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ABSTRACT *This research studied the effects of coaching in a New Zealand primary school. It was a deliberate act of leadership by the principal to bring about pedagogical change. Underpinning the study was the belief that often effective teachers are unidentified and underutilised despite teachers being the best resource in a school. A review of literature found one of the most important factors in a child's learning was the teacher. Other literature stressed the importance of obtaining teacher buy-in and that successful coaching partnerships were built on trust. The coaching model adopted for this study recommended certain conditions had to be created for coaching to be successful. This paper explores the process developed to meet these conditions. It shows how action research methodology, and methods such as collaborative storying, contextualised classroom observations, non-evaluative feedback and the nominal group technique resulted in teacher dialogue and reflection on practice.*

BACKGROUND

This article is the result of an action research study undertaken in a low socio-economic primary school New Zealand in 2003-4. Two groups of teachers participated in the study, which was set up to investigate the question "how can peer coaching be used to effectively develop teachers' pedagogy?" It was a deliberate act of leadership to bring about change. The process was based on a concept of Hopkins (2001) that a cadre, or small group, could be developed to work together and then influence other colleagues within the school. The principal as a facilitator/coach worked with an initial group of four teachers, to begin their work in mid 2003. Each of this initial group then selected a colleague to work with in a coaching partnership in 2004. It is the work of these eight teachers that is reported in this article.

The education reforms in New Zealand in 1988 had a major impact on the context of this research study as they resulted in a great deal more administrative work for principals (Wylie, 1997), which, in turn lead to a management focus rather than a focus on leading learning. Teachers were also struggling to come to terms with the new curriculum documents, sharing their professional development with colleagues, and managing the related assessment requirements associated with the changes. Their lives became filled with checklists, the completion of reports and a focus on compliance. Extensive portfolios of checklists and work samples became the norm in schools and an expectation of the Education Review Office (Wylie, 1997). Most of the professional development was focussed on selected teachers from each school attending courses to find out how to implement the new curriculum documents. They were then required to return to their schools and 'train' their colleagues. It seemed that the focus was on sharing of knowledge rather than on the skills of how to teach. The rapid change – and on-going fine-tuning – created an

environment where the focus was on implementing change rather than pedagogy in the classrooms. These beliefs were supported by the Secretary for Education in his address to the Principals Moot (April 2004, p.8) where he said: "While important and worthwhile reforms occurred the major focus was one of investing in learning and strengthening the critical role of teachers. It did leave many teachers feeling isolated and put upon."

The last sentence is important as, I believe that it summed up the mood of many teachers and affected their focus in the classroom. The isolation of teachers in their single classroom cells is always an issue in developing new skills but the rapid pace of change exacerbated it. Myers and MacBeath in the preface to Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003, p. xi) said: "teachers are often seen as the problem rather than part of the solution." As I got closer to formulating the proposal for the study it seemed to me that the answer to school improvement, and more importantly the change in pedagogy, lay in working with teachers.

FOCUS ON TEACHING

There was a great deal of support for this view of focussing on teachers in the literature. Hattie (2002) said that one of the most important factors in children's learning was the teacher who closed the door at 9:00 every day. Fullan (1991) also believed that if one wanted to bring about change there was a need to focus on the teacher. This view is also shared by Barth (2001). Bishop, Berryman and Richardson (2001, p.49) found that, "effective teachers could clearly explain what they were doing in the classroom and why they were doing it." Hattie (2003, p.9) also said:

It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in the learning equation and it is the one source of variance that can be enhanced with the greatest potential of success.

Hill and Hawk (2000), Deans (1999) and Gipps, (1994) all share a similar belief that quality interactions between teacher and student is a key factor effecting their learning. Hopkins (1993, p.3) supported this when he said;

a teacher promotes student learning by being active in planning and organising his/her teaching, explaining to students what they are to learn, arranging occasions for guided practice, monitoring progress, providing feedback and otherwise helping students understand and accomplish work.

Hattie (2002), Bishop et al (2001), Ramsay (1993) and Ysseldyke and Christensen (1983) identified a range of skills and attributes that effective teachers demonstrate. The common features from these various authors included teacher expectations, instructional match, reflective behaviour, passion for teaching, and that students are a central focus. The commonalities of these writers beliefs continue: the teachers practice a range of skills, they are able to motivate students, relationships with students are important, there is a positive classroom climate, they provide quality feedback and they endeavour to develop deeper learning. Who are these teachers? Where are they? How can we, as leaders, identify these leaders and use them to

reduce isolation and develop similar skills in others so that they impact on students' learning? These were the questions that I confronted as I began this research study.

COACHING AND THE COACHING PROCESS

The greatest resource that any school has is the intelligence and problem-solving ability of the staff (Gottesman, 2000). How could the skills and attributes be harnessed within a school? Robertson (1995) found that the principals she worked with benefited from the support of a coach. In fact there was benefit to both participants in the coaching partnership. Robertson's (1995) research helped the principals in her group cope with the isolation of their jobs and learn from observing and talking with each other, as they reflect on their practice. It seemed to me that this process had the potential to benefit teachers in my school.

There is a lot of discussion in literature about coaching and mentoring and sometimes not a lot of agreement about the differences. Clutterbuck (1992) believed that mentoring was something that occurred between individuals of different experience. Hobson (2003) and Clutterbuck (1998) believed coaching was a narrower form of mentoring with a focus on specific job skills. The view of Angelique, Kyle and Taylor (2002) was that peer coaching or peer mentoring occurred between two people of similar experience and was therefore a more equal partnership, while Gottesman (2000) saw coaching's purpose as a way of transferring knowledge and training in everyday situations to manage the task more effectively. She agreed that coaching occurred between professionals on the same level. Holmes (2003) saw coaching as a process to assist learning and for development to take place. Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003) added another dimension to the discussion with their view that coaching was a form of critical friendship and a way of supporting schools. Coaching empowers the learner, which leads to an improvement in self-efficacy according to Popper and Lipshitz (1992), and I believed that this fact could encourage the participants to continue learning. Another point of view that supported the use of coaching to change pedagogy, was that the development and consolidation of new learning and consolidating it as part of the classroom practice was more likely to occur if the teacher/learner participates in classroom observation that is followed by quality and focussed feedback (Joyce and Showers, 1982). This view is expressed similarly by Cook (1999) who believed that coaching helped identify and correct poor practice and improved teacher morale. Another aspect to coaching was put forward by Holmes (2003) who believed that it was an effective process if it was sustained in the middle to long term. How could all these components be drawn together and lead to teachers changing their pedagogy? This was the challenge to me as a researcher and leader, to design a process and also create the conditions for coaching to succeed.

Holmes (2003) believed that there were four components that were required for successful coaching. These are set out in diagrammatic form below. It was Holmes (2003) view that this model was most successful where all four criteria of the task of coaching, the ecology of the school, the coach's skills and the attitude of the learner

intersect. He believed that the participants in coaching partnerships must have an understanding of the school goals and that the coaching goals must be similar, and that the culture in the school needed to be conducive to the implementation of coaching. He also had the view that coaches needed to have skills and be secure in their role, the school and profession, and that the learners had to be willing participants who were open to change.

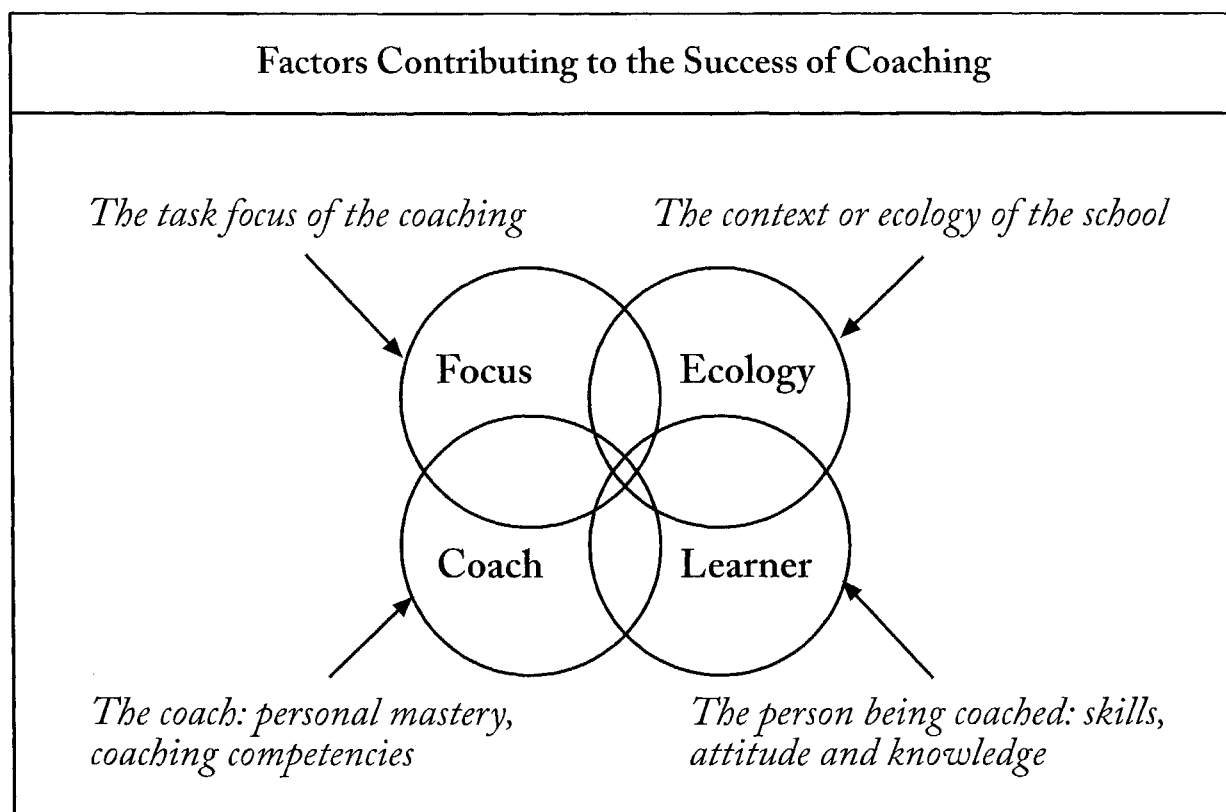


Figure 1

Holmes (2003)

These ideas appealed to me as a sound guide and it was decided that this model would be the basis for this coaching study. There was a personal challenge for me too. As Stein and Spillane (2003) said, in their experience, not many schools have been able to create the conditions that grow and develop teachers learning of teaching and pedagogy in a routine way that includes shared planning and coaching. In this school there was one other factor that had to be considered when the coaching process was planned and implemented. The research was being carried out and facilitated by the Principal in his own school. This created some ethical issues to be overcome in the design of the process.

Ethically the teachers needed to be able to choose to become involved. The research and the coaching process had to consider other factors such as teacher ownership and buy-in, the participants' ability to share and discuss ideas without fear or favour, and the need for teachers to feel empowered so that they were willing to make change.

Action research had been used effectively by Robertson (1995) and it seemed that this would be the best methodology to meet the needs of the research and also the participants. This view is supported by this quote:

Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of those practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p.5)

The importance of action research to this study was further underlined by the views of Stenhouse (1976, pp222-233) when he stated:

I believe that the long term improvement of education through the utilisation of research and development hinges on the creation of different expectations in the system... the different expectations will be generated only as schools come to see themselves as research and development institutions rather than clients of research and development... Research in curriculum and teaching which involves the close study of schools and classrooms, is the basis of sound development and the growth of a research tradition in schools as its foundation... it is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they should do it themselves.

It seemed to me that if I wanted to bring about long-term change to classroom pedagogy that there was a need for teachers to understand the reasons for the changes.

By bringing together the research and the action, I wanted to avoid having research **done to** teachers but to have it **done with** teachers. I also believed that action research could enable immediacy in that applications or changes could be applied from the research across to the action (Cardno, 2003, p.11). I considered the views of Grundy (1995 p.18) who said; "the essence of action research is groups of professional practitioners with a passion for improvement taking risks and assessing what happens when they make change." I was hoping to attract participants with passion who were risk-takers and to ensure that another view of Grundy, (1995) was considered. She believed that action research was only able to occur when there is trust and that the status, position or powers do not have any privileges. These views were encapsulated in the Holmes' (2003) model that I intended to use in the study.

To meet the goals set by Holmes (2003) and to ensure that trust was developed between participants it was important to use a number of methods that gave control to the participants and allowed me to be the observer of their world. I planned to use the cadre (Hopkins, 2001) approach to change, where a small group would be formed and their skills developed so that they could work with peers, and gradually gather further participants until coaching became an accepted way of doing things within the school. This was a long-term plan of change that was to continue way beyond the period covered by the research.

From the readings and my experience, I believed that the key to effective teaching was for the teacher to understand their beliefs, values and attitudes that underpin their practice as it is these factors that are at the core of their pedagogy (Effective

Literacy Practice – years 1-4, 2003, p.15). It was decided to begin the coaching relationship using the collaborative storying method (Bishop, 1996) with the four volunteers from the staff. The collaborative storying method involved meeting with each participant individually and recording their views to the question “what are the beliefs, values and attitudes that underpin your practice?” A draft of their views was returned to each participant within a short time and a further meeting took place where the participant could make changes or clarify ideas. The researcher/colleague could ask questions to further understand the participant’s statements. The new report was returned to the colleague again and the same process repeated. Finally, after three meetings the document went back to the participant for final corrections and sign off.

A conceptual framework (of the beliefs, values and attitudes) was developed so that the researcher had a clear understanding of each of the participants philosophy that underpinned their practice. These were remarkably similar to those of the writers on effective teaching mentioned earlier in this article. This showed the sort of teachers who had volunteered to become involved in the research. The individual participants were given a list of their beliefs, values and attitudes and asked to make an appointment for an observation of their teaching to see if there was a link between their espoused theories and theories in action. Gottesman’s (2000) belief was that classroom observations should be negotiated with the teacher, and a context developed. This process of preparation for the observations gave the participant a sense of control and encouraged “buy-in.” Bishop, et al, (2001) had used a system called stimulated recall with teachers following observations so that teachers could explain their actions. It was planned that Gottesman’s (2000) non-evaluative feedback process would be used to see if it stimulated discussion with the observed teacher. Statements such as “I heard..,” and “I saw..,” would be used in the feedback. Once the coaching process was underway the same approach would be used until the peer/learner was confident enough and asked for evaluative feedback.

Professional development or learning was also part of the research and fitted into the Holmes (2003) model. The aim was to bring the teachers involved to a focus group discussion approximately every three weeks so that they could suggest changes to the research, reflect on the process, or respond to readings that were provided. The nominal group technique (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, pp. 237-239) was used to start this part of the process. The teachers would arrive at the meeting and the question for discussion was displayed on the whiteboard. Without discussion they would individually write each of their responses on a sheet which I would display on the wall. When it was obvious they had finished writing they would read all the responses and then again write their views/responses on sheets that were also displayed. By the time they had finished they would have cleared their minds of the mass of ideas from the classroom, have clarified their views on the topic and be ready to participate in the discussion. Then there would be a discussion, without a designated leader, while the researcher listened and recorded ideas. The purpose was to get the participants to reflect upon the conversations and to stimulate new ideas or solutions to issues. The use of dialogue to assist in reflection is encouraged by Bambino (2002, p.74) who said:

(dialogue) is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand one another's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions – they inquire into each others' values, beliefs, etc to better understand how things work in their world.

This belief is enhanced by the opportunity to identify and clarify beliefs before the discussion.

IMPLEMENTATION

After a presentation to the staff about the planned research I waited for volunteers to become more involved in the study. I was confident that I would get quality volunteers as Barth (1990) had said that it was the outstanding teacher who is willing to take risks and look critically at his/her performance. Four teachers volunteered to participate in the coaching process. The initial cadre (Hopkins, 2001) was composed of four women and included teachers with leadership and management roles as well as classroom teachers. When it was time to invite the second group of colleagues to join the coaching research there was no difficulty in getting volunteers. However the second group were all less experienced female classroom teachers without leadership or management roles.

Each member of the initial group participated in the collaborative storying to begin their involvement. It was apparent from the honesty and depth of ideas that were shared that collaborative storying not only empowered the teachers but also built up the trust that was to be so crucial for the coaching partnership. The teachers were proud of their stories and continued to develop them as their confidence grew. One teacher said, "I really enjoyed the opportunity to talk about my teaching and to reflect on it. It's very empowering." Another said, "I enjoyed explaining my philosophy. It helped me to reflect on my practice and justify why I am doing certain things."

It was in this stage of the research that the initial group suggested an important change that underscored the value and importance of the collaborative storying. One of the most often heard words in the nominal group technique discussion about collaborative storying was reflection. It seemed that the storying encouraged reflection, built up a trust with the colleague and increased the teacher's confidence in their ability to teach. Teacher A said:

It's a springboard for reflection on your own teaching. A way to focus on what you are actually doing and why you are doing it. It's an affirmation that you are valued as a teacher and that someone is interested in your story! It's a good starting point for discussion and taking a professional approach to what we are doing in the classroom.

Another comment was "(It's) a way to get to know what makes a teacher 'tick'. It's empowering and a chance to reflect on your own teaching... build an even closer relationship with a colleague."

It was comments such as these, which prompted the group to suggest that when they became coaches that they should develop the collaborative story with their peer so that they could build the trusting relationship. What had started out, as a

researcher's tool to empower others and give them control of the process became a vital key to the whole coaching process. The second group were equally as enthusiastic about the importance and value of collaborative storying.

Having developed the collaborative storying the next stage was to see if there was a match between their espoused theories and theories in action. A classroom observation was negotiated with the peer. The context setting covered points such as the lesson to be observed, the time, whether the observer could move around the room and talk with students and how long to spend in the room. This followed closely the model of Gottesman (2000). The observer was given a list of their peers beliefs, values and attitudes so they knew what they expected to see or look for. The observations were to be followed by non-evaluative feedback (Gottesman, 2000). This feedback had been the subject of a lengthy discussion at a nominal group technique meeting with the initial team. Teacher B summed up the negative views of non-evaluative feedback during a nominal group technique discussion where she said:

I have a concern about no feedback. My immediate reaction is that someone has been watching me teach and I want to know/hear his or her response... I know that it encourages conversation and reflection but I need to know how I did.

The second group of teacher/participants saw it as a plus as it reduced the stress that they felt they might be under. All were enthusiastic after their first experience of non-evaluative feedback. Teacher A, put forward this positive view:

I think that it's all about developing a culture where we are comfortable to go in and out of each other's rooms. The statement in the reading really struck a chord with me. Initially I expect someone coming into my room not to judge but to support me.

Views following the observation and non-evaluative feedback were positive as evidenced by these quotes:

Insightful – just hearing what I did. Sometimes you don't realise what you are doing and saying. Its encouraging to know that I do sound like a teacher. (Teacher Y)

I've had lots of people observing me and this was the first one that I felt was totally focussed on me – and it brought out lots of positives. (Teacher W)

Non-evaluative feedback proved to be an ideal way to assist in the introduction of the coaching process. It helped continue building the trust and rapport begun with the collaborative storying. The fears of the initial group were allayed by the experience. The other successful outcome of the non-evaluative feedback was that it helped develop the skill of reflection, which is essential if pedagogy is to change. It was a way for participants to be able to construct new knowledge and to carry out self-development. The participants were delighted that they had the opportunity to reflect, review and make changes to their programmes. By the time all the coaching

participants had been involved in four observations and feedbacks they were asking for evaluative feedback. To assist teachers I introduced a self-review step where the peer put forward their ideas before the coach provided this evaluative feedback. This technique had proven to be successful in Robertson's (1995) work and generally the participant introduced the points that the coach wanted to feed back on. What were the outcomes of this approach to coaching?

FINDINGS

Coaching was a deliberate act of leadership to ascertain whether it was an effective approach to bring about a change in pedagogy by utilising the skills of some teachers within a school. There were five categories of data that formed the basis of the findings. Under the title coaching for change, they were the skills and techniques required for effective coaching, the role and importance of professional relationships and the value of reflection as a tool to improve pedagogy. The final category was the development of communities of learners and the impact of these on teachers and their practice. When these categories were analysed it became clear that there were cause and effect relationships between the findings and a great deal of interdependence. This diagram best demonstrates this interdependence (see on the following page).

The diagram endeavours to show how the coaching process in effect pushes out from the centre, in effect "removing the classroom walls," reducing teacher isolation and creating an environment for change in pedagogy to occur in a non-threatening way to the benefit of students. The effectiveness of this coaching model, which was developed in the action research, is the interdependence of the different categories and activities that enhances the coaching process for the participants. These categories will be discussed below.

COACHING FOR CHANGE

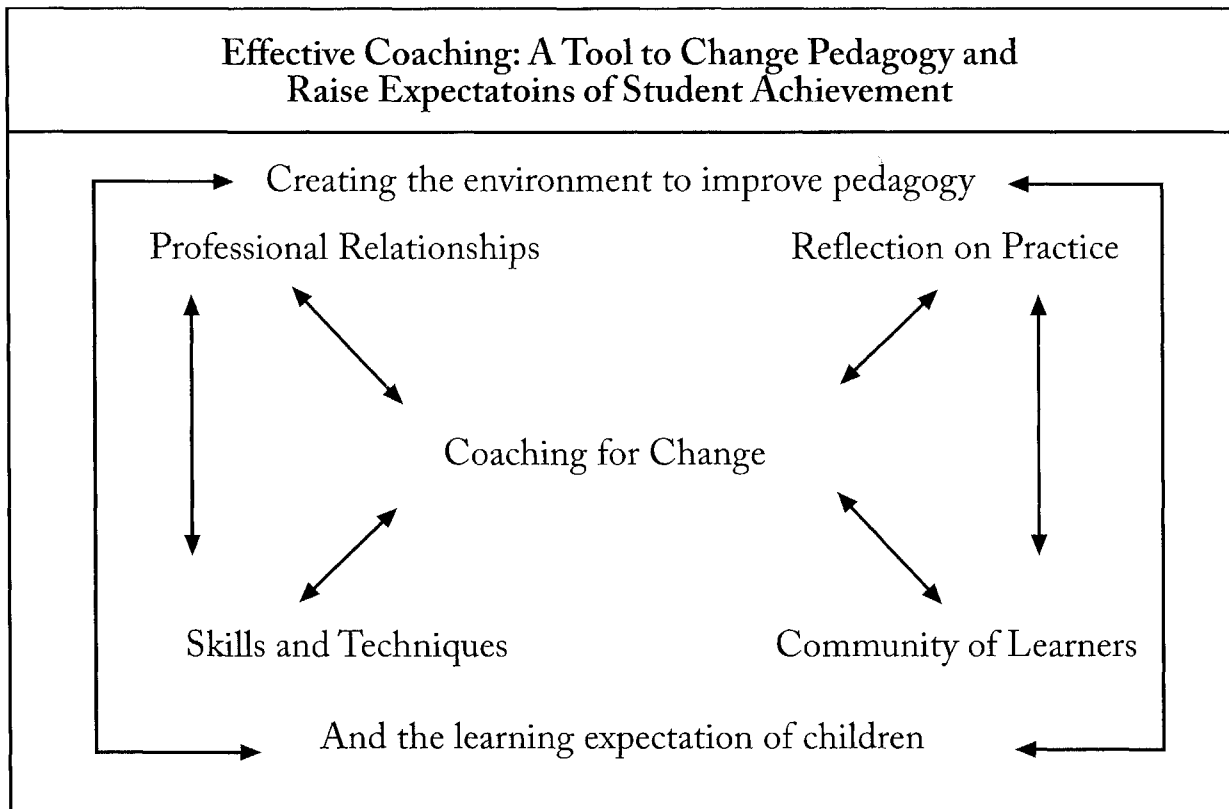
This coaching process is about people retaining the power and responsibility for their development and participating in collaborative actions to bring about change in classroom practice. The coaching process is defined as the combination of all the activities undertaken and reported under the four headings in the diagram. The findings about coaching for change included that the peer/learners all made changes to their practice due to the support of the coaches and that the participants attempted to implement new learning from professional development in the knowledge that they would get constructive support from their coach.

There were personal professional benefits to the participants as well as reciprocal benefits from the coaching partnership (Robertson, 1995). This is supported by this comment from Teacher A who said:

The whole process has made me look more closely at what I do. I think that as a result I am more professional than I was. I certainly know a lot more about myself as a teacher.

Teacher X, who was one of the Peer/Learners had this to say:

I have felt that this is a fantastic way to open our classroom doors in a non-threatening way... it is very positive to encourage teachers to have an open-door policy with a colleague.



The study also highlighted the importance of leadership in supporting the coaching process. It was important that the coaches, who were all new to the process, had someone with whom they could discuss their role and clarify their thinking. They wanted someone to talk through their views of the observations or the feedback they were going to participate in and someone to act as a sounding board to ensure that they were doing things right. There was regular contact with the coaches as they sought clarification or advice. The researcher acted in many roles including the facilitator, confidant, pace-setter and listener to name but a few. This was in line with findings from Robertson's (1995) work.

Holmes (2003) model was used and shown to be the key to the successful implementation of coaching for change. The purpose for coaching was clear to all the participants. The initial group who became the coaches also wanted to set up a culture that was successful when they chose the peer/learner to work with. Teacher B's view was: "I think that there needs to become a bond (between peers) based on trust so that you want it to happen and to succeed." This is supported in literature from writers such as Day (1999) and Gottesman (2000). The coaches all took the opportunities provided to develop their coaching skills so that they could be effective. They all paid great attention to active listening and reflective interviewing techniques, that were modelled during the collaborative storying process. All involved in the coaching role identified value and skills they had gained from their role. Teacher C sums this up saying:

I am more aware of working with others and what they are doing, and of the sharing of ideas, programmes and resources with colleagues, and of being open to professional discussion with colleagues.

All of these criteria and actions helped create the environment that made it possible for the coaching process to be successfully implemented. To be effective the participants also needed other skills and techniques.

SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

This category of findings includes skills and techniques that were necessary to ensure that the coaching process was successful. The skills included collaborative storying, the nominal group technique, observation and feedback. These were essential in developing trusting relationships and teacher talk. The value of collaborative storying as a skill has been discussed earlier. It's sufficient to say that it encouraged reflection and increased teachers' confidence in their ability to teach. Knowing why they teach the way they do was important to these participants. Expressing their theories and explaining how they related to classroom practice raised teachers' awareness of the impact of pedagogy and was a starting point for the observations and feedback that were to occur in the coaching partnership.

One of the important findings in this area was the importance of the professional development of the participants. This demonstrated another of the beliefs of Holmes (2003) model. Professional development was provided throughout the research bearing in mind that action research itself is considered to be professional development (Grundy, 1995). The participants learned and practised the skills mentioned above and were given readings which were followed by group discussions. This approach was particularly necessary in the areas of observation and feedback. The time spent on professional discussion and in developing skills was well worth it as is demonstrated by this statement from Teacher Z about observations and feedback:

Being so unobtrusive (the coach) meant that my teaching and actions were natural so the findings are a true picture of what is happening in my room... It's funny that even though I had set the scene/context for the visit the feedback was actually really on that.

The Peer/Learner had received the messages she expected and was satisfied that the coach had captured the picture of what was happening in her room. The development of coaches' skills and techniques contributed to this successful classroom support programme. All of the Peer/Learners invited the coach to provide evaluative feedback within four classroom observations as there were no surprises and the personal relationship had been developed. This leads to the next category of findings.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Almost every writer on coaching talks about the importance of developing a relationship if the process is going to work. This action research study showed that quality professional relationships were a requirement for two people to engage in

a successful coaching partnership. One of the outcomes, that has been repeated frequently and demonstrates the interdependence of these categories of findings, is that collaborative storytelling was the key to building the strong trusting relationships required for effective coaching. When Teacher W was reflecting on the coaching process she said: "I think that it would have been different if we hadn't spent all that time building up the collaborative story. It built up the trust."

Another finding that contributed to the development of professional relationships was that the Peer/Learner had control of the process and this gave them confidence and encouraged their participation in the coaching process. Teacher Y said:

It was nice to ask for feedback and ideas when you needed it. I was in control!
The perfect learning situation/environment – non-threatening, help there if you asked for it, role-modelling from the coach and learner centred.

The participants also stressed that coaching was successful because the process focussed on them. They felt empowered through the ownership and that the relationship was one of choice, not imposed. Teacher W explains her view: "I've had lots of people observing me and this was the first one that I felt was totally focussed on me – and it brought out a lot of positives."

Observations played an important part in the coaching process and a good relationship was needed for these to be successful. Teacher Z had this to say:

Being observed in this way makes you want to do your best, so you lift your performance. If you have a person watching you, you want to show them you can teach well. So you think about it a lot before you teach.

The coach, in this case is bringing about change in a programme and providing a focus for teaching by being part of the process. It illustrates the benefit of 'removing the classroom walls' or reducing teacher isolation as it leads to reflective behaviour and improved practice. Reflection is an important part of the coaching process.

REFLECTION ON PRACTICE

The key finding of this category was that formal reflection is an essential factor in the coaching process. It is a way of constructing new knowledge (Day, 1999) resulting in new practices based on the experiences that the participants were involved in. The research study used the adult learning method (Kolb, 1984) and was based on the premise that it is more effective to have individuals develop new knowledge than have it imposed on them. The coaches were not seen as experts but as a colleague who encouraged reflection. The status or role of the teacher in the school was not a consideration in accepting them into the programme or in the setting up of the pairs. The belief held was that all teachers, with appropriate development, could become effective coaches. When teachers were talking about their participation in the process during a discussion they made the following statements about the importance of reflection:

- ∞ "I've had to reflect on my classroom practice" (Teacher Y).
- ∞ "Interesting. I've learned a great deal about myself and how I think. It's also

showed me what I may be neglecting to do” (Teacher W).

- ∞ “The general consensus is that the exercise is a good way of reflecting on, and improving effectiveness. It’s probably important for all teachers to do” (Teacher Z).

Teacher talk was identified as another way of reflecting leading to the development of new knowledge. Here is a statement from Teacher C:

It is my belief that it’s about reflecting on what I do and acting upon it. I think that we need formal and informal discussion with colleagues, as it’s invaluable if it changes pedagogy for the better. It’s my role to pass this on to the children so that they can become reflective too.

The research also found that dialogue, reflection and coaching could assist teachers in making changes based on professional development in the school. This led to personalised learning, which is explained in the following sentences. Within this school there is a strong focus on whole-school professional development. The first tier of professional learning consisted of ideas or concepts being delivered to all the staff. The second tier occurred when the teams or syndicates of teachers met and looked at how the learning could be applied to their particular student group. The third tier of learning came about through coaching, where the Peer/Learner invited the coach into the room. This became evident during the research where the Peer/Learner applied new ideas, approaches or skills and asked the coach to carry out observations and provide guidance about the effectiveness of their implementation. Teachers were using reflection to open themselves to new ideas about teaching and learning so that, with coaching support, they could take on new skills and develop pedagogy. What other effects did all the associated coaching activities have?

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

One of the important factors in this research study was having regular meetings of groups where ideas were shared and debated leading to the development of a community of learners. From the beginning of each stage a strong group relationship developed. One where there was trust, and the confidence to challenge, reflect and debate. It was a natural part of the ongoing professional learning in the study. The two groups became their own small communities of learners. This occurred because teachers felt they had had common experiences that formed the basis of their ability to share and debate ideas. One teacher has gone further and developed her own community of learners who meet regularly to debate issues to do with professional learning.

Coaching for change has been a process that has brought together a range of skills and techniques, developed professional relationships, encouraged teachers to reflect on practice, and by working together, build a community of learners to create an environment for teachers to improve their pedagogy so that it impacts on the learning of students. The challenge is to sustain this process so that it impacts on the whole staff.

FUTURE ACTION

How can peer coaching be replicated or introduced to other schools with success and ensure that teachers have ownership? That is a challenge to any researcher and it is my belief that each institution should develop its own unique model. I believe that some of the key points to guide others are as follows:

- ∞ Use the Holmes model as a guide to ensure that the ideal coaching environment is created;
- ∞ Use action research so that the participants can make changes as they investigate and challenge their own practice;
- ∞ Introduce peer coaching using the cadre or small group approach so that there is a manageable “buy-in” by those involved;
- ∞ Make sure that key members of the Leadership Team in the school are involved so that coaching is seen to be important and to encourage the change agents or participants;
- ∞ Ensure that the coaching skills and the professional development strands are run concurrently so that the participants understand the reasons for change and growth;
- ∞ Consider that the unique combination of collaborative storying, contextual observations, non-evaluative feedback and the nominal group technique were keys to this successful peer coaching process; and
- ∞ Remember that peer coaching to change pedagogy is about building the professional capacity of the staff and that leaders need to take a long term view.

Teachers will enjoy the challenge of professional growth when they are involved and have the responsibility to support colleagues (Robertson, 2005). Sustainability requires the development of new leaders and Barth (2001) believes that there is a leader in every teacher waiting to be freed.

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