What is Mentoring and What is Coaching?

This chapter covers the historical narratives of coaching and mentoring and links these to modern day practice and current arguments. It also explores the historical meanings and considers what coaching and mentoring are for. It is clear that there have been changes in meaning for the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' over time. This observation in turn raises 'truth' issues. I discuss these by making use of a speculative unified heuristic framework for coaching and mentoring at the end of the chapter.

introduction

Before I get into presenting a brief history of coaching and mentoring, I think it is important to be mindful of what historical research could become. Friedrich Nietzsche's essay, *The Use and Abuse of History* (1873), talked about a *'malignant historical fever'*. Nietzsche believed that studying history was potentially a worthless activity, which did not always lead to a good use for historical tradition. He believed that past knowledge should serve both the present and the future but also that history should not become abstract and devoid of the context that gave it life. Social context is a recurrent theme throughout this book!

A concept to consider, and one that underpins this book, is that both coaching and mentoring share a learning and development agenda (see Chapter 5). There are many ways to look at learning. For example:

- The importance of whole person learning (Buber, 1958).
- The conditions for learning, the social context and dialogue (Rogers, 1969; Habermas, 1974; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1985a, b; and Bruner, 1990).
- The importance of experiential learning (Dewey, 1958; Lewin, 1951; Piaget, 1970 and Kolb, 1984).
- The importance of reflection (Argyris & Schon, 1981).
- The importance of purpose (Lyotard, 1984).

In relation to this 'purpose' for coaching and mentoring activity, Lyotard's (1984) framework as summarised by Pedler et al. (2005: 62) is helpful here:

> Speculative: knowledge for its own sake, concerned with theoretical rigour, unconcerned with application.

> Emancipatory: knowledge that helps us overcome oppression and attain the highest human potential.

> Performative: knowledge that helps action in the world, to resolve problems, to produce better goods and services.

Lyotard's position suggests that learning has the potential to serve all three purposes. However, arguably, modern life seems to focus far more on performative knowledge and this, in my view, creates a problem, placing all sorts of tensions and pressures on people. It also raises ethical issues and we could well ask – *'if the purpose of coaching and or mentoring varies or is mixed, does the practice and therefore the "in use" meaning change?'*

These issues are discussed as the book develops.

a very brief history of mentoring

The first mention of mentoring in history can be found in Homer's Odyssey. Here Mentor, the Goddess Athene in disguise, takes Odysseus' son on a developmental journey in order to maintain the Kingdom of Ithaca and develop a successor to the throne.

Much later on in eighteenth-century Europe there appeared five main publications about mentoring. First was Fénélon's (1651–1715) educational treaties *Les Aventures de Télémaque*; then Louis Antonine de Caraccioli (1723–1803) published *Veritable le Mentor ou l'education de la noblesse* in 1759 and this was translated into English in 1760 to become *The true mentor, or, an essay on the education of young people in fashion*. In 1793 and 1796, Honoria published three volumes of *The Female Mentor*. The later authors all based their writing on Fénélon.

These historical works link mentoring with cognitive development, emotional development, leadership and social integration, all of these being rooted in an experiential learning philosophy. Mentors invited mentees to participate in and observe situations that they would then discuss. Transition and change are also key elements and mentoring will involve the older, more experienced, person in supporting and engaging in discussions with the younger and often less experienced mentee. Both mentee and mentor would use the experience to facilitate reflection and discussion

with the purpose of gaining an all-round education. It was explicit in these writings that the mentor supported the discussions with reflective and challenging questioning and would tend to hold back from handing out uninvited advice as has been suggested by, for example, Rosinski (2004).

more recent history

Daniel Levinson first presented the modern concept of mentoring in the USA in his (1979) book *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. This was a substantial longitudinal study of male development. Levinson used the term 'mentor' for someone, often half a generation older, who could help accelerate the development of another in his age-related transitions. He suggested that mentoring could reduce these age transitions from an average of seven to three years. This very quickly became the catalyst for a rapid growth in mentoring that would focus on an accelerated career progression in the USA.

In *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life* (1976), Gail Sheehy discussed adult development mainly from a female perspective. At that time, she noted that mentoring relationships were not so common among women. However some twenty years later, in her revised edition, *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time* (1996), she added developmental maps on both male and female development and noted that mentoring had become more common among women. She also noted a substantial social change in attitudes in both women's and men's lives in developed economies since her first edition had appeared in 1976. These changes were with regard to attitudes towards work, careers and equality.

Still in the USA, Kathy Kram has produced much good quality research on mentoring. This is discussed throughout the book but, in my view, her most significant contribution to the mentoring literature has been her statement that mentoring activity performs a *'psychosocial function'* (1983: 616); the mentee is socialised into a specific social context and develops self-insight and psychological wellbeing.

More generally within the mentoring literature there is a discussion around the psychological impact of mentoring. For example, Zaleznik (1977: 76) writes *'psychological biographies of gifted people repeatedly demonstrate the important part a mentor plays in developing an individual'*. He argues that leadership ability is developed through these intense and often intuitive relationships which have the affect of *'encouraging the emotional relationship leaders need if they are to survive'* (p. 78).

The theme of emotional development within mentoring is common and has its origins in history. Berman and West (2008: 744) show that mentoring activity increases the *'accurate awareness about one's emotional*

intelligence skills' and many writers (Clawson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978; Mullen, 1994; Smith, 1990; Zey, 1984) link a mentor's unconscious motivation to Erikson's (1978) psychological concept of 'generativity'. McAuley (2003) employs the psychological concepts of transference and countertransference in order to provide a deeper insight into the power dynamics that may be at play between mentor and mentee relationships. Garvey (2006) shows in two mentoring case studies that the intention for mentoring is not 'therapy' but its affect can be 'therapeutic'. In these cases, he links mentees' development to Levinson et al.'s (1978) framework of age-related transition and Jung's (1958) psychological concept of individuation.

These ideas seem to resonate with historical writings and bring together the idea that mentoring discussions play a role in cognitive, emotional and social development.

David Clutterbuck brought this modern concept of mentoring to the UK in 1983 with the publication of his book *Everyone Needs a Mentor*. This was a case study work inspired by David's experience in the USA. It is still in print and remains an all-time bestselling business book.

Many publications and a substantial body of research followed these milestones on both sides of the Atlantic and mentoring became established in developed economies.

According to Clutterbuck (2004) there are two main models of mentoring. In the USA, the emphasis is on *'career sponsorship'* whereas the European perspective is more *'developmental'* in approach, although there is some evidence (Kram & Chandler, 2005) that mentoring in the USA is changing to include a developmental approach.

Decades of US research also show that the *'sponsorship'* perspective brings with it many advantages for mentees, mentors and their host organisations. Carden (1990) and Allen et al. (2004) note that on the positive side, sponsorship mentoring activity can enhance knowledge, emotional stability, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, opportunity, leadership abilities in individuals, and organisational morale and productivity.

In contrast, Ragins (1989, 1994); Carden (1990); Ragins and Cotton (1991); Ragins and Scandura (1999) indicate that mentoring with a career sponsorship orientation can be exclusive and divisive, encourage conformity among those with power, maintain the status quo and reproduce exploitative hierarchical structures. These elements can also lead to the relationship breaking down or becoming abusive.

In the UK, various studies (Clutterbuck, 2004; Garvey, 1995; Rix & Gold, 2000) demonstrate that *'developmental'* mentoring offers the same kind of positive benefits as identified within the US model but with fewer negative effects.

From the historical perspective, the issues that stand out in mentoring are:

- The social contexts of mentoring are important and influence the kind of mentoring that takes place.
- There is a common focus on career sponsorship or general and holistic development.
- The issue of experience and how it is used in the education of the mentees raises questions about the nature of advice giving.
- There are power dynamics within mentoring relationships.
- Mentoring seems to be consistently about change, transition and leadership.
- In some cases leadership is developed and in others it is demonstrated.
- It is largely a voluntary, emancipatory and speculative (Lyotard, 1984) developmental activity that can also be performative (Lyotard, 1984) over time.

a brief history of coaching

The term coaching appeared first in the English language in 1849 in Thackeray's novel, *Pendennis*. Set in nineteenth-century England, particularly in London, the main character, Arthur Pendennis, is a young English gentleman. Pendennis is born in the country and sets out for London to seek his place in life and society. The story offers an insightful and satiric picture of human character and the aristocratic society of the time.

The reference to coaching in the story is insubstantial and used as a play on words to describe both moving from A to B in a coach and to coach for academic attainment at Oxford University. Pendennis and his friends are travelling back to Oxford in a horse drawn coach and one says to the other *"I'm coaching there," said the other, with a nod. "What?" asked Pen, and in a tone of such wonder, that Foke burst out laughing, and said, "He was blowed if he didn't think Pen was such a flat as not to know what coaching meant." "I'm come down with a coach from Oxford. A tutor, don't you see, old boy? He's coaching me, and some other men … "*

Other references to coaching in England during the same time describe:

- Tutoring for academic attainment.
- Improvement in performance in boating and rowing.
- Teaching defence of the wicket in cricket.

- Developing subject matter expertise, particularly in science.
- Teaching parenting skills.

These references, made in magazine articles or newspapers of the time, mainly discuss coaching as a group activity rather than a one-to-one activity. Some viewed coaching sceptically and even as unsporting, particularly with reference to the coach cycling on the towpath shouting instructions and advice to rowers on the river!

As far as I can discover, there are no works predating the nineteenth century devoted to exploring or describing the meaning and practice of coaching, therefore coaching, relative to mentoring, is a newer term. This does not mean, however, that coaching is a relatively modern concept. Some writers on coaching (Brunner, 1998; de Haan, 2008; Hughes, 2003) link it to classical times and especially Socratic dialogue.

Socratic dialogue is about the pursuit of self-knowledge and truth and is essentially a dialectic debate and inquiry between people of differing viewpoints. The Socratic approach takes widely held truths or dominant discourses that shape wider societal opinion and unpicks them to test their consistency with other beliefs. The Socratic method involves asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to illuminate ideas. It often involves an oppositional discussion in which the defence of one point of view is set against the defence of another. There is a sense of competition within the concept whereby one participant may lead another to contradict him in some way thus strengthening the inquirer's own point. The Socratic method identifies 'better' hypotheses by identifying and eliminating those hypotheses that lead to contradictions.

In my view, it is clear that elements of this method, such as asking questions and challenging ideas, are common features of modern coaching and mentoring practice. However, the approach was essentially a group and rather formalised, indeed almost ritualised, process. It is also, arguably, a negative methodology that has the potential to develop a cynical view of ideas and therefore could prove to be corrosive (Goldman, 1984; Kimball, 1986; Stone, 1988) rather than confirming. I will return to Socratic dialogue in Chapter 2.

There are some (McDermott & Jago, 2005; Zeus & Skiffington, 2000) who would also claim that coaching has been around since Stone Age times. The support offered for these claims is a narrative based on assumptions that early humans *must* have helped each other to improve at, for example, stone throwing or making axes. The interesting association here is that these writers are making *'performative'* links to coaching activity. With this in mind, some others (Starr, 2002; Wilson, 2007) suggest that coaching is derived from sport. Historical references from the nineteenth

century support this idea, but perhaps more accurately the principles of academic coaching migrated, first, to rowing and then to cricket.

Many of the above writers also link the birth of modern business coaching to Timothy Gallwey's (1974) book *The Inner Game of Tennis*. This book is about the tennis player reaching a state of *'relaxed concentration'*. It presents a philosophy to enable players to discover their true potential. There is a strong psychological thread within the book as Gallwey explores the concepts of Self 1 (the teller) and Self 2 (the doer). In essence, Gallwey bases the philosophy on four steps:

1) Non-judgemental observation
2) Visualising the desired outcome
3) Trusting Self 2
4) Non-judgemental observation of change and results.

The overall concept of an 'inner game' offers an insight into the psychology of human performance and has resonances with various approaches to therapy, for example, psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, humanistic-existential, transpersonal and integrative-eclectic.

Following shortly after, Megginson and Boydell (1979) published a manual called *A Managers Guide to Coaching*. Here coaching is defined as *'a process in which a manager, through direct discussion and guided activity, helps a colleague to solve a problem, or to do a task better than would otherwise have been the case'* (p. 5). Coaching is here located in the workplace as a management activity.

A further milestone in coaching literature came in 1988 when Sir John Whitmore published *Coaching for Performance*. A central feature of this work is the GROW model and it is noteworthy that at least three people claim the development of GROW – Graham Alexander, John Whitmore, and Alan Fine. John Whitmore studied with Tim Gallwey, and as far as I can discover all four had contact with each other. The GROW model emphasises establishing the goal in coaching as a central feature. However, it is interesting to note that Gallwey is light on 'Goals' and 'Performance' discussions in his book. These issues are discussed later in Chapter 5.

Whitmore's book has since become an international bestseller and its contents are widely cited.

In terms of peer-reviewed research, the earliest seems to be Gorby's in 1937. This looked at coaching for waste reduction and profit enhancement. According to Grant and Cavanagh (2004: 5–6) *'Between 1937 and 1994, only 50 papers or PhD dissertations were citied in the PsychInfo and DAI databases. Between 1995 and 1999 there were 29 papers or PhD dissertations. Between 2000 and Nov 2003 there were*

49 citations. Between 1935 and Nov 2003 there were a total of 33 PhDs'.

They go on to summarise the content of these pieces as follows:

(a) discussion articles on internal coaching conducted by managers with direct reports;

(b) the beginnings of more rigorous academic research on internal coaching and its impact on work performance;

(c) the extension of research to include external coaching by a professional coach as a means of creating individual and organisational change;

(d) the beginning of coaching research as a means of investigating psychological mechanisms and processes involved in human and organisational change;

(e) the emergence of a theoretical literature aimed at the professional coach.

In summary, coaching seems to have emerged from several independent sources at the same time and spread through relationships and networks. This makes it a social activity. The intellectual frameworks seem to be a broad and eclectic mix, reflecting their social origins based on a cross-fertilisation of practices and different disciplines. Like mentoring, modern coaching practices are dynamic and contextual with coaching coming into existence to meet a variety of needs in a variety of situations. Common elements from the past indicate a discursive relationship aimed at an improvement in achievement within specific contexts, or in Lyotard's (1984) terms, 'performative' learning.

Its core roots are in:

• Education
• Sport
• Psychology and psychotherapy.

With subjects like philosophy and sociology influencing the discussions on coaching's meaning and contrary to current opinion, advice and teaching are elements from its history.

In a rather provocative article, Arnaud (2003: 1131–1132) states:

After all, what does the entrepreneurial language in vogue today convey through its references to 'coaching' and 'coaches' if not the imagery of sports competition so cherished by management gurus (Berglas, 2002)? As such, the use of this terminology in the field of

professional training can hardly be considered as neutral. The stereo-typical image of the world-class athlete in training immediately comes to mind (Whitmore, 1994). Such an association not only flatters the ego of high-level managers/clients, it also gives a narcissistic boost to the coaches/trainers who supposedly dedicate body and soul to their noble and altruistic mission of making a success of their 'protégés'.

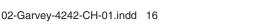I discuss these issues, raised by Arnaud, throughout this book.

What really stands out for me is the almost relentless claim in the literature that coaching is an ancient and deeply embedded human activity. I think this is important. Making this claim is, in my view, evidence of the richly and socially constructed and diverse past of coaching. It is also speculative, associative and, arguably, takes history and rewrites it for the present. Perhaps on one level Nietzsche would approve, however, he was also concerned with honest questioning, however unpopular or contrary to the dominant discourse that might be.

So are these modern writers repositioning coaching and if they are what might their motives be?

Darwin (2010) provides an explanation and argues that 'truth' is an elusive concept. He employs the concept of 'alethic pluralism' to illustrate this. According to him (based on an analysis of the philosophies of Kuhn, Pooper, Feyerabend, and Lakatos), there are four possible ways in which something can be 'true' and these are neatly summarised below by Stokes (2010):

- Correspondence – what is said about a phenomenon must be true if it corresponds with what can be seen in the 'real' world.
- Coherence – what is said about a phenomenon must be true if the claims made seem plausible and internally consistent.
- Consensus – what is said about a phenomenon must be true if there is consensus between people about what it does.
- Pragmatism – what is said about a phenomenon must be true if it works/is practically adequate.

If we take the historical linkage for mentoring for example, there is evidence of the 'Correspondence' view of truth for mentoring in that the historical works do exist and these are relatively clear in their descriptions. Further, the 'Coherence' view of truth in the mentoring literature is contestable as these works seem to vary between their different contexts. The views from a 'Consensus' and 'Pragmatism' perspective are also contestable.

Taking the historical linkage for coaching, I contest the 'Correspondence' position because of the sheer variety of descriptions and associative linkage in the literature. Further, the 'Coherence' perspective is also variable as there are many descriptions of coaching in many contexts with many antecedents. The 'Consensus' position is also difficult to assess, as there are clearly many different groupings, approaches and contexts for coaching. What is clear is that some groupings have a 'Consensus' on what they believe to be true about coaching, for example, professional bodies. The 'Pragmatic' position may hold 'true' because many of those who write about coaching in a wide range of settings agree that it works!

Gibb and Hill (2006) and Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005: 15–17) suggest there are contrary positions presented in the coaching and mentoring literature that are almost 'tribal' in nature.

As a result of all this I would conclude that interest groups are offering different narrative lines based on the interests of their social groupings.

Garvey et al. (2009: 225) take these different sources of knowledge and practice in coaching and mentoring and bring them together in the following table.

Table 1.1 Antecedents, mediating concepts and practical applications for coaching and mentoring

Antecedents	Mediating concepts	Practical applications
Sport	Goals and targets Measurement Competitiveness Performance	GROW model Mental rehearsal Visioning Goal focus The inner game
Developmental psychology	Education theory Conversational learning theory Motivations Sense making Theories of knowledge Mindset The role of language Narrative theory Situated learning Adult development theories Age transitions	Levels of dialogue Holistic learning Knowledge productivity Johari's window

(Continued)

Table 1.1 *(Continued)*

Antecedents	Mediating concepts	Practical applications
Psychotherapy	Emotional disturbance Stress and wellbeing Blindspots and resistance to Change Transference Generativity Narrative theory Age transitions	7–eyed model of supervision CBT techniques Psychometrics Challenge Devil's advocacy Visioning Solution focus The dream The inner game Johari's window
Sociology	Organisational theory Relationships Change, power and emancipation Language, culture and context Dominant discourse Strategy Mindset Narrative theory	360° feedback SWOT and PESTS Performance management Human resource management practice ROI Discourse analysis
Philosophy	Power, morality and mindset Dominant discourses and meaning The notion of expert	Evidence-based coaching Existential coaching Ethical frameworks and standards

Source: Garvey et al. (2009: 225)

While this inevitably offers a single perspective on both coaching and mentoring, it also represents the diverse nature of the knowledge bases from which the activities are drawn as well as the sheer variety of practices. One result of this diverse and rich heritage is that different disciplines and philosophies find themselves in competition for the ownership of coaching and mentoring and I can only conclude that coaching and mentoring activities are socially constructed, dynamic and subject to reconstruction in various settings to suit a variety of purposes. Adding to this international and cultural considerations, there emerges a very mixed picture indeed.

A group of eminent coaching researchers and practitioners met in Dublin in 2008 for a global convention on coaching. From this they issued a declaration and their second point states:

> Acknowledge and affirm the multidisciplinary roots and nature of coaching as a unique synthesis of a range of disciplines that creates a new and distinctive value to individuals, organizations and society. To accomplish this we need to add to the body of coaching knowledge by conducting rigorous research into the processes, practices, and outcomes of coaching, in order to strengthen its practical impact and theoretical underpinnings. (Mooney, 2008: 5)

It would seem that there is support for the notion of an 'eclectic mix' in this statement and an acknowledgement that this would be achieved through rigorous research.

For me this raises a number of key questions – namely:

What are the implications of this eclectic mix on practice?
How do clients and consumers make informed choices?
What is good practice?
How is it possible to establish standards?
What's the difference between coaching and mentoring or are these the same?
How can coaching and mentoring be researched if there is no common definition?

I shall discuss these in the next chapter.