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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine where and how coaching and mentoring disciplines overlap or differ in approach. Coaching and mentoring have emerged as important interventions as the role of helping relationships have gained prominence in human resource development. However, there appear to be contexts where one or other is preeminent, without consistent explanation of their suitability. Such inconsistency arguably creates confusion and doubt about these interventions and their efficacy notably amongst those who commission such interventions and their potential beneficiaries. This study focuses on this inconsistency of coaching or mentoring by exploring practitioners' approaches within six disciplines: executive coaches, coaching psychologists, sports coaches, mentors of leaders, mentors of newly qualified teachers and mentors of young people, with the aim of assisting those seeking support with development.

Design/methodology/approach – This exploratory study was undertaken using a qualitative methodology, where in-depth interviews were completed with experienced practitioners to elucidate their approaches and practice.

Findings – The findings show that approaches may be discipline-specific, where practitioners specialise in a particular type of coaching or mentoring requiring distinctive knowledge and/or skills. However, the sharing of good practice across disciplines and the value of understanding the common dimensions which emerged is also evident, providing clients and those who commission coaching and mentoring with reassurances regarding the nature of these helping relationships.

Research limitations/implications – As the research focused only on the practitioners' experiences of their work in these disciplines, it is vital that the mentees' and coachees' experiences are captured in future research. There is also value in further exploration of the model developed.

Practical implications – By deploying the model concerned with the future development of these interventions suggests practitioners can expand their capacity and scope by adopting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches.

Originality/value – By directly exploring the shared and distinctive approaches of coaching and mentoring practitioners in six contexts, this study provides opportunities to understand where practitioners can benefit from imparting best practice across these interventions and highlighting specific aspects for their context.

Keywords Mentoring, Coaching, Deficit/developmental mind-sets, Directive/non-directive approaches

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

Observing the coaching and mentoring landscape, confusion surrounds this "dynamic duo" within the literature and in practice-based settings, as universal definitions remain elusive (CIPD, 2010; Clutterbuck, 2008). There are also conflicting arguments regarding the value of attempting to define each role (D'Abate *et al.*, 2003; Rock and Garavan, 2006). Some discuss clear overlaps (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007) or the impracticalities of such a task of separation (Ferrar, 2004), whilst others see benefit in understanding where differences might lie (Garvey *et al.*, 2014). Further confusion is caused by professions or organisations who have historically implemented mentoring over coaching or vice versa. For example, it is considered the "norm" for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to be mentored rather than be coached; and athletes to be coached rather than be mentored. Yet, there is limited evidence of the reasons behind these decisions (Garvey, 2014; Downey, 2003). This situation means that those who commission such interventions, human resource managers and potential clients require a greater clarification of differences in approach between coaches and mentors, so that contracts or arrangements can be based on clear client need and practitioner approach (CIPD, 2008).

This article aims to explore what distinctions can be made between the selected coaching and mentoring disciplines and where convergence might be found across the selected disciplines. It also considers how practitioners located in a specific discipline share aspects of their coach/mentor approaches, have the capacity to practice in more than one discipline and demonstrate multidisciplinary approaches. Initially, an overview of the literature on the ambiguities concerning coaching and mentoring is outlined, and this is followed by a section on the methodology adopted. The findings from the in-depth practitioner interviews and the subsequent analysis identify the shared and distinctive dimensions across the six of coaching and mentoring disciplines and indicate the value of such insights for future research and practitioners alike.

Coaching and mentoring as developmental helping relationships

Key texts have sought to articulate problems associated with defining mentoring and coaching, or have attempted to list both common and separate attributes (Ferrar, 2004; Garvey *et al.*, 2014). The pursuit for clarity seems inevitable given the apparent need for stakeholders and customers keen to ensure that they are getting appropriate support and value for money (Jackson, 2005). An academic literature review carried out by D'Abate *et al.* (2003) identified features such as long term, role modelling, counselling, support and advocacy to be found within mentoring; compared with shorter, more targeted developmental work including goal setting to be found more in coaching. One of the difficulties in clearly defining mentoring and coaching links to the way in which both traditions have evolved over time, having roots that stem from a range of professional settings (Bachirova *et al.*, 2014; Cavanagh and Grant, 2005; Garvey *et al.*, 2014). On one hand, this allows for richness, diversity and creativity; but on the other hand, there are no single chronological pathways clearly marked out within different professional contexts or sectors that can help clearly explain the real origins of mentoring and coaching (Lane *et al.*, 2014).

Clutterbuck (2008, p. 9) offers a broad description of how mentors and coaches might approach their work with different emphases:

> Coaching in most applications addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life; while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and with career progress.

This broad definition is helpful, but other texts exploring the nature of mentoring and coaching can get into difficulties when the author uses their own experiences as a starting point. This can result in the writer taking for granted other settings where principles are not so easily reapplied. For example, one premise is that mentoring largely depends on the mentor and mentee sharing the same background (Hamlin and Sage, 2011; Wynn *et al.*, 2007). However, this overlooks mentors working with young people, where the background is not always applicable. A common understanding of coaching is that coaches tend to adopt a facilitative and non-directive approach; therefore, there is no requirement for the coach and client to share the same professional background (Boyce *et al.*, 2010; Evans and Lines, 2014). However, this understanding becomes redundant in sports coaching, as many coaches working in this context believe that shared knowledge and experience is a crucial part of the relationship (Lemyre *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, any single definition cannot be easily reapplied to all contexts (Law *et al.*, 2007). Renton (2009) suggests that the debates associated with trying to define coaching and mentoring are resultant of the range of disciplines that have entered into the arena: predominantly from business and psychology. She goes on to describe how within the business sector, cross-discipline approaches began to emerge in the 1990s when coaching started to grow. It seems that as the mentoring and coaching disciplines develop, further cross-discipline work is needed to help enhance practice; therefore, a greater understanding of the field viewed through the lens of disciplines, sub-disciplines and inter-disciplinary practice might be a more accurate depiction of what is taking place.

These on-going debates are exacerbated by the ambiguity of the professional bodies and training providers. In the UK, there are a range of professional bodies, each one with their own particular niche area. A range of different perspectives on coaching and mentoring (with a bias towards coaching), making it difficult at times for practitioners to know where to place their allegiance. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council list European-based training providers who have European Quality Award (EQA) status on their Web site (www.emccouncil.org). At the time of writing, the list of EQA training providers' courses exceeded 100, of which 1 per cent focused solely on mentoring and 14 per cent offered training coaching and mentoring training combined. There are of course many other training providers, including programmes available on mentoring. However, the overwhelming picture painted by professional associations and training providers is one of confusion, with limited evidence of coherent and consistent approaches (Hall, 2015).

The specific context in which a coachee or mentee is located is widely understood as holding the key when determining which definition should be applied (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2008; Delaney, 2012; Garvey *et al.*, 2014). This allows for variability based on the specific needs found within that area of work, leading to specific approaches adopted by the coach or mentor. However, the term "context" has limitations in that some types of mentoring or coaching straddle a range of professional settings, such as coaching psychologists who require specific training in psychology but can operate in a variety of organisations (Bachirova *et al.*, 2014). The term "discipline", although not widely used within coaching and mentoring literature, was felt to be a more useful way of depicting the parameters between roles (Walker, 2004). Six disciplines were identified to represent three types of mentors and three types of coaches using specific criteria which were:

(1) areas of practice which have been established for a significant period of time;
(2) disciplines where existing academic research can be found; and
(3) disciplines which provide practitioners the opportunity to either work full-time as a mentor or coach; or be trained in a specialist area of work.

The following disciplines were selected as areas to focus on within the study: mentors who work with young people (which may be known as youth mentoring), leaders and NQTs; and executive coaches, coaching psychologists and sports coaches. These choices all represent disciplines where mentoring and coaching have been implemented for a significant period of time, giving practitioners a wealth of knowledge and expertise to draw upon (Garvey *et al.*, 2014). These disciplines were also selected on the basis of providing significant contrasting elements, such as the juxtaposition of mentoring leaders with executive coaching, or mentoring young people with sports coaching.

Mentors of young people

This discipline is steeped in history; therefore, a wealth of existing research can be found regarding mentoring supporting the transition of young people into adulthood. One of the first mentoring organisations to be established is Big Brothers Big Sisters, founded in 1904 (Frecknall and Luks, 1992). This organisation epitomises a rich history of mentoring interventions aimed at young people, and this provides a good starting point from which to compare other forms of mentoring that have been introduced more recently (Dolan *et al.*, 2008; Meier, 2008; Meyer and Bouchey, 2010).

Mentors of leaders

The nature of leadership mentoring can at times be informal, and, therefore, hard to report on if not captured or written down (Mullen, 2010). The term leadership incorporates managers at various hierarchical levels, so mentoring can be quite broad engaging with talented employees showing management or leadership potential (Simon, 2003) right through to established senior executives accessing on-going support (Zachary and Fischler, 2009; Whitney Gibson *et al.*, 2000).

Mentors of NQTs

Education has a rich history of utilising mentoring, particularly as an induction and training strategy. In the UK, teacher tutors were used as supervisors in the 1970s and 1980s, and later changed to "mentors" when formally established as a core element of the induction and training process (Bleach, 1999). More recently, coaching has also become a popular intervention in schools, particularly as a way of offering on-going staff development (Burley and Pomphrey, 2011; Salter, 2015). Therefore, those participating as mentors of NQTs may also have some knowledge and understanding of what coaching is, now that mentoring and coaching are established within educational settings.

Executive coaches

The title of executive coach can mean a variety of things to different people, encompassing both trained and untrained practitioners. Executive coaches will sometimes market themselves with particular approaches, tools or methods in mind, such as NLP coaching (McDermott, 2010) or cognitive behavioural coaching (Neenan,

2010; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Given the vagueness of this area of coaching coupled with high levels of growth, it is important that research is undertaken to ascertain what sets this apart from other forms of coaching and mentoring.

Coaching psychologists

Coaching psychology began in the 1960s when the positive psychology movement first emerged (Williams, 2012; Palmer and Whybrow, 2014). Grant and Cavanagh (2007, p. 2) define coaching psychology as "using theoretically grounded and scientifically validated techniques to help clients reach goals in their personal and business lives". Perhaps, unique to this discipline is the prerequisite for coaches to also be qualified psychologists; something that is not mandatory in other kinds of coaching. However, generally speaking, mentors and coaches may well draw on theoretical frameworks such as solution-focused psychology, without having had the training as psychologists.

Sports coaches

This discipline originates in the seventeenth century when some games started to become codified, encouraging aristocrats to pay others to help them increase their ability in horseracing, golf, cricket and boxing (Jones *et al.*, 2008; Garvey *et al.*, 2014). Many believe that for sports coaches to pass on skills and teach others, their own experiences as a player is crucial in this process (Lemyre *et al.*, 2007). This resonates strongly with mentoring approaches where prior knowledge is deployed, unlike other more facilitative styles adopted by other kinds of coaches (Clark *et al.*, 2006). Others see coaching as not necessarily skills-related in terms of understanding the specific physical techniques of a sport, but the ability to work with someone's mental state of mind from a psychological perspective (Siripatt, 2005).

Methodology

The research was designed using a qualitative social constructivist framework to facilitate an exploration of practitioner views, opinions and experiences (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). As such, this was a comparative qualitative research design which aimed to "seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain a greater awareness and deeper understanding of social reality" (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 66). First, the six coaching and mentoring disciplines were selected on the basis that they each represented established areas of work where existing literature and research could be found. With this in mind, the six areas were chosen for the focus of this study. Three participants from each of these disciplines were recruited and engaged in an in-depth interview so that they could share their beliefs about the purpose behind their work and the ways in which they went about either coaching or mentoring. Whilst only three participants were selected from each of the six disciplines, it was felt more important to involve experienced practitioners through in-depth interviews rather than adopt approaches which access greater numbers of participants (Tongco, 2007). Due to the different starting points for the six coaching and mentoring disciplines, it was not appropriate to use definitive criteria for length of engagement across all disciplines (Walker, 2004). Instead, the researchers reflected the evolving state of the coaching and mentoring disciplines to select participants based on their primary area of expertise and reputation. The team worked through their existing networks to identify known mentors or coaches other contacts that they would be willing to pass on. For example, through existing youth work networks, a recommendation was provided for a professional sports coach

who agreed to participate in the research. In other instances, LinkedIn was used to contact executive coaches and one interviewee was found via this route.

Each participant was viewed as an individual case, as they did not work alongside other interviewees from the same discipline (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). This formed the basis of a comparative case study, providing access to multiple perspectives (Gray, 2009). The interviews were semi-structured and provided participants with the opportunity to articulate their own approach, so that this could be compared alongside others. They were also asked to describe their coaching (or mentoring) experiences and their backgrounds (what had brought them to that practice). Participants were also asked what makes the context of their work as a mentor or coach different from others. They were also asked what aspects of a mentor and coach's role were similar and they thought this. Finally, participants were asked whether a mentor or coach within their discipline could work effectively work in any other discipline or context, what they thought their discipline could offer other mentoring or coaching disciplines and how other disciplines could enhance the practice within their own area or discipline. The same questions were used as a guide for each interview; however, there was also some flexibility to allow for supplementary questions or discussion for further clarification.

To identify the distinctive and shared aspects of each mentoring or coaching domain, each transcript was examined individually and tables were created which helped list relevant discourses (using direct quotations to help retain meaning). These were then grouped together in related themes. Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6) as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". This approach was repeated by analysing and comparing interviewees from the same discipline of mentoring or coaching before analysing findings again comparing responses from mentors alongside coaches.

This study used Guba and Lincoln's (1994) framework, based on the concept of trustworthiness, for handling issues of reliability and validity in the qualitative research approach adopted. The four categories of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were integrated into our methodology and analysis, and included pilot interviews, consistency of background information supplied to participants and verbatim transcript checking with participants.

Understanding approaches used within six coaching and mentoring disciplines

To capture the essence of the six coaching and mentoring disciplines, as described by the practitioners. Table I was created to identify shared and distinctive aspects of the helping interventions. This table identifies some of the key themes which emerged across the six disciplines and identifies shared areas of approach as well as distinctive aspects particular to the disciplines.

The nature of the respondents from the six disciplines is summarised in the first row, highlighting the experienced nature of the participants. The focus of the six helping intervention disciplines stresses the variety of ways in which practitioners saw their helping relationship from "working with clients" in the case of executive coaches to the "supporting […]" in the cases of mentors of young people and NQTs, and "developing" in mentors of leaders. More specific were the goal-oriented focus of sports coaches and the "overcoming psychological barriers" of coaching psychologists. The emphasis of the

Table I. Shared and distinctive aspects of approaches across six coaching and mentoring disciplines

Features	Executive coaches	Coaching psychologists	Sports coaches	Mentors of leaders	Mentors of newly qualified teachers	Mentors of young people
Participants	Three executive coaches working full-time across a range of sectors, including private, public or both. One participant also volunteered as a mentor	Three coaching psychologists all worked with external organisations. One participant specialised in maternity coaching working with expectant mothers	Three sports coaches each represented different sports: tennis, athletics and football/soccer	Three mentors involved in mentoring leaders in organisations. One participant with coaching executives experience too	Three participants with extensive experience of mentoring NQTs – also familiar with coaching in education. Held senior leadership positions in secondary schools	Two of the participants coordinated mentoring schemes and also mentored. The third participant worked full time as an inclusion worker in a secondary school
Focus	Working with clients to effect change	Overcoming psychological barriers to development	Goal-orientated focus to enable athletes to increase performance so that ultimately, they win	Develop mentees in new areas of responsibility, helping them to gain fresh insights was seen to be crucial	Supporting a new professional entering their organisation. Sharing practice and offering support	Supporting adolescents' transition and those "at risk". Dealing with emotional or behaviour needs
Organisations formal/ informal	Most likely to be formal	Formal	Formal – some evidence of informal activity too due to the professional/ amateur dimension to sports	Mix of formal and informal – can be sought out by individuals or as part of an organisational initiative	Formal – required part of teachers professional development	Mix of formal and informal – associated with charity and public sector and education initiatives
Priority skills	Exceptional interpersonal skills, including the ability to listen to the client and find out factors such as drive, motivation and areas for growth and development	Psychological understanding and skills to work with clients to overcome barriers preventing them to develop	First-hand experience of sport – elements of assessing them and using teaching skills to help them develop in areas which need improvement	Good interpersonal skills and credibility with leaders. Ability to act as an experienced sponsor when supporting those with leadership potential	Mentor role-models good practice to their mentees, either through discussion or by the mentee observing their mentor in the classroom setting	Prioritises listening and ability to engage with young people who often display challenging behaviours. Value of slowly building trust and rapport. Stable adult

(*continued*)

Table I.

Features	Executive coaches	Coaching psychologists	Sports coaches	Mentors of leaders	Mentors of newly qualified teachers	Mentors of young people
Tools and Techniques	May use specific tools/methods, such as Neuro Linguistic Practitioner or cognitive behavioural therapy or personality profiling	Ability to use tools and methods – informed their work. Only real tool is yourself as a coach	Based on the psychological and physical needs of clients – use of biomechanical analysis techniques and tools to assess performance, and prevent or manage injuries	Non-specifically used more reliant on prior experience and network	Sharing of experiences and techniques such behaviour management	Human qualities – warmth, spontaneity, improvisations, empathy, ability to listen, you know creativity
Specific to the discipline	Working within tight timeframes. Recognised the need to not only maintain confidentiality but also respect any contractual arrangements, factoring in organisational expectations	Practice shaped by psychological theories and training. High level of personal self-awareness as a CP – only tool you use as a coach is you	Balance of the psychological and the physical – working to achieve goal through mental and physical preparation	Primarily around career progression, sponsorship and developing their management and leadership skills	Prior experience and ability to share specialist skills and knowledge in the mentee as a common feature of their role. *The root of it is good questions and good listening*	Child protection procedures and safeguarding
Similarities	Apparent that similar skills might be found in other coaching and mentoring disciplines	Resonates with the approaches of executive coaches – also shared similar clients with this group	Sports coaches' approach resonated with mentoring – such as the role and use of instructions	With mentoring of young people – focus on transitions	Similarities with sports coaches and mentors of leaders	Similarity with mentors of leaders – focus on transitions. Shared aspects with coaching psychologists and executives

disciplines is captured in the insights from one of the sports coaches and mentors of leaders who both identified moments as part of their main foci:

> You can set a goal for 8 years hence and in that moment you know that is when you will be judged as to whether or not your coaching, the process, the activity of the athlete, the decisions – you will know at that moment what has all worked (Sports Coach).

> Conversations that create insight […]. Helping people have that kind of "ah ha" moment, getting a flash of insight (Mentor of Leaders).

The third category in Table I highlights the organisational and formal aspects of the helping relationships. This issue created specific challenges for executive coaches and mentors of young people whose coaches/mentees may be referred to them through formal channels. In the case of referred mentees, they were often suspicious of what they might be letting themselves into so the mentors needed to work with this and put the young person's mind at rest, identifying ways to get the relationship off to a good start, "Lots of the kids we work with are just never heard by their parents, carers, teachers that they work with, or social workers" (Mentor of Young People). For executive coaches, the issue was often about balancing the expectations of what could be achieved within a timeframe from the viewpoint of the client (commissioner) and the coachee themselves:

> My coaching is always within an organisational context, so you've always got an additional endeavour. So there's the personal and the profession from the client's point of view and it's always within some kind of systemic context (Executive Coach).

In terms of prioritised skills, there was a prominence of interpersonal skills and abilities across the sample, however, these were emphasised in comments by the executive coaches, mentors of young people and leaders. The importance of first-hand experience of the journey the mentee/coachee was undertaking was apparent in sports coaches, mentors of leaders and NQTs where they acted as sponsors and role models. In contrast, the coaching psychologists emphasised their psychological understanding and ability to work with clients at that level as their prioritised skills set. Similarly, the ability to work with young people who might display challenging behaviours was underlined.

The tools and techniques used by the 18 practitioners from the six disciplines ranged widely. The mentoring disciplines were less likely to refer to specific tools instead emphasising more personal qualities and abilities. The sports coaches included more technical tools and techniques associated with measuring the physical abilities of their coachees. The executive coaches and coaching psychologists both referred to specific tools and methods that could be used but also stated "I don't explicitly use any tools really now. I think they get in the way" (Executive Coach). Likewise, the coaching psychologists highlighted their intermittent use of tools but stressed that their qualified and professional expertise offered other insights, "You need to have a high level of self-awareness. You need to understand yourself because the only tool you are using when you are coaching is yourself" (Coaching Psychologist).

Each set of practitioners offered specific facets peculiar to their discipline. In terms of executive coaches, this revolved around how the contractual arrangement with the organisation funding the coaching affects the approaches used, as they need to be executed in a time-efficient fashion. Similarly, the relationship between the coach and client vs coach and organisation often demands a degree of sensitivity. For coaching psychologists, their knowledge and ability to understand how people tick was seen to be

specific, as captured by the participant who argued, "We have a capacity to enter a deeper sense of the person; which comes back to a central view that I want to understand the person's worldview" (Coaching Psychologist). For sports coaches, the first-hand experience of the pressure of professional sports was highlighted alongside an understanding of the physical and psychological factors, which one of the sports coaches described as:

> With my goal-keeping coaching you have to understand the role of the player in that position. And for me, to look at the technical, tactical, psychological, biomechanical and social side of the development of the individual and within a team (Sports Coach).

For the mentors of young people, the area of specialist knowledge which stood out was the need to understand child protection procedures, safeguarding and confidentiality, so that mentors would know how to appropriately respond if a mentee disclosed to them that they, or someone they knew, were in danger. This was articulated as, "With child protection and safeguarding there are limits to what can be kept back" (Mentor of Young People). In contrast, the level of prior experience as a leader was seen as a distinctive aspect of mentors of leaders due to their previous success, ability to role model leadership behaviours and credibility as a sponsor for their mentees' career progression. For mentors of NQTs, their specific expertise was seen to be in the expertise and experience they could pass on from the context, as highlighted by a mentor who suggested this revolved around, "Lots of techniques for behaviour management […]. It's about how to differentiate between the different levels of abilities; it's about how to make the students engaged and interested" (Mentor of NQTs).

Analysis of findings from within each discipline area shows that some specialist knowledge is required within each "type", which are largely driven by the needs and/or demands placed on the coachee/mentee on the receiving end. However, the findings also show that some boundaries are blurred. These discussions also highlight the complexities associated with the on-going definition debate because certain approaches might be found between two or more coaching and mentoring disciplines; however, the picture might change if the criteria for comparison is amended. The next section explores this complexity further by focusing on two different dimensions: underlying deficit or developmental frameworks and the use of non-directional and directional approaches.

Shared dimensions of coaching and mentoring approaches

The responses offered by participants provided insights into their belief systems: some mentors and coaches believed that their role was to help the mentee or coachee gain something from the mentor or coaches' knowledge or experiences, which could be described as a "deficit" model (Philip, 2008). Garvey *et al.* (2009, p. 128) describe this as "compliance mind-set" where the mentee or coachee is expected to work towards a pre-determined set of goals. This contrasted with other practitioners who believed that the mentee or coachee might better respond to an approach that was much more mutual (Garvey *et al.*, 2009, 2014); benefitting from the practitioner being skilled in helping them find effective ways of developing themselves further. The same underlying beliefs fuelled the approaches taken by the practitioners and as such provide the first dimension for trying to clarify coaching and mentoring in different disciplines (Figure 1).

The deficit model stemmed from the practitioners' belief or mind-set that the mentee/coachee needed help and guidance in areas that they wanted to improve in, whether that was life skills for young people (Philip, 2008), professional skills for NQTs (Hudson and Hudson, 2010) or sporting skills for athletes (Cushion *et al.*, 2007). One mentor of young people explained where the source of referrals came from, "They come from a variety of backgrounds, quite sort of chaotic families, sometimes quite vulnerable kids with difficulty containing emotional states and things like anger management". This highlights how young people with challenging needs tend to be the focal point of mentoring schemes and that a mentor might offer a level of support that could combat some of these unhealthy circumstances or damaging behaviour patterns. In contrast, within the teaching profession, mentors are looking to help increase their mentee's capacity to teach. Therefore, they will focus their energies and resources into helping the NQT develop their teaching skills:

> The mentor is someone who is more experienced […] and is therefore actually not only just kind of helping that person to come to recognise what the areas of weaknesses are and explore the possible solutions to development issues; but the mentor would actually be able to suggest ways of improving in a very targeted way (Mentor of NQT).

Sports coaching stood out from the other coaching disciplines with a reliance on the practitioner offering help to close the gap between the athlete's performance and desired performance, usually captured in specific goals or targets:

> (Sports) Coaching is more to do with repetition, feedback and working with a player seeing where it is going right, where it is going wrong. How to develop fitness, how to develop the skills (Sports Coach).

Mentors of leaders, executive coaches and coaching psychologists contrasted with this frame of reference and tended to be more developmental; particularly where the mentee/coachee already had a good deal of life and professional experiences to draw on. Mentors of leaders encountered discussions relating to the mentee's career, or issues within their organisation. One leadership mentor described how this differed to coach approaches, which in his view, are more concerned with offering expert advice:

> They are not going to be able to really coach them specifically on the performance aspect of their job because that is not their area of expertise. But they are able to […] help her navigate her way through the politics, help her think about how she positions herself in her function and become more visible (Mentor of Leaders).

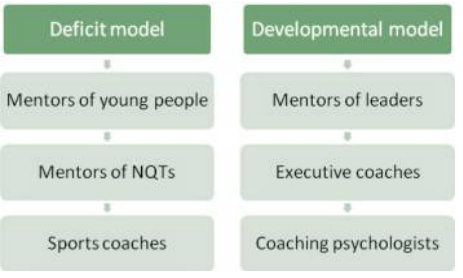

Figure 1.
Deficit vs developmental model

Coaching psychologists often work in a similar way:

> I am not there as an expert in that person or what they should be doing, or the content of their job. I am there to help them realise what capabilities they have got themselves and how they can discover those, look at those differently, and find resources within themselves (Coaching Psychologist).

This deficit versus development dimension highlights contrasting perspectives about the nature and purpose of coaches and mentors helping roles indicating common ground between certain mentoring and coaching disciplines, and equally differences within mentoring and coaching.

Another way of comparing how some mentors and coaches differ from other practitioners is by deploying a directive and non-directive dimension to the approaches. Figure 2 shows how the disciplines are reconfigured when the directive or non-directive dimension is instigated.

Unlike the previous dimension, where the mind-set of the practitioner is predominant the directive or non-directive dimension is guided by what the practitioners' experienced as the needs of the mentees and coachees, and whether or not they are looking for instruction or facilitation for them to increase their learning. Mentors' approaches with leaders did vary and some were more directional than others. However, there was a sense that the mentor had a significant amount of leadership experience, which meant they could help offer advice and insights by explicitly referring to their own expertise: "The mentor typically comes from within the same profession or […] they have professional insight into areas that you want to go in" (Mentor of Leaders). Another Mentor of Leaders stated "I know people who do professional mentoring […] gurus in their field; and people pay to be mentored by them, and they get told what to do".

Similarly, a mentor of NQTs explained how a feature of their role is to impart and draw on knowledge based on professional experiences about how to teach successfully: "They are dependent upon you for the expertise or the knowledge of the experience" (Mentor of NQTs). Likewise, sports coaches also need to be directive as they instruct athletes to work hard at improving their sporting abilities as outlined by the comment "First of all there is observation – I see what people do naturally. Then there is teaching – as you show them how to do it better using what skills they have already got". Indeed, a mentor of young people offered his thoughts about different approaches a sports coach might adopt, "My sort of feeling about coaches is that they have probably got a lot of detailed and practical knowledge about their subject […]. Coaching to me feels like teaching" (Mentor of Young People).

This contrasts with a non-directive approach more evident in mentors of young people, executive coaches and coaching psychologists. One participant described what a non-directive approach might look like, "Mentoring to me is more like, I walk alongside

Figure 2.
Directive vs non-directive approach

the young person so that they can get themselves to where they want to go" (Mentor of Young People). Similarly, executive coaches refrain from being directive:

> When I am talking in a coaching hat, it is always about facilitating the clients inner resources I believe they have and the starting point for mentoring with me is I'm there because I've been there and done it and I've got some t-shirts and I can offer advice and it could be direct guidance (Executive Coach).

One executive coach explained that this is because the coach is working from the premise that the client should be discovering their own solutions:

> It is the giving advice thing, you know stepping back, as a coach working with the persons' existing knowledge and experience and helping them come to their own conclusions and find their own answers (Executive Coach).

Coaching psychologists take a similar approach, seeing their role as non-directive and facilitative rather than advice-giving:

> Mentoring is for me based around an expert, wiser, older model […] somebody who has understanding and experience in that particular domain and they bring that more to the forefront. So they are more likely to be active in making suggestions, giving opinions, offering advice. Whereas coaches are not likely to start from that point (Coaching Psychologist).

Ellinger *et al.* (2008) suggest that coaches should avoid using directive approaches. The findings demonstrate that more mentoring contexts rely on a directive approach, whilst the majority of coaches tend to be more non-directive. However, the findings from mentors of young people and sports coaches showed that the divide on being directive or non-directive is not simply made between mentors and coaches. Mentors of young people avoided being directive and demonstrated approaches more in line with executive coaches and coaching psychologists. The sports coaches also appeared to be directive, and had more in common with mentors of leaders and NQTs when it came to passing on context-specific knowledge and expertise.

These two dimensions; deficit versus developmental, and directive and non-directive present the opportunity of mapping coaching and mentoring disciplines and Figure 3 displays this plotting. The benefit of such a depiction is the prospect of capturing in the vertical axis, or dimension, the mind-set of the practitioner and in the horizontal axis the instructional requirements of the coachee/mentee. The facility to summarise these key parameters of coaching and mentoring as helping interventions emphasises the opportunities for where sharing expertise across coaching and mentoring disciplines may be particularly apparent (Garvey *et al.*, 2014).

For example, identifying how practitioners may improve their ability to engage clients through non-directive means, specifically, active listening and the use of questions, may be particularly beneficial between mentors of young people, coaching psychologists and executive coaches. Conversely, enhancing the developmental helping relationships which require more instructional engagement suggests sports coaches, mentors of NQTs and mentors of leaders may benefit from further sharing of their expertise. Likewise, the developmental and deficit dimension suggests that that those portraying deficit mind-sets may profit from participating with each other (mentors of NQTs and young people and sports coaches) to explore and understand how their views of their mentees/coachees are shaped by their own journeys, and how they can work with their coachees/mentees in positive frameworks.

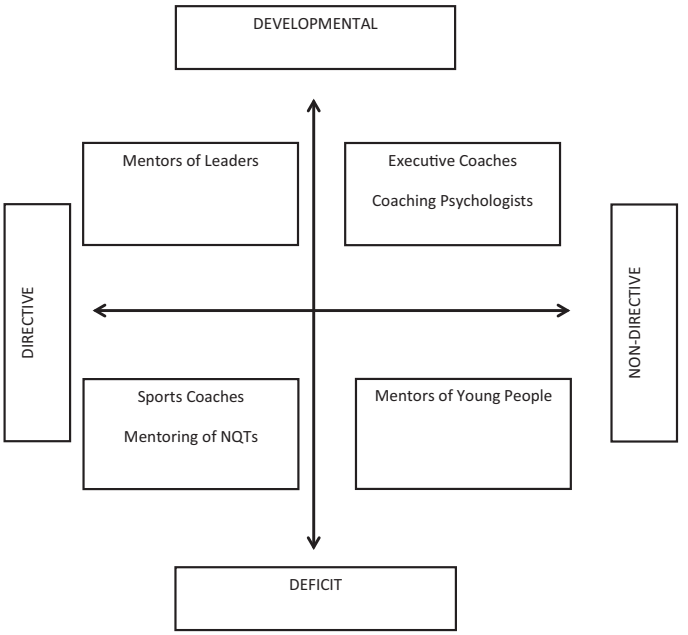

Figure 3.
Dimensions for understanding shared aspects of coaching and mentoring across six disciplines

Implications for practice

This study has helped shed light on patterns of approach and requirements evident within six selected coaching and mentoring disciplines. Findings reveal how coaches and mentors operating within a specific discipline require elements of specialist knowledge and understanding, such as child protection and safeguarding for young people (Alexander, 2000), or the kinds of demands and pressures placed upon executives (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007) and leaders (Zachary and Fischler, 2009). This raises implications for the ways in which knowledge and skills are developed in practitioners, and the extent to which training providers and professional bodies are able to equip coaches and mentors to work effectively in their chosen area of work and purposively across other disciplines' approaches. Coaches and mentors participating in supervision may also be able to explore where their skills could be developed or knowledge increased, given the type of work they are engaged in. However, this also depends on the supervisor understanding and appreciating the practitioners' specialist area of work. Much more thought needs to be given to training and support fora available so that contextual elements are factored in rather than assumed. This will help support coaches and mentors to be clearer about the nature of their work – what is specific to their type or discipline, and how aspects of their approach overlaps with other coaching and mentoring disciplines.

Practitioners acknowledged times when they ventured into approaches usually associated with other coaching and mentoring disciplines. This shows how flexibility in approach is already evident but that further opportunity for "interdisciplinary" learning is possible – such as coaches selecting appropriate moments to disclose information about their own experiences, or mentors dipping their toes into coaching domains when supporting a mentee to make behavioural

changes. Again, this requires practitioners to have a clear understanding of their main approach, with an appreciation of wider and alternative knowledge and skill-sets available to them. This study reinforces that practitioners could develop their skills further and competently work in a range of coaching and/or mentoring disciplines. However, they would need to be able to be clear about the approach used within disciplines and then adapt their skills and style according to each setting or type of work.

Two contrasting features were found which represented different mind-sets, beliefs and motivations for coaching and mentoring: a deficit versus developmental dimension. At one end of the dimension, the deficit aspect reflected how some practitioners saw themselves to be the expert or believed that the client was deficient in some way and that their intervention was needed to achieve success for the client. This contrasted with other practitioners who believed the client had the capacity and resources to develop themselves. These conflicting beliefs add to the confusion about how coaching and mentoring are defined, as they represent different presuppositions. While some have advocated that attempts should be made to tackle deficit mind-sets due to the associated negative premises and position of justification for the practitioner, it may be that certain helping interventions must pre-suppose there is a gap between the mentee/coachees' abilities and those of the mentor/coach. In addition, the negative connotations of the deficit aspect of this dimension may be overplayed and it is primarily the established expertise of the coach/mentor and the value of sharing their own successful journey or attainment (of a sporting target, successful teaching practice or stable adulthood) which lies at the root of this mind-set.

The other contrasting element was where contexts adopted either directive or non-directive approaches. This was more acceptable when coachees or mentees wanted advice or instruction because of their need to develop in skills or knowledge that the practitioner possessed. However, there was scope in some circumstances to allow the coachee/mentee to take more of a lead in their learning and development; therefore, the onus was on them to take more responsibility. In both cases, regardless of the approach being directive or non-directive, learning and development were also possible for the coach and mentor.

Implications for theory and further research

This study has highlighted the need for coaching and mentoring scholars and researchers to be more mindful of difficulties associated with attempting to draft universal definitions (Garvey *et al.*, 2014). This requires greater understanding of the relationship between the needs associated with helping disciplines and how these impact on coach or mentor approaches. Therefore, assumptions cannot be made about the way in which a practitioner operates if other disciplines have not been factored in. Authors (Boyce *et al.*, 2010; Lemyre *et al.*, 2007) acknowledge where and how the background of the practitioner relates to their practice which implies that certain limitations are placed on their approach due to the discipline in which the coach or mentor is located. Again, recognition of this and other factors needs to be much more explicit and not ignored or overlooked.

Perhaps, a human reaction to emergent or establishing fields is the perceived need to understand difference and this was evident when analysing existing

research, particularly when authors used prescriptive language which suggested ways in which coaches and mentors "should" approach their role (Lane *et al.*, 2014). An alternative outlook which celebrates diversity and looks for increased opportunities to integrate and inter-relate approaches might help broaden the field of coaching and mentoring in a meaningful way, increasing the scope and ways coaches and mentors can assist individuals to grow and change, in how they work/study/live in the community (Hall, 2015).

This study has several limitations due to its focus on the practitioner, the number of practitioners and, not least of all, the number of selected coaching and mentoring disciplines, which do not fully represent the field of developmental helping relationships. An analysis of additional disciplines would help develop this model further and offer a fuller picture of where overlaps lie, or where other specialist coaching and mentoring disciplines may fruitfully share expertise and aspects of distinctiveness. For example, McKevitt and Marshall (2015) carried out a longitudinal study which found that a directive form of mentoring may be more appropriate in the context of entrepreneurial mentoring, compared with the kind of mentoring required in larger corporate settings. Another missing element was the perspective of the coachee and mentee when identifying the needs present within disciplines. Further research which engaged with those on the receiving end of coaching and mentoring would also offer an important perspective. Similarly, professional bodies and training providers were referred to in this study without involving them in the empirical research. The on-going debate on the nature of different helping relationships, such as coaching and mentoring would benefit from exploring perspectives and insights from those acting as guardians and gatekeepers.

Conclusion

By exploring approaches found within six coaching and mentoring disciplines, this study has highlighted the complexities associated with the challenging task of clearly capturing the shared and distinctive aspects of this dynamic duo in the field of developmental helping relationships. However, in so doing, further clarity has been achieved on the shared and unique elements of each discipline's practitioners' approach. Furthermore there are many overlaps which are not always separated as the terms coaching vs mentoring suggest. Rather than look for further degrees of separation, those engaged with coaching, mentoring or both, are encouraged to find ways of sharing good practice with those at work in other disciplines.

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