



COACHING FOR TEACHERS

by

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The Purpose of this Booklet

This booklet is intended to provide succinct guidance to teachers, leaders and other practitioners in schools on current research and methodologies related to coaching.

Coaching is increasingly seen as an important, key element in practitioner professional learning.

The Welsh Government's recent publication 'Investing in excellence: Our national workforce development plan 2019–21' (Welsh Government, 2019) includes commitments to:

- a dedicated programme of coaching and mentoring and a set of standards for mentor support along with a programme of common professional learning for mentors. (designed for) practitioners in the early career stages
- the introduction of an enhanced programme that includes coaching, mentoring and a high-level development programme (to support leadership and succession planning)

The national professional learning model (NAPL) is the government's vehicle for the design and delivery of professional learning (<https://gov.wales/national-approach-professional-learning-napl>). In the context of practitioner coaching and mentoring, the following design features are particularly pertinent:

The professional learner is near the centre of our national approach. Professional Learning should be intended and designed to be a personalised response to individual professional learners' needs, taking into account their experience, expertise and aspirations.



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(Welsh Government, 2019)

There are clearly links to effective teaching and learning also, and hence to the Welsh Government's professional standards for teaching and leadership (Welsh Government, 2018).

Whilst the focus in this booklet is on the teaching profession, coaching has already been shown to be truly beneficial for the development of a wide range of professions, and for activities both inside and outside work (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

This resource looks in particular at examples of coaching within schools, and highlights points that help promote effective practice. We discuss how to approach coaching relationships, both from the point of view of being coached, and from the perspective of becoming an effective coach. We lastly discuss ways in which you can get involved in coaching to support your own professional learning.

Further expertise on coaching can be obtained via the Wales Coaching Society based at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) – see: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/wappar/coachingconference/coaching-society/>.

Coaching and Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership

Coaching can have a positive impact on most of the key domains covered by the Welsh Government's 2018 Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

Figure 1: Overview of professional standards for teaching and leadership (based on Welsh Government, 2018)



The Welsh Government has identified coaching as making a potentially significant contribution to professional learning, and it proactively supports the development of interpersonal and negotiation skills critical for effective collaboration. Coaching enhances the leadership skills of both coaches and coachees, and importantly, it supports the central professional purpose of teachers - their pedagogic practice.

Point for reflection

Do you think that you might need coaching on a specific aspect of your practice?

Coaching Concepts

There is often some confusion as to what coaching is, with misconceptions that it might be a form of counselling or facilitation. Table 1 below provides simple working definitions of coaching and mentoring that should help when discussing these two important professional relationships. The coach or mentor can be a colleague at work or can be external to your school or organisation. The interaction will normally be one-to-one and takes place in at an agreed time to an agreed agenda. However, you may find the contexts in which these two terms are used differ.

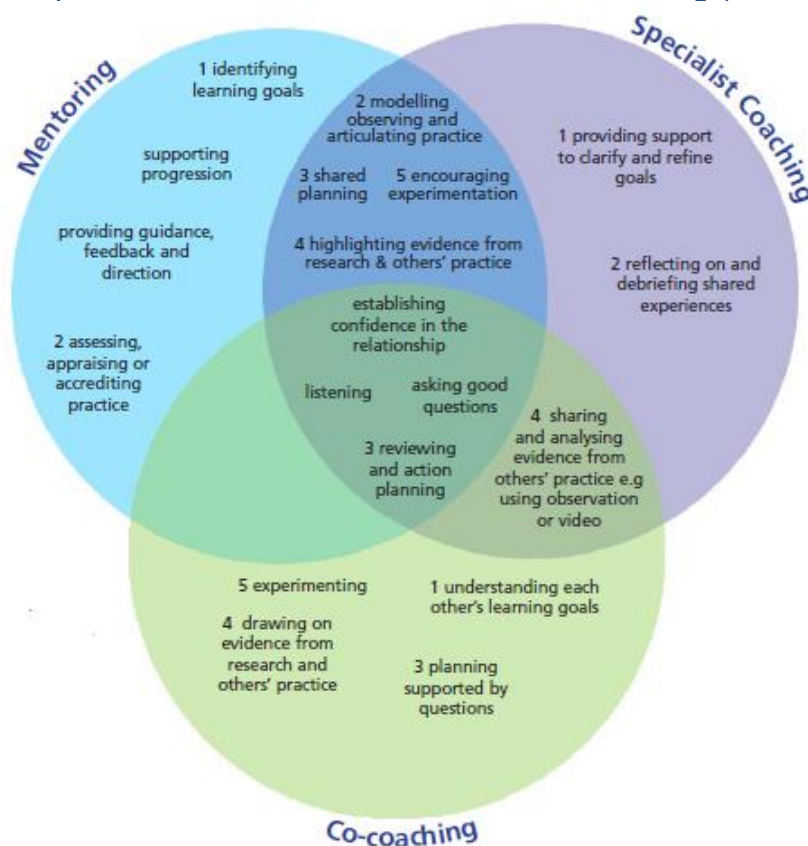
Table 1: Working definitions of coaching and mentoring

Term	Working definition	Who provides?	Who receives?
Coaching	Provision of guidance on specific skills and competencies to improve performance.	Coach	Coachee
Mentoring	Provision of advice and guidance on a range of professional issues often connected with career development.	Mentor	Mentee or protege

(see also Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2004, and Passmore, 2007)

Definitions of 'coaching' are fluid, and many aspects of coaching overlap with mentoring, as indicated in Figure 2 which is based on the CUREE (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education) model of coaching (CUREE, 2005):

Figure 2: representation of the CUREE model of coaching (CUREE,2005)



This booklet primarily uses the definition of coaching associated with the CUREE model upon which the Welsh Government has used as a foundation for guidance on Mentoring and Coaching. This model describes coaching as 'a structured, sustained process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice'.

Hence, we can generally think of coaching as a professional relationship between two individuals: the 'coach', who has experience and expertise in particular skills or competencies, and the 'coachee', who needs to acquire particular skills or competencies. Coaching is a familiar term in sport, where sports coaches help athletes and team members to enhance and develop specific sporting skills such as running faster or jumping higher. In education, we might focus on examples such as behaviour management or assessment for learning.

What is effective coaching and how can it support teaching practitioners?

A study by Lord et al (2008) for the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) indicated that both coaching and mentoring led to benefits for all parties, and also for their organisations. Table 2 lists some of the key benefits noted by those receiving coaching.

Table 2: Benefits for coachees (from Lord et al, 2008)

Improved knowledge and skills
Better problem-solving skills
Increased reflectivity and clarity of thinking
Improved psychological well-being and confidence
Communication and relationships
Self-management and self-learning

The study of Lord et al (2008) also found very similar benefits for coaches, who additionally found that their engagement with these processes enhanced their own career development. These benefits are similar across other professional sectors and identify the fundamental efficacy of the approach (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Point for reflection

What benefits might coaching bring for **you**?

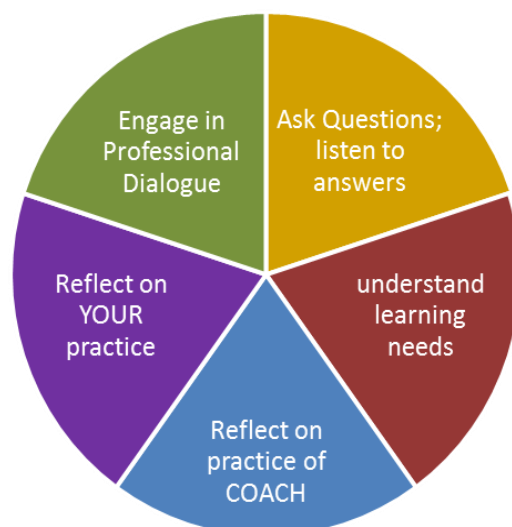
But note that the study by Lord et al (2008) also identified challenges associated with coaching, including:

- time and workload pressures
- the requirements of the coach role
- understanding and expectations
- gaining the commitment of coaches, and the workplace in general

These should be borne in mind when planning programmes of professional development.

What else should you consider when planning to receive coaching, and what should you actually do in a coaching session? The CUREE model of coaching (CUREE, 2005) gives more guidance on this, and Figure 3 summarises some of the key points to bear in mind.

Figure 3: Activities coachees could undertake in a coaching session (based on CUREE, 2005)



Reflecting on practice is clearly an important aspect of being coached. How could you best reflect on your own practice? You could use a diary, log book, or blog for reflection, and you could also consider 'performance indicators' such as learner attendance, responsiveness in class, achievement in tests and formal examinations. Having your lessons observed, either by a line manager or a peer, can provide valuable information upon which to reflect, and video can provide further material for discussion. Models such as those of Schön (1983) and Kolb (1984) can also be really useful when deciding how to approach the process of reflection.

Case study 1

Approximately ten years ago, the CfBT Education Trust (now the 'Education Development Trust') commissioned research into ways in which coaching was used to support teaching, and the resulting report (Lofthouse et al, 2010) summarised findings from 13 schools in England. The report indicated that most coaching sessions for educational practitioners revolved around the observation of coachees' lessons. In the majority of cases, the sessions mainly comprised pre- and post- lesson conversations, sometimes supplemented by studying videos of lessons. The research carried out included an analysis of coaching conversations and the types of interaction observed within them. These different interactions are shown on the horizontal axes of the bar charts below (Figures 4 and 5), and they include:

- 'summary': provide a summary of information imparted, what has been learnt, etc.
- 'acceptance': coachee indicates that they accept the feedback about them
- 'challenge': coach and/or coachee introduce and/or respond to some form of challenge
- 'continuity': there are clear links between different parts or activities within the coaching conversation
- 'dissonance': there are signs of disagreement or discontent within the coaching conversation.

The two bar-charts in Figures 4 and 5 show examples of the results from Lofthouse et al (2010). Figure 4 depicts a coaching episode with coach 'Angela', and Figure 5 with coach 'Miriam' (both pseudonyms). The number and type of different interactions observed from both coach (blue) and coachee (red) are shown in each case.

Figure 4: The type and number of interventions observed with coach 'Angela' (reproduced with permission of CfBT)

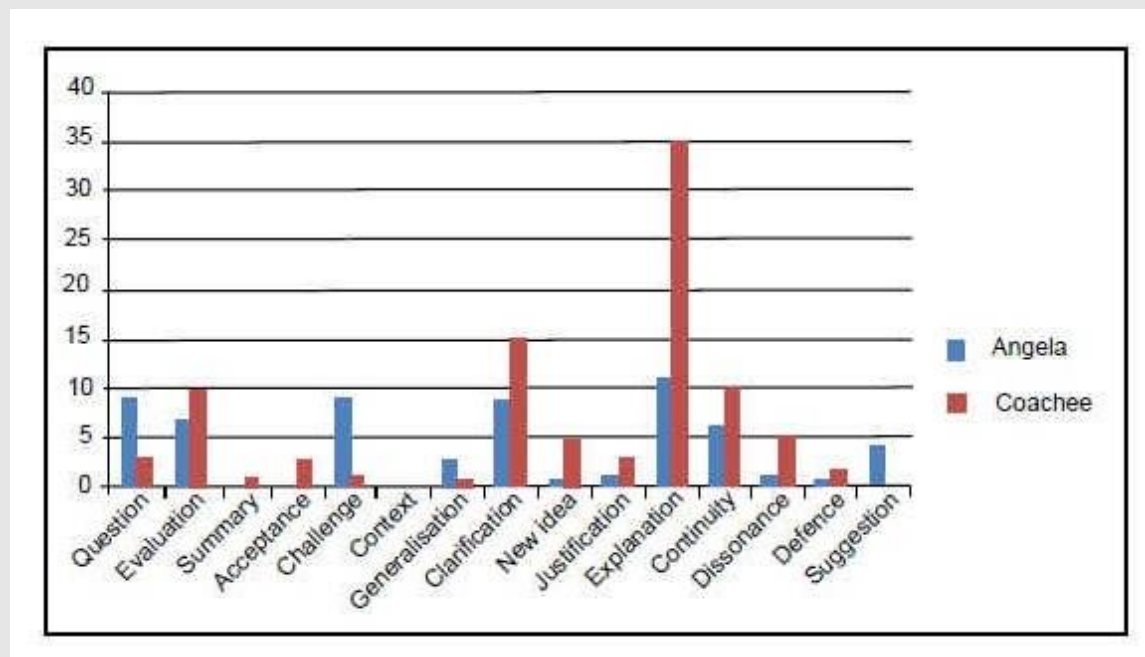
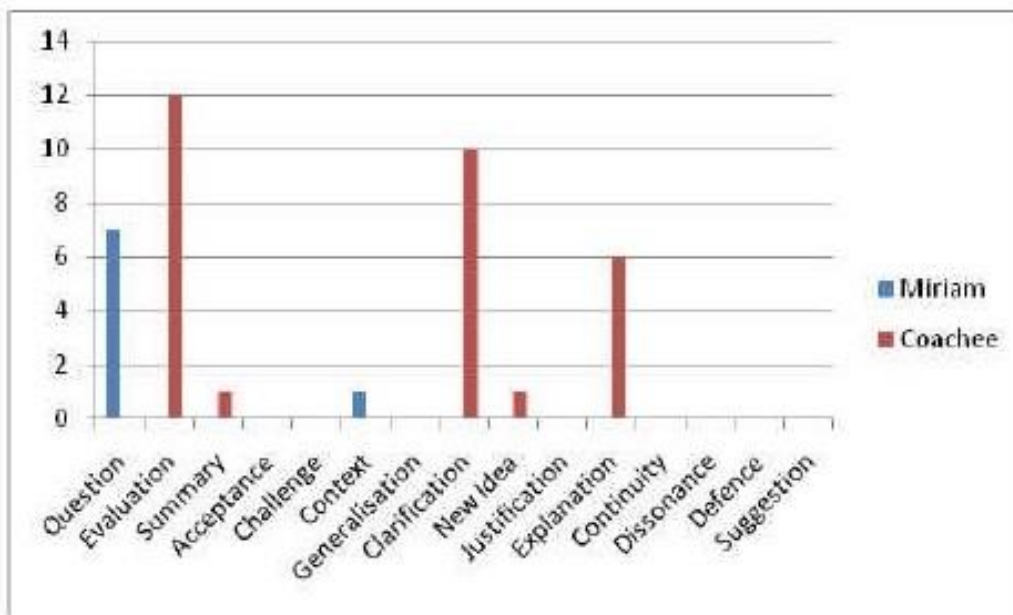


Figure 5: The type and number of interventions observed with coach 'Miriam' (reproduced with permission of CfBT)



- How would you describe the coaching strategies of Angela and Miriam? What might be the pros and cons of these very different approaches?
- If you were given a choice of coaches, which of these two would you chose, and why?
- To what extent does a coachee need to be pro-active in a coaching relationship? What sort of steps should a coachee take prior to, and during, a coaching session?

Point for reflection

Can you picture how you would behave when being coached?

There are several variations on the typical 'one-to-one' coaching model. One variation involves coaching with peers, or 'peer coaching'. This is a collaborative arrangement with each peer supporting the other, and it is sometimes referred to as 'co-coaching'. Coaching 'triads' or 'triplets' are an extension of this.

An example of a coaching triad can be found in a report by Jo Linden (2011) commissioned by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in England (now renamed the 'National College for Teaching and Leadership'). It describes coaching relationships involving a grouping of three primary schools, and also groupings of three individuals at different levels in the senior leadership team.

Coaching triplets are also in evidence in Case study 2.

Case study 2

A primary school in South-East Wales prioritises staff skills and ensures that all teachers are provided with appropriate training and opportunities, including opportunities to share their skills with others within the school and beyond. 'Coaching triplets' is one co-coaching strategy employed by the school, and this involves teachers working in triplets in order to coach each other in ways to improve learning and teaching. Staff work together, observing each other teach and then having discussions in order to find ways to improve. Each member of the triad has an assigned role: Coach, Coachee or Observer. The Coach's role is to use skilful questions to encourage the



Photo by Romain V on Unsplash

Coachee to reflect on their teaching and consider goals and ways forward. The Observer focuses on the Coach in order to feedback on the Coach's skills, for example, in terms of the questions they ask and their body language. This has led to improvements in learning and teaching and also builds capacity by developing leadership skills. This strategy is now well-established in the school and helps to build and improve teaching and leadership skills (Estyn, 2014).

How to become a good coach

As well as providing tips for coachees, case studies 1 and 2 provide ideas for coaches to take on board. Becoming a coach is an important milestone on a professional learning journey, and a key step for practitioners heading for leadership. The role of coach in an educational institution carries a great deal of responsibility, as the support a coach provides will not only influence the practice of teachers, but also the learning experience. Hence, coaches should strive to plan coaching sessions thoroughly using the best tools at their disposal. There are a variety of frameworks or models that coaches can use to structure their coaching sessions and perhaps the most well known is the GROW model (Whitmore, 1992).

The 'GROW' model can support coaches in diagnosing the 'skill and will' of a coachee, and can help to frame coaching conversations so that those being coached can more easily set themselves **G**oals within the context of their full knowledge of the current situation ('**R**eality') and identify the **O**ptions available to them, finally encouraging them to find **W**ays forward (hence 'GROW!').

Figure 6: Adaptation of the 'GROW' model



This framework can be covered in one coaching session so that the coachee is able to plan constructive and appropriate action in a very timely fashion. However, some issues may need more extensive analysis and consideration, and may therefore require several coaching sessions. The coach should make sure that a coachee does not just rehearse previously identified perspectives (which may not have provided a sustainable solution) but is able to develop further potential solutions. Coaches should aim to help their coachees to think 'outside the box' and engage with higher level thinking.

The CUREE model (CUREE, 2005) also goes into some detail about the characteristics of a good coach, and some of the points referred to in that model are listed in Table 3 below:

Table 3: What should coaches do to be effective?

1. Relate sensitively to coachees.
2. Model expertise.
3. Facilitate access to research data and other evidence.
4. Tailor activities in partnership.
5. Observe, analyse, and reflect on a coachee's practice.
6. Facilitate growing independence.
7. Listen actively.
8. Use open questions.
9. Provide feedback.

The last two points in this list (which is by no means exhaustive) echo the best practice in 'assessment for learning' that teachers often aim to use with learners in their classes, as advocated by key educationalists such as Black and Wiliam (2001). This reminds us that coaching is a learning relationship: it will not be worthwhile unless the practitioner being coached is able to learn, develop, and improve his or her teaching skills. The second point in Table 3 further reminds coaches that they must themselves demonstrate and model best practice. Therefore, whilst coaches should not supply solutions, they can demonstrate best practice including an analysis of a coachee's lesson or videoed lesson as part of a coaching conversation.

It's also important that coaches listen carefully, and ensure that a rapport builds between coach and coachee which will build trust and sustain further coaching activity. Maintaining eye contact is an important aspect of this, and so is 'matching and mirroring' coachee reactions. It is critical for coaches to be good listeners, and as part of that, be non-judgemental, able to simplify what a coachee says so that the main messages can be ascertained. The other skill of real importance for coaches is to be able to frame appropriate, insightful questions. It is through questions that coaches illuminate the factors operating in a situation and allow coachees to see alternative views of an issue these are the key tools to guide coachees.

Coaches and coachees also need to think ahead with respect to the practicalities of the coaching session, including where and when they will meet, and ensuring that there is an adequate provision of time. There are also issues such as confidentiality to bear in mind, and very importantly, setting expectations.

It is usually sensible to draw up a 'contracting checklist' to address many of these points. Your checklist should contain the following elements:

1. Expectations: What do you want to achieve?
2. Boundaries: How will you deal with difficulties? How will you ensure confidentiality, and address other ethical issues?
3. Practicalities: Where will you meet? How will you contact each other between meetings?

In summary, as a coach you would NOT be providing solutions for your coachee. Your role is to stimulate your coachee to analyse their situation fully and with their best thinking, explore the potential solutions and opportunities and support their action planning and activity (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck 2014).

Point for reflection

What skills or competencies do you have that would make you a good coach?

Coaching Learners

Case study 3 examines a recent example of best practice in coaching school learners.

Case study 3

'Achievement for All Cymru' was an initiative launched in 2014 linked to the 'Achievement for All' project in England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/achievement-for-all-national-evaluation>). This aimed to raise the aspirations and achievement of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, including those eligible for free school meals, those with additional learning needs and children looked-after. Achievement for All Cymru helped schools to:

- provide evidence of effective use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant
- prepare for Estyn inspections
- bring together national, local and school-based interventions and initiatives under one, single, effective framework.

The programme was successfully piloted at 'Pathfinder' schools in Wales. Data from the pilot indicated significant progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The programme involved the nomination of an 'achievement coach' in each of the schools involved, and they led coaching sessions for all staff in four key elements of school improvement, namely:

- Leadership – with a strong focus on school-led improvement to transform outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- Learning and teaching – including assessment and data tracking, planning and delivery.
- Parental engagement – structured conversations with parents/carers focusing on educational outcomes.
- Wider outcomes and opportunities – improving behaviour, attendance and participation in school life.



Photo by National Cancer Institute on Unsplash

The 2008 'Learning Coaches of Wales' programme was another example of coaching interventions for learners in Wales (Saunders and Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). The initiative helped to develop the interests, achievements, and study skills of the 14 to 19-year-old sector in Wales.

Point for reflection
Can you think of good examples of coaching involving your learners?

How can you get involved in coaching?

You may already be involved in a coaching programme or may have been in the past. Alternatively, the concept of coaching may be new to you. Whatever your role or past experience, you should find that you can participate in, and benefit from, some form of coaching. Hopefully, having read the previous sections, you have already reflected on what this collaborative interaction might mean for you,

Table 4 below provides further support by prompting you to consider specific coaching steps that could be useful to you. Examine each activity and indicate with a tick or cross whether it's one you need to undertake, and then indicate the rank order of priority. In the far-right column, you may wish to add notes (for example, about any specific guidance you might need).

Table 4: Prioritising coaching steps

Activity	Required?	Priority level	Notes
Receive guidance on a particular aspect of practice (i.e. receive coaching)			
Receive guidance on a particular aspect of practice from peers (i.e. co-coaching)			
Develop skills in providing coaching			
Find out more about coaching within your organisation			
Initiate coaching within the organisation			
Evaluate coaching within the organisation			

Now use the priorities you have listed in the above table to produce a set of targets for yourself. Ensure that you note:

- exactly what you are aiming to achieve
- the actions you need to take to achieve your aims.

How will you implement the actions you need to carry out? If your organisation already has well-established systems of coaching, it should be fairly clear who you need to approach. In such organisations, the processes involved in becoming a coach should also be obvious. However, not all organisations have reached that stage, so you may

need to take the lead in the implementation of required actions. What should you do in this instance? Here are some possibilities to consider.

- Approach your line manager with a specific request.
- Discuss with peers whether they have similar needs, or useful ideas.
- Approach a member of the senior management team (SMT), perhaps using this resource as a starting point for a conversation about professional learning.
- Find out about the coaching activities that may take place in nearby schools and consider whether links might be made between schools.
- Find out what support is available from your regional consortium.
- Find out what further support on coaching and mentoring may be available from professional bodies and online networks.

For some items on your list, particularly those relating to other schools and consortia, you will need to have the support of your line manager and SMT before taking steps.

The Wales Coaching Society should also be really helpful source of support for you. Based at UWTSO, the Society comprises several experts in the field of coaching who can give advice, and the Society also holds regular conferences and seminars. To find out more go to: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/wappar/coachingconference/coaching-society/>

Summary and key points

- Coaching and mentoring are two important aspects of working collaboratively, and key components of teachers' professional development.
- Coaching involves the provision of guidance, whether on specific skills or general goals.
- Coaching confers benefits to both 'providers' and 'receivers.' Benefits can include new knowledge and skills, greater reflexivity, improved capacity to solve problems, improved psychological well-being, and career progression.
- All educational practitioners in Wales can use coaching in some way to support their practice and improve learner outcomes.

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