The developmental needs of coaches and coachees: a meta-synthesis of *IJMCE* volumes 1 to 7

Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this review is to highlight the key findings, themes, and concepts in coaching from the inception of the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* in early 2012 to the end of 2018. The review examines how coaching is theorized and practised in an educational context, and how coaching has evolved across educational disciplines.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is based on an analysis of research trends in articles published in the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* from Volume 1 Issue 1 (2012) to Volume 7 Issue 4 (2018). The criterion, according to which articles were selected for inclusion in the literature review, is whether the word "coaching" is used in the title, abstract, or key words.

Findings – Across a wide range of geographical and institutional contexts, the studies surveyed in this literature review point to the different ways in which coaching interventions support success in teaching and leadership. This review identifies three principal themes across the literature on coaching: confidence, trust, and identity.

Research limitations – The literature review is confined to studies published in a single publication and is therefore not representative of the entire field of coaching research.

Practical implications – The focus of this review is coaching in education. The review comprises a survey of research concepts, innovation, and creativity in the area of coaching

and education. It highlights advances in the field of coaching and education and points to areas of development for future research.

Originality and value – By bringing together existing research in a number of areas across the field of coaching, this literature review provides a coherent overview of a rapidly evolving and diverse field.

Key words

coaching, professional development, education, identity, confidence, trust

type of paper – Literature review

Introduction

This literature review seeks to illustrate the breadth of organizational and geographical contexts in which coaching has had an impact on education. The study comprises a review of the research on coaching published in the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education (IJCME)* from its inception in 2012 until the final issue of 2018. The research published over this timescale stems from diverse coaching contexts: from supporting pre-service teachers in the UK (Salter, 2015) to helping to develop a model for school leadership and professional development in the Qatari school system (Chaaban and Abu Tineh, 2017); from providing scaffolding for teacher change in the UK (Collett, 2015) to encouraging teacher innovation in Singapore (Ng, 2012). The different studies under review followed principals in urban school districts (James-Ward, 2013), mathematics coaches in elementary schools (Polly *et al.*, 2015), curricular coaches focused on teacher retention (De Jong and Campoli 2018), and head teachers (Celoria and Hemphill, 2014; Houchens *et al.,* 2017; Rhodes and Fletcher, 2013). The various studies showcase a variety of coaching models: the Gradual Increase of Responsibility (GIR) model (Collett, 2015), the Six "P" Model for

inclusion coaches (Gallagher and Bennett, 2018), the "Life Matters" cognitive behavioural coaching programme (O'Rourke *et al.,* 2016), and the Differential Coaching Model (Gallant and Gilham, 2014). However, for all their differences, these multi-disciplinary, geographically dispersed, and contextually bound studies share three key themes, which will be explored in detail in this literature review: trust, identity, and confidence. These specific themes emerged during a process of thematic analysis, and their presence in the literature demonstrated a significance that demanded to be highlighted.

These themes emerged recurrently across the different studies published over the past six years. For example, in the context of Cypriot school leaders, Nicolaidou *et al.* (2016) underscore how coaching has emerged as the fastest growing leadership strategy, a strategy that supports teacher identity "since it can be a constant reminder to school teachers of their values" (p. 22). In her inquiry into the explicit benefits coaching brings to teachers and school leaders in the context of Australian schools, Netolicky (2016) found that being both a coach and a coachee were empowering and identity shaping. Examining the practice of coaching in the Singaporean educational system, Ng (2012) posits that coaching for professional development is predicated on trust. Whipp and Pengelly (2017) make a direct link between peer coaching and confidence building, as long as the coaching goals are clear and transparent.

I will turn to these three key themes later in the paper in order to highlight the beneficial role coaching plays in professional development in the field of education. In fact, the ineluctable conclusion I have drawn in surveying the hypotheses, models, programme descriptors, and practice reflections from 31 theoretical perspectives packaged in research articles, case studies, and conceptual papers is that coaching is the life-blood of professional development. In an investigation that focused specifically on how coaching supports teacher change, Collett (2015) points out that "Because contexts for teaching are constantly changing, preparation for

teaching requires professional development that is discursive as well as dialogic and reflective" (p. 269). Throughout my reading, I have been increasingly convinced that coaching provides this mediational, contextualized role in the development of professionals working in education. Coaching has the potential to provide true transformative change.

Methodology and process

I undertook a survey of 31 papers published in the *IJMCE* from 2012 (Volume 1 Issue 1) to 2018 (Volume 7 Issue 4). The coaching research under review was conducted in countries as varied as Germany, the UK, the US, Cyprus, Qatar, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Turkey, Malaysia, Singapore, and Ireland. The different institutional contexts represented by the articles under review include primary schools, high schools, universities, and public and private businesses. Although coaching themes might have been overlooked by excluding "mentoring" papers, the aim of identifying key trends in the development of coaching research required strict adherence to the following criteria: the papers had "coaching" in the title, abstract, and/or keywords. Some of these papers examined mentoring as well, but my focus was on coaching.

The distinction between coaching and mentoring is sometimes blurred. Rhodes and Fletcher's (2013) investigation into the ways in which coaching and mentoring increase self-efficacious leadership in schools refers to the two practices as complementary and mutually reinforcing: "It is suggested that active development of an individual's self-efficacy through mentoring and coaching relationships may serve to ensure that the loss of human potential of those who could lead but never completed the journey is reduced" (p. 47). This review focuses predominantly on coaching, although the boundaries between coaching and mentoring are often diffuse, and the underlying suppositions and practices of both are enmeshed and sometimes indistinguishable. In other words, while this review foregrounds the practice of

coaching rather than mentoring, much of what it asserts about the benefits of the former is applicable also to the latter. The various studies surveyed here are predicated on the contention that coaching nurtures confidence and self-belief, that the mastery brought about by coaching creates high efficacy beliefs, and that coaching can reduce the isolation associated with leadership in particular. Where there is an overlap between mentoring and coaching, I have attempted to concentrate on the key themes and concepts of the latter. In order to create a descriptive meta-synthesis of the articles, I used a thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in which I coded the texts after identifying categories of specific themes and concepts derived from an initial reading. Observing the recurrence of certain themes in the various studies under review, I used a process of inductive reasoning to conclude that these themes were common across the literature, and I subsequently undertook a more systematic analysis of the presentation of these themes. Given their recurrence across the literature and the importance attributed to them by numerous authors, I suggest that the themes of confidence, trust, and identity are of fundamental significance in educational coaching.

Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion are organized into specific sections. The first section discusses the authorship details insofar as they influence the context of the study. The remainder of the study synthesizes the overarching themes shared by the different studies under review. The themes of identity, trust, and confidence are discussed, as are the authors' findings on the obstacles to success as a warning to anyone setting up a coaching programme or participating in one as either a coach or coachee. I explore the impact coaching has on education in all its various permutations: peer teaching, principal coaching, leadership coaching, and curricular coaching. Finally, I highlight limitations in this literature review, examine innovations in the

field of coaching, and explain the implications of the various studies under review for coaching practice and further research.

Authorship details

The majority of the papers on coaching from early 2012 to late 2018 were from the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand. These papers broadly explore peer coaching, the effect of coaching on professional development and growth, the effect of coaching on leadership, coaching in team learning, the link between emotional intelligence and coaching, coaching and retention, and how a number of skills and competencies are strengthened by coaching. Countries represented outside of the English-speaking sphere are the following: Turkey, Singapore, Cyprus, Qatar, Malaysia, and Germany. This latter group of studies tend to highlight a national coaching programme, such as Chaaban and Abu Tineh's (2017) exploration of the experiences of instructional coaches in the Qatari school-based support programme or Ng's (2012) inquiry into the inherent tensions in having an appraisal connotation in some Singapore coaching programmes while encouraging critically reflective learning. Aside from these authors' concentration on a system, usually state-wide and unique to their country, the same prevailing themes of identity, trust, and confidence are either explicitly or implicitly highlighted.

Key terms, relationships, concepts, and themes

In this section, I will explore the varying definitions of coaching, the relationship between coach and coachee, and the key themes of identity, trust, and confidence.

Definitions of coaching

A small number of papers sought to define coaching through comparison with mentoring. Said papers endeavoured to draw a distinction between the two, explaining the historical

roots of both practices and how each develops practitioner skills differently (Ng, 2012; Rhodes and Fletcher, 2013; Salter, 2015; Jones, 2015). Ng (2012) points out that both coaching and mentoring are important concepts in the professional development of educators and have a positive impact on the educators' performance and wellbeing. Ng goes on to observe that although there is a high degree of overlap and similarities in practice, coaching is more concerned with performance, taking a medium- to long-term perspective in the area of professional development. Salter (2015) states that coaching is not concerned with role modelling but with supporting the coachee to develop critical reflective skills and to set his or her own agenda. Jones (2015) argues that research on both coaching and mentoring can result in beneficial impacts on educational professionals' learning and development. Her intention is to blur the boundaries between coaching and mentoring, emphasising their inter-relatedness in order to illuminate the benefits research on both can have on educational policy and practice. Rhodes and Fletcher (2013) are convinced that both mentoring and coaching are the essential ingredients in engendering confidence, self-efficacy, resilience, and perseverance in the journey to leadership in schools.

Elsewhere there is a concern with how coaching can support teacher change, particularly in the context of structuring a professional development course that is highly reflective (Collett, 2015). Coaching is identified as the engine behind the process of professional development, which has its roots in fields as diverse as education, psychology, and sports. The definition of coaching offered by Du Toit and Reissner (2012) as a "sustained process for enabling the development of the individual" (p. 179) could encompass all of the definitions of coaching within the *IJMCE* with an emphasis on professional development. Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018) conducted a thematic analysis of the experience of education teams introducing coaching into schools and concluded that organizations that develop coaching cultures create positive and nurturing environments that encourage individual growth. In

common with all papers examining the impact of coaching initiatives on personal development, Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018) found that research is limited. Equally important, they found that a commitment to a coaching process is necessary for successful leaders, and that it is "crucial for school leaders to develop an understanding of how coaching is central to their leadership development" (p. 344).

The relationship between coach and coachee

Continuing with the link between coaching and leadership development, Anthony and van Niewerburgh's (2018) overview of the transformational leadership approach (Bass, 1995), which is often promoted in educational settings, illustrates the ways in which transformational leadership models are well aligned with a coaching approach. Transformational coaching is often the goal of peer coaching, which is the subject of many of the coaching papers. Charteris and Smardon (2014) suggest that dialogic peer coaching (based on a conversational exchange between two parties) can enable teachers to influence each other's professional learning, revealing growth in teacher leadership capabilities and significantly increasing transformative teacher agency. Whipp and Pengelley (2017) found that peer coaching cultivated a sense of solidarity when there was a focus on strength (as opposed to the coachee's weaknesses) and when the peer coach offered feedback and evaluation in the form of a "critical friend" (p. 99). Peer instructional coaching was found to alleviate tensions such as principal overwork (Rivera-McCarhen and Scharff Panero, 2014), to help to create a culture of learning based on dialogue and reflection (Jewett and MacPhee, 2012), and to provide a framework that encouraged participants to reflect and collaborate more with peers (Salter, 2015).

Zepeda *et al.*'s (2013) international comparative study of the differences between the applicability of peer coaching in different educational systems, namely, American and

Turkish, exemplifies a successful teacher peer-coaching process. Of a total population of 491 principals, department chairs, and teachers surveyed, the authors found that all participants believed that peer coaching was adoptable and desirable. Respondents emphasized its strengths in promoting high order skills, in increasing teacher professionalism and collegial communication, and in allowing teachers to exchange ideas and problem solve with colleagues. Even allowing for the more individualistic American culture and a Turkish culture marked by power inequalities, the study found that peer coaching increased reciprocal learning and support. Although there are cultural aspects that can limit coaching effectiveness (a theme to which I will turn in the "Limitations" section), effective coaching can in fact transcend cultural differences.

In the Qatari school-based support programme, the success of implementing professional development was attributed to developing trusting relationships (Chaaban and Abu Tineh, 2017). In Singapore, the effectiveness of educational coaching was evident yet dependent on trust. In Cyprus, coaching among peers – either in dyadic or group sessions – led to cultural competence and leadership capacity, with the proviso that trust must be established in the first place. As long as coaching goals are transparent and achievable, peer coaching will build the confidence needed to effect transformational cultural and individual change (Nicolaidou *et al.,* 2016).

Trust, confidence, and identity

Regardless of the cultural context in which coaching is situated, successful coaching is a constituent of a trusting relationship between the participants. In a sensitive and nuanced exploration into whether mental health stigma can influence a willingness to engage in coaching in the field of MBA study in Germany, Millard and Korotov (2014) found unsurprisingly that those with mental health issues hold attitudes that limit their participation

in the coaching process: their mental health issues translate to a stigmatising barrier to coaching engagement. Trust evidently lies at the cornerstone of these MBA students' reluctance to seek counselling treatment, a finding which the authors believe has serious implications for coaching. In their US-based research into whether coaching techniques help school principals improve their instructional leadership, Houchens *et al.* (2017) found that deep self-reflection, which can emerge between a principal and a coach, is predicated on a trusting and confidential relationship.

Professional growth, which is often the by-product of gaining practical skills through collaborative coaching, is founded on an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect (James-Ward, 2013). In her study of principals and leadership, James-Ward demonstrates that trusting the coaching experience helped the principals feel supported and encouraged them to believe in themselves: trust and confidence become intertwined. Relationships are central to coaching: coaching provides a reduction in the isolation associated with leadership, according to Rhodes and Fletcher (2013). Becoming less isolated and more knitted into the group, school leaders report an increased sense of self-confidence and self-belief (Rhodes and Fletcher, 2013). Ng (2012) emphasizes that trust and confidence can be severely hampered by an appraisal nature within a development process, such as the practice implemented in the Singapore education system: without trust, personal development becomes a series of tasks to complete. Lofthouse and Leat (2012) strongly argues that the goals of coaching will invariably meet resistance by a managerial culture that demands accountability and surveillance: trust, which is vital for effective peer coaching and, by extension, for the establishment of any transformative coaching relationship, will be adversely affected by a system in which teachers are being judged and set performative objectives.

In their effort to understand coaching "as a social activity [that] allows one to gain a broader, holistic perspective on the work of coaching altogether", Sam and Caliendo (2018, p. 233)

found that promoting trust and building strong relationships lay at the heart of implementing a valuable coaching initiative. A negative culture that includes harsh accountability standards and a rigid hierarchy undoubtedly impedes the very act of using coaching as a resource. In any coaching initiative, navigating relationships among the main stakeholders is crucial to a workable coaching programme. In an exploration of the benefits coaching brings to teaching, Netolicky (2016) discovered that, aside from the cultivation of a shared language and understanding, a clearer cognition of teaching purpose, and an increased capacity for leadership, the identity of being a coach or a coachee was empowering. In a joint US and Malaysian study, Ng *et al.* (2012) found that in Malaysia, after eleven years of formal education, students lacked personal autonomy and had difficulty with being resourceful, taking the initiative, and exhibiting agency. Coaching influenced learner autonomy and had implications in creating a learner identity.

My review of the literature uncovered incontrovertible results of the efficacy of coaching in developing trust and confidence and in maximizing the potential to express identity (Chaaban and Abu Tineh, 2017; Houchens *et al.,* 2017; Jewett and McPhee, 2012; Ng, 2012; Rhodes and Fletcher, 2013; Wetzel *et al,* 2018). Moreover, emotional intelligence (EI) can be developed in measurably and statistically significant ways. Tschannen-Moran and Carter (2016) explored the EI of instructional coaches, measuring their self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Coaching was found to improve all of these qualities. The authors' study encapsulates the majority of the findings of the papers I surveyed: to be successful, coaches must be tactful, compassionate, and sensitive, all aspects of high EI, which can be enhanced by a coaching programme that focuses on strengths and never loses sight of the integral role trust plays in developing confidence and identity.

Factors that support, enhance, and hinder success in creating innovative coaching cultures

This section highlights a range of innovative practices in coaching and identifies the factors that contribute to coaching failure. My review of innovative practices in coaching encompasses stories of coaching cultures that displayed diverse ways of understanding how school leaders can introduce coaching into their schools and institutions. James-Ward's (2013) study following four novice principals in two US urban school districts focused on the attributes of an exemplary coach and the key components of the coaching process. Particularly in light of leadership studies, the reader can learn much from this case study. James-Ward found that an exemplary leadership coach had a proven record of results and was an active listener and strong questioner, who, above all, had the critical ability to establish trust with coachees. Collaboration around leadership skills and a trusting relationship with the coach were discovered to be important to principals: professional growth came from gaining practical skills through these collaborative experiences. James-Ward found that the core leadership practices that influenced student achievement were enhanced by the principals' perceived benefits of the coaching experience.

Collett's (2015) "Scaffolds for Change" paper looks at the pivotal role feedback plays in coaching. Collett offers concrete suggestions on specific coaching moves: modelling, recommending, asking questions, affirming, and praising. Her GIR model situates the teacher "as an active constructor of knowledge" and permits coaches to "embody the stance that good teaching is dependent upon the knowledge of where the learner is and where the learner is ready to move next" (p. 285). Even in schools of the twenty-first century, where an atmosphere of accountability and continuous improvement overshadows a potentially transformative coaching experience, the scaffolding provided by an experienced coach has the potential to provide lasting change in the classroom in the shape of contextualized professional development.

Du Toit and Reissner (2012) provide fundamental lessons on how coaching can be utilized in a social work context. Working in a bespoke vocational university course for family support workers, the authors set out to provide empirical evidence for the supportive role of coaching in team learning and in professional development. Establishing the definition of coaching as the "sustained process for enabling the development of the individual" (p. 179), they found that coaching positively influenced people learning to be a part of a demanding profession that not only had to cope with constant changes in policies and practices, but was also subject to severe media scrutiny. In this six-month course designed to help the team bond quickly and effectively and to give them new skills to support their professional development, Du Toit and Reissner (2012) found that coaching had the power to transform an individual's performance in the workplace. Participants reported that the knowledge they gained from the coaching process enabled them to approach their work differently in developing potential solutions and in evaluating these solutions. Informed by adult learning theories that underpin practice, Du Toit and Reissner's (2012) study provides a clear causal link between the family support worker students' learning and their subsequent superior workplace performance.

De Jong and Campoli (2018) questioned whether curricular coaches could reduce turnover among early career teachers and found that the presence of these coaches was associated with a substantial reduction in early career teacher turnover. In this unique inquiry into the link between the presence of curricular coaches and teacher retention in US urban schools, De Jong and Campoli (2018) used a statistical model to examine the relationship between teacher turnover and the presence of curricular coaches in the schools. The authors analysed participant responses to a nationally representative sample of 1,440 teachers and found that competency, communication skills, and commitment, qualities fostered by the relationships between curricular coaches and teachers, were all associated with high quality teaching. Coaches helped the urban school to become a "more stable, responsive learning environment

focused on improving student achievement" (p. 193). There are obvious implications for US (and other) school districts in saving money by improving teacher satisfaction.

Charteris and Smardon (2014) found that 63% of Australian teachers surveyed did not believe that they received feedback adequate for their professional growth. They reported that they also believed that their work appraisals were largely carried out to fulfil solely administrative requirements. The authors interviewed 13 volunteer teacher participants, and the results of their discussions indicate that dialogic peer coaching can enable teachers to influence each other's professional learning and to strengthen teacher agency. Drawing on adult learning theory, Charteris and Smardon (2014) found that successful school leaders could improve students' outcomes indirectly through their influences on motivation. Key themes emerged such as using questioning to promote thinking, having enough space for reflective practice, and witnessing the growth of leadership capabilities as people become dialogic coaches to each other. Charteris and Smardon's (2014) research, in the same way as much of the research on coaching in the *IJMCE*, has direct implications for how leadership power can be brokered to promote and support learning in all organizations, at all levels.

Gallant and Gilham (2014), also in Australia, looked at differentiated models of coaching in order to explore how a coaching culture responsive to differing coaching needs could be established. They focused on coachees' perceptions of the reasons why some coaching goals are more achievable than others. A sample size of 22 coaches allowed the authors to glean a detailed understanding of these coaches' understanding of their experiences. An important finding was that a goal was deemed obtainable when aligned with a specific focus. In the goal of improving student numeracy and literary, coaching could also be used to enhance teachers' sense of professionalism, which can contribute to establishing a more effective workplace environment in which educators feel their skills are facilitated and valued.

Advocating the use of fictional texts as a means of enhancing coaching training, Eastman (2016) makes a case for the benefits of exposing students to literary fiction. Reading about how fictional characters negotiate the terrain of life and work can help coaching students create stronger and more innovative narratives in their work-based projects. Eastman (2016) suggests that stories are how human beings make sense of the world, and that a fictional character can become a simulative hinge between theory and practice. Storytelling is the means of conceptualizing our position in the workplace and could be a means of resolving professional problems. Moreover, the critical thinking skills encouraged in professional practice can be enhanced by reading literature: from reading a story, students learn the importance of pace, of keeping the reader's interest, of letting the agent of the sentence control the sentence, and of telling a story. All of these authors in the *IJMCE* are fully engaged in exploring how coaching is mediated in their organizations and those they researched and, in diverse ways, demonstrate how coaching supports our taking responsibility for making changes to our behaviour to effect meaningful results.

Research limitations

The *IJMCE* welcomes a variety of approaches to coaching research and publishes studies that use an array of definitions, theories, and practice in coaching (and mentoring) through an educational lens. The diversity of theoretical traditions represented in the pages of the journal coupled with the scholarly rigour of the articles published in the field of coaching mean that this literature survey makes up in depth what it lacks in breadth. Given that the *IJMCE* is the only journal dedicated specifically to coaching (and mentoring) in education, it is a logical starting point for identifying wider trends in the field of coaching research.

By highlighting key trends in the field of coaching research, this review is designed both to identify the institutional contexts in which coaching has had an impact and to point to areas in

which this impact might be further developed. By synthesizing key themes from recent coaching research, this literature review shows the current state of the art in the field and points to promising areas of future research. One area that could be explored in the pages of the *IJMCE* is that of educational programmes in industry that promote organizational coaching. There are some compelling stories of how industry addresses coaching in an educational context in the workplace, and the *IJMCE* could extend its remit to demonstrate how coaching is promoted in this area, perhaps examining the key themes of trust, confidence, and identity in particular. The culture of industry can seriously limit coaching effectiveness, particularly when coaches feel compelled to use the process to encourage organizational and social conformity rather than to encourage personal growth and development (Shoukry and Cox, 2018). Too often, the culture of industry promotes coaching in a training setting rather than in a more appropriate educational context, leading to a frustrating and limiting process that neglects prolonged reflection and human complexity (Shoukry and Cox, 2018). In many organisational settings, according to Shoukry and Cox (2018) coaching becomes more a tool to integrate individuals "into a persuasive ideology" (p. 2) and less a means of promoting agency and critical thinking.

I have showcased a range of innovative practices in coaching and have identified practices that lead to coaching failure. The key themes of identify, trust, and confidence contain many sub-themes such as support, role modelling, innovation, and retention, themes which space does not permit me to explore in more detail but remain vital aspects of coaching.

Conclusion

In the 2012 inaugural issue of the *IJMCE,* Sarah Fletcher set out the prevailing coaching scene at that time:

Research into mentoring and coaching has historically often comprised descriptions of what participants in these relational activities have done or said, with no analyses. What has underpinned these relationships that skilful critical engagement might have revealed (and potentially invigorated future mentoring and coaching encounters) was lost in pages of reported speech and drowned out by unsubstantiated claims to know. (p. 6)

This survey of studies published in the journal since its inception reveals an abundance of substantiated, analytical, and highly reflective accounts of the reported benefits of coaching in a range of different educational contexts. The panorama of coaching research in the six years since the inauguration of the journal, which is captured across its pages, attests to the measurable effects of coaching on educational culture. These studies contribute to long-standing efforts to shift the prevailing educational culture to evidence-based practice and shared accountability. Celoria and Hemphill (2014) speak for many other authors when they write, "We are persuaded that knowledge develops as one engages in dialogue with others" (p. 73). Coaching brings thinking to the surface. It is not concerned with controlling, limiting, or measuring responses but in questioning, paraphrasing, reflecting, and establishing a focus that invites someone to learn something new.

The studies surveyed in this review have contributed to the advancement of the coaching field by being rigorous and precise in their definitions, proactive in challenging mediocre teaching and leadership practices and untested and uncontested educational shibboleths, and responsive in analysing data, revealing what may not be immediately evident. Above all, they have given voice to the many unsung and unappreciated practitioners working hard in the educational world. Six years from Sarah Fletcher's recognition that we were "witnessing the birth of a knowledge base for mentoring and coaching that transcends local, regional and national boundaries to be international and intercultural" (p. 4), we have seen the landscape

alter to reveal a forum in which coaching innovation, research, findings, methodologies, and practices can be debated, challenged, promoted, and spread. Here are the narratives that shape educational coaching today.

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