped me recognise the specific position I am taking in the research, namely that being a school leader is difficult, that self-efficacy levels can impact agency and that being a coach can enable one to reflect on ones' own and others' learning and that this process may bolster self-efficacy beliefs. I recognise my own positive bias towards coaching. Although it is based on my professional experience and I have come to understand coaching as a powerful

tool for beneficial human learning and growth by helping coachees to learn for themselves, I recognise that not all leaders will have had similar experiences to mine.

As is considered good research practice, therefore, when working within the interpretivist field of inquiry, I have reflected on my philosophical assumptions when designing the study. I was mindful of Maturana and Varela's (1998) summation that people tend to see their world and themselves in the way that they want to and that people are unlikely to change their views, unless they reflect upon their philosophical assumptions, not only considering what they think but also how and why they think what they think (Maturana and Varela, 1998). Consequently, I reflected on my ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological perspectives using the four headings found in Creswell's interpretive framework tool. This is shown in Table 6 (Creswell, 2013, p36).

Table 6. Four Philosophical Assumptions of The Researcher

Interpretive Framework	What are the researchers Ontological Beliefs? *(the nature of reality)*	What are the researchers Epistemological Beliefs? *(how reality is known)*	What are the researchers Axiological Beliefs? *(Role of Values)*	What are the researchers Methodological Beliefs? (Approach to Inquiry)
Is drawn from a social constructivist paradigm.	There are multiple realities constructed through the practical experiences of leaders who coach and/or when leaders use coaching skills in their work with the many and varied colleagues they encounter. Coaching is a good thing to do because it is helpful, serves others and is an applied tool which promotes my authenticity as a servant leader.	Meanings are co-constructed between the researcher and the researched. Meanings are shaped by the experiences of the individuals in their coaching work with colleagues, their leadership experiences and their interactions in real-time.	There are individual values emerging from the field data that must be recognised and negotiated as well as understood while I as researcher analyse the data for meaning. I notice aspects of meaning that are important to me, but which might not be important to other researchers.	The use of an inductive approach to interview analysis is a natural follow-up after adopting semi-structured in-depth interviews with the participants. This is useful in allowing the emergence of ideas and themes to be revealed through the interviews, in the analysis of the transcripts and the integration of both forms of data (survey and interviews). Ongoing analysis of the data helps me to customise and adapt the research questions should deeper exploration is required.

Using the four headings as a reflective process helped me raise theoretical and procedural questions for discussion with my supervisors. These discussions coupled with the literature reviewed concerning possible theoretical perspectives relevant to the study guided my work led me to identify Bandura's (1997) theories of self-efficacy beliefs and agency as the interpretive lens through which I have chosen to view the

field of inquiry. Referring back to the reflections guided me while undertaking the field work, the analysis and the writing up stages of the research process.

3.5 Theoretical lens: a short re-cap

Bandura's (1997) theory was an appropriate lens to adopt because it explores notions of sustainable life-long learning, education, personal development and human agency; the process by which people have influence over the course that their lives take (Bandura, 1997). The theory suggests that a large part of human learning comes from social modelling. It concludes that people can learn by observing the lives of others, through mastery of experiences, through verbal persuasion and through emotional regulation. I was mindful of unexpected findings from the IFS, which indicated that leaders who coached experience enhanced levels of reflection and learning about their leadership and their self by listening to and observing the leadership stories of their coachees, developing increasing levels of mastery in the use of coaching skills and by experiencing a sense of calm attentiveness during the coaching conversations.

3.6 Research Procedures

3.6a Data Gathering

As a piece of practitioner research my intention was to follow a linear exploratory sequential 3-stage mixed-methods procedure as described by Creswell (2014), but in reality, the process of gathering and analysing data and of theory testing was dynamic, iterative and cumulative in nature (Simmons, 2009). The data gathering process reflected the practicalities of what could be collected and analysed within the time available, and the scope and scale of an EdD Thesis (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, the realities of life as a school Principal and a change of job had an impact on the implementation of my field-work plan. When work commitments

became onerous and international travel overtook my life, I placed the analysis of interview transcripts temporarily on hold. Although undertaking an initial analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data in an ongoing manner close to the time via note taking and memoing enabled me to refine and filter my thinking and sharpened the lines of inquiry in subsequent interviews, only six transcripts were analysed in full at this early stage. The remaining fifteen interview transcripts were analysed in full in one batch after taking a leave of absence from my job.

Midway through the process of organising and conducting interviews and after analysing the initial survey outcomes, I discussed the issues of the small sample size with one of my doctoral supervisors. I agreed to re-open the online survey, and as will be seen later, the number of participants increased. I was then able to analyse the survey for the second time, including all the new responses, and compare it with the first data set. This took place whilst I was undertaking the remaining interviews. Having anticipated that the survey data would be completed before the interviews, I was aware that the approach I adopted through necessity was not precisely that set out in the research proposal. The process did, however, afford me the opportunity of working in a dynamic, iterative way. As will be seen in the presentation of the data, the second opening of the survey served to confirm what had been gleaned in the first iteration.

The following diagram [(Fig. 3)] illustrates the interconnectivity of the three stages of the procedure I used in practice. Four different sized trapeziums are shown, each proportionally illustrating both the number of participants involved in the different parts of the research process and, the range of questions asked. The Trapezium shown at the top of the diagram is repeated mid-way down to indicate where the survey was re-opened. The capitalisation (main) and lower case (supporting) use of the terms

QUAN and QUAL illustrate the different emphasise of the meanings drawn out from each stage of the analysis process (Creswell 2014:228). The single central arrows indicate the sequential flow of the data collection and filtering.

Figure 3. Exploratory, dynamic, iterative, mixed-methods research plan
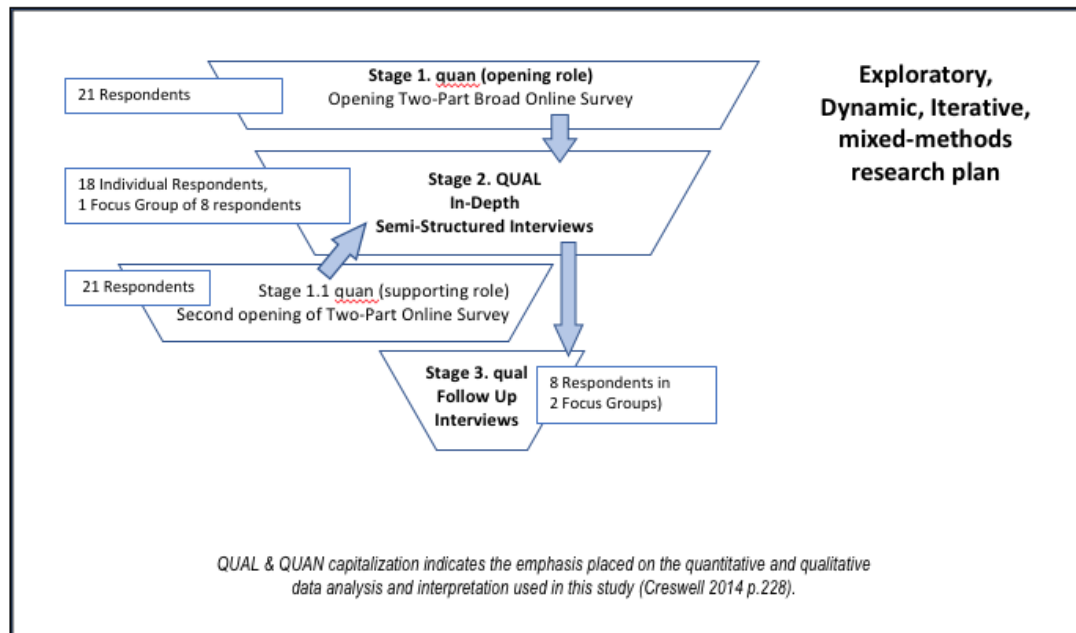
The participants I selected were located within my international and UK schools' network of professional educators to whom I both had access and was aware used coaching. I selected the participants not only because they provided an appropriate source of relevance to the subject matter, but also because they were accessible (Thomas, 2011), and were willing to take part in the research. I recognise, therefore, that the sample I chose is not only purposive, but is also convenience based. As referred to in the introduction, participants tended to be enthusiastic coaches whose starting point is that coaching is useful, helpful and a positive force for professional and personal growth. Consequently, I agree with Thomas' (2011) views concerning respondents as not being representative of the wider population and make no claim that the views expressed are representative of the wider educational community.

3.6b Data validation

I consulted Creswell's guidance to researchers for the validation of data throughout the process of data collection and analysis (2013). From eight validation strategies, Creswell suggests that researchers should adopt at least two as a minimum (Creswell, 2008 p.250-252). I drew upon five throughout the process of data validation listed below:

1. Rich, thick descriptions
2. Prolonged engagement in the field
3. Triangulation
4. Clarifying researcher bias
5. Member checking

I kept data validation uppermost in mind believing that it is vital to ensure the data is clean, correct and useful. I deemed this important because I wanted to be as confident as possible that other school leaders who might read my conclusions could trust the basis upon which they were drawn. Should they want to pursue the development of their coaching skills, I wanted the study to help them make informed decisions and take relevant actions.

3.7 Fieldwork Stage One – Survey

3.7a Survey - Pilot Stage

The first stage of the fieldwork took the form of a two-part online survey using the IOE authorised research tool 'Opinio'. Part one asked questions about the demographics of the sample and part two, used Likert stems to gather data about coaching experiences. Following ethical approval the survey was piloted with two school-based middle-level leadership respondents both known to me. Both had recently completed Masters' in education and or had been admitted to Fellowship of the Chartered College of Teachers. As former colleagues and recent postgraduates, I was confident

that the respondents were sufficiently familiar with current practice in educational research to comment critically. I also wanted to test both the effectiveness and ease of access to the online tool Opinio [(Appendix vii)] and, most importantly, the efficacy of the survey.

Each respondent completed both parts of the survey in full. I then analysed the survey and made notes about my observations and contacted each respondent separately and discussed their experience of completing the survey online. I undertook a sentence by sentence analysis of all text in the survey with each respondent. Both respondents questioned the meaning of several sentences in the introduction, the instructions, and in the Likert stems. Feedback was used to make the introduction and the instructions shorter and clearer. Both respondents commented that some of the stems contained two value objects, which had led them to become confused as to what specifically they were being invited to comment upon. Consequently, I redeveloped each 'double-barrelled' statement and explored several possible options with them. To include all the value objects, the survey was expanded from Ten stems to Sixteen. As a mechanism for validating the clarity and efficacy of the survey in advance of it being posted online, I used the pilot process as a form of member checking by inviting the respondents to comment upon the clarity and credibility of the questions (Merriam, 1988; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

I discussed my general concerns about surveys with the respondents regarding the extent to which the stem statements might be perceived as being overly leading. As assertions, stem statements can be considered to persuade or lead respondents to answer in a particular way (Creswell, 2013). Further discussion took place, therefore, regarding the potential problems of respondent bias, particularly when asking a convenience sample of people who are generally positive about coaching a series of

questions about coaching. Since it is well known that Likert items can tend to promote acquiescence bias, persuading respondents of the argument they are presenting and specifically that positively written stems can foster an overly positive response, I deemed it appropriate to re-write some stems as negatives to overcome this potential concern. Likewise, the use of negatively written stems helped to detect any respondents who chose the same point on the Likert scale for each answer, in contrast to making a thoughtful, individual choice for each.

I questioned the respondents about the notion of adopting either an even number (to avoid respondents choosing a neutral midpoint) or to adopt a more typical five-point range which included a neutral mid-point. The consensus was to include a neutral midpoint within a five-point range, not only to afford respondents the option of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement, but also as the pilot respondents reminded me, to foster familiarity with the type of survey commonly used in schools.

An additional idea I had not considered was raised by the respondents who suggested that by including a neutral position, the survey may help to overcome binary thinking; that coaching could only have either positive or negative impacts. Instead, the neutral position offered respondents the opportunity to indicate that coaching could have no impact at all.

Once complete, I opened the survey up to 200 potential respondents for a period of two weeks be email containing a hyperlink. All 200 potential respondents had given consent for me to contact them in the preceding Autumn when attending a webinar about coaching I ran for COBIS.

3.7b Survey Part One - Demographics

The first part of the survey asked questions about the demographics of the sample, which included the professional roles and international or national status of the participants' working environments. Questions invited respondents to declare the extent to which they were familiar with coaching theories and models, the extent of their training in their use of coaching skills, the frequency of coaching interactions and the number of coachees they worked with. This was because findings in the literature review indicated that each may have affect the extent to which coaches benefit from their work.

The second part of the survey adopted a series of Likert items designed to uncover respondents' attitudes to question statements (stems), concerning their experiences of using coaching and the extent to which using coaching skills may have impacted their self-efficacy beliefs and agency.

In the first instance, twenty-five people responded - a response rate of 12.5%. Of the twenty-five respondents, nine completed part two, which is a response rate of 4.5%. Given that a typical response rate for an external survey is 10-15% (Fryrear, 2019), and following discussion with my supervisors concerning the sample size, I deemed it appropriate to extend the reach of the survey. I contacted several international and UK schools by email where I was aware that coaching was in use. Within two more weeks, 21 more respondents had completed part one of the survey and 12 had completed parts one and two. Ergo, the total number of respondents taking part in the survey was 42, 21 of which completed both parts.

3.8 Fieldwork Stage Two and Three – Semi-Structured, In-Depth Interviews

I adopted semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary tool. Following Creswell's (2013) advice to researchers regarding the process of conducting interviews, I recognise that the interviewees and I were engaged in the active construction and synchronisation of meaning. Likewise, I was mindful of my assumptions throughout the interview process. I made every effort to set them to one side or declare them during the interviews and invited the participants to comment on them where necessary. Similarly, whilst analysing the survey and interview transcripts, I attempted to place a boundary around my assumptions. By raising awareness of my assumptions and continually revisiting them [Table 6], I made every effort to suspend my preconceived ideas and explore the themes as they emerged.

In stage Two, I interviewed thirteen participants who have leadership roles in school, twelve by Skype and one face-to-face. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Of these participants, one was a Headteacher and the remaining twelve worked in a variety of school leadership roles. The timeline for the interviews is set out in Table 7. I also interviewed 4 participants known to me who do not work in schools (three by skype and one, face-to-face) but have leadership roles within adult learning settings. I used this opportunity to explore the emerging themes and benchmark them outside of the school environment. I have included some aspects of the findings from these interviews in the analysis and discussion chapter. I sought permission from all participants to record each interview on a digital recording device.

Interviews began by asking participants two broad questions suggested by Moustakas (1994), which were set within an interview guide [Appendix i]. The opening questions invited the participants to describe their experiences of being a coach and discuss the contexts or situations which had typically influenced or affected their

experiences. Follow up questions, aimed at mining for deeper understanding were used. This enabled the participants to reveal more detail about their experiences (Klenke, 2008). As Collis and Hussey (2003) argue, in-depth semi-structured interviews are an effective way of extracting rich and wide-ranging field data. This view is supported by Klenke (2008), who contends that in-depth semi-structured interviewing enables the views of the participant to be most highly valued in the research process. As Klenke (2008) also proposed, I found that it was the conversational nature of the semi-structured in-depth interviews, which provided me with the platform to explore the interviewee's professional, and personal perspectives more deeply.

Table 7. Time scale and field research participants

Research Type	Time Frame	Notes
Survey	Spring 2019	21 respondents in leadership roles: Headteacher Principal CEO Executive Head Head of Department Head of Year
Stage Two. Individual Interviews with school leaders who coach	August and September 2019	14 participants in leadership roles: Headteacher Deputy Head Director of Academics Assistant Head Head of Department Head of Year Achievement and Progress Leader
Stage Two. Individual Interview with leaders of professional learning who coach	August 2019	1 participant in a leadership role Director of Learning for Global Construction Company and Qualified Executive Coach
Stage Two. Individual Interviews with leaders of professional learning who coach	September 2019	3 participants in leadership roles Head of Learning and Development for Global Communications Company Head of Learning and Development in a UN NGO in Den Haag CEO of UK based Professional Institute for Outdoor Learning and CEO of UK Outward Bounds Learning Centre. Qualified Executive Coach and coaching business owner.
Survey	September	Re-opening of survey 21 further respondents
Stage 3 Interviews	October 2019 – January 2020	7 participants in various roles 1 pair (Achievement and Progress Leaders) 1 group of 3 (2 Teachers and a Deputy Head) 3 individuals (2 Teachers, and an Assistant Head)

I found in-depth semi-structured interviews succeeded most strongly when the questions I used were as open-ended as possible; a technique within interpretive research supported by both Crotty (1998) and Creswell (2013). Creswell's (2013) writing encouraged me to focus my attention on both the participant descriptions of their actions and their reflections so that the meaning of situations, settings and relationships could be ascertained. The interviews afforded me opportunities to interpret and check the accuracy of the meanings' participants articulated (Crotty, 1988; Robson, 2011) and moreover, uncover the essential features, subtleties, and complexities of the use of coaching and its impact on the participants' self-efficacy and agency. A summary of coded responses is included in Appendix ii.

3.9 Coding and Analysing Data

To code and analyse the data I chose to make use of techniques specified by Straus and Corbin (1990) and Glaser (1992). I adopted several steps in the process of coding the transcripts [Fig. 4]. I transcribed four of the first six interviews in full myself. Two were transcribed by a former Headteacher known to me, as a way of saving time. I realised, however, that I missed some of the subtleties and nuances of the comments made by the interviewees by only reading the transcript and so listened back to the interview recording whilst following the transcript. I found the process of listening and transcribing the interviews, then reading and re-reading the transcripts sharpened my focus on aspects of the text which had the most significance for me. Later, when returning to the 15 remaining interviews that I had saved to a secure hard drive I worked in one block to listen back and transcribe each interview. As a time saving measure, I used a piece of artificial intelligence software online known as Otter.ai [Appendix vii]. After uploading a recorded interview, the software automatically transcribes the recording. I then listened back while following the transcript making small corrections where required. Listening back to the full interview was a form of data

validation fostering my prolonged engagement in the fieldwork (Creswell, 2008). Throughout transcription and analysis, I was mindful of the four sources of self-efficacy beliefs adopted in Bandura's (1997) theories noticing some emerging connections and used the working document listed in Appendix vii to capture initial coding and thematic ideas.

Figure 4. Data analysis process for semi-structured in-depth interviews
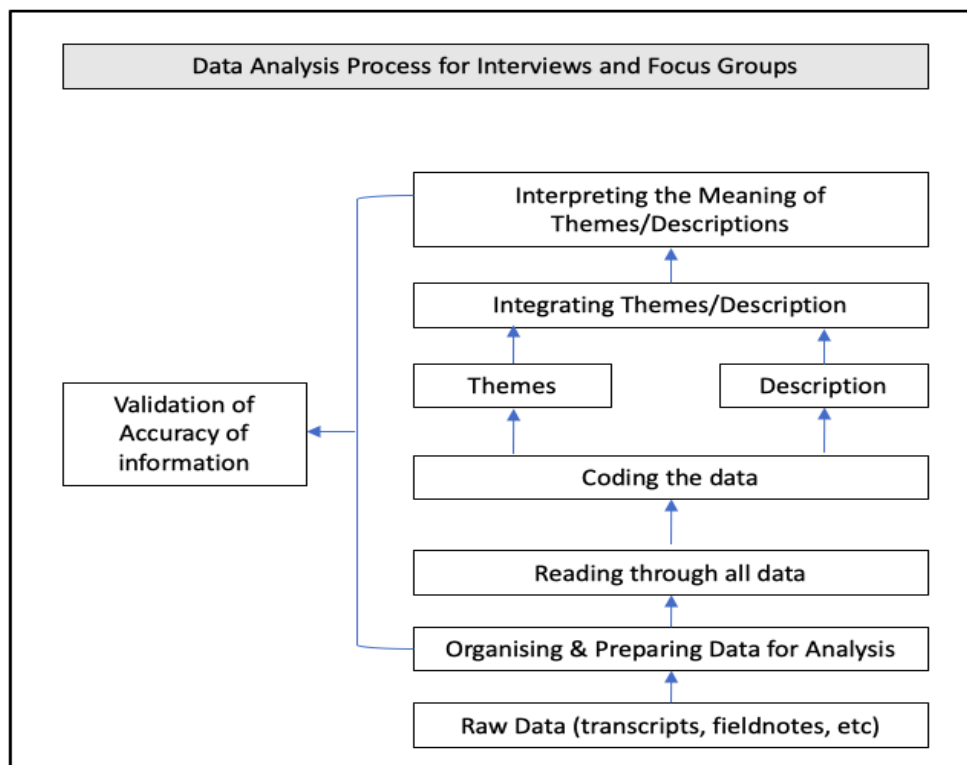
I used NVIVO [Appendix vii] to code the transcripts. I proceeded line by line, looking for the views, ideas, repeated ideas and connections expressed by the participants. Those of significance and relevance were marked with a code. Then, when coding subsequent transcripts, I began to group the codes into concepts. Next, I began to link concepts together and considered how each concept might be related to overarching themes. I continued with this procedure, often returning to previously coded transcripts to mine for further ideas, concepts and themes as stronger connections with more recently revealed codes unfolded. Although NIVIVO has functionality so as to automatically code transcripts, I found the process of reading

them through in full and coding them myself to be more revealing of what was contained within. I also listened to the interviews several times while reading the transcripts so that I could hear the emphasis and feelings expressed by the participants as they responded to my questions. This helped me to identify aspects of their responses which had great meaning for them, despite it not being revealed when simply reading the transcript. Not only is it important to read what people say, but also to hear how they say what they say (Creswell, 2014).

The next stage of analysis was to develop categories. Through an iterative process of re-reading and re-checking, some were refined, and others emerged (Creswell, 2014). This process continued after the fieldwork was completed, building towards the surfacing of themes to conceptualise meanings revealed within the data (Charmatz, 2008). Adopting this iterative and at times circular approach helped me refine my understanding. Unexpected ideas were revealed, which directed me to aspects of literature I had not previously consulted.

I used the research technique of memoing throughout the fieldwork, having benefitted from the process in previous assignments and the IFS (Creswell, 2008, 2014). I found it to be a helpful way of capturing my initial observations and thoughts about the survey and each interview. I referred to my notes while coding and developing categories to refresh my memory of the impressions I had gained during each interview. Taking notes after each interview had helped to guide subsequent interviews. I support, therefore, Dimmock and Lam's (2014), view that when studying educational leadership experiences, a sensible way to construct a theoretical perspective about the phenomenon being examined is to explore concepts that emerge as the data is collected, and as far as possible analyse it in an ongoing

fashion (2014). While I was not able to do this as precisely as anticipated, the approach I adopted never-the-less mirrored Dimmock and Lam's (2014) ideas and reflects the interpretive process proposed and developed by Charmatz (2008). She argued that relying on overly systematic approaches may hinder the full exploration of what is present in the data (Charmatz, 2008). As the approach to analysis was evolving while it was being undertaken, I was careful to document the steps I took. The process was rigorous and conducted in a step by step fashion even if there was a three month pause between the analysis of the first six interviews and the remaining fifteen. Throughout, I worked to link categories together in meaningful ways and began to construct a series of themes which were used when writing the analysis and discussion chapters and the conclusions of the study.

The ideas of constant comparative coding were useful in supporting me as I began to not only explore what was present in the transcripts inductively, but also considered whether my initial ideas were supported by subsequent participants' views (Charmatz, 2008). I then worked deductively, using the *a priori* codes which had emerged from the literature review as a both a benchmark and as a comparative tool, seeking to gauge the extent to which the expected themes were evident in the field data (Creswell, 2014, Charmatz, 2008). The process is set out in Table 8.

Table 8. Coding Process

Coding Process Steps	Explanation
Codes	Searching for views, ideas, repeated ideas and connections
Concepts	Similar codes that can be grouped together
Categories	Equivalent concepts where there is close alignment and where they can be grouped together
Theorising/Conclusions	The assembly of categories, to form an overarching understanding, theory and or conclusive explanation.

In working systematically, I was reminded of Creswell's (2013) comments that research in general, and data collection and analysis in particular is never as neat and tidy as researchers might want it to be. I found that the coding process worked best when I moved forward and backwards through the transcripts, blending survey outcomes into the process where possible. The process of revisiting earlier transcripts multiple times was particularly helpful as I explored and re-explored the codes, concepts and categories emerging in the initial interviews.

I attempted, therefore, to take on a proactive but systematic, interpretive role, interacting with the participants and co-constructing theory together using member-checking techniques to clarify outcomes. I recognise that my own views and experiences, my perceptions, perspectives and predilections regarding leadership and coaching experiences have contributed to the theorising process as meaning was co-constructed. However, on the basis that this study is part of a professional doctorate in which I as researcher am expected to bring my experience to the research, I have both attempted to separate out my bias and use my experience as a way of exploring those aspects of school leadership, coaching, self-efficacy and agency that are important to me.

I support Creswell's (2013) warning to researchers, however, that it is not possible to claim that what participants said is exactly what they meant to say. Nor is it accurate to assert that I have understood what was meant. Despite attempts to limit my own influence, I recognise that I bring a degree of subjectivity to interviews by applying my own filters to what is heard and choosing what it is that I deem to be of significance. I accept that the choice of questions one uses shape the outcomes of the inquiry (King and Horrocks, 2010). I made every effort, however, to consider the fit of the

questions for the purpose of the research, generating and testing out a range in the earliest interviews (Krathwohl, 1998; Gubrium and Holstein, 2003; Seidman, 2006).

3.10 Adaptations To The Fieldwork

In the study proposal, I had been advised to adopt the use of focus groups in stage three, inviting colleagues of leaders who coach to comment on the extent to which they exhibited agentic leadership. Undertaking this phase, however, proved to be particularly difficult. When attempting to set up the focus groups, I became aware that potential participants expressed strong levels of reluctance to being asked to comment on their colleagues' work. I suspect that since the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018, professionals are increasingly sensitive to what they say about others and the potential consequences for them of data and privacy infractions. Furthermore, several possible participants expressed genuine feelings of being uncomfortable about describing behaviours of fellow workers in the presence of other colleagues.

In bounded communities such as schools (particularly in international settings where colleagues become close co-workers, friends and in some cases partners) it is understandable that people are uncomfortable about describing anything other than positive behaviour in a group forum. Consequently, I decided to interview participants in stage three on an individual basis as well as in small focus groups. Nine participants agreed to share their perceptions of their colleague's agency via semi-structured interviews. Each interview inquired into the participants' perceptions of professional agency and explored the extent to which any changes in agency had been noticed in their colleagues as a consequence of their use of coaching. I interviewed participants in one setting in a pair, in another setting as a three and in all other settings

individually by Skype or face-to-face. I now present the field data in chapter four before discussing the analysis in chapter five.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of the two-part online survey, [appendix viii] in which forty-two respondents completed part one and of these, twenty-one respondents also completed part two. The online survey served two functions in the research, first, to provide an opening to the fieldwork and second, to support the analysis of the interviews explored in the discussion chapter (Creswell, 2014). The first part of this chapter, therefore, not only describes the online survey findings, but also 'opens' the analysis, locating the data within the wider context of the research. Survey data is also used in a 'supporting role' in the discussion chapter (Creswell, 2014).

When working with small sample sizes, readers and researchers should not consider findings as representative of the characteristic of the wider population. As Creswell (2014 p.235) notes, in mixed methods, where the quantitative procedures are used to open the inquiry, analysis serves as a means of pointing 'towards new issues that help to develop concepts' and provides contextual clarity for the interview process and analysis.

To understand the sample's demographics, survey part one asked questions about location, gender, age and leadership role. To assess the respondents knowledge, understanding, perceived skill and use of coaching, questions invited respondents to indicate how they had learned to coach, how long they had been coaching, how frequently they coached colleagues and their familiarity with the theoretical underpinnings of coaching, with coaching genres and with coaching models.

Part two surveyed participant perceptions regarding their coaching experiences, inviting respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 16 Likert stems. Each stem ascertained respondent perceptions concerning the effects that being a coach may have made on their self-efficacy beliefs and agency.

4.2 Survey Part One - Findings

From the sample of forty-two school leaders who used coaching skills in their professional work in schools, 95% worked internationally.

4.2a Gender Profile
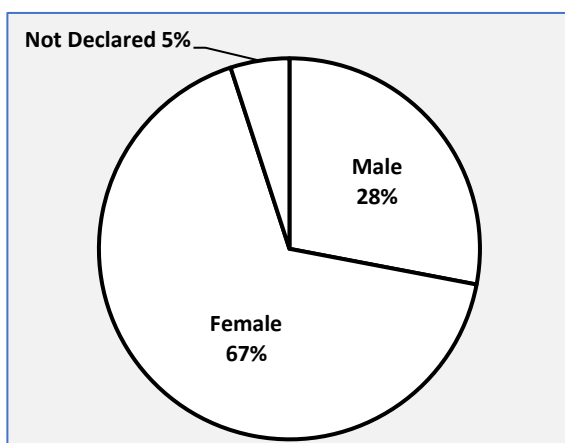
When comparing gender identity, 67% were female, and 28% male. One respondent chose not to declare their gender identity, ergo more than double the sample is female. This mirrors the worldwide distribution of teachers according to the OECD, which stands at 4:1 (female to male) in primary education; 3:2 in lower secondary and 1:1 in upper secondary.

4.2b Age Profile
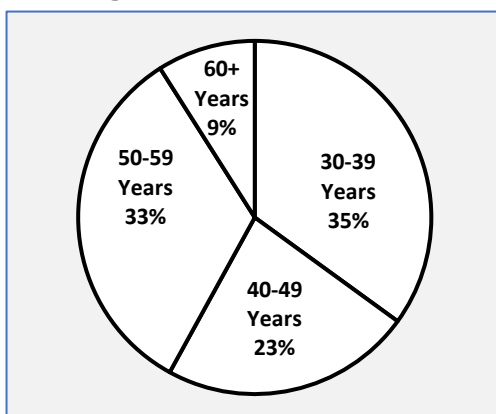
No respondents were less than Thirty years of age. Two preferred not to answer, but from those who did, the spread was relatively even across the age ranges: 30-39 years (35%); 50-59 years (33%) and 40-49 years (23%) but was significantly less in the 60+ age bracket (95%). This shows that the lowest number of respondents using coaching skills fell

within the 40-49 years range and the 60+ age range. In my view, this was an unexpected finding. I had anticipated that the 40-49-year-old and 60+ professionals may have been the largest group, given their years of experience, career development and the potential desire to foster learning of younger colleagues. In contrast, the data may reflect an aspect of the upper 'Millennial' (31-39 years) generation's working methods. Millennials are thought to not only seek out mentoring and coaching but are also proactive in offering it to their colleagues (Barrington and Luetchford, 2019). While it is somewhat surprising that no respondents fell into the 20-29 age-bracket, the data may indicate that the youngest professionals spend time working in education for several years before becoming leaders who use coaching skills.

4.2c School Leaders' Roles
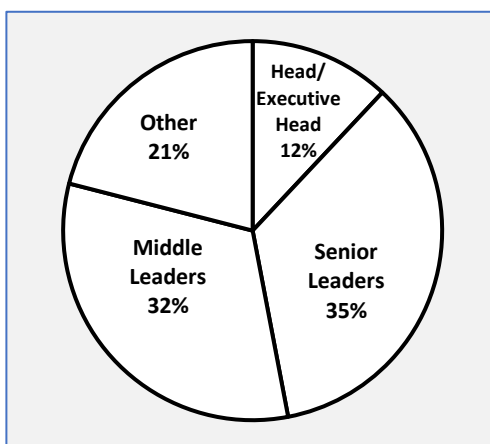
Fourteen different leadership roles were indicated by the respondents. 12% indicated their role as being Headteacher or Executive Headteacher. Those respondents fulfilling the position of Senior Leaders (Deputy Head, Assistant Head or Vice-Principal) totalled 35%. Middle Leaders (Heads of Department or Year, Curriculum Leaders or Achievement and Progress Leaders) amounted to 32%. The remaining respondents (21%) declared their roles as either Educational Consultants, Director of Educational Technology, Teaching and Learning Assistant or 'Coach using Positive Psychology'.

Consequently, 67% of the respondents work in middle and senior leadership tiers in schools. Given that most of these leaders are likely to have experienced a variety of

leadership training programs which may have included basic training in the use of coaching skills, and have access to many colleagues in teams, departments and year-groups, the finding is not unexpected.

4.2d Modes of Learning to Coach
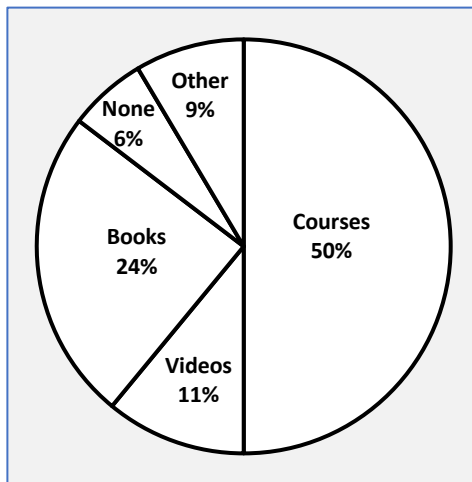
Data supports Earley and Porritt's (2010), understanding that there are a range of mechanisms by which school leaders learn to coach. From these modes attending courses (50%) was most common and reading books (24%) was second. 6% of the respondents reported never having received any training or engaged with any professional learning. Three of these respondents, however, later contradicted themselves by indicating that they had read coaching books, attended a school-based workshop and or learned on-the-job. A further 9% of the respondents listed learning on the job and discussing coaching with colleagues as a mode of learning to coach.

The data may illustrate that despite the many and varied ways in which school leaders engage in professional development (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009), a view exists in some quarters that unless one has received training or gains a qualification in some official capacity, real learning has not taken place. Given Knight's argument that 'coaching offers authentic learning that provides differentiated support for professional learning' (2009 p.2), it may indicate that some school leaders do not consider their application of the coaching process as having anything to do with their professional learning.

4.2e Length of Time Using Coaching Skills
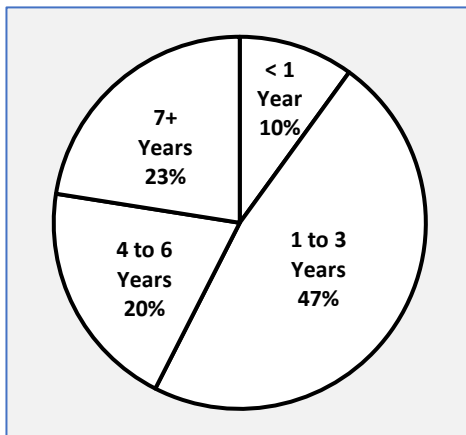
The use of coaching skills by school leaders is a relatively recent phenomenon as suggested by Knight (2009), at least in this international sample. Only 23% of respondents had been using coaching skills for seven or more years, and 20% for between four and six years. 47% had been coaching for between one and three years, and 10% less than one year.

Although it is important to be cautious when interpreting this data, it may reflect the relatively recent interest in the take up of coaching in schools, exemplified by 57% of respondents beginning their coaching journey within the last three years. Despite the significant growth of coaching in the business world, school leaders' understanding that coaching can be an effective process to promote sustainable, self-reflective professional development is a relatively recent phenomenon (Peltier, 2010)

4.2f Coaching Frequency
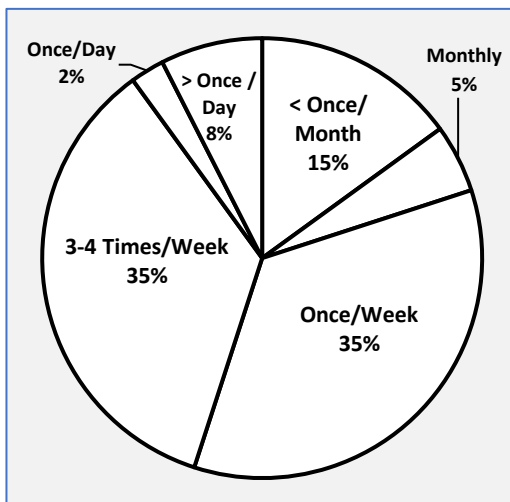
Data indicated that 35% of respondents used coaching skills at least once per week, and a further 35% used coaching three to four times per week, ergo 70% of respondents use coaching between one and four times per week.

Findings indicated that 79% of the respondents who used coaching between one to four times each week were drawn from the middle and senior tiers of school leaders. A likely explanation is that an immediacy and access to numerous colleagues within the school organisational structure, and the operational aspects of their middle and senior leader role is focused on teaching and learning and developing colleagues (Jones, 2018).

4.2g Genres of Coaching – respondents' familiarity
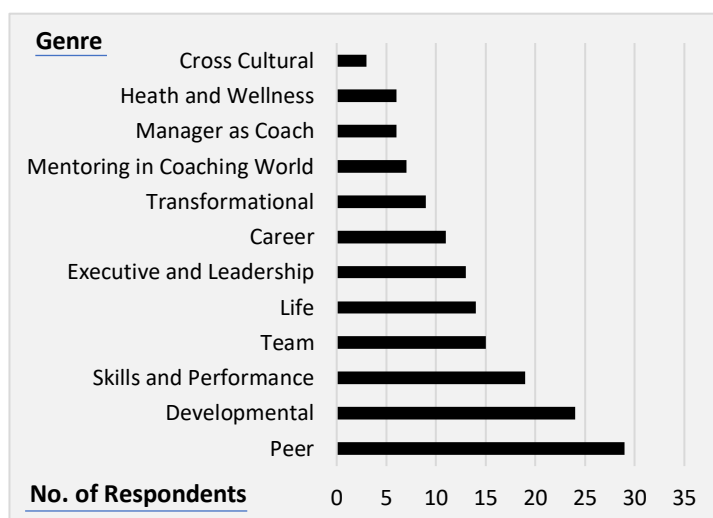
Amongst the twelve genres of coaching that Cox, Bachirova and Clutterbuck (2014) describe, [(appendix iii)] findings signposted that although more than half of the respondents indicated familiarity with two types of coaching: Peer Coaching (29 respondents) and Developmental Coaching (24), other genres were less familiar. While close to half of the respondents were familiar with Skills and Performance Coaching (19) only one quarter to one third of the

respondents expressed familiarity with Team Coaching (15), Life Coaching (14), Executive Coaching (13) and Career Coaching (11). One fifth or less of the respondents indicated familiarity with other forms of coaching: Transformational (9), Mentoring in a Coaching World (7), The Manager as Coach (6), Health and Wellness Coaching (6), Cross-Cultural Coaching (3).

Findings suggest, therefore, that Peer Coaching has gained the most traction as a process of promoting professional development in schools, a point supported by Rodger (2014) and Ladyshewsky (2014) and the previous subsection, 4.2f: coaching frequency. A likely explanation is that peers coach one another to help develop and improve their leadership skills and teaching performance, and is reflective of the growing culture of shared professional learning in which professionals 'learn and work best collaboratively' combining 'different experiences, expertise and ideas' (Woods and Roberts, 2018 p.11).

4.2h Theories underpinning coaching – respondents' familiarity
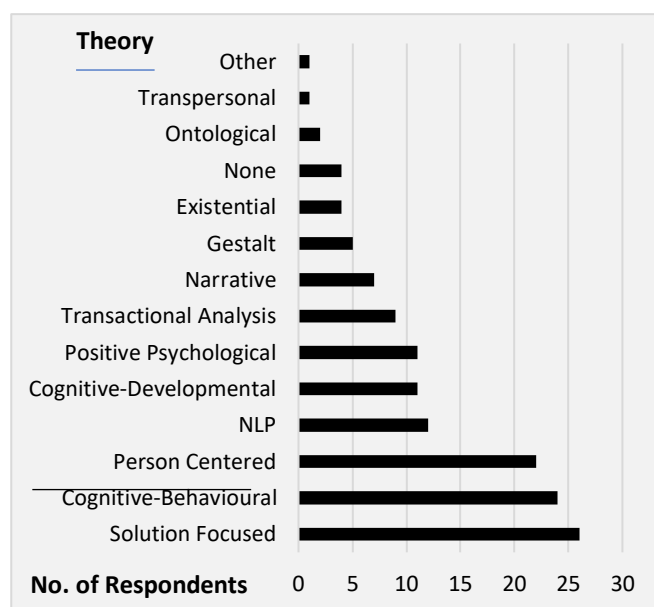
Findings indicated varying degrees of familiarity with theories underpinning coaching as noted by Cox, Bachirova and Cultterbuck (2014).[appendix iii] Overwhelmingly, Solution Focused (26 respondents), Cognitive Behavioural (24) and Person-Centered (22) theoretical underpinnings were most familiar. Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Cognitive-Developmental, Positive Psychological were familiar to around 25% of the

respondents. This finding supports the outcomes of the literature review, in which coaching was described as a relatively new field of applied practice, drawing on multiple theories within spheres of adult learning (Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2011; Mezirow, 1990). Although all theoretical underpinnings were recognised by at least one respondent, all others were familiar to less than 20% of the respondents. One respondent listed Hypnosis (other) as a coaching theory.

A likely explanation is that Solution Focused, Cognitive-Behavioural and Person-Centred theories have the greatest familiarity because as earlier findings indicated the most common genre of coaching is Peer Coaching, which is often associated with peer to peer solution finding, and helping co-workers think constructively about their whole personhood before attempting behavioural change (Ladyshewsky, 2010).

4.2i Coaching Models – respondents' familiarity
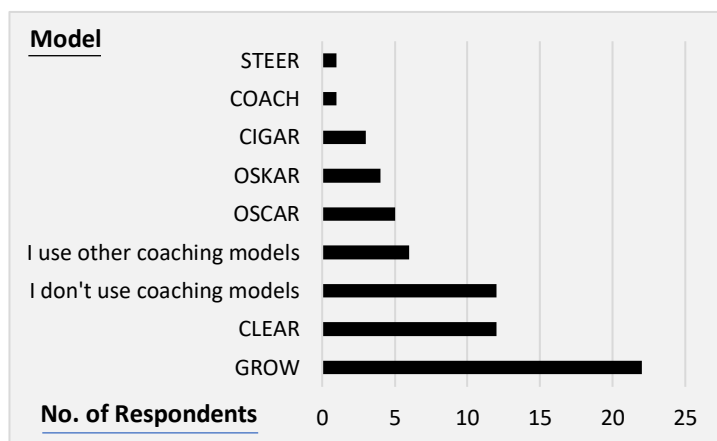
Findings indicated that the most commonly used coaching model was GROW with just over half of the respondents reporting its use. Almost one third noted CLEAR as an alternative model in regular use and a similar number of respondents indicated that they did not use any model at all. Other Models (CIGAR, OSKAR, STEER, OSCAR, COACH) [appendix iv] were used sparingly (<12%). Two respondents identified three alternative coaching models; FUEL, FACTS and OUTCOMES not listed in the survey and one noted that they used a blend of their own personal model, and common sense, 'all based on healthy relationships and connection'.

4.2j Survey Part One - Summary

Although it is important to exercise caution when summarising the outcomes from a small data sample, it appears that while more female than male school leaders use coaching, the proportionality reflects the nature of the profession's female to male imbalance. Findings indicate that school leaders who coach are, for the most part, above 30 years in age. They have limited familiarity with the theoretical underpinnings of, and the different genres of coaching. School leaders have learned to coach by a variety of means. However, school-based workshops, short courses and reading books are the most common methods. There is some evidence of learning to coach by doing. School leaders who coach, generally do so between 1 to 4 times per week. Although a range of coaching models are in use, GROW and CLEAR are the most common.

4.3 Survey Part 2 - Findings

4.3a Introduction

In this section I present the findings of part two of the online survey which uncovered respondent perceptions regarding their coaching experiences via 16 Likert stems. Each adopted a five-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree inviting respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the possible effect that coaching colleagues had made upon their learning, leadership influence, confidence, self-efficacy beliefs and agency. Although the survey was mainly used to direct lines of inquiry in the interviews and the main discussion concerning the findings is found in chapter 5 in the following passages I blend the quantitative and QUALITATIVE data together, uncovering possible meanings as expressed by the respondents adding clarity to the wider context of the research.

It is important to note that the survey sample of 21 respondents is statistically very small. I remind the reader, however, that all respondents used coaching skills and were able, therefore, to comment on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the Likert stems. Numerical codes were not allocated subsequently. Although Opinio automatically counts means and standard deviations, I deemed it of little value when considering the small sample size and because the main purpose of the survey was to signpost areas of exploration in subsequent interviews. Means and Standard deviations are, therefore, not reported.

The data is set out in the form of a horizontal divergent stacked bar chart, which provides a visual overview in Fig. 5. Findings indicate a general tendency for coaching to have been perceived as a positive process and to have had generally positive effects.

Figure 5. Horizontal divergent stacked bar chart of respondents' views for each Likert Stem as percentages using the scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree.
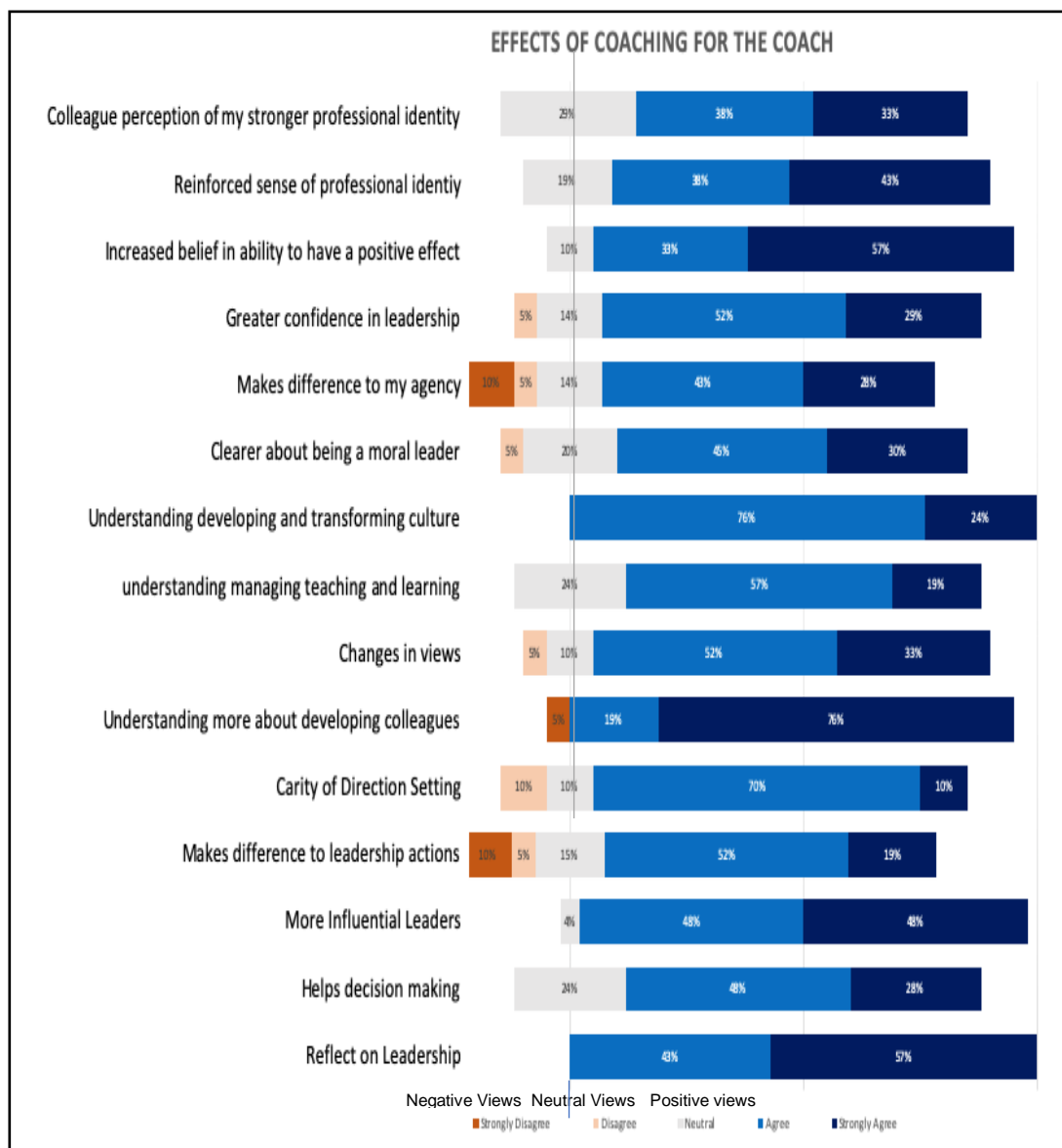
4.3b Survey Part Two - Findings

The horizontal divergent stacked bar chart distinguishes the varying effects of coaching as perceived by the respondents. Findings indicate that while coaching is generally perceived positively there is some difference in the perceived effects of coaching on leaders' learning, reflection, self-efficacy beliefs and agency.

Two stems received only positive responses. A further six stems received only positive or neutral responses. Seven stems received some, albeit low percentages, of negative responses.

The following list, written in descending order, indicates aspects of school leadership work in which coaching has had a positive effect:

1. Reflection on their leadership
2. Influence as leaders
3. Understanding colleagues
4. Understanding of cultural transformation
5. Confidence in their ability to have a positive influential impact on their school
6. Sense of professional leadership identity
7. Managing Teaching and Learning
8. Direction setting in the school
9. Changing views of leadership
10. Decision making in leadership

100% respondents noted that coaching helped them to reflect on their leadership with 57% strongly agreeing and 43% agreeing. When considering leadership influence, 96% agreed or strongly agreed (48% and 48% respectively) that coaching had helped them to become more influential leaders in their schools or departments. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that coaching was a source of understanding more about developing their colleagues, 76% strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing. Only 5% (one respondent) noted that it did not help. 80% noted that coaching had given them a greater sense of confidence in their leadership abilities, with 52% agreeing and 28% strongly agreeing. The remaining respondents (15%) neither agreed nor disagreed and only 5% disagreed. 80% of the respondents also noted that coaching had reinforced their sense of professional identity with 38% agreeing and 42% strongly agreeing. 20% neither agreed nor disagreed. Similar results were noted when respondents were asked to state the extent to which they believed their colleagues perceived them to have a stronger sense of professional identity because

of their coaching work. Here, 70% agreed or strongly agreed (38% and 32% respectively), and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Concerning the coaches understanding of managing teaching and learning, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed that coaching had helped them understand more about the management of this aspect of school life but 77% believed that coaching had helped them in this regard, with 57% agreeing and 19% strongly agreeing. Coaching appeared to have a positive effect on leaders in relation to their direction setting with 71% agreeing and 10% strongly agreeing. Similar percentages (9.5%) were noted for those who neither disagreed or agreed and those who responded that coaching did not help with their direction setting.

When asked about the extent to which coaching may have led to coaches changing their views of leadership, 85% believed it had done so, with 52% agreeing and 33% strongly agreeing. A further 10% neither agreed nor disagreed and 5% noted that coaching had not led to any changes in view. When school leaders commented on coaching as a source of help in their decision making, 24% noted that it made no difference. Of the remaining respondents, 48% agreed, and 29% strongly agreed. Findings indicated that coaching had the lowest effect in the following areas of leadership work as perceived by the respondents:

1. agency
2. leadership actions
3. clarity concerning moral leadership

The stem asking about agency was written in negative form. The statement read; Coaching colleagues has made no difference to my agency as a leader. Here, 28% strongly disagreed, and 43% disagreed. In other words, because the statement was written in reverse form, 71% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the act of coaching makes a difference to their agency. The remaining respondents were as

follows: 14% neither agreed or disagreed, 5% agreed that it had made no difference and 10% strongly agreed that it made no difference.

Despite this influence, however, the following question yielded a lower response when participants were asked about leadership actions. Although 19% strongly agreed that coaching led to leadership actions and 52% agreed, 10% of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed and a further 15% noted that coaching had made no difference at all to their leadership actions. Coaching also appeared to have some positive effects in helping the coaches understand what it means to be a moral leader. However, while 75% agreed or strongly agreed (45% and 30% respectively) 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and 5% disagreed.

4.3c Summary

Survey part two indicates that school leaders who coach benefit from the process overall. The strongest benefit, however, appears to be focused on professional leadership reflection. Coaching appears to have influenced school leaders' confidence in their ability to have a positive, influential impact on their school, not only by understanding their colleagues but also by understanding what is involved in cultural transformation. Coaching also appears to have a positive impact on the confidence in the leaders' leadership abilities which may be contributing to reinforced self-efficacy beliefs concerning their perceived, specific leadership abilities which is explored in chapter 5. Coaching appears to have contributed to a stronger sense of professional identity and school leaders report being more able to manage teaching and learning.

If agency is accurately described as the ability to make a difference (Giddens, 1984) and the 'power leaders have to shape the spaces within their organisations' (Riley,

2017), the findings indicate that the coaching work undertaken has positively affected the respondents' agency. It is, therefore, unclear why when asked directly about agency, respondents were less positive about the effects of coaching. A likely explanation is that the concept of agency is a less familiar term or is less understood than I had imagined. This finding became an area for follow up in the interview questions.

Although I had developed several interview questions as an outcome of the literature review, I used my learning from the survey to re-develop the interview guide [Appendix i]. Questions focused on; how school leaders had learned to coach, what leaders thought about before and during coaching sessions, what coaching had meant to them as a professional, how listening to the coachee had impacted their thinking, and what effects coaching had on their self-confidence and beliefs in their ability to lead. I asked about the coaching process and what contributed to leaders' reflexivity, how it may have helped them change their ideas, what the differences might be between coaching and other forms of conversation, the extent to which coaching had impacted their agency as a leader and whether or not there were other aspects of the coaching experience that they wanted to discuss. I discuss the combined findings of the survey and interviews in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the survey and from twenty-one in depth, semi-structured interviews; seventeen with school leaders who coach, and four with leaders working in adult professional learning who coach. Findings indicate that school leaders who coach benefit from the process and each of Bandura's (1997) four sources of learning - Vicarious Learning, Mastery Experiences, Verbal Persuasion and Emotional Cognitive States - contributes at different levels to fostering the coach's reflection, learning, self-efficacy beliefs and agency.

The chapter adopts a sequential approach to its structure and mirrors the main concepts discussed in the conceptual framework [fig 1]. Five concepts were initially identified which included the knowledge, understanding and skills of the school leaders who coach, reflection, learning, self-efficacy beliefs and agency. Findings indicated, however, that learning takes place when leaders reflect on the self and on leadership activity. Consequently, the discussion is organised under the following five themes:

1. The knowledge, understanding and skill of school leaders who coach
2. Learning from self-reflection
3. Learning from reflection on leadership activity
4. Self-efficacy beliefs
5. Agency

I use the term participants when referring to the interviews and respondents for the online survey. I have disguised the participants by using pseudonyms and adjusted genders in some cases.

5.2 Knowledge, Understanding and Skills of Coaching

The extent to which coaches understand what they are doing when coaching, is an important factor in coaching efficacy as understood from the literature review. Furthermore, the theoretical framework developed for this research[(fig. 2)] began by attempting to understand the applied knowledge, understanding and skills of the coach in four areas:

1. Questioning and listening,

2. Coaching models and tools,

3. Assessing coachee's ongoing needs,

4. Building rapport and trust.

Survey and interview findings indicated that building rapport and trust, and creating an emotionally safe environment are connected elements of coaching efficacy. They are, however, both worthy of discussion. Consequently, the following passages discuss each in the resulting order:

1. **Creating an Emotionally Safe Environment -** in which the coach works to establish confidentiality, equality and is aware of theirs and their coachee's emotional balance.

2. **Building Rapport and Trust** – in which the coach works to build rapport with the coachee, builds relational trust thereby providing a safe emotional space for the conversation to unfold

3. **Questioning and Listening** – through which the coach asks increasingly effective questions to elicit dialogue with the coachee, enabling the coachee to explore possibilities and find solutions

4. **Assessing Coachees Ongoing Needs** – through which the coach continually assesses the coachee's needs and adjusts their strategy accordingly to elicit the greatest learning and growth in their coachee

5. **Coaching Models and Tools** – In which the coach uses appropriate models to structure the coaching conversation toward a desired outcome

5.2a Creating an Emotionally Safe Environment

Coaching literature suggests that a fundamental responsibility of the coach is to prepare for and create a safe environment in which the coachee can begin to reflect and discuss their inner thoughts. All interview participants spoke of the significance they attached to preparation for coaching conversations coupled with heightened levels of self-awareness during sessions (Brent and Dent, 2015). Take, for example this excerpt from Geraldine's interview as she describes the importance of distinguishing between roles when working as both a senior member of staff and as a workplace coach in the same institution:

> Even though we'd been through the confidentiality part of the rules
> in the contracting, I'd always remove my identity tag at the start of
> the session - it was a symbolic gesture to reaffirm every time that
> I'm not SLT, I'm here as a coach – literally.

Geraldine is aware of potential mixed messages that may be transmitted when coaching colleagues and when working with them in manager-subordinate relationships. Although contracting is usually an opening activity in a coaching relationship (Landsberg, 2015; Knight, 2009; Rogers, 2016) it is generally accepted as good practice to revisit the ground rules of coaching each time a conversation takes place (Cope, 2010; Rogers, 2016). The example demonstrates not only a sense of self-awareness as being essential for this coach's ability to remind the coachee of equality within the relationship but also that there are different modes of communication when they seek to build rapport.

5.2b Building Rapport and Trust

Building rapport is a central pillar of coaching practice, and is not so much based on techniques, but is concerned with 'ways of being with a coachee' (Rogers, 2016 p.33). Furthermore, rapport involves the unconditional acceptance - not approval - of the

coachee. Acceptance creates a platform for conscious reciprocal disclosure, which is understood to be a powerful force in promoting social connectedness (Webb, 2018). When the coach remains curious and open to what the coachee is saying the coachee can explore their inner thoughts and assumptions uncovering 'what these inner voices and assumptions are' (Rogers, 2016 p.34). The coach's responsibility is, therefore, to help their coachee feel relaxed and create a space in which the coachee senses the authentic listening and intentions of the coach, which Geraldine and Indira illustrate in the following examples:

> Geraldine: I think it is that connection between asking the right question, almost anticipating the sense of the answer the person might have because there is a connection or you're sensing the way they might respond - a reciprocity between you and the coachee that's taking place in that moment - it's very encouraging as a coach to feel like you're tuned in to what the coachee is talking about.

> Indira: I think about my body language – it's really important, because I've been caught out before you know, when someone is really exasperating you and they're not quite getting it and you're thinking, is it skill, is it will and you need to explore that. And the problem is, you can find yourself inadvertently sort of switching off or looking cross or looking surprised. And actually you have to be aware, you have to be conscious that when they drop something which is a bit of a clanger rather than being shocked by it and pulling a face - but asking a question saying, well, is this the best option, have you considered other options - with a totally straight deadpan face, rather than a face that could demonstrate a feeling which could make a person feel vulnerable.

These excerpts reinforce the point that coaching is a complex process and the coach must always be aware of effect they have on the coachee. Indira's comment is particularly interesting, serving as a useful reminder that not only must coaches make

ongoing assessments of what their coachee is discussing in terms of their 'will' (motivation) and/or 'skill' (competencies) but also be consciously aware of the effect that their body language and facial expression may have on the coachee's continued sense of being valued (Landsberg, 2003 p. 51). It is not only the coach who is reading the body language and facial expression of the coachee, but also the coachee reading that in the coach. Coachee's easily sense the level of genuine interest being shown in their narrative. If the coach is more concerned with themselves, less attention is placed on the coachee, which has the effect of hampering the quality of rapport. As Rogers argues, what matters for the building of genuine rapport is the coaches 'self-awareness and self-acceptance' (2016 p.39) because this enables them to work with difference, suspend judgement about what it is they are hearing and focus on the best questions that will help uncover the coachee's agenda transitioning to the goals and objectives that the coachee can work on to achieve real change.

5.2c Questioning and Listening

Effective questioning is a key process coaches rely on to help coachees move their thinking, learning and actions forward (Rogers, 2016; Brent and Dent, 2015), evident in fifteen interviews. The following passages illustrate how participants use questions to open coaching conversations, how they adapt questions to foster lines of inquiry and how they promote listening opportunities for the coach. As Lee (2014 p.81) states, 'effective questioning guides the process of reflection and discovery steering the conversation and giving shape and focus to new avenues of exploration'. The following narratives illustrate this:

> Dante: I don't want to go in with my agenda, the only thing I do is look back at what we talked about before starting with what I've asked them at the end of the last session - what would you like to tell me the next time you see me?

> Geraldine: I keep the right balance of questions - let's not make any assumptions of what the root causes are, so still digging down into what needs to be done, because they're giving you a lot of information so then you can really get to the nitty gritty of what they want to talk about. From there you think ok well there might be several directions that this might go. There are so many different possibilities where you could go it's making sure you're following the right line of inquiry so that the coachee feels it is going the way they wanted it to, because of course, the agenda sits with them.

These points are backed up in the following example from Brian when coaching within an adult learning business environment:

> I always start off asking the question what specifically do you want to get out of this session and then you ask key questions or 'say some more about that' - to get someone talking, to get them to say more about what they're doing and you get to the real depth and honesty about things that you probably weren't expecting, you get answers but sometimes you think 'I wasn't expecting that'!

The previous excerpts illustrate how leaders use questions as a mechanism to open coaching conversations, reminding the coachee that the agenda is theirs. Brian's comment, 'What is it that you specifically want to talk about' and Dante's question 'what will you want to say next time we meet', exemplify this. Questions serve to support the coachee in expanding and exploring the topics on their mind and at times, can reveal unexpected ideas and possibilities of thought. Furthermore, when coaches find the right balance of questioning, a deep dive into the heart of what matters most for the coachee, not only uncovers the 'real' issues that the coachee is facing, but also helps to provide a staging post for the coachee to explore their own solutions to the challenge they are discussing. Effective questioning is, therefore, vital for successful coaching. While De Haan and Burger state, 'coaching is mainly a matter of listening and asking questions' (2014 p.36), Knight (2009 p.178),

however, adds that 'learning to coach is a lot more than learning to ask good questions'. It involves, careful anticipatory thoughtfulness, the awareness of one's actions and language choices and suspension of personal assumptions. The following examples further illustrate these points as participants reflected on ways that questioning had helped their coachees:

> Martijn: The benefit comes in the fact that you ask them one or two questions, and they talk for an hour. You listen, and you show that you're listening. I think that's why coaching works.

> Hamisha: Thinking of questions… well, because a lot of times it's more about with adults, trying to get them to come up with their own answers, not giving them an answer but saying, you know, I hear you saying this, that makes me wonder if this would be good for you, or have you considered this situation? Or have you looked at it from this angle or through this lens?

> Leila: I'm always mindful of not coming with my own judgement, or my own solutions. So I try and think of questions, I will always come with a few questions prepared. Inevitably I maybe just use a few of them, and then we end up going in a different direction. And I always try and find questions where we're exploring where they are. The trick is always just to stay open, keeping up with them, understanding rather than thinking too much about what I'm going to ask next. Although I've got my question, when they continue the question is no longer relevant.

Martijn's point is a reminder of not only the power of questions to open up the coachee's exploration, but also that listening deeply to their answers generates new lines of investigation. More importantly it serves to provide the coachee with the feeling of being heard. It is an example of what Cox (2013 p.42) describes as 'witnessed significance' when referring to work by Fleischman (1989 p.8) who states that all people have 'the need to be seen, known, responded to, confirmed,

appreciated, cared for, mirrored, recognised and identified'. Hamisha, notes that one mode of combining listening and questioning occurs when coaches use statements such as 'I hear you say this', 'have you wondered', have you considered looking at it from this angle or through this lens?' And as Leila states, remaining open is key for coaches because as the coachee unfolds their story, the questions the coach may have in mind quickly become irrelevant. A closed perspective of prepared questions moves the agenda to the coach, away from the coachee and inhibits the coach's ability to assess the coachee's ongoing changing needs and adjust the coaching conversations accordingly.

5.2d Assessing Coachees Ongoing Needs

The coaching literature suggests that coaching is a learning process in which coaches facilitate learning for their coachee, by eliciting options, possibilities and solutions and by enabling learning and behavioural change to occur (Hoult, 2005). Consequently, coaches must assess the learning needs of their coachee, not only as an opening activity in the coaching relationship but also as an ongoing diagnostic aspect of their practice (Lee, 2014, Rogers, 2016). In the following example, Oliver, refers to the continuous assessment of coachee needs:

> A lot of coaching it is largely dependent on the colleague, so if it's someone I believe needs a bit of support particularly in their practice, I might say what I'd start thinking about is, or I'd approach this situation like this. If I think they're able to work on the solution themselves, I'd focus a lot on the best questions for that conversation so that it goes in the direction where they're able to provide the answers. But what I'm very conscious of here is that I don't ultimately determine what the outcome is.

Although the coaching literature argues that coaches should mainly focus on questioning, Oliver's example indicates that in some instances, when the coachee

does not know what to do, what is required is for the coach to offer possibilities. Equally important is a comment made by Paul, who illustrates that sometimes when coachees appear to not know what to do, they may be hiding behind an unwillingness to engage in coaching and are, potentially, not ready for coaching:

> How do you coach someone who just doesn't seem to want to be coached? Who wants to challenge the process, challenge the questions challenge the outcomes? This is hard - maybe coaching isn't always appropriate for everyone. I guess that's where I arrived at.

This example captures a fundamental coaching truth that although coaching is a powerful learning tool, not everyone believes that it is helpful generally or specifically beneficial to them (Cox, Bachirova and Clutterbuck, 2014). Consequently, a crucial role of the coach is to consider the readiness of the coachee and ascertain whether coaching should start, continue or stop. The level of self-awareness a coach requires, therefore, is high so that they can understand the extent to which the coachee is learning from the coaching conversations, putting their ego and need to coach to one side if and when they sense that the coachee no longer requires a coaching approach. This point was illustrated by Sarah in one of the later interviews when exploring the notion of leaders' agency. Although the discussion focused on her perceptions of other's leadership, she commented on her learning as a coach:

> I tried to do what good teachers do, which is ask open ended questions to allow people to consider their thoughts rather than quickly put in my own. Before I hadn't really recognised or understood the difference between mentoring and coaching. So, after realising that I needed to not put in my own opinion, I thought now it would be helpful to ask if somebody would like to move into a mentoring session.

Understanding some of the differences (and overlaps) between coaching and mentoring (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck 2014) is evident in this example. The coach realises that in some instances, what the coachee needs is more of a mentoring approach, perhaps offering advice and guidance from a more seasoned professional, as opposed to a questioning approach from a coach. It takes self-awareness and personal security to know when not to coach and when to pass the coachee onto another (Rogers, 2016).

Kendra, working in outdoor and adult learning refers to an important point about ensuring that it is the coachee's agenda which comes to the fore, particularly when working in the same organisation, or when the coach is also working on similar objectives or a shared project:

> The challenge is not to introduce your own agenda. It's really hard when you are both in the same organisation trying to achieve similar things or working to a certain project or outcome or whatever it may be. The starting point is to try and put yourself out of a job. I had to learn this because I totally love helping people out and if I think about something that's helpful to them I can't help but slam the present down on the table and say 'unwrap that!' But that's all about me isn't it!

In this narrative, the coach avoids providing answers and does not allow herself to be the centre of the discussion. Focusing on the coachee's agenda is described powerfully when the participant suggests that one of the aims of coaching is not to be needed or to 'put themselves out of a job'. Here she displays a level of self-awareness concerning problems with their need to be helpful, realising that coaching helpfulness is about equipping the coachee and empowering them to be able to stand on their own two feet.

5.2e Coaching Conversation Models and Tools

Although survey findings indicated that there are many different coaching conversation models in use, GROW developed in the 1980s by John Whitmore appears to have gained prominence in the field. This is supported by the literature (Cox, Bachirova and Clutterbuck, 2014). In contrast other more searching and complex models of leadership coaching such as ACE FIRST (Lee, 2014) and Cox's (2013) dynamic 'Three Spoke' model of experiential coaching, were not referred to.

A possible explanation is that the sample of school leaders exhibit an over-reliance on GROW as their preferred coaching model, with CLEAR as a back-up, as opposed to having a deep understanding of the variety of tools, the different purposes in which they can be used most effectively and the theories underpinning the coaching process. A tool can be used even if school leaders have little or no understanding of how and why it works (Ellul and Fehring, 2017). If a lack of understanding of the importance of meeting coachee needs results in the overreliance on one coaching tool and coaches look to good fortune for its appropriateness, it may shed light on the point made in the literature review that although coaching can, and is, often helpful for a coachee's learning and development, if it is not understood by the coach, it is not always so (Tolhurst, 2010).

When coding the interview responses, I noticed that those school leaders who had worked towards ILM 7 or equivalent, had deeper insights into the appropriateness of the use of coaching models, tools and skills and reflected a more searching sense of self-reflectiveness and subsequent learning when discussing their coaching experiences than those participants who were either relatively new to coaching or who had limited professional training upon which to draw.

5.3 Learning Through Self-Reflection

Self-refection is important for adult learning and is understood as a series of interconnected elements of human living; both in the moment as knowing in action and afterwards, as reflection on action (Schön, 1983; McGill and Brockbank, 2006). Earlier in my IFS, I identified critical reflection as important for coachees' learning. In part two of the online all respondents indicated that coaching had either supported (43%) or strongly supported (57%) reflection on their leadership work. The following excerpt from Jasmine exemplifies this:

> Because you are listening to somebody else's story and because you are empathising with it, it connects and it resonates and… although you are sitting back and listening, it's giving you the opportunity to really think quite deeply about the other person's story and to see it from their point of view.

This data might indicate that coaches partake in critical self-refection as they engage with examination, justification, validation or rejection of notions as discussed by Mezirow (1990), and which emanate from the vicarious exposé coachee narratives provide (Bandura, 1997). Viewing another person's story offered Jasmine an opportunity to engage in learning vicariously when their coachee verbalised 'their thought processes and strategies aloud' (Bandura 1997 p.93). As coaching interventions unfold, the coachee is afforded the opportunity to articulate their 'covert thoughts' which have guided their behaviours and actions, and are 'made observable through' their 'overt representation', which the coach hears and begins to reflect on (Bandura, 1997 p.93). The excerpt also illustrates an aspect of cognitive self-modelling (Bandura, 1997), which involves the coach working to master deep listening, suspending their own viewpoint as they attempt to see the world through the eyes of their coachee. As Bandura states, reflecting in this manner serves to enhance self-efficacy beliefs (1997 p.95).

Jasmine's example indicates that refection can happen in the moment (Schön, 1983). It is an example of a form of self-coaching (McGonnagill, 2002; Grant and Greene, 2003) and illustrates that the coaching process acts as a catalyst for the coach's personal reflection (Vogel, 2012). Furthermore, the excerpt highlights the collaborative nature of coaching as a dialogic process through which a shared narrative emerges (Jewett and MacPhee, 2012). Although this might be considered a benefit for the leader who coaches, in a contrasting example, however, Naim discusses the challenge of the dialogic process, articulating that when there is too much going on in their mind, they struggle to focus:

> If I have too much inner dialogue during a coaching session, I lose
> the connection of the coachee. And I'm at risk of projecting my own
> things on the coachee and seeing my own issues and so I actually
> try to listen as best as possible and keep my inner dialogue down.

Naim's account illustrates that not only is it important that coaches suspend their own thoughts and agendas, but also that they focus on the coachee's needs and issues. Nevertheless, despite the participant perceiving a gap between their current skill level and that which is required, it is the self-awareness of the gap which acts as the incubator of their learning. It is evident that it is the complexity of the challenge of coaching which has given rise to the enhanced levels of reflection witnessed in this example as Naim articulates self-perceived limitations and the agency they apply in overcoming them. Similarly, Rogier vividly comments on personal growth while reflecting on the impact that being a coach has made to them:

> Coaching makes you reflect on your own life, on your own abilities
> or your own professionalism, it challenges you as an individual to
> be a better person.

The act of coaching, it appears, not only helps leaders enhance their reflective skills (Grant, 2016; Kovacs and Corrie, 2017), but also provides the challenge to enhance one's sense of being professional, and at a more holistic level, as a better person.

Martijn discusses how his use of coaching with others or more specifically 'looking after others' has strengthened his realisation of the importance of self-reflection:

> One of the things that I've picked up from looking after others in coaching is realising that I need to have some time to reflect, whether that's with another coach for a session or actually just on my own though, reflecting on your own, I think is sometimes a little bit tricky.

In this passage, Martijn refers obliquely to the benefits coaches gain from supervision, which while not part of the study's research focus is nevertheless worth mentioning at this point because reflecting alone, as the participant describes, is not an easy thing to do and sometimes requires the intervention of another. As Hawkins and Smith (2014) argue one purpose of supervision in coaching is the 'provision of a supportive space for the coach or mentor to process what they have absorbed from their coachees and their coachees' systems' (2014 p.394). Supervision may help overcome the 'trickiness' the participant speaks about, promoting reflection and a co-creative and generative opportunity for shared thinking, which may lead to the forging of new learning (Hawkins and Smith, 2014).

5.3a Learning through self-reflection – post coaching

In the following extract, Indira discusses the effect of her coaching, noting that it is after the coaching conversation has taken place that she finds herself reflecting on her work and considers how impactful the coaching was, and what she might have done differently:

> Coaching also enables that reflective practice so you go away afterwards and sometimes I go away from the conversation or something I handled, you know, I could have handled that better or I was a little bit too flippant in there or, you know, there are times when you feel it and you have to be open and honest with yourself…

Although as Cox (2013) argues, the sole purpose of coaching is to help the coachee to think for themselves and develop a dialogue by the coachee with him/herself (2013 p.158), the excerpt indicates that the coach also develops a dialogue which fortifies their reflection. This example of the reflective process mirrors stage three of Cox's (2013) three spoke experiential coaching cycle in which the coachee engages with post-reflective thinking. While Cox's (2013) insightful model refers to the experience of being a coachee within the coaching space, the three elements; Touching Experience, Becoming Critical and Integrating, each require 'varying amounts of emotional, cognitive and physical effort, and so drive the coaching process' (Cox, 2013 p.156), can also be applied to being a coach. Not only does the coachee engage in post reflective thinking, but so also does the coach as is seen in Dante's narrative:

> And I think it's that sometimes coaching leads to questions and that doesn't stop does after you finish the dialogue - you might be in the taxi on the way home or walking the dog and that's still going on, on that shoulder. It's still, you know, there's something about and it's typical, not in a negative way, but in a kind of reflective way. And, and it's like you're learning from it, and you're thinking actually, you know, what they were talking about resonates or, you know, there's something you're not 100% comfortable with, or you know, then it's not come out, in the session or it's not been in the data, but it's sat there and, you can sort of explore it and it may be that you pick that up with someone else in another conversation.

In this excerpt, Dante notes his ongoing reflection after the coaching experience, by, quite literally referring to walking around with the questions reverberating 'on his shoulder'. Next he refers to learning from the experience and from the reflection on the experience (Schön, 1983), noting that what he is learning might not have been 'in the data' but is an outcome of exploring what he had been questioning.

The following passage from Leila illustrates a high level of self-awareness following the process of reflecting on her (failed) attempts at bringing coaching into her international school. In the example she discusses reasons why she has been unsuccessful in fostering a culture of coaching across the school's professional community and what learning she has taken from the experience:

> In trying to bring in coaching into our school and having failed in terms of a whole school culture, if you like, one of the ways that my thought process has gone is, I'm actually stopping talking about coaching in school. I actually want to talk about communication and having good conversations, - bottom line - is it's asking good questions, and it's, you know, it's good communication.

In this example, Leila bravely explains that her work to introduce a coaching culture into her school was unsuccessful. She realises after reflecting on the failed attempt, that what the school requires is an understanding of the key elements within the coaching process noting them to be about identifying good questions and communicating well. Although coaching might be thought of as an intervention designed to meet the 'fullness of the coachee's dilemmas, stand back and work in a critical, rational way with reflective material in order to transform it into learning' (Cox, 2013 p.160), it is, as this example highlights, as powerful for the learning of the coach as it is for the coachee. In other words, Leila realised her school was not ready to

take on a culture of coaching for myriad reasons, even though she noted in a moment of quiet musing during the interview that:

> But maybe coaching's a benefit to me as well. I think well, what, what questions should I ask myself now?

This example confirms that when school leaders reflect on their experiences regardless of whether they have been successful or otherwise, they might have more focused questions to pose to self, their mental models may be sharpened and their understanding of self, might be enhanced (Moldovenau and Martin, 2008). By naming the problem Leila is well placed to be able to follow the issue up in the future with possibility thinking (Cox, 2013) and has begun the journey towards overcoming barriers to organisational and personal learning (Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993). Coaching is, therefore, a process that promotes personal learning conversations, which help people to engage with personal leadership challenges. As Cox (2013:159) states, 'when experience becomes articulated it acquires meaning'. Reflection, it turns out, allows adult educators to question one's own 'taken-for-granted frames of reference and interrogate them in order to create new interpretations of the world (Guzman-Valenzuela and Cabello, 2017).

Dante discusses reflection when talking about how training as a coach has helped him learn by regulating his emotional state (Bandura, 1997).

> So learning how to do coaching's also helped me reflect on situations - so initially, when I'm getting stressed, when I'm faced with a situation where you know my instant response is anger or frustration or upset or worry, I can ask myself those coaching questions or I can reflect back and think back to the course and think about what I learned and say okay, if someone were to be coaching you what type of questions could I think of. I think I'm now, so aware all the time.

In this example Dante captures an important point that it is not the 'sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions' that matter most but rather, in contrast, how they are understood, interpreted and handled (Bandura,1997 p.108). Equipping Dante with some coaching skills and experience, particularly concerning his ability to pose helpful questions, appears to have enhanced his perceived capability to cope with demanding situations in which he previously lost composure.

In the following passage Paul makes an interesting point about reflection and learning from listening. Although at first reading it may sound as if listening is a passive process he adds, however, that 'keeping your mouth shut' when coaching others not only helps with listening but also provides thinking time:

> Well, I think keeping your mouth shut for that length of time also gives you a good bit of thinking time, right? So it's not if you're just listening - you know, I really do believe that everybody has something valuable to contribute. I could I learn from everybody that I that I speak with and for me that's always the takeaway is what have I learned from this person? Even if you know, it's something as simple as you know, I wouldn't have thought that…why would I not have thought that or why don't I think that way and you know for me it stimulates other thought processes and reflection about what I'm doing.

With echoes of Joseph's (2014) writing about person-centred coaching, this example indicates that not only is listening a key part of coaching, primarily to encourage the coachee to verbalise further and explore issues in more depth, but it is also a source of learning from reflection for the coach. Paul exemplifies both reflection in action and reflection post action, (Grant, 2016; Schön, 1983). Coaching has provided him with an opportunity for direct reflection concerning the lived experiences of the coachee. When exposed to coachee perspectives, Dante begins to reflect more deeply by

asking a series of questions about his thought processes. This enables him to hear his own voice through the dialectic, conversational interaction not only with the coachee, but also with himself (Redman and James, 2017). As a socially enacted mechanism that fosters self-awareness in the presence of another, coaching, therefore, involves dyadic and dialogic processes in which the differing perspectives of the coach and coachee provide an opportunity for the coach to develop understanding by exploring contrasting perspectives within a dialogic space.

Martijn discusses reflection when working in a leadership role in adult learning for an NGO. His account supports those expressed by school leaders illustrating how his coaching experience has helped him to consider his strengths and areas for development.

> I'm having to really go back and think about what I want to do and where I want to go. And it makes me realise that I'm actually quite poor at doing that. And I think coaching is what's enabled me to do… is to try and reflect on what I need. And one of the things that I need is, what I would say is… other people to keep me sharp.

Here, Martijn's reflection highlights learning from his coaching experience. The interaction with another provides him with a 'sharpening' opportunity and illustrates his reflective thinking through his use of the following; 'I have to go back and think', 'I want to reflect on my needs', and 'I need others to help me'. The passage also illuminates aspects of self-regulatory thinking which include; self-monitoring, application of personal standards as a means of forming a judgement about past and future performance and 'enlisting self-reactive influences to guide and motivate one's efforts' (Zimmerman, 1999 p.219). Each of these self-monitoring activities are understood to be contributory factors in psychological functioning described by

Bandura (1986, 1997) and, support Martijn's self-efficacy beliefs (Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1999).

The final excerpt used to illustrate how coaches may benefit from reflection is drawn from Abigail who not only describes post coaching reflection but also refers to her growing sense of agency as a professional:

> To me it's all about hoping that you have made a difference, you
> do reflect… I could have done something different there…and I
> reflect and I think, I hope it helped.

The passage above is a useful reminder that coaching interventions are meant to be about making a difference for the coachee but also provide the coach with an opportunity to consider their impact within the coaching process and reflect on the extent to which they are making a difference for the other (Ellul and Fehring, 2017). Clearly coaching is not the only form of difference making in the workplace, but as is noted in this example, the coaching engagement, fosters opportunities for difference making in relation to reflection (Cavanagh and Grant, 2005).

5.4 Learning Through Reflection on Leadership

Throughout the interviews, the notion of reflection on leadership was a prominent feature of participant's narrative. In total, fifteen participants referred to reflecting on their leadership as one outcome of their coaching experiences and all respondents in part two of the online survey indicated that coaching had either supported (43%) or strongly supported (57%) reflections on their leadership work. This longer section begins to connect the important themes of coaching, leadership, reflection and learning.

5.4a Reflecting on leadership styles

In the following excerpt, for example, Abigail explains how coaching another leader, with a different style to their own, prompted reflection:

> The time that I am most aware that I'm talking to someone who has a completely different leadership style to me – they might be a bit more commanding, very frustrated or angry in their leadership style, not so much on relational stuff - and I am thinking about how I would go about doing the same thing that they have just done, but trying not to talk about it - kind of thing - because that's not the way to lead. So that's what makes me reflect on my leadership - when someone does things differently.

Here, Abigail compares her leadership preferences and philosophies against those of her coachee. Although she describes leadership behaviours in terms of a different 'style' to hers, and setting aside the fact that she is suspending her views, or attempting to deflect her feelings in the coaching conversation, implicit in her stating 'that's not the way to lead', are two important aspects of leadership. First, is that leadership is fundamentally about relationships (Kouzes and Posner, 2017; Cochrum, 2013; Stokes and Jolly, 2014), where leaders' power comes from the extent to which followers decide 'whether to follow or not' (Stokes and Jolly, 2014 p.253). Second is that leadership is concerned with values; particularly values relating to aspects of human agency.

The example also hints that Abigail is not only comparing leadership styles but is also questioning her coachee's leadership behaviours and actions. Fundamentally the narrative illuminates her belief that the coachee is wrong. Although she states the coachee has a different set of ideas, it is evident that her true belief is one of being about a set of different *wrong* ideas. However, as Stokes and Jolly note, what is considered as being 'good' or correct leadership is very much concerned with the

perception of the person describing what they believe good or correct leadership 'looks like' to them, as opposed to an application of 'objective criterion', (2014 p.253). As Peltier's (2010) masterful writing on the psychology of executive coaching argues, since leadership is of 'undisputed importance', coaches working with leaders must understand what is known about effective leadership, leadership theories and models (2010 p.308). Although uncomfortable, Abigail benefits from the internal discourse with which she engages as her coachee unfolds aspects of personal values which conflict with her own.

In the next excerpt Geraldine, when speaking about leadership that is perceived as good, noted that it was her coaching training, coupled to coaching practice which fostered a greater understanding of leadership styles and provided an opportunity for her to reflect on her beliefs about leadership:

> Obviously, that's a leadership style that I believe in, I'm not saying it's the only one or the right one but I wouldn't have known that I might have known it before I did the coaching course, but I guess I wouldn't have had the reading that I have done around it and the experience of the one-to-one coaching and seeing the success there to support all that as a leadership style.

Kouzes and Posner's (2017) extensive research supports this point. They add that it is not until leaders have worked out what their values are, that they find a voice through which to articulate them and have the inner confidence to demonstrate the human agency needed to lead others.

5.4b Reflecting and insight into colleagues and context

All participants discussed the fact that coaching colleagues had given them deeper insight into the needs and aspirations of their co-workers. Survey respondents

overwhelmingly responded that coaching was a source of understanding more about developing their colleagues, with 76% strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing. Only 5% (one respondent) noted that it did not help. Coaching also appeared to have had substantial effects in helping coaches understand more about developing the culture of their organisation or department, with all respondents agreeing (76%) or strongly agreeing (24%) that it was a useful tool. The following excerpt demonstrates how coaching has helped Dante, who when joining a school requiring 'special measures', moved away from a command and control style towards a more democratic relational approach:

> When I look at my leadership style - when I was leading it was predominantly a coaching style and because of that the relationships with staff improved. And because I listened and because I used a coaching way of speaking to those people all of the time, - it was always a professional conversation but in a coachlike conversation - so, if someone came to moan I would be able to say I understand, and we'd have a coaching conversation and they would walk away feeling better

This narrative highlights the importance of maintaining a coaching style of conversation 'all of the time', or perhaps more realistically, as a continuous and consistent disposition, so that colleagues become used to joining in the discussion, working out their own solutions. Consequently, this approach appears to have led them to feel better about their work. Here, coaching has been used to re-culture a department. Dante's post experience reflections indicate both a high level of self-awareness and contextual understanding enabling the team to move forward. The following extracts describe the outcome of three-to-four month's work when adopting a coaching approach in his leadership. Although there had been significant challenges in the school, Dante notes that:

> I stood my ground, and said we would take on a coaching style for
> a term and again it completely changed the culture of the school
> and erm when Ofsted came in in the January, ten of the fifteen
> things that that they said were really good, were the stuff I had put
> in, including coaching.

Dante's narrative highlights that leaders not only need to work in a coaching style at times, but when challenged to drop it or change to a more directive style, must stay the course, adding:

> because my coaching style of leadership affected everything else
> and I was more likely to listen, any feedback I got I didn't see it as
> a criticism.

Adopting a coaching style in leadership appears to have fortified Dante allowing him to be more able to not only hear criticism, but through self-awareness, work with it when it was received.

5.4c Reflection, self-awareness and personal development

Indira describes the importance of self-awareness as key in one of her leadership reflections noting that:

> I just think that self-awareness is key to leadership. And, to me,
> leadership is about empowering others and you're only as good as
> your team and that sounds very silly, but you have to start by
> looking at yourself and how you interact with others, and then when
> you're coaching, you know, we're not perfect all the time. But if
> we're self-reflective, then yeah, that works. It works well. So… I
> think the self, the self-coaching model is pretty significant.

This narrative highlights self-awareness, self-reflection and self-coaching as three aspects of the 'self' that are impacted as a consequence of using coaching skills. Here, coaching others acts as a catalyst for the coach's reflection. As Woods and

Roberts (2017) argue, it is important that school leaders and school leadership teams reflect on their leadership. They identify three different catalysts; values clarification, leadership re-framing and formulating change to develop collaborative leadership, the first two of which have been activated through the coaching experiences of Dante and Indira.

Oliver exemplifies Woods and Robert's (2017) third catalyst when reflecting on his own journey as a leader in the following passages, noting that coaching was the source of personal leadership development, a re-thinking of how to lead and the process used to foster collaboration within his department:

> Coaching was something I took on board and it was something I started to realise had massive benefits for leadership and the way that I worked with my team. And it really changed my perspective on what it was to be a leader. So last year when I started my new role as a Vice Principal I spoke to those people that I line manage and said this is what the meetings are likely to be like, you're going to talk, I will often say nothing or I might ask questions.

Not only does Oliver use coaching skills to foster collaboration and invite his team members to contribute more in meetings, but also he notes how a coaching approach has worked to generate personal confidence when working with others who have far more experience:

> It's interesting because in my first year as I'm new in post, the staff that I line manage in a lot of areas are more experienced than me and having the confidence to sit there and not say anything, and to not have to justify your position –I don't need to as the coach.

In this passage, Oliver describes his thinking about leadership noting that as he thinks in the moment and draws on his coaching skills, he does not need to be the expert in the room. In a different example, Brian picks up this theme when discussing his

leadership experience in the commercial sector of adult learning and HR development:

> If I'd have known earlier on that the benefits of sitting down and having coaching conversations with individuals it would make me more effective. So I look back at some of the mistakes I made. I could have avoided those through having proper coaching conversations rather than assuming and telling. You don't have to know the answer that's the thing that I've learned as a leader, when I started the previous job you come in and you want to…from day one, you want to be seen as the expert, whereas a better way to come in is the experts are the ones in your team, because they have been there already.

This ontological example explores how Brian having reflected on previous leadership experiences, understands that adopting a coaching approach gives rise to a great sense of personal confidence. He explains that he does not need to be the expert, but has the belief that he can, by using coaching skills, unlock the potential in his new team. It is an example of self-efficacy beliefs growing out of reflection on his combined coaching and leadership experiences, by using what has passed, to inform his anticipated view of what he will be able to do in the future (Bandura, 1997).

In the following example, Erika describes how using a coaching approach has benefitted her leadership work.

> The coaching bit to me professionally, not as a coach, but as a leader it's been very beneficial in the way I approach leadership, I mean, when you know getting your, you know everyone to develop their own conclusions - which logistically that cut's your workload down - but it's about them leading the meeting and going back to the problem or the concern and being able to deal with it.

The participants remark about how they approach leadership and reveals the underlying philosophy of leadership they deploy. It resonates with Ciulla (2004), who defines leadership 'as an influence relationship between leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes' (Ciulla, 2004 p.306 cited in Peltier, 2010 p.311). Furthermore, the excerpt illustrates that Erika understands that the purpose of coaching is to enable coachees to find their own solutions to problems. Although somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the idea that using coaching skills to 'reduce one's own workload' is an interesting one because coaching is commonly understood to be a time-consuming endeavour (Hardingham, 2004; Robertson, 2008; Rogers, 2016). What Erika is referring to is the way in which coaching helps coachees find their own direction, determine their own action steps to enhance future performance and in effect, have the confidence and competency to make their own decisions (Anderson and Anderson 2005).

5.4d Reflection and leadership confidence

When thinking about leadership confidence, in part two of the online survey 5% disagreed (one respondent) with coaching as a confidence boost in their leadership and (15%) neither agreed nor disagreed. In contrast, 80% of respondents noted that coaching had given them a greater sense of confidence in their leadership abilities, with 52% agreeing and 28% strongly agreeing. This was supported in the interviews. Dante for example, discussed confidence - and joy - gained from coaching when reflecting on his leadership experiences in several schools, likening coaching success to that which is experienced in the classroom with students:

> As a professional, coaching has given me a lot of joy, when people say things like it's changed their lives, or it's changed their careers or even the path of the career. Maybe they were thinking I can't do this anymore, they were quite tunnel vision but because of the coaching its opened up. I always got a buzz from that, it's the same

> sort of thing - it's seeing the people make progress and develop
> and the confidence they get from it, I get a kick out of that!

In the passage, Dante explains that the coachees he is working with gain a sense of confidence from the coaching interactions, from reflecting on their work and working out that there are other possibilities not previously considered. This leads them to experience stronger confidence levels and it is this vicarious view, which Dante experiences. Furthermore, Dante gains a sense of satisfaction from having helped another person and begins to sense a degree of self-mastery in the helping process (Bandura, 1997). As two sources of learning, mastery experiences and vicarious involvement which Bandura (1997) documents when discussing social modelling. Coaching appears to be a form of socially modelled learning in this context.

5.4e Reflection and agentic action

Celia captures similar sentiments in her narrative when discussing how coaching has helped her be more agentic in relation to working with her Headteacher. The following excerpt illustrates this:

> What I've loved is the confidence that coaching has given me – to
> say for example when I write an email to the Head to say is there
> anything I can do to support the school.

Celia notes that coaching has given her confidence and this enabled them to be more forthcoming when offering her help across the whole school. It is significant in view of the school being a particularly challenging environment. Celia then discusses how she had used the confidence gained from coaching to support people new in post and that adopting a coaching approach had given her insight into the people she was working with across the whole school. To further illustrate the next excerpt includes two of my questions and the answers that followed:

Celia: Coaching helps you to see people's real strengths

Interviewer: How does that help you - why is it that seeing people's strengths makes you more effective in your work?

Celia: Because if I was to step up and be a leader in a proper role urm… I would be more confident about being able to develop people into the right fit for them within the structure of the organisation.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to say about your coaching experience that might be of interest?

Celia: Just how it literally can turn lives around.

This reminding us of the potential for coaching to have transformational effects on another person's life (Hawkins and Smith, 2014).

5.4f Reflection and impact on leadership

Kendra's interview was particularly rich concerning ways in which coaching had impacted her leadership. As a former outdoor education centre facilitator working with young people, a professionally qualified coach and now chief executive of an outdoor learning centre, her professional life has been involved with learning and development crossing education and business boundaries. While some outdoor centres are registered as schools, I make no claim that the passages I now explore have come from a school leader. They are however from a leader who understands schools and has a voice at national level in the UK advising the DFE on outdoor learning provision. On this basis, it is my view that their responses are worthy of analysis.

There is a piece to explore I think between general theories of leadership and skills and the mindsets approach involved with

effective coaching. I think a little bit of what your model is doing is bringing the two together because you are talking about leadership efficacy and the challenges facing leaders and the role of coaching in helping them.

In this passage Kendra draws the link between coaching and leadership, identifying that not only is coaching a tool that might help leaders with their leadership agenda but also, as a process, begins to raise the importance of leadership theory. She goes on to explain further that for her, coaching and leadership meet in the theoretical domain:

> That's where coaching for me meets leadership development. That's where you can use models like Hersey and Blanchard and Situational leadership, where you have stages of choosing the style of approach that you might take in engaging with your individual team members – where you move through that tell to delegate series of options

In this excerpt Kendra draws attention to theories of situational leadership noting that by understanding them, leaders can deploy coaching skills at an appropriate time with individuals following some form of assessment of situational need (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2008). Kendra then moves onto talking about how leaders can sustain or 'maintain' leadership noting that coaching is, in her view, a form of leadership.

> Then there's the area of how you maintain yourself as the leadership coach? So there's the person coaching others playing a leading influencer role right? But because you're coaching at a high level – you're not just doing a bit of skill development using a coaching style - you're using coaching as a significant leadership intervention, that's a key thing, it's a form of leadership.

As an ILM Level 7 qualified coach it is, perhaps unsurprising that Kendra refers to the differences between using some coaching skills for a ''bit of skill development' and

the higher level of coaching used as a leadership intervention tool. This point illustrates an aspect of coaching mastery; namely that the training and experience gained through supervised hours, skills training and academic work has afforded her with a high level of competent understanding, which enables her to articulate the theoretical constructs underpinning coaching and leadership. It might suggest that not only could leaders make use of coaching skills, but also engage in professional learning about coaching because of the understanding that it can lead to.

In the final passage from this interview, Kendra reflects on a period of her leadership journey when she had a regular commute and used the time to read about leadership and management:

> There are a series of choices of leadership interventions – coaching is not always the right one. So there is a contest for this isn't there and if you label yourself a leader - as in you seek to give people a sense of direction and help people find their way to a new place, if you're doing that, in an organizational or community context, then the need for you to reflect on the way you do it and the way you could be more effective is quite important.

> I think you can get totally engrossed in the outcomes and the progress you're making and it's about having the space to reflect - I went through some really big learning when I had a 9-5 job and could sit on the bus for at least half an hour every day and crunched through loads of leadership and management books and learnt a lot – as I got busier there was much less space in my world and my learning came from a different place - I did less reflecting – if you are going to benefit from coaching it has to become something that you do, it becomes a conscious kind of part of your job as a leader as well as that whole capacity to reflect effectively, individually or with a supervisor or in a wider group.

In this extended narrative, Kendra discusses one of the key issues leaders experience as they get busier: a lack of time to reflect. Reflection is an important driver which underpins her conscious awareness of leadership actions and the effects they might have on the people she is leading. But coaching is not the only leadership intervention a leader can choose. Ergo, when it is deployed, as Kendra implies, it should be because the leader has consciously selected it as the best approach in that moment, not as a default setting. Since coaching was understood in the literature review to be potentially one of the most powerful interventions possible to promote professional learning (West-Burnham and Coates, 2005) it can be equally powerfully unhelpful if used when the situation calls for a different form of leadership intervention.

Reflection on leadership and on the use of coaching should, according to Kendra become a conscious part of the leader's tool kit. As Khaneman (2012) writes in his two step fast and slow model of thinking, the fast working parts of the brain often overpower the conscious slower working more deliberate parts and it is not until there is time and space to allow the conscious part of the brain to flourish, that deep conscious refection and critical thought can occur.

5.5 Self-Efficacy

As discussed in chapter two Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's beliefs in their ability to achieve a goal or more specifically, 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments' (1997 p.3). These ideas provided the basis of the theoretical framework for the research. Bandura characterises self-efficacy beliefs as powerful mediators of individual's behaviour, particularly concerning behavioural change, arguing that 'perceived self-efficacy results from diverse sources of information conveyed

vicariously and through social evaluation as well as through direct experience' (Bandura, 1986 p.411).

In the following passages, drawn from all interviews with school leaders and leaders in the adult learning sector, participants discuss the effects that their coaching work has had on their self-efficacy through; mastery of the coaching process, listening 'vicariously' to the stories of their coachees, regulating their emotional state and the persuasive power of language.

Nineteen participants referred to increased self-efficacy beliefs via mastery of coaching on seventy-four occasions during the interviews. Coding indicated that this was the aspect of the theoretical framework most commonly referred to by far. Learning vicariously was referred to by ten participants on fourteen occasions and learning as a result of emotional cognitive state, by nine participants on eighteen occasions. Verbal persuasion was referred to by five participants on five occasions.

In the following excerpt, Abigail explains how using coaching skills with her colleagues has enhanced her self-confidence. When asked what the use of coaching skills has meant to her and what it might have done for her, she responded by saying:

> Definitely confidence - confidence to interface with other colleagues and you know it is very powerful if you can get someone to solve their own problems - it is very empowering.

Although self-efficacy and self-confidence are not precisely the same things, overlaps exist. Take for example work by Jack, McDowell and LeFever (2017), who research teacher self-efficacy. They argue that a teacher's self confidence in their ability to 'achieve long-reaching learning goals is directly related to a sense of self-efficacy'

(Jack, McDowell and LeFever, 2017 p.70). Here self-confidence is understood as a contributory factor underpinning self-efficacy.

Jasmine speaks powerfully in a heart-rending passage which captures what coaching has meant for her confidence as a leader and her self-efficacy beliefs. In the excerpt, she explains how leadership success was not replicated after moving jobs from one international school to another. Although in hindsight, this was not only because of her actions but also the actions of others towards them, she nevertheless believed that failures in leadership were down to her. Coaching, however, provided an opportunity for growth in her self-efficacy beliefs:

> A lot of learning from this model of coaching came from my own painful experiences really trying to work out what was happening in my own professional life. I had been more successful prior to moving out to my new school and was questioning what's the biggest change now? I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that I tried to lead in a way that wasn't me. And some of the things that I was doing previously, I stopped doing. I didn't get that sense of immediate pleasure. But when you sat down with someone for 45 minutes and you've done some coaching and they've gone, thanks that's been really, really helpful. And yeah, and you think, OK - I *can* do this. I felt as though coaching made a difference – actually tiny, tiny differences, but I felt very validated. I felt like my time had been well used. And I felt pleased that I'd been able to facilitate someone else's growth.

In this example, Jasmine explains how coaching others helped her to rediscover a sense of belief that she could 'do' her leadership work. Throughout the interview, she referred to the situation in which she received continuous negative feedback from more senior staff. Her commitment to coaching colleagues appears to have afforded her with both a mechanism to help others and has restored a sense of personal

efficacy needed for her ability to lead. Furthermore, it also appears to have been the cause of a shift in response to pressure she felt from a school culture in which aversive provocations abounded towards more positive values and motivators 'such as hope and contribution' (Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran, 2010 p.16).

The example also illustrates how a school leader who coaches felt validated through her service towards her colleagues. Although the purpose was to help others, by receiving thanks for her coaching work and from noticing how others were growing as professionals, she gained satisfaction. It demonstrates how leadership performance accomplishment makes a powerful contribution to a more robust, and in this case, restorative sense of self-efficacy (Betz and Hackett, 2006). It also reminds us that low self-efficacy takes its toll on leaders. Without professional activity acting as a counterbalance, inefficacy can contribute to occupational burnout. In contrast, an 'affirmative sense of efficacy contributes to psychological well-being as well as to performance accomplishments' (Bandura, 1999 p.12). The narrative is a particularly significant exemplar that begins to answer the principal research question since, people tend to evaluate themselves as being efficacious when experiencing positive environments and moods, but inefficacious when they experience depressing situations and moods (Kavanagh and Bower, 1985). As Munby describes, leading well 'is about having the confidence in your aims but also being comfortable and receptive to the input of others (2019 p.90)'.

The narrative may indicate that one of the things someone who is experiencing negativity in their leadership can do to help themselves, is to coach others. Not only because coaching helps their colleagues but also because it provides a platform for the coach to receive efficacy building inputs from colleagues.

One interesting passage from Leila epitomises a feature of all the interviews conducted. Participants found it difficult or were somewhat reluctant to speak about their accomplishments, preferring to discuss the benefits and growth they had witnessed in their colleagues. Since the purpose of coaching is to help the growth of another person, it is not surprising that school leaders who coach, are less inclined to want to talk about themselves than they are about their coachees. Take, for example, Leila's comments when describing her impressions of what coaching colleagues has meant to her:

> There's a sort of buzz to it. And there's a real energy to the conversation even if its where it's somebody just thinking – and it's not forced. But I don't feel it should benefit me. I mean it benefits me. It makes me a better listener it makes me better able to empower others to solve their own problems and it makes me a better leader in developing others. Am I doing it for me? Well I shouldn't be, but at the same time, there is an enjoyment in illustrating to people that you know, that however stuck you think they are there is always another way of thinking or different ways to go in a different direction or…you know, different possibilities.

This narrative embodies one of the key paradoxes of effective leadership, that although a great deal of self-awareness, skill and agency is required for leaders to lead effectively, when leaders make their leadership about themselves, not the mission, they rapidly unwind. In contrast, leadership when it is truly effective, is not about the leader (Kouzes and Posner, 2017).

Leila moves on, however, to point to personal enjoyment emanating from helping of others, noting that her coaching can enable coachees to discover hopeful solutions when they had become boxed in or stuck. This finding indicates a sense of personal satisfaction and a growing efficaciousness, but by stating that she has become better

at listening, and better at leading the development of colleagues, working to help others is clearly not for their personal satisfaction. It is an example of humility in coaching.

Rogers (2016) picks up the theme of humility in coaching, capturing the paradox brilliantly, stating that coaches need to be both powerful and powerless at the same time. Here she notes that coaches must be 'expert at self-management – centred, self-aware' and intelligent in terms of 'analytical, emotional, spiritual and systems intelligences' while conveying to the coachee that there are many things that they are unaware of, and many uncertainties exist in their thinking (Rogers, 2016 p.54).

In the following extended passage, Paul discusses a challenging professional time when professional development opportunities were scant and when he faced enormous pressure from a wide range of sources:

> All the investment in my own professional and personal development came from the activity that I was doing and the investment that I was making in other people in the organisation. At the end of the contract, it could have put me off leadership in education for the rest of my life. But I don't think it did, partly because of the investment that I had made over the years into other people. The feedback that I had from that investment, whether that was perceptual or direct feedback from people that I had been coaching was actually - you can make a difference. So it was almost like I had… I had developed a shield which helped me to negotiate all of the negativity that I was going through though.

In the conceptual framework I developed, my working understanding was that coaching colleagues might provide leaders with a counterbalance to the pressures they experience in their day-to-day work. In this excerpt, the benefit of coaching has provided a protective layer around the school leader rather than a counterbalance. It

appears that coaching has helped Paul cope with the pressure more than pushing against it or removing it. Paul's narrative explained that while coaching others over a period had been concerned with investing in the professional growth of his colleagues, it not only generated positive results for those people, but also acted as a source of positive feedback for him. The narrative is also relevant in terms of his comment about the possibilities of giving up as an educational leader. As Betz and Hackett (2006) explain from investigations of perceived self-efficacy, research indicates that the extent of a person's efficacy significantly affects the development of core vocational choice predictions such as interests, values and goals.

In the following short excerpt from Brian who worked in professional adult learning, a point is made about wanting to coach more, on the back of coaching success:

> Because you've seen somebody achieve their goals and deliver
> their goals - it gives you more confidence as a coach to do it again.

This comment backs up those made in earlier passages, that one of the most impactful things for a coach is to see their own coaching, work. It is an example of learning through mastery which Bandura (1997) argues is the most powerful of the four sources of efficacy beliefs. The following extract from Geraldine's interview supports this idea when discussing coaching mastery:

> The mastery experience - in my case like what you were saying,
> the more hours I have under my belt the more tools I have been
> able to utilise. At times it has made me be a bit sloppy and I have
> had to discipline myself to properly prepare and make good notes
> and everyone now has a file and it's all properly organised,
> because I can wing it and it works but that's not good enough.

In the narrative, Geraldine introduces an important aspect of learning, namely that without conscious awareness, it is possible to become 'sloppy' and 'wing it'. As Ball

and Bloomfield note, coaching is 'both a science and an art' (2013 p.203). When left only to the science, coaching becomes stilted and formulaic, and when the art or the feeling is overly relied upon, it is whimsical, and there is potential for sloppiness. In contrast, the skilful, efficacious coach brings both science and art to the coaching experience, blending their understanding of the coaching process, of learning and their intuitive feel for their coachee as one.

In the later interviews which set out to explore participants perceptions of their colleagues, Walter veered off from talking about his colleagues. He reminded himself of his coaching training and how it had given him a sense of empowerment. Although the purpose of the interview was not to focus on Walter as coach, but his colleagues' agency, the quote is worth capturing:

> I came away from the coaching training feeling I could achieve anything… completely empowered.

While this example might touch on the notion of growth in personal efficacy expressed by Walter, as Bandura (1997) argues, it 'requires more than simply producing effects by actions. Those actions must be perceived as part of oneself and one must recognise that one is the agent of those actions' (1997 p.167). To illustrate further, Walter goes on to describe a dip in his feelings of empowerment, which he first sensed when the realities of school life crowded in to cause a loss of time to coach and less efficacious feelings:

> After those three training days, as being a coach and being coached, you almost be like, you know what, I can go out there and achieve everything but then then you get back into the day to day work and the heart and the hardness of the job if you like. And without that regular coaching it doesn't stick. I think when we've met as a group, and we've done that coaching, it's all reset and I'm like, Yes, okay, I'm moving on again now.

This passage also illustrates both the importance of using coaching skills regularly and of working with other coaches to achieve a sense of mutual learning and accountability. Mutual coaching support, as described in the passage, was an unexpected finding. It picks up the point that coaching in schools is concerned with fostering positive relationships with coachees, but also one mechanism to boost the efficacy of coaches is for them to work with each other. While training led to an immediate feeling of efficaciousness, it is the regular use of coaching, and the connectedness of growth and learning over time that leads to the real strengthening of it. Although working within a group of coaches, sharing accountability and mutual learning is not the same as coaching supervision, it illuminates the importance of coaches avoiding working in isolation (Rogers 2016). Walter concludes his narrative with a reminder that mastery in coaching grows out of the use of coaching skills:

> As a one off, I think you get a short-term benefit. But it was when I coached other people, makes you much more self-aware of yourself and thinking, yeah, I'm gonna think about that. And again, you build on that as you move forward.

Despite these generally positive narratives from various participants, the following excerpt sheds light on problems with coaching and the need for coaches to be aware that coaching is a human process with no guarantee of success. Referring to Ball and Bloomfield's (2013) point about the science and art of coaching success, it is the blending of the two which gives rise to the greatest chance of success. This is exemplified in the following excerpt from Paul.

> There's no guaranteed outcome. Sometimes I get absolutely nothing out of it, but other times it's seeing what other people do - the direction that they take in their development - their growth out of the process feeds my own internal process of growth and development if you like, right - but it doesn't always happen.

Although in the excerpt we read that coaching does not always lead to success for the coachee or the coach, Paul spoke compellingly about the metaphorical shield that personal learning from his coaching had led to. We might conclude that although some coaching episodes do not yield immediate feelings of self-efficacy, it is noticing coachees develop, set direction and grow over time, which feeds the efficacy growth of the coach.

Oliver's narrative specifies areas of school context in which he is benefitting as a leader. Although he hints at not wanting to glorify coaching, he recognises how much he enjoys coaching conversations:

> What I'm actually gaining is that because it's school specific, I'm hearing things that I wouldn't have considered, I'm gaining a much broader picture, an holistic picture on parts of the curriculum, education models - timetabling that I wouldn't necessarily have. Also, it sounds a bit kind of glorifying coaching but I just get more satisfaction out of that sort of conversation with people; you can just see it in people, you can see that they just enjoy it more, they have more trust they have more ownership.

In this passage, Oliver identifies managing teaching and learning; the various parts of the curriculum, the timetabling process as benefits realised from his use of coaching with their colleagues. It amplifies the understanding gained from part two of the online survey in which 77% of respondents believed that coaching had helped them in managing teaching and learning (57% agreeing, 20% strongly agreeing). Oliver also refers to his feelings of enjoyment as a result of coaching colleagues adding that the approach to leadership has fostered relational trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). As Hardingham (2004), and Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005), argued, building relational trust is a determining factor in coaching success.

In the next passage, Naim speaks about learning from vicarious experiences:

> There's definitely been moments of refreshing learning like, oh,
> okay, so this person really knows their stuff and knows what they're
> doing. And that adds on to what I have in my toolbox. But that might
> also be because I tried to again set boundaries about what comes
> in. What if, you may have spoken to people who are really great at
> what they do, but if I set that as the benchmark, it's too big, or it's
> too high, then it's you know, useless to me. So I need to try and
> get it into pieces where I can actually work with it. So I think that's
> maybe also, you know, a gate system - there's definitely a funnel
> or whatever.

Here, Naim recognises that when coaching an expert, listening to them affords the coach with insight into the competence of the coachee. But it is not so simple as merely listening to them or being persuaded by them, because if the 'person really knows their stuff' the coach can easily be overloaded with information. In this excerpt, Naim explains how setting boundaries and breaking what has been heard vicariously into pieces and then working with it is what gives rise to learning. It is a form of cognitive rehearsal, which Bandura (1997) argues builds stronger perceived efficacy than modelling alone (1997 p.93).

Despite Bandura's (1997) social modelling theory including verbal persuasion as one of the four pillars of learning, in the following excerpt, Rogier notes that verbal persuasion is not something that has much, if any effect in a coaching context. The narrative was a response to my explanation of the conceptual and theoretical framework I developed for the study.

> I think part of it is that you can't let yourself as a coach be
> persuaded by the coachee. Because the whole point is they're
> coming to you in order to get past a certain stage, right? That there

are blockages that are hitting, and if they start, if they had the persuasion, they were trying to persuade you with x, y, and z, then that would sort of defeat the whole point because you're there to challenge them.

In this example, Rogier disagrees with the notion that coaches learn from verbal persuasion during coaching sessions. At first, this might appear to be odd in the sense that coaching relies so heavily on the verbalisation of the coachee. However, when looking more deeply, Rogier highlights that because the coach is present in the conversation for the benefit of the coachee and the efficacy of coaching is to be attuned to the coachees narrative, the coach must spot moments when the coachee might be trying to persuade themselves. It is in this moment that the coach is sensing the false persuasive elements of the coachee's narrative that they benefit from this form of learning, not by agreeing with the coachee, but by challenging their assumptions. As Bandura (1997) identified, social persuasion provides a mechanism to enhance the beliefs a person possesses. He argues that in times of challenge, it is easier for a person to believe in themselves if another expresses 'faith in their capabilities than if they convey doubts' (1997 p.101). The efficacy of coaching, however, is neither to agree or disagree with the coachee. Instead, it is to pose questions through which the coachee reflects on what their beliefs and consequent actions will be. It may be, that verbal persuasion works more in the direction of influencing the coachee than the coach, and that through the questioning of the values and assumptions expressed by the coachee the coach reinforces or rebuts their values and beliefs as an outcome.

The narratives explored in the previous sections illustrate how coaching colleagues strengthens self-efficacy beliefs. Professional Learning and school leaders' ability to accomplish specific tasks in specific situations is enhanced most strongly by three of

the four sources of human learning: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, and cognitive/emotional state (Bandura, 1997), although each has a different effect on the self-efficacy beliefs of those in a coaching role.

Although self-efficacy is distinct from self-esteem, defined as being concerned with a person's view of their self-worth, coaching appears to have made some impact on promoting self-worth in some of the participants. Furthermore, there is also evidence that positive verbal feedback from coachees has made an impact on the coaches' self-concept, (their view of their overall strengths and weaknesses). This is the place where verbal persuasion appears to have an effect on enhancing the self-efficacy beliefs of the coach. Not only has the mastery of coaching helped school leaders to believe that they can coach and that this is a good thing to do to help their colleagues, but also they have benefitted from the efficacious feelings gained from working in this way. These benefits appear, as the following passages indicate, to have led to increased levels of agency in some cases.

5.6 Agency

The notion of Agency has gathered momentum in recent years. Take, for example, the ongoing development of the International Baccalaureate, which as of 2018 includes Agency as a critical aspect of student success. Or the International Education Bureau's inclusion of self-agency in its drive to develop a Universal Learning Programme, or the OECD's 2030 vision for education which includes Agency as a central pillar of the disposition's students must demonstrate.

Notwithstanding the challenges of exploring agency from the perspective of colleagues who work with school leaders who coach as I explained in chapter 3,

extracts from the group interviews highlight some aspects of increases in agency as perceived by colleagues as a result of their training in, and use of, coaching.

Agency expressed as difference making was evident in the findings from the online survey. For example, 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (48% and 48% respectively) that coaching had helped them to become more influential leaders in their schools or departments and that coaching had supported their direction setting (71% agreed and 10% strongly agreed) with the remaining 19% neither disagreeing nor agreeing. Furthermore, 52% agreed and 19% strongly agreed that coaching had fortified their leadership actions. In contrast, 10% of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed and 15% noted that coaching had made no difference at all to their leadership actions.

In the literature review when considering school leadership, Riley (2017) argued that Agency is the 'power of leaders to shape the spaces within their organisations', and to 'help create organisations which are places of inclusion'. Coaching appeared to have positive effects in helping coaches understand more about shaping the culture of their organisation or department, with all respondents agreeing (76%) or strongly agreeing (24%).

These findings suggest that for most survey respondents the act of coaching has had a positive influence on their self-agency and was raised on over 80 occasions in 20 interviews. Take for example, this excerpt from Timo who describes the difference he has noticed in his colleagues, following their coaching training and their use of the coaching skills in the same school:

> I think, for me, the big difference and the big plus about coaching
> is people's capacity to listen. I was always aware of the value of

listening. But you know, when something's affirmed from a higher source and they say yes, in order to do this properly, you need to listen. And I think the people who have been through the process of being coached or being trained to coach, they listen. They don't always - we don't always go through the whole coaching process, but that aspect of it, I think is the most valuable, and the most important part of the coaching is the listening.

This narrative explains how colleagues have become stronger listeners as a result of their coaching experiences. Timo has noticed that his colleagues embody listening – an important aspect of leading more effectively - even if the skill is not always used within a coaching context. Delving deeper into this narrative Timo referred to improved senior leadership team meetings, in which the previous culture of talking had been largely replaced with thoughtful listening. As Rogers argues, 'genuine listening is rare' (2016 p.33). Timo continues his narrative reinforcing his previous point about the culture of listening explaining what he believes happens when people stop listening:

So I would definitely say that developing a culture of listening and really listening. Deep listening… I think they can read the waters better. I think the flaw in it always will be pressure of time, pressure of workload. And I think that's when people stop listening because they've got their own heads too full.

Timo makes a powerful point about what might be going on in the minds of his colleagues. Although colleagues might be feeling more efficacious, have better listening skills and want to be more agentic, the challenges of their daily lives sometimes lead them to have more going on in their mind than they can handle.

Interestingly, Levitin (2014) a professor of neuroscience argues that one effective strategy for focusing when there is a lot going on is to *'act as if'* (2014 p.201). Since

listening involves giving attention to others and not speaking, the agentic act of doing the hard work to attend, focus and to listen to the narrative of the other has the effect of forming 'a positive feedback loop wherein the additional effort actually results in success and helps to gradually build up the person's sense of agency and competence' (Levitin, 2014 p.201). As Bandura's (1997), theory suggests, learning through mastery experiences is a powerful mechanism for growth in self-efficacy, and in this passage is an example of agency contributing to self-efficacy.

In the next excerpt from the same group interview Ursula refers to the importance of listening. She reminds us that coachees sometimes end up talking about something other than what they first imagined:

> Having the coachee find their way in their journey through what the main issue is - and quite often - it's made me realise that they - what they come in to be coached for is quite frequently not the thing that they need. The challenge is to give them time, to be the listener.

Here, the coachee is benefitting from the time the coach takes to listen, because this act enables the coachee to talk for long enough, to explore deeply enough to be able to get to the heart of the matter. Listening, for long enough is what appears to activate the coachee's reflection. Ursula then comments on two colleagues who use coaching, pointing out what changes have taken place since they started coaching others. In the first passage, Ursula begins by explaining that her colleague was already emotionally intelligent and makes a useful point about learning, implicitly expressing that having been a leader for a long time, coaching is not the only source of their development. Nevertheless, this excerpt illustrates several enhanced behaviours:

> They had emotional intelligence. But now she's sharp. Her perception on how things are, why they are, is built more on having picked up evidence. Whether it's right, whether it's language use,

whether it's body language, whether it's attitude…she's gaining confidence as well. She is more reflective than she was. I think she can see the power of language and the use of particular vocabulary. And she's very intentional about the word choice that she uses when she's working with people. And I'd say she was always a good listener but before, she was preoccupied with her own stuff.

The excerpt identifies several beneficial outcomes from coaching; sharpness, perceptiveness, evidence gathering, use of body language, precise use of language, attitude, confidence, reflective ability and suspending 'her own stuff' when listening. The final point reinforces the idea that listening is an important skill and a significant agentic act in the workplace. As Rogers (2016) and Cox (2013) argue, however, listening is not so simple. It is complex having multiple levels which coaches may deploy with varying degrees of effectiveness. Cox (2013) explains listening as follows:

Level 1 listening - is the situation in which coach is not really listening but waiting for a gap in the coachee's narrative so that they can speak or offer some advice.

Level 2 listening - goes much deeper and is the situation in which the coach and coachee are 'locked into an absorbing intensely concentrated conversation' (Rogers, 2016 p.38). Here, coachees and coaches experience rapport and the questions the coach uses, help the coachee explore and clarify what is on their mind. The coach might summarise and probe as they foster the coachee's learning by not only listening to what is said, but also to what is not said. Rogers argues that if coaches can operate at this level they are 'doing well' (2016 p.38). At this level, the coach is listening for the 'underlying meanings' coming from the coachees narrative and is 'aware of their own impact on the coachee' (Rogers, 2016 p.38).

Level 3 listening - goes further still. In this situation the coach builds on all the skills exhibited at Level 2 but adds in the ability to sense and work with the emotion of the coachee even if the emotion has not been named. The coach assesses risks on-the-fly and is attentive to their intuition. As Rogers states, it is a kind of listening few of us ever reach in a 'normal' conversation with a friend' (2016 p.39). In coaching, however, when it does occur, the coach 'sees the whole coaching relationship stretching out in front of you and it feels special' Rogers, (2016 p.39).

In the following excerpt Sarah spoke about a colleague who had developed his coaching skills to the ILM Level 7 standard. She noticed several features of her colleague's leadership behaviour which she found inspirational:

> I think what struck me about my colleague was his practice. I don't know how much was his personality and how much is learned behaviour - which is always difficult because you just don't know. I characterise him as being calm, reflective, and considered at all times, in a way, which I think is really impactful in every situation. I saw him in the way that he made every leadership situation better by being here. So it's difficult to put my finger on what I mean. But I think he knew exactly the right question to ask because he didn't dive straight in. So a bit, as we said before, about taking the time first to listen and to simulate what the actual issue is, then what a good question would be to move it on without giving any value judgement. I would aspire to be like that because I tend to want to say what I think!

In the narrative, Sarah struggles to work out how much of the leadership behaviour seen in her colleague is down to personality and how much to training. Having also interviewed this colleague as part of the data gathering process it is clear from their narrative that he believed coaching training and practice had helped him to become more reflective, calm and considered. It had also enabled him to understand the

power of, and impact of relevant questions. It was also clear, however, from his earlier narrative that an aspect of his personality is of significant curiosity about people.

Sarah's colleague was initially sceptical about coaching, but who saw its potential from having 'a go', consequently noticing the power it had on others. By pointing out the uncertainty of what led this colleague to be so effective as a leader Sarah identifies two significant points. First, that coaching is not the only aspect of a professional's development which impacts a leader's agency and second, that given a person who is curious and open to learning, coaching can powerfully assist them in helping to develop effective agentic leadership skills. We might conclude, therefore, that learning to coach has had some impact on the leader's leadership even if it is not clear how much.

In the following excerpt, Sarah describes the impact that coaching training and coaching practice has had on another colleague.

> There are some aspects of their personality that are leadership, I think have changed. And the one is I think they're less impulsive. They think before they speak. Their contributions aren't always formed in the 'I think that'. They're formed in in a more open kind of - 'you could consider that this is an idea', which is definitely a more of an open coaching style. They've definitely made a leap in the way they manage people. They listen more. They've stopped trying to solve things for other people. They're much more about helping them to come to that decision.

This narrative highlights the behavioural change seen by Sarah in a variety of settings when a colleague has adopted a coaching style of leadership. Colleagues are listened to more. Colleagues are invited to find solutions to their own problems, rather than being given the answers and the coach in question has not only become less

impulsive but has also developed a more considered questioning approach in meetings. One benefit of working in this way is described by Cox (2013), who notes that it creates the feelings in others of being heard, which may contribute to a stronger sense of rapport, and connectedness.

Sarah discussed her own use of coaching, identifying several aspects of her leadership which she believed had improved as a result of using coaching skills. The following four extracts from her interview capture aspects of her self-perception concerning her leadership agency. In the first excerpt she identifies two benefits arising from the coaching training and experience:

> I think I have two things. I have a sharper understanding of what happens in a group of people when you're trying to process information and discuss situations. And I have a greater sort of toolkit of things that I can do in order to help move the conversation forward.

She adds that her coaching training has given her leadership strength, which she identifies as understanding people more, identifying people's thoughts and noticing patterns of language:

> So really, after training coaching, it helped me I think be a stronger leader because I'm now way more aware of trying to identify people's true thoughts based on some of the patterns of vocabulary that they're using.

Sarah then provides an example of how she has used her coaching skills in a strategic team meeting to review and reflect on the way in which teaching and learning is being managed via the school timetable.

> I noticed that we were going around in circles so I just started writing down the comments that that the people around the table were making and then and said, look can I just show you

something? When we're talking about performance? These are the words you're using. So it was 'inspired' 'challenge'. So you know, those kinds of words. And when we're talking about … what was it we were talking about? … that there were words like 'irritated' 'can't fit in' you know, those kinds of things. And that really helped because it helped *them* to identify something that was a subconscious thought to them.

In this example Sarah examines the language choices the team are using to discuss a topic. She captures what people are saying, reflecting the different words and their meanings back to the group and mediates the implicit messages colleagues might be unwilling or are uncomfortable about giving more explicitly. As Gendlin (2009), argues, people commonly use words that capture the sense of how they have experienced a phenomenon, often making implicit references to that experience. Sarah's role in this case as School Leader, was to listen carefully to the implicit messages and reflect them back to the group so that the unconscious became conscious and could be worked with. It is an act of agency, of making a difference by using coaching skills to run a meeting that uncovers the true feelings and meanings of the group.

Sarah concludes her narrative by offering the following comments about the benefits she perceived in her agentic acts of leadership in her school.

The number one biggest change from a managerial perspective, when I'm sat in a team meeting I think I used to - before coaching - I used to say what I thought first and then ask people to discuss it. Now, I don't do that. Now I ask questions in a much more open way in order to try and encourage people to say, to give their true thoughts and you can see the process growing and developing. Whereas I think if you if you're busy giving your own ideas you shut people down more quickly, and that has an effect on some people more than others. I noticed, for example, that someone might not

respond. She needs many open questions and a coaching model
in order to get to tease things out for herself.

In this final passage, Sarah explains how the awareness she has gained from noticing what happens in a meeting conversation has helped her shift her modus operandi from 'here's my idea what do you think', to 'what do we think and what's the best idea'. Furthermore, she personifies self-awareness as she articulates awareness of her effect on the group dynamic. It is particularly revealing in view of her position as Headteacher, a position which touches on power and relational issues that are associated with being 'The Boss'.

Bandura (1997 p.512) refers to power relationships arguing that 'new practices usually threaten existing status and power relations' noting that those adopting new ways of working, and being, must not only take on the new, but also let go of the old. This, he claims can be an 'intimidating and tedious process of mastering competencies' (1997 p.512), but that efficacy beliefs can help by acting as a 'generative system of human competence' (Bandura, 1997 p.37). By exercising control in a way which is empowering for the group this leader exemplifies leadership humility, the power of collective thinking (Woods and Roberts, 2018) and a determination to apply her learning from coaching in her school.

Rogier's narrative highlights a sense of changed perception in the way he believes colleagues 'see' him in the school setting. Following his considerable use of coaching skills, he identifies how staff complimented him in a way which reinforced his sense of professional identity:

> I think what was the biggest thing that got me was people's perspective of me seemed to change and suddenly people are saying really complimentary things. And in my head, I was thinking,

> I'm actually not doing anything different to what I've previously done or not *so* different. But maybe it's just been a bit more visible and then suddenly I found myself, I got a reputation 'oh Rogier's the coach go speak to Rogier about stuff and my line manager was bringing people up to me, not necessarily for the right reasons, but she said, go speak to Rogier, Rogier's a coach, he'll help you out. And I was like, well, it's always about helping but then I have to accept that that's her view of it. And the fact of that was that she saw me as somebody who could help people - and, and I got a lot quicker at my job too!

In the extract, Rogier notices that a consequence of using coaching skills is that he has become a more visible member of the professional community and gains a reputation as someone that others can come to for help. His line manager also identifies this and utilises his coaching skill to help others. It is not clear from the interview exactly what the motivation of the line manager was but, nevertheless, they have identified a skill set in Rogier drawing on it regularly. It is an example of perceived agency by the professional community. Rogier notes that they were not really doing very much differently, whereas, others have begun to see him differently. The example illustrates Bandura's (1997) notion that 'people make causal contributions to their own psychological functioning through mechanisms of personal agency'. By coaching others, Rogier has not only garnered a reputation as someone who is helpful, but also received compliments for his professional work. It is, perhaps an example of verbal persuasion affecting self-efficacy beliefs, mastery learning from Rogier's continued success in coaching and the exercising of his agency in the school environment. Overall coaching appears to have contributed to his positive emotional state.

In the final excerpt, Celia powerfully captures her learning and reflects on what becoming a coach has meant to her:

It made me want to research how to lead teams – even though I'm not a DH or AH – I'm becoming more of a leader because I've noticed more certainty, more centeredness in me, and less I need to be… and want to be… and no, I'm just who I am and doing what I can…

Here, Celia amplifies that coaching has given her a growing sense of self-efficacy, specifically related to being who she is and that she does not need to try to lead in a way which is inauthentic. She concludes by reflecting on her observations of Heads of School noting that:

Sometimes Heads put staff in boxes – if they are not coaching heads once a member of staff is in a box they stay in there no matter how they develop themselves – that's why it is important for heads to be coaches.

She is clear that it is not a good idea for School Leaders to put staff in 'boxes' because of the limiting beliefs it creates and the inability of the School Leader to see staff differently. As Celia notes, becoming a coach appears to open the mind to possibilities and opportunities.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I discuss the extent to which I uncovered answers for each research question restating the main ideas and arguments in the thesis. I review the critical points from the main findings. I explain my analysis of the value of the materials used for the research as well as assess the implications they had for the research findings.

I comment on the limitations of the approach I adopted for this research. I then make recommendations which have arisen as a direct result of the research, which are aimed at enhancing school leaders' practice and professional learning. I make suggestions for future research in two areas concerning aspects of the findings which require more work, and aspects of the work of school leaders who coach, which has not been researched but connects with unanticipated findings or would be useful to study in the future.

6.2 Research Questions

This study set out to uncover benefits for school leaders' learning, self-efficacy and agency, as an outcome of their coaching experiences. The research explored the principal question:

- **To what extent does being a coach support school leaders' self-efficacy and professional agency?**

Supplementary research questions were as follows:

- To what extent does using coaching skills promote self-reflection and build self-awareness supporting school leaders' understanding of their leadership strengths and weaknesses?

- Do leaders who coach perceive changes in their professional agency?
- Do colleagues who work with leaders who coach perceive changes in the leaders' professional agency?

The literature reviewed indicated that school leadership is important for safeguarding the learning outcomes and success for all students by creating the best possible classroom conditions in which students can flourish. Effective school leadership concentrates on capacity building, sustained growth and professional development. It articulates and promotes social and moral values ensuring that schools are places of inclusion and belonging. The intersection of Transformational and Instructional Leadership appears to drive school success creating the overarching paradigm for effective operational practices. Adaptability, flexibility and pivotability, coupled with collaborative participation by all are the behaviours associated with successful leadership and when backed up by the ethical and credible character of leaders, fosters organisational and personal trust.

School leaders at all levels learn to lead through various mechanisms, but particularly because of reflection in, and on, professional experiences. One process which promotes reflection, and which enhances learning is coaching. Although the literature acknowledges that coaching is a powerful tool for adult learning it is mainly focused on the reflection and learning benefits experienced by the coachee within the dyadic coaching partnership, not the experiences of those in the coaching role. Findings in this research, however, indicated that although coaching is not used widely in schools and there is some way to go before there is a ubiquity about its adoption as a tool to promote professional learning, school leaders who coach experience seven enhanced aspects of effective professional practice:

1. increased levels of self-awareness,
2. increasingly patient listening,
3. more profound reflexivity,

4. increased effectiveness when posing resonant and relevant questions,
5. enhanced attentiveness to others' needs,
6. greater empathy in building rapport and trust; and,
7. the capacity to develop emotionally safe environments in which colleagues can develop.

The first benefit school leaders who coach experience answers part of the first supplementary question. It explored the extent to which using coaching skills promoted self-reflection, built self-awareness and supported school leaders' understanding of their leadership strengths and weaknesses as they reflect on their experiences of coaching both in the moment and afterwards. Coaching appears to provide a platform for reflection but also acts as a catalyst for deeper thinking. Findings indicated that reflection based on coaching experiences leads to enhanced self-awareness, particularly concerning the language choices school leaders make, their ability to listen and the effectiveness with which they use questioning to develop thought in others. Findings also indicated that being a coach supported school leaders understanding of their leadership efficacy, although there was little evidence to suggest that being a coach helped school leaders identify their strengths or weaknesses. Instead, reflection and enhanced self-awareness contributed to a deeper understanding of their operational effectiveness and the effect their behaviours had on those they lead and work with.

The second benefit answers the first part of the principal research question, which explored the extent to which being a coach supported school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs. Findings indicated that being a coach has a significant impact on increasing school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs, concerning their work as coaches and their work as leaders. Findings indicate that by making a valuable contribution to the lives of colleagues, by helping co-workers solve personal and professional problems, by helping colleagues become unstuck and move professional projects and tricky

situations forward, the efficaciousness of the school leaders who coach is strengthened. Where inefficacy has been shown to contribute to occupational burnout, coaching others provides efficacy building opportunities which can contribute to a leaders' expertise in self-management. Coaching takes the form of a positive feedback loop, a virtuous cycle of efficacy building.

Coaching exposes school leaders to the life story of their coachees vicariously and the unfolding narrative affords a safe space in which to compare personal and professional beliefs against those of their colleagues. Consequently, school leaders who coach have opportunities to confirm their thinking or reject preconceived ideas in a safe space that overcomes some of the defence mechanisms leaders' experience in normal line manager situations. The equalisation of roles in the dyadic coaching space appears to create a more equal relationship which acts as a useful platform in which to undertake cognitive rehearsal for the coach (and coachee) to reflect and learn, boosting the self-efficacy beliefs of the coach.

The second part of the principal research question explored the extent to which being a coach enhanced school leaders' agency. Findings indicated that listening skills improved and were coupled with increases in self-awareness. The application of more patient listening appears to have positively impacted the school leaders' agentic effect. Self-reported increases in agency were marked, and according to those colleagues who work with school leaders, there was some evidence of increases in agency as perceived by others. Being a better listener and being more open to the thoughts and ideas of others, particularly in team situations, appears to have given rise to an appreciation of the school leader's agency, a recognition of their learning and professional growth. Colleagues noticing these changes had greater respect for their school leader colleagues and increased their discretionary effort as followers.

Not only has coaching had some impact on the school leaders' agency, but also it appears to have a doubling effect by fostering the agentic action of those who are being led.

Coaching helps leaders find their inner voice through which they can articulate their values more strongly and have the confidence to demonstrate the human agency needed to lead others. Increases in agency help leaders cope with criticism and fortifies their understanding of the leadership context in which they work, promoting values clarification opportunities as they re-frame understandings and formulate plans for leading change.

The third supplementary research question asked whether school leaders perceive changes in their professional agency as an outcome of coaching colleagues. While the findings indicate that they do, based on the myriad descriptions of agentic actions in their coaching and leadership work, agency is an unfamiliar term. As researcher I needed to explain the notion of 'agency' on several occasions. I noticed, however, that once clarified, school leaders quickly latched onto its meaning and were able to understand how increases in self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to lead in specific situations in the future; to have a degree of control and confidence in the likelihood of success in a specific aspect of future work, led to a positive influences on their future actions and behaviours.

The fourth supplementary question explored the extent to which colleagues who work with leaders who coach, perceived changes in the leaders' professional agency. As explained in chapter three, finding people willing to talk about their colleagues was problematic, although it was possible to gather some data from a small group of participants. Findings indicated that participants noticed improved listening, more

reflective behaviours, less haste in reaching conclusions and stronger levels of participatory behaviours in meetings in their colleagues' behaviours. Coaching appears to have led to behavioural change, an increase in the effectiveness of the leaders' work, positive influence in their work to build a collective leadership team and shaping the overarching culture of the organisation.

Findings indicate that coaching in most commonly used by middle and senior leaders who rely on one or two coaching models and have limited understanding of the psychology and theories underpinning coaching. Instead, coaching is applied as a practical tool to support their work with colleagues. Findings indicated however, that participants who have engaged in extended coaching training, have reached an advanced level of knowledge, understanding and skill in coaching and when using it regularly are more able to reflect on their learning, their leadership, consequently experiencing a stronger sense of professional identity.

Becoming and being a coach are positive professional acts for school leaders to engage with. Coaching fosters knowledge, understanding and skills associated with effective listening and participatory leadership and provides school leaders with opportunities to be more responsive and less reactive, to raise the visibility of their agency within the organisation and to fortify their inner strength so as to better cope with the challenges and demands of the work they do to positively influence the life chances of the students in their care. Coaching as it turns out, is one small aspect of a leaders' tool kit, but has a significant effect on colleagues and on the self.

6.3 Value of the Materials Used for the Research

The online survey added less to the overall outcomes than was anticipated as a result of the small sample size. The low level of participation may indicate that school

leaders are less interested in completing surveys and prefer to discuss their experiences.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews provided me with a rich source of deep insight into the experiences of school leaders who coach and enabled me to follow up lines of inquiry as they arose. As expected, the choice of this approach was positive when exploring socially constructed meaning with the participants, by affording me the scope to explore unexpected and interesting perspectives as revealed by the participants. Nvivo and Otter.ai, the software tools used to transcribe and store the interview transcripts were useful. NVivo enabled the coding of 100k+ words of transcribed interviews to build up concepts and themes. Otter.ai provided me with a faster means of transcribing than my initial manual approach. As it is not 100% accurate, listening back to the recorded interviews and making corrections to the scripts was necessary and proved to be a useful step in reflecting on what I had learned within the interviews.

6.4 Limitations

There are several limitations in this research. Despite sending the survey to over 200 potential respondents the response rate was so small that the information the survey contained was of limited value. At best it signposted aspects of coaching and leadership worthy of further exploration. By activating my professional network by contacting schools where I had an existing professional relationship, data could be skewed as people responded out of a sense of familiarity or loyalty to me, rather than because of genuine interest in the subject matter adjusting answers towards what they may have believed I wanted to hear. To overcome this, I attempted to explain the conceptual framework in each interview and asked the participants what specifically they thought was mistaken, wrong or unclear. While this was helpful and

had the effect of legitimising their challenge to my assumptions, it could be considered as overly leading the participants.

A further limitation could be the scope of the EdD itself in that it is a professional degree that requires the researcher to continually bring their research back to their professional practice. This may have meant that I as researcher adopted more of a deductive approach to the research than was intended and while being conscious of not looking for evidence to fit my assertions, deductive thinking could have inhibited my inductive reasoning.

A further limitation is that when conducting the literature review, I only reviewed English language papers and books, which for the most part projected a predominantly western cultural paradigm. Although one study explored some outcomes from participants in Asia Pacific, my mono-lingual approach limited the research base.

6.5 Recommendations

There are three recommendations emerging from this research.

Firstly, school leaders would be wise to learn to use coaching skills and then, deploy them in their schools. Not only does this benefit their colleagues, but it also benefits them. Coaching has the effect of strengthening school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs in relation to leadership and to coaching through a form of cognitive rehearsal. It can have the effect of increasing school leaders' agency, which can help them to cope more effectively with the demands, challenges and pressures they experience in their professional lives.

Secondly, school leaders should consider engaging in training as a coach to an advanced level to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in coaching, to move beyond the all too common entry-level approach when school leaders adopt one coaching conversational model, without much understanding of how and why it works in practice.

Thirdly, providers of professional leadership learning for school leaders would be well-served to review their course materials, evaluating the extent to which the knowledge, understanding and use of coaching skills is part of the programme of learning. Building in, or enhancing what is currently in place, to equip school leaders with an understanding of the psychology that enacts coaching efficacy would be beneficial. Although it may not need to become mandatory for school leaders to become professional coaches, training in coaching which moves beyond using one or two models should be made mandatory as part of the ongoing professional learning school leaders are expected to engage with as professionals.

6.6 Proposals for further research

An unanticipated finding arose from the interviews in which I as researcher noticed that participants who used coaching most often, and who had worked through various levels of increasingly demanding qualifications, discussed their experiences in greater depth than other school leaders who were relatively new to coaching. It would be interesting to explore the range of coaching qualifications school leaders can obtain evaluating which aspects of the qualifications are the most effective in promoting professional learning in school contexts.

Although not part of my research, other researchers may wish to explore whether there is an optimal frequency of coaching with colleagues, and which coaching tools

or approaches are the most appropriate in schools. Although it was not part of my research to find out why school leaders mainly use the GROW and CLEAR [appendix iv] tools, this could be explored.

Given that coaching appears to be an effective personal and professional learning for the coachee and for the coach, but that it is not yet used with ubiquity across International and UK schools, it would be helpful to explore why coaching has not yet taken hold and what would need to happen to both foster it's adoption as well as understand what it is blocking it.

6.7 Final thoughts

Although in the social sciences it is difficult to isolate *the* 'one thing' that makes the difference because there are multiple forces at play and the complexity of school leaders' leadership contexts is vast, becoming and being a coach appears to make a significant difference to the school leader. Having visited many of the schools in which the participants work, and witnessed close hand the difference these leaders make in the lives of children and young people who attend their school, I am more convinced that enhancing that difference-making ability and capacity through coaching is something the profession must engage with even more strongly. Not only is this important for the continuous development of leadership strength in the schools but is also important for the sustained belief school leaders have in their self-efficacy. One of the participants for example would have been lost to our profession had he not learned to coach. Having recently visited his new school, in which hundreds of children are thriving, learning, growing and developing under his wise leadership, his difference-making is evident for all to see.

At the start of the EdD, my Foundations of Professionalism supervisor invited me to consider what I might say after completing the degree, imagining I was presenting at a conference. How might I begin and end the speech? Given that this research is first being presented in May 2021 at the COBIS leadership conference the headline questions and answers are as follows:

- Should school leaders coach? Yes.

- How do you know? My research has indicated that becoming a coach is beneficial to you as a leader.

- So why then should school leaders coach? Because coaching affords school leaders with a form of cognitive rehearsal and promotes self-efficacy beliefs which can enhance their agency so that they make a bigger, positive difference for everyone around them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i.i – Interview Guides – School Leaders Who Coach

1. Please can you tell me a bit about your coaching experience, as a coach. What have you been doing, how many people do you coach, how often and those sorts of things, how long are sessions typically?

2. And when you're actually thinking about coaching one of your coachees, what kinds of things do you think about before you sit down with them and start the coaching experience?

3. So, you're sitting in the session, with your coachee and they start talking about what-ever they are talking about – what are you thinking about when that's happening?

4. What has coaching meant to you as a leader in your professional life?

5. When you've been coaching your coachees, to what extent has that coaching experience and the experience of listening to the real issues that those people are contending with, affected your own thinking about yourself?

6. To what extent has your experience of being a coach impacted your own self-confidence?

7. My understanding is that you sit with someone for an hour, up to an hour and a half maximum, and in that space you might be looking at an 80:20 or even 90:10, where the coachee is doing most of the talking and articulating and you are literally not saying anything. How does just listening and how does not actually doing very much, help you grow as a person?

8. So how does just listening, listening, listening, listening…help you be a better leader?

9. Can you give any experiences of coaching when the experience has changed your thinking?

10. Has coaching others confirmed your pre-existing thoughts about your worldview of leadership itself or has it challenged any of those views?

11. The idea of flow was mentioned by a previous interviewee being a really important human state for the coachee. What do you think about that? To what extent do you get into a state of flow?

12. I sometimes step away and find I think I haven't done anything, and the coachee is 'that's been amazing, totally life changing. Why is it different in a

coaching situation than just sitting down with the same person having a conversation?

13. OK - well thank you – is there anything that you want to add that you've not talked about or that you think would be of interest or that's been a key learning for you as a coach?

Appendix i.ii - Colleagues who work with leaders who coach

1. Tell me about the coaching experiences you have been part of in the school?

2. To what extent have you noticed any behavioural change in the school leaders who coach, following on from their training and use of coaching?

3. What sorts of things do the school leaders who coach, now do, that they didn't do before?

4. In my earlier interviews, school leaders who coach said that coaching others had been helpful to them, by giving them a stronger sense of self-efficacy as coaches and leaders. What do you think about that?

5. School leaders who coach – those who I interviewed – said that one of the outcomes of coaching was their increased determination to lead well. To what extent have you been witness to them leading well?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to say or comment on?

Appendix ii - Themes Codes and The Theoretical Framework

THEMES	CODES	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Self-Efficacy
Experience	− Qualification Level − Formal Coaching − Informal Coaching − Regularity of Coaching − Number & Range of Coachees − Models Used in Coaching	Mastery Experience
Benefits to Coachee	− Clearer thoughts − More able to understand self − Feeling more organised − Being more in control of self and environment − More able to make a difference − Found their own solutions − More confident in their work − Improved working relationships with colleagues and with coach	
Benefits to self	− Feeling useful − Being able to help others − Feeling confident in self − Feeling more able to talk to managers − Better listening skills − Getting buzz from helping others − Being more present − Being less distracted − Believing in self more − Sense that I can do this − I can make a difference − Use coaching skills in other aspects of leadership work	Mastery Experience Vicarious Learning Emotional Regulation
Thinking in advance of coaching	− The coachee's needs now − Coachee needs in the future − Coachee's previous learning − Previously agreed coachee actions & goals	Mastery Experience Some Vicarious Experiential Learning Emotional Regulation

	− Doubts about coachee follow through − Safe space for coachee – physically & emotionally − Building rapport − Check my own emotional equilibrium	

THEMES	CODES	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Agency
Thinking about the process	− Remembering best practices − Remembering training − Reading up on models & tools − Reflecting o previous sessions − Rehearsing questions in the mind of different forms − Reminder to be in the moment − Reminder to check my own emotional state − Reminder to serve the coachee	Mastery Learning
Learning about leadership	− Different ideas for leading − Different ways of leading − Different ways to solve problems − Others have different approaches to their work − Some leadership approaches and actions are more successful than others – why? − Understating how to apply coaching skills in other contexts − How people learn to lead is different in each case & through multiple sources	Mastery Learning Vicarious Learning
Conscious Awareness	− Focusing the mind in the moment − Focusing on the coachee, listening deeply − Suspending personal views in the moment − Parking my perceptions − Holding an idea and coming back to it at the right time	Mastery Learning Vicarious Learning Emotional Regulation

	− Working out what is the best questions from a range of questions − Comparing my views with the views of the coachee − Exploring the concept of similarity and difference − Walking through the world with another person – being aware of their story − Wondering why people do what they do	

Appendix iii - Theoretical Underpinnings and Genres Of Coaching

Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2014), identify several theoretical traditions of coaching and several genres in their book 'The Complete Handbook of Coaching'.

Theoretical traditions underpinning coaching are listed as:

- Psychodynamic
- Cognitive-Behavioural
- Solution-Focused
- Person-Centered
- Gestalt
- Existential
- Ontological
- Narrative
- Cognitive-Developmental
- Transpersonal
- Positive Psychology
- Transactional Analysis
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Genres of coaching in applied contexts are referred to as being:

- Skills and Performance Coaching
- Developmental Coaching
- Transformational Coaching
- Executive and Leadership Coaching
- The Manager as Coach
- Team Coaching
- Peer Coaching
- Life Coaching
- Health and Wellness Coaching
- Career Coaching
- Cross-cultural Coaching
- Mentoring in a Coaching World

Appendix iv - Coaching Models

GROW - The model was originally developed in the 1980s by business coaches Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore and stands for:

- Goal
- Current Reality
- Options (or Obstacles)
- Will (or Way Forward)

CLEAR – The model is not dissimilar to the GROW model above. It was developed by Peter Hawkins in the early 1980's and stands for:

- Contracting
- Listening
- Exploring
- Action
- Review

CIGAR - The model was developed by the Full Potential Group in the 1990's and stands for:

- Current Reality
- Ideal situation
- Gaps between the current reality and Ideal
- Action
- Review

FACTS – The model is associated with De John Blakey and his book 'The Trusted Executive'. It stands for:

- Feedback
- Accountability
- Courage
- Tension
- Systems Thinking

FUEL – The model was developed by John Zenger and Kathleen Stinnett and was published in a book 'The Extraordinary Coach – How the best leaders help others grow'. It stands for:

- Frame the conversation
- Understand the current state
- Explore the desired plan
- Lay out the success plan.

STEER - This model was developed by Kevin Charlton in 2002 and stands for:

- Spot
- Tailor
- Explain
- Encourage
- Review

OSKAR – This model was developed by Paul Jackson and Mark McKergow and is featured in their book, 'The Solutions Focus, Making Coaching and Change Simple'. It stands for:

- Outcome
- Scaling
- Know-how and resources
- Action
- Review

OSCAR – This model was developed by Karen Whittleworth and Andrew Gilbert in 2002 as an attempt to build on the GROW model. It stands for

- Outcome
- Situation
- Choices and (Consequences)
- Actions
- Review

OUTCOMES – This model was developed by Allan Mackintosh in 2003 to help managers structure coaching sessions. It stands for:

- Objectives
- Understand the Reasons
- Take Stock of the Present Situation
- Clarify the Gap
- Options Generation

- Motivate to Action
- Enthusiasm and Encouragement
- Support

Appendix v - List of Leadership Roles held by Respondents And Participants

School specific leadership roles

- CEO
- Executive Headteacher
- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Assistant Headteacher
- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Head of Department or Year
- Assistant Head of Department or Year
- Curriculum Leader
- Lead Teaching and Learning Assistant
- Language Consultant
- Director of Educational Technology
- Educational Advisor/Consultant
- Education Consultant
- Coaching Using Positive Psychology
- Achievement and Progress Leader

Non-specific school leadership roles held by four interview participants

- Director of Professional Learning – NGO
- Director of Professional Learning – Commercial
- CEO – Outdoor Learning Trust and Outdoor Education Centre
- Director of Professional Learning - Global Technology Innovation and Communication Company

Appendix vi - Participant Information Sheet for Leaders in Schools who Coach

Semi-Structured Interviews

UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval ID Number:
Z6364106/2019/02/79 social research in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Study:
School Leaders who Coach:

Exploring the Effect of Coaching on

Their Leadership, Learning, Self-Efficacy

and Professional Agency

Department:
UCL IOE: London Centre for Leadership and Learning

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher
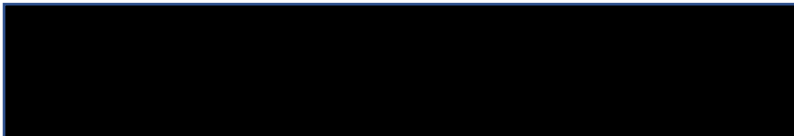
Dear Participants

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decided it is important for you to understand why the research us being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The study is part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at UCL IOE that I am carrying out. I will write a 45000-word Thesis that will available in the IOE library. The work will be reviewed by my Tutors and examined by two university-appointed examiners.

Purpose of the Study:
This study explores the effect of coaching on the leadership, learning, self-efficacy, and agency of leaders in UK and schools internationally who coach. The study asks whether school leaders' perceived self-efficacy can be strengthened as a

consequence of coaching colleagues and whether enhancing self-efficacy increases their professional agency.

Building on my interest in professionalism, leadership, and coaching in schools, I am concerned to find ways to; help leaders believe more strongly in their own leadership abilities, to reinforce their locus of control and to enact their professional agency more strongly. An unanticipated finding from my earlier research was that when leaders adopted a coaching approach in their work, the coaching process served to reinforce personal self-efficacy beliefs, in relation to professional decision making and problem-solving. My aim is to interrogate this finding in greater depth.

Why have you been chosen?
You have been invited to take part in semi-structured interviews because you are working in a school leadership capacity and may be using coaching skills in your work.

Do you have to take part?
No – taking part in the study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign the consent form below. You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw after participating in the interviews you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point.

What will happen to me if I take part?
The semi-structured interview you have volunteered to take part in will last between 30 and 45 minutes. I will contact you by email and arrange a skype /or equivalent call with you. You will only be asked to undertake one interview. I will ensure that no clues to your identity will appear in the thesis or in any subsequent conference presentations or publications. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the paper will be entirely anonymous. Other than your role and gender I will not collect any personal information. I will not contact you for further research but will send a copy of the thesis as a PDF once it has been completed and is available in the public domain. The last point at which the data you have supplied can be removed from the study is December 1 2019 when the writing up of all of the outcomes is being finalised.

The study will involve me conducting a semi-structured interview with you, which I would like to record using my iPad. I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews, which include a number of broad questions about the experience of being a coach since this allows you to tell your story. This approach provides me with qualitative data and affords you with opportunities to talk about things that matter to you.

The interviews fall within the qualitative part of the field of mixed methods research. I am interested in the story you have to tell, your insights and reflections and what being a coach has meant to you. My role is to interpret what is happening when you are socially constructing your learning in the coaching experience. It will help me to gain a deeper understanding of what happens when leaders coach others. It will begin

to help me shed some light on why being a coach may be a powerful tool that impacts leaders' self-efficacy and agency. From what you say and from what we discuss I begin to construct a detailed understanding based on your experiences.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

To help me, I will record the semi-structured interviews and then personally transcribe the conversation. Following this stage, I will analyse the text using a software tool known as Nvivo which helps me to look for emerging themes, as well as aspects of school leadership that I might expect to see. The audio recordings of your interview made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. It is possible, however, that since I am interested in your experience of being coached that talking about your experiences may cause you to reflect on uncomfortable situations as well as those that were supportive.

Although I am not working in the school in which you are working I am aware that the international school community is a small world and news travels fast. All of your comments are treated with strict confidentiality and none will be reported. You are, therefore, encouraged to speak openly and respectfully about your own learning and your school. You will not be asked to name people.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating it is hoped that this work will contribute to our understanding of ways in which we can bolster school leaders and support their wellbeing.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to make a complaint, you are at liberty to do so by contacting my supervisor

If you should they feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee – ethics@ucl.ac.uk

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All of the information I collect during the course of the research will be anonymized and kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

Limits to confidentiality.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

It is my intention to submit the thesis for examination in December 2020. They will be seen by my supervisor, and two university appointed examiners. It is likely therefore that subject to the Viva and any amendments the thesis will be published in the first half of 2021. After successful completion, a copy is located in the University library and is made available online for all to access. I will send a PDF of the completed thesis to you. You will not be identified in any report or publication. The data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research. The study may be published in a research journal.

Local Data Protection Notice
Notice:

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. It is provided to all participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018). Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in their 'general' privacy notice: click here. The lawful basis used to process your *personal data* is [performance of a task in the public interest]. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. I will anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide. I will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

The categories of personal data used will be as follows:

- Name
- Role in School
- Length of time in role
- Frequency and volume of sessions when using coaching skills
- Location (UK/International)
- Where and how you learned to coach

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

If you need any further information, please feel free to contact me:

David Porritt:

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering whether or not to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form.

Consent Form

I…………………………………agree to participate in David Porritt's research study entitled: Professional Agency: Exploring the Effect of Coaching on the Leadership, Learning, and Self-Efficacy of School Leaders who Coach, for his Doctoral Degree in Education at UCL IOE.

The purpose and nature of the study have been explained to me in writing.
 I am participating voluntarily.
 I give permission for my interview with David to be recorded.
 I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.
 I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
 I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
 I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the paper and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)
I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview☐
I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview☐

Signed………………………………….Date……………….

Appendix vii - List of Software used in The Research

Online Survey software: **OPINIO** – Available at http://www.objectplanet.com/opinio/

Interview Analysis Software: **NVIVO** – Available at

https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home.

Interview Transcription Software: **Otter.ai** – Available at https://otter.ai

Interview Recording software: IOS Voice Recorder: iPhone

Appendix viii – Link to Survey Data

Full Online Survey Data can be accessed at the following link for 6 months after the

date of publication.

https://www.dropbox.com/s/73hpa4wwisgchzg/THESIS%20SURVEY%20REPO

RT.pdf?dl=0

Appendix ix – Ethics Project Number and Approval Email
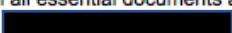
Subject: 20190212 Email confirm Z6364106 2019 02 79

Hi,

Thank you for your application to register with the Data Protection Office. I am pleased to confirm that this project is now registered under, reference No Z6364106/2019/02/79 social research in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

You may quote this reference on your Ethics Application Form, or any other related forms.

When all essential documents are ready to archive, contact the UCL Records Office by email ███████████████ to arrange ongoing secure storage of your research records unless you have made specific alternative arrangements with your department, or funder.   Please note the UCL Records Office does not store student research data.

For data protection enquiries, please contact the data protection team at ███████████████

For ethics enquiries, please contact the ethics team at ███████████████

Regards,

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Tables

End Notes

[i] https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/early-years-agency.pdf Acccessed 18-4-20

[ii] http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/student-agency/in_brief_Student_Agency.pdf accessed 18-4-20

Accessed 6-4-21

[iii] https://www.bethanyjunior.co.uk/viva-go/ accessed 6-4-21