‘Stand by me’
Enhancing Professional Practice through Coaching

Rachel Lofthouse
Enriched opportunities for teacher learning & practice development

Permission for purposeful change

Enhancing educational practices requires ...
I take a socio-cultural historical view of practice; that practice is conducted by individuals and groups as a response to evolving contexts and situations. Practices (noun) are influenced by an individual’s beliefs, decisions, experience and expertise. They are actions embodying language, relationships and physicality. They can stagnate, but they can also be altered through practicing (verb), allowing them to be understood and refined with intent.

Procedures are mechanisms that help individuals or organisations to undertake their work or function. Procedures are relatively readily managed, can be monitored and are definable components of a larger system. Procedures can be replaced, over-hauled or fine-tuned when their part in the system is deemed to be inefficient, or leading to divergence.

Practices are actions which sustain human activities.

Practices are different to procedures.

Lofthouse, 2015
Do you stand together in professional practice?

As teachers and school leaders our professional practices are educative and educational practices.

Keep asking yourselves – but why are we doing what we are doing?

Be clear about how our actions lead to positive changes in professional practices.
Why consider coaching?

Communities
Schools are communities where adults and young people share time, space and activity.

Success
Success of individuals in the school community depends on common purpose and concern for each other.

Coaching
Coaching can enhance educational practices, allow professional learning through co-construction and increase self-efficacy.
Changing practice through coaching starts at the micro-level

• Focus on teacher enactment of values and policy in practice (as opposed to the implementation or delivery)
  • Clarity of purpose
  • Development of fit-for-purpose practices – knowledge practices, pedagogical practices, curriculum practices, assessment practices

• Can create teachers who:
  • Think educationally
  • Take the initiative – the activist professional
  • Have expansive aspirations for education
  • Are able to work collegially

(after Priestley et al.)
Initiating change
- Getting teachers talking

Developing practice
- Collaborative coaching

Sustaining changes in practice
- Agency and advocacy
Commitment: change embedded

Expansion: connections made to other practices / ideas

Consolidation: overcoming problems

Concerns: question new ideas in practice

Novice: try out new ideas

Initiation: exposed to new pedagogic & curriculum ideas

Leat, Lofthouse & Taverner, 2006
Initiating change

Getting colleagues talking
Initiating change:
Getting teachers talking

Novice:
try out new ideas

Initiation:
exposed to new pedagogic & curriculum ideas
A cautionary tale

- It [is] difficult for teachers to engage in interaction [with each other] with sufficient frequency, specificity, and depth to generate new insights into teaching dilemmas or to foster instructional innovation.

Horn & Little (2010)
Horn & Little (2010) suggest a number of possible explanations for why talk about teaching, even among teachers who are attracted to collaboration and committed to reform, may not add up to much:

- the difficulty of making tacit knowledge explicit (Eraut, 2000),
- the challenge of confronting well-established norms of privacy and non-interference (Little, 1990) or contending with disagreement and difference (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001),
- insufficient structural and social supports (Louis & Kruse, 1995),
- taken-for-granted language and frameworks that reify assumptions about learners and learning (Coburn, 2006; Horn, 2007),
- the urgency of the immediate and multiple tasks to which teachers must attend (Kennedy, 2005; Little, 2003b).
Stimulate the conversation

- Use a focus on practice to initiate thoughtful reflections and stimulate decisions
- Use what is available to create stimulus, to provoke discussion. Try video, agreed observation notes, teacher learning journal, pupils’ work, planning etc
- Return to what matters – what educational values do we share?

Developing practice

Collaborative coaching
Developing practice:
Collaborative coaching

Consolidation:
overcoming problems

Concerns:
question new ideas in practice
Coaching is focused professional dialogue designed to aid in developing a teacher’s repertoire, knowledge and skills.

- It relies on reflection and propositional skills.
- It often supports experimentation with new classroom strategies.
- Coaching can assist in the development of open and collaborative cultures.
Coaching contributes to an expansive learning environment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expansive learning environment</th>
<th>Restrictive learning environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close collaborative working with colleagues</td>
<td>Isolated, individualist working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-school educational opportunities, including opportunities to reflect and think differently</td>
<td>No out-of-school time to stand back. Only narrow, short training programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit focus on teacher learning as a dimension of normal working practice</td>
<td>No explicit focus on teacher learning except to meet crises or imposed initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported opportunities for personal development going beyond school or government priorities</td>
<td>Teacher learning dominated by government and school agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues are mutually supportive in enhancing teacher learning</td>
<td>Colleagues obstruct or do not support each others’ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to engage with working groups inside or outside of school</td>
<td>Work restricted to ‘home’ departmental teams within school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to extend professional identity through boundary-crossing into other departments, school activities and schools</td>
<td>The only opportunity to boundary cross associated with major change of job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for variations in ways of working and learning, for different teachers and departments</td>
<td>Standardised approaches to teaching and teacher learning are prescribed and imposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers use a wide range of learning approaches</td>
<td>Teachers use a narrow range of learning approaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels of coaching – progression in coaching?

Emerging
Coach initiated. Description and explanation.
Reference to former or future teaching is limited.

Developing
Justification of practice and suggestions.

Refining
Practice challenged. Incidents are generalised.
Discussion of future action.

Co-constructive
The role of coach and coachee blurs as they explore practice.
New ideas are developed.

Collaborative Coaching

Scaffold the conversation

• Introduce a sense of scale in discussion. For example in the relationships between ...
  • Critical moments (unplanned but interesting),
  • Planned learning episodes,
  • The lesson as a whole,
  • Broad themes which open up discussion about Teaching and Learning,
  • Big ideas – exploring the relationship between school, individuals and society.

Sustain the conversation

• Think about your tone of voice – keep it neutral and curious.
  
• Create opportunities for time travel - think ahead, think backwards, think laterally.
  
• Create a dynamic conversation in which there are opportunities to share problems, to pose & respond to questions, to extend thinking, to build solutions.

Sustaining changes in practice

Agency and advocacy
Commitment:
change embedded

Expansion:
connections made to other practices / ideas

Sustaining change:
Agency and advocacy
"It's always 'Sit,' 'Stay,' 'Heel'—never 'Think,' 'Innovate,' 'Be yourself.'"
Collaboration is an action noun

... describing the act of working with one or more other people on a joint project.

It can be conceptualised as ‘united labour’ and might result in something which has been created or enabled by the participants’ combined effort.
Key considerations – agency and advocacy

Multiple opportunities for coaching within cycles of practice development

Formative and cumulative – individual and institutional

Developing teacher leadership in a professional culture of trust and dialogue

planning, doing, reflecting refining

explaining, critiquing, expanding

flat structures, ideas welcomed, build expertise
Putting this together: Enhancing educational practices through coaching

**Initiation**

*Emerging coaching*
Coach initiated. Description and explanation. Reference to former or future teaching is limited.

**Novice**

*Developing coaching*
Justification of practice and suggestions.

**Concerns**

*Refining coaching*
Practice challenged. Incidents are generalised. Discussion of future action.

**Expansion**

*Co-constructive coaching*
The role of coach and coachee blurs as they explore practice. New ideas are developed.

**Consolidation**

**Commitment**

Initiating change: Getting colleagues talking

Developing practice: Collaborative coaching

Sustaining changes in practice: Agency and advocacy
Develop coaching as social and educative practice

Don’t stop talking...
Talk well...
Talk openly...
Talk productively...
Talk with students, colleagues, leaders and expert others....
Talk to learn – become the educational practice experts

Enriched opportunities for teacher learning & practice development

Permission for purposeful change

Enhancing educational practices requires...
I won’t be afraid
Just so long as
you stand by me

When the night has come and the land is dark
If the sky we look upon should tumble and fall

Develop coaching as social and educative practice
References


• Lofthouse, R. 2015, PhD, Newcastle University, *Metamorphosis, model-making and meaning: developing exemplary knowledge for teacher education*


• Lofthouse, R. 2016. Teacher Coaching; A collection of think-pieces about professional development and leadership through teacher coaching. Research Centre for Learning and Teaching, Newcastle University, UK [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/assets/Documents/Coaching%20Collection%20R%20Lofthouse.pdf](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/assets/Documents/Coaching%20Collection%20R%20Lofthouse.pdf)

