International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring
2018, Special Issue 12, DOI: 10.24384/000540

Exploring the Lived Experience of Internal Coaches

Jo Feehily

Oxford Brookes University, jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk

Abstract

This study investigates the lived experiences of internal coaches. In-depth interviews were conducted with four practising internal coaches in a large UK Higher Education Institution and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to understand the sense that coaches make of their experience. Through reactive sense-making coaches experience self-efficacy to address work related issues, align work with personal values and impact the way others behave towards them. Through embodied sense-making coaching is seen to impact internal coaches positively via self-care and self-management skills. A personal development process, manifested through experiential sense-making appears to contribute to altruism in coaches who demonstrate concern for the wellbeing of others.

Keywords: internal coaching, meaning, lived experience

Introduction

Participating in *mentoring* impacts employee engagement by "enhancing work-related fulfilment" (Kennett and Lomas, 2015, p. 29). But what of *coaching*? What impact does participation in coaching have on the coach? Manager coach programmes are thought to improve leadership skills by enhancing coaching and delegation skills (Grant and Hartley, 2014) and internal coaching improves the work-related prospects of coaches (Mukherjee, 2012; Rock and Donde, 2008; Cureton et al., 2010; Kennett and Lomas, 2015). It remains important to understand the lived experiences of internal coaches so that they can be recruited and supported appropriately. This study set out to explore these experiences; what it is like to train to be a coach and to engage in coaching alongside other work responsibilities, what sense coaches make of their coaching, what motivates them and what benefit they derive from the experience.

The study is set within the context of Oxford Brookes University (OBU), a large UK Higher Education institution, which offers the Institute of Leadership and Management accredited Level 5 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring to internal and external staff as a development opportunity. Graduates of the scheme are invited to join an institutional peer to peer coaching pool. This study explores the lived experiences of those coaches.

Internal coaching schemes

An Institute of Leadership and Management study (2011) indicated that 83% of organisations surveyed were sourcing their coaching internally, seeking to develop coaching capacity and the associated benefits of cost containment, a coaching culture and better managers, as organisations believe coaches make better managers (McKee et al., 2009). External coaches bring benefit to organisations but typically for a narrow range of employees, the leaders of the organisation (Mukherjee, 2012; Frisch, 2005; Rock and Donde, 2008). As long ago as 2002 senior managers in leading UK companies indicated almost unanimously a preference for coaching being more widely available to all levels of employees (Chartered Management Institute, 2002). Rock and Donde

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

(2008) conclude that internal coaching programmes allow wider access and their existence keeps external coaches competitive (Frisch, 2005), can keep down costs (Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh, 2014) and internal coaches understand the organisation and are respected by clients (Rock and Donde, 2008) because they are known to them.

In 'manager as coach' schemes, organisations benefit from managers focusing on their coaching skills, becoming better and more loyal leaders, with improved communication and conflict resolution skills and with a greater desire to develop others (Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh, 2014.) Jones et al., (2016) determine that internal coaching is more effective than external particularly when the relationship is purely between coach and coachee. Anderson and Anderson (2005) assert that internal coaches must have a good reputation, and be a good and mature listener. However, internal coaches are often not properly trained (Mukherjee, 2012). In practice internal coaches are not always managers (Edwards, 2014). Internal coaching contributes to organisational benefits such as increased retention, engagement, productivity and performance as well as ROI (Rock and Donde, 2008, Olivero et al., 1997) particularly when structures can ensure that internal coaching remains professional; formalised coach selection and continuous development such as supervision and clearly defined and integrated organisational goals (Frisch, 2005). These conclusions focus on measuring organisational impacts and leave open questions such as what is the lived experience of the internal coach like and how can organisations best support their work.

Impact of coaching on the coach

A selection of studies have investigated the impact on the coach or mentor of engaging in these helping relationships and thereby give some insight into the lived experiences of internal coaches albeit usually manager coaches. Cureton et al's., (2010) study of mentoring takes place in a UK Higher Education setting; benefits to the mentoring scheme participants include the opportunity for development, contact with colleagues and emotional support. Employees feel that the organisation is willing to invest in them (Cureton et al., 2010, Waldman, 2009) and that mentoring rekindles their interest for work (Clutterbuck, 2008, Cureton et al., 2010).

Mukherjee's (2012) case study in a large Indian production organisation investigated the impact of the internal coaching process from the coaches' perspectives. Coaching has both direct and indirect benefits for managers; 'improvement in interpersonal skills, listening ability, confidence level, work-life balance and visioning' (Mukherjee, 2012, p. 76) and indirect benefit in management capability, a benefit also noted by McKee (2009) in a study located in a large banking organisation. The act of helping others ameliorates the negative health effects of power and can enhance the sustainability of senior managers, although compassion fatigue can ensue (Boyatzis et al., 2006).

Kennett and Lomas (2015) examine, using IPA, the lived experience of mentors. They propose mentoring as a mechanism for enhancing staff engagement by making work meaningful (Kennett and Lomas, 2015). They studied volunteer mentors, who might be expected to feel positive about the experience (Kennett and Lomas, 2015). Moore and Koning (2016) propose a complex intersection of challenging environmental circumstances as contributing to meaning-making in the lived experience of trainee coaches. In learning to juggle the demands of the course with their jobs their coaches are supported through 'sense-enabling devices, such as theoretical literature, assignments and coaching supervision as well as coaching as a 'reflective, dialogic practice' (Moore and Koning, 2016, p. 39).

There is therefore literature which contributes to our understanding of the impacts of these helping roles for the coach or mentor, these impacts are often defined as quantifiable measures such as improved promotion prospects (Rock and Donde, 2008) and derived from investigating hierarchical schemes (Rock and Donde, 2008; Cureton et al., 2010; Mukherjee, 2012; Boyatzis et al., 2006;

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

McKee et al., 2009). However, literature in this area has yet to explore in-depth the lived experiences of internal coaches working in non-hierarchical voluntary coaching schemes.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of the OBU internal coaches, who work in the public sector in unpaid coaching roles. The study concerned itself with the words that the coaches used to describe their experience. The design therefore adopted an overarching qualitative research strategy (Bryman, 2016). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) was chosen as the most appropriate approach as it is concerned with making sense of experience "…in a particular context, for people who share a particular experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 45.) This study thus assumed a phenomenological stance, was interpretivist in nature and therefore adopted an inductive approach in that the sense of the data emerged through close consideration of the words in the transcripts (Creswell, 1998).

The participants

The sample of participants was selected purposively so that they could provide specific insight into the experience central to the study (Smith et al., 2009). The four participants are all employees of the same organisation, although in varying roles and had trained as coaches through the OBU scheme. They had all coached at least one client through the internal pool, typical for an IPA study, the sample was small and homogenous.

Table 1: Participant profiles

Participant pseudonym	Work specialism	Prior experience of coaching/mentoring	Coaching experience post training course
Sally	Senior Academic	Substantial	Substantial – internal and external clients
Joanne	Professional Services - Directorate based	None	One client since graduation
Frank	Professional Services - Directorate based	Of helping role and mentoring	Substantial – internal and external clients
Jenny	Professional Services - Faculty based	Student Mentoring	Substantial – continual coaching since graduation, internal and external

Interview procedure

In-depth interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes were used to "invite participants to offer a rich, first-person account of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56). An interview schedule was prepared in advance which provided an agenda for topics, emanating from the literature review but very open in nature allowing for new topics to emerge. The broad topics were shared with the interviewees the day before their interview, allowing them time to begin reflecting on their experiences, but the interviews were flexible to explore reflections as they arose (Bryman, 2016). The interviews took place in convenient and private locations and were recorded digitally to allow for later transcription.

Data analysis

From original transcripts thematic analysis was undertaken (Smith et al., 2009) using a process which moved from exploration of individual experiences to common experience "moving from the

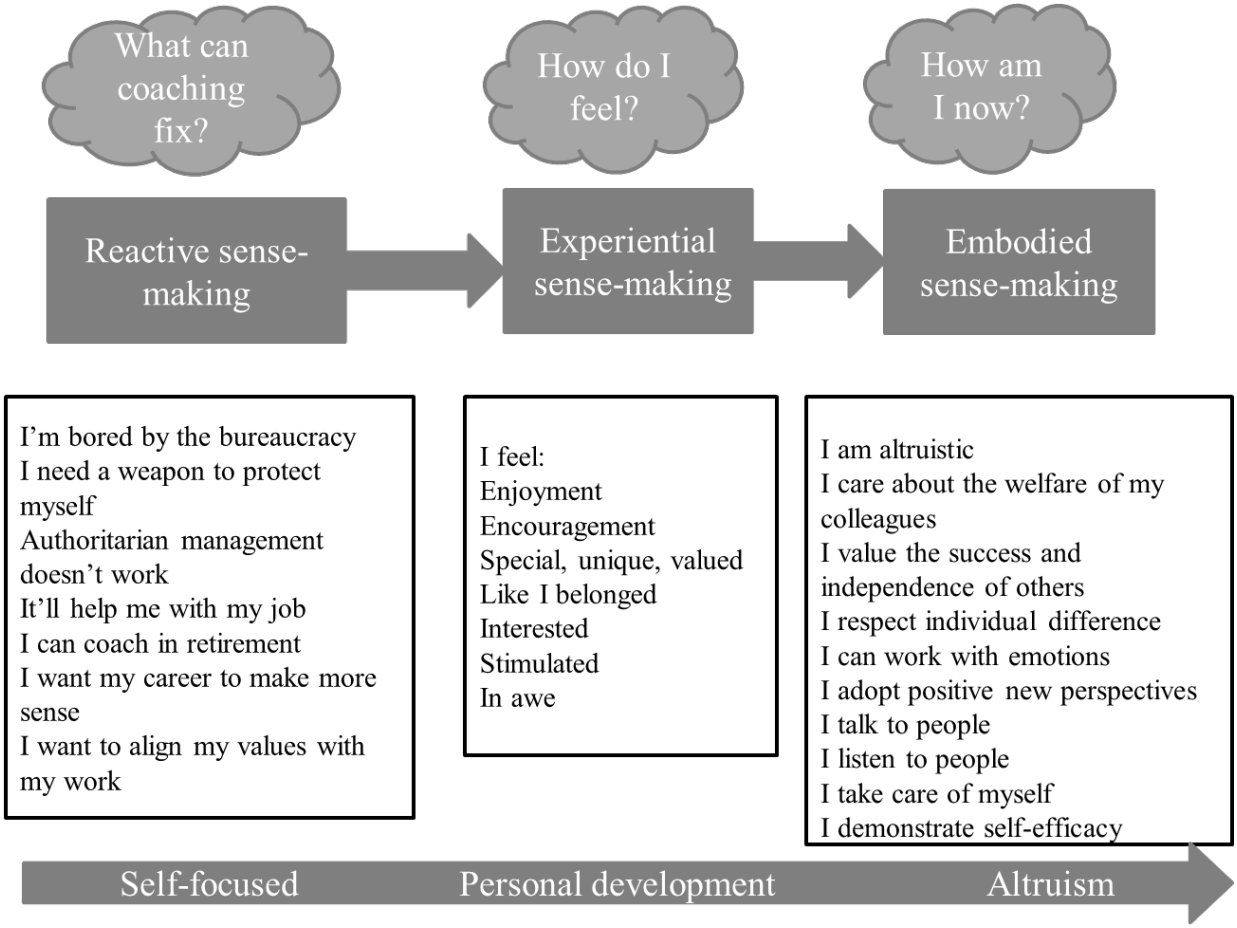
© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79). The transcripts were read several times to understand and give voice to the experiences of the individuals "the phenomenological requirement" and to derive meaning from those understandings "the interpretative requirement to contextualize and 'make sense'" of these experiences (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 102). The transcripts were first analysed at a detailed semantic level; then annotated for descriptive and linguistic content. Finally, more conceptual comment emerged. At an individual level the transcripts were then reviewed to identify themes emerging from the first level of analysis and then analysed across the participants to identify themes and patterns commonly experienced. Themes were then organised into a framework to demonstrate relationships between the themes (Smith et al., 2009) and reviewed in relation to relevant literature to bring a further level of interpretation.

Findings

Threads emerging from analysis of the transcripts can be organised into three super-ordinate themes, (Fig. 1) each generated from a series of related sub-themes (Table 1). Reactive sense-making sees the participants proposing drivers in their professional and private lives which motivated them to coach. This category is concerned either with deficiencies in their working lives or in the alignment between their values and lived experience and sees coaching as an activity which might fix the situation. Experiential sense-making engages the emotions and feelings experienced by the coaches. Embodied sense-making involves participants having absorbed the principles and techniques of coaching and being aware of their presence in their ways of being at work and interacting with others.

Figure 1: Sense-making of internal coaches –super-ordinate themes



© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

Table 2 details how super-ordinate themes and sub-themes featured in individual participant interviews.

Table 2: Super-ordinate theme and participant responses

Super-ordinate theme	Sub-theme	Raised in interview by
Reactive sense-making	Coaching will fix something	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
	Coaching for career coherence	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
	Coaching for values alignment	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
Experiential sense-making	Joy or enjoyment	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
	Awe	Sally, Frank
Embodied sense-making	Altruism	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
	Respect for the individual	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne
	Emotional confidence	Sally, Jenny, Joanne
	Ways of being	Sally, Jenny, Frank, Joanne

Reactive sense-making

The participants identified push or pull factors which contributed to a sense that coaching could make a positive contribution to their work experience as an antidote to an unsatisfactory situation. The demands and complexities of Sally's senior role mean that research is less central to her professional life and this is not satisfying.

Sally:

> *I like the variety but I've never, […] in my academic side of work been able to do what other people do and just concentrate on one particular area, so I dabble…[…] it's perhaps more difficult to channel and build up a profile of particular things.*

Frank hoped to move into a management role and had a preference for a coaching style of management, wanted a role which involved thinking and feeling and where he could identify his personal contribution. Jenny identified a specific difficulty of communication when she came into her new role working with a new set of colleagues. She seems willing to take personal responsibility for addressing this difficulty. Challenge is a common theme in participant roles and they suggest coaching contributes to personal efficacy in addressing perceived difficulties.

Sally, Frank and Jenny describe coaching as a natural part of their career development which has helped them to achieve a sense of career coherence. Sally details significant engagement with coaching and mentoring in earlier stages of her career, she has received, researched and taught others about mentoring. Coaching forms an extension to her professional disciplinary specialism.

Sally:

> *so although I'd been involved in it and teaching about mentoring and coaching I hadn't really any formal qualifications …. I realised that I was bored….Not bored because I haven't got lots to do, bored because I needed something of a different stimulus.*

For Frank coaching means he has fulfilled a long held ambition of returning to the type of work experienced with a charity. Both Sally and Jenny mention using coaching as an alternative income source when they are no longer working. Therefore, coaching represents for them a future step in their careers.

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

Coaching has allowed for a closer alignment of the coaches' personal values with their working lives and in Frank's case he has been able to help clients achieve such alignment too. The coaches all demonstrated a pre-existing concern for others in their working lives. Jenny demonstrates a willingness to develop herself, through coaching, for the benefit of others. She was attracted to coaching because she found it difficult to talk to her new team, if she could communicate better with her academics, there might be a higher number of applications for research grants, so the academics would perform better, which is the objective of her role. Coaching provided a vehicle for her to deal with this difficulty

The coaches have been able to bring a closer alignment with their personal values and their day job through coaching. For Joanne the opportunity to offer a safe space for clients and empower them was attractive on a value level.

Joanne:

> *what I liked about it is that it's, […] giving people the space to think things through and work out their own solutions…*

For Frank there is compelling evidence that coaching is a vehicle for alignment of personal values with working life, because coaching is concerned with, and values individual difference. In terms of the lived experience of these coaches, the coaching provided each of them with the means to develop self-efficacy in addressing dissatisfying features of their own roles.

Experiential sense-making

The interviews were all characterised by a lightening in mood as participants shifted between talking about their day jobs and talking about coaching. A sense of joy through coaching was evident, language was joyful, light and forgiving of aspects of the programme they had not enjoyed. Language shifted to describing feelings and mood, coaching acts as an emotional pick-me-up and an antidote to everyday frustrations.

Joanne:

> *… I enjoyed the course tremendously, enjoyed the workshops, I didn't enjoy so much the theory behind it and complications.… People's thoughts are acceptable because they are their thoughts, rather than… You can't really say that… You want to think about what you've just said and possibly rephrase it… You know and it was easy it was more relaxed...*

Jenny:

> *it's the complete opposite of my job which I really enjoy and I think it has helped me enjoy my role.*

The participants felt special and welcomed into an elite group of people.

Joanne:

> *I was really, really excited, and then when they told me I'd got on it, it was like I'd been accepted onto this elite training programme and I was very pleased.*

Participants saw the coaching time as being special time for themselves, which made them feel different and they found the experience both nurturing and stimulating.

Sally:

> *…every time we have a session I pick something up and think yeah that's interesting I could use that. I'll try that out and I think that's how I develop my practice in all areas and I'm not [too] proud to say I've nicked it…*

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

One clear emotional response to coaching was a sense of awe, an expression of wonder at how effective the coaching can be, the powerful impact it has on those that it touches. Sally mentions the power that coaching can have with just one conversation. Frank reflects on the process of shifting a person's thinking through coaching.

Embodied sense-making

The final sense-making theme which emerges relates to how the coaches are after the experience. These descriptions felt more significant and present, they were illustrated by current observable behaviours not just reflections and descriptions. The participants appear to have absorbed core principles of coaching which impact their current lived experience; they have certainty that the client is resourceful, equal with the coach, sets the agenda and therefore owns the credit for any change that results (Rogers, 2012). Frank has absorbed so much of his coach training into his way of being that he rehearses coaching as he speaks. By describing some of the core processes that he observes when he is coaching, he reflects transformations that he has experienced himself.

Frank:

> *….if that person [that we are having difficulty with] is slightly less demonised, slightly more humanised, if I can see who they are and what they are rather than just this steamrolling over that, then in fact what's happening is that the change is happening in me and that changes everything, so that puts me back in power because as soon as I've lost power, that I'm dependent on the other person to change, then all the frustration can build up because the person won't change, why should they? Just because it would make my life easier – […] and once somebody can stop talking about that they start, things start to turn a new.*

The participants exhibit altruism, a seemingly selfless concern for the welfare of others. For Sally that feeling is similar to when she facilitates the advancement of students. The success of the client in making changes gives her pleasure. For Joanne coaching has become part of her day job persona, she is able to maintain an informal, neutral position in her relations and thereby become a person that colleagues want to talk to.

Joanne:

> *… before I wouldn't have done …I would have just left them to it, so I'm trying, [..] to be more responsible for the welfare of the people who work around me.*

Frank's altruism is demonstrated through his insistence that all credit belongs with the client and that his own role as a coach is minimal and one which allows clients space. He acknowledges a temptation to marvel at what has happened but a better reward for him is to give credit and ownership back to the client. Jenny feels compassion for the life of an academic; describing how the environment has become more stressful. Ultimately her coaching journey has been undertaken to fulfil that role of facilitating academics to achieve their fundraising objectives more effectively. A deeply held concern and respect for the individual and individual difference and a confidence that positive outcomes can be achieved, colours the language of the participants.

The participants exhibit emotional confidence; some specifically accredit this to the coaching. Sally's example explores her growing confidence working with emotions.

Sally:

> *I find the more that I coach the more I am comfortable with… naming emotions, and I think probably when I first started […] I wouldn't have felt as comfortable about …. I'm picking up from you that the emotion is anger… I'm picking up real anger… Is that right? Or what you've just done (she folds her arms) shows me that you're feeling*

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

> *defensive. I've become much better, I hope, at being attuned to how people are responding to things.*

From coaching, Joanne has developed a new way of being, distancing herself from situations and developing new perspectives. She takes criticism less personally and more constructively now.

The participants have adopted ways of being within their organisation and maintenance techniques for looking after themselves. They experience a greater sense of belonging, connection and engagement, in some cases with the coaching team and in some with the organisation and colleagues generally. Sally, Joanne and Jenny feel the value of being better connected in the organisation and of understanding different perspectives. Jenny's new way of being seems to have reaped rewards, she has shifted her own perspective to be more interested in what is going on behind the scenes when people ask her questions and the behaviour of others has changed towards Jenny. They are more likely to come to her to ask for help and they see her help as being more than 'doing the labels'.

For Frank, coaching has brought a different perspective on his own career, he was looking to change jobs to move into a management role but now accepts he can contribute different things to the organisation and feels valued without feeling pressure to progress through the job scales.

Frank:

> *…. in a big organisation… I can either see myself as just trying to progress for my own sake or I can take a bigger view of it, that as long as I can make a worthwhile contribution in the work I'm doing then I can give of my best to the work I'm doing then that's better than… Always looking for something that's where the grass is greener or things are paid more...*

The coaches coach themselves as self-maintenance. Several report trying to achieve a sense of calm and checking that they are not carrying any baggage into a coaching session; activities which seem to bring their own benefit.

Frank:

> *I have to start by making sure I'm applying it to my ordinary life so that when it comes to coaching somebody else there's no barriers in me… there is nothing that I'm demanding to get for myself to solve my own situation in a coaching session… I need to observe myself I need to notice what's going on [..] I like to meditate, I like to sort of spend time either with nature or just sitting and thinking and making sure that there's nothing kind of worrying me I need to sort out first and then I can go and focus on the client.*

Participant reflections within this theme demonstrate a way of being that has shifted from the reactive sense-making focused on the self towards a more altruistic position. The participants report a deeper connection with their organisation or those they coach or work with and a deeper valuing of themselves and the importance of taking care of themselves.

Discussion

Reactive sense-making suggests reflective behaviour which impacts on the lived experience of the coaches. Contemplating one's current work experience, identifying issues, and doing something proactive suggests employees who are engaged, self-aware and seeking self-determination. The mentor participants of Kennett and Lomas's study (2015) encountered similar meaning-making through a combination of self-determination and reflection. Coaching is a vehicle for agency: rather than complain about unsatisfactory aspects of their roles, the participants use coaching to change

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

the reality. Whether a pre-existing tendency to agency was evident prior to coaching is difficult to say, although both Frank and Sally demonstrate engagement with lifelong learning. Whereas Kennett and Lomas's (2015) participants describe these opportunities for reflection and self-determination as contributory to making their work life more meaningful and fulfilling, the participants of this study describe work-related issues as reasons for coaching and drivers for change in their working lives.

Coaching contributes to a more positive work experience because the participants achieve a deeper sense of alignment between their personal values and their day jobs and a deeper sense of career coherence through a process of narrative sense-making. Bakker and Demerouti, (2008) believe well-being at work is shaped by engagement and Kennett and Lomas (2015) propose that in order to be engaged one must find work meaningful. One psychological driver of engagement is aligning the purpose of one's role with one's own purposes and values (Crabb, 2011). As participants describe their lived experience, their sense-making is more than a sequential, linear, cognitive communication of information; by weaving coaching into the sense of their stories it is more like the "temporal process[es] of making [their lives] sensible through embedded and embodied narrative performances" (Reissner, 2008, p. 66). The working lives of all four participants share the hypercomplexity that Stelter (2009) describes as inherent in modern working life, including the requirements to blend a range of discipline specific and soft skills and to perform in a range of changing roles. The coaches reflect on experience and the different roles and identities required of them (Butcher, 2012) and integrate that experience within coherent stories of themselves.

The participants share the impacts on lived experience noted by other authors; better listening and management skills (Mckee et al., 2009; Rock and Donde, 2008), increased confidence, improved interpersonal skills and listening ability (Mukherjee, 2012). Their reflections seem to suggest something more profound, however. For example, Jenny not only listens to the questions that her academics bring to her but feels now more interested in what makes them ask those question. By seeing and listening to people differently she has changed how they see and work with her and what they believe she is capable of. In addition to behaviours that contribute to an internal coaching culture and to better management competence overall (Mukherjee, 2012, McKee et al., 2009), the lived experience of the OBU coaches suggests an ability to change the way others relate to them.

Rock and Donde (2008) note impacts for the coach from coaching of increased promotion prospects and relief from unsatisfactory roles, Cureton et al., (2010) observe a rekindling of interest in work and Kennett and Lomas (2015) a finding of meaning through work. This study did not set out to measure promotion prospects however, some participants, Frank in particular, set out on a coaching journey to improve those prospects but coaching has contributed to a sense of satisfaction with current roles in its alleviation of some of the challenges and by providing a vehicle for a different contribution.

The participants experience restorative effects anticipated of supervision (Proctor, 1997) but also through their own self-care measures. Bachkirova (2016) uses the analogy of the coach as the instrument of coaching and cites a condition for its good use as taking care of the instrument, for prevention of burnout and to sustain energy, which appears to be what the participants are doing.

New insights from this study are the particular embodied ways of being that have emerged from the coaching process; altruism, a concern for and understanding of others, their challenges and their differences and a sense of emotional confidence which is resilient to ambiguity and comfortable with emotion. One of Crabb's (2011) psychological drivers for engagement is the managing of emotions, this gives some insight into what is happening here. With a greater degree of confidence working with emotions, a sense of engagement with the workplace is enhanced.

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

The coaches' observations resemble shifts in personal development; they exhibit tolerance for difference in others and a holistic understanding of the nature of individual contribution and therefore seem to exhibit the cognitive developments described by Kegan (1982) which can be conceived as ego evolution (Bachkirova 2011). A self-authoring mind can see multiplicity and patterns and is critical and analytical, a self-transforming mind demonstrates tolerance to ambiguity and a movement from linear logic to more holistic understandings (Kegan, 1982). Joanne's ability to react more objectively in conflict situations for example is resonant of Cook-Greuter's (2004) more integrated levels of interpersonal style and development potential which are characterised by a tolerance both of conflict and the autonomy of others (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Coaches describe coaching as an antidote to issues in their working lives. They weave coaching into their life stories creating a sense of coherence (Reissner, 2008, Butcher, 2012) and agency to address pre-existing issues (Kennett and Lomas, 2015). Coaches have absorbed the learning and the principles of coaching which leads to certain observable impacts of the coaching experience such as improved emotional confidence and better listening and interpersonal skills (McKee et al., 2009; Mukherjee, 2012; Rock and Donde, 2008). Between these two types of sense-making sits a transformational process; a shift between a more self-focused set of motivations for coaching, to a more altruistic position which demonstrates care for the welfare of colleagues. The coaches occupy a way of being in the workplace, which is more concerned with the well-being of others (Batson and Shaw, 1991). Mastain (2007, p. ii) maintains that "altruistically motivated pro-social behavior is more committed, extensive, and effective than egoistically motivated helping and results in a higher level of attachment to, and concern for, the long-term well-being". This shift is likely to have beneficial effects for: the coaches in terms of engagement (Kennett and Lomas, 2015), the recipients of coaching and the organisation. Understanding that shift is helped by the findings of Moore and Koning (2016). The complex intersecting of career development, personal life and education experienced by the Moore and Koning (2016) trainee coaches as they grappled with issues of identity, share similarities with the experiences of the participants of this study. The joyful, welcoming, nurturing, intellectually challenging demands of the coaching course and pool appear to have provided the same "sense-enabling devices" (Moore and Koning, 2016, p. 39) that help to address challenges of sense-making and provide a supportive environment within which the coaches have assimilated the principles and values of coaching into their lived experience.

Implications for coaches and organisations

The shift from the more self-focused sense-making of coaching to the more altruistic embodied sense-making, leading to more connected and capable individuals (Mastain, 2007), seems to hinge on the nurturing environment of the coaching course, the coaching itself and the group supervision. The feeling of being brought into an elite, supportive group of trained coaches has been fundamental to a developmental process whereby coaches progress along a continuum towards greater altruism and connectedness (Mastain, 2007). An enabling and nurturing environment (Moore and Koning, 2016) plus supportive training and supervision is key in this coaching programme and can be construed to be important for programmes of this type.

As a tool for developing engagement and agency, this internal coaching programme has been effective for these coaches; these outcomes could be shared with potential coaches for internal coaching programmes in similar organisational contexts where coaching is voluntary and unpaid. Self-care (Bachkirova, 2016) for the coach emerged as a common practice among the participants, and manifested as a series of meditative and self-coaching practices. The exercises were described as beneficial for clients and have been important in sustaining the energy of the coaches (Bachkirova, 2016) and their confidence in their coaching. This has important implications for coach training curricula.

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

Limitations and opportunities for future research

This study took place in one organisation operating a non-hierarchical internal coaching programme and the study shares a limitation with the Kennett and Lomas (2015) study that the coaches were volunteers and therefore brought a positive view of their experiences. Future research could explore the lived experience of coaches in different organisational settings and investigate whether similar findings are experienced in settings where coaching or mentoring is expected or compulsory.

The findings point to a developmental process being underway, with participants moving into self-authoring or self-transforming states (Kegan, 1982) and adopting a more autonomous and integrated personal style (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Future research could investigate whether there is evidence of coach development processes at work within other coaching and mentoring training environments and to determine frameworks for describing those processes.

References

Anderson, D. L. and Anderson, M. C. (2005) *Coaching that counts: Harnessing the power of leadership coaching to deliver strategic value.* Burlington, MA:: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Anderson, N. (2016) *On becoming a coach.* MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford.

Bachkirova, T. (2011) *Developmental Coaching: Working with the Self.* Maidenhead: Open University Press

Bachkirova, T. (2016) 'The self of the coach: Conceptualization, issues, and opportunities for practitioner development', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,* 68(2), pp. 143-156.

Bakker, A. B. and Demerouti, E. (2008) 'Towards a model of work engagement', *Career Development International,* 13(3), pp. 209-223.

Batson, C. D. and Shaw, L. L. (1991) 'Evidence of Altruism: Towards a Pluralism of Prosocial Motives', *Psychological Inquiry,* 2(2), pp. 107-122.

Boyatzis, R. E., Smith, M. and Blaize, N. 2006. Developing sustainable leaders through coaching and compassion.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods, Fifth edition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butcher, J. (2012) 'Exploring the Link between Identity and Coaching Practice', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring,* June 2012(Special Issue No. 6), pp. 119-129.

Clutterbuck, D. (2008) 'What's happening in coaching and mentoring And what is the difference between them', *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal,* 22(4), pp. 8-10.

Clutterbuck, D., Development., C. I. o. P. a. and Megginson, D. (2005) *Making coaching work: creating a coaching culture.* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Clutterbuck, D., Megginson, D. and Bajer, A. C. (2016) *Building and Sustaining a Coaching Culture.* CIPD

Cook-Greuter, S. R. (2004) 'Making the case for a developmental perspective', *Industrial and Commercial Training,* 36(7), pp. 275-281.

Crabb, S. (2011) 'The use of coaching principles to foster employee engagement', *Coaching Psychologist,* 7(1), pp. 27-34.

Creswell, J. W. (1998) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions.* London: Sage.

Cureton, D., Green, P. and Meakin, L. (2010) 'Peer Mentoring for Staff Development in a Changing Work Environment', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring,* 8(2), pp. 79-90.

Eby, L. T. d. T., Allen, T. D., Hoffman, B. J., Baranik, L. E., Sauer, J. B., Baldwin, S., Morrison, M. A., Kinkade, K. M., Maher, C. P., Curtis, S. and Evans, S. C. (2013) 'An interdisciplinary meta-analysis of the potential antecedents, correlates, and consequences of protégé perceptions of mentoring', *Psychological Bulletin,* 139(2), pp. 441-476.

Edwards, L., Ann (2014) 'What Makes a Great Internal Coach', *Talent Development*.

Frisch, M. H. (2005) 'Extending the Reach of Executive Coaching: The Internal Coach', *Human Resource Planning,* 28(1), pp. 23-23.

Gormley, H. and van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2014) 'Developing coaching cultures: a review of the literature', *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice,* 7(2), pp. 90-101.

Grant, A. M. and Hartley, M. (2014) 'Exploring the impact of participation in a Leader as Coach programme using the Personal Case Study Approach', *Coaching Psychologist,* 10(2), pp. 51-58.

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University

Gyllensten, K. and Palmer, S. (2005) 'Can coaching reduce workplace stress', *The Coaching Psychologist,* 1(1), pp. 15-17.

Institute of Leadership and Management (2011) *Creating a coaching culture.* London: ILM.

Jones, R. J., Woods, S. A. and Guillaume, Y. R. F. (2016) 'The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching', *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology,* 89(2), pp. 249-277.

Kegan, R. (1982) *The Evolving Self:Problem and Process in Human Development.* London: Harvard University Press.

Kennett, P. and Lomas, T. (2015) 'Making meaning through mentoring: Mentors finding fulfilment at work through self-determination and self-reflection', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring,* 13(2), pp. 29-44.

Larkin, M., Watts, S. and Clifton, E. (2006) 'Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2), pp. 102-120.

Mastain, L., Kelly (2007) *The lived experience of altruism as described by moral exemplars: A descriptive phenomenological study.* P.h.D., Saybrook University, California.

McKee, A., Tilin, F. and Mason, D. (2009) 'Coaching from the inside: Building an internal group of emotionally intelligent coaches', *International Coaching Psychology Review,* 4(1), pp. 59-70.

Moore, L. and Koning, J. (2016) 'Intersubjective identity work and sensemaking of adult learners on a postgraduate coaching course: Finding the balance in a world of dynamic complexity', *Management Learning,* 47(1), pp. 28-44.

Mukherjee, S. (2012) 'Does Coaching Transform Coaches? A Case Study of Internal Coaching', *International Journal of Evidenced Coaching and Mentoring,* 10(2), pp. 76-87.

Olivero, G., Bane, K. D. and Kopelman, R. E. (1997) 'Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool: Effects on productivity in a public agency', *Public Personnel Management,* 26(4), pp. 461.

Proctor, B. (1997) 'Contracting in Supervision', in Sills, C. (ed.) *Contracts in Counseling*. London: Sage Publications.

Reissner, S. (2008) 'Narrative and Storytelling: New Perspectives on Coaching', *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching* December 2008.

Rock, D. and Donde, R. (2008) 'Driving organizational change with internal coaching programs: part one', *Industrial & Commercial Training,* 40(1), pp. 10-18.

Rogers, J. (2012) *Coaching skills: a handbook, 3rd ed.* Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Sherman, S. and Freas, A. (2004) 'The WILD WEST of Executive Coaching', *Harvard Business Review,* 82(11), pp. 82-90.

Skiffington, S. and Zeus, P. 2003. *Behavioral coaching: How to build sustainable personal and organizational strength B2 - Behavioral coaching: How to build sustainable personal and organizational strength.* New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing.

Smith, J. A. (2007) 'Hermeneutics, human sciences and health: linking theory and practice', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health & Well-Being,* 2(1), pp. 3-11.

Smith, J. A., Larkin, M. and Flowers, P. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research.* Los Angeles, [Calif.], London: SAGE.

Stelter, R. (2009) 'Coaching as a reflective space in a society of growing diversity - towards a narrative, postmodern paradigm', *International Coaching Psychology Review,* 4(2), pp. 209-219.

Waldman, J. (2009) 'Introducing a coaching culture', *Training Journal*, pp. 65-69.

Yardley, L. (2000) 'Dilemmas in qualitative health research', *Psychology and Health,* 15(2), pp. 215-228.

Author Information

Jo Feehily is a Programme Lead and Principal Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, this research formed part of her dissertation for an MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice, which won the Esther Cavett prize

© The Authors
Published by Oxford Brookes University