

A photograph of two young women in a kitchen setting, wearing white aprons over dark patterned blouses. They are looking down at something on the counter, possibly a recipe or a piece of paper. In the background, other students are visible, some wearing blue aprons, suggesting a practical learning environment like a food science or nutrition class.

**Empowering students to promote independent learning : A project utilising coaching approaches to support learning and personal development.**



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# Context

- White Paper, 2011 – Student Experience
- Student expectations – fee increase
- Staff ratios/ staff roles
- Student engagement
- Student motivation
- Transferrable skills – employability

# Coaching

- What constitutes coaching?
- What can coaching offer in educational settings?
- How can coaching help staff and students?

# An institutional approach ....

- Commitment to coaching
- Multi tiered
- Qualification based
- Coaching network
- Identification of key staff – management focus

# Models

- Multiple models – SIMPLE, GROW, OSKAR
- Multiple approaches – co-active coaching, coaching for organisational effectiveness, life coaching.....
- Keeping it SIMPLE and GROWing interest ....

# SIMPLE

(Jackson and McKergow, 2007:10)



**Solutions not problems**

**Inbetween – the action is in the interaction**

**Make use of what is there**

**Possibilities – past, present and future**

**Language – simply said**

**Every case is different**

# GROW (Whitmore 1992)



**Goal**

Reality

Options

Way Forward



# Pilot study

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2 groups :

- 1 x self directed learners
- 1 x small level 6 cohort ( 26 students)

Reflective, solution focused approach to learning

# “What does success look like?”

Use of coaching tools and approaches:-

- Scaling
- Affirmation
- Reflection
- Prioritisation

# Solution based approach

- Problem solving
- Behaviour change
- Personal development

# Piloting the approach

- Information giving – explaining ethos and techniques
- Signing up for participation
- Reflective logs
- Feedback mechanisms
- Evaluation

# Some examples

- Using scaling approaches to ascertain attitudes to research
- Using coaching in tutorials
- Action learning sets
- Use of ‘air time’

# Using ‘GROW’ student responses from self directed study group



- *‘at first I thought it was quite obvious – the goal was to get my dissertation done .. but then the coaching questions kept pushing me to be more specific and I began to focus on how the dissertations would help my future career ( which influenced my choice of topic) and also identified interim goals.’*
- *‘I don’t ever think in goals, so it seemed really good to really think about what I was aiming at ...it made more sense of the timeline..’*
- *‘I am used to compartmentalising my life – this approach made me realise just how much my part time job, social life and living away from home impact on the reality of how I study...’*

## Using ‘GROW’ student responses from self directed study group



- *‘we got into a coaching conversation about motivation and self-motivation – I realised that the things that motivated me at school are absent at university – maybe explains some of the issues I have been having...’*

# Reflecting on ‘options’

It is implicit in the coaching process that the coach does not suggest options, but that these exclusively arise from the coachee. A useful tool in coaching is to ask the: ‘what else?’ question.

- *‘she just kept asking – what else? What else? And I was annoyed at first and kept thinking – that’s it- but actually the further we went on the more stuff I kept thinking of – and I felt I went from no options ( in solving a problem which had emerged in the research) to feeling that there were actually things I could do..’*



# Reflecting on ‘options’

- *‘we were talking about where I could get support - and I suddenly became aware of all sorts of places – in the uni, old friends, roommates, even my mum ..... it opened up all sorts of possibilities....’*

# Using ‘the way forward’...

- The ‘way forward’ involves identifying one action – a participant commented: *‘I felt I had to do it before I went back to my next supervision because I had suggested it (as an action)’*
- *‘I was annoyed at first – I went for tutorial because I wanted her to tell me what to do – and she didn’t – she made me work it out myself...once I had got over being annoyed , I felt quite good about it all.’*
- *‘I realised I was happy talking ideas, but I didn’t want to be pinned down to actually doing stuff – in the end I pinned myself down.’*

# Using ‘the way forward’...

- *‘it was so helpful that I found myself having imaginary conversations with myself between supervision sessions in which I thought about the stages and the questions.’*
- *‘written down it all seems obvious and simple, but it is really empowering.’*

# Using SIMPLE

Participants variously reported that the emphasis on a solutions focus:-

- *‘helped me to move it on ’*
- *helped people ‘ to get unstuck’*
- *‘it stopped me from keep telling my story and beating around the bush to moving to the next stage - right it has happened , now what am I going to do...’.*
- *it maintained a focus on ‘the importance of thinking about the resources available’.*

# An application in staff student liaison meetings.... On using ‘air time’...

- *‘I was sitting in the circle and I really didn’t want it to come around to me, but when I shared my idea, people liked it and it actually felt great.’*
- *‘people really listened to me – I am quite shy – so it was a new experience and it wasn’t half bad.’*
- *‘it made me contribute and I don’t usually do that - and I found I had something to say.’*

This was typical of many comments which were around lack of self-confidence, not seeing oneself as a contributor or just enjoying being heard. One participant commented: *‘it was ultra-polite ..no one was shouted down or drowned out...’*

# Does it suit everyone....?

- *'it just feels like it is taking too long to get anywhere.'*
- *'I just didn't like it – I felt it was all moving too slowly.'*
- *'I didn't feel comfortable, but maybe it was actually one to one supervision sessions I don't like – I felt exposed somehow.'*

# Would it work in other contexts?

Participants were also asked whether they felt that coaching would be beneficial in other contexts.

- *‘a solutions focus cannot be a bad thing and identifying a range of resources can only be positive.’*
- *‘I think it would take too long to explain to larger groups of students what coaching is about – it would be too time consuming and I don’t think you could get them to engage enough to consent to being coached’*

However, there was some agreement that the types of questions used in coaching are helpful:

- *‘focusing on the present rather than the past – and getting the person to a place where they acknowledge where they actually are rather than where they would like to be.’*

## Some conclusions...

Whilst being a small scale initiative the learning suggests that there is merit in undertaking a larger study.

Coaching has the potential to be of real benefit in an educational context as it fuses successful achievement of goals with growth, learning and development

There may be occasions where it may not be directly applicable, but the repertoire of coaching skills are core to good management and support and the benefits are tangible at personal level for students and also for teaching teams.

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# Some conclusions...

- Coaching offers an opportunity to support students as they develop skills for the workplace
- It is a tool which is of use to staff as they face continual change in workplace settings through using a solutions focused approach.
- it gives participants a creative space to engage with contemporary challenges and educators a 'new' tool to facilitate participation in a non-directive way.
- Initial reflections and evaluation are positive but further exploration could determine whether elements of coaching would be appropriate for use in other educational contexts