
# Calm, confidence and hope: A grounded theory study of the coachee experience of receiving coaching support from an educational psychology service.

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## Abstract

There is growing professional interest within Educational Psychology regarding the use of coaching psychology to support casework, at system, staff and individual levels (Adams, 2016b). Research suggests positive outcomes from the use of coaching psychology in schools, but it has been noted that these studies rely on frameworks developed outside of the educational context (van Niewerburgh & Lane, 2012). Additionally, few studies have explored the experience of coaching from the perspective of the coachees; during scoping reviews of the literature, the researcher could find none within the UK educational context. The present study aims to examine the psychosocial processes involved in the coaching experience in schools, from the point of view of coachees. The participants in this study accessed coaching psychology based support from an Educational Psychology Service, giving an opportunity to explore practice in context. To meet this aim, a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) was taken to generate a model of coachee experience, grounded in the UK education context. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, which was analysed using a complex iterative method of abstraction to generate six categories. These categories were explored alongside the extant literature to develop a theoretical model of the psychosocial processes reported by the coachees. The resultant grounded theory illustrates a process of professional identity change and growth in self-efficacy and wellbeing, through interaction with the coach. Insights into the usefulness of this model are discussed, for coaches, coachees and researchers. Limitations of this study are acknowledged, alongside identified areas for future research.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and interests of the author

This project began as an exploration into how best to support school staff in the delivery of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) provision, following research showing discrepancies between the what had been specified in their plans, and what was being implemented in schools (RIP:STARS, 2018). Scoping reviews around this subject suggested the discrepancy in practice was felt by many to be a school capacity issue (DfE, 2019), and at this time the researcher narrowed focus to exploring how school staff capacity may be supported through the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs) in schools. Finally, the project was steered towards the use of coaching psychology, as emerging literature suggested this as a new direction in supporting staff development and wellbeing, with the ultimate goal of supporting children and young people (Adams, 2016b). The researcher's placement Educational Psychology Service (EPS) was offering staff development support through a coaching psychology informed intervention, suggesting that this avenue had clear links to practice. At the inception of this project, the researcher knew very little about coaching, coaching psychology, and how this might be used in the support of school staff and young people, giving an exciting opportunity to explore this in a substantive thesis project.

While the project began with questions around implementation, the focus has shifted somewhat towards experiences, psychosocial processes and gaining understanding of coaching psychology in schools. This was steered by a response to the available literature, an exploration of the author's epistemological positioning

and subsequently, refinement of the research question. One review paper in particular identified that there had been no model or approach developed based in the context of schools despite the growing use of such approaches (Knight and van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The authors expressed a need for an "evidence-based" model designed specifically for schools to ensure consistency of practice in school contexts. Further papers suggest that EPs are well placed to deliver coaching support in schools (Adams 2016a) and that there are many who currently use coaching psychology (Farelley, 2020). To bridge this gap, the following research project is an attempt to unearth understandings of processes occurring within a coaching intervention. It is hoped that this can be used to inform EP practice when using coaching psychology and can be used as a basis for further development of a model or framework which can be used to inform the consistent and effective use of coaching in schools.

Grounding the project in supporting school staff to support young people remains a north star for this study, the ultimate aim of which is to contribute to the professional knowledge base which would support schools to be inclusive, supportive and meeting all pupils' needs to the best of their ability.

### 1.2 Study context and epistemological positioning

The present research project aimed to explore the experiences of a group of people who had experienced a common phenomenon. The choice to approach the subject matter from an exploratory standpoint aligns with the researcher's views around knowledge generation and the importance of having an open approach to data gathering, particularly in areas of study which are new, growing, or concern complex

social phenomena. A relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology were employed here to acknowledge the validity of each individual's understanding of their own experiences, and the researcher's influence in analysing and presenting the data. A constructivist grounded theory approach was chosen to minimise the imposition of pre-conceived ideas around what takes place within coaching. From this approach, new knowledge was hoped to be gleaned, which one may otherwise not have known to look for.

The research topic is of importance as coaching and coaching psychology is becoming increasingly present within EP practice (Adams, 2016b). The Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) requires registrants to adhere to professional guidelines which include ensuring practice is evidence-based/informed, and to understand the theoretical basis of interventions used (HCPC, 2023). However, a dearth of context-specific research around the use of coaching psychology would make fulfilling these criteria difficult. It is hoped that through contributing to the understanding about the topic, this knowledge can be built on in context, supporting evidence-informed practice.

### 1.3 Overview of chapters

- Chapter 2 is a first literature review which explores coaching psychology and it's relevance to EPs working in schools in the United Kingdom (UK), presented as a narrative review. Research aims and questions are presented based on the discussed literature.
- Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach. This chapter describes the epistemological positioning of the researcher in more detail, and then describes

the process of using constructivist grounded theory methodology as a data collection and analysis method. This chapter also explores ethical considerations and questions of study quality.

- Chapter 4 presents the result of the researcher's analysis. This includes categories and codes generated from the data alongside illustrative examples from the transcripts.
- Chapter 5 is a second literature review which explores theory and research which is relevant to the results presented in Chapter 4. The literature review supports conceptual understanding of the presented results.
- Chapter 6 presents the grounded theory of this study, constructed from the data presented in Chapter 4 and the literature explored in Chapter 5.
- Chapter 7 is a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the presented grounded theory. Chapter 7 also presents additional considerations regarding the quality of the study, the researcher's reflexivity, and future directions for the field of study.
- Chapter 8 gives a conclusion of the study, with a summary of its findings, presented theory and implications.

# 2. Literature Review – Part 1

## 2.1. Introduction

Coaching Psychology is a relatively new area of interest for psychologists (Adams, 2016d). Several sources describe this interest beginning at the start of the 21st century, with this rapid growth in interest resulting in just over two decades of research across psychological disciplines (Adams, 2016b; Association for Coaching, 2023; BPS DoCP, 2022).

Coaching support in schools is suggested to have positive effects for educational outcomes including pupil attainment (Shidler, 2008), teacher wellbeing (Adams & Lee, 2021), teacher goal attainment (Grant et al., 2010), school-based health initiatives (Dusenbury et al., 2010) and pupil mental health (Robson-Kelly & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). The delivery of this is varied, with some using peer models (Balchin et al., 2006; Sider, 2019), and others using external coaches (Stoiber et al., 2022), in the support of systemic (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014), group (Madden et al., 2010), and individual (Lucey & van Nieuwerburgh, 2021) change. There is also emergent evidence around the benefits of coaching to support child development in family and community settings (Allen & Huff, 2014). Given the potential wide-ranging usefulness of such an approach, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is professional interest within the UK Educational Psychology (EP) profession regarding the use of coaching psychology in schools (Adams & Lee, 2021; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).

Within the EP professional context, it is suggested that coaching techniques are routinely used by around a third of practising EPs in the UK (Fanshawe, 2019). There

is disparity within the way this is used, with some practitioners describing coaching skills as a part of their everyday practice, others describing it as discrete approach within their skillset, and others still suggesting that the two approaches – that of being a "coach" and an "EP" – should remain separate (Fanshawe, 2019). Others have greatly embraced the approach, with British Psychological Society (BPS)'s "coaching psychologist" register containing a number of practising EPs (BPS, 2023c).

During the development of this project, the researcher had no experience with coaching as either practitioner or recipient. A scoping review of the literature indicated that while this is an exciting time for coaching in education, the rapid growth of interest may mean existing approaches are transferred to school settings from other arenas, such as instructional coaching (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012) which could miss some of the context and nuance around the use of coaching in schools. Initial reading also established that there are many frameworks and psychological approaches relating to coaching which are worth exploring, as well as many new directions within coaching psychology research (Passmore & Evans-Krimme, 2021). Thus, further exploration around coaching psychology may help to develop understanding around effective practice in support of the implementation and outcomes of coaching, which is the basis for the wider project this literature review informs.

### 2.1.1 Discussion of the use of literature reviews in grounded theory studies

The present study is using a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis. Grounded theory takes an inductive approach to analysis of data in the pursuit of developing theory (Charmaz, 2014). The appropriateness of conducting a

literature review before commencing a grounded theory research project is a topic of debate (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). There are those who believe that reviewing the literature at the outset can influence the analysis of data, clouding the researcher to alternative interpretations and new theoretical development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The idea that new knowledge can be created through approaching a problem with no pre-conceived ideas is known as *naïve empiricism* (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019). Glaser and Strauss (1967), the originators of grounded theory, advocate for naïve empiricism and so the approach of not undertaking a literature review ahead of commencement of a grounded theory study has remained prevalent (Charmaz, 2014). However, naïve empiricism does not account for the researcher's subliminal biases, nor their socio-cultural and ideological standpoints (Cutcliffe, 2000; Thornberg, 2011), and so constructivist researchers suggest that being informed around a topic ahead of commencing a grounded theory study is appropriate, and can even be useful (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019). Without knowing what came before, a naïve researcher may re-tread old ground, and waste resources on "reinventing the wheel" (Thornberg, 2011). Additionally, prior knowledge of the subject area supports the researcher to "speak the language" of the topic and be better aware of how to engage participants during interviews, allowing for rich data collection (Charmaz, 2014).

To develop a background understanding of the topic, the following literature review will take a broad, exploratory approach. As discussed above, knowing the background and social contexts that a grounded theory project is situated in can be useful when conducting a grounded theory study through the epistemological lens of constructionism (Charmaz, 2014; Thornberg, 2011). It does however remain a

necessity that the researcher remains reflexive and critical when considering the research that has come before (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019).

### 2.1.2 Literature review aims

The following literature review takes a narrative approach to exploring topics relevant to coaching psychology in the context of the UK educational system. This is to develop a background understanding of the literature around coaching that relates to the practi of EPs. The overarching questions this review seeks to answer is:

1. What is coaching psychology?
2. How is coaching psychology applied within educational psychologist practice from theoretical and practical perspectives?

## 2.2 Definitions and Terminology

### 2.2.1 Coaching

Definitions of coaching can vary depending on the professional context. Examples include coaching within sports, business, mental health, and general goal attainment ("life coaching") (van Niewerburgh & Lane, 2012). The Association for Coaching (2023) offers a practical definition of the act of coaching as *"…a collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee."* This definition appears frequently in the literature (Adams, 2016d; Fanshawe, 2019; Farrelly, 2020). Despite this, disagreement around definitions remain even within professional contexts. This definition was used within Fanshawe (2019)'s study exploring practising EP views of the definition of coaching, and of those surveyed regarding the accuracy of the

above definition, 67% EPs "fully" agreed that the definition was accurate. For clarity, the present study is considering the above Association for Coaching definition as accurate, with the understanding there may be differing views.

In practical terms, from Fanshawe's (2019) study, coaching used by EPs included meeting with a person or groups of people who work in schools, to have conversations guided by the principles of their subscribed coaching approach. This includes exploring and setting goals and can also include using a set framework for the conversation. While often coaching is assumed to be an ongoing package of support, some EPs used just one session of coaching. Some EPs used modelling, observation, scaling and evaluation forms for measuring goal achievement.

### 2.2.2 Coaching psychology

Coaching Psychology, according to the British Psychological Society (BPS)'s Division of Coaching Psychology (DoCP), is *"the scientific study and application of behaviour, cognition and emotion to deepen our understanding of individuals' and groups' performance, achievement and wellbeing, and to enhance practice within coaching"* (BPS DoCP, 2022). There is no one theoretical basis which coaching psychology draws from and those purporting to use coaching psychology will draw from a range of relevant theoretical approaches (Adams, 2016b; BPS DoCP, 2022). As such, we may look to the goals (e.g., performance, achievement, wellbeing) of the support as being the aspect of the above definition that clarifies when one is applying coaching psychology. The definitions separate "coaching" and "coaching psychology", wherein coaching is the action and process, and coaching psychology is the study and application of the evidence base.

The present study refers to both coaching and coaching psychology. Where discussed as part of the coachee experience, coaching refers to the contact with a psychologist from an educational psychology service (EPS) wherein the psychologist proports to be using coaching psychology in the support of coachee development.

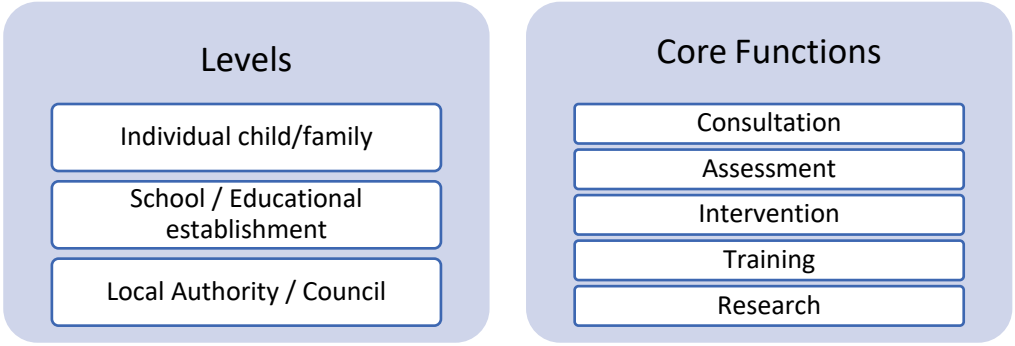
### 2.2.3 The role of educational psychologists (EPs)

In the UK, EPs are professionals who have completed training, usually at doctoral level, in applied psychology relating to children, young people and education systems (BPS, 2023b). A majority of EPs work in Local Authorities but increasing numbers are working independently, either self-employed or in private practice (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2023).

Regarding the day-to-day of EP's practice, a Scottish Executive review of the role (Currie, 2002) identified three "levels" and five "core functions" of practice. This was reiterated by Birch et al. (2015) suggesting these remain relevant to EP practice. Each function can occur at each level. These levels and functions are represented in Figure 2.1

**Figure 2.1**

*The Core Functions and Levels of Educational Psychologists (Birch et. al. 2015)*



As well as qualified EPs, an EPS can also include trainee EPs and Assistant Psychologists (APs). Trainee EPs are those who are completing the professional doctorate and are on placement at a host service. APs are practitioners who usually have a BPS accredited degree in Psychology, and often have a variety of roles, with tasks including direct work with schools, research activities and administration responsibilities (Woodley-Hume & Woods, 2019).

As with Coaching Psychology, EPs are not restricted in the psychological paradigms they apply in their work, and many will take a pragmatic approach to the application of psychological evidence and theory in their role (Burnham, 2013).

### 2.2.4 Overlapping Approaches: A Note on Consultation, Supervision, and Training

Adding to the confusion within discourse around coaching use in EP practice is the overlap with other typical approaches, including consultation, supervision, and training, (Birch et al., 2015). It is pertinent to discuss the similarities to and differences from coaching, according to the literature.

#### 2.2.4.1 Consultation

Defining how coaching and consultation in UK EP practice are distinct from each other is made difficult by the aforementioned lack of a clear definition of coaching, combined with a similarly nuanced understanding of consultation (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). A survey conducted by Fanshawe (2019) reported that 20% of responding EPs felt there was little to no distinction between the approaches, whereas 40% felt there was a strong distinction between the two, suggesting some disagreement within the profession.

Similarities identified between coaching and consultation models include the skills of the consultant/coach in encouraging self-reflection and the importance of the relationship between the dyad (although there are noted differences in areas such as collaboration, power imbalance and the "expert" role of the coach/consultant discussed by Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). However, the survey conducted by Fanshawe (2019) suggested that practising EPs place more emphasis on the helping relationship within coaching, the clarity of aims, and utilising structured techniques or frameworks than they do in consultation. Further, this same study identified that EPs were more likely to meet for several contacts when coaching and take longer per session than when using a consultation approach.

#### 2.2.4.2 Supervision

Another possible overlap with coaching approaches is professional supervision, which focusses on personal and professional development of the supervisee (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). This description has some clear overlap with the Association for Coaching (2023) definition of coaching, to "…*facilitate the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee".*

Key differences between the two approaches, as they are understood within EP practice is the emphasis within supervision on supporting reflection within a confidential, relationally safe space (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013), whereas coaching can feature activities which may transcend the containment of supervision including modelling, video recording and observation (Lofthouse, Leat, & Towler, 2010). Another key point of difference is the emphasis on goal setting within coaching.

Learning points are often identified within supervision (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010), but coaching typically defines specific targets at the outset (Adams, 2016b; van Niewerburgh & Lane, 2012). In this way, supervision creates a space for learning and growth, whereas coaching takes a targeted approach towards a goal.

#### 2.2.4.3 Training

Both training and coaching feature a goal of learning and development for the trainee/coachee. Given the greater time investment within coaching (Adams & Lee, 2021), clarity about when and why each approach should be used will be helpful when negotiating time and resource allocations (Adams, 2016b).

Traditional training models lack many of the features of a coaching model. Of note is the relational element within coaching (Adams & Lee, 2021) and collaborative nature of knowledge development, neither of which are usually present in training (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Benefits of the traditional training model for schools may include sharing of information with multiple staff members at a lower time and cost investment to the school, and training delivered by EPs is often positively received by those attending (Patel, 2013).

Challenges to the traditional training model include the "transfer problem" (Fixsen et al., 2009) wherein the new knowledge gained through training is not acted upon. This has been called Educational Psychology's "unspoken problem", wherein attempts to effect change through sharing knowledge or understanding have not translated into action (Chidley & Stringer, 2020). There has been some suggestion that the transfer problem can be reduced through creating opportunities within training to improve self-efficacy (Turner et al., 2011) and through giving

opportunities to experience mastery or gain vicarious experience (Balchin et al., 2006), features which are found in discussions of effective coaches (Adams, 2016c). This suggests there are activities which take place within coaching which support the use of new knowledge. This suggests a benefit of coaching to the increased cost and time commitment for schools.

#### 2.2.4.4 Summary

This section has explored some of the similarities and differences between coaching and other approaches within EP practice. In summary, the practical and behavioural aspects of coaching described above include that coaching usually comprises of multiple contacts with the coachee, has defined goals at the outset, and may include activities such as video guidance, observations and modelling. The relationship between coach and coachee can be described as collaborative, as can the development of knowledge or skills.

### 2.2.4 Coaching psychology's relevance to educational psychology practice

Referring back to the core functions of the EP, the application of coaching psychology can fit within several of the core functions and across all three levels of intervention. Adams (2016c) describes examples of his own practice including work with senior leadership teams and individual staff members in schools. A survey by Fanshawe (2019) found that many practising EPs used coaching psychology as a stand-alone approach and also within other functions such as training and consultation. Some have noted a greater time investment for practitioners using coaching versus traditional training or consultation models but contrast this with a greater payoff for learning, development and change (Adams & Lee, 2021).

Developing clarity within one's own practise around using coaching psychology may be a useful exercise to support evidence-based practice (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). Developing a robust understanding of the evidence base and application may support EPs who are using coaching psychology in their day-to-day practice, and support others in education in understanding the use of coaching in support of change and development.

### 2.2.5 Relevant legislation and guidance reports

The relevance of coaching for use in schools has been identified within the UK's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as early as 2003, where it is discussed in a guidance report around teaching staff's continuing professional practice (CPD) (DfES, 2003). This led to the development of practical implementation guides for use in schools which have drawn on evidence bases from a range of coaching disciplines (CUREE, 2005; Lofthouse, Leat, & Towler, 2010). Interest in coaching in schools has remained over time; for example in 2022, government initiatives such as the Leading Together programme offered coaching support for leadership development (Teach First, 2022). Coaching implementation frameworks have been shown to have some effectiveness in improving educational outcomes in schools (Shidler, 2008). However, Knight and van Nieuwerburgh (2012) note that there were no evidence-based models of coaching which have been developed specifically for the educational context. This has been suggested to be a source of confusion amongst educational practitioners (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). This confusion could lead to actions which are not evidence-based or grounded in practice-based evidence, affecting fidelity and outcomes which could lead to a sense of coaching being

ineffective when in fact, clarity is needed surrounding the use of coaching and coaching psychology in schools (Moir, 2018).

## 2.3 Current research concerning educational psychologists and coaching psychology

To develop an understanding of the context of coaching psychology, and its relation to EP practice in the UK, the following section is a focused exploration of the relevant literature. A systematic search method is used to ensure that the identified literature is relevant to the above, tightly defined topic. This is then explored using a narrative synthesis approach to give a balanced view, in context, of the available literature.

### 2.3.1 Narrative synthesis

A narrative synthesis approach was appropriate for this review as it was anticipated that the identified studies would use varying methodologies, and narrative approaches can be used to synthesise qualitative and quantitative data (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). This approach also allows the researcher to examine the literature alongside the historical and social contexts that the literature was produced within, and accept that differences within the literature and multiple views can exist together, with knowledge claims being reflective of their respective contexts (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). Taking such an approach to research synthesis allows the researcher to maintain the open mindedness and reflexivity required of an early literature review within grounded theory (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019). The avoidance of an analytical approach such as meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988), wherein the aim is to develop a theoretical understanding of the body of research, is deliberate as the development of such at this stage of research could

be argued to be biasing the researcher towards an interpretation of later data within the grounded theory study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### 2.3.2 Search strategy

To ensure the identified studies were relevant to UK EP practice, inclusion and exclusion criteria were specified, detailed in table 2.1. Studies were identified using the search terms “coaching psycholog*” and “school or education” and limited to journal publications in English between 2000-2023. The databases used were Web of Science, PsychINFO, Science Direct, ERIC, ETHoS, and the British Education Index. ETHoS is a database of unpublished theses. The inclusion of grey literature such as unpublished theses can be important in reviews which are considering a relatively new area of research interest (Haddaway & Bayliss, 2015).

The database searches identified 130 relevant studies, of which 110 did not meet the inclusion criteria, 7 were duplicates, and 2 were inaccessible, resulting in 11 identified studies for full text review. Subsequent citation tracking of the identified papers identified a further 5 published studies and 3 unpublished theses for full text review. After the full texts of these 19 studies were reviewed, it was found that 9 of the identified studies did not meet the inclusion criteria (including one thesis). Of the two theses that were included, both had several “phases” of research with differing aims and research questions. Only the phases that fit the inclusion criteria were included for full text review. This was “phase 3” in Farrelly (2020) and “phase 2” inFanshawe (2019). One published study was a summary of one of the identified theses (Fanshawe, 2019) and in this case, the thesis was preferred due to the in-

**Table 2.1**

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

| Inclusion | Exclusion | Reason |
|---|---|---|
| Study includes a discussion of coaching in the UK educational context. | Study does not include discussion of coaching in the UK educational context. | Ensuring the studies are situated within the UK education system's historical and social context. |
| Study discusses the use of coaching psychology in a school setting. | Coaching refers to an intervention not relating to applied psychology (e.g., sports coaching); coaching is commissioned and delivered in a community context; no coaching is described. | To filter out alternative meanings of coaching that are not relevant to this study; to filter alternative deliveries of coaching not typical to EP practice. |
| The study is available in English. | The article is only available in a language other than English. | Accessibility and accurate understanding for the researcher. |
| The study was published between 2000-2023. | The study was published before the year 2000. | Multiple sources describe that coaching psychology became a distinct area of interest "at the turn of the 21st Century" (Adams & Lee, 2021) allowing for a current understanding of the term. |
| The study concerns work with children in the 4-19 age range. | The study concerns further or adult education. | To filter out education settings which do not routinely work with EP services. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The study draws on primary data sources. | The study is a "think piece" or professional practice discussion. | To gain a view of practice rather than espoused approaches/theoretical discussion. |

depth data provided on the relevant phase which was missing from the final publication, and the published study was removed from the final synthesis to avoid amplification of these results. A total of 9 papers were included in the review. A summary of this process can be found in appendix 1. A summary of the included studies can be found in appendix 2.

**2.3.3 Synthesis**

Each study was read several times ahead of the synthesis phase; as part of screening, reading for meaning, for critical analysis, and to create a summary of studies (appendix 2). Each paper's contribution to understanding the research questions was considered with particular interest to dissenting or conflicting views (Greenhalgh et al., 2005). Summaries were created based on the studies' characteristics, context, quality, and findings (Harden et al., 2004). An example can be found in appendix 3.

The studies were then mapped together, using several different configurations to explore their similarities and differences. Mapping the studies allowed for a consideration of a multitude of ways the studies could link together. Examples included the target population, the underlying psychological approach, or the model of delivery. This also allowed for an exploration of links between the authors and recognition of where data had been re-used to inform other studies. The papers

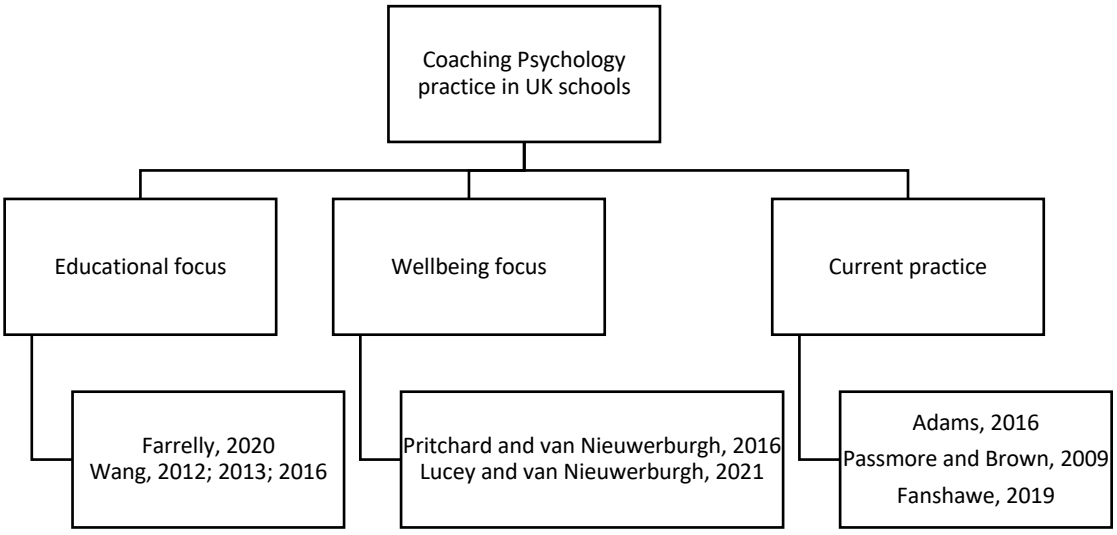
were then re-read, with their contexts, similarities, and differences kept in mind to synthesise a narrative regarding the topic (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Multiple configurations are presented here to support an understanding of the overall landscape of coaching psychology research as it relates to the UK educational context.

### 2.3.4 Configuration 1: Focus of coaching

In figure 2.2, the studies are presented according to the area of target for understanding around the use of coaching, specifically outcome studies exploring how coaching supports educational outcomes or wellbeing, or to report on general use.

**Figure 2.2.**

*Map of Studies Grouped by Coaching Focus.*



#### 2.3.4.1 Educational focus

Four studies explored the use of coaching for learning purposes. For reasons detailed in section 2.4.6, the Wang studies will be largely discussed as one body of work. Both researchers (Farrelly and Wang) took different approaches to this focus.

Wang's body of research explored how using a Coaching for Learning approach in teaching supported pupil's development of learning identities, confidence, independence and autonomy, reporting gains across these areas. Farrelly (2020) explored how coaching supported teachers' use of Working Memory support strategies, and in turn, how this affected target children in their classrooms.

Both researchers identified that coachees' reported greater self-efficacy overall, and both noted changes in classroom approaches. Wang (2012; 2013) noted differences in the classroom in the pupils' interactions with each other and their teachers/coaches. They discuss the change in power dynamics between the teacher/coach and students, describing a move from teacher-led instruction towards collaborative interaction. These dynamics were not explicitly explored within Farrelly (2020)'s study, despite a brief discussion of expert-led versus collaborative models of the coach-coachee relationship. Of interest is that the only teacher who experienced the coaching intervention as an expert-led model was the only teacher to report no improvement of their understanding of the concept of working memory, which may give some support to the espoused usefulness of collaboration in coaching (Sider, 2019).

The similarities in findings suggest that there are some commonalities within a coaching model focussing on educational gains, be they with adult or child

populations, as well as specific learning outcomes. Neither of the studies discuss the relational aspects of coaching in-depth, although do touch on the concepts of rapport. It could be that, given that Farrelly (2020)'s study focused on professional role, it may be that in this context, relational aspects of the coaching support were not felt to be salient by either the researchers or the participants.

The researchers discussed the challenges to implementation within the UK educational context. Wang (2012; 2013; 2016) mentions the difficulty in measuring the progress in learning using traditional methods such as exams. Farrelly (2020) notes the time pressure faced by teaching staff as a potential barrier to engagement in multiple coaching sessions, but notes that all teachers in her study said the time investment was worth the expense. Ultimately, the studies are positive towards the use of coaching in skill development/classroom learning.

#### 2.3.4.2 Wellbeing focus

Two studies explored the use of coaching in schools with the goal of improving wellbeing (Lucey & van Nieuwerburgh, 2021; Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). Both studies are grounded in positive psychology, and they share a second author. The two studies are likely influenced by a similar understanding of positive and coaching psychology, and that coaching research in this area may be experiencing a homogeny of ideas. This is further explored in section 2.4.6.

Both studies used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methodology (IPA). In both studies, the researcher is also the practitioner/coach and the implications of this are discussed as limitations within the studies, particularly around the pressure this may have put on the participants to respond positively. One study's target group

was “at-risk” adolescent girls (defined by the author as being experiencing risk factors which may result in interruption to “healthy” development) (Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016), and the other’s is a group of teachers in their first year of training through the “Teach First” programme, who were referred to support their wellbeing (Lucey & van Nieuwerburgh, 2021). Both studies used a Positive Psychology (PP) coaching approach and discussed their research within this context.

Commonalities between the two studies’ findings include the importance of the coaching relationship, a development of self-awareness and understanding, increased positive emotions, and emotional regulation. There were some differences within these, for example, Pritchard and van Nieuwerberg’s participants identified the value of sense making their experiences, whereas Lucey and van Nieuwerberg’s participants discussed sense making of their job role. Given that the two interventions explored each of these areas respectively, taken together, this could suggest that PP coaching supports sense-making of the intervention target.

Another similarity is the increased self-understanding which was discussed and reflected on specifically by the participants in Lucey and van Nieuwerberg’s study, and less explicitly by Pritchard and van Nieuwerberg’s participants, who described an awareness of other’s perspectives and own strengths. Pritchard and van Nieuwerberg identify the egocentrism of their participants, which they suggest is a result of their adolescent developmental stage, whereas the adult participants were more aware of their “selfhood” and how this differs from others. However, both groups did describe increased consideration to others which they attributed to

coaching. Taken together, these studies represent a positive view of PP coaching for varied populations in the support of wellbeing within educational settings.

#### 2.3.4.3 Current practice

Three studies fell into this category, each with different approaches to reporting evidence based on current practice. One used thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews of EPs using coaching psychology in schools (Fanshawe, 2019), another was a case study of an instance of coaching casework in EP practice (Adams, 2016b) and the final study was a correlational study of delivering coaching to students and whole-cohort GCSE results (Passmore & Brown, 2009).

The Passmore and Brown (2009) study is of interest as it is cited in some of the other studies included in this review (Fanshawe, 2019; Wang, 2012) as demonstrating a causal link between coaching and GCSE attainment. However, upon examining the study, the authors have made a knowledge claim that the data does not support, which is then amplified by other researchers reporting this finding at face value. The study participants were 18 schools who self-selected to receive additional funding for the deployment of coaches to work with students in Key Stage 4. The researchers then used the GCSE results from the schools over the next 3 years to demonstrate that these schools had improved beyond the national average, and that schools in the local area who had not received coaching had not made the same gains. They point to the coaches as the direct cause of this:

> *"This study confirms the hypothesis that coaching can be an effective intervention for enhancing examination performance… the study builds*

> *on earlier work… in relation to building hope and resilience." (Passmore and Brown, pp. 61)*

However, this study explored the correlation between coaching access and GCSE results and did not account for the myriad of other factors that may have influenced the results, for example, there was no examination in the paper around the types of schools who self-selected to take part in the project versus those who did not, offering no avenues for alternative explanation. Furthermore, there were no reported measures of hope or resilience in this study and so no conclusions can be drawn regarding the latter claim.

The Passmore and Brown study is influential in that it is the earliest published study found by the inclusion criteria. The data collection would have started just after the inception of the BPS special interest group in coaching psychology (Adams, 2016b) making it an innovative study which may have promoted the practice and research around coaching within the UK. This paper may have supported interest and funding in coaching in education, contributing to the generation of the evidence-base which exists today. In terms of how this study influenced practice, the authors note that following their project's success, other Local Authorities started their own coaching projects. It is unfortunate that the wider project this study inspired seems to have been lost to time as the researcher has not been able to find any current coaching initiatives at a Local Authority level in Sandwell, the location of the study.

The remaining two studies offer a view of EP coaching/coaching psychology use in their own practice. The paper by Adams (2016b) is a case report wherein the author also holds the roles of coach and EP. Fanshawe (2019) presents the views of 10 EPs

who use coaching routinely. While Adams (2016b) gives a coherent view of their own coaching use in schools, the findings from Fanshawe (2019) suggest that EP views of coaching differ between them, with some who view coaching as a part of everyday practice and others who view it as a distinct approach within their repertoire. This may relate to how coaching and coaching psychology are understood as distinct terms, but this is not clear in the reported responses. A commonality was that practising EPs reported an eclectic use of psychological approaches which differed depending on the coachee's needs, described as professional autonomy in Fanshawe (2019).

Both Fanshawe (2019) and Adams (2016a) raise the importance of relationships within coaching practice. Adams (2016a) discusses how the practical side of coaching should be secondary to the therapeutic alliance. Relationships are described as central to the process by some of the participants in Fanshawe's study. The respondents in Fanshawe's study also discuss the bidirectional nature of relationship development and emotionality, which is perceived on both sides of the coaching relationship by the respondents. This suggests that coming from the perspective of practising EPs, relationships are positioned as central to the coaching process.

### 2.3.5 Configuration 2: Underpinning psychological approach.

The examined research identified numerous psychological approaches which were used as tools within coaching psychology. It is interesting to note, as others have (Adams, 2016b), that there is an overlap of approaches used within both educational and coaching psychology. The identified approaches within this set of papers are described in table 2.2, although it should be noted that this is not an

**Table 2.2**

*Examples of Psychological Approaches Identified as Being Utilised within Coaching Psychology, Identified Within the Review Studies*

| Approach | Description of Use in Coaching Psychology |
|---|---|
| Solution Focused Coaching (SFC) (Wang, 2012, 2013, 2016; Farrelley, 2020, Adams, 2016, Fanshawe, 2019) | Coach supports the coachee's exploration of what is working for them, what else they could do, and to reinforce their suggested solutions and experiences of success (O'Connell et al., 2012).<br>Coach "leads from behind" by asking questions, encouraging a future focus, and helps the coachee develop realistic (rather than overly positive or negative) self-talk (O'Connell et al., 2012).<br>Goals are set by the coachee, allowing the coachee to experience collaboration, helping and autonomy (van Niewerburgh & Lane, 2012).<br>Despite SFBT and SFC's popularity, and an evidence base suggesting it's efficacy (Kim & Franklin, 2009; Kvarme et al., 2013), there is little research into the specific psychosocial processes occurring within the model(s) (Trepper et al., 2006). |
| Positive psychology (Lucey & van Nieuwerburgh, 2021; Pritchard & van | A shared focus with Coaching Psychology on strengths, growth and motivation (Biswas-Diener, 2020). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Fanshawe, 2019) | Coaching can be informed by positive psychology approaches through a coach-coachee relationship and goal-orientation (Grant & Atad, 2022).<br>Research into the use of Positive Psychology Coaching (PPC) in schools suggest that it can support improvements in pupil and staff wellbeing (Adams & Lee, 2021) and goal attainment (House, 2020). |
| Person-centred and humanist approaches (Fanshawe, 2019) | Positions coachee as having the fundamental right to self-determination (Adams, 2016c).<br>Change occurs as people are positively inclined towards optimal growth and through experiencing the right social conditions, this inclination is actioned (Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2018)<br>Core conditions are unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding and congruence, which will allow a therapeutic helping relationship to develop, known as the “therapeutic alliance” (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005).<br>Research into the practical application of this approach in its pure form is mixed (Kensit, 2000), but the applications of person-centred practice are argued to run through almost every coaching approach (Adams, 2016c). |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Collaboration a core aspect of this approach, but there are questions as to whether this can be true within the coach-coachee power relationship (Freeth et al., 2017), a concern relevant to all coaching approaches which espouse collaboration. |
| Behaviourist approaches (Passmore & Brown, 2009) | Successful coaching programme is identified through observable behavioural change on the part of the coachee. Advocates of the approach note behaviourist influences within goal and target setting common to most coaching approaches, regardless of their espoused standpoint (Peel, 2005).<br>Coach's role is to guide the coachee through meaningful learning, behaviour change and reflection on their actions (Peel, 2005).<br>Approach is generally coach-led (Light, 2008), which differs from the above described approaches which espouse collaboration. |
| Narrative Coaching (Wang, 2016) | Based in Narrative therapies, this approach seeks to raise personal agency through supporting the coachee to create and re-tell their stories in such a way that gives meaning and direction to their lives. This approach separates itself from therapeutic |

| | |
|---|---|
| | approaches through a focus on learning and development (Wang, 2016). |

exhaustive list of overlapping psychological theory between the two disciplines (Adams, 2016c).

Having multiple theoretical perspectives to draw from fits within the BPS's definition of coaching psychology (*"the scientific study and application of behaviour, cognition and emotion to deepen our understanding of individuals' and groups' performance, achievement and wellbeing, and to enhance practice within coaching"* (BPS DoCP, 2022)). In a similar vein, the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for practising Educational Psychologists (2023) notes that there are many psychological theories and models expected to be used in practice, and it is the practitioner who must consider the evidence-base of these and select them accordingly. By using the above definition, a practising EP may be described as using "coaching psychology" when they are engaging in an activity which has the goals of enhancing performance, achievement and wellbeing, and they are drawing from the psychological evidence base relating to these goals in their practice. The approaches specified in table 2.2 may be considered a set of tools which both coaching and educational psychologists can use in practice.

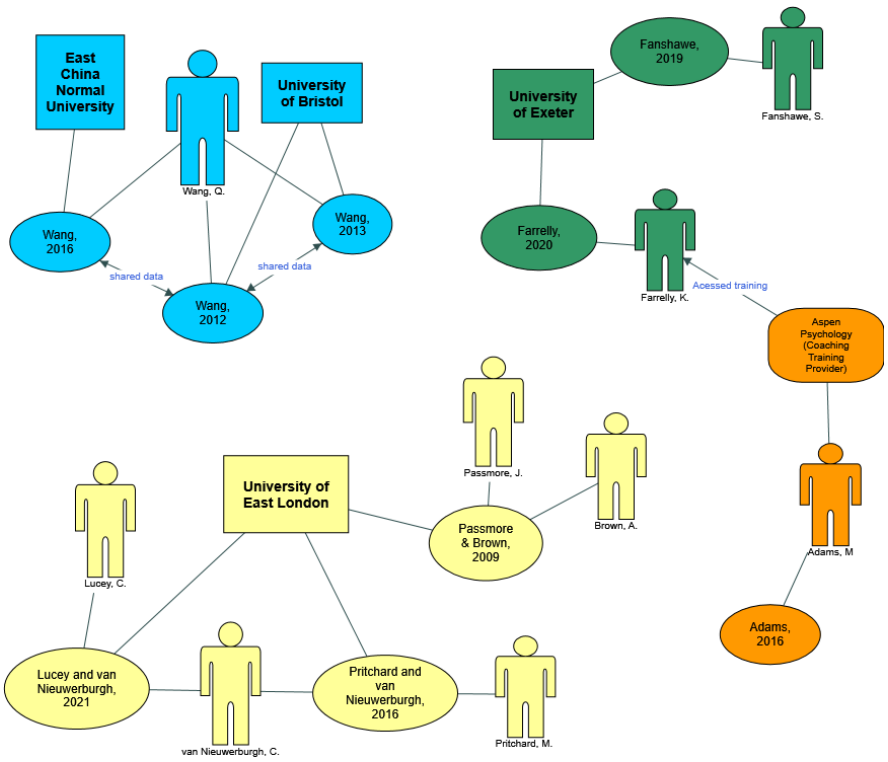
### 2.3.6 Configuration 3: Contextual links between studies

One benefit of using the narrative synthesis approach is the ability to explore social, cultural and contextual influences which influence the body of research being synthesised. To support this understanding, a map of researchers, studies and institutions is presented in figure 2.3. Of note is that of the nine studies identified for

review, three come from the same author, using data from one participant pool. This is described as “salami slicing” the dataset (Karlsson & Beaufils, 2013), where data

**Figure 2.3**

*Author and Institutional Links Between Studies and Researchers*




from one study are divided and reported separately. Some view this practice in a negative light, mentioning risks around research integrity and ethical concerns (Altay & Koçak, 2021) but it is also noted that where the dataset is large enough to be divided into multiple discrete reports, each with their own clear and unique contribution, it is not a threat to integrity (Altay & Koçak, 2021; Karlsson & Beaufils, 2013). In the case of Wang’s body of research, two of the studies appear to closely overlap (Wang 2012 & 2013) in terms of which data was analysed and how.

One of the studies (Wang, 2013) is a journal paper and the other is a conference paper (2012) but this is not clear unless the journal (Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences) is known to the reader. Both papers report on the narrative and semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and survey data, although each study discusses them differently in terms of level of detail and importance placed on each. The second published study (Wang 2013) does not make it clear that the data within had been previously published. Both studies appear to have similar aims; to explore how coaching for learning affects learning dispositions in students. The studies present slightly different conclusions. Wang (2012) describes that the data shows the Coaching for Learning approach is separate to other kinds of coaching and can support learning power gains and identity formation, whereas Wang (2013) discusses how the coaching model facilitates the learning process and makes the link between learning and coaching clear. However, throughout the body of the papers, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs are reused, suggesting that the ideas within were not substantially different to warrant re-publishing. The two reports are ultimately not copies of each other as a whole, but the lack of transparency about the re-use of the dataset and repetition of ideas could obfuscate the body of research around coaching in education.

In contrast, Wang (2016) draws from the same dataset, but approaches it from a novel analysis point wherein the children's narrative interviews are closely examined to explore what could be learnt about coaching experiences through an art-based approach to narrative interviewing. As before, it was not clear in the report that the data had been drawn from previously reported data. However, by taking an in-depth look at one part of the vast amount of data collected, in this study Wang (2016)

presents an approach to coaching using art-based methods wherein the reader is asked to consider how art can be viewed as dialogue within the coaching relationship, which holds inherent value to those who often work with people who may find complex verbal expression difficult. This could be considered as a methodological paper but does report on the experience of coaching from the point of view of the coachees, identifying reported increases in confidence, and reflection on their role in the class and how they relate to others. This is reminiscent of the findings from Pritchard and van Nieuwerburgh (2016), discussed in section 2.4.4.2.

The discussion of Wang's body of work highlights the importance of exploring the connections between publications when viewing the body of evidence in context. Figure 2.3 shows the clusters of researchers and institutions who contributed to the studies identified in this review. The two identified theses stem from the same University, on the same course (Doctor of Educational Psychology) and had shared research supervisors. Considering the boon in interest in coaching psychology and education (Adams, 2016b), it is perhaps not surprising that there are multiple recent theses on a similar topic (present study included). However, the contextual proximity of these may raise considerations around the influence of the institution, supervisors, and local education context in shaping the approaches taken by these researchers. Further, researchers accessed training courses run by other researchers suggesting a sharing and overlap of ideas may be present. This is not an inherent problem, as knowledge is constructed upon what came before. However, this may have shaped the research in a particular direction, in some ways limiting avenues to explore and reducing the learning of alternative models and processes through pre-set ideas, theoretical tools and mechanisms.

### 2.3.7 Summary

The scope of the review was relatively narrow and some overlap or connection between researchers is expected. However, this section raises some concerns relating to the possible repetition of data or disproportionate influence of ideas within these selected papers which are important contextually when exploring research from a critical narrative perspective. As an emerging area of interest, coaching psychology's use in UK education would be well served through widening the net in terms of evidence-base, to prevent the profession being steered early on into dominant paradigms or narratives. For this reason, the present study will take an inductive approach to data collection.

## 2.4 Rationale

The above review used a small number of studies, identified through a systematic search process, to attempt to create a narrative regarding current understanding of coaching and coaching psychology in schools in the UK. As discussed, there are many avenues that future research into coaching psychology in schools could take. Knight and van Nieuwerburgh (2012) note that, while there are many frameworks for coaching being used in schools, there are no frameworks that have been developed for use in schools specifically, and so a bottom-up approach to understanding coaching psychology in this context may be useful. Grounded theory, discussed at the beginning of this review, is a method which uses inductive data analysis to develop explanatory theory (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014) and may go some way to filling this knowledge gap.

Importantly, giving voice to education professionals within research which concerns their role provides some epistemic justice (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022), as currently dominant research narratives are from the perspectives of school leaders (Blatchford et al., 2009), large research foundations (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018) and psychologists (Adams, 2016b; Webster et al., 2011), who are arguably privileged in terms of social and educational hierarchy. A coaching relationship is a dyad, and the two studies which directly included EP practice (Fanshawe, 2019; Adams, 2016a) report on the experience of the EP and there is yet to be an examination of the coachee experience in the UK educational context, as identified in the systematic review.

### 2.5 Research aims and questions

The present study aims to explore what can be learnt from those in receipt of coaching psychology support from a member of an EP service. In line with the grounded theory approach, the research aims to develop theory from the data collected, but at the outset it is not possible to determine what the end product may be. Examples may be a model, framework, or theory (Birks & Mills, 2015). A secondary aim is that the resultant grounded theory will in some way be useful for EP practice in the use of coaching psychology in schools. The research question for this study is as follows:

- Which psychosocial processes occur during a coaching psychology-based intervention, as experienced by coachees in a school-based context?

*Psychosocial processes* refers to the change and development occurring between one's psychological factors and the cultural and social environment (Vizzotto et al.,

2013). Psychological factors include the individual processes and meaning-making of one's experiences which influence mental states such as wellbeing, self-esteem, or motivation (Upton, 2013). In this instance, the social environment would refer to coaching (i.e., access to and communication with the coach), but also to the school, and any other relevant aspects of the coachee's social environment. This was felt to be the key area of study to explore given the studies identified in the literature review having focus on change within the coaches. This question is exploratory in nature, to allow for an open approach which is not beholden to pre-conceived frameworks or ideas, be they my own as a result of this review, or others who have taken top-down approaches to research in this area (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher is careful to note their own experiences, biases and personal views will shape the final product of the research.

### 2.6 Chapter summary

This section has described the current context of coaching, coaching psychology, and the relevance of such to UK EPs professional practice. It has then examined a small group of studies which are highly relevant to the question of current coaching psychology use in the UK. From this, a topic of focus has emerged through considering the approaches to research already taken, and the inclusion of coachee experience within the evidence base. The present study's aims are outlined, and research questions presented, which will direct the methodology in line with the grounded theory methodology, and identified epistemological stance described in Chapter 3.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the approach taken to explore the research question. The ontological and epistemological standpoint is shared before detailing the chosen methodology. The process of the data collection and analysis is described in its entirety, alongside issues of validity, methodological rigour, and ethical considerations.

## 3.2 Ontology, epistemology, and methodology

An ontological stance refers to one's theory of the nature of reality, and epistemological stance refers to how one can come to understand or measure reality (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Methodology must be congruent with epistemological and ontological standpoints (Clark, 1998), and thus the researcher has carefully considered their own positioning on this in relation to coaching psychology and education. In practice, the researcher ascribes to pragmatism, as their belief is maintaining this helps to ensure all claims of knowledge remain under continual scrutiny. For this study, however, the researcher has adopted epistemological and ontological standpoints which have been chosen to ensure rigour, congruence between methods and questions, and a solid basis for knowledge claims presented throughout the presented study (Birks & Mills, 2015). This remains in line with a pragmatic philosophical approach, which asks the researcher to consider which approaches are fit for purpose to answer research questions (Burnham, 2013). The following is a discussion of potential paradigms which were explored and considered for the present study.

### 3.2.1 Positivist and post-positivist paradigms

The positivist paradigm's ontological assumption is realism, that a consistent physical reality exists outside of human observation and interaction. The epistemological assumption here is that this reality can be objectively measured (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Within this paradigm, there is no consideration around the influence of the researcher on the results of research, as the application of the scientific method is assumed to negate this (Eisner, 1992).

In the researcher's view, when considering questions concerning the social world, the influence of the observer in the generation of knowledge is relevant information. A researcher is a human instrument with their own motivations, political leanings, interests, and values which likely impact on their reasoning for asking a research question, regardless of the methodology used. The post-positivist paradigm of critical realism steps towards accepting the influence of the observer, wherein it is agreed that a physical reality exists outside of perception but this can only be measured by humans imperfectly (Groff, 2004). Within this paradigm, there is a distinction between the "real", and the social representations we have of "reality". This also aligns to the epistemological standpoint of constructionism, which allows for the multiple perceptions to coexist and be valid views on reality (Burr, 2015). However, the present study is concerned with psychosocial processes occurring as a result of an interaction between two people within coaching support, the experience of being a coachee within a coaching psychology intervention. As this occurs entirely within the participants' individual social worlds, it cannot be said that any one experience is the reality for all, and thus cannot be objectively measured. For this

reason, the present study is conducted under constructionism, a post-positivist paradigm.

### 3.2.2 Constructionism

Within the constructionist paradigm, the epistemological standpoint posits that one's understanding of reality is borne of the social understanding of one's experiences, and that multiple meanings can be made from the same experience, all of which are valid and constitute reality for the reporter (Burr, 2015). Various epistemological and ontological views fit within this paradigm, as might be expected when the confines of objectivity are lifted. Some views can take a very specific lens in examining knowledge bases, for example, feminist standpoint theory, which views all knowledge bases through the influence of feminism (Burman, 2017). However, for the purposes of this study, a broad approach, specifically social constructionism, was felt to be more appropriate given that there were no specific questions relating to standpoint (Chung & Hyland, 2012). Social constructionism as an epistemology suggests that reality is a product of human perception, where one actively constructs their knowledge through language and discourse with others, resulting in an understanding of reality that is culturally and historically bound (Burr, 2015). This position is suggested to be useful in psychological study, as often the object of study is not one which can be observed using the laws of nature, as other scientific disciplines can, and attempts to do so are basing knowledge claims on a false understanding of the mind (Liebrucks, 2001). Proponents of social constructionism suggest that taking a constructionist epistemological standpoint can support epistemic justice through allowing considerations of social, economic and cultural influence through challenging the dominant discourse through the reflexivity of the

researcher (Sabnis & Newman, 2022). Reflexivity is continuous self-reflection engaged in throughout the research process by the researcher, so that awareness of their actions, perceptions, emotions and decision making is considered alongside the data analysis (Darawsheh, 2014).

Aligning with this, a relativist ontological standpoint is appropriate to the present study as this position is that one's reality is shaped by their perspective, beliefs, and meaning making of such in their own context (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Sankey, 2000). Critics of relativism suggest that using this ontology alongside constructionist epistemology means that nothing can ever be described as "true", making this approach void for the purposes of empirical research (Liebrucks, 2001). However, this argument is from the assumption of objectivity, that seeking an objective truth is the aim of scientific study (Raskin, 2001). Rather, ontological relativists do not reject the concept of truth wholly, but accept that one's perceptions will differ to others, especially when examining phenomena bound by social interactions with their cultural world (Sankey, 2000). The research questions and aims of the present study seek to explore the experience of multiple people who each will hold their own views and understanding of the coaching process, all of which hold truth but none of which will be the same, thus, relativism is the appropriate ontological standpoint for this study's aims.

#### 3.2.2.1 A note on the differences between constructivism and constructionism

Through the remainder of this paper, constructivism will be referenced within the methodological approach (Charmaz, 2014). Social constructionism and constructivism differ in terms of their ontology. Social constructivism posits that

knowledge is constructed within the individual, whereas social constructionism places knowledge as being constructed through interactions with others (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018). Charmaz (2014) discusses the reasoning behind describing her methodology as “constructivist”, during the development of constructivist grounded theory, social constructionism had not yet embraced relativism and did not have the same emphasis on the subjectivity of the researcher that is present today. She acknowledges that the position of constructivist grounded theory is now in line with the modern understanding of social constructionism (Charmaz, 2014, pp.14). In the context of this study, as the data collected is the result of an interview conducted between two people, it is felt that the term “constructionism” is accurate. For this reason, the researcher will use the term "constructionism” when referring to the epistemological standpoint, and “constructivism/constructivist” when referring to the specific methodological approach of constructivist grounded theory.

### 3.2.3 The present study

This study intends to explore the subjective experience of a coaching psychology-based intervention. As multiple perceptions will be considered, this study is positioned within the social constructionist epistemological standpoint with a relativist ontology. These epistemological and ontological assumptions are appropriate for examining the complex social phenomena being explored in this study (Weinberg, 2014). In accordance with the assumptions relating to knowledge within this paradigm, the most appropriate methodological approach will be a qualitative research method (Robson & McCartan, 2016), examined in the following section.

While this study is exploring the experience of receiving a coaching psychology based intervention, there is also an aim of extrapolating from this a model, theory or framework which will be useful for EPs using coaching in their casework. To develop this, there is some cross-case discussion relating to the similarities and differences within the participant's experiences. This discussion is presented in Chapter 4. The resultant model is the researcher's construction of the data and extant literature and is presented as a representation of the experiences discussed by the participants of this study. This is with the acknowledgement this is unlikely to be universal across coaching contexts or a full representation of the participant's experiences. The model is presented to communicate the experiences within the data by the researcher which may give view to the psychosocial processes involved and thus support EPs to consider their approaches and tools when embarking on coaching support. For this reason, the study is described as being within the social constructionist standpoint, as it acknowledges that the data presented here is one view of many, which may be useful to add to the knowledge base around coaching in schools.

### 3.3 Qualitative research methods considered for this study

As described above, the present study uses a qualitative approach, in line with the exploratory nature of the study. This research field provides several possible methodological approaches. Presented here is a brief discussion of the considered methodologies and subsequently, a rationale for the chosen methodology.

As the research question in part concerns participant's lived experiences, Narrative Inquiry was considered as a research method to analyse the participant's stories of

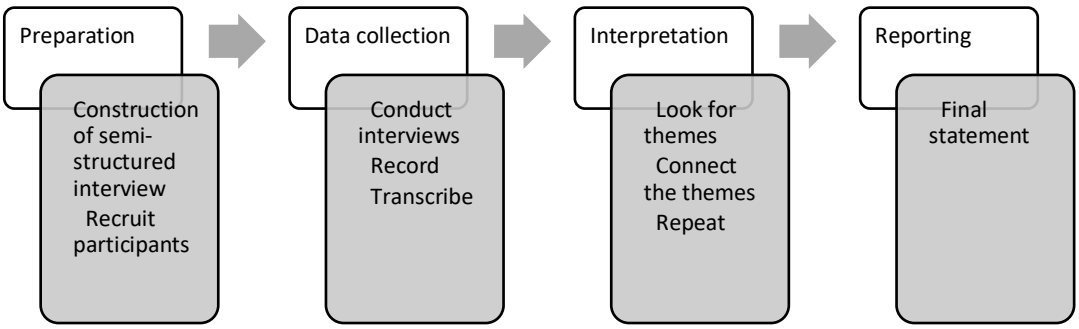
coaching (Wells, 2011). Within narrative research, several approaches to data collection and analysis are available including extracting themes, examining language, or highlighting tensions. However these approaches are time-intensive and require significant, in depth information about the participant's lives and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As the present study explored a short, compartmentalised aspect of the participants' life stories, the researcher considered that they may not have developed a rich narrative around being a coachee, in order to yield the necessary data for a thorough examination using narrative approaches. The aims of the study also did not naturally align with a narrative approach: in narrative inquiry the aim is to deepen understanding about a topic from the perspective of a small group (Wells, 2011), whereas the present study aimed to explore what could be learnt, and how this could be applied to coaching-related practices. Narrative approaches are not suggested to achieve the level of abstraction necessary for this, instead remaining close to the experiences of the participants (Clandinin, 2007).

At its inception, this study was to be conducted using an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, summarised in Figure 3.1. IPA examines the common meanings ascribed by those who have experience of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This approach moves away from the goals of narrative inquiry to understand the individual's story, towards developing an understanding of universal experience (Creswell & Poth, 2017). IPA studies are exploratory and focus on experiences of homogenous groups of people in a particular context (Harper et al., 2011), which would be appropriate for the current study. Nevertheless, grounded theory was ultimately chosen over IPA. Whilst this study is concerned with

individual's experiences, the research questions also concern the psychosocial processes involved in coaching psychology support (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), and developing explanatory theory around this which could be useful for practice. This was the primary reason grounded theory was identified as being the appropriate research method, rather than IPA.

**Figure 3.1.**

*Process of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Adapted from Smith and Eatough (2007)*




### 3.3.1 Constructivist grounded theory

Grounded theory is a robust and rigorous method to the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Birks & Mills, 2015). Grounded theory originated with Glaser and Strauss (1967), who published a seminal text describing their data-driven approach to developing theory. While the approach is still used in its original form, adaptations of the approach which are reflective of cultural shifts in sociological research have resulted in the development of an alternative grounded theory methodologies (Birks & Mills, 2015). Grounded theory is widely used across professional settings, suggesting it is appealing within the applied sciences arena (Robson & McCartan,

2016). Grounded theory methodology can be used with a range of different ontological and epistemological standpoints depending on the standpoint of the researcher. As described above, this research is couched within social constructionism and thus constructivist grounded theory is the most appropriate (Charmaz, 2014). While grounded theory methodologies may differ in epistemological underpinnings, there are aspects of the approach which are consistent. Birks and Mills (2015), in their overview of the different approaches to grounded theory studies, identify these commonalities as:

- Initial coding and categorisation of data
- Concurrent data generation and analysis
- Memo writing
- Theoretical sampling
- Constant comparative analysis
- Theoretical sensitivity
- Intermediate coding
- Identifying a core category
- Advanced coding and integration

Section 3.6 discusses these steps within the present study. The above identified steps feature across grounded theory methods but depending on the approach taken and particular researcher restrictions, they may be executed differently. For example, key within constructivist grounded theory is reflection on the researcher's role, experience, and influence on the analysis and how these impacts on theoretical sensitivity. In the first iteration of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the

positivist standpoint suggested researcher objectivity, being influenced only by exposure to the field of study. This approach advocated that the researcher be as naïve as possible to the area of study to maintain an open mind. The constructivist view differs in that, regardless of the subject, no researcher is a blank slate. Hence, there is acknowledgement of reflexivity whereby prior knowledge of a research area is not a barrier to completing a grounded theory project (Charmaz, 2014), but the researcher will always be influenced in some way by their previous experiences and socio-cultural understanding.

As identified in Chapter 2, UK-related research into the use of coaching psychology within the education system is limited. At present, the rate of research is growing but remains at an early exploratory stage. The flexible study design of grounded theory allows for previously unknown aspects of an experience to come to light, which is important where a phenomenon is not yet well understood (Thornberg, 2011).

Furthermore, the research identified in Chapter 2 has attempted to transfer theories and frameworks from other contexts into the UK education system (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Much of the available research that offers frameworks or models for coaching acknowledges that these frameworks are engineered top-down from theoretical models and various areas of psychology (Adams, 2016b). Using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), the aim of the present study is to generate a data-driven framework for psychologists using coaching psychology with education professionals in schools. The development of such a framework could

support EP practice for those who are considering using coaching psychology in schools.

### 3.3.2 Rationale for the methodological approach in the present study

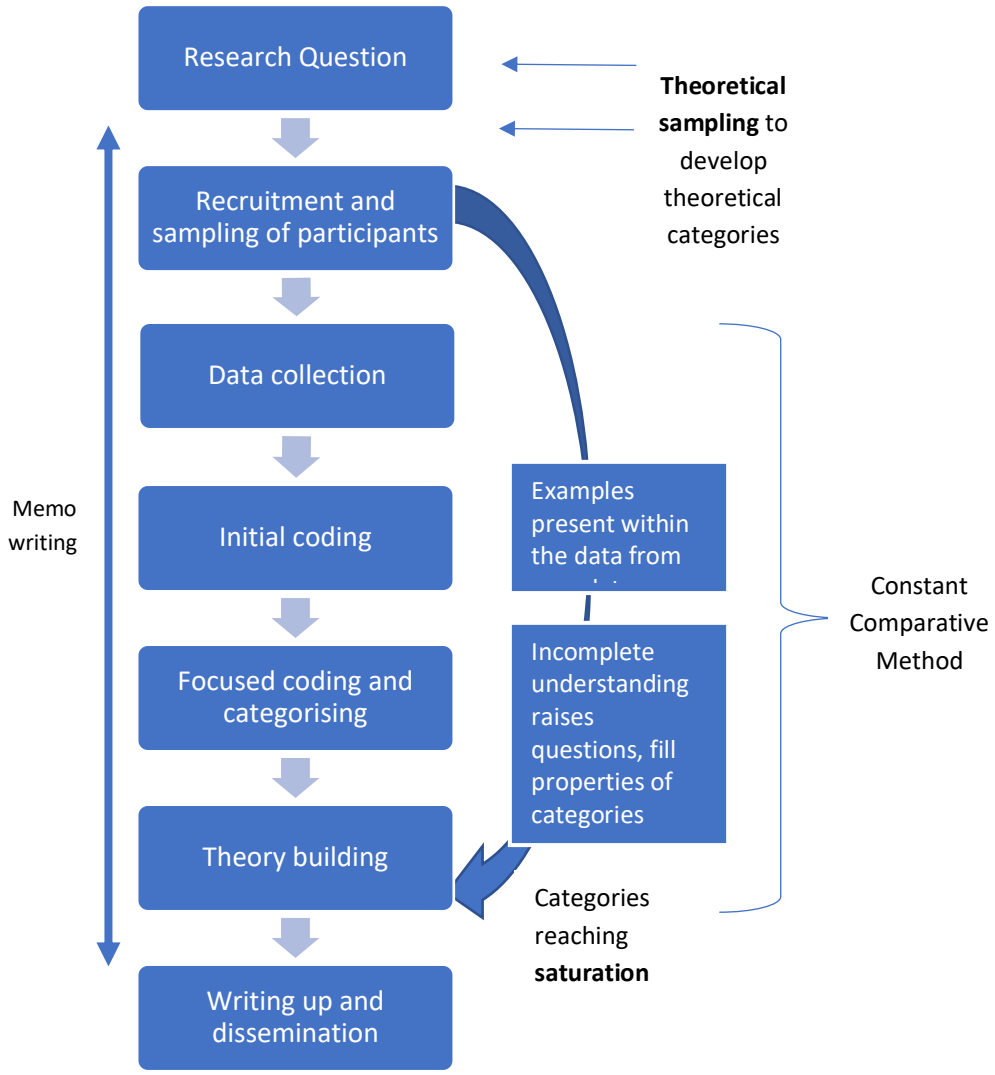
Figure 3.2 details the steps of method and analysis used in constructivist grounded theory. Birks and Mills (2015) suggest that grounded theory techniques are likely to be appropriate if:

- Little is known about the topic, or it is a developing area of interest.
- A process is likely to be identified within the phenomena of study.
- The aim of the study is to produce theory.

This rationale applies to the current study. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 2, there is little known about the coachee experience within educational and psychology service contexts. Further, the goal of coaching psychology interventions are to support a move towards a coachee's goal or development (BPS DoCP, 2022) indicating a potential process within this experience that then may be examined through using grounded theory approaches. Finally, this study aimed to generate a theory, framework or model that may support EPs use of coaching psychology. Thus, in line with the study's epistemological and ontological standpoints, the specific approach of constructivist grounded theory was selected. Alongside the usefulness of the approach in achieving the study's aims, it is noted that grounded theory is a popular, rigorous and systematic approach to data collection and analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015; Starks & Trinidad, 2007) which is

**Figure 3.2**

*The Process of using Constructivist Grounded Theory in Research, Adapted from Charmaz (2014)*




supportive in this instance due to the relative naivety of the researcher regarding the scale and level of study of the project.

### 3.4 Design

The following is a description of the study design, including procedures, sampling, data collection and analysis.

### 3.4.1 Stakeholders

The stakeholders involved in this study were:

- The researcher
- The University of Nottingham
- The researcher's placement EPS
- The participants in the study
- The participant's school settings

The research was completed as a thesis project for the University of Nottingham's Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. As such, this project was beheld to criteria set out by the university including ethics approval (see section 3.8). This project was also conducted with the support of the researcher's traineeship placement, who had also delivered the coaching psychology support. The placement supervisor, one of the Principal EPs, was consulted as part of the development of the project, and requests for participant leads were shared at whole team meetings. The participating school professionals are also stakeholders, as they provided data for this study through taking part in semi-structured interviews. The schools that the participants were employed within were stakeholders to some extent in that the study concerned interventions that occurred within their schools. Outcomes of the study were planned to be shared with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), the participants, and their schools (see Chapter 7).

### 3.4.2 School professionals

The participants included newly qualified teaching staff, teaching assistants, and pastoral support leads. Several participants held more than one role title and it is

noted that nationally, teaching assistant precise role titles can differ, but responsibilities remain largely the same (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014).

### 3.4.3 Members of an EPS

Members of the EPS were stakeholders as they delivered the coaching to the participants, which included a Principal EP, a main grade EP and two Assistant Psychologists (AP) (supervised by a Senior EP). Additionally, the EPS contributed to sense-checking of the categories through viewing the final categories and confirming their understanding of the categories were in line with the researcher's. The members of the EPS did not contribute to the data collection or analysis process.

## 3.5 Sampling of participants

Grounded theory methodology requires a sample which is guided by the research topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In constructivist grounded theory, sampling is initially purposive, and then becomes theoretical as the data drives the selection (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). In purposive sampling, the researcher identifies potential sources of rich information relevant to the area of study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In the present study, the purposive sample was the first participant and their interview data, identified because they were a school staff member who had received support from a member of the psychology service which fit the descriptions of coaching laid out in Chapter 2. Multiple potential participants were identified at the outset of the study, but the participants who selected for interview after the initial participant, along with the adaptations to the interview schedule (and thus gathered data) meant that these participants and their data were theoretically sampled (Birks and Mills, 2015). Notes, documents and other records

kept by participants as sources of rich data subject to their ability to be anonymised were also initially desired (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Unfortunately, the available records were inappropriate due to their content referring to individual young people. The purposeful sample sought to gain in-depth data regarding the experience of accessing coaching-psychology based support from the EPS. There was no pre-determined theoretical basis for narrowing the participant pool beyond exploring the participant's experience, and the inclusion criteria (Table 3.1) is deliberately broad to reflect this. See sections 3.5.2 and 3.6.4 for detailed information regarding the sampling process.

### 3.5.1 Procedure

To identify participants, members of the researcher's traineeship placement EPS were asked to identify schools that they had delivered coaching support in during a scheduled team meeting, where information about the planned project was shared. These potential participants had accessed a coaching psychology based intervention which varied in precise description. Broadly there had been an identified skill (e.g., approach, intervention) or area for development which the EP or AP offered coaching support for. This was described as a collaborative approach for support which was flexible depending on the participants needs but would include developing new understandings, generating action points, observation, modelling, and ongoing problem-solving. For the AP offer, the coaching support was part of a package to help school staff expand their intervention repertoire, and so staff members could access support for specific interventions such as Lego®-Based therapy, Precision Teaching, or Therapeutic Story Writing. The specificity of the AP coaching offer was to support predictability within the AP role, to support skill

**Table 3.1**

*Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

| Inclusion | Exclusion | Reason |
|---|---|---|
| Had coaching psychology-based involvement with a member of an EPS between February 2022 and the time of data collection as the result of EP casework. | No coaching involvement. | To ensure the participant has had experience of the examined phenomena; to ensure the involvement was recent enough to be properly recalled by the participant. |
| The coaching psychology-based intervention was completed by a member of the EPS who is not the researcher (e.g., senior/main grade EPs, assistant psychologists). | The coaching psychology-based intervention was initiated by the researcher (in their role as a TEP). | To maintain clarity of boundaries between role as researcher and practitioner; to reduce information sharing between practitioner and researcher roles; to support adherence to ethical guidelines. |
| Coachee was employed and working in an educational setting at the time of involvement. | Coachee was not working in an educational setting at the time of involvement. | To ensure the coaching occurred in the context of an educational provision. |
| The involvement concerned more than one coaching session (minimum 2; maximum 8). | The involvement involved just one session. | To allow for ongoing relationships and reviews which are often features of coaching psychology-based support. |

development, whereas the EPs were expected to have the skillset to apply their coaching psychology skillset flexibly. A list of schools who had a potential participant was provided to the researcher following this meeting, and the provided information was examined to ensure the inclusion criteria were met. The researcher then sent a request for participation to the schools' SENCO and/or Headteacher (see appendix 4), to seek a view from the identified staff member about taking part. It is noted that the participant may have felt compelled to take part if being asked by their line manager, and so further consent checks were in place, discussed in detail in section 3.8.1. Due to confidentiality arrangements, the researcher did not name the participant but asked the SENCO/Headteacher to speak to their Link EP if they were unsure who had received the support. Where this was followed and the coachee agreed to take part, the coachee's contact information was sent to the researcher upon which they received a participant information sheet (appendix 5) and consent forms (appendix 6) to make an informed decision regarding participation. Interviews were arranged at a time and place convenient to the participant. There were no rejections to participation.

Before the interviews began, the participants re-read the participant information sheet. They were invited to ask questions relating to the study, following which, a brief script around the interview process was read to them (appendix 7). The participants were reminded of their right to withdraw consent at any time during or after the study, and finally, asked to complete the consent form (appendix 6). The interviewer then began the semi-structured interview, using a pre-written outline (appendix 8) and Intensive Interviewing approach (section 3.5.3).

### 3.5.2 Sample size and demographic information

Five participants from five different schools were recruited, the first using purposive sampling, and the subsequent four using theoretical sampling (see section 3.5.4). While it is understood that typically, participants in a small-scale study such as this will be assigned pseudonyms or other identifiers to support the research narrative, this study will not do so, to protect the confidentiality of the participants. This related to the ease at which members of the psychology service could access the quotes and transcript samples and use these to identify participants. The following discussion of demographics and features of the sample provides context to the study and to support transparency of reporting, not to imply that the sample is representative and thus the experiences reported could be universal.

All participants were female and worked in primary schools. Two participants held qualified teaching status but only one was employed in a teaching role, with the remainder employed in non-QTS roles such as pastoral managers, teaching assistants and intervention support staff. The participants had varied experience and duration of working in schools, and of working in the roles they held at the time of the involvement (see table 3.2). Two participants received coaching from an EP and three received coaching from an Assistant Psychologist (AP). It is acknowledged that training and experience may be different between EP and AP coaches; however, the focus of study is the experience of the coachee. Within the field of educational psychology, APs are often employed to work across a range of activities in line with BPS and HCPC guidelines (BPS, 2023a; HCPC, 2023) and the APs delivering the coaching were trained and supervised by an experienced EP, suggesting consistent quality of support.

**Table 3.2**

*Length of Time Participants have been a) Working in Schools and b) Working in their Current Role*

| Time (years) | Working in educational settings (N=5) | In current role (N=5) |
|---|---|---|
| >1 year | 0 | 4 |
| 1-2 years | 0 | 1 |
| 2-5 years | 2 | 0 |
| 5-10 years | 1 | 0 |
| 10+ years | 2 | 0 |

Two participants had two face-to-face sessions, one had three with two being face-to-face and one online, and two received approximately 8 face-to-face coaching sessions (these being with the Assistant Psychologist). One received coaching support for a concern regarding a whole class, one for a group, two for their own professional development and one for work with an individual child. Two participants received coaching from the same Assistant Psychologist although the duration of each involvement varied.

The details of each participant are not provided ere to ensure anonymity, however, of note is that participants had varied years of experience in schools, and all had recently changed roles in some capacity. For example, transitioning from a learning mentor to pastoral role, moving schools, being promoted to leadership roles, or qualifying from a training course.

All five educational settings were mainstream primary schools. Demographics are presented in table 3.3. Two of the schools did not have an Ofsted rating due to their recent academy conversion, prior to this both schools had been in special measures.

### 3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

The interview schedule was developed using the principles of Intensive Interviewing. Intensive Interviewing is a common qualitative data collection approach which aims to build a thorough picture of the ways the participant understands their social world (Charmaz, 2014). Intensive Interviewing techniques allow for flexibility in the order and presentation of the questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). This allowed the

**Table 3.3**

*Participating Schools' Information*

| **School type** | **School location** | **Pupils on roll (approx.)** | **Ofsted rating** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | Urban | 400 | None (Prev. Inadequate) |
| Primary | Urban | 400 | None (Prev. Inadequate) |
| Infant | Sub-urban | 200 | Outstanding |
| Primary | Rural | 200 | Requires Improvement |
| Primary | Rural | 80 | Good |

researcher to be dynamic in their approach and ask questions to explore aspects of the experiences which appeared relevant to the emergent categories, or which were conceptually interesting. The approach also emphasises the active role of the researcher, and the importance of social context and understanding the participant's world views, which align with the research's epistemological standpoint and grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014). To put this into practice, an outline of topics was developed through considering how one might elicit the backgrounds, values, attitudes and behaviours of the participants relating to their experience (Check & Schutt, 2012). The researcher also explored what constitutes an "experience", and the questions were informed by this consideration. Papers on this concept were largely from the realm of marketing research meaning that the questions were informed by but not directly taken from this area. The "Six Dimensions of Experience" model (Sherdoff, 2019) was used to support the design of the questions. The initial interview schedule can be found in appendix 8. This was used as a prompt for the researcher, and was employed flexibly in line with the intensive interviewing approach and reflexively in line with constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014).

### 3.5.4 Purposive sampling

The initial pool of potential participants identified through discussion with the placement service were employed in non-teaching roles in schools. This was not a target population at the outset of this study, however, at the early stage of research this became and emerging participant pool. For this reason, the initial inclusion criteria and ethics application (appendix 9) reflected the ethical issues around exclusively working with participants in non-teaching roles, as it was felt that this

would be reflective of those who were in receipt of coaching psychology interventions. This did change later in the process to include a participant in a teaching role, in line with theoretical sampling (section 3.6.4). After contacting schools (outlined in section 3.5.3), the initial participant was identified using purposive sampling and was chosen by virtue of being the first to respond and arrange an interview date. The interview was transcribed, and initial analysis began (see section 3.6.2). During this process, the researcher identified possible areas for further exploration, recorded as tentative categories and memos. In line with constructivist grounded theory procedure, after data analysis on the first case began, the next participants were identified through theoretical sampling (Birks & Mills, 2015). Theoretical sampling is a method by which the next data set is sought based on the analysis, categories, and questions arising from the previous data sets (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Theoretical sampling has been described as an essential method within grounded theory to allow emergent theory to take shape (Birks & Mills, 2015). Taking a purist approach to theoretical sampling would mean that the characteristics of the participants cannot be identified ahead of the project, as beyond the first participant, their qualities will not be known until analysis begins (Charmaz, 2014). This can be difficult when conducting a doctoral thesis which is bound by ethical approval wherein the participants are tightly defined out of necessity. However, given the phenomenon under study is compartmentalised, potential participants could be narrowed down into serviceable inclusion criteria (table 3.1). During data collection and analysis, theoretical sampling meant that there was an updated ethics submission to allow for a slight change to the inclusion criteria (appendix 9).

As the research questions developed and categories emerged from the data, this interviewing schedule was adapted. A record of this adaptation can be seen through notes made during the interviews by the researcher on the schedule (appendix 11).

While purposive and theoretical sampling were the most appropriate sampling methods for this study (Birks & Mills, 2015), there were risks to credibility. For example, the participants were all in the same geographical area, under the same Local Authority and accessing the same EPS. This may have limited the variety of experiences within the participant pool, and thus the available theoretical pathways this research could have taken. However, the aim of this study is not to generalise findings across the profession, but to explore the phenomena in context. In this participant pool, it should be noted that all coachees and coaches were women, living and working in the same geographical area. These social influences may be of consideration, as they may influence the participants' experiences in common, unconscious ways that have not been identified through the present study. The participants were all working in primary schools, of which recent data suggests that 85.9% of teachers and 89% of support staff were female (Gov.uk, 2021), suggesting that the majority of those in receipt of coaching in this context will be female. On the delivery side of the dyad, as of 2018, 80.5% of Educational Psychologists were female (Lyonette et al., 2019) suggesting that in the context of Educational Psychologists delivering coaching in schools, this female-female gender dyad will be common, suggesting this is not necessarily a limitation of the present study, given its highly contextual positioning.

One coach and one coachee were of mixed ethnicity, and the remainder were white. Within the UK school workforce, 85.1% of people identify as white British (Gov.uk, 2021). A survey from the Association of Educational Psychologists found that 86% of respondents identified as white (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2021). It would be difficult to have a representative sample of ethnicity within the size of the present study's participant pool, however the remainder of the study should be read with the knowledge that there may be issues relating to race, culture and intersectionality which are not captured here, but could still be important to understanding coaching in context. The implications of the participant pool are further explored in Chapter 7.

### 3.5.5 Theoretical sampling

Throughout the initial analysis of transcripts, potential gaps, further questions, and considerations around which data to seek to saturate the emergent concepts were considered (see section 3.6). There is debate within grounded theorists as to when it is appropriate to begin theoretical sampling. Charmaz (2014) advocates for this to be done once core categories have been identified, so that they can be saturated with data collected through theoretical sampling. However, for this project, the researcher has not taken this approach due in part to practical reasons. The timescale of this project and the small potential participant pool make this clear separation between purposive and theoretical sampling difficult. Instead, the researcher has opted for Birks and Mills (2015) approach to theoretical sampling who argue that each participant after the initial purposively-identified participant within grounded theory should be theoretically sampled with sensitivity to the

earliest emerging concepts, provided there has been some analysis of the data collected before the next participant.

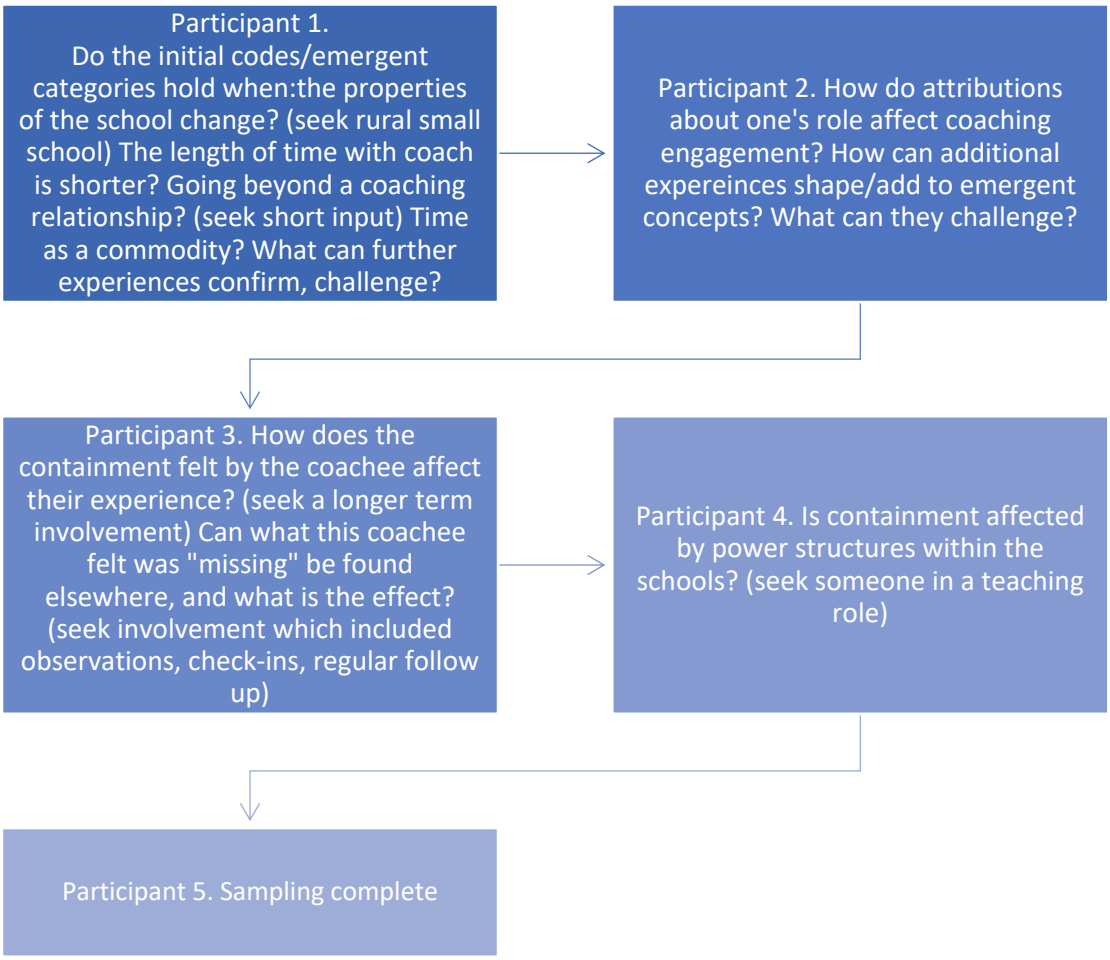
Despite being one of the defining features of a grounded theory study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) it is noted that this stage of methodology is not always transparent within reporting (Birks & Mills, 2015). Given the small sample size, in this project it is possible to trace the theoretical reasoning behind the chosen participants, detailed in figure 3.3. The recruitment, consent and data collection processes for theoretical sampling were identical to the purposive sampling method. The participant's data was coded following the process described in sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3 using the constant comparative method to explore how previous codes fit with the new data and vice versa. This was largely achieved through memo writing, diagramming, and clustering (see below). While the data impacted understandings of previously identified categories, at this stage no new categories were identified and so the data was considered to have reached saturation and data collection ceased (Saunders et al., 2018).

**3.6 Data analysis**

The following is a description of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. As discussed, this process follows the process associated with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014).

**Figure 3.3**

*Process of Theoretical Sampling*




### 3.6.1 Transcription of semi-structured interviews and adaptation to interview schedules

Once the recordings were completed, the researcher transcribed the interviews by hand. This was in part to ensure no third parties were exposed to the data, to ensure confidentiality. This also allowed the researcher to become familiar with the dataset at an early stage. During transcription, memos were made about potential codes, categories and emerging questions which were then used to guide later interviews (see section 3.6.4 for more information about the use of memos). Notes were made

during the transcription process which included areas for further exploration and key questions which were added to the interview schedule which was then used during the next interview. Questions were designed to further explore emerging concepts, to add to current data around a concept, or to explore new directions identified within the previous interview. Examples of these questions can be seen in figure 3.3, and notes can be seen in appendix 11. Questions were also removed when it was felt they were not relevant to the emergent concepts. The change in questions meant that the data gathered during the interviews, as well as the participants, was theoretically sampled (Birks & Mills, 2015).

### 3.6.2 Initial coding

Coding refers to the conceptual label given to a part of the dataset (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Within grounded theory analysis, the researcher engages in successive coding with increasing abstraction from the data (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding is thus the level of coding which is closest to the dataset in terms of abstraction, and may use single words, phrases or "in-vivo" coding to begin to fragment the data. In-vivo coding refers to where phrases are included in the codes which are lifted directly from the data, as they are felt to hold a helpful summary or high conceptual value (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Examples of in-vivo codes at this stage included "coaching us to help them", "firefighting" and "having a wobble".

During initial coding, the transcripts were examined line-by-line and codes were identified with particular attention paid to context, action and emotion (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A line-by-line approach to analysis is said to support researchers to systematically consider the data (Birks & Mills, 2015), particularly useful when the

researcher is a novice. Charmaz (2014) describes line-by-line coding as being a useful first step to fragmenting the data, and through separating the data in this way, the researcher can begin to interrogate the data and find emerging concepts which might be otherwise obfuscated by the researcher's assumptions. In this project, staying close to the constructivist approach, initial coding also used gerunds (e.g., "describing", "hoping", "anticipating") where possible to support thinking around processes and action (Charmaz, 2014). Alongside this, the researcher considered Corbin and Strauss (2008)'s "Explanatory Paradigm" wherein the conditions, interactions, emotions and consequences of such are kept in mind during analysis. These approaches supported the construction of explanatory theory through making processes transparent (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

During the initial coding of a transcript, the data was compared with itself to consider how the codes may be construed together, or to explore where new codes emerged. Data was also compared between transcripts, particularly where they appeared to fit within codes from previous transcripts, and where there appeared to be isolated occurrences of a code. Pieces of the transcripts were also extracted and coded side-by-side where there appeared to be a common incident (e.g., the first meeting with the psychologist) as this supported the comparative process and also flexible thinking about the data (Charmaz, 2014) (see appendix 12 an example). Memos were made throughout this process where there were overlaps or emerging themes, but codes were not collapsed into each other at this stage.

### 3.6.3 Focused coding and categorising

The aim of focused coding is to begin to sort through and synthesise data, through which emerging areas of importance begin to form (Charmaz, 2014). As discussed above, this represents the next "level" of abstraction, wherein the codes move towards being conceptual representations of the raw data (Charmaz, 2014). Through this process, relationships and overarching themes can be identified which can be further abstracted into core categories (Birks & Mills, 2015).

To support this process, the initial codes were translated into NVivo 12 software for ease of management. At this stage, some of the codes were grouped together and re-considered or changed to reflect higher concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The transcripts were then re-examined with this prior examination of initial codes in mind, to consider how larger sections of data fit within the theoretical directions identified in earlier analysis and memo writing (Charmaz, 2014). See appendix 13 for an example of initial versus focused coding.

Once focused coding neared completion, the codes were grouped together based on emerging properties, which had been recorded in memos, and also identified during the process of sorting and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Again, in line with Charmaz's (2014) approach to constructivist grounded theory, categories and final focused codes were developed flexibly and at a late stage of analysis to allow for openness to emergent concepts within the data (Birks & Mills, 2015). Throughout this process, the data was returned to and re-examined as necessary to check for meaning and consider alternative concepts or properties. Multiple groupings of

codes were trialled, to allow for a thorough examination and critical evaluation of the researcher's analysis (appendix 14).

### 3.6.4 Memo writing

Memo writing is considered a key aspect of grounded theory methodology (Birks & Mills, 2015). Memos are notes made throughout the process, to support immersion in the process and the creation of theory from data (Charmaz, 2014). They serve as an analytic tool and a way to form the narrative of the study, through exploring conceptual links within the data (Lempert, 2007). The informality of the notes support flexibility of thought, as ideas can be half-formed, spontaneous and picked up or abandoned as the researcher returns to them (Birks & Mills, 2015). Memo writing occurred at each stage of the project, during inception, development, data collection and analysis. These memos varied in their form. Some were short notes made quickly while coding, some were reflections on the process, and others were reflections on the self when engaging in the research process (appendix 15). The memos supported the constant comparative method through successive note making (appendix 16). Memos supported data analysis through creating an ongoing dialogue for the researcher to consider how the data fit within each category, particularly where overlaps and dual meanings were present. Memos were dated as they were written and recorded on paper on a large pin board, so that they could be grouped together and moved flexibly as needed, then filed in the research diary, as well as being recorded within NVivo 12 software. This allowed the researcher to remain immersed in the data through having a visible representation of their thought process in an easily accessible and interactive format.

### 3.6.5 Diagramming and clustering

Throughout the data analysis, the researcher utilised process maps, brainstorms, and diagrams as part of memos. This is in part to support the spontaneity of recording ideas through using a medium the researcher is comfortable with (appendix 17). This approach is recommended by Charmaz (2014) to visualise relationships, scope, and directions within the data. At times these diagrams were fragmented, which is reflective of the analysis process wherein data is taken apart and put back together. As the data analysis moved to higher levels of abstraction, these diagrams began to encompass more themes and began to be more coherent and capture more of to the overall dataset.

### 3.6.6 Peer briefing for quality assurance

Following the initial analysis, members of the researcher's placement EPS were asked to view the emergent core categories and give their views on their meaning. This was completed to support the sense-making of the categories and to ensure the final product would resonate with those who had experience of coaching psychology support in schools. This was to support the quality of the present research (Stiles, 1993). To this end, the diagrams presented in Chapter 4 were shown on a slideshow, and the researcher talked through the categories, and then asked the EPS members to give their views on their understanding of the categories. This was to ensure the language, concepts and important topics had been captured in a way which resonated with those who had both experienced coaching psychology interventions, and who might be expected to find the results of the present project useful for practice. These views were recorded through note taking during the discussion but did not inform the data analysis beyond inclusion in memo making. This was to

ensure that the data set did not include the experiences outside of that which was the target of study – that of school professionals. During this, there was some discussion around the EP's theoretical understanding of coaching and coaching psychology, which was used to support theoretical saturation in the second literature review presented in Chapter 5.

### 3.7 Considerations of research validity and quality – Part 1

In qualitative research, there are multiple perspectives on what constitutes validity and quality (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This contrasts with quantitative approaches where measures are taken to ensure objectivity, reduce bias and strive for generalisability of findings. These concepts do not translate to qualitative paradigms wherein the ontological standpoint no longer allows for an objective measurement of reality (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The approach to evaluation of quality of research must fit within the study's ontological and epistemological viewpoints, lest they fall into logical fallacies (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this reason, this section does not refer to issues of reliability and validity, as to do so implies a positivist standpoint, or suggests that this is the standard to which this research strives to achieve, implicitly devaluing the status of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). To support the research's credibility, evaluation must be carefully considered and actioned throughout the study, not just the evaluation stage (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To this end, the researcher used the framework outlined by Charmaz (2014), summarised by Birks and Mills (2015) to support the quality of the research from its inception (see table 3.4); a critical reflection of this is presented in section 7.4.

**Table 3.4.**

*Measures Taken to Ensure the Quality of the Present Research, Adapted from Charmaz (2014)*

| Evaluation Criteria | Measures Taken |
|---|---|
| Credibility | The researcher has engaged in multiple taught sessions and workshops regarding general research methods, and grounded theory specifically, throughout training at doctoral level.<br>The researcher has engaged in regular supervision with tutors at the University at each stage of the development of this study to support critical evaluation of approaches, philosophical congruence, and rigor of application of grounded theory methodology.<br>The researcher has engaged in regular peer supervision wherein the topic has been conducting grounded theory research.<br>The researcher has been present for and involved in multiple discussions around the use of coaching psychology as part of their role as a Trainee EP at their placement service.<br>The researcher has familiarised themselves with and adhered to the constructivist grounded theory process as detailed in Chapter 3, including memo writing, use of |

| | |
|---|---|
| | theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method. This has also been supported through sharing examples throughout the appendices of this study.<br>The researcher has conducted member checks for sense making of the emergent categories and offer challenges to "pet theories" ahead of finalising the analysis.<br>The researcher has maintained a research diary to create an audit trail for their own use when reporting the processes and outcomes of this study.<br>The researcher has remained critically aware of the potential pitfalls of the study and has considered how social and cultural influences of the geographic location, school cultures and openness of schools to EPS support have affected the schools who opted into the study.<br>The researcher has used software to support the processing, auditing and recording of data analysis. It is suggested that use of such software assists qualitative research through allowing more in-depth analysis of data, and supports transparency when reporting the process of analysis (Hutchison et al., 2010). |
| Originality | See Chapter 7. |
| Resonance | |
| Usefulness | |

In evaluation of the study, Charmaz (2014) details specific questions for the researcher to reflect regarding their approach, the resultant analysis and reporting. These evaluative questions will be considered in section 7.4. Additionally, ahead of the presentation of the analysis, the originality, resonance, and usefulness cannot be evaluated and will be returned to in Chapter 7.

This evaluative framework describes four components, defined below:

- Credibility – concerns the researcher's familiarity with the topic, sufficiency of data to make claims and represent them thoroughly, application of the systematic grounded theory approach.
- Originality – concerns the possible new insights and theoretical significance of the work, and it's use in practice.
- Resonance – considers whether the research has uncovered new or innovative findings, and how the research findings make sense to people who share the participant's circumstances.
- Usefulness – queries whether the theory can be used day-to-day and whether there are implications arising from this; considers whether the research can generate new interest or research directions.

**3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for this study were considered extensively, in line with University requirements, and BPS guidelines including the Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2021a) and the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021b). Ethics approval was granted by the University of Nottingham's ethics committee (appendix 9).

### 3.8.1 Informed consent

The procedure for gaining consent began through the researcher contacting the SLT at the school to seek an initial expression of interest from the participant. If this was gained, the researcher shared information about the study directly with the participant (appendix 5) and arranged a time and place to meet. Before beginning the data collection process, the participant re-read the information sheet, was given time to answer questions, and then asked to complete a consent form (appendix 6). This included information about confidentiality, data protection and their right to withdraw. Deception did not feature and so did not need to be controlled for. Participants were reminded that they could decline to answer any question, could make comments about the interview or ask questions during the procedure.

### 3.8.2 Confidentiality

Participants were informed of the arrangements in place to ensure their confidentiality through the consent form (appendix 6) and verbally. This included the researcher solely transcribing all recordings themselves to avoid sharing of data with third parties. During transcription, the researcher removed all references to names, dates, ages, and other identifying information. The recordings were subsequently deleted, and no record of identifying information was stored.

To maintain confidentiality, the transcripts were not reproduced in full, to minimise risk of potential of identification from superfluous contextual information. Section 3.8.6 discusses the overlapping and potential for misuse of information should this occur. Participants were informed that some quotes may be used in the body of the

thesis. The content of the interviews was not discussed with the members of the EPS.

### 3.8.3 Debriefing

At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and asked if they would like to receive updates about the study; all participants said yes. The opportunity to ask questions was offered at this point. Participants were also given the researcher's contact details for further questions or comments. Participants were reminded of their right, and process, to withdraw their data. Finally, the study's expected completion timeline was shared.

### 3.8.4 Minimising harm

The content of the interviews was not expected to cause emotional distress to the participants. However, in the event of emotional distress, harm was intended to be minimised through the researcher's training in interpersonal skills as part of the professional training course (Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology) and signposting to local authority or school academy wellbeing resources. The participants were also given a de-brief wherein they could share concerns, described in section 3.8.3.

### 3.8.5 Right to withdraw

All participants received the participant information sheet twice, and completed a consent form which detailed their right to withdraw their data at any time. They kept the information form which contained contact information for the researcher, their supervisor, and the University. They were also verbally reminded at the beginning and end of the interviews about their right to withdraw, specifying this could be then

and there, during the interview or at any point between the interview and the thesis submission. No participants exercised this right.

### 3.8.6 Safeguarding against improper use of data

As this study concerned an intervention provided as part of the researcher's placement service, it was noted that there could be an evaluative nature to the project which may affect the psychologists who delivered the coaching. This was not the purpose of the study and as such it would be inappropriate to allow the data to be used in this way. The settings involved were likely to have ongoing involvement with the EPS and the researcher remained concerned that there could be content in the interviews that the participant would not want to be shared with the EPS. For this reason, measures were taken to ensure the anonymity of the psychologists including not recording the psychologist's position within the transcripts (e.g., assistant, main grade, principal) or the specifics of geographical regions within the county, to limit any identifying information. Transcripts are also not provided in full within this thesis as participants would be easily identifiable by the psychologists who delivered the support through context cues.

## 3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has positioned this study within an ontological and epistemological standpoint and described the reasonings for the chosen methodology regarding data collection and analysis. Presented here has been a detailed account of procedures relating to the data collection and analysis process. Key issues around the project's validity, quality and trustworthiness have been considered in part and the remainder

of which will be discussed Chapter 7. Considerations around the ethical risks associated with this project and mitigation of such have been detailed.

# 4. Results

## 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the author's construction of the data, at it emerged through the process described in Chapter 3. Key components of this analysis include iterations of coding toward increased abstraction, constant comparative analysis, and memo writing throughout. The analysis reflects the participant's reported experiences of being the recipient of a coaching psychology-based involvement from a member of an EPS which was shared during the data gathering process. This analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection stage, due to the theoretical sampling process (Birks & Mills, 2015), and the results presented here are the final analysis completed once sampling was finalised. Examples of how this analysis evolved over time presented in appendices 13 and 14. From the analysis, six core categories were constructed which were felt to contain the highest analytical value relating to the research question (Charmaz, 2014). These categories are presented in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**

*Core Categories of the Present Study*

| | |
|---|---|
| A | Developing trust in the coach |
| B | Shifting role identity towards the ideal |
| C | Managing tension and difficulty |
| D | New ways of understanding |
| E | Socially supported action |
| F | Continuing with calm, confidence and hope |

Each category is presented in turn, with a description of the final focused codes used to construct the category (see section 3.6.3 for process and approach to data abstraction, and appendix 18 for a table of focused codes and categories). Researcher discussion and sample quotes from the participant's interviews illustrate and add detail to these focused codes, highlighting how they relate to the research question. Many of the codes interact with or overlap each other. Given the emphasis on processes and action-reaction during the coding process, that each code may influence the other is expected (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Relationships between codes will be discussed where appropriate.

For the remainder of the chapter, to support anonymity, the term "coach" will be used to refer to any psychologist delivering the support (assistant, main grade, principal, senior) and the term "coachee" will be used for anyone receiving support (pastoral leads, teaching assistants, teachers). The quotes may refer to the involvement as "coaching", which refers to the episode of support wherein coaching psychology was used consciously by the coach. Where words or phrases are omitted, this is to support anonymity.

Following this chapter, extant literature relating to each of the codes, will be explored to develop a grounded theory in response to the research question:

- Which psychosocial processes occur during a coaching psychology-based intervention, as experienced by coachees in a school-based context?

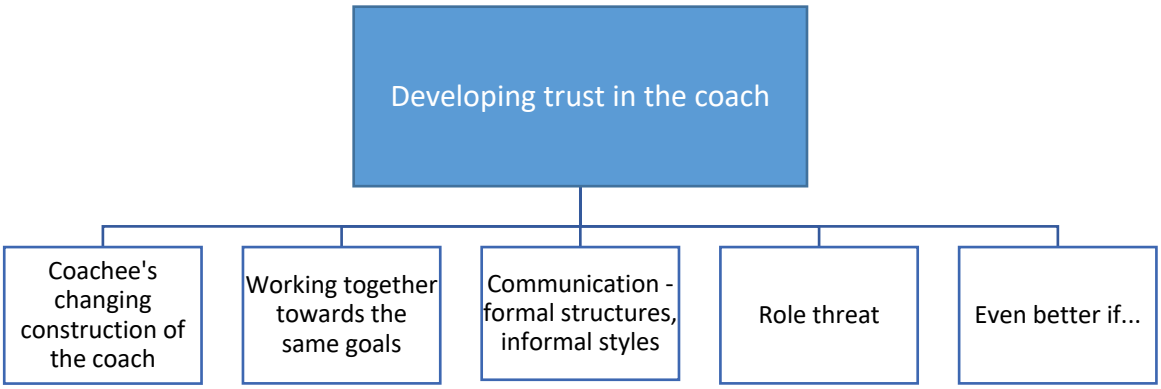
This is also to support the secondary research aim of informing future EP practice in the use of coaching psychology in schools.

### 4.2 Category A - Developing trust in the coach

The relationship that developed between the coach and coachee changed over the course of the support, including time spent before and after direct contact. This category explores the movement through the coachee's experience of the coach from first hearing about the support offer, towards a sense of trust and security. Originally, this category was described as "developing relationship with the coach", however upon examining the data and considering the context of the study, it was felt that this did not accurately describe the experience given the lack of enduring attachment to the coach. While coachee views of the coach were positive, they did not feel a need for continued interaction following cessation of contact. The final focused codes which were used to construct this category are presented hierarchically in figure 4.2. A full list of focused codes, final focused codes and categories can be found in appendix 19.

**Figure 4.2**

*Category A - Developing Trust in the Coach*



### 4.2.1 Focused code: Coachee's changing construction of the coach

The coachees described their views regarding the coach as moving through two distinct phases. Firstly, a feeling of anxiety ahead of meeting which quickly alleviated, after which the coach is perceived as a knowledgeable and supportive team member. An enduring construction throughout this process was the perceived "expert" status of the coach, as a psychologist.

> *"It was OK, but it felt daunting for me because – [air quotes] "the psychologist", and I was new to the role."*

> *"Oh, my goodness, educational psychologist, they're coming in and sitting in my classroom."*

This worry ahead of contact may relate to a perceived power imbalance, or uncertainty about what to expect. However, the anxiety relating to the perceived expert status of the coach did not remain through the course of the coaching support, despite the enduring perception of the coach as having privileged or additional knowledge:

> *"(Coach) is definitely the expert. I wouldn't put myself there at all. Having said that, she made me feel like we were a team…She never gave me the impression that she saw me as inferior."*

The above quote suggests that one source of the worry is around threat to status within the coachee role, which will be explored further in section 4.2.4.

Two coachees also expressed that they'd thought about how the coach views them, and how the coach experiences their own profession. This highlights the reciprocal

nature of the relationship within the coaching dyad. One coachee was cognisant of the coach's emotional responses, for example, which appeared to be a motivating factor in implementing some of the work done once the support ended:

> *"There must be nothing worse than going into a school and doing all these things and no one following it up."*

Another coachee expressed that she was considering the purpose of the actions the coach was taking, which seemed to support reflection on her practice.

> *"Well, I was thinking that it's working, but if she came back, would she think it's working?"*

The above suggests that the coach's opinion mattered to the coachee, and this was a motivator to action.

#### 4.2.2 Focused code: Working together towards the same goals

The coachees described collaboration and teamwork wherein the coach and coachee had distinct roles to play to achieve a shared target. This focused code is an in vivo quote, from:

> *"(Coach) will have a different outlook on thinks and knowledge about other things that really could help us work together as a team… we work together to get the same goal with different viewpoints."*

The above describes how the coaching psychology-based support created a space where the coachee and coach bought their own views, knowledge, and experiences together to support the shared goal, which is either pre-defined or implicit to the

coachee. The goals described by the coachees were set either by themselves, following a request for support in a specific area, or in collaboration with the coach:

> *"I said, I'm really struggling with the afternoons, so I'd like (coach) to come in then to really understand what it's like (...) she didn't come in and say you need to be doing this, this is your goal."*

> *"I explained it was all very new for me as well, and she came in (…) she very quickly gave me some feedback on everything and then said she would target her coaching based on what she'd seen and the areas we picked up together."*

As noted in section 4.2.1, the coachees viewed the coach as being in an "expert" role. Despite this they reported that they did not experience a sense of power imbalance when working with the coach, as might be expected wherein one is seen as holding privileged knowledge:

> *"It was like having a colleague with me… it didn't feel like I was being watched, it just felt like two members of staff and some children, it was really good."*

This same coachee discussed how she did expect to feel some power imbalance, suggesting that her initial trepidation was related to this. She reflected on this during the interview:

> *"I was expecting to feel I was being judged or assessed or things like that, but I didn't get that from (coach) at all."*

The coachees positioned themselves as being similar to, and working closely with the coach, sometimes more so than their colleagues. This was sometimes related to their goals, the time they spent together, or assumption of the coach's values and opinions:

> *"My colleague, her attitude is a lot more old-fashioned than mine… I'm much more in line with (coach) really."*

Overall, the coachees used language around collaboration and teamwork when considering how they worked with the coach:

> *"She made me feel like we were a team."*
>
> *"I felt like we were working in collaboration… I felt like we did work really well."*

The idea of shared goals was centred on support for the children the coachees worked with. This was sometimes implicit, and sometimes explicit wherein the coachee had asked for support around an individual child. This concept was neatly summarised by one coachee:

> *"She's coaching us to help them."*

This identifies the distinct roles of coach and coachee in that the coach is not expected to "help" the child, despite that being the ultimate shared goal, the responsibility for action remains with the coachee. Further, this suggests that the coachees noticed an indirect impact that the coach had on the school community.

### 4.2.3 Focused code: Communication – Formal structures, informal styles

The coachees valued an informal style of communication, as this supported them to feel at ease when faced with the potential power imbalance described in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.4.

> *"When I met (Coach) I just felt at ease, because of the way she was, she made me feel like I was doing a good job (...) She didn't make me feel like she was there to judge me."*
>
> *"You can ask her anything, you wouldn't feel daft."*

Meeting with the coach was described as *"spending time", "having a chat"* and *"talking a bit"* and the coachees reported a communication style characterised by low-demand language:

> *"I knew I could try what I wanted. I didn't feel like I was expected to do these things. It just felt like she was saying, well, here's these things you can try."*
>
> *"She says, "Have you ever done social stories before?" and I say "Oh yeah, I read them stories", and instead of like, sneering, she'll say, "Well do you know much about them, maybe I can have a chat sometime?" (…) I'm like, "Wow I had no idea!" and she's said "Well I can do a bit of training with you if you want?"*

The informality appeared to create a calming and reassuring space for communication. Coachees expressed a preference for regularity however, and where this did not happen, it was missed:

*"It'd be really nice if we'd had some dedicated time each week to sit down and say what worked well, what do you think, but we've not had time to do that which to me is a shame."*

And where it did, the regular nature of communication enhanced feelings of support and containment which will be discussed further in sections 4.6.2 and 4.7.1.

*"For me this was really helpful – we had a check in each week, it was really lovely."*

**4.2.4 Focused code: Role threat**

As will be discussed in detail in Category B, the coachees understanding of the self and the role they filled within school was a common theme, and the influence of the coach on this appeared to bring out some difficult feelings, which has been constructed by the researcher as being linked to "role threat". Some coachees were able to reflect on this after the fact:

*"I was sort of sceptical at first…I got very, "see if you can make a difference!" (laugh) "you can try!" – But you always are when somebody comes in to do things you've already been trying to do, and you've not made much of a change."*

Later in the interview, the same coachee said:

*"I would have been a bit insulted if the children's behaviour improved massively... It's not that I'm pleased, the work she's been doing has had an impact and that's good, but I'm pleased that it hasn't made me think what I'm doing is awful."*

It is possible that this fear of being revealed to be ineffective was an unconscious worry held by the coachee before the intervention. This worry of feeling (or being made to feel) that they are not doing well was common among the coachees:

> *"I want to do it – and I want to do it well – which is probably why I felt so worried about meeting (coach) in the first place, in case I'm not doing a good job."*

> *"I was surprised with how complementary she was on that first day because I was expecting a list of things to improve on, and I didn't get that."*

However, none of the coachees described this discomfort as being insurmountable or remaining after the contact with their coach. It appeared that the benefits, and the desire for change, was a greater motivating factor than the barrier any role-related anxiety may have been.

**4.2.5 Focused code: Even better if…**

The coachees were able to identify missing components of coaching support that they felt would have been helpful. The coachees described features of coaching practicalities which are commonly used, even if they weren't aware of their commonality:

> *"Looking back, I would have liked to have watched somebody else do it, but I know that's not really possible."*

> *"Being talked through it… not having a script necessarily but maybe some role play."*

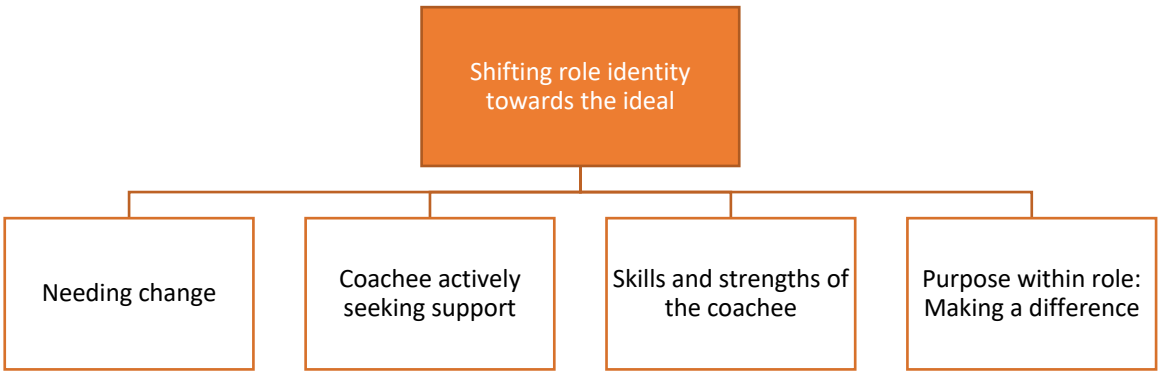
All the identified “missing” features were present in the other’s experiences of coaching psychology support, underlining the variety of experience even within this homogenous group. This finding also suggests that coachees know what they want from coaching support. This may be that they have arrived at these ideas through reflection, or they may have been aware that they were missing this at the time but did not feel able to raise this with their coach.

### 4.3 Category B – Shifting role identity towards the ideal

This category identifies the goals and ideals that the coachees describe as being important to them. Being good at the job they had was identified as not only important, but achievable with the skills, experience, and values they held. It was considered that these values and strengths contributed to their sense of identity within their roles. However, the coachees identified that at the point of coaching, change was needed to reach these ideals. The focused codes which relate to this category are presented in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3.**

*Category B – Shifting Role Identity Towards the Ideal*



### 4.3.1 Focused code: Needing change.

The coachees described a need or a desire for change within their role. For some this related to training or skills, but for the majority, change was needed to support professional wellbeing and resilience. The precipitating circumstances for this will be explored in Category D.

Within this code, coachees described that their circumstances before the coaching support were not working for them, and by implication, the children they supported.

> *"My class did not gel at all, and they didn't have any strategies to use with each other to do that and I didn't know how to make them gel."*

> *"It (nurture group) just kind of naturally happened that way but these children, their needs were so different that it just didn't work."*

The coachees described attempts at change-making ahead of the coaching support, but described these attempts as being unsuccessful:

> *"They weren't meeting the targets I'd set… I wasn't able to deliver what we were hoping."*

> *"If I'd had a plan in there I would have over planned, and it would have not worked out how I wanted anyway (…) It would have gone wrong because of the dynamics."*

Despite this, the coachees were generally clear about what kind of change needed to happen:

*"It's very reactive, my job, to poor behaviour and I think that needs to be turned around, we need to be proactive… a few changes are needed but we need to take it slowly."*

For the coachees, the coaching support acted as a conduit to being able to make the changes they felt were necessary through providing the social support (section 4.6.2), additional knowledge (Category D) and confidence (section 4.7.3).

**4.3.2 Focused code: Coachee actively seeking support**

The coachees had identified the need for change, and it appears having the coaching support was a way of meeting this need. The coachees actively engaged in, sought out, and in some cases requested further support from the coach:

*"I emailed her asking for more information and she filled in the gaps I had on some of that."*

Where the way forward wasn't clear, the coachees valued exploring the issue with their coach:

*"I'd say, I've tried doing this intervention but it's not really working I don't know what to do, and she would say, well if you aim it like that, you get the same outcome but it's a different experience for the child… she was able to help me think of things from a different angle."*

It appears that, whereas before the coaching support, the experience of meeting challenge was met with a lack of progress, having a person to actively construct a way forward with was beneficial either from a learning or confidence perspective.

### 4.3.3 Focused code: Skills and strengths of the coachee

The coachee's skills were elicited in the interview through asking them what a new member of staff would need to be good at, if they were to do the job role the coachee was currently in. The coachees related this question to themselves readily, with all of them describing the skills in reference to their own.

> *"Patience, calm, somebody who can empathise with the children and be really understanding."*
>
> *"I know that I am quite caring and that I'll take that pastoral role."*
>
> *"Having a nurturing side, and patience because they need patience and time to build a relationship with them, gentle, nurturing, I've got a lot of patience."*

Alongside this, the coachees described their wealth of experiences and how this supported them in their current role:

> *"**What do you think helps you be so receptive?** I think it's my experience, I know I keep banging on about it, but I've been teaching since I was (age) so I've got a huge amount of experience in schools."*
>
> *"My history, I came from a specialist setting and so that's what I'm used to, it's what I know."*

Alongside the coachee's personal strengths and experience, they described an element of self-motivation, although few identified this as such:

> *"I think it was that self-motivation actually, I want a different afternoon tomorrow, so that's what gave me the motivation of let's try it now, it's*

*as good a time as any… and because I was willing to try (the strategies) that's why they were helpful."*

*"I was asked if I was interested, and I'd already researched it, so I thought, yeah I'll give it a go."*

This highlights the importance of the active role the coachee has within the success of coaching psychology based support.

**4.3.4 Focused code: Making a difference for the children**

The idea of, and the goal of, "making a difference" to the lives of the young people the coachees were working with was a theme amongst all the coachees. This code should be considered alongside section 4.4, as this was a source of tension for many, perhaps contributing to the need for change discussed in section 4.3.1.

The coachees describe the work they did with the children as having a positive effect. In the context of this sample, this largely related to wellbeing, behaviour or emotional support:

*"I'm working with children and see the impact it can have on them and how positive that can be."*

The idea of supporting children was central to the coachee's constructions around their roles' purpose:

*"It's not the children's fault, things happen that are out of their control, and it affects the way they are, and we just have to try and support them."*

*"It's about the child as a whole and how they're developing… we support the children with their whole lives."*

The coachees discussed how rewarding they found their work, despite some of the challenges. They used strong words to describe their drive to engage in the work they were doing:

*"I love doing this. It's my passion. I love it, I love it, it's my passion."*

*"It's what I'm used to, it's what I know and it's what I love."*

Alongside this, the coachees described hoping and wanting to be good at their job, suggesting some uncertainty about their efficacy at times:

*"**Would you say that you're good at your job?***

*I hope so! I want to be."*

Where the coachees thought they may not be performing to their own standards, this created a sense of discomfort:

*"I felt at a loss that I wasn't doing the best that I could."*

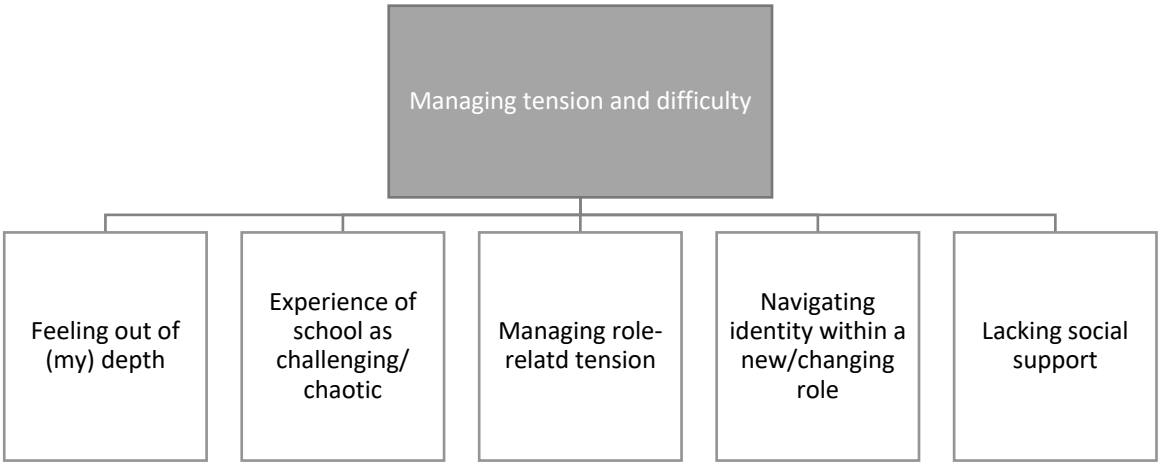
Taken together, this focused code describes the coachees' views of themselves as possessing the skills and experience necessary to be effective in a role that is important to them, which has a high value for the children they care for. As suggested in the last quote, this can be a source of tension which will be explored further in section 4.4.

### 4.4 Category C – Managing tension and difficulty

To varying degrees, the coachees described experiencing difficulty in their role. This was explicitly described as chaotic by some, and implied to be so by others. This links to the need for change discussed in section 4.3.1, but Category C relates more to the coachee's inwards experiences of their own role, the context and circumstances impacting on this, and later, the coach's role in supporting the coachee to manage this experience. The present category defines experiences which push the coachee away from remaining in stasis. This differs to Category B which relates more to experiences which pull the coachee towards coaching support. The focused codes which relate to this category are presented in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4.**

*Category C – Managing Tension and Difficulty*




#### 4.4.1 Focused code: Feeling out of (my) depth

The coachees described the difficult emotions associated with their role, summarised here:

*"I'm not going to lie, there's been days where it's been really tough in this role."*

This was presented almost as a confession, where it was perhaps taboo to admit that there were times where the coachee struggled or found things difficult. For the coachee group as a whole, this sometimes related to the work, either the nature or the amount:

*"They were just so fussy after lunch, afternoons were mayhem and I just don't know what to do."*

*"They can't get that actually I've got a whole school, we've got a lot of need across the whole school and I'm not available to deal with everything all the time"*

Some coachees described feelings of powerlessness or a lack of hope around making an impact in their role at times, which has been identified as being important to the coachee's views of their role in section 4.3. Here two coachees discuss this experience:

*"It's difficult because they don't get it, the parents are not supporting you so there's little we can do."*

*"I wasn't able to deliver the things I was hoping to deliver because at any one point we had four children escalating and it was just… [trails off]."*

For one coachee it was best to manage the difficult feelings by actively avoiding them, which she described as compartmentalising:

*"I've become quite hardened to things, when a child's made a disclosure and you're contacting children's services and you're like, "oh my word" but I compartmentalise and move on."*

Whereas others describe the uncomfortable feelings as becoming overwhelming:

*"I feel out of my depth at times, and I do take things on board too much."*

Some of the context given surrounding these difficult emotions are detailed in the following sections.

**4.4.2 Focused code: Experience of school as challenging/chaotic**

For all coachees, aspects of the school context contributed to challenge within the role. All but one coachee felt the need to emphasise the unique or unusual aspects of the school which meant their role was more challenging than expected, such as being in areas of high deprivation, extremely rural locations, or a lack of investment in CPD. Examples included:

*"Because it's on the estate, it's quite…I think the pastoral part of being a teacher here is more than it would be in a village school or something."*

*"We've got a higher-than-average number of vulnerable children and SEN and everything else that goes with that so a lot of need."*

For others, staffing structures and changes impacted on their experience of stress within the role:

*"Me and (school staff member) ended up leading the room because the teacher had other responsibilities and then she left so it was given to the deputy head… it was literally just left to me and my colleague to run. We*

*had all the SEN children, 5 of them were highly behavioural so we had to deal with that… we led all the lessons, adaptations, did all the planning, assessments, and behaviour management."*

The children's behaviour was frequently mentioned as being challenging or difficult, confounded by a sense of lacking support from others in the school:

*"They (staff members) were annoyed. There are lots of behavioural incidents on the playground."*

*"So much time is spent firefighting with those pupils and really poor behaviour."*

The coachees identified that they felt the pressures within the school contexts were increasing rather than getting better:

*"We've just found that the needs of the children are running higher and higher."*

This sense of pressure within the school contexts may have contributed to the coachees feeling they needed to seek change (section 4.3.1).

### 4.4.3 Focused code: Managing role-related tension

The coachees described having many different roles and responsibilities in their schools. An example is given here, where the coachee holds three distinct roles:

*"I'm now a teaching assistant at level 5 and I also run the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) room and do the Lego interventions."*

These roles had often changed over time. Again, an example is given here which is typical of other's experience:

> *"When I first began, I was a 1-1 until they left and then I was a teaching assistant… Then we moved into a SEND hub…Then my ELSA role started, and now I cover PPA in the morning and ELSA in the afternoon."*

Given the many responsibilities within each coachees' role, it is unsurprising that they often experienced tension or conflict between aspects of their responsibilities. Many discussed the seemingly at-odds academic and pastoral goals:

> *"I'll take on that pastoral role as well as the academic part, to me it's not just about how well they are doing in their work, it's also about how well they are doing in their life."*

> *"They are very different roles, the intervention role goes a bit deeper than when you're a teacher, they learn more emotionally than in class – a lot of it gets missed."*

These pressures and conflicts affected the coachee's time management, which contributed to their feelings of stress:

> *"I said that I'm there for the pastoral part as well, but this was getting to the point where… actually… y'know, it's taking a lot of time."*

Given the previously mentioned (section 4.3.4) priority of supporting children's wellbeing, this tension and the forces seemingly acting against that were likely to be generating some of the uncomfortable feelings described in section 4.4.1.

### 4.4.4 Focused code: Navigating identity within new/changing role

Despite the varied experiences and length of time working in schools between coachees, at the time of coaching support all had recently begun a new or changed job role and were navigating the changes associated with that on a professional and personal basis. Examples of this change included being assigned new responsibilities arising from school initiatives (e.g., setting up intervention spaces), or through completing training courses such ELSA training or gaining Qualified Teaching Status (QTS). The coachees described the roles as being inherently fulfilling, giving a sense of purpose:

*"I want to do this, this is my thing now. I'm really passionate about it."*

It should be noted that while they did experience enjoyment within the role, they acknowledged the challenging aspects of it and the relating emotional experiences. This highlights how the two co-exist; the coachees simultaneously are motivated and challenged by their roles. One coachee reflected that this was at times so insurmountable she considered leaving:

*"There's been days where I've just wanted to pack it in."*

For others this feeling was associated with specific aspects of their role:

*"P.E. days were a nightmare for me, I used to dread P.E. days."*

At times, the coachees experienced feelings of self-doubt in their ability to navigate their new role. Here the coachee describes her sharing this feeling of self-doubt with her coach:

*"I was having my wobble and saying, "I can't do this, I'm rubbish at it" and they're still being excluded they're still… there were some days like that."*

The coachees were able to rationalise some of their more difficult emotions as arising from a lack of experience, or through navigating these changes:

*"There were times where I thought I can't do this because I don't know what I'm doing, but I think I did know what I was doing it was just that it was my first year."*

As the above quote suggests, these feelings had largely passed at the point of the interviews. Some of the coachees attributed this to experience, as above, and others attributed this to the coaching support, which were resultant of the processes described under Category F.

**4.4.5 Focused code: Lacking social support**

Another contributing factor to the coachee experience of difficulty in school was around lacking social support systems. This was not a total lack of support but that this was felt in varying degrees amongst the coachees. This code was noted throughout the coachees' experience, before, during and after the coaching support.

For some, this was noted within the senior leadership teams at their schools.

*"Obviously, the SENCO knows bits, but she doesn't know the extent… she's not experienced it, I'm literally the only one to deliver it and if they have questions, they ask me."*

*"We need to be proactive… But nobody's really in support of that you know, the headmaster, the deputy, the SENCO they're all like, you can't do it every day."*

For some this was noted within the other staff members:

*"**Did you have any help with that?***

*No, no. It was just on me and my colleague."*

*"There's a lot of pushback against (my role) and that can be tricky, I think people are starting to get it a little…"*

And where there were no specifics regarding who was not providing support, the coachees described still feeling alone or unsupported in some sense:

*"I felt like I was going in blind, I felt like I was on my own with it."*

*"It's a very strange job, it's a very isolating job. I'm on my own for the majority of the time."*

This concept of social support will be further discussed below, in Category E.

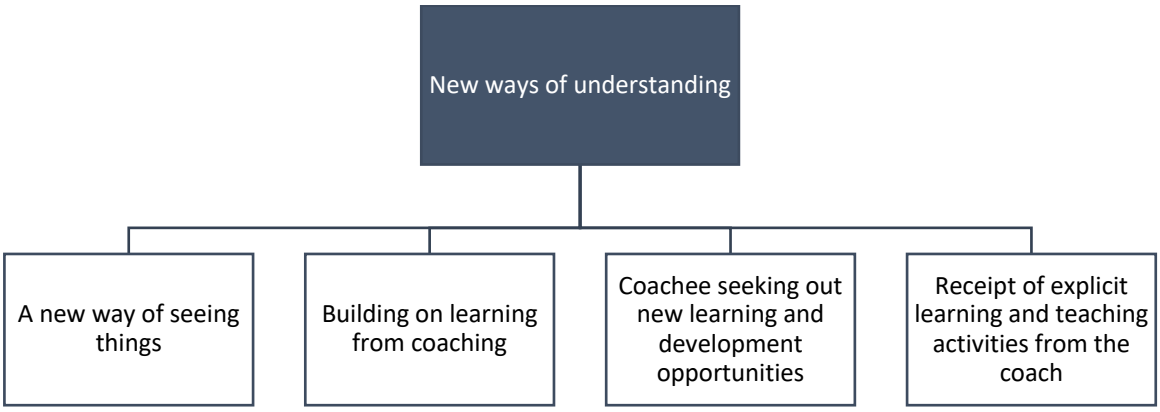
**4.5 Category D - New ways of understanding**

This category describes the active learning taking place during the coaching involvement, both mediated by and independent of the coach. The coachees described a disposition of learning new things, and a desire to develop their skills and understanding as being an enduring aspect of themselves, ahead of, during and after support from the coach. The coach was described as a conduit for further learning. Some of the learning was practical, and others related more to a new way

of making sense of their experiences. Figure 4.5 details the composite final focussed codes which constructed Category D.

**Figure 4.5.**

*Category D – New Ways of Understanding*




### 4.5.1 Focused code: A new way of seeing things

All the coachees referred to new ways of understanding aspects of their role, because of engaging with the coach. For some, this was through changing their original views through the interaction. This was noted as a neutral experience in that the coach's views were not held in higher regard than the coachee and the coachee did not believe they had been wrong previously. This new way of seeing was met with appreciation:

> *"We're coming at it from different angles I suppose, see different things, so there's nothing wrong with that, if another person was to pick up on something that we hadn't spotted that's fine, it's not a bad thing, it just means they've been able to see something, and we can work with it and hopefully do something better for the children."*

Others described gaining insight, wherein their previous understanding was extended. Here, through support, the coachee was able to construct a deeper understanding of situations they encountered within their role. They explicitly linked this improved understanding to changes in their approach. For example, raising awareness about sensory needs supported this coachee to reduce her feelings of frustration when faced with challenges during changing for P.E.:

> *"You know, we often think like, "Just go and get changed!" but for some children, they have to prepare for what's next so that really helped me understand the children more as well on an individual level. So, it helped me to help the children."*

Coachees also described how the coach encouraged them to reflect on their practice. The coachees continued to do this after coaching support ceased, discussing approaches, effectiveness, and responses after the fact. This allowed them to utilise their learning over time and be responsive to their pupil's needs.

> *"When I first started (Lego Club) I sat back and thought about how I felt (during role play). Because it's quite hard, when you want to produce something, and you want it to work (…) I felt a bit, not sorry for them, but like I knew how they were feeling."*

> *"I've used (strategy) again recently actually (…) it worked better this time. I had more practise – It was quite an alien concept I think."*

The explicit links to actions because of changing perceptions was also linked to the central goal of supporting children, which was present throughout the coachee's interviews.

### 4.5.2 Focused code: Building on learning from coaching

The coachees talked about extending the learning from the coaching sessions beyond the contexts they initially encountered it. The coachees, independently of the coach, extended their own learning through practising, adapting, and evaluating their approaches. This was outside of expectations or perceived evaluation by the coach, as many of these examples were from times after the coaching support had ceased with no plans for future contact.

Here, the coachees describe taking suggestions from their coach and then adapting it to meet their pupils needs, or their own preferred approaches:

> *"I did it as a craft activity… that felt better than just talking about it you know? (Coach) suggested using a gingerbread format which is what I did the first time, but to make it more personal, I think sometimes they need something else."*

> *"I do set a lesson objective rather than a target… I'm adapting it for that individual child's needs."*

For this coachee, the perceived freedom to adapt their practice helped to support a sense of autonomy and control over their situation:

> *"I felt like I was still in control of my classroom I was just given strategies to help (…) I put my own spin on things, made my own decisions."*

Coachees also extended their learning through teaching others. The effect of the coaching intervention extended from the individual coachee towards the school, and in some cases, the wider community:

> *"When I spoke to my mentor about the worry cards, he was like, wow, that's an amazing idea, why have we never thought of that!"*
>
> *"I talked about it with a parent of a little girl I was working with… I explained how she'd used it… the language in the report wouldn't mean anything to Mum probably so I did do that."*
>
> *"I've had two schools come and ask to observe (strategy) which is nice."*

In this way the learning reported by the coachees was not static, but it continued to grow and change over time, independent of having contact with the coach.

**4.5.3 Focused code: Coachee seeking out new learning and development**

The coachees described seeking out opportunities for learning and professional development both within and outside of the coaching context. This suggested that, at least within the coachee pool in this study, coachees were actively seeking learning as a matter of course. For some this was formal (for example through colleges or opportunities in school), others did so flexibly (e.g., reading for interest). This self-motivation on the part of the coachee also appears in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, suggesting this is an underlying driving force for many of the reported successes of coaching in this sample.

The coachees described a disposition of openness to learning:

*"I'm far more receptive than (colleague)… I'm more like, let's give it a go."*

*"I wouldn't mind being observed. I'd definitely be open for more training and suggestions."*

And they also described the actions they took which indicated this openness:

*"I've signed myself up to lots of free training, things like that."*

They described seeking out feedback from others, particularly the coach:

*"I said I'd (write a social story) and send it to (coach), but I haven't yet. She said she'd read it if I tried to write one, so I'll have a go and see what she thinks."*

*"I'm always up for feedback, and I always have been. I'm the one to be like, there's other people out there who can help."*

In addition to seeking feedback from the coach, the coachees valued learning from others in their community. The social aspect of learning was described favourably by two coachees in particular:

*"I visited another school where there's an equivalent to me, and I had a chat with her, and she showed me everything they do."*

Several coachees drew parallels between the experience of coaching and their experiences of training:

*"I think they're similar. What you're actually learning and the reasons behind it are really valuable."*

However, within this discussion, the coachees also contrasted their experiences, suggesting that the experience of coaching is experienced differently to training, despite some similarities. Some coachees explicitly described a preference for the coaching style support over training:

> *"I'd far rather (coach) come in than spend half a day on a course, it's much more informal, you can ask lots of questions without thinking oh, someone's going to be cross with me because they want to finish early (laugh) (…) what you can learn in an hour with somebody as opposed to half of or a whole day."*

For the above coachee the informal communication style (see section 4.2.3) supported her engagement with the coaching support, allowing her to be more open and interactive with not only the content of her sessions, but the development of the relationship between herself and the coach.

**4.5.4 Focused code: Explicit learning/teaching from coach**

The coachees described different a range of learning opportunities throughout their engagement in the coaching psychology intervention. This code refers to times where the coachee has gained something tangible and specific, potentially directive, from the coach. These served as prompts for the coachee to consider and re-construct through their practice (see section 4.5.1), reflected upon with the coach in later involvements.

> *"There was about an hour's feedback session where she gave me some tips and pointers to go forward with."*

*"(Coach) sent me a link to a website which broke it down to the roots, the ground, the trunk and the leaves – and I did it creatively, as a craft activity each week."*

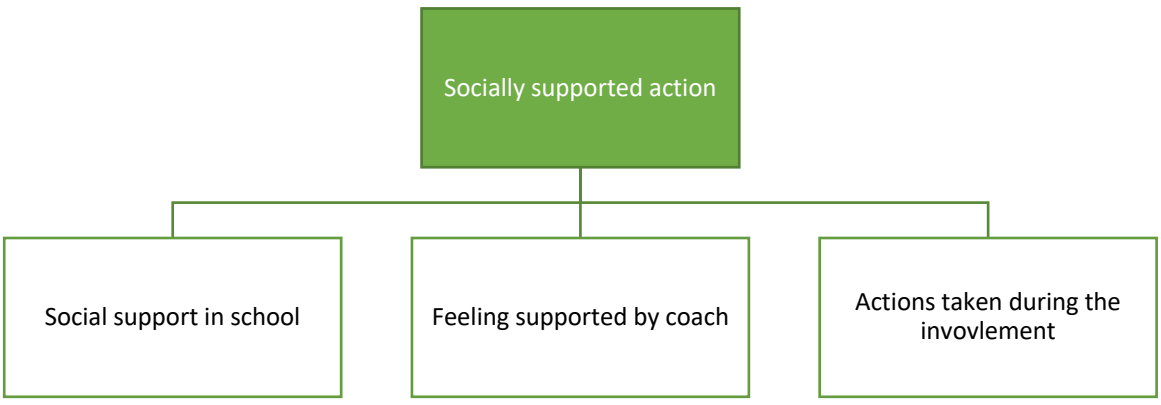
These provided specific points of discussion for the coachees within the interviews which may be why they were described as frequently as they were. While these were described as helpful, the coachees did not experience them as the most helpful part of the intervention and did not generally discuss them in depth.

### 4.6 Category E – Socially supported action

Within this category, the coachees described their experience of conscious action relating to their coaching involvement, both during contact and outside of contact with the coach. This is similar to, but distinct from, Category D as it relates not to the internal learning but to how this translated to action within their practice. The focused codes which relate to this category are presented hierarchically in Figure 4.6.

**Figure 4.6.**

*Category E – Socially Supported Action*



changes. While this was inconsistent across the coachees, the majority described some SLT support for accessing coaching.:

> *"(Headteacher) said to me that there's going to be (coach) coming in to work with you."*

However, the coachees may have experienced practical and social support as separate. It is possible that the provision of a coach in the absence of social support was felt to be related to performance management:

> *"I was thinking, OK, so is my behaviour management not where it should be?"*

As noted above in section 4.4.5, the feelings of being supported and missing support were not mutually exclusive, as the coachees identified people within school who did give support to their role regardless of how they felt the school community supported them more widely. One coachee suggested that there were many in the school who were against her approach, but identified pockets of support:

> *"We've got a fantastic safeguarding lead, and a family liaison officer, she's brilliant."*

In addition to the support structures identified as already in place in their settings, part of the action from coaching was that the coachees were more able to network and create further support sources:

> *"She gave me a lot of confidence to go to the SLT, if I've got a problem that I want to bring up, I think if she hadn't been here, I would have just carried on battling through."*

*"I had a chat with her (…) that gave me the confidence to go to SLT and say, look, this isn't working."*

There was the development of an ongoing supportive relationship with members of the SLT through coaching support which were previously not felt. This is an example of the reported continuing benefits of accessing coaching support, further explored in Category F.

**4.6.2 Focused code: Feeling supported by the coach**

Coachees described the coaching relationship as being supportive. All coachees reported feeling positive about the support they had received. One coachee shared this could have been enhanced with more contact with the coach, hence a supportive ongoing relationship may be a significant component towards building a positive coaching experience:

*"It would have been nice to have another catch up (…) just to see how it's going really, a little check in (…) but it feels like it's gone now, I did the (strategy) and that's it."*

For some, the knowledge they had someone to talk to helped them to feel they had support available:

*"I had the summer to think because of course I was thinking, "Oh what am I going to do?" so it made it easier knowing there was going to be someone to help."*

Several coachees identified that the coaching support had come at the right time for them:

*"If I'd been doing this for years and years maybe it'd be harder because I'd feel protective or a bit reluctant for someone to come in and tell me what to do, but actually (coach) coming in has come at the right time and supported me in an area where I've been like, "oh my god!""*

*"At the point where (coach) came in to see me the way she did it was good for me because I wouldn't have been able to pinpoint that it was the transition that wasn't working so for her to pick up on that was really helpful."*

These coachees describe the relative newness of the role (see section 4.4.4) as being a reason for the coaching support being at the right time. The unsaid here is that, if there is a right time, there is also a wrong time, which was not explored in these coachee's interviews.

The concept of feeling supported was often tied to the overall positivity:

*"I think with the timing and everything, she was so, so supportive, it was the whole thing was a really good experience."*

*"I feel positive, and it was definitely supportive, just getting that feedback…it's nice knowing that there's that background support."*

Finally, this feeling of being supported allowed coachees to take actions or apply learning in ways they do not feel they would have done but for the coaching:

*"I didn't know the child and I had the report saying to do this and I wouldn't have done it, without the help from her."*

### 4.6.3 Focused code: Actions taken during coaching

The coachees described their experience of coaching in terms of the activities done with the coach such as observations (of them and of the coach modelling an approach), role play, and discussions. The coachees described the actions of observing and being observed as reassuring for different reasons. One coachee found that observing the coach allowed her to see that others also found the approach challenging at times, perhaps implying that this let her know that this did not mean she was bad at her job, which may be a concern for others:

> *"Actually, I see that she's having the same problems we're having with them, uhm that sounds awful like – it's not that I'm pleased but I'm glad it's not made me think what I'm doing is awful."*

Observation of the coachee was met with trepidation by all who experienced it:

> *"She came in and watched me which I really didn't want her to do (laugh)."*

> *"It was quite daunting."*

However, on reflection the observations were experienced as being highly valuable for learning and development:

> *"The coach actually observed me and saw what I was doing and gave me a lot of feedback – in this role I don't get much of that really."*

> *"I really appreciated the time she spent… She picked up on what she thought from observing I suppose, she picked up on what she thought*

*might be a sticky point and then in the meeting we had a discussion about them."*

As described in section 4.2.2, as well as serving a practical function, the experience of being observed created a sense of shared experience between themselves and the coach:

*"In the meeting we had a discussion (about the observation), and I would say I feel like that too, or I think to be honest everything she picked up I did feel like, so she was on the same page as me."*

In addition to the above the coachees also discussed the ways in which the coach supported them to reflect on their practice. Examples included explicit questioning:

*"We talked about how it made us feel, if there was anything… it did make us aware of the skills that we used that we didn't know we had."*

*"I told (coach) it was going really well and then she was asking me more questions about how things were working, and I think that was to get an understanding of how I felt it was going and if there was any other feedback."*

Another example of supporting reflection was through modelling feedback and encouraging self-reflection. Here, a coachee talks about how she thinks back to her coaching sessions to problem-solve around new issues arising in her role:

*"Now that I've had this experience with (coach) and the things she picked up, I think about my class now and thought, well last year (coach) picked*

*this up and I have a think about why that might be, and I adapt my teaching practice now thinking back to that."*

The coachees valued feedback and requested this in various forms from the coach, including sharing examples of work completed during the duration of the coaching relationship:

*"I said to (coach) I'd write one (social story) this weekend and send it to her and she said she'd read it if I tried to write my own, she said have a go and she'll let me know what she thinks."*

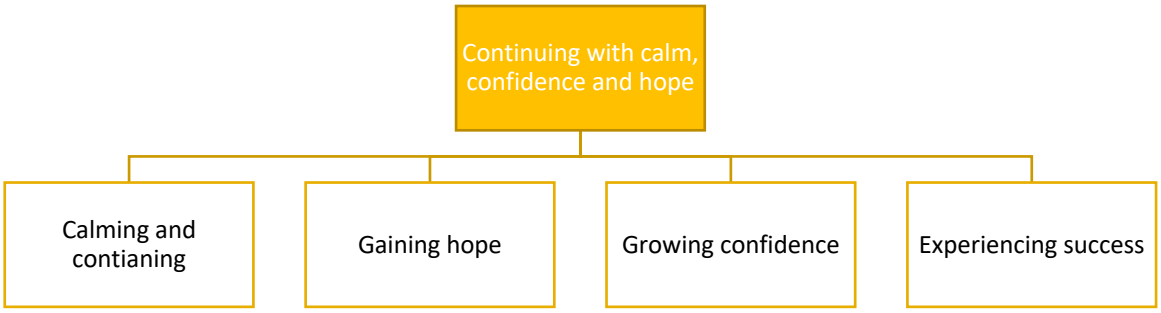
This was a highly valued aspect of support which supported the coachees learning, also explored in section 4.5.2.

**4.7 Category F – Continuing with calm, confidence and hope**

The final category relates to the coachees' experience towards the end of the coaching support. Through the processes described above the coachees appeared to experience emotional and practical stability. Some of this was ascribed to internal states and others to observations of the self and others. This was achieved through the experiences described in categories A, B, D and E. It is perhaps important to note that the coachees did continue to report the uncomfortable feelings described under Category C, however, these were perhaps more balanced with positive feelings. The focused codes which relate to this category are presented in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7**

*Category F – Continuing with Calm, Confidence and Hope*




### 4.7.1 Focused code: Calming and containing

Often when challenging experiences were discussed, the coachee contrasted them to their experience when with the coach, suggesting that the coach was different to or mitigating these feelings. One coachee here describes a calming interaction with her coach:

> *"She would kind of listen and be that kind of calm voice. It's chaotic…so um she was a very calming influence when it was all so new, and it really put me at ease."*

Coachees talked about contact with the coach being an opportunity to *"decompress".* Contact with the coach lead to a reduction or release of tension. Here, two further coachees describe a sense of relief being attributed to the coaching support:

> *"It's very similar to what I would have done anyway and so when she told me to do that I was like, oh ok, phew yeah I am doing the right thing."*

*"I felt at a loss… she came in and was like, well you're doing as much as you can for these children… it was nice to have that perspective."*

Relating to section 4.4.4, the dissipating discomfort arising from coaching contact was often described as coming from feeling reassured by the coach that they were *"doing things right"*:

*"I had a challenging bunch of children, and I didn't know if I was doing it right or not so I think that's why she was bought in, to say like actually you are doing things right, it's just finding the strategies to help you and the children be the best we can be."*

Several coachees noted that the coach being there as an observer or a model helped create a sense of shared experience, relieving the sense of being alone (as discussed in section 4.4.5) temporarily:

*"(Coach) came in, it's there right in front of her, she knows exactly what's happening, she's seen it herself."*

*"She came and looked at (strategy) and talked about how we can tweak it (…) others can come in and say you're doing a good job and things like that, but she really did."*

For the second coachee, this observation supported the authenticity of the reassuring comments the coach made during feedback.

For one coachee, the feeling of calm from contact with the coach was the most influential aspect of the intervention, crediting this with her resilience in the face of challenging circumstances:

*"She was a very calming influence when it was all so new…It was just so beneficial, it just… this is going to sound dramatic, but I don't know if I'd still be doing the job now if I hadn't had (coach) there."*

Finally, linking to section 4.1.1, the coachees idea of the coach as an expert, or in a position of power, helped with feeling reassured, despite it previously provoking anxiety:

*"Well, if a professional is telling me I can do it, I must be doing it right!"*

Taken together, this focused code conveys the influence the coach has over the emotional safety felt by the coachees, which contrasts to the challenging and chaotic experiences described under Category C.

**4.7.2 Focused code: Gaining hope**

Few coachees used the explicit label of hope relating to their experience, and so this focused code picks up on some implicit suggestions from the coachees. This was noted where they were describing anticipating a better future, or that desired changes were going to happen. There was one explicit example which came from the researcher labelling this as such:

*"What we will do will make a massive difference, really help them.*

***So, you're feeling quite hopeful?***

*Yes, absolutely, definitely."*

Whereas the following expressions, where there is a prediction of future success which infers hope, was more common:

*"I'm very open minded, I can see that it will work, I would expect it to, I think some of (the children) will find it really challenging but I think it will work."*

*"There are glimmers that it's having a positive impact… Next week we are re-doing the Boxall profiles so we're hoping to see from that how the children have changed."*

The feeling of hope here is the emotional component to observed change and success, which will be further discussed in section 4.7.4.

**4.7.3 Focused code: Growing confidence**

The coachees described feeling confident when faced with situations that they could relate their coaching experience to. One coachee reflected on how she had previously felt unable to action information from a psychologist's report, but this changed following coaching support:

*"I wouldn't feel like that now, doing something, I got another child's report and thought, I can do that, and that, and that… it's from her initial support that she gave me. It's been valuable."*

When this coachee was asked if she would contact the coach again, she considered that this would be unlikely, saying:

*"Everyone (coach) has seen since, I haven't asked her for support, because I'm more confident, I don't have the same questions."*

Another coachee notes that through carrying on with the actions identified through coaching, her experience grew which helped her to feel more confident in her practice:

> *"The more experienced I've gotten, the more confident I am delivering (strategy). It's like my baby now."*

For one coachee, confidence was an area specifically identified as part of the professional development sought through coaching:

> *"(Coach) said that it was to help and support me with the areas which would be most beneficial really. She said it was all about my confidence, and things like that."*

For this coachee, the interaction with the coach did impart feelings of confidence through reassurance, praise and being a calming influence.

> *"She would say, well actually I've seen you do this, and you're really good at that, and we need to keep going – so it really gave me a boost… she really helped me, she gave me a lot of confidence."*

For this coachee, gaining confidence the most helpful aspect, beyond learning and practical aspects:

> *"She was so, so supportive, yeah the whole thing was a really good experience, and I learnt a lot, but even just the confidence she gave me was really good."*

Another coachee identified that modelling, particularly of problem solving, has supported her to adapt her practice to the needs of her class, suggesting a lasting change in the coachees approach to managing difficult situations:

> *"I wasn't confident in what my teaching style was whereas now I'm more confident and I know like if something's not working, then why isn't it working, I would be able to pick up on that."*

**4.7.4 Focused code: Experiencing success**

In addition to hope and confidence, the coachees described experiencing success following coaching support. This was around making a difference for the children, as discussed in section 4.3.4. This was through their own evaluations:

> *"We will keep doing it once she leaves. Lego club has been a real hit."*

> *"I used the Tree of Life – that was a powerful session that I did using that, but I got a lot from the child from it."*

As well as noticing and reflecting on their success within themselves, the coachees reported others noticing and feeding back their observations. Some of these were through noticing changes within the target children that the coachees were supporting through intervention work:

> *"I started my first group, we have a group of children who are hard of hearing who come, and it's been great, the lady who works with them (Teacher of the Deaf) came to look last week to see it going and she said it's amazing seeing the children communicate and work with each other so that's been really good."*

*"(The teacher) has seen a difference in the children's confidence, being able to speak out rather than hold things in… They come out of their shell more."*

These experiences of success appeared to be a motivating factor for the coachees to continue taking actions following coaching, perhaps creating a cycle of action and success:

*"That was so helpful, and I will continue to use that. My class not are not like that, but it's something I would take forward if my next class is like that."*

*"She gave me some suggestions for things to work on with (child) and I've used them for lots of children since, the Tree of Life is a really lovely activity, I find it helps children think inwardly about themselves which I don't think they do a lot of the time."*

This experience of success seemed important to the continuation of actions from coaching, which perhaps influenced the subsequent successes within the role. Creating experiences of success to add-in to the construction of the role may have supported the resilience of the coachees when they were finding aspects of their role challenging.

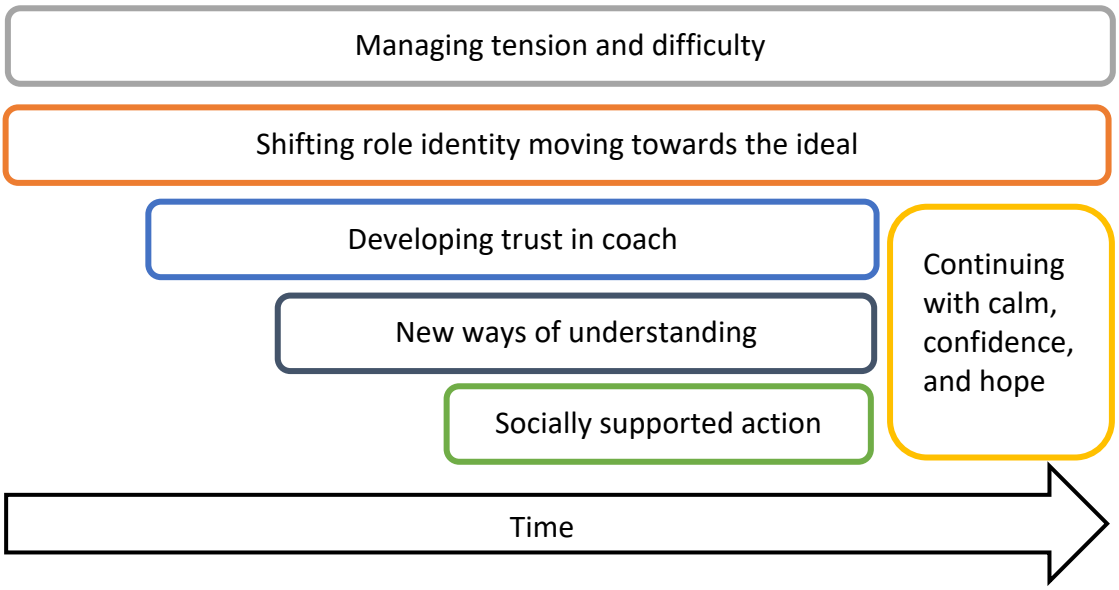
**4.8 Linking categories to time**

Much of the analysis considered the movement through the coaching support which links the actions to time. Figure 4.8 was created during the analysis process while memoing and is included here to give a visual representation of the journey the

coachee takes through the coaching intervention. This is to aid understanding of the categories' relevance at different times of coaching support, as they begin and end at different times and my be more or less conceptually relevant throughout the coaching journey. The processes happen concurrently, which can also be seen through the overlapping ideas within the discussion above.

**Figure 4.8**

*Figure to Show the Concurrent Processes Described Within the Codes Along a Timeline*




**4.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the researcher's construction of the data gathered through purposive and theoretical sampling. The analysis, based on the research questions and grounded theory method of analysis, identified six categories of conceptual importance. These categories have been discussed in relation to their composite focussed codes although it was noted that many of the categories overlapped or were interrelated. As noted this is not surprising given the research

focus on psychosocial processes, and the approach to analysis which focussed on actions (and reactions) (Charmaz, 2014).

The results highlight several psychosocial processes including the ways in which the coachees constructions of the coach changed over time, their emotional responses, and their actions. Furthermore, the coachees constructions of themselves in their role changed over time. The coachees described their roles as being characterised by tension, chaos, and uncomfortable feelings, which were dissipated at times through contact with the coach but not fully alleviated following the support. It appears that the internal changes noted above (perspective, experience, hope, success) is the additive value of coaching as perceived by the coachees. The following chapter explores literature relevant to the identified processes to support the researcher's theoretical sensitivity in the development of grounded theory relating to the presented data.

# 5. Literature Review – Part 2

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous literature review, presented in Chapter 2, was broad and had the aim of setting the rationale for the present study. The following literature review is a focused exploration of the theories, frameworks, and research relevant to the selected categories constructed through the analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4. Where the data in Chapter 4 is a construction of the participant's experiences, the following two chapters are the researcher's construction of a theory, framework or model based on their experiences through engaging with the data and extant literature (Birks & Mills, 2015). This supports the construction of a grounded theory based within data, which will be presented in Chapter 6. The review after analysis is a key component of grounded theory methodology, as through exploring the relevant extant research, the researcher's theoretical sensitivity is supported, allowing full exploration of literature which is relevant to the findings of the data (Birks & Mills, 2015). Presented here are the concepts which were the most conceptually relevant to the present study. It should be noted that other areas were explored by the researcher but felt to not be relevant and thus not included in the body of this review. The literature was identified through the researcher's own psychological understanding, gained through previous educational experiences, through discussion with other members of the placement psychology service. This was through sense checking (described in section 3.6.7) and general discussions of coaching support at team meetings and supervision. General reading around the topic was also used for this process, including from sources identified through the first literature review and through key journals such as *The Coaching*

*Psychologist* and the *International Coaching Psychology Review*, both published by the British Psychological Society (BPS). Presented here are the areas of research which resonated with the present study's identified psychosocial processes and reported experiences of the participants. Some areas considered, but not presented here, include Cognitive Behavioural theories, Behaviourism, and Humanism, as they were not felt to hold conceptual relevance to the presented data and categories.

Through considering the research question, the categories identified as being most conceptually relevant, and thus the focus for this review are:

- Shifting role identity towards the ideal
- Managing tension and difficulty
- Developing trust in the coach
- Continuing with calm, confidence, and hope

As described in Chapter 4, the above categories interact with each other. The remaining categories (New ways of understanding; Socially supported action) were considered to be a by-product of the detailed processes, and so they will not be considered separately within the literature review or grounded theory. Theoretical integration seeks to explore and explain links between identified categories (Charmaz, 2014) hence, the categories will be discussed in in relation to overarching psychosocial processes rather than turn-by-turn.

**5.2 Psychosocial processes**

The research question focused on exploring psychosocial processes, which were the areas of psychological development identified through analysis of the interview data.

The identified categories for exploration relate to the psychosocial processes present in the data, namely:

- Changing concept of role, identity, and behavioural responses to this.
    - Relevant category: Shifting role identity towards the ideal
- Motivation
    - Relevant focused codes: Making a difference; seeking support for change; experiencing success.
- Improving wellbeing, the increasing experience of positive emotions, and the influence this has on action.
    - Relevant categories: Managing tension and difficulty; Continuing with calm, confidence, and hope.
- The development of the coaching relationship and constructs of the coach.
    - Relevant category: Developing trust in the coach.

Processes were identified through memo writing during data analysis (See Chapter 3). Figure 5.1 gives an example of a memo contributing to this. The psychosocial processes will be used as the framework for this review. Relevant theory and research will be explored and linked to the data to support the development of an explanatory theory.

**Figure 5.1**

*Example of a Memo Contributing to the Exploration of Psychosocial Processes.*

**Memo: Journeys**

**25/03/2023** – The coachee begins alone, is joined by the coach for a period, and ends alone, transformed. The contact with the coach is a transformative experience. They move from one state to another. What are the commonalities and differences for the participants along this journey?

**07/02/2023** – Common features

*Emotional*

Finding it hard ---- containing ----- feeling hope

*Relational*

Coach is scary ---- coach is trustworthy

*Change*

Wanting ----- seeking ---- getting ---- sharing with others

*Role identity*

Wanting to be "good" ---- growing confidence ---- feeling like they are "good"

## 5.3 Role identity

The following is an overview of conceptually relevant theories on identity, discussed alongside the results of the analysis. Psychosocial processes around changing role identity was an important aspect of the coaching experience.

### 5.3.1 Identity Theory

Within Identity Theory (IT), identities are conceptualised as self-definitions which are tied to roles. Roles are social positions in society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). the individual behaves in ways to meet their identity related expectations. These expectations are constructed by the individual and relate to their experiences, societal influences, and culture (Stets and Serpe 2013). Examples of roles identified

in this study include *teacher, teaching assistant,* and *coachee*. The coachees in this study would also be influenced by their multiple identities which are overlapping and interacting, (Francis & Adams, 2019), but not identified within the present research (e.g., family roles, political affiliations, pedagogy (Barty, 2004)).

The coachees in this study had all experienced a relatively recent shift in their role identity, suggesting a change to their established role, meanings ascribed to this, and related behaviour. Table 5.1 lists the three core components of an identity within IT (Francis & Adams, 2019), alongside the potential influence this had on the coachees of this study in relation to navigating their roles at the outset of the coaching support.

**Table 5.1**

*Components of Identity within IT as Relevant to the Coachees' Reported Experiences*

| **Component** | **Meaning** | **Influence** |
|---|---|---|
| Identity | Multiple and multifaceted concepts of what a role means and how one in such a role should behave. | A recent change to job role may have meant the coachees were experiencing a shift or uncertainty about role expectations. |
| Salience | Identities are arranged hierarchically and those which are at the top of this hierarchy are the most salient; they will | The recent shift in role may have meant the coachees were utilising a highly salient identity (frequently used) which is less |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | be used most often, across multiple situations. Those higher up the hierarchy will contain more elements and be less susceptible to change. | effective than in their previous role, and highly resistant to change, creating tension. |
| Commitment | The social ties to the identity; who expects the person to fulfil the role, and act out the identity. Influenced by the closeness of the person to the social ties, where weaker social ties will result in weaker motivation to fulfil the role and vice versa. | The social ties in the case of the coachees may have initially been the school community who, for many coachees, knew them in their previous role/identity, creating a resistance to shift from outside perspectives. The introduction of the coach may have been an additional social tie to the new identity, allowing the coachee to explore and develop their role identity, resulting in perspective shift from the school community. |

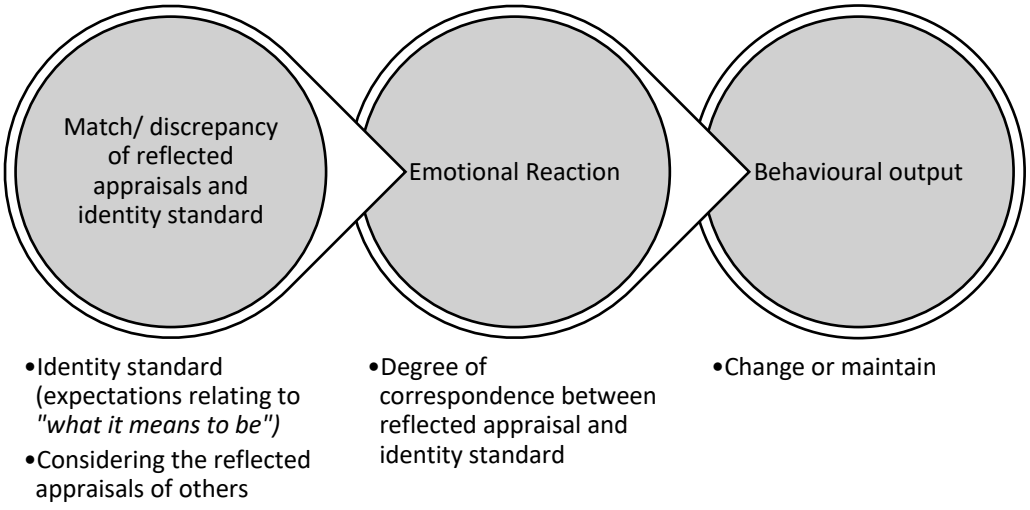
The consideration of how emotion influences identity development is also an aspect of IT. Stryker and Burke (2000) identified three ways emotion and identity interact:

- Through seeking others who share the same (emotional) meanings as one's own. The creation of shared understandings was identified in the coachee's discussions, as well as feeling understood by the coach (focused codes "*feeling supported by coach"* and *"working together towards the same goal"*). This may have motivated the coachees to seek and maintain the relationship with the coach. The shared understanding and reassurance (focussed code "*calming and containing"* and *"a new way of seeing things"*) may have reflected a preferred or idealised version of the role the coachees were trying to fulfil.
- Identities are linked with values, which are linked to comfortable and uncomfortable feelings; this promotes acting out identities which have positive meanings, and avoid the ones which feel uncomfortable (e.g., which do not align with one's values).
- The experience of difficult feelings during events which disconfirm their identity. Where the coachees were previously very effective in their roles (focused code *"making a difference"*), which was very important to them, they may have held onto this role for longer than it was useful to try to maintain this positive emotional tie. However, experiencing a reduction in effectiveness would have created a disturbance in this, and access to coaching and the experience of success (focussed code *"experiencing success"*) may have resolved this tension. This may also have explained the apprehension felt when first encountering the coach, in that the coachees may have felt that needing support disconfirmed their idea of themselves as being effective in their role.

As suggested above, there were times where the coachees experienced a discrepancy between their action and their expectations relating to their identity. Where discrepancies occur, the individual works behaviourally to minimize this, resulting in behavioural change or a shift in conceptualisation of identity (Cast & Diamond-Welch, 2015). Burke (2006) summarises the dynamic nature of identity, represented in figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2**

*Process of Behaviour Change and Emotional Reactions in Response to Identity Conceptualisation, Adapted from Burke's process of Identity Change (2006).*




The coachees in the present study identified similar expected personal attributes for their roles to each other (e.g., being nurturing and empathetic, making a difference to children's lives) suggesting a social understanding (or identity standard) relating to supporting children in schools. The coachees also noted limited appraisals from

others, or appraisals made with limited data, or appraisals which did not match the identity standard (e.g., when they felt they were not “making a difference”). Another source of appraisals which did not match the identity standard were through the coachees observations of the children they worked with seemingly not changing behaviour despite their efforts. Taking this view, the coachee’s active choice to engage in coaching (focussed code: Coachee actively seeking support) could be a way of matching their identity standard with their appraisals through changing behaviour within their roles. It could also, considering the reported feeling of reassurance, have provided a social appraisal which was in line with their identity standards and thus alleviated some of the difficult feelings associated with the discrepancy. The continued (or planned) behaviour change suggests that the new activities and learning (Category D) have been assimilated into the identity standard.

### 5.3.2 Affect Control Theory

Closely linked to IT, Affect Control Theory (ACT) (Heise, 1987) centralises the emotional component when considering identity and behaviour shifts, rather than the cognitive component which is centralised in IT. ACT suggests that one acts in relation to how one feels about the role or themselves, and experiences emotionality relating to confirming or disconfirming events. Rather than hierarchical identities, one chooses a situational self, relating to the emotional component of the experience (Francis & Adams, 2019). These situational selves change over time in relation to emotional appraisal (how the event affects wellbeing) and evaluation (recognising what can be done in the situation) (van der Want et al., 2018). IT and ACT can be considered alongside each other, particularly given the recursive and dynamic nature of identity formation (Francis & Adams, 2019), however in this

dataset IT may be more readily applied given that the coachees did not discuss their emotional appraisals of multiple situations in detail, possibly due to the researcher being unfamiliar to them, or possibly because it is not as salient as the cognitive processes described in IT. This may relate to the emotional depth of the coaching intervention, further discussed in section 5.6.1. Despite this, the coachees in this study did identify difficult emotions relating to their roles which appeared to affect their appraisals of the role and the self.

### 5.3.4 Coaching and identity shift

The experience of shifting role-identity through coaching is present within the coaching literature, suggesting this is present within other's coaching experiences beyond the present study. One such study explored group coaching support for executives, wherein the target for change is an aspect of the coachee's professional role (Florent-Treacy, 2009). The coachees had voluntarily changed careers and accessed coaching in support of this. This study noted that although career moves were positive, difficult emotions surfaced (e.g., feeling stuck, frustrated) which shifted through identity exploration and experimentation, which was a process of action and self-reflection. Similar processes were reported within the present study, particularly within focused code "actions within coaching", wherein supported self-reflection was identified as being helpful by the coachees. This has also been seen within a case study examining the experience of a new-to-role SENCO (Adams, 2016a), which again reflects on the exciting possibilities of new roles alongside the difficulty of losing sense of competency and having new demands. Adams (2016a) notes that if this is unresolved there may be an impact on performance and wellbeing. The present study also identifies fears around performance (e.g., focused

code “wanting to be good at (my) job”) and wellbeing as being present within the coachee experience. Identity shift was not the focus of Adams’ (2016a) case study, but the outcome identified that exploration of the role was a supportive action, which may relate to the coachee’s self-reflection.

### 5.3.5 Personal Construct Psychology

Complimenting IT/ACT is Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) which can provide insight into the coachee’s experiences before and after contact with the coach, and some of the processes around experiencing tension and understanding one’s social roles. PCP posits that people’s understanding of the world is through constructs, which are beliefs and views held about the world, which give a roadmap for expectations and behaviour (Kelly, 1955). One’s constructs are shaped and integrated over time through their experiences (Kelly, 1955; Pavlović, 2011). Some of these constructs will be stable and core to understanding the world, and others will be more malleable. Each construct is bipolar, with a preferred and non-preferred end (Walker & Winter, 2007). Constructs about the self inform global and role-specific understandings. Where one evaluates or positions themselves toward the non-preferred end of the construct pole, uncomfortable emotions can arise (Walker & Winter, 2007) resulting in a self-reappraisal. Reappraisal may result from cognitive change (e.g., changing the salience of the construct to be more or less important) or be behaviour based (e.g., doing something differently which is more/less in line with the construct) (Fransella, 2015). This process was noted within the present study, an example is presented in figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3**

*Quote from Coachee with Construct Poles and Indication of Preference Identified*

**Quote:**

*It's only the experience that tells me ok if I don't* ***make any difference*** *to these children's lives – but – some of them I will, some of them I'll* ***make a difference*** *and it's* ***really rewarding*** *when you see that but – you know for others you just think oh well you know, its* ***unfortunately it's not my problem*** *(…) it's* ***an awful thing*** *to say but it's unlikely to have an impact on me um* ***it's terrible really*** *to think like that but I mean, I've been around the block a bit (laugh) and you just think, well, ok not going to get too upset about it…*

Here the coachee has identified a preferred pole in "making a difference", evidenced by the description of this end of the pole as being rewarding. There is the non-preferred pole, of "no difference", suggested to be non-preferred through accepting that being at this end is "terrible". The coachee describes how over time, she experiences little concern about being on the non-preferred end of the construct pole. She seems to be describing a conscious effort to be unconcerned, whereas the extremity of emotions associated with each pole ("reward", "awful", "terrible") suggest it once held great significance. A representation of distancing this from herself is seen where she identifies this as not being "my problem". Despite this reappraisal, the coachee did engage in coaching support which might not be expected if accessing coaching results from this tension. In this extract, tension has been resolved, so it would not follow that coaching would be supportive for resolving these difficult feelings, as they are no longer present. Indeed, accessing

coaching may create a re-evaluation again wherein tension is increased temporarily which may deter engagement. In this example, it is possible that this coachee did in fact experience distress around this but did not want to share this with the researcher. She later noted that she tries to minimise emotions regarding her work, which can be a protective measure in the face of emotional exhaustion (Pishghadam et al., 2022), which may have been an unidentified or unspoken source of tension.

Personal Construct Coaching (PCC) has been put forward as a model of coaching, with advocates for this approach suggesting that PCP was founded on principles common to coaching psychology before the popularity of the latter. Those using this approach view coaching as explicitly exploring and experimenting with the coachee's constructs (Stojnov, 2010). The goals within PCC are reconstruction of constructs through collaboration and discourse with the coach. This does not fit the model described in the present study, as there was little mention of explicit discussion around constructs within the actions identified by the coachees. Within the present study, it may be most useful to consider PCP in terms of what it may tell us about the internal processes of the coachee resultant from experiencing coaching.

### 5.4 Theories of motivation

The coachees were motivated to seek out and engage in coaching, which is an area for exploration to better understand the psychosocial processes around coaching-psychology support. This topic is most relevant to the focussed code "*needing change*" but also the category "*socially supported action".* That coachees bring their own resources to coaching support is identified within the literature, with narratives being that coachee factors are the greatest influence of the success of coaching

support (Adams, 2016c; de Haan & Page, 2013). This is based on the idea of common factors within coaching relationships.

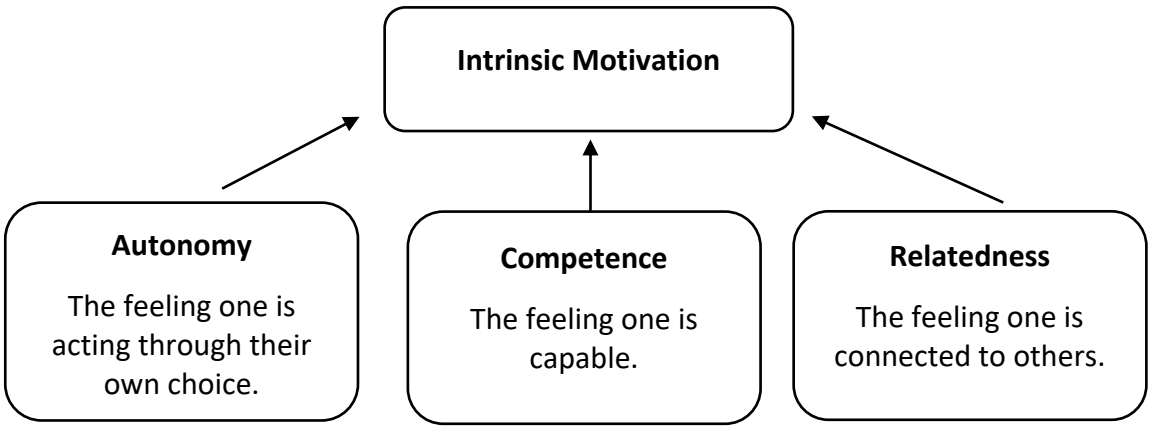
### 5.4.1 Self Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT is a theory of intrinsic motivation developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) which suggests that three basic psychological needs contribute towards intrinsic motivation towards a goal; competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) (see figure 5.4).

Intrinsic motivation refers to the inclination one has towards development or mastery of a goal outside of external influences (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT suggests that through optimising the above, the ideal social conditions can be created to

**Figure 5.4**

*Self Determination Theory, adapted from Ryan and Deci (2000)*




foster intrinsic motivation. Coaching can support all three components of the theory and thus enhance overall motivation to act on identified goals (Spence and Oades, 2011).

Aspects of coaching as discussed in the literature do map onto each of these. The coaching relationship, for example, has been espoused as one of the key benefits to this approach (Grant & Atad, 2022). Feelings of competence can be explored within the coaching relationship (see section 5.4.3) through the use of specific techniques within coaching conversations (Spence, 2018). Autonomy is expected to be present within the collaborative nature of the coaching relationship, wherein goals are set based on the coachee's own views and through maintaining the coachee's sense of responsibility over their own development (Adams, 2016d). Ryan and Deci (2000) note that SDT's internal motivation cannot account for all human behaviour, and social contexts remain powerful influences over motivation. Relating this to the present study, SDT could be a helpful theoretical concept to explore the coachee's initial and ongoing engagement with the psychologist/coach, with the goal of changing an aspect of their situation, which should be considered alongside other influences on behaviour.

The data gained from this study suggests that the coachees came to the coaching sessions driven largely by motivation towards making a difference for their pupils, which was subsequently increased following the contact with the psychologist/coach. Thus, the coaches nourished what was already present rather than created or instilled this motivation. Therefore, each component and related data will be considered at two timepoints; just before, and during the coaching-psychology support.

Coachees described some professional autonomy within their roles. Most set their own timetable, selected the pupils they worked with, or chose the approaches they

employed. This suggests that at the outset, the coachees already experienced some autonomy. During coaching, coachees reported relief that accessing coaching did not diminish their autonomy, for example, one coachee reported *"I still felt like I had control over my classroom".* This was carefully managed by the coach, notably by using low-demand language and collaborative approaches (described in Chapter 4, section 4.2.3). There was little to directly suggest that the coach increased feelings of autonomy beyond the coaching relationship itself.

The sense of competence within the coachees appeared to fluctuate in the time before and during the coaching sessions. As noted, the coachees were very experienced and had enjoyed a great sense of competence within their roles before the coaching support. However, the change in their role and responsibilities shortly before the coaching support, coupled with other difficult circumstances, may have reduced their overall sense of competence. Following the support from the coach, the coachee's feelings of competence increased, described by the coachees in focused code "*growing confidence*". A very similar process was identified within a case study of a new-to-role SENCO (Adams, 2016a) wherein initial loss of competence is regained through the coaching process.

SDT posits that increasing each of the three components supports motivation but does not specify the mechanism by which this occurs. There is some suggestion that positive feedback is one such way that sense of competence is increased (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Relating specifically to coaching support, one study found that when there was a threat to feelings of competence, coachees demonstrated attentional bias towards positive task-related feedback (Waterschoot et al., 2020), possibly

linking to the coachees' enthusiasm around the positive feedback from the coach/psychologist in the present study. The coachees in this study often described the positive feedback from coaches as helpful and viewing this through the lens of SDT would suggest that support is through the increase in feelings of competence which supports goal-directed behaviour.

The final component of SDT is relatedness. In SDT, the relatedness component posits that one is more likely to flourish in environments where they feel relationally secure. Early theories of attachment inform this definition (Bowlby, 1969). Despite general critique of this theory (e.g., Harlow (2021)) attachment security has been linked to adult relatedness, suggesting this remains important for wellbeing across the lifespan (O'Rourke & Egan, 2023). Relevant to the present study, adult attachment styles have been related to a commitment to work related goals (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). A secure relationship is characterised in adulthood by supporting problem solving and reducing distress (Feeney, 2004), which were two areas the coachees identified as supported by the coach/psychologist in the present study. Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that while relationships are necessary for motivation, it is not as great an influence as autonomy or connectedness, whereas others place greater onus of relationships to support wellbeing and engagement (Adams & Lee, 2021; Joseph & Murphy, 2013; McKenna & Davis, 2009). Within the context of the present study, security in the coaching relationship was noted to increase quickly, with coachees identifying that regular contact was helpful, and expressing positive affect towards their coach. The coachees also described feeling that the coach was demonstrating empathy as well as meeting coachee's emotional and practical needs,

which has been identified as building a secure relational base within adult therapeutic relationships (Talia et al., 2020).

Concepts of belonging may also be relevant, which may give a wider view of how relatedness affects and is affected by coaching support. Belonging refers to the sense of group membership arising through social connectedness (Halse, 2018). Some of the coachees in the present study expressed a lack of social support at times, which were supported through raising their profile and through specific actions towards goals (e.g., talking to Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) about specific issues, receiving positive feedback from others). A general framework for supporting this has been suggested wherein skills, motivation, opportunity and perceptions interact to influence one's sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2021). Within coaching, identified within this study, belonging may be supported through developing skills around social interactions, and through supporting self-reflection relating to perceptions of belonging. However, at present, the researcher has not been able to find literature around coaching specifically influencing sense of belonging.

Overall, the above suggests that, viewed through a SDT lens, the coachees arrived at the coaching experience with some intrinsic motivation towards achieving their goal, but accessing coaching shored up the three key components, thus increasing overall goal directed behaviour (identified as "making a difference" for their pupils). This increase results in the data contained within Category F: *Continuing with calm, confidence and hope*. The increased motivation results in continued action on the part of the coachees, even when the coaching support is withdrawn.

While SDT does appear to provide an explanatory mechanism for much of the obtained data, the minimisation of relationships as a component, alongside a lack of specificity regarding the processes within each of the three components, further theoretical exploration is required.

### 5.4.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one has the skills and ability to take action to produce a desired result (Maddux, 2012). It is a theory of motivation first described by Bandura (1977) within Social Learning Theory (Higgins & Gulliford, 2014) and has been influential in understanding how and why people persevere in trying to achieve their goals (Adams, 2016c). Within this, the influence of social interactions is key to understanding the appraisals one might make (Bandura, 1977), for example the interactions had during coaching sessions, or through feedback from other members of staff on the coachees.

Self-efficacy changes in response to experience, which has been suggested as a mechanism through which coaching support is effective in helping coachees move towards their goals (Aguiar Vieira & Palmer, 2018). Within this the coach supports the coachee's self-efficacy judgements through supporting reflection, verbal persuasion and evaluating success (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Higgins & Gulliford, 2014). Within the extant literature, self-efficacy is seen to have such relevance that a coaching model has been developed based around it (Aguiar Vieira & Palmer, 2018), although other researchers consider it to be more useful as a complement to other approaches (Adams, 2016c).

Within the present data, the coachees' reported growth in role-specific self-efficacy and identified this as being a key aspect of finding coaching psychology support useful. This was verbalised directly as "growing in confidence". In line with the above literature, coachees identified experiences of success, feedback from the coach, and modelling of problem-solving approaches as contributing this sense of growing confidence (efficacy). As predicted by Bandura (1977) this increased efficacy contributed to the coachees' reports of continued goal-motivated behaviours, and lasting experiences and expectations of success (focused code "*experiencing success"*).

Similar processes are found within studies of efficacy development in coaching in a school context. Studies exploring the link between self-efficacy growth and access to coaching have found gains in cohorts of school leadership teams (Brandmo et al., 2019; Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013), and teaching staff (Adams, 2016b; Preechawong et al., 2019), which can translate to gains for the children being taught by the coachee (Hanisch et al., 2020). This gain in self-efficacy is broadly suggested to be through the coachee enacting successful actions, supported by verbal reflections and constructions of experience (Brandmo et al., 2019), as identified within the present dataset.

**5.5 Wellbeing and resilience**

The coachees reported moving from a place of difficult emotionality towards a more settled and emotionally acceptable state of being. This could be conceptualised as changes to the coachees' wellbeing. This section will explore the factors potentially affecting wellbeing more widely, before considering how the access to coaching-

psychology support helped coachees to report greater wellbeing than before, and the implications this has for their role. The following sub-section is a discussion of the contextual landscape for teaching assistants in the UK. As the majority of coachees in this study were within this role, it is considered to be an important area to give context to the coachees' experiences. This section relates mostly to the category *"Managing tension and difficulty"* and partially to the Category A: Developing trust in the coach.

### 5.5.1 Context for the role of teaching assistants in the UK

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has identified that the number of full-time teaching assistants in UK schools has trebled over the last 20 years (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). The EEF report suggests that the reason for this is twofold; to reduce teacher workload, and to support pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. Research into the role of teaching assistants offer mixed views of their effect on pupil development (Webster & De Boer, 2019), and suggests further examination of support staff's roles should be considered. The EEF report gave recommendations, which included that teaching assistants should receive "extensive" training. This background suggests a recent period of national change regarding the deployment of teaching assistants in schools, from a rapid growth to a push back, and subsequent restructuring. Further, the identified research suggests targeting intervention at the teaching assistants themselves, suggesting that the "problem" lies within them rather than elsewhere (e.g., school leadership, government training initiatives) (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018; Webster et. al. 2013). Indeed, this background may be an underlying factor in the recent

changes the coachees had experienced in their roles due to restructuring, or with some of the tension reported with other school staff.

### 5.5.2 Power Dynamics in Schools and Coaching Relationships

School communities are hierarchical, meaning that power, influence, and status are not equally shared. Headteachers and SLT hold leadership positions, and diffuse leadership down through subject leaders, class teachers, and teaching assistants. It is argued that this leadership cannot be separated from power (Hatcher, 2005) suggesting that the coachees in this study held relatively little power within their school community, compared to the SLT who typically commissioned the psychologist/coach. This consideration of power dynamic would also be relevant to the coachee who was in a teaching role, due to their newly qualified status. Power dynamics were not overtly commented on as part of the coachee's experience, but examination of their experience suggests that this is reflected in the importance of the social support felt from SLT (focused codes: social support, supported (or not) by SLT). Power dynamics were touched upon during discussions of the coach and coachee relationship, wherein the coach/psychologist was frequently referred to as being the "expert". Discussions of power bases within the literature have highlighted the concept of "expert power", which is an increase in influence one has over another based on the perception that they hold special or privileged knowledge (French & Raven, 1959). Coaches were from the EPS, thus not sitting within the school hierarchy and so this power consideration may be different within other coaching relationships, highlighting the situational nature of these findings.

This perception of power is a contributor to the trepidation reported by some of the coachees ahead of the coaching contact. However, it may have also supported the initial acceptance, and/or seeking support from the psychologist. French and Raven (1959) align power with an ability to effect change, something coachees had identified as being needed and perhaps sought through accessing coaching support.

Power within coaching relationships is reported to be under-explored (Louis & Fatien Diochon, 2018), and literature reviews suggest research often prioritises how best to leverage coach "power" to create change (Fatien Diochon & Lovelace, 2015). In contrast, others define coaching as being a collaborative and non-hierarchical approach suggesting an equality of power (Adams, 2016d). The data from this study suggests that in this context, both may be true, that initially the coach (psychologist) is sought due to their expertise power, but the experience of the relationship is collaborative (focused code *"communication: formal structure and informal style"*).

### 5.5.3 The PERMA Model of Wellbeing

There are many theories and definitions around concepts of wellbeing (Jayawickreme et al., 2012), this review will use the CDC's simple definition: *"Well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good"* (CDC, 2023). For this study's purpose, it could be considered that an improvement in wellbeing would be reflected in coachees reporting more positive emotions relating to work and themselves than before the intervention and reported enjoyment around coaching and their role.

Discourse around teacher wellbeing is increasingly prevalent in the UK (Hascher et al., 2021). Increasing anecdotal and survey based reports of poor wellbeing are being

identified, alongside increasing attrition from the profession (Brady & Wilson, 2021). Less is known about teaching assistant wellbeing; within government publications exploring wellbeing in the education sector, teaching assistants are generally not discussed (e.g., CooperGibson (2018)). A recent Ofsted report did discuss teaching assistant wellbeing as a comparison point to teachers, describing that 49% of teaching assistants who took part in the survey reported their occupational wellbeing as being "high" (32%) or "very high" (17%) versus 35% of teaching staff (excluding senior leadership) (Ofsted, 2019). These statistics may explain why the current priority for research and policy is teaching staff, despite roughly half of teaching assistants reporting low wellbeing in the Ofsted study.

Coaching has been suggested to improve school staff wellbeing (Adams & Lee, 2021). For example, Grant et al. (2010) found that teaching staff engaging in a 20-week long strengths-based coaching programme reported reduced stress and greater wellbeing and resilience compared to a control group. The coachees in the present study received a range of coaching approaches but did report increased positive affect and wellbeing as described in the Category F: Continuing with calm, confidence, and hope, suggesting a generalised benefit of coaching for wellbeing.

A commonly-used model for understanding the contributors to wellbeing is PERMA (Seligman, 2018). PERMA is an acronym of domains which individually contribute to overall wellbeing:

- P – Positive Emotions - e.g., joy, excitement, calmness.
- E – Engagement - using strengths, experiencing flow, focusing on the task at hand.

- R – Relationships – mutually supportive relationships, feeling valued by others.
- M – Meaning – a sense of higher purpose, acting in line with our values.
- A – Achievement – both internal and external, e.g., meeting a goal, mastering a skill.

Within the PERMA model, intervention would focus on increasing the coachee's experience of each of the above. This model has been utilised as framework for coaching (Falecki et al., 2018).

The PERMA model has also been used to explore teacher wellbeing. Studies have found links between higher "PERMA profiles" (personal ratings of each building block) are positively associated with job satisfaction in teachers suggesting that utilizing PERMA may be useful in understanding role related wellbeing (Dreer, 2021). In one study, engagement in an intervention based around PERMA in socio-economically challenging schools suggest an improvement in overall wellbeing, however it is noted by the authors that this may be a by-product of improved social support as a result of the project (Wood & Wessels, 2019). However, if this was the case, this would feed into the Relationships building block of PERMA suggesting that while the intervention itself was not uniquely contributing to wellbeing, the PERMA model could still apply to the findings. Examples of how the identified focused codes and categories linked to each domain of the PERMA model is presented in Table 5.2. This model suggests how the sum of the identified aspects the coaching experience work together to support overall wellbeing for the coachees. This model does not,

however, explore the mechanisms by which each area is improved, which have been explored elsewhere in the literature review.

**Table 5.2**

*Categories and Focused Codes Linking to the PERMA Model*

| PERMA Element | Relevant categories | Relevant Focused Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Positive emotions | Managing tension and difficulty; Continuing with calm, confidence and hope. | Gaining hope<br>Calming and containing |
| Engagement | Shifting role identity towards the ideal | Experiencing success |
| Relationships | Socially supported action; Developing trust in the coach | - |
| Meaning | - | Making a Difference |
| Achievement | Continuing with calm, confidence and hope. | Experiencing success<br>Growing confidence |

### 5.5.4 Models of Resilience

Resilience is a term which has multiple definitions within the literature (Hart et al., 2016). For the present research, resilience is understood to be "overcoming adversity, whilst potentially changing or even dramatically transforming (aspects of) that adversity" (Hart et al., 2016, pp. 3). Linking to the above, some conceptualise resilience as being a pathway to wellbeing (Brown & Shay, 2021). Within the present study, the coachees may be thought of as experiencing adversity, in that they each identified a set of circumstances they were finding challenging. In this context, overcoming adversity may relate to remaining in the job role, for example. One coachee explicitly discussed how coaching supported her resilience in role, saying:

*"This is going to sound dramatic, but I don't know if I'd still be doing the job now if I hadn't had (psychologist) there."*

This is the only part of the dataset which appears to relate explicitly to resilience. It could be that thoughts around giving up were not vocalised by others as they were not willing to discuss this, or it could be that for the other coachees issues of resilience were not relevant. However, for this one coachee, this was a very significant aspect of their coaching experience.

The coaching literature also presents the idea that coaching can support resilience. Models of coaching which focus on resilience utilise cognitive behavioural approaches, strengths-based approaches and positive psychology (Smith, 2015), which have in the first literature review, again noting the overlapping and permeable nature of coaching models. The findings of studies which explore whether coaching supports resilience have suggested this can be an effective intervention, based on self-report measures from the coachees (Sherlock-Storey et al., 2013). A grounded theory study of coaching for those in leadership positions found that cognitive strategies used during coaching sessions were useful, but the supportive coach-coachee relationship was the most helpful aspect of coaching support for resilience (Smith, 2015). This study identified five key themes which greatly overlapped: Reclaiming self-belief, learning, seeing a wider perspective, supportive relationship, and thinking space. This study was read after the development of the categories and codes presented in Chapter 4, and yet, there are similar concepts identified between the two, suggesting similarity of experience between the two coachee groups. Additionally, exploratory studies of coachee experience which have not used a

specific resiliency framework have identified growth in resilience as an outcome. For example, Lucey and van Nieuwerburgh (2021) found that discourses around continuing in difficult circumstances emerged from their phenomenological study of using coaching to support newly qualified teachers.

### 5.6. The coaching relationship

The following explores the development of coaching relationships, considered alongside the present study's data and the literature relating to the development of other relationships within an educational psychology context, as it is understood that the present study's coach-coachee dyads are likely affected by the nature of the coach's other roles. This section relates to Category A: Developing trust in the coach.

The coaching relationship has been reported to be one of the key determinants in coaching psychology outcomes (the other being coachee characteristics) (Adams, 2016c; McKenna & Davis, 2009). The coaching relationship has been characterised as a "working alliance", a psychoanalytic concept wherein change occurs through one who seeks change and one who offers to be a change agent (Bordin, 1979). This working relationship is described as holding shared goals, collaborating on tasks (explicit and implicit), and human relationships. Bordin (1979) describes how the depth of trust and relationship is dependent on the nature of the work. Where this is time-bound and focussed on outer experiences the human relationship may be less important, but trust is still required. More recently, when exploring therapeutic client's views of experiences of therapeutic alliances, two underlying relationship factors were identified; confidence in therapist, and confidence in treatment (Finsrud et al., 2022). This study further identified that the clients evaluate the

therapists' qualities globally rather than separating the different factors otherwise identified in the literature (e.g., empathy, expertise). This was seen within the helping relationships of the present study, where it appeared the coachees couldn't always specify what was useful about the coaching relationship and talked about the coaching actions and the coach quite separately.

While the above relates specifically to the therapeutic working alliance, the coaching literature has taken interest in this area relating to coaching effectiveness and outcomes. There are notable differences between coaching and therapy, with coaching generally involving less exploration and processing of emotions (McKenna & Davis, 2009), thus there are differences within the concept of the working alliance between contexts (Bordin, 1979). Studies exploring working alliances within coaching have generally supported that the working alliance is important to coaching outcomes (Boyce et al., 2010). A meta-analysis of studies which explored the relationship between working alliance and coaching outcomes found that "strong" working alliances are supportive of desirable outcomes and mitigate against unintended negative effects (Graßmann et al., 2020), within this study, a "strong" working alliance was characterised by mutual agreement on goals and tasks and a trusting, respectful relationship with genuine positive regard for the other. They note an equality of commitment from both sides of the relationship and active engagement, which is also reflected in the present study (e.g., focused codes: Coachee actively seeking support; coachee construction of the coach; working together for the same goals). Studies of coaching which examine a general question of what helps from a coachee perspective have also identified the coaching relationship as being key to perceived helpfulness, with the relationship being

viewed as a whole rather than as distinct skills or techniques on the part of the coach (de Haan et al., 2011). Within the de Haan et al. (2011) study, the coachees did identify being heard, sensing understanding and being encouraged by the coach as being the most helpful aspect, ahead of knowledge. This is interesting given the emphasis in this study on the knowledge base of the coach and perceived "expertise" being an often-discussed helpful aspect by the coachees. This is possibly related to the school context wherein the view of EP as expert is pervasive (from the perspective of the coachee) and becomes a key factor of the relationship. Alternatively in the context, the coachees of the present study may have been seeking expertise and thus attributing change to accessing this.

### 5.6.2 Consultation literature and its relevance to coaching psychology as delivered by EPs

Much of the coaching-psychology focused literature has explored the concept of the therapeutic alliance. An alternative way of conceptualising the interactions between the coach and coachee stems from educational-psychology focused literature around consultation. Within the present study, the coaches were from an EPS and had training and experience in the field of consultation and these interpersonal skills have some merit within the coaching relationship (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). It is noted that in this study, coachees may have a pre-determined view of the coach and an established expectation for how the relationship may emerge due to previous experiences with the EP. Similarly, the coach would have pre-conceived ideas around the nature of helping relationships and, given their professional context, may bring theoretical understandings informed by other approaches, such as consultation. Within the context of EP delivery of coaching psychology, 20% of EPs surveyed

reported that they saw little to no distinction between coaching and consultation (40% reported strong distinction) suggesting some overlap in the approaches in practice is likely (Fanshawe, 2019). Definitions of psychological consultation vary, but within Educational Psychology can be understood to be a conversation wherein psychological theory is applied to gain a better understanding and develop a plan where there are concerns about a young person or school situation (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). This involves the psychologist speaking to parents, school staff, and similar. The importance of interpersonal skills is noted here, which may be extrapolated to the coaching relationship discussed in the present study (Stoiber et al., 2022). However much of the literature focuses on outcomes centred around the topic of consultation rather than the experience of or development of alliance within (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). Studies of consultee experiences identified the role of the consultant in giving a new perspective, the development of positive relationships to the psychologist/consultant, and increased confidence (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018), and the development of a collaborative working alliance (Nolan & Moreland, 2014) which are resonant with the coachee's experiences in the present study.

One of the most commonly reported models in use in the EP Profession is Wagner (2000)'s model of consultation (Kennedy et al., 2008) which identifies consultation as being a voluntary and collaborative approach to support the functioning of a system (Wagner, 2000). The features of opting-in, collaboration, support and change are also identifiable within the coachee's experience in the present study. The identified similarities between being coached and accessing consultation may relate to the training, experiences, and values within the EP profession, rather than similarities between coaching and consulting approaches.

Relating to this, Wagner's model of consultation (2000) operates under the assumption that EPs are most effective when they work collaboratively. Given the prevalence of this approach, it is likely that the EPs/APs who delivered the interventions were conscious of, and held the value of being seen to be on an equal footing to the coachee. Collaboration was reported by coachees, but they also commented on the coach/psychologist being an expert, as discussed in section 5.5.2. This suggests that the development of a collaborative relationship was a conscious effort on the part of the psychologist and was appreciated in this study by the coachees.

**5.7 Summary**

This chapter has explored literature relevant to the identified categories and psychosocial processes, with the aim of raising theoretical sensitivity to the extant literature on the part of the researcher, to contribute to the grounded theory presented in the following chapter. Conceptually relevant theories have been identified and discussed in relation to the present study's dataset where relevant. The literature presented is largely theoretical and this is representative of coaching literature, where a "gap" has been identified between theory and examining this through research (Lai, 2018). To this end, literature from areas which relate to theory but not coaching have been discussed, such as those relating to consultation. The following chapter will pull together the literature presented here, and the results presented in Chapter 4 to form a cohesive presentation of the overall study.

# 6. The Grounded Theory of the Study

## 6.1 Introduction

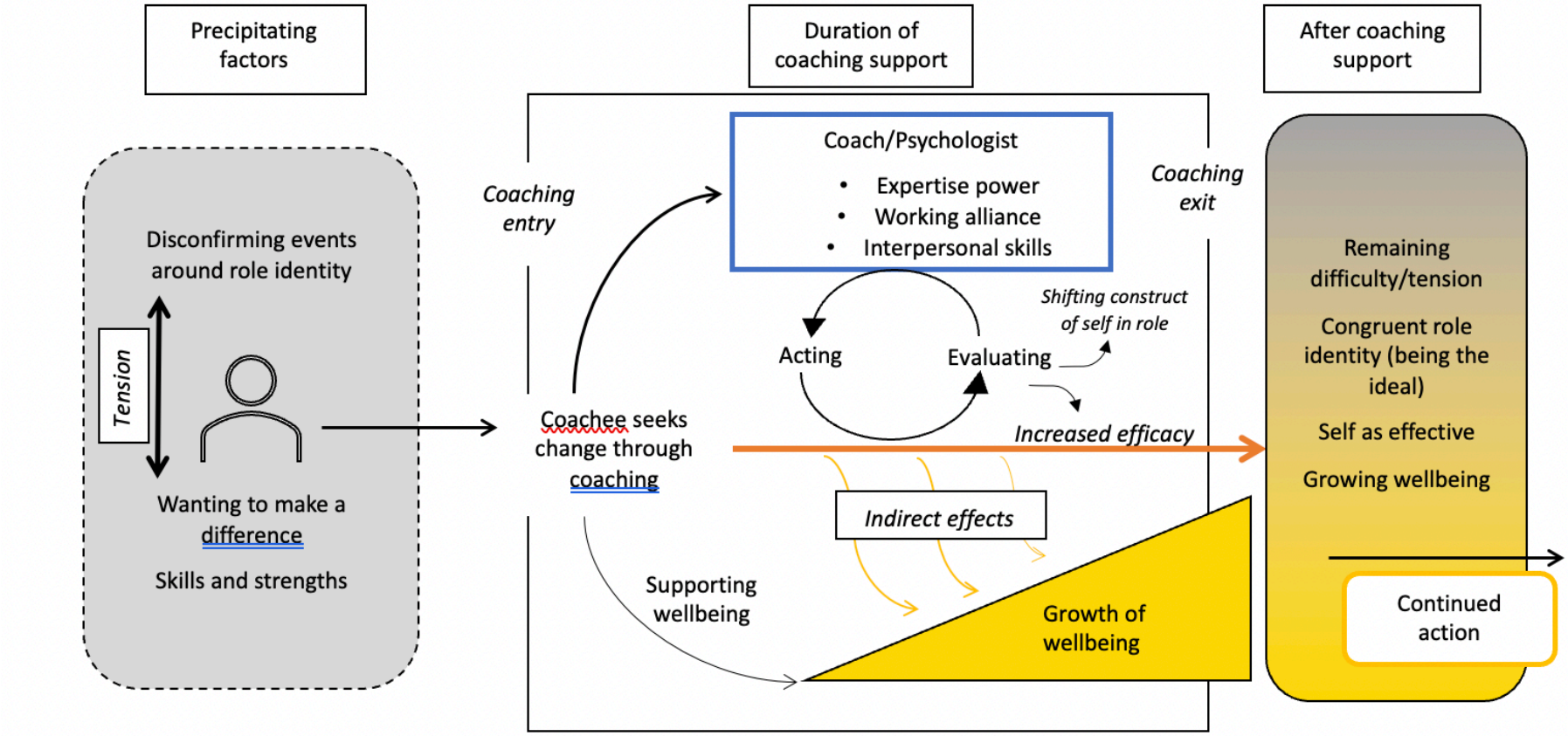
This chapter presents the grounded theory of the study, through analysis of the data, the process of which is detailed in Chapter 3 with results in Chapter 4. This data was then examined alongside the extant literature, presented in Chapter 5. The model presented in figure 6.1 has been constructed using the categories identified within the diagram using the colours used in Chapter 4:

- Category A: Developing trust in the coach (blue).
- Category B: Shifting role identity towards the ideal (orange).
- Category C: Managing tension and difficulties (grey).
- Category F: Continuing with calm, confidence, and hope (yellow).

These categories were felt to hold the most conceptual value when considering the psychosocial processes occurring during the reported experience. Figure 6.1 is a visual representation of the grounded theory of this study, with an elaboration of this presented in section 6.2. The visuals are presented in colour to support the visibility of the categories within the model.

**Figure 6.1**

*Diagram to show the study's grounded theory of coachee experience of coaching psychology support in schools.*



### 6.2 The grounded theory of the study

The presented grounded theory represents the transformative process experienced by the coachees who engaged in a coaching-psychology based support package from a psychologist. Two systems occur simultaneously to bring the coachee's evaluation of themselves closer to their ideal role construction, reducing tension and difficult emotions associated with this. The first is an increase in self-efficacy gained through accessing coaching, acting on feedback, and subsequent re-evaluation of self in role. The second is an increase in wellbeing, through supporting the "building blocks" within the PERMA model (Seligman, 2018), a positive psychology, strengths-based model of understanding contributors to wellbeing (discussed in Chapter 5). The precipitating factors of tension, disparity between role standard and experience, and previous positive experience, contributed to the act of seeking support, alongside the importance of "making a difference" for the coachees. These processes result in a new state viewing the self as competent, experiencing the role as fulfilling (while remaining challenging) and experiencing enhanced feelings of wellbeing. These allow for continued growth and action following cessation of coaching support.

The following sections examine parts of the model through exploring the precipitating factors towards accessing coaching support, the two systems by which coaching was experienced to be helpful, and the experience of being in role following coaching support. Implications for practice will explore how the theory might affect implementation of coaching psychology in relation to EPs and education-based psychology professionals, as this is the field the researcher is situated within.

### 6.2.1 Precipitating factors

Ahead of coaching support, coachees reported a period of change to role which influenced their role-related self-perceptions. This included recent changes to responsibilities, as well as environmental and social influences. Coachees described wanting to be good at their jobs, and make a difference to young people, with the implication that this was not the case before accessing coaching support. Within Identity Theory (IT) this experience being different to their "role standard" resulted in behaviour change (Burke, 2006), which included seeking or opting-in to coaching support. Alongside the cognitive aspects of disconfirming experiences, the coachees experienced uncomfortable emotions or tension resultant from this which was also a factor in driving change (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

The role of motivation is relevant too, as coachees appeared to be actively moving towards the new state from the less desired state described above. This is supported by Self Determination Theory (SDT), whereby coachees demonstrated some pre-requisites in relation to intrinsic motivation and sense of agency (Ryan & Deci, 2000):

- Autonomy – coachees discussed having autonomy within their roles including setting their own agendas, planning, and accessing identified workspaces.
- Competence – previous experiences of success in their old roles supported their belief in their ability to be good at their new job role.
- Relatedness – Access to coaching necessitated support from senior leadership (buying in, allocating EP time etc.). Most coachees reported social support from key others in school.

This concept of the SDT building blocks remains relevant throughout the presented theory, as accessing coaching support influenced these and built motivation during the intervention.

This understanding of the precipitating state is useful for psychologists using coaching psychology in schools to consider who would most benefit from coaching psychology, and who may be most likely to opt-in. This suggests that there is a balance within the coachee of both wanting (internal motivation) and needing (effect on wellbeing, navigating identity) to change. Psychologists may need to consider how these influences are acting on their client when considering using coaching approaches to support their goals.

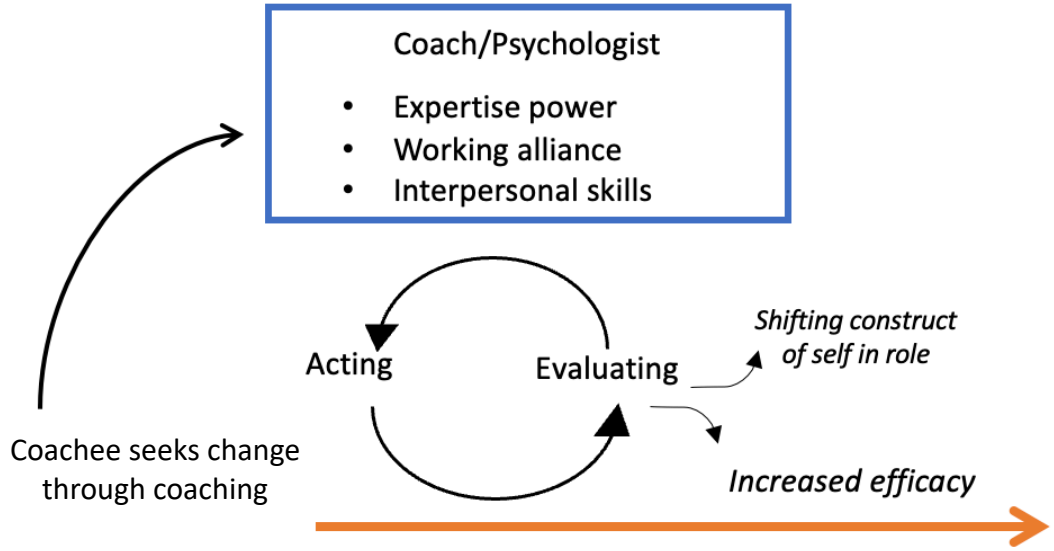
### 6.2.2 Raising self-efficacy

In the present study, following coachees opting into coaching support from the psychologist, a working alliance (Adams, 2016b; Bordin, 1979) was quickly established. The concept of expertise power was discussed in Chapter 5, this study considers this power simultaneously supports coachee trust and thus the working alliance (Fatien Diochon & Lovelace, 2015) but also acts as a potential threat to coachee perceptions around autonomy (French & Raven, 1959). Coachees reported relief when their autonomy was not threatened, which is often linked in research to a collaborative effort on the part of the coach/psychologist (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gutkin, 1999). Relating this to SDT, the coachees maintained their autonomy and thus, as hypothesised, their motivation to engage in coaching support. Additionally, the coach/coachee relationship enabled social support (relatedness) and supported their growing feelings of competence through actions taken to

support their self-efficacy, represented by the portion of the diagram highlighted in figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2**

*Growing self-efficacy through the cyclical process of acting and evaluating, supported by coach (From Figure 6.1)*




As discussed in Chapter 5, self-efficacy is the sense that one has the necessary tools and ability to influence an outcome which in the present study, this relates to role-related tasks. For many coachees "making a difference" to the young people appeared pivotal to their roles. Conceptualised here, it is likely that coachees evaluate their self-efficacy based on self-reflective observations and feedback from others (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 2012). Coachees described that the feedback from the psychologist was valuable and helped their "confidence", here understood to refer to efficacy. From there, they noted their own successes because of actions they took, and some also received feedback from others in the school community.

Coachees also noted measurement data as a form of feedback. Hence, raising self-efficacy is a cyclical process which began with positive feedback from the coach (trusted due to working alliance and expertise status) then became self-sustaining as a positive feedback loop.

Alongside raising self-efficacy, the coachee re-evaluates their self-concept within their role through positive feedback, creating a cyclical effect of self-efficacy and self-concept change. As the working alliance is in place, supporting a coachee-directed goal, experience of success provides the coachee with evidence they are moving towards their role standard. This also allows for re-evaluation of the self in the role (Burke, 2006), thereby over time they are increasingly meeting the role standard and resolving difficult emotions around this conflict or disparity (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

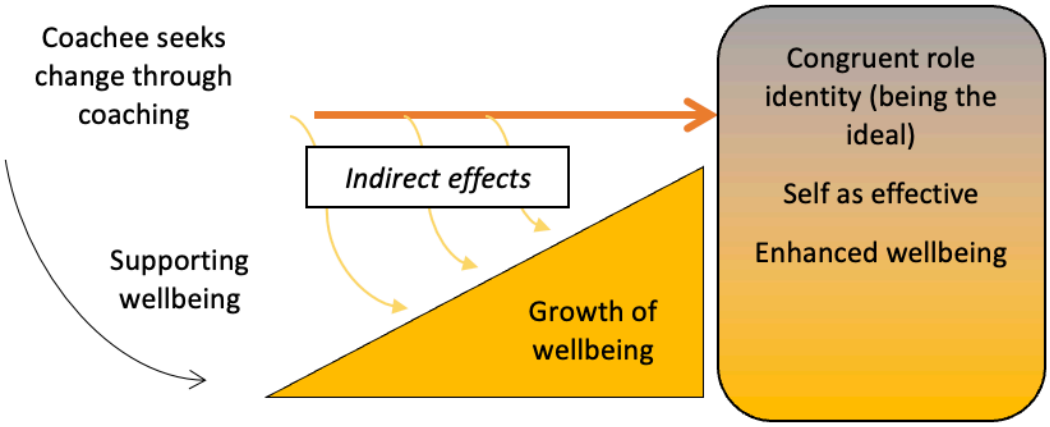
For potential coaches, this highlights the importance of supporting efficacy within the coaching relationship and developing a trusting and positive working alliance from the outset. The positioning and potential of expertise power must also be understood, in that it is present within the working alliance and has utility in supporting a trusting relationship, but also, that its presence must be acknowledged by the coach in order to maintain a collaborative relationship. This concept of balancing expertise power and collaboration is familiar within the field of educational psychology, particularly in discourses around consultation (Gutkin, 1999).

### 6.2.3 Developing positive wellbeing

Wellbeing was not identified as an explicit target within coaching support but appeared to be supported as a by-product of other psycho-social processes. This could be understood through the PERMA model of wellbeing wherein five separate and core elements are considered the foundation of positive wellbeing (Seligman, 2018), discussed in Chapter 5. In the model, this is described as an indirect effect, but is still a key aspect of the coachee's experience. This is summarised in figure 6.3, which presents the growth of wellbeing pathway from the overall model.

**Figure 6.3**

*The Growth of Wellbeing during Coaching Support (From Figure 6.1)*




The growth of positive emotionality during the coaching process did not negate other difficulties experienced, but appeared to sit alongside, and create a balance, represented in the grounded theory by the grey and yellow in the post-coaching state (reproduced in part in figure 5.3).

Figure 6.4 gives examples of the ways in which the coachee's wellbeing was supported through contributing to the PERMA building blocks. The grounded theory of this study postulates that wellbeing is perceived as being supported by coaching psychology, and sense of meaning, resilience and self-regulation within coachees roles is promoted through this (Hascher et al., 2021).

**Figure 6.4**

*Examples of Coaching Intervention Supporting the PERMA Building Blocks of Wellbeing*

| | |
|---|---|
| P | *Positive Emotions* |
| •Resolving challenging emotions relating to role-related tension<br>•Creating calming, containing spaces to talk | |
| E | *Engagement* |
| •Support to utilise strengths and engage in goal-directed behaviours<br>•Noticing self engaging in behaviours congruent to role standard | |
| R | *Relationships* |
| •Developing the relationship with the coach<br>•Coach supporting coachee to develop relationships with others<br>•Social support through successes in school | |
| M | *Meaning* |
| •Supported actions which align with coahcee core values (e..g, Making a Difference, being good at the job) | |
| A | *Achievement* |
| •Noticing own success through self-evaluation<br>•Others in school community feeding back successes<br>•Data-driven evaluations of success<br>•Reflection within coaching sessions | |

The influence of this supported wellbeing contributes to the final state of the model, wherein the coachees cultivate a strong foundation of efficacy and wellbeing which supports continued action around “making a difference” for their young people, however that may look within their role. The feelings of wellbeing and efficacy are linked with each contributing to the other reciprocally (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The increase in wellbeing can link to preferred emotional states, feeding into identity development via concepts highlighted in Affect Control Theory (ACT) (discussed in Chapter 5) such that the overall affective meaning assigned to their role identity becomes more positive (Stryker, 2004).

Importantly, coachees did not cite improved wellbeing as an explicit target at the outset of their coaching contact or experience, yet this became important as a mechanism underlying their perceived success of the intervention. Psychologists utilising coaching psychology should consider how and where providing wellbeing support could be most effective while maintaining awareness that coachees may not identify this as an initial goal.

### 6.2.4 Arriving at a state of increased efficacy and wellbeing and continuing forward

The coachees’ experience culminates in a reported stronger foundation of efficacy and wellbeing from which to go forward in their roles. Note that the model does not include an arrow from the coach to this final state, as the coach does not “give” this to the coachee, rather the coachee creates this state through active participation in coaching support. Historically the research narrative has focused on Teaching Assistants and auxiliary staff being a passive resource, with narratives around cost effectiveness and questions around impact being prevalent (Education Endowment

Foundation, 2018; Roffey-Barentsen, 2014; Webster et al., 2013). This study highlights the active role they play in seeking to develop their skills and become effective practitioners. Hence, once the coaching support ends, the coachees continue to build on their experience as their internal state has shifted towards one of efficaciousness, congruence with role standards, greater internal motivation towards goals, and heightened wellbeing.

### 6.3 Summary

This section has presented a grounded theory which has been conceptualised through data analysis and integration of the extant literature, presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The theory seeks to explain the reported experience of school staff gaining efficacy and wellbeing, allowing for continued action, following support based in coaching psychology. The theory proposes that through the psychosocial processes around supporting efficacy, role identity shift and raising wellbeing, coachees can feel secure in their role and able to make a difference to children's lives. Considerations around how psychologists may apply the theorised psychosocial processes within coaching psychology. This may be during planning support in schools, or as a reflection tool during process. This theory centralises the coachee as the driving force to change, suggesting the tool may be useful to consider who may be a good candidate for this support, and where other approaches may be a better fit.

# 7. Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores links between the first literature review (Chapter 2) and the presented grounded theory (Chapter 6) and subsequent implications for practice and policy. The distinctive contribution of this study is demonstrated. The researcher's reflexivity and the study's strengths and limitations are explored, followed by a discussion of future research avenues.

## 7.2 Considering the grounded theory alongside the 1st Literature Review

The first literature review (Chapter 2) identified relevant literature including legislation and guidance reports, and a narrowly defined set of studies relating to coaching psychology in the UK education system. The relevant legislation and guidance reports will be explored in section 7.3.2. The following section will explore how the present study links to the research identified in Chapter 2's narrative synthesis.

### 7.2.1 Coachee/coach working relationship

Of note is Adams (2016b), who asserted that the coaching approach is secondary to the development of a therapeutic alliance. This concept of therapeutic (or, working) alliance was identified in the grounded theory of this study, relating the necessity of a collaborative and trusting relationship with the coach on the part of the coachees. Within Adams' study, he reports that the contracting process is crucial for the alliance to be effective. However, in the present study, the coachees did not include an explicit contracting process as part of their experience, instead identifying that the communication style and implicit support as the generators of the sense of

alliance. Adams does note that the development of the working alliance is a flexible and non-prescriptive process. The coaching relationship was noted to be important across many of the studies, including Lucey and van Nieuwerburgh (2021) and Pritchard and van Nieuwerburgh (2016), who both explored the use of coaching with the goal to support wellbeing. The studies by Adams (2016b) and Fanshawe (2019) are from the perspective of EPs delivering coaching support, and within this, the EPs discussed the importance of the relationships and the dyadic nature of their development. The present study gives the coachee view, giving support to this suggestion that the relationship development is a reciprocal process.

Grounded studies of coachee experience in areas other than schools or educational psychology found similar importance was placed on the working alliance. For example, one study of those in receipt of executive coaching identified the importance of the coach's perceived trustworthiness, supportiveness and empathy (Passmore, 2010). Another, which explored coaching support for women in leadership roles, found that several overlapping processes were supportive to coaching outcomes, including the development of a strong coach-coachee relationship (Smith, 2015).

### 7.2.2 Self-efficacy

Much of the current results and the grounded theory relate to the concept of self-efficacy. The importance of self-efficacy was also identified in Farrelly (2020) and Wang (2012; 2013), who explored the use of coaching support in learning new information (curriculum and CPD). These studies did not, however, explore the relationship development aspect of the coach-coachee dyad. In the present

grounded theory, coachee self-efficacy was considered to develop through the coaching relationship, whereby coachee trust in the working alliance enabled action-evaluation cycles in sessions, this in turn supported self-efficacy growth. This highlights how "trust" in this relationship is key to impact, given the emphasis on self-efficacy within the coaching literature (Aguiar Vieira & Palmer, 2018).

The present study identified a role for trust and wellbeing within the coaching experience. Lucey and van Nieuwerburgh (2021) and Pritchard and van Nieuwerburgh (2016) also explored coachee's experiences of coaching support. These studies highlighted the development of self-awareness and emotional regulation as core facets of coachee development. These facets were not actively highlighted in the present study. On reflection, this may stem from coachees not identifying a wellbeing need ahead of the coaching support, thus not conceptualising "emotional regulation" as an issue requiring exploration, hence it's absence in the data collection. The two studies did note self-hood and recognition of strengths as concepts which are mirrored by the identity shifts discussed within the present study, wherein coachees are encouraged to reflect and reconceptualise on themselves (in role or more generally). The links to these studies suggest that reflection and evaluation are mechanisms by which wellbeing is supported in the coaching relationship in schools in multiple experiential studies.

Within other grounded theory studies of coachee experience, this growth of self-efficacy has been described as a "virtuous cycle" wherein self and others evaluations of strengths and success support the development of positive self-concept and

commitment to goals (Elston & Boniwell, 2011), again identifying similarities in experience gained through using grounded theory methodology.

### 7.2.3 Identity shift within the coaching process

The concept of a shift in identity was not explicitly discussed within the literature identified in Chapter 2. Some studies did discuss self-concept (Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Wang, 2012) which can relate to identity as it concerns one's thoughts about oneself. It could be that the present study's focus on the inner experience through intensive interviews of the coachees themselves meant that questions around role identity were more easily examined whereas other studies concerned the action of coaching support more than the experience of. Alternatively, the use of grounded theory methodology to explore underlying and implicit processes may have given view to unconscious processes in this study (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).

### 7.2.4 Underpinning psychological approaches

The identified studies in the narrative review all reported their psychological underpinning. Coaching frameworks and psychological theory were not explicitly discussed by the coachees in the present study which may be because the views were gathered from coachees only, who did not have the technical understanding or interest in the psychological approaches used. Without the EP's side of the interactions, it is not possible to comment on the specific coaching psychology approaches that the coachees experienced. It could be assumed that underpinning approaches are in line with other studies of EP practice in coaching (Adams, 2016b; Fanshawe, 2019) but this cannot be known for certain. When interpreting these

results, it is important to note that the processes identified in this study's presented model exist outside of any one coaching approach. Within the aims of this study, this is acceptable as this was not a study of process or tools but of experience. Given that generally coaching psychology is used eclectically by EPs (Fanshawe, 2019) the present study fits within this. The presented model gives suggestions around the psychological theories which may be useful, such as Identity Theory (IT) and Self-Efficacy theories but does allow for some flexibility for the inclusion of the coach's preferred approach.

## 7.3 Implications of the present study

### 7.3.1 Distinct contribution

The research question of the present study is:

- Which psychosocial processes occur during a coaching psychology-based intervention, as experienced by coachees in a school-based context?

Additional aims were to explore the experience of being a coachee receiving coaching support from a psychologist, and to apply this to future directions in EP approaches. This was to support the understanding of the coaching process, and to ground practice implications in context rather than pre-determined frameworks or understandings. In this respect, the presented grounded theory offers a novel model of the coaching journey as experienced by coachees. While the model is new, it does also reflect some of the prominent theory and prior research in coaching literature, as discussed in Chapters 2, 5 and 6. In this way the model contributes new understanding of previously discussed knowledge.

The present study provides an additional view regarding the use of coaching psychology, particularly by Educational Psychologists/Assistant Psychologists in the UK educational context. This adds to other studies which have explored the psychologist's role within this area (Adams, 2016b; Fanshawe, 2019; Farrelly, 2020) by giving the other side of the coaching relationship dyad. Further, this study centralises a coachee group (teaching assistants, newly qualified teachers) who are considered to have a low power base within their school environment (section 5.2.2). As coaching is described as a cooperative process (Association for Coaching, 2023), promoting the experiences of this group allows for the inclusion of coachee voice into this growing area of research, which is important for knowledge generation based on cooperation and equality (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014). Taking this view allowed for the teaching assistants, as coachees, to be placed as the driving force in the model, promoting their agency and influence within the research discourse. Alongside this, a review of the qualitative coaching research has suggested that the field should turn towards the coachee journey, rather than the outcomes, as this was a gap in the general coaching psychology research (Graf & Frédérick, 2021). The present study contributes information about the coachee journey through a rich analysis of their experience, which goes some way to reducing this dearth of research.

### 7.3.2 Practice implications

This study has practice implications for professionals including EPs/APs, psychologists using coaching approaches, and school staff and school senior leadership who may access or commission coaching from a psychologist.

Summarised here are implications considering the functions of the EP, referenced in Chapter 2, figure 2.1, presented in table 7.1.

**Table 7.1**

*Implications of the Present Study on the Levels of EP Work, Identified in Chapter 2*

| Level | Coach/psychologist | Coachee/commissioner |
|---|---|---|
| Local Authority (LA)/systems | • Support evidence-based practice when negotiating coaching support at LA/systems levels | • Provide a general, visual model of mechanisms of change which can be readily understood by commissioners considering coaching at a systems level |
| Schools | • Discussions around evidence base, expectations, practicalities of coaching<br>• Consideration around staff support and development; when coaching would or would not be helpful | • Gives clarity about the approach and change mechanisms to support those not familiar with coaching psychology to understand the model and potential effect; giving transparency to those who may seek to commission coaching support. |
| Individual | • Raise awareness of mechanisms of change<br>• Support thinking around psychological models and approaches<br>• Give view to coachee experience supporting reflexivity of coaching practice | • Gives a map of process which might be expected when they access coaching<br>• May raise profile of coaching for wellbeing as well as learning<br>• Support reflection on their own coaching journey |

The model developed through this study offers a simplified, evidence-based map of the coaching journey from the coachee perspective; inclusion of coachee perspective in coaching research supports ethical and purposive practice (Grant & O'Connor, 2019). Thus, for psychologists using coaching psychology in their practice, the results and grounded theory of this study presents the coachee's experience and development. The coachees in this study came from a narrowly defined population and coaches working with this group could consider the relationship between alliance development, self-efficacy, and wellbeing within their dyads as a pre-emptive approach.

With a particular focus on psychologists working within education (i.e., EPs and APs) and, from a practical perspective, the model may support commissioning-related conversations with school to highlight how and when coaching support can benefit school staff. On the side of senior leadership teams, having clarity about the approach may support considerations around Continuing Practice Development (CPD) planning (Lofthouse, Leat, & Towler, 2010). It may also give a tool to raise awareness of the importance of interpersonal skills and trust building ahead of change, and serve as a reminder that the central driving force is not the coach, but the coachee.

For the coachee, the presented results and grounded theory may support coachees to reflect on their coaching journeys. It may support prospective coachees to have a clearer picture of how they might experience coaching support, and when they might choose to access it. Having the autonomy within coaching made clear may support informed consent to engagement at the outset. Being able to present

psychological theory to non-psychologists is also suggested to support collaboration between professionals (Dutke et al., 2019). This is suggested to be best achieved through strong links to practice, which the grounded theory methodology supported in the present study.

Finally, considering the national context, coaching has long been identified as an opportunity for staff development by government-funded projects (e.g., CUREE (2005) initially developed as a Department of Education CPD framework for teaching staff). Coaching in education has remained present in research, suggesting interest, but it has been noted by the researcher that initiatives have seemingly been lost to time, such as the withdrawal of the DfE from CUREE and the lost initiative evaluated by Passmore and Brown (2009) (see Chapter 2). This may relate to issues of implementation and resultant impact (Lofthouse, Leat, Towler, et al., 2010). The present study can support understanding of context, and the when and why of effective coaching practice (Graf & Frédérick, 2021) which may support wider implementation. This may then encourage government/LA backing, particularly in relation to approaches to raise impact and capacity of TAs. Given the debate around TA deployment in the research and policy narrative (Giangreco, 2021; Webster & de Boer, 2021), coaching may offer a way forward for schools considering how best to upskill staff members, while simultaneously acknowledging the skills and strengths this portion of the school workforce provides.

### 7.3.3 Dissemination of research

One aspect of evaluating the usefulness of a grounded theory study is the contribution it makes beyond the act of research (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher

plans to share a brief version of the research findings with the schools and coachees who contributed to the study. The intent is to create an infographic or other visual representation of the findings which can be readily understood by a wide variety of readers. This approach is chosen as visual representation of research findings can efficiently communicate complex ideas (Hayes, 2020). For the placement EP service, feedback will take a similar approach, through presenting the visual findings and using this as a basis for discussion. The focus of the discussion will be on the grounded theory of the study rather than categories and codes. This is to distance the EPs from the coachees to support confidentiality, discussed in Chapter 3.

It is hoped that through sharing the findings of the study, coaches and coachees will reflect on their experiences and use these to build on their practice through avenues such as:

- Raising awareness of the identified processes.
- Coachees applying the model when working short-term with coaches in school settings.
- Coaches planning for precipitating factors to led to coachee goal creation and fulfilment.
- To reflect on when there may be other approaches which are more suitable to the context (e.g., training, supervision, wellbeing support).

### 7.4 Evaluation of research – Part 2

Table 3.3 in Chapter 3 showed the steps taken to support the study's quality during the early stages of development of the research. These considerations were taken from Charmaz (2014)'s descriptions of best practice for supporting quality in

grounded theory studies. These criteria are revisited in this section (table 7.2) to demonstrate how steps were taken to support quality through the final analysis and development of grounded theory stages of the study. For a thorough evaluation of the study, tables 3.3 and 7.2 should be considered together.

**Table 7.2**

*Measures Taken by the Researcher to Support the Credibility of the Present Study using Criteria Described by Charmaz (2014)*

| **Evaluation Criteria** | **Measures Taken** |
|---|---|
| Credibility | The categories and codes have been generated through rigorous engagement with the data and can be traced through levels of abstraction (appendices 13, 14, 17, 19).<br>There was reflexivity within data analysis, such as using a research diary, memos (appendix 16), and returning to data and codes support adherence to the methodology (see section 7.4.1).<br>Development of codes, categories and the grounded theory are recorded within memos (e.g., appendix 15, 16), supported using the researcher's diary, diagrams, and engagement with the research supervision process.<br>The study has been shared with other trainee Educational Psychologists who are familiar with the grounded theory |

| | |
|---|---|
| | process who scrutinised the methodology and results and confirmed they fit within their understanding of grounded theory methodology and analysis. |
| Originality | A discussion of this study's unique contribution is discussed in section 7.5.<br>The coachee pool drew from a demographic which has previously been under-represented in both education and coaching research, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5 and Chapter 5, section 5.5.1.<br>The study offers a unique perspective through the researcher's construction of the theory, grounded in the provided data, of the phenomena of study.<br>The theoretical and practical implications of this study are discussed in sections 7.2 and 7.3.<br>The analysis provides a new conceptual model for the psychosocial processes involved in coaching in educational contexts.<br>The findings have been abstracted beyond the face meanings using the processes described in Chapter 3, offering new insight to the experience. |
| Resonance | The initial findings, including the categories, focused codes, and early models of the grounded theory were shared with members of an Educational Psychology service for sense- |

| | |
|---|---|
| | checking and sharing of views who confirmed the findings made sense within their experience of coaching psychology.<br>The study identified links to existing research and theoretical standpoints within the literature. There are also identified similarities between other coaching-psychology based grounded theory studies which were not read ahead of analysis, discussed in Chapters 5 and 7 (Elston & Boniwell, 2011; Passmore, 2010).<br>The presented grounded theory represents an aspect of the reported experiences; while this may affect the resonance of the study, it was felt to be conceptually appropriate to thoroughly examine one area rather than take a broad stance, due to the confines of the thesis timelines. |
| Usefulness | The findings offer a model which could be considered when utilising coaching interventions within the context of Educational Psychology support; it may also be a helpful tool for EPs who supervise assistant psychologists delivering such support; and may also be a useful tool for other psychologists utilising coaching psychology.<br>The findings offer new insight into an emerging topic in educational psychology and contribute to the growing research base around coaching psychology use more generally. |

Being grounded in experience, this study demonstrates clear practical data links to previously theoretical thinking about the psychosocial processes within coaching.

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### 7.4.1 Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is an important consideration within grounded theory research (Birks & Mills, 2015). Constructivist grounded theory approaches in particular require the researcher to remain aware of their biases, decision making and assumptions arising from previous experience (Charmaz, 2014; Gentles et al., 2014). It is noted that through reflexivity previous experience can support cultural understanding, reference points and shared language which is a benefit to the overall study (Birks & Mills, 2015; Thornberg, 2011).

The researcher's previous experiences working in education in a range of roles (including teaching assistant and as a member of a psychology service) supported the process of intensive interviewing. Being familiar with school staff roles and expectations allowed for the researcher to ask questions around topics which might otherwise have been hidden. This was particularly key when exploring social support, for example. This led to quick establishment of shared meaning, rapport and understanding of terminology. Conversely, having had no experience in delivering a coaching psychology intervention at the time of the interviews may have had the benefit of avoiding terminology or assumptions which were unfamiliar to the coachees, given their non-psychological backgrounds. However, this could miss the benefits of being familiar with the topic as described above. Intensive interviewing

allowed for the researcher to explore conceptually significant avenues as they arose (Charmaz, 2014). However, what is defined as "significant" is dependent on the researcher. When listening back to the recordings of the interviews, missed opportunities for exploration were noted. This reflection time during transcribing supported the structure and content of the following interviews (appendix 11).

Throughout the entirety of the project, the researcher kept a research diary to record decision making, planning, notes from meetings and memos (as discussed in Chapter 3). The use of a research diary is recommended among qualitative research approaches (Borg, 2001; Robson & McCartan, 2016) to support reflexivity. This diary was supportive as it held a record of choices, abandoned avenues, and unstructured thoughts which could be returned to and refined as needed (see appendix 20). As the project developed, the diary was also used to capture memos and diagrams relating to the analysis. This supported the researcher to track their research journey, to see where ideas began and how they developed over time. The diary also contained records of research supervision, peer supervision groups and informal conversations about the project, which supported identification of ideas which grew from these discussions.

### 7.5 Strengths, limitations and future research

The use of constructivist grounded theory has allowed for an exploration of the experience of coaching, culminating in the development of a model of the psychosocial processes identified in this study. This model has been built from the data given by the coachees and constructed through the researcher's lens of previous psychological knowledge and future reading around coaching psychology.

Taking this exploratory approach allowed for the inquiry to uncover the elements of coaching the coachees felt were important, the content of which was analysed reflexively and allowed for an abstract model, grounded in the data, to be put forward as this study's grounded theory. Linking this to the extant literature meant that the resultant model gave a new and yet familiar understanding of the coaching experience. As discussed above this can be useful for those interested in coaching psychology, particularly in education.

Another strength of this study is that the views and experiences of an underrepresented group (within the coaching research) has been examined. Their inclusion supports the research narrative to take these voices into account, and as the practice of coaching psychology in education develops, this may support the development of initiatives aiming to support teaching assistants or NQT staff specifically, and also influence more general development with its inclusion in the overall understanding of coaching processes.

A core strength of this study is the development of a model, which could be used as a tool to support thinking and action within coaching psychology frameworks to develop the wellbeing and self-efficacy of school staff historically highlighted as having relatively little power (Roffey-Barentsen, 2014) (compared to senior leadership, teaching staff etc.). A psychologist using the model may consider how their expert power is perceived by the coachee and when this is a helpful or hindering factor to relationship development, they may consider how to raise the reflection and evaluation aspects of the self-efficacy cycle, or they may consider the wellbeing benefits of such an approach. Given this study presents one of the first

attempts of grounded theory coaching models within the field of education, others in the field may build on and expand the model, relating it to varied contexts and experiences within education.

This study does have limitations relating to the methodology, it's potential for wider impact, and considerations around the epistemological approach. Key to constructivist grounded theory is the concept of theoretical saturation. Within grounded theory, theoretical saturation is suggested to be achieved when no new codes emerge from the data which was achieved in this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, given the time constrains of the doctoral thesis, the researcher does consider that had there been more opportunity for reflection during initial coding stages, there could have been new codes uncovered. It is noted that achieving theoretical saturation is not clear cut, and considering how and when saturation is reached is dependent on methodology and aims of the research (Saunders et al., 2018). Reflecting on this, the study met surface-level theoretical saturation as described by grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is likely that another researcher, with wider and prior grounded theory methodology experience would have a different view regarding initial codes and sampling (Charmaz, 2014). Birks and Mills (2015) note that grounded theory can be a difficult methodology to become proficient in. To mitigate this limitation, the researcher sought out additional teaching from the University on the topic, accessed a range of online resources, engaged in research supervision and took part in a GT peer interest group. The reflective research diary also supported understanding around the method and gave space to practise analysis approaches separately to the main

study, thus attempts to minimise limitation were actively made throughout the study.

Despite the small sample size, the data gathered was rich, with many potential avenues for analysis. The amount of data gathered meant that there were some areas of enquiry which were not followed to their fullest extent. This while this is a decision on the part of the researcher to explore the most conceptually interesting aspects of the study, what is "interesting" is affected by the researcher's values, experience and the construction of the interviews. While this was robustly analysed using the methods described in Chapter 3, the researcher remains aware that others may have taken another approach and explored other areas of interest, which may have resulted in an alternative model or framework to that which was presented here.

This concept of construction of the meaning of the data is another aspect of this study which needs to be considered. In line with the constructionist epistemology and relativist ontology, the data is considered to be a representation of the coachee's understanding of the world. There is another layer of this construction, being the researcher's understanding and presentation of the data within this thesis, as a philosophical pragmatist (as discussed in Chapter 3) the researcher has wrestled with this throughout the research project. This may also be due to the dominant research narratives in the UK prioritising studies which follow the "scientific method" (Reiter, 2019) meaning the researcher needed to re-examine many assumptions about the process of analysis in qualitative research. This may be a limitation in that within the scientific community there may be bias relating to the research

methodology used. However in the field of coaching psychology, there does appear to be an appetite for qualitative studies (Graf & Frédérick, 2021) and such an approach is not unusual (Passmore & Whybrow, 2018; Robson-Kelly & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016); similarly, Educational Psychology as a discipline is an area where qualitative research is readily accepted as a trustworthy research method, and indeed, one which can support epistemic justice (Sewell, 2016).

Finally, the coachee sample should be considered when evaluating this study's strengths and limitations. The study did unintentionally focus on a coachee group for whom power dynamics were a consideration, and the concept of expert power was salient within the final grounded theory. This does raise questions regarding whether the same would have been true of other coachee groups within schools. As noted in Chapter 3, the small sample size meant that minority voices (i.e., ethnicity, cultural, gender) were not captured within this study. There is professional interest in culturally responsive practice within the EP profession (Parker et al., 2020) and coaching psychology (Kranski & Steed, 2022). This is a missing aspect of the present study, and while there was no discussion by the participants relating to ethnicity or culture, this may be because the majority of coachees and coaches were within the dominant ethnicity and thus this was not a salient aspect of the experience (Toole, 2022). This perspective does contribute to the overall understanding of coaching models in schools and may be an area for further exploration.

As noted in Chapter 2, research into coaching in schools is limited at present, giving many areas for further exploration. Future studies could take an exploratory approach with members of senior leadership, class teachers, or a cross section of

school communities who have experienced coaching, in a similar way to the present study. Further, the present study examines just the coachee side the dyadic relationship, and future studies may consider joining the coach and coachee experience to gain a deeper understanding of the reciprocal coaching relationship development in the school context. Future studies could also build on the presented grounded theory, through exploring aspects of the model such as the precipitating factors, or an examination of identity shift over time.

### 7.6 Summary

The presented study utilised constructivist grounded theory to achieve the aim of exploring the experience of coaching, from the perspective of coachees working in education. A diagram of the identified psychosocial processes was developed in response to recursive and complex analysis, to represent the abstracted experience in such a way as to be useful to practising psychologists. This chapter has linked the literature identified in Chapter 2 and professional implications of the current study including plans for dissemination. The study's strengths, limitations, and trustworthiness have been discussed with detail around the researcher's reflexivity. Future research directions were considered with a focus on the field of educational psychology.

## 8. Conclusion

This study was located in a national context of supporting staff development and wellbeing, and the emergent role coaching psychology in this. Coaching and coaching psychology has experienced a recent boon in research and practical interest (BPS DoCP, 2022) and this is generating interest across psychological disciplines, including educational psychology (Adams, 2016d). Despite this interest, gaps in the literature were identified, including research exploring the coachee experience (Graf & Frédérick, 2021). Alongside this, flexibility of coaching approaches raised questions regarding the application of coaching psychology in schools (Adams, 2016c) in such a way that is ethically and professionally sound (Graf & Frédérick, 2021). The current study contributes to the literature through closely examining a small sample of coachee experience, in way that was closely relevant to EP practice, given the researcher's professional interests. Aims of the study were to contribute to the understanding of psychosocial processes involved in coaching and to provide a conceptual model of the experience of coaching that may support EP's understanding of coaching psychology in schools and for this reason, constructivist grounded theory was the chosen methodology. Ultimately five coachees were recruited to the study, four teaching assistants and one newly qualified teacher, identified through contacting schools who had received coaching through the researcher's placement psychology service. These coachees were interviewed using an intensive interviewing approach which provided rich data for analysis.

Through a complex process of reflexive and repeated analysis, codes and categories were generated from the data. This was considered alongside relevant literature

which included theoretical and research-based literature around self-efficacy, identity change and school staff wellbeing. The presented grounded theory draws these concepts together to present a model which captures the coachee experience, and places it within a theoretical model which is hoped to be useful for professional practice. The model is useful for psychologists who are using coaching psychology to support their planning and understanding of processes which may be present in their coaching engagements. It may also be a helpful addition to the emerging research around coaching in education, with many future avenues for research identified from this study, especially given the early stage of coaching research in UK schools. An evaluation of the research's trustworthiness, using a framework which is relevant to constructivist grounded theory methodology was presented, with an account of the researcher's active reflexivity throughout the project. Strengths of the study were discussed alongside an acknowledgement of the study's limitations, which both related to general issues around conducting qualitative research, as well as specific limitations relating to the researcher's novice status and the coachee sample.

The findings from this study are hoped to contribute to the professional practice of coaching psychologists and educational psychologists through the clarity of psychosocial processes presented in the model. It is also hoped that this will support school staff in the understanding of the coaching process, and when this may be useful to them. Through dissemination of the research findings in informal and formal channels, it is hoped that the research project and model will ignite further exploration around the potential of coaching in schools.

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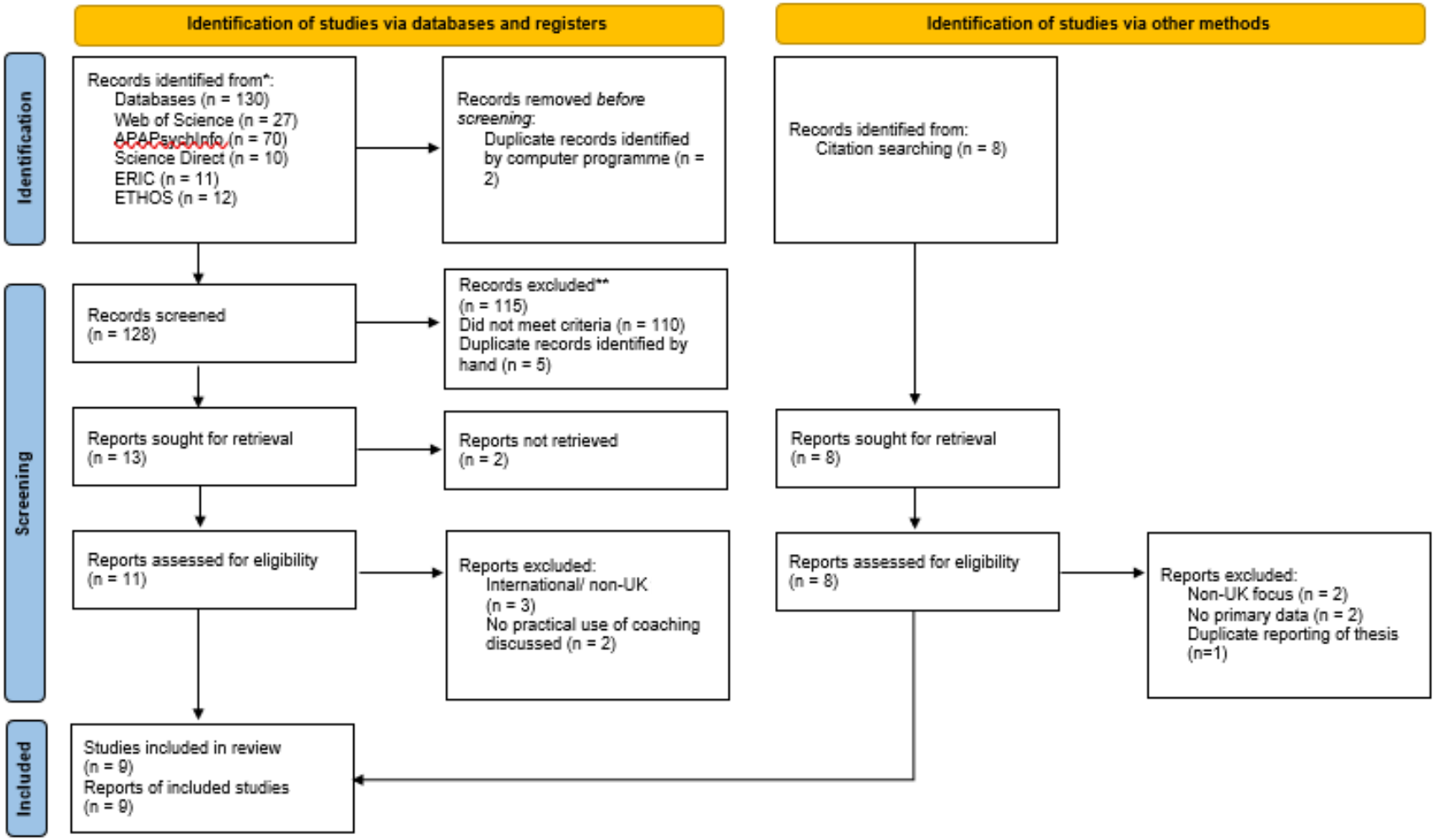
**Appendix 1. Flow chart to show systematic search process, adapted from PRISMA (2020) (Page et al., 2021)**



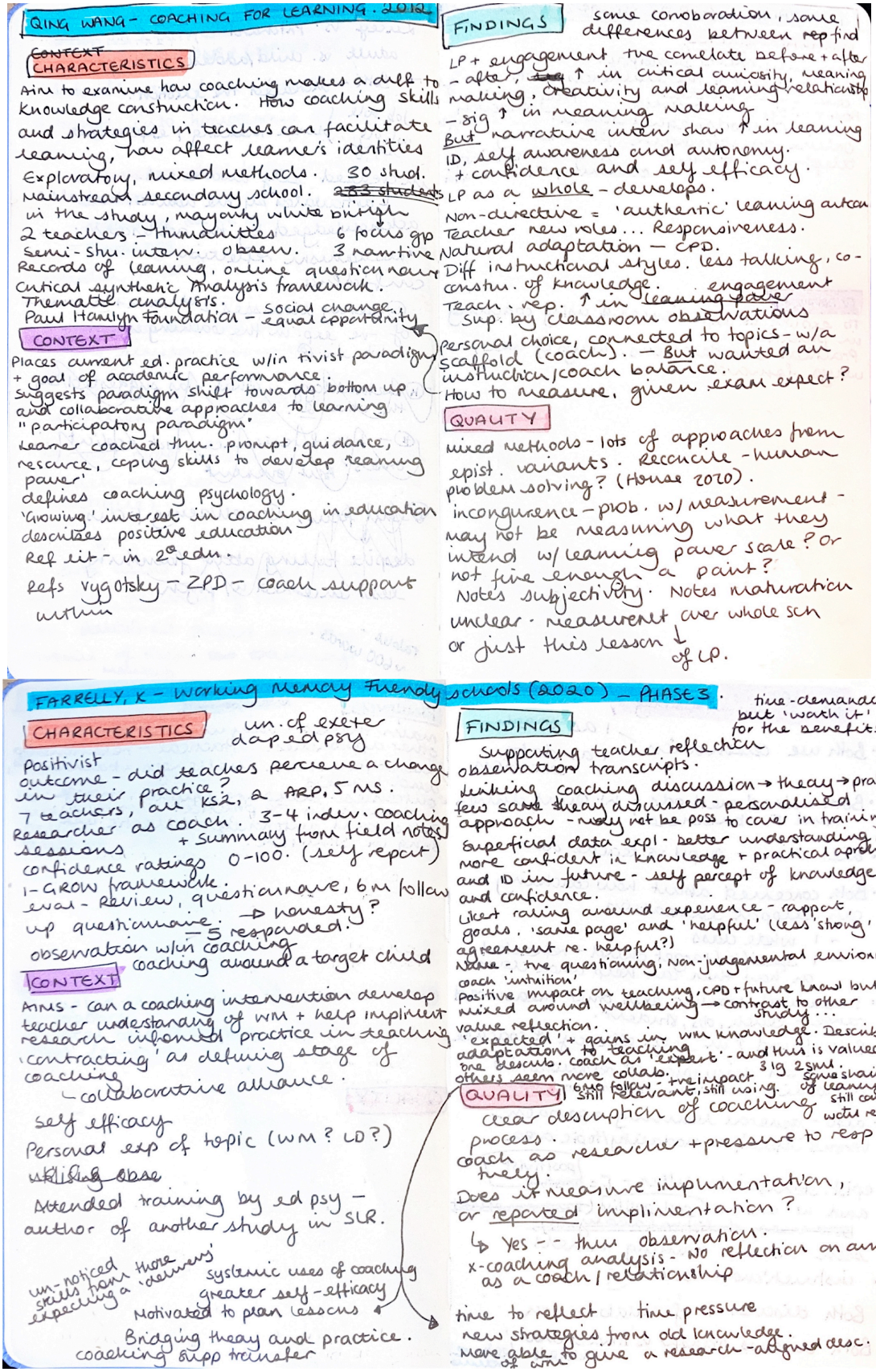
## Appendix 2. Table to show information about studies included in the 1st literature review.

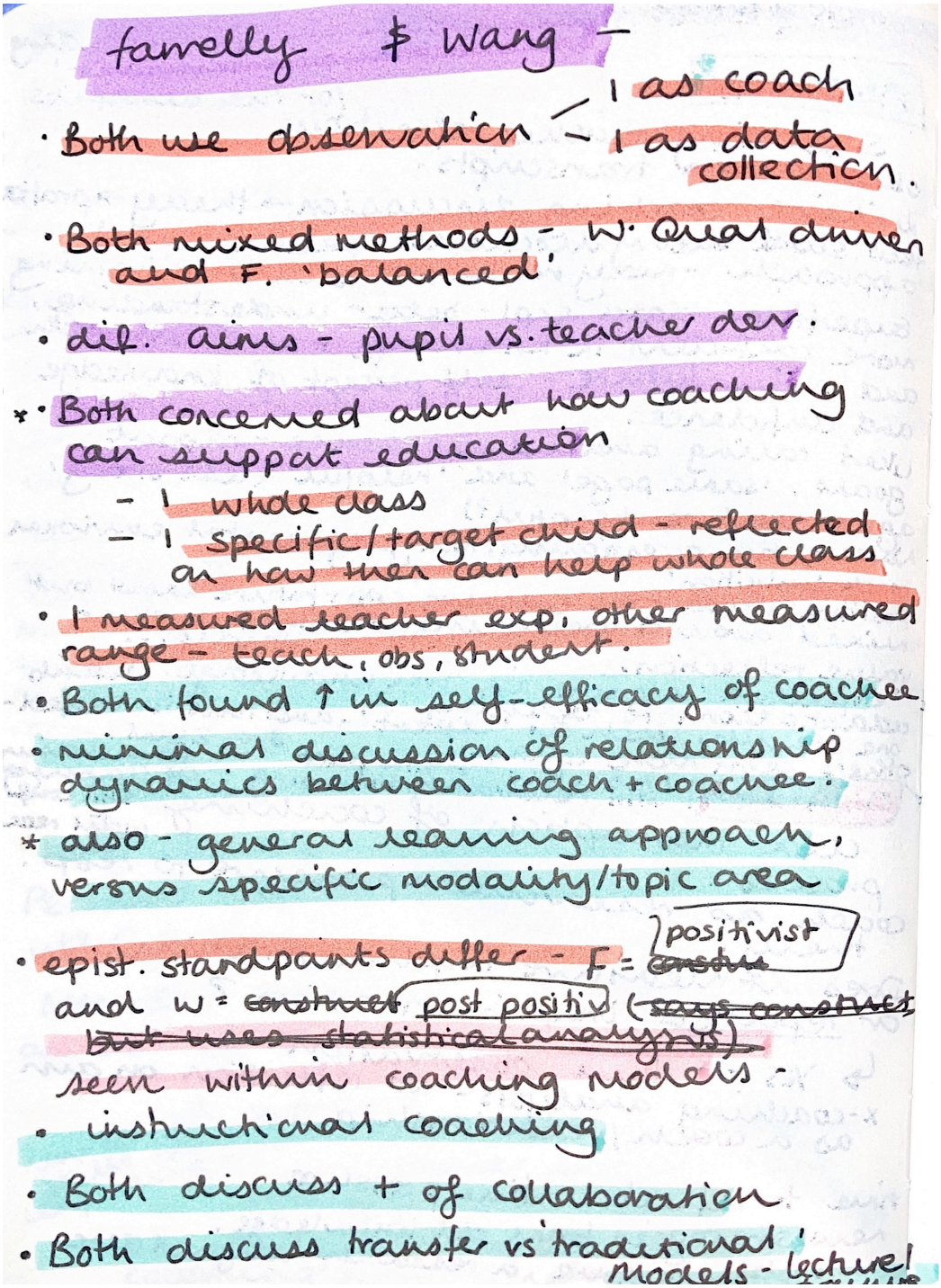
| Study Title, Author(s) and publication year | Participants | Methodology | Research aims | Model / theory | Summary of Findings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 'More willing to carry on in the face of adversity': How beginner teachers facing challenging circumstances experience positive psychology coaching. (Lucey and van Nieuwerburgh, 2021) | 3 teachers in their first year of Teach First (employment-based teacher training) | Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis | To explore how Positive Psychology coaching (PPC) can be used to support teachers in challenging circumstances | Positive Psychology | Overarching themes identified included normalising experiences, positive emotions, sense making, and time to think. PPC reported to be experienced as supportive in work and life. |
| Working memory friendly schools: educational psychologists using coaching with teachers to improve knowledge about working memory difficulties in primary schools (Farrelly, 2020) (Phase 3 only) | 7 Key Stage 2 teachers and 19 pupils in mainstream schools and resource bases | Likert-rating questionnaire and thematic analysis of written comments and interviews | To examine whether a coaching intervention can develop teacher understanding of working memory and facilitate the use of research-informed approaches | The I-GROW model (Solution-focused) | Teachers reported greater confidence and self-efficacy in supporting pupils with working memory difficulties. Suggests this is through coaching creating an environment which promotes self-determination and understanding. Discusses theories of motivation. |
| Exploring educational psychologists' views and experiences of coaching (Fanshawe, 2019) (Phase 2 only) | 10 Educational Psychologists | Thematic analysis of interviews | To explore the experiences of EPs who use coaching in their practice | Mixed approaches | Coaching challenges and future directions discussed. The emotional investment is considered. Discussions around use of coaching within traded models considered; value for money, bringing it into practice, discussions with schools.<br>Highlighted a lack of clarity even within practitioners, perhaps in part as it is not seen as a distinct approach. |
| The perceptual changes in life experience of at-risk adolescent girls following an | 3 female secondary aged pupils | Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis | To contribute to the understanding of how coaching and positive | Positive Psychology | Identified three themes; control of emotions and reactions, increased positive emotions and thoughts and identifying a meaning to |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| integrated coaching and positive psychology interven tion group programme: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Pritchard and van Nieuwerburgh, 2016) | | | psychology interventions are experienced by "at-risk" adolescents | | life; all participants reported higher quality of life. Suggests this is based on perception of life changes. Discussion of an "upward spiral" of wellbeing. |
| Coaching psychology: An approach to practice for educational psychologists (Adams, 2016) | 1 teacher, school setting not specified | Case study | To illustrate how a previously described model of coaching can be applied in practice. | Solution focused | Participant and line manager reported positive impact of performance, development and well-being. Author notes limitations to case study model. Discussion of skills necessary for practice. |
| Art-based narrative interviewing as a dual methodological process: A participatory research method and an approach to coaching in secondary education (Wang, 2016) | 3 pupils from a mainstream secondary class | Narrative inquiry | To explore how narrative inquiry methodology can be used alongside artistic methods to explore the experience of coaching from the perspective of the students | Coaching for Learning (Based on I-GROW, a solution focused model) | Narratives of increased confidence, change in behaviours, and group cohesion emerged. From a perspective of the usefulness of narrative inquiry, the process uncovered metaphors and language use around the transformative nature of learning over time. |
| Towards a systems model of coaching for learning: Empirical lessons from the secondary classroom context (Wang, 2013) | 2 teachers trained in coaching; 30 pupils overall; 6 pupils in focus group; 3 in narrative interview; all within one mainstream secondary school class | Case study – mixed methods | To develop understanding of how coaching skills can be used by teachers to facilitate learning in their students. To explore how this affects student's identities as learners. | Coaching for Learning (Based on I-GROW, a solution focused model) | Increased engagement scores, quantitative data found statistically significant increase in meaning making. Some discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative findings (e.g., reported increases in resilience in narratives, but this measure decreased in quantitative). Teacher and student reports of increased independence, improved learning relationships and "agency" (self-motivated learning actions). Suggests that the quantitative measures were not sensitive |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | enough to pick up many of the qualitative findings. |
| Coaching for Learning: Exploring Coaching Psychology in Enquiry-based Learning and Development of Learning Power in Secondary Education. (Wang, 2012) | 2 teachers trained in coaching; 30 pupils overall; 6 pupils in focus group; 3 in narrative interview; all within one mainstream secondary school class | Case study – mixed methods | To develop understanding of how coaching skills can be used by teachers to facilitate learning in their students. To explore how this affects student's identities as learners. | Coaching for Learning (Based on I-GROW, a solution focused model) | Increased engagement scores, quantitative data found statistically significant increase in meaning making. Some discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative findings (e.g., reported increases in resilience in narratives, but this measure decreased in quantitative). Greater collaboration in coaching approach reported greater "authenticity" in learning outcomes but does not define this. Teacher and student reports of increased engagement and positive attitude to learning. Discussion of features of coaching as learning instruction. |
| Coaching non-adult students for enhanced examination performance: A longitudinal study. (Passmore and Brown, 2009) | 47 coaches trained by "An experienced coach", measured outcomes for 1987 students (average age 15) | Cohort study - quantitative | To explore whether coaching can be an effective tool for educational improvement | Behavioural model (GROW) | The schools who utilised coaching interventions showed a measurable increase in GCSE scores; however as not all pupils in each school took part, and no triangulation of data round what was being done in schools, it is not clear that this was as a result of coaching nor the suggested mechanism for this. |

**Appendix 3. Research diary extracts to show an example of the synthesis process.**






**Key**

Blue – Findings

Orange – Characteristics

Purple – Context

Pink - Quality

## Appendix 4. Initial emailed request for involvement.

Dear [SLT MEMBER],

I am getting in touch in my capacity as a researcher from the University of Nottingham, although you may know me as a trainee Educational Psychologist on placement at XXXX Psychology Services.

I am contacting you because somebody in your school recently did some work with one of our psychologists, [NAME]. My research is interested in your staff member's experience of taking part in this work. Please see the attached participant information sheet for a more detailed description of my research project and it's aims.

I would be very grateful if you could pass the attached on to your staff member and ask them to get in touch with me to confirm if they are able to take part. Taking part would mean being interviewed for approximately an hour, at a time and place convenient for them.

If you or your staff member would like to call to discuss, my phone number is [NUMBER] or any questions can be emailed to the above address.

Kind regards,

Cleo Allan

Trainee Educational Psychologist

## Appendix 5. Participant information sheet.

**School of Psychology**

Consent Form

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

**Understanding the Experience of Coaching in the Support of Educational Psychologist's Casework from the Perspective of Education Professionals: A Grounded Theory Study**

*Ethics Approval Number: S1435*

*Researcher: Cleo Allan*
*Supervisor: Sofia Hussain*
*Contact Details: cleo.allan@nottingham.ac.uk, sofia.hussain@nottingham.ac.uk*

This is an invitation to take part in a research study on the experiences of receiving coaching support from a member of the Educational Psychology Service, in your role as a member of school staff.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

This research is aiming to learn more about school staffs' experience of coaching support. There is some evidence to suggest that coaching support is helpful for a range of support needs within people's roles in school. However, not much is known about the underlying psychosocial processes that mean this approach is helpful. This research is aiming to explore these processes through understanding your experience. If you participate you will be asked a series of questions about your work with the member of the psychology service. The purpose of these questions is to understand more about your personal experience – e.g., your thoughts, feelings, and opinions of the process. Your interview will be looked at alongside others who have also taken part in a similar intervention. It is hoped that by examining this information in detail, more will be understood about coaching in a school context.

The whole procedure will last approximately an hour. This interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher, at which point it will be anonymised and the audio will be deleted.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. All data will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. It will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can also be contacted after your participation at the above address.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

## Appendix 6. Consent form.

**School of Psychology**

Consent Form

**Understanding the Experience of Coaching Psychology Interventions in the Support of Educational Psychologist's Casework from the Perspective of Education Professionals: A Grounded Theory Study**

*Ethics Approval Number: S1435*

*Researcher: Cleo Allan*

*Supervisor: Sofia Hussain*

*Contact Details: cleo.allan@nottingham.ac.uk, sofia.hussain@nottingham.ac.uk*

The participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?
  YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)?
  YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? YES/NO
  (at any time and without giving a reason)
- Do you agree to take part in the study?
  YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant:_____Date:_____

Name (in block capitals):_____

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher:_____Date:_____

## Appendix 7. Script for reading to participants during interview.

**Introductory Comments**

Hello, my name is Cleo Allan, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. My trainee role means that I spend some time on placement, and some time at university. While I do these side-by-side, this means I have two distinct roles, that of a practitioner and that of a researcher. I am here today in my role as a researcher. The primary boundary is that I do not access any information available to me through Lincolnshire Psychology Services, nor do I share information with them from this role.

Thank you for meeting with me today. I hope you've had time to read the participant letter. Briefly, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of school professionals who have taken part in coaching with a member of the psychology service. There has been a good deal of research into this area already, but I am hoping that through exploring service user's experiences, a greater understanding of coaching in a school context can be gained.

I'd like to reiterate that everything we talk about today is confidential, unless something is raised that indicates harm to yourself or another person. The interview is going to be recorded, this recording will be transcribed by myself, and any identifying information will be removed at this point; your transcript will not be republished or stored in full, but some short quotes may be included in the final thesis write up. After the transcription process, the data will be analysed, themes drawn out, and then the transcript will be destroyed at the point of thesis submission. Please read the GDPR sheet for information about data storage.

Some of the questions I ask might seem unusual or silly. You are free to answer how you please, or not answer at all. There are no trick questions, I am just interested in your authentic experience. During the interview, if

you want to ask me anything, or give a comment or opinion on the process, please feel free at any time.

I'll turn your attention now to the consent forms. Please have a read, and let me know if you have any questions, about the forms or about anything else. I'd also like to double check now, is it OK for me to record this interview?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Debrief

Thank you for answering these questions. Just to remind you, what we have spoken about today is confidential. You can withdraw your consent to take part in this study at any time, and if you do, your data will be destroyed and not included in the project. You can do this by contacting the e-mails on your participant information letter. You can also use the emails to contact me about anything else related to the study; if you have any questions you think of later, if you'd like an update on the project, or if you think of something you'd like to add or remove, for example.

I'll transcribe this interview, removing identifying information as I go, and I'll delete the recording straight after. I'll then analyse the transcript and use this analysis to inform my thesis. The thesis should be completed by September 2023, at which point I am planning to put together a research summary to be shared with participating schools. If you did want to read the full thesis, let me know and I can share a copy.

Thank you again for your time.

## Appendix 8. Intensive interview schedule.

**Background Questions**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your job? What is your role title?
    a. How long have you been a (role title)?
    b. Have you been a (role title) anywhere else?
2. What does being a (role title) mean to you?
    a. What does being a (role title) in (school name) look like?
    b. What kind of people are (role titles)? In (school name)?

**Experience of Coaching**

1. What did your work with (psychologist) involve?
    a. How did it start? End?
    b. How many times did you meet?
    c. What did you do when you met?
    d. Which EBI were you coached in?
2. How were you made aware you would be taking part in coaching?
3. How do you feel about the coaching process? During, after, now?
    a. Can you give one word to summarise?
4. Is there anything that surprised you about your work with (psychologist)?
5. Is there anything that you would have done differently, knowing what you know now?
6. If another person in school was going to take part in coaching with a member of the psychology service, what would you tell them? What would they need to know?

**Use of strategies identified in casework**

1. Can you tell me about your use of (strategy)
    a. When did you start it?
    b. Do you still use it?
2. How do you feel about using (strategy)? Do you think it works?
3. How do you think your work with (AP) affected your use of (strategy)?

**Rich Data Collection**

1. It would be helpful if you can provide any notes, paperwork or planning materials used with the psychologist during your coaching sessions. If you have any, are you happy to provide an anonymised version of them?

**Closing Questions**

1. Is there something else you would like to tell me?
2. Is there anything important that we have missed?
3. Is there anything you would like to clarify or revisit?
4. Do you have any questions for me?

## Appendix 9. Ethics committee acceptance letter.

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

SJ/tp

Ref: **S1435**

Monday 13th June 2022

Dear Cleo Allan and Sofia Hussein,

**Ethics Committee Review**

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research *'Exploring the Use of Coaching to Support Education Paraprofessionals in Delivering Evidence-Based Interventions in School'*

That proposal has now been reviewed and we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

**However:**
**Please note the following comments from our reviewers:**

**Reviewer One:**
- Please ask consent for audio recording
- Risk assessment form requires submission to and discussion with Chris Reinert

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

*Professor Stephen Jackson*
*Chair, Ethics Committee*

## Appendix 10. Amended ethics committee acceptance letter.

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

2nd December 2022

**Ref: S1484 Chair Approval Minor Amendments**

Dear Cleo Allan and Sofia Hussain,

**Title of the new project:**
Title:
Exploring the use of coaching to support education professionals in the support of educational psychologist casework in school
Are you an postgraduate? PGR
**Applicants:** Cleo Allan

Details of Previous Study:
Applicant: Cleo Allan
Title: Exploring the use of coaching to support education paraprofessionals in delivering evidence-based interventions in school
Date of approval: 13/06/2022
Reference number (if known): S1435

As Chair of the Ethics Committee I have considered your request and I am happy to grant approval for the following changes:

List of significant changes in the proposed study. This list should include any changes which could potentially impact on ethical risks of the work e.g. moving from student participants to vulnerable adults; use of sensitive stimulus materials; changes in remuneration or consent procedures:

- No longer excluding participants who hold qualified teacher status – research focus now exploring a wider staff group. No additional ethical issues are identified with this; the same consent and recruitment procedures will be followed.

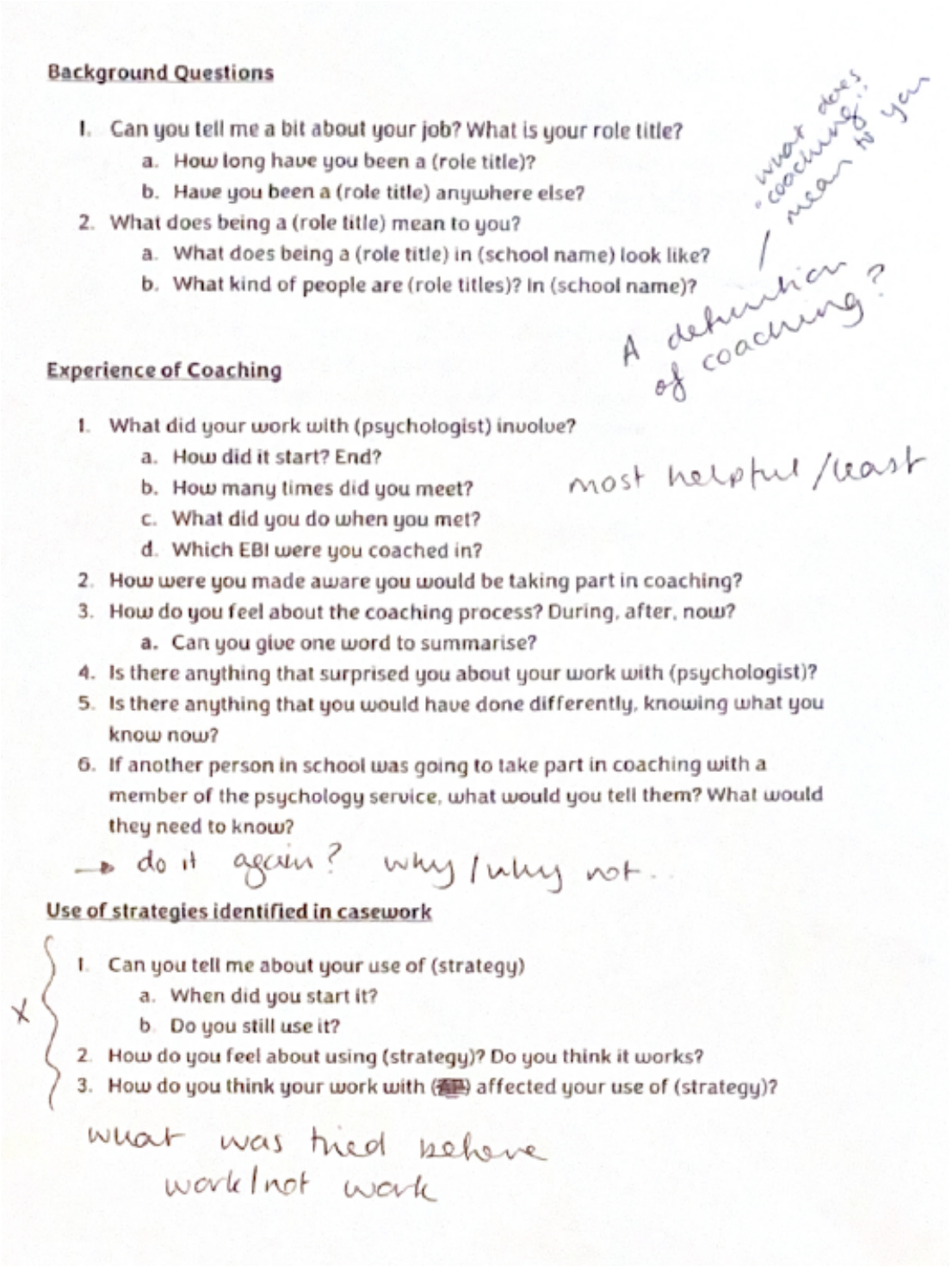
Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

*Professor Stephen Jackson*
*Chair, Ethics Committee*

**Appendix 11. Annotated interview schedule to show development of questions in response to emergent codes and theoretical sampling.**



**Background Questions**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your job? What is your role title?
   a. How long have you been a (role title)?
   b. Have you been a (role title) anywhere else?
2. What does being a (role title) mean to you?
   a. What does being a (role title) in (school name) look like?
   b. What kind of people are (role titles)? In (school name)?

what does coaching mean to you / A definition of coaching?

**Experience of Coaching**

1. What did your work with (psychologist) involve?
   a. How did it start? End?
   b. How many times did you meet?
   c. What did you do when you met?
   d. Which EBI were you coached in?
2. How were you made aware you would be taking part in coaching?
3. How do you feel about the coaching process? During, after, now?
   a. Can you give one word to summarise?
4. Is there anything that surprised you about your work with (psychologist)?
5. Is there anything that you would have done differently, knowing what you know now?
6. If another person in school was going to take part in coaching with a member of the psychology service, what would you tell them? What would they need to know?

most helpful / least

→ do it again? why / why not.

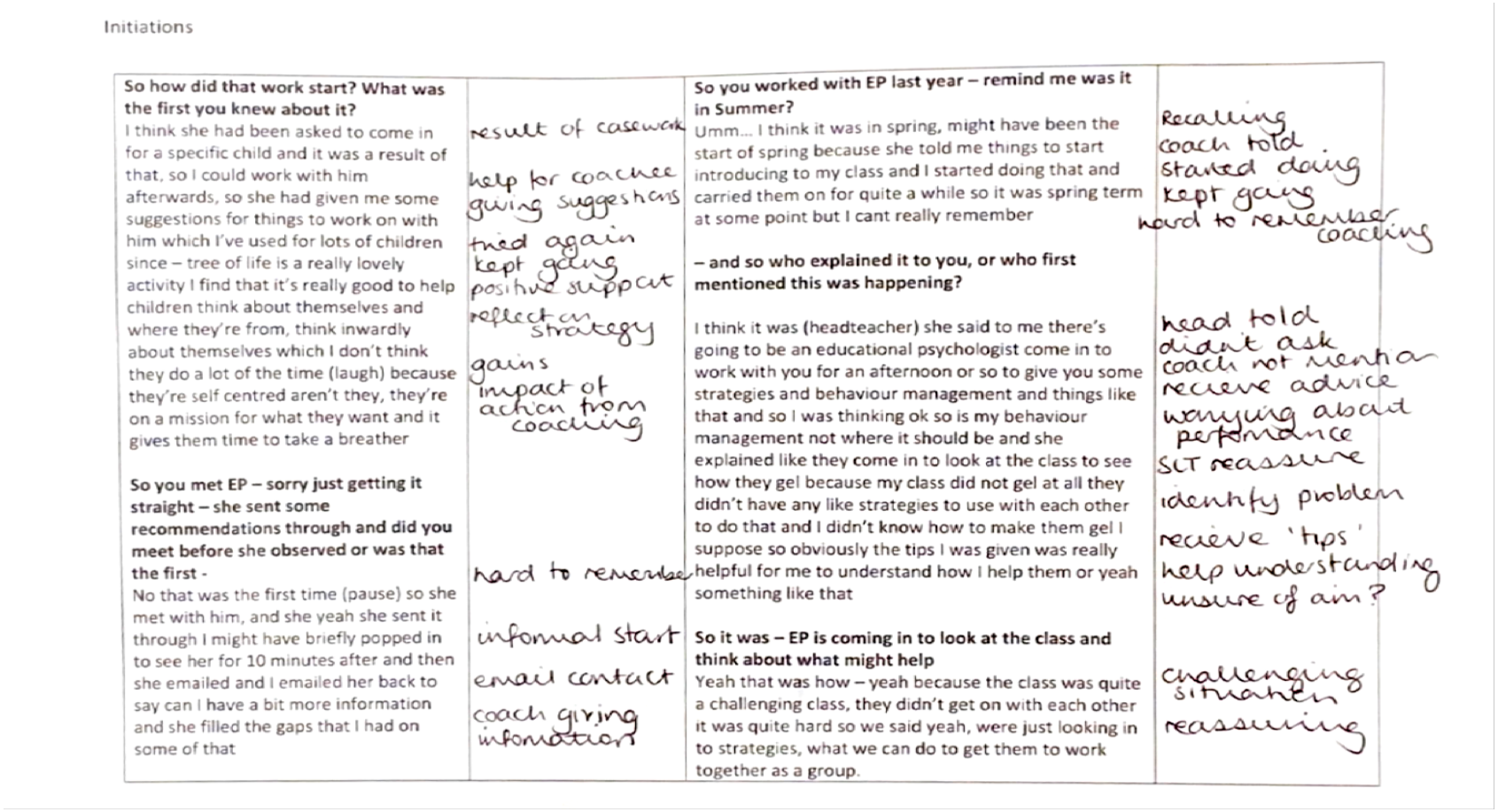
**Use of strategies identified in casework**

X

1. Can you tell me about your use of (strategy)
   a. When did you start it?
   b. Do you still use it?
2. How do you feel about using (strategy)? Do you think it works?
3. How do you think your work with [redacted] affected your use of (strategy)?

what was tried before work / not work

## Appendix 12. Example of coding: Comparing incidents.

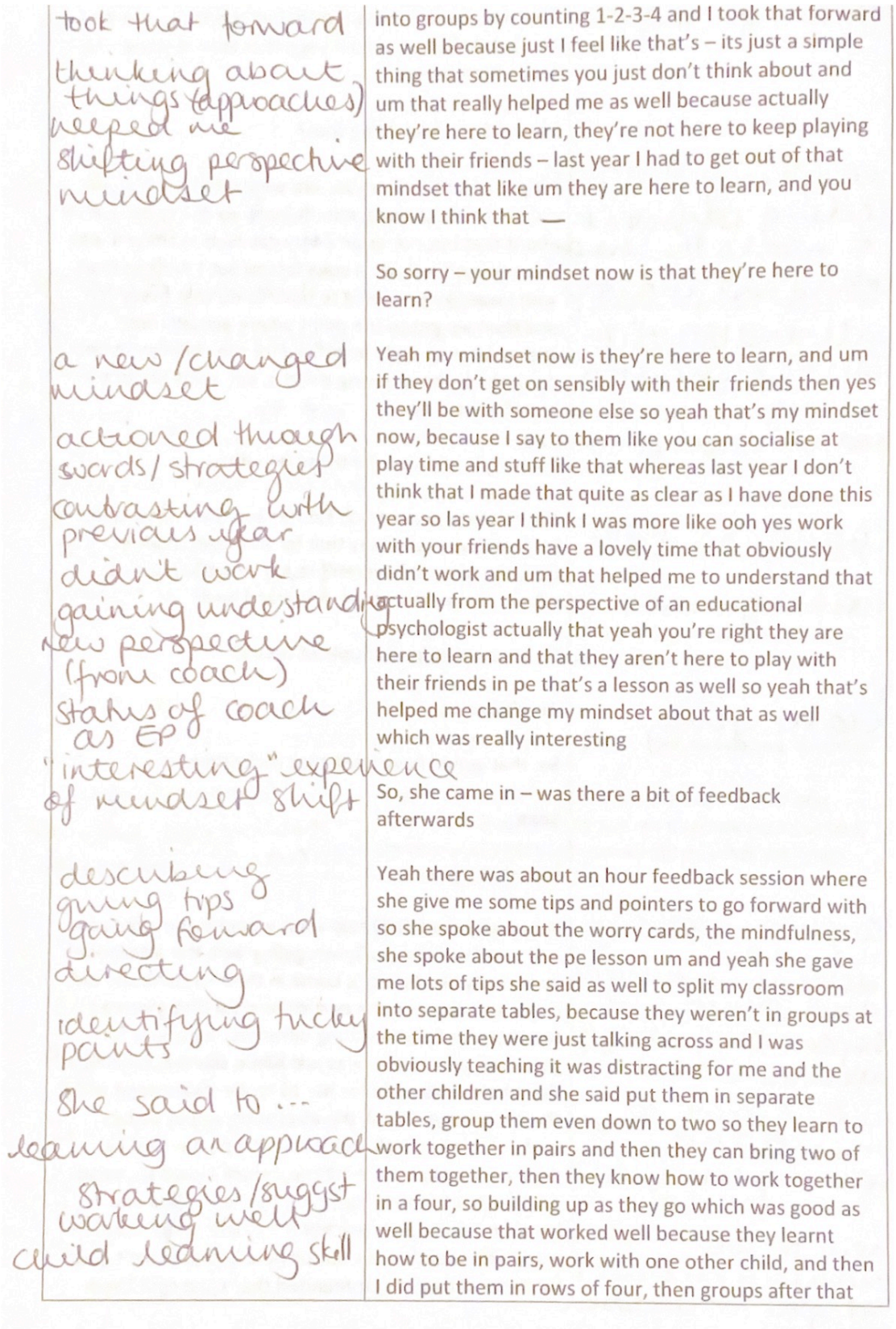


Initiations

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **So how did that work start? What was the first you knew about it?**<br>I think she had been asked to come in for a specific child and it was a result of that, so I could work with him afterwards, so she had given me some suggestions for things to work on with him which I've used for lots of children since – tree of life is a really lovely activity I find that it's really good to help children think about themselves and where they're from, think inwardly about themselves which I don't think they do a lot of the time (laugh) because they're self centred aren't they, they're on a mission for what they want and it gives them time to take a breather<br><br>**So you met EP – sorry just getting it straight – she sent some recommendations through and did you meet before she observed or was that the first -**<br>No that was the first time (pause) so she met with him, and she yeah she sent it through I might have briefly popped in to see her for 10 minutes after and then she emailed and I emailed her back to say can I have a bit more information and she filled the gaps that I had on some of that | result of casework<br>help for coachee<br>giving suggestions<br>tried again<br>kept going<br>positive support<br>reflection<br>strategy<br>gains<br>impact of action from coaching<br>hard to remember<br>informal start<br>email contact<br>coach giving information | **So you worked with EP last year – remind me was it in Summer?**<br>Umm... I think it was in spring, might have been the start of spring because she told me things to start introducing to my class and I started doing that and carried them on for quite a while so it was spring term at some point but I cant really remember<br><br>**– and so who explained it to you, or who first mentioned this was happening?**<br><br>I think it was (headteacher) she said to me there's going to be an educational psychologist come in to work with you for an afternoon or so to give you some strategies and behaviour management and things like that and so I was thinking ok so is my behaviour management not where it should be and she explained like they come in to look at the class to see how they gel because my class did not gel at all they didn't have any like strategies to use with each other to do that and I didn't know how to make them gel I suppose so obviously the tips I was given was really helpful for me to understand how I help them or yeah something like that<br><br>**So it was – EP is coming in to look at the class and think about what might help**<br>Yeah that was how – yeah because the class was quite a challenging class, they didn't get on with each other it was quite hard so we said yeah, were just looking in to strategies, what we can do to get them to work together as a group. | Recalling<br>coach told<br>started doing<br>kept going<br>hard to remember coaching<br><br>head told<br>didn't ask<br>coach not mentioned<br>recieve advice<br>worrying about performance<br>SLT reassure<br>identify problem<br>recieve 'tips'<br>help understanding<br>unsure of aim?<br><br>challenging situation<br>reassuring |

## Appendix 13. Examples of (1) initial coding and (2) focused coding.

1. Initial coding by hand.



took that forward
thinking about things (approaches) helped me
shifting perspective mindset

into groups by counting 1-2-3-4 and I took that forward as well because just I feel like that's – its just a simple thing that sometimes you just don't think about and um that really helped me as well because actually they're here to learn, they're not here to keep playing with their friends – last year I had to get out of that mindset that like um they are here to learn, and you know I think that —

So sorry – your mindset now is that they're here to learn?

a new / changed mindset
actioned through words / strategies
contrasting with previous year
didn't work
gaining understanding
new perspective (from coach)
status of coach as EP
"interesting" experience of mindset shift

Yeah my mindset now is they're here to learn, and um if they don't get on sensibly with their friends then yes they'll be with someone else so yeah that's my mindset now, because I say to them like you can socialise at play time and stuff like that whereas last year I don't think that I made that quite as clear as I have done this year so las year I think I was more like ooh yes work with your friends have a lovely time that obviously didn't work and um that helped me to understand that actually from the perspective of an educational psychologist actually that yeah you're right they are here to learn and that they aren't here to play with their friends in pe that's a lesson as well so yeah that's helped me change my mindset about that as well which was really interesting

So, she came in – was there a bit of feedback afterwards

describing
giving tips
going forward
directing
identifying tricky points
She said to ...
learning an approach
strategies / suggest working well
child learning skill

Yeah there was about an hour feedback session where she give me some tips and pointers to go forward with so she spoke about the worry cards, the mindfulness, she spoke about the pe lesson um and yeah she gave me lots of tips she said as well to split my classroom into separate tables, because they weren't in groups at the time they were just talking across and I was obviously teaching it was distracting for me and the other children and she said put them in separate tables, group them even down to two so they learn to work together in pairs and then they can bring two of them together, then they know how to work together in a four, so building up as they go which was good as well because that worked well because they learnt how to be in pairs, work with one other child, and then I did put them in rows of four, then groups after that

2. Focused coding (using NVivo 12 software).

into groups by counting 1-2-3-4 and I took that forward as well because just I feel like that's – its just a simple thing that sometimes you just don't think about and um that really helped me as well because actually they're here to learn, they're not here to keep playing with their friends – last year I had to get out of that mindset that like um they are here to learn, and you know I think that

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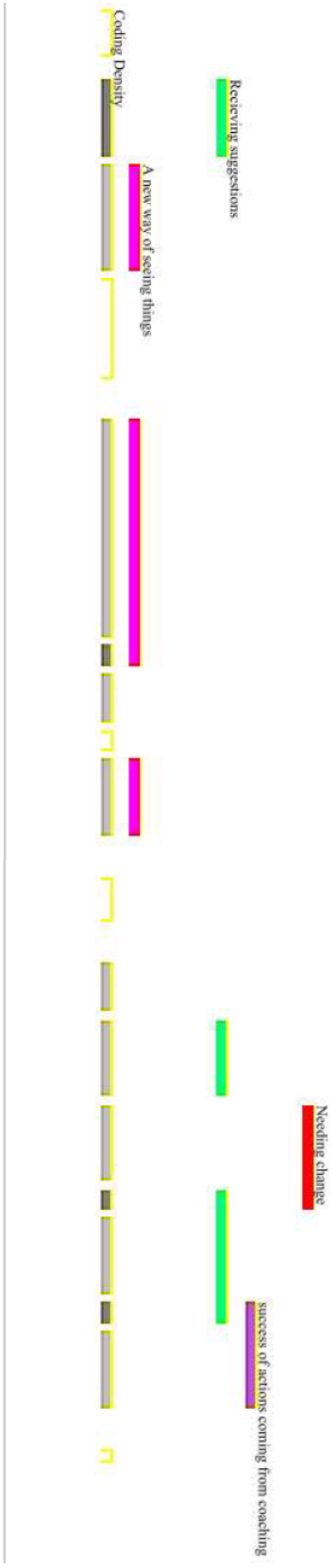
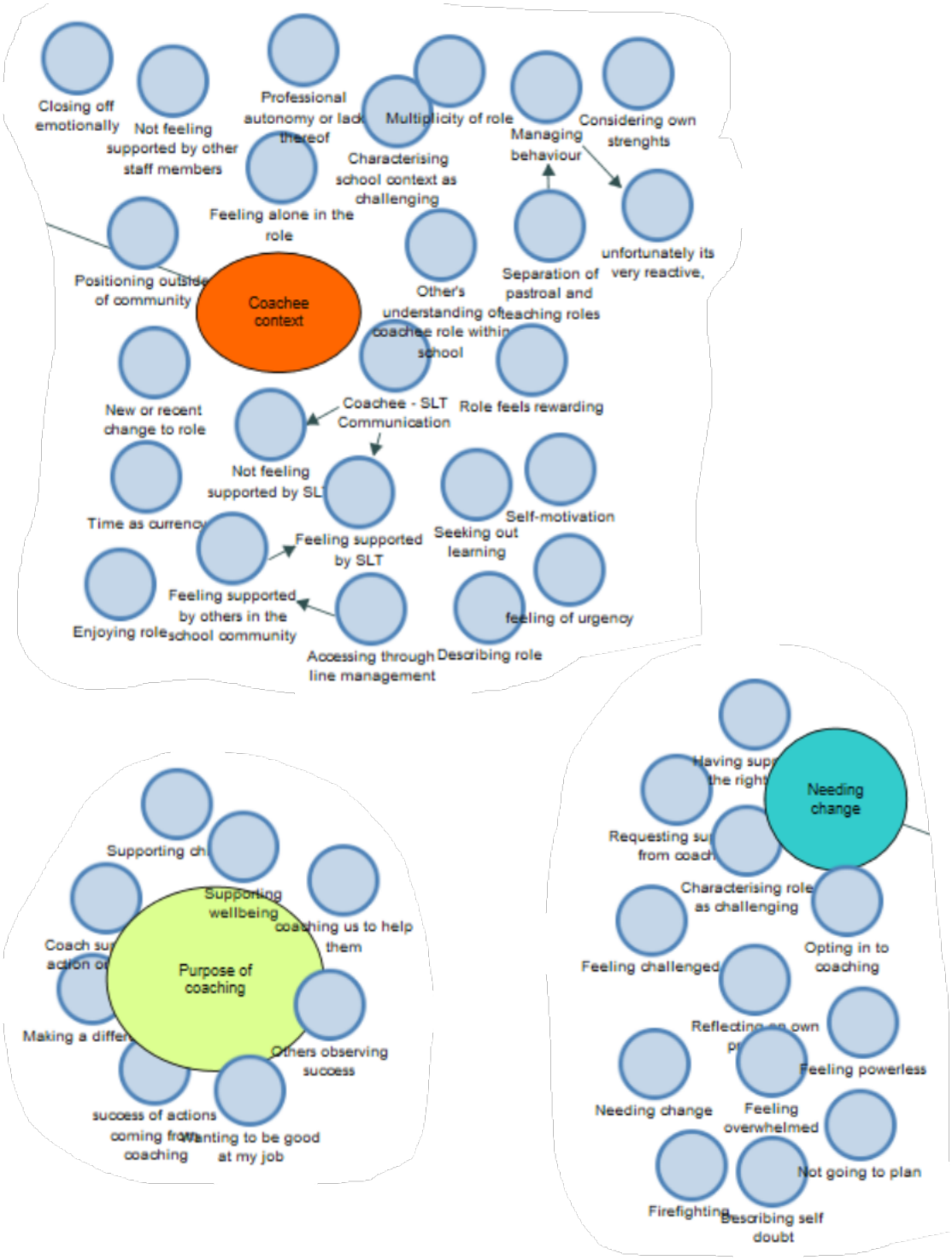
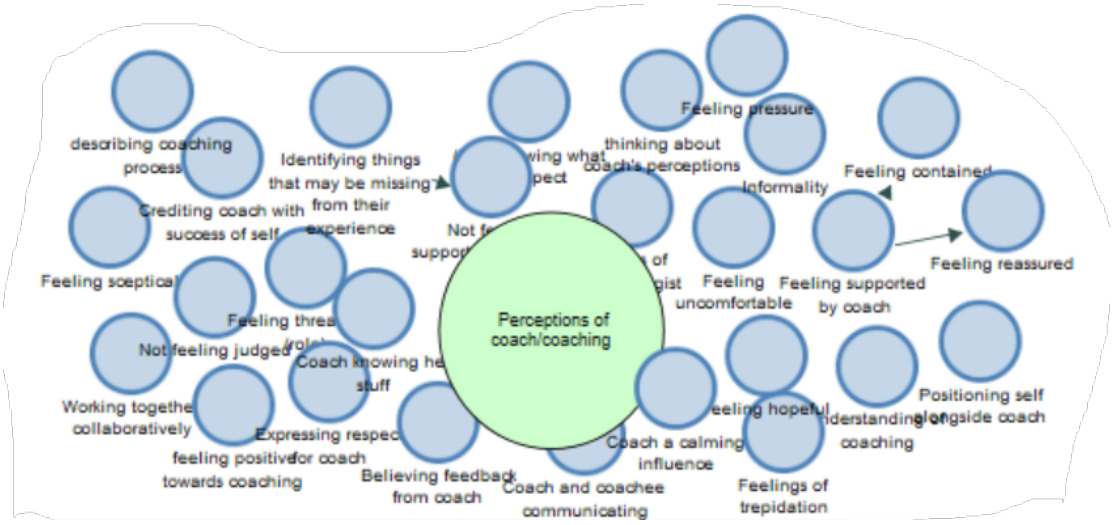
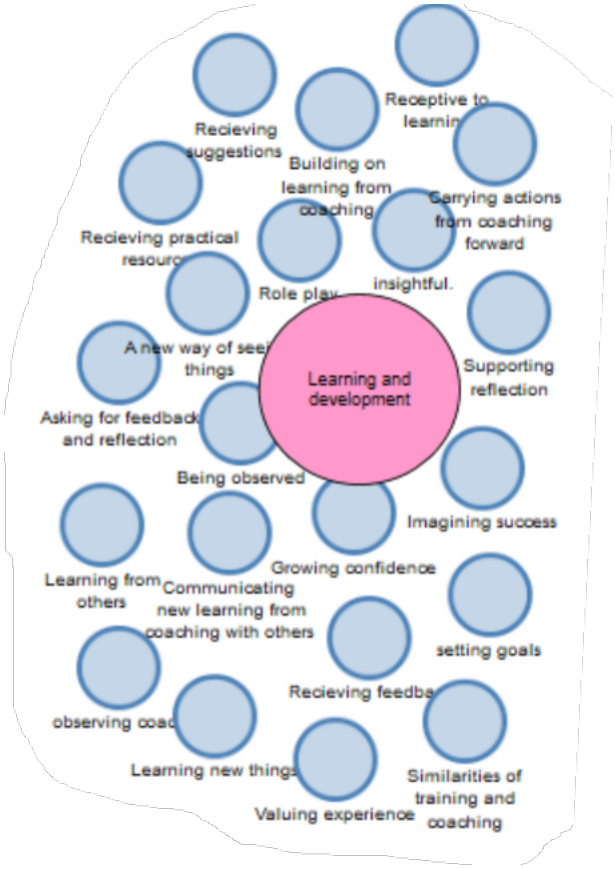


## Appendix 14. Examples of grouping codes to develop categories.

1. Early clustering attempt with accompanying memo





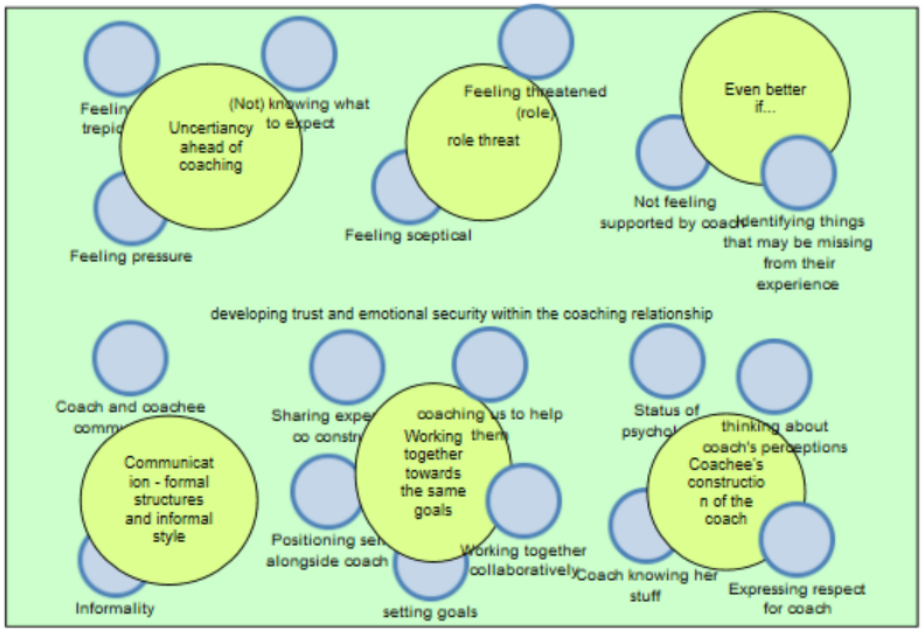



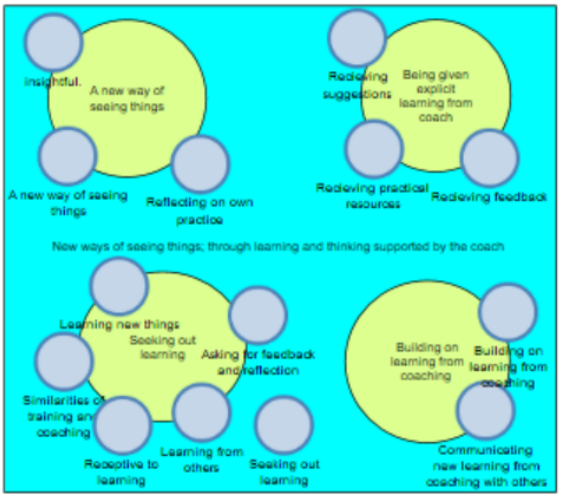

**27/03/2023**

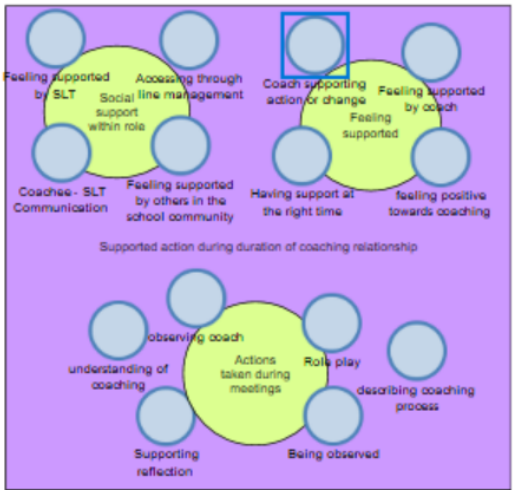
**Memo – Conceptual Value of Map 1**

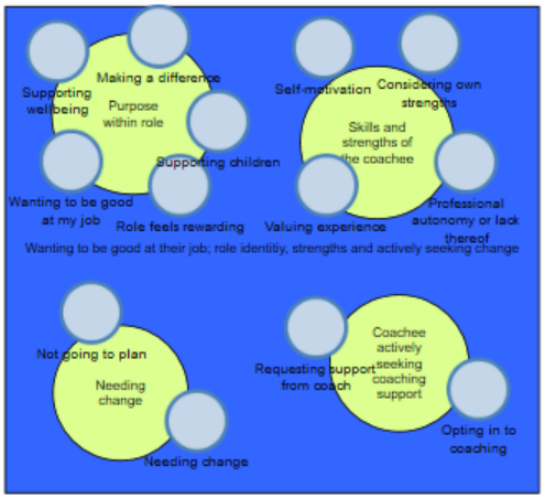
Map 1 feels like the categories are too general with limited conceptual value - surface level properties and actions - except the "coaching us to coach them" -- the other categories seem different to this one - coaching us to coach them suggests and action, and a process, and I wonder if this is where to focus my next mapping attempt. Return to previous sketched memo around processes? Return to focused codes to consider conceptual value – Have I abstracted enough? Am I missing processes?

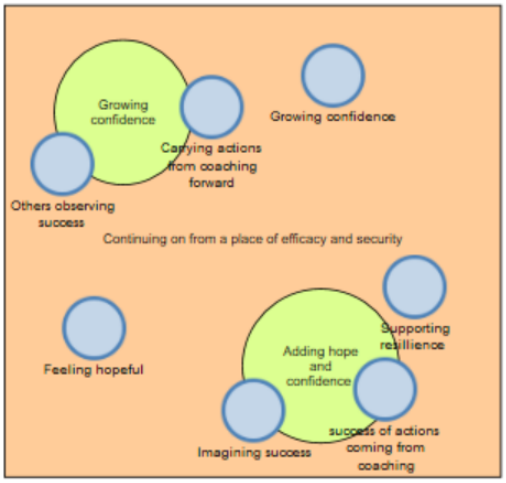
2. Later clustering configurations, following a return to the data and development of final focused codes. This configuration (with some edits) became the final analysis presented in the body of the thesis. The blue circles represent focused codes; yellow circles are final focused codes; and the rectangles represent categories.

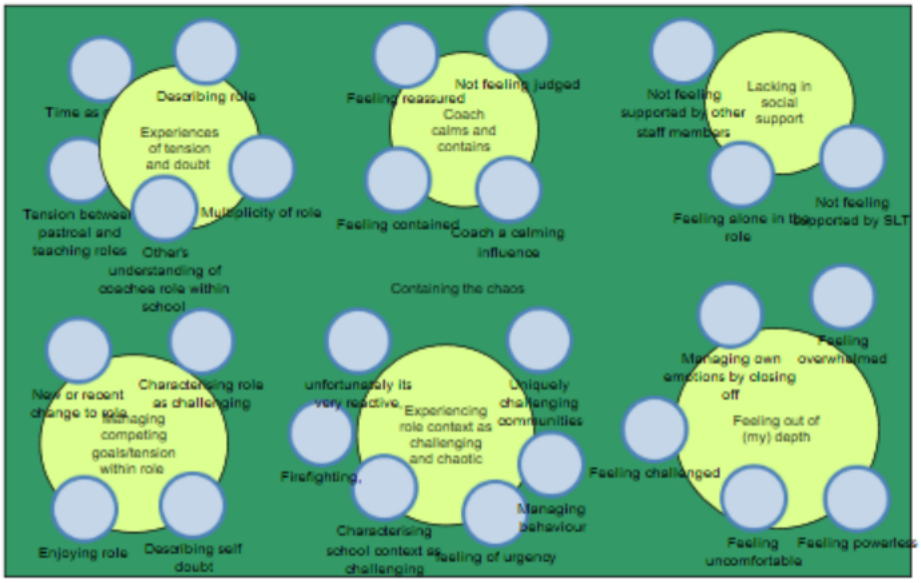


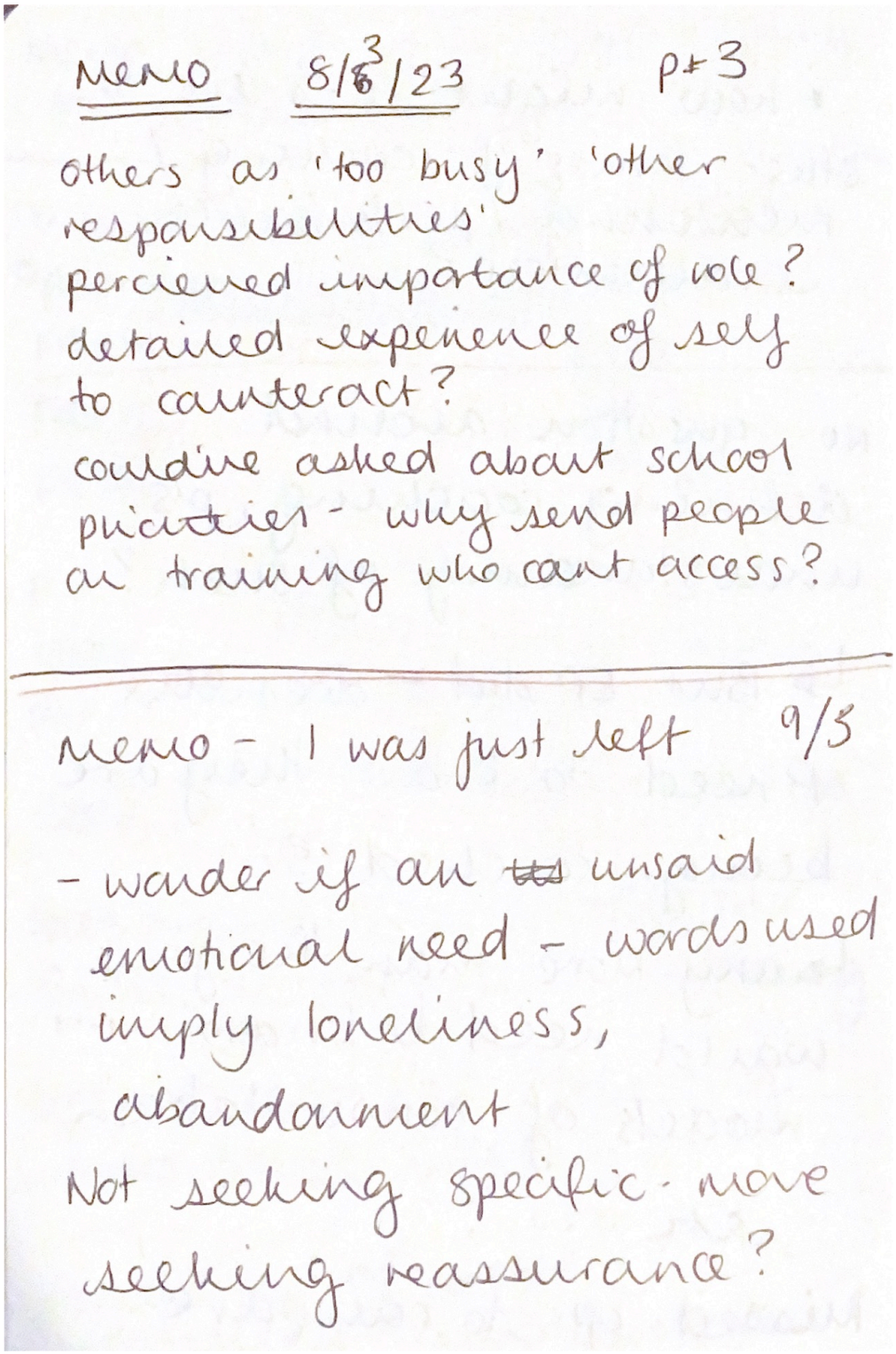

Supporting wellbeing
Making a difference
Purpose within role
Supporting children
Wanting to be good at my job
Role feels rewarding
Self-motivation
Considering own strengths
Skills and strengths of the coachee
Valuing experience
Professional autonomy or lack thereof
Wanting to be good at their job; role identity, strengths and actively seeking change
Not going to plan
Needing change
Needing change
Requesting support from coach
Coachee actively seeking coaching support
Opting in to coaching


Growing confidence
Carrying actions from coaching forward
Others observing success
Growing confidence
Continuing on from a place of efficacy and security
Feeling hopeful
Adding hope and confidence
Supporting resilience
Imagining success
success of actions coming from coaching


Describing role
Experiences of tension and doubt
Multiplicity of role
Others understanding of coachee role within school
Feeling reassured
Not feeling judged
Coach calms and contains
Feeling contained
Coach a calming influence
Containing the chaos
Not feeling supported by other staff members
Lacking in social support
Not feeling supported by SLT
Characterising role as challenging
Managing competing goals/tension within role
Describing self doubt
Experiencing role context as challenging and chaotic
Uniquely challenging communities
Managing behaviour
Feeling of urgency
Managing own emotions by closing off
Feeling out of (my) depth
Feeling challenged
Feeling overwhelmed
Feeling uncomfortable
Feeling powerless

**Appendix 15. Examples of memos, hand-written and typed.**

1. Quickly captured memos during active coding.



MEMO 8/8/23 P+3

others as 'too busy' 'other responsibilities'
perceived importance of role?
detailed experience of self to counteract?
could've asked about school practices - why send people on training who can't access?

---

memo - I was just left 9/3

- wonder if an ~~its~~ unsaid emotional need - words used imply loneliness, abandonment
Not seeking specific - more seeking reassurance?

2. Reflective memos made outside of active coding

**06/04/2023 - Focused Code: Coaching us to help them.**

Coachees recognising the impact that the support has had on the children they work with. Through the coachee changing/acting they perceive the children also being supported. Linking back to the values, what is important, what constitutes role satisfaction, this is likely to raise the coachees internal state of satisfaction with their job role, move them towards their idealised versions of themselves within their role identity. For one participant this seemed to also be a defence mechanism - she felt that she closes off her emotions and redirected any suggestion around her own support towards the children instead. By focusing on the children needing help, is she trying to say she does not need it? This was one who also had a fair bit of role threat relating to her age and the age of the coach.

wanting to do better, be better for the children - I wonder if this is also at the core for the coaches, and thus creates an assumed shared goal?

**30/04/2023 – Narrating the Process**

1. Participants experience a mismatch between their role standard and experience – experiencing disconfirming events, difficult emotions which affect their wellbeing.
   The process of coaching supports a move toward the ideal/role standard.
   This helps to resolve tension but does not affect the environment (much).
2. Participant's self-efficacy is improved through coaching by the psych and others evaluations, the importance of confirmation from one with "expertise status" and motivation/skill use enable experiences and observations (self and others) of success.
3. Motivation to engage in change-making behaviours is supported by the development of the working alliance with the psych – also through supporting the SDT components through increasing relational and competence but NOT decreasing autonomy (returning to collaboration – working alliance feature).
4. Occurring almost passively is the shoring up of wellbeing which may support functioning and positive evaluations of others (may also support a positive, rose-tinted evaluation of the coach?).
5. All together this leads to greater efficacy and wellbeing, allowing continued actions towards role standards, more positive evaluations, and a positive feedback loop.

## Appendix 16. Example of successive memos.

1. First entry relating considers opting-in in one coachee's context. This memo creates an initial code around "opting in". Constant comparative method – previous transcripts are revisited and the code "opting in" is explored across the data set, raising it to a focused code.

**Memo - Focused Code: Opting in to coaching.**

**21/03/2023 -** P3 - TA who enthusiastically chose to take part in Lego Therapy coaching - researched before and signed up is the one who has continued using it in school whereas others who were signed up by the SLT without engaging off their own back have not continued using it - while as P3 notes this may be related to their other job roles in school I wonder if this relates to the participants choosing to take part versus being told - the one other participant who was "told" then did have many weeks to build up the coaching relationship.

---

**06/04/2023**

Where the coaching was offered versus sought out, either way the participants have agreed on some level to engage. No one described being forced into it. Some implied that they couldn't really say no - they were told - but their engagement suggests a willingness to take part and thus are opting in. Coachees as active agents in their own change.

2. Memo begins reflecting on autonomy for coachees 1-3, considering how this affects the first three, followed by an updated recording of thoughts following initial coding of all transcripts.

**Memo – Professional Autonomy**

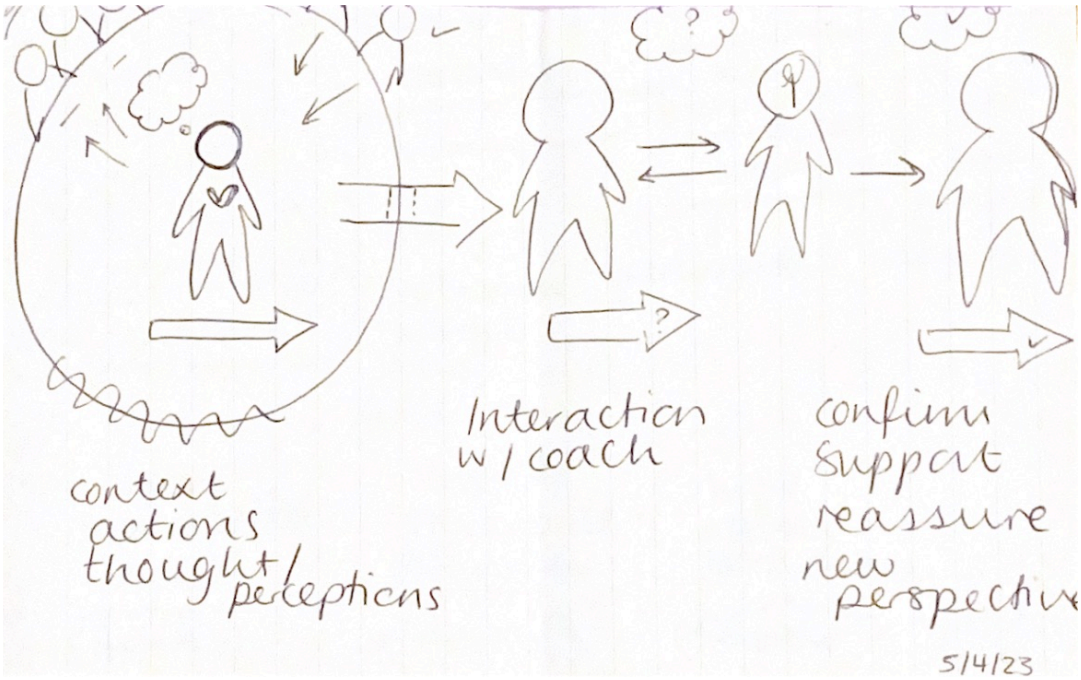
**20/03/2023 –** Participants 1-3 have similar job roles on the face of it – operating in a room separate to the main class, supporting emotional wellbeing and behaviour – different contexts- but with little direct instruction from SLT – but all describe their role with varying levels of autonomy – P1 uses passive language (sent to me – tell me come and get them), whereas P3 talks about planning, reviews, and P2 is somewhere in between – possible reflection on ELSA training status?

---

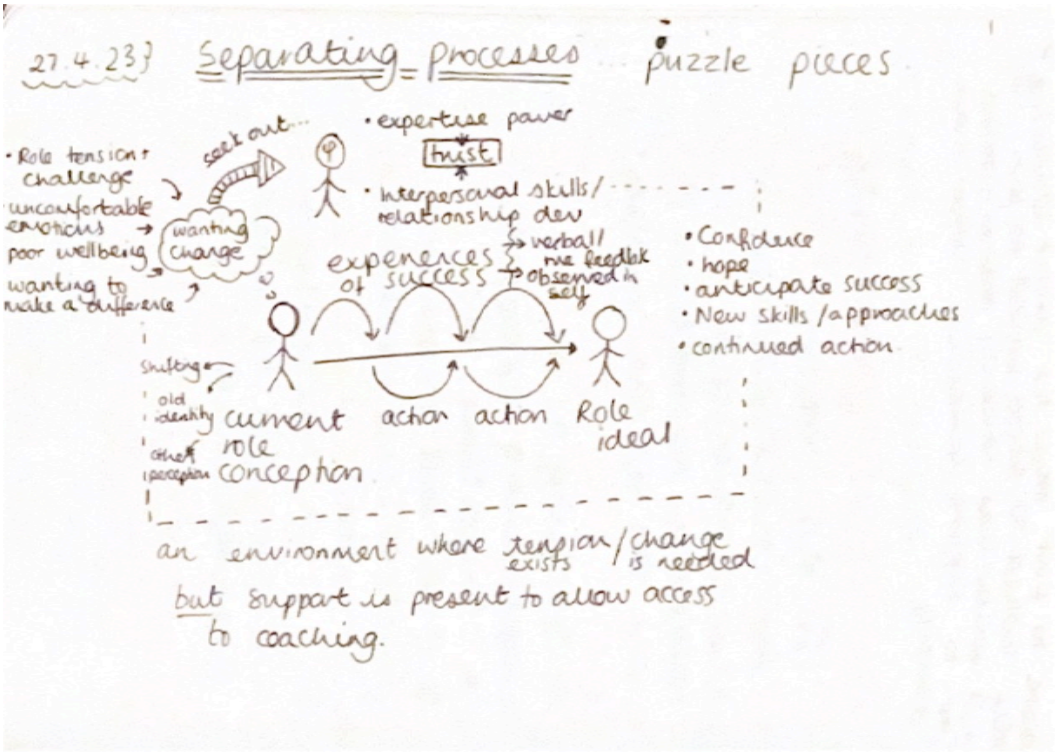
**08/04/2023 -** Participants described varying levels of professional autonomy in their role, but all described some level of such. For some this is fairly new (e.g., ELSA roles) - I suppose everyone has some autonomy in some way in their role but the participants were not micro-managed - many set their own intervention schedules or were able to make choices which were not strictly aligned with school policy (P5). Could having less of this - or feeling less of this - have affected coaching? It is hard to say that this is a pre-requisite as there were no participants to compare to who felt no autonomy - likely that this is known within the psychologists too, and that they may not recommend such in that situation. Participants felt they had autonomy to some degree, which may have been affected by funding, resources, etc. but this puts them in a place of control over their actions and in a position to make changes to better their situation.

## Appendix 17. Examples of successive diagrams to support analysis and development of the model.

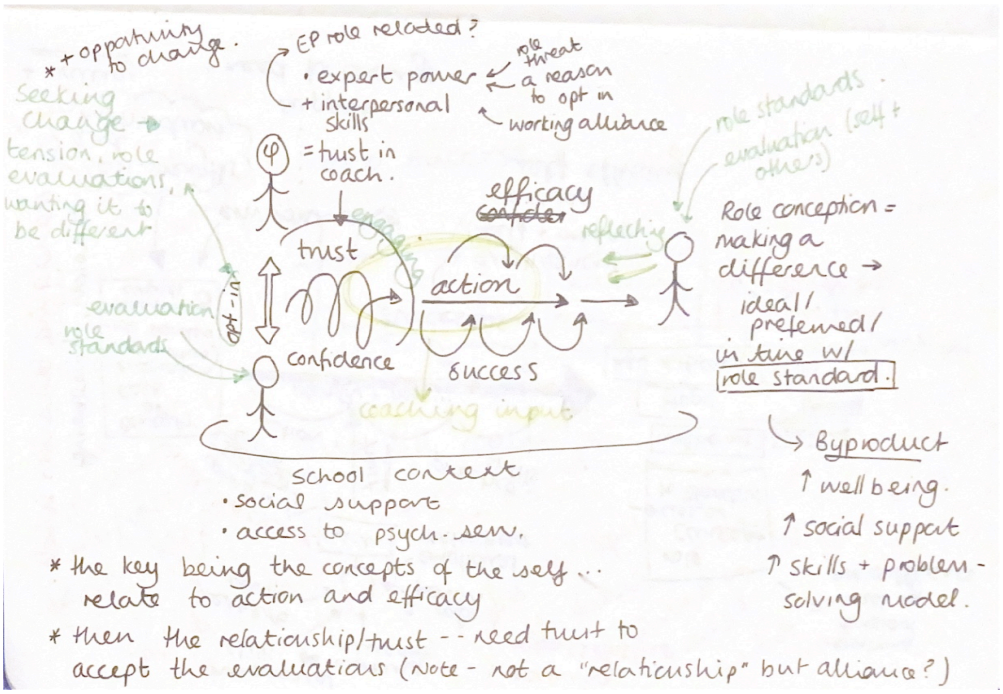
1. Early example of the three “phases”, elements of the school context enveloping the first phase, interaction with coach, and arrival at a new experience of their context.



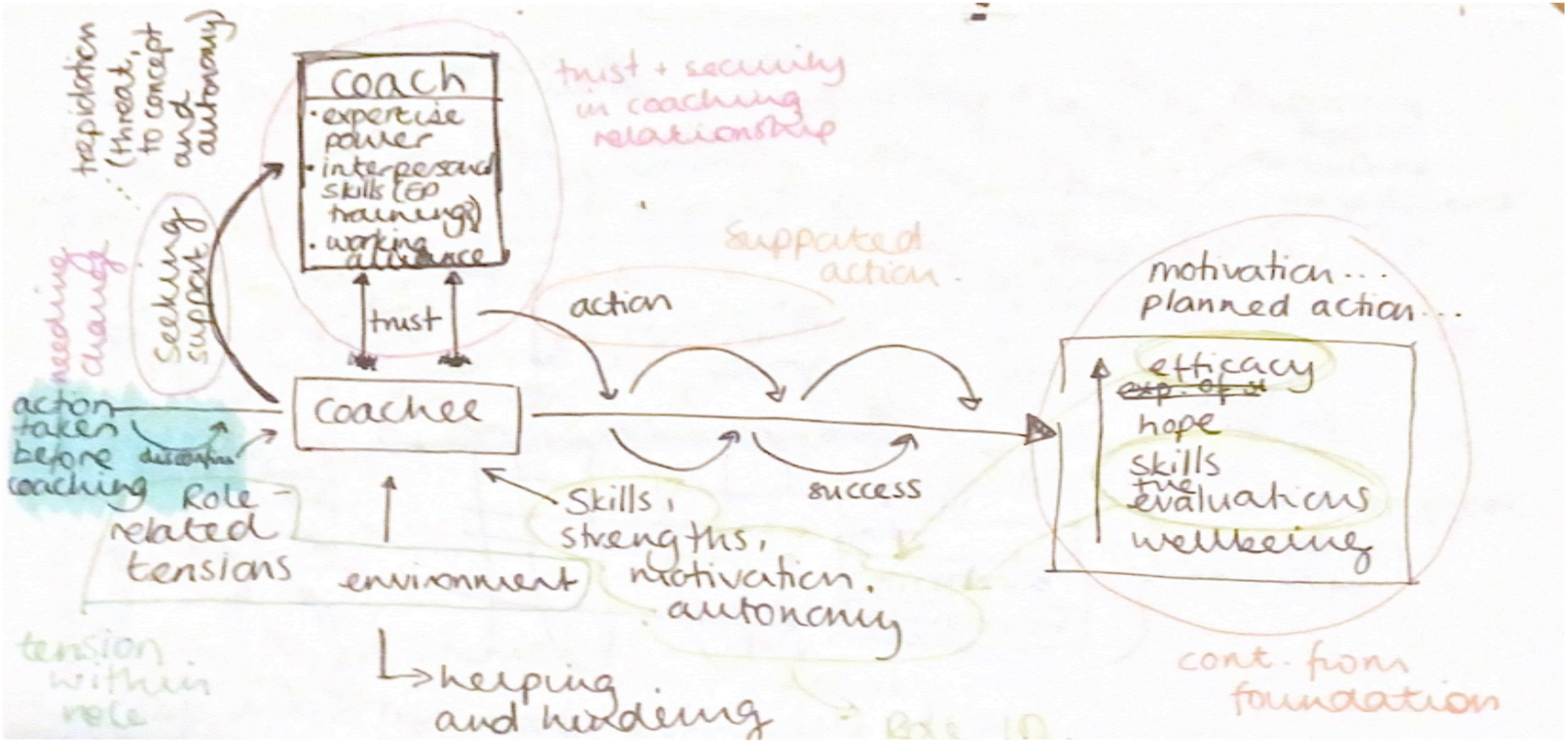
2. Exploring processes using the previous 3 phase framework seen in (1).



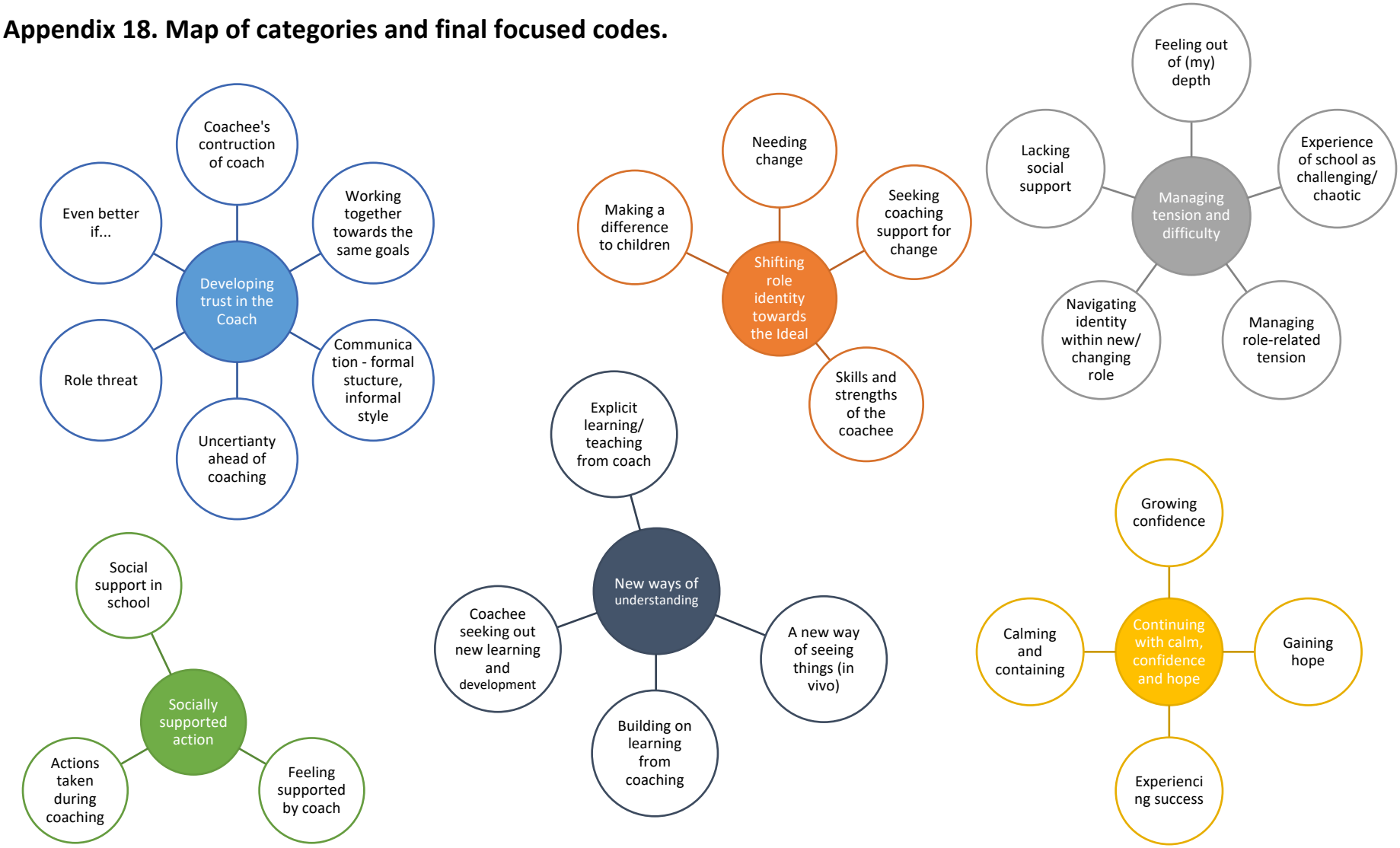

3. Elaboration of (2).



4. Elaboration of (3) with categories and focused codes identified.



## Appendix 18. Map of categories and final focused codes.



**Appendix 19. Table to show the focused codes, final focused codes, and categories developed through analysis.**

| Category | Final Focused Category | Focused Category |
|---|---|---|
| Developing trust in the coach | Coachee's construction of the coach | Coach knowing her stuff (in vivo)<br>Status of the psychologist<br>Expressing respect for the coach<br>Thinking about the coach's perceptions of the coachee |
| | Working together towards the same goals (in vivo) | Working collaboratively<br>Cultivating a shared experience<br>Setting goals<br>Coaching us to help them (in vivo)<br>Positioning self alongside coach |
| | Communication – formal structure and informal style | Informality<br>Coach and coachee communicating |
| | Uncertainty ahead of coaching | Feeling pressure<br>Not knowing what to expect<br>Feelings of trepidation |
| | Role threat | Role threat/anxiety<br>Feeling sceptical<br>Uncertainty |

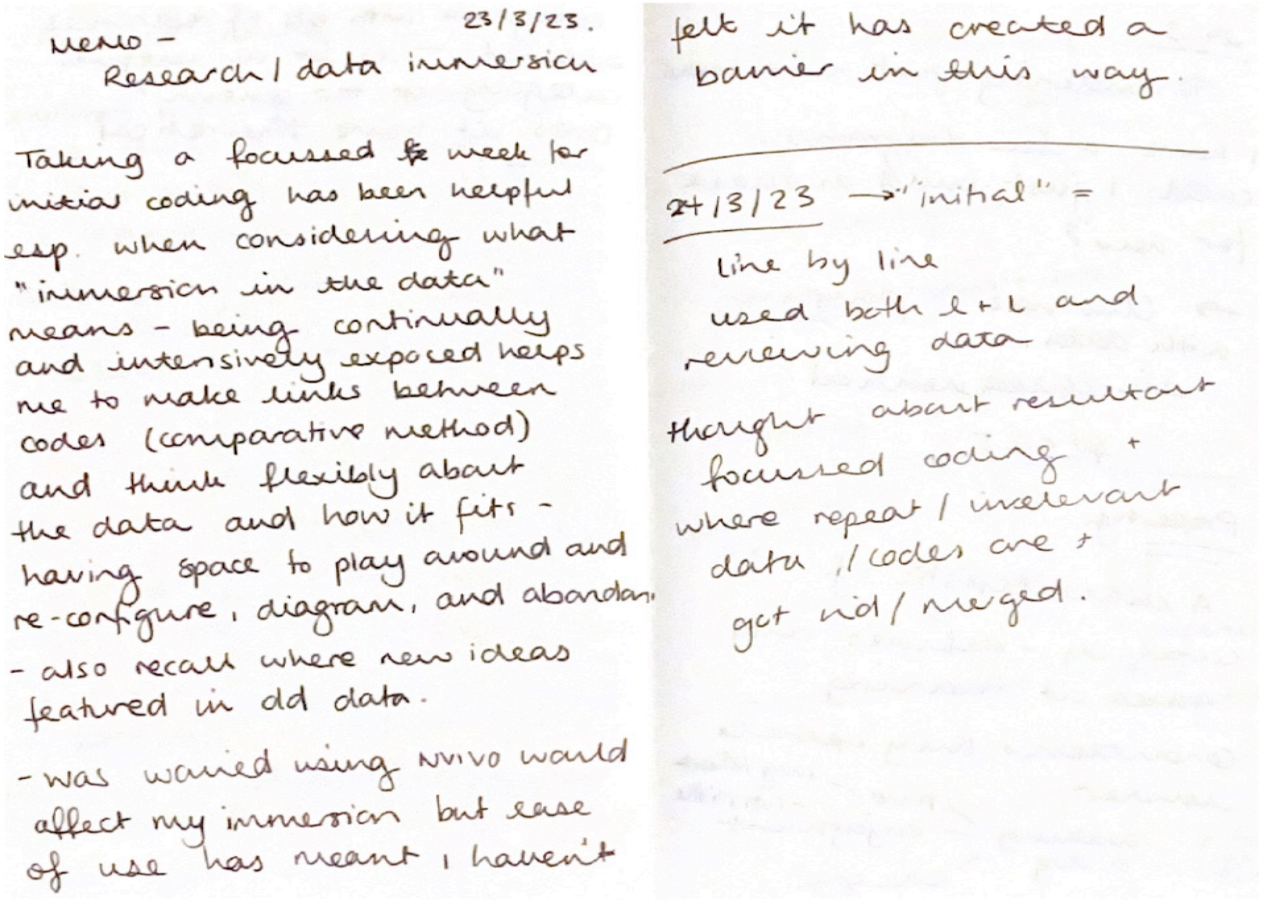
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Even better if… | Not feeling supported by coach<br>Identifying components which may be missing from their experience<br>activities they felt would have been helpful |
| Shifting role identity towards the ideal | Needing change | Things not going to plan<br>Needing change |
| | Coachee actively seeking coaching support | Opting-in<br>Requesting specifics from coach |
| | Skills and strengths of the coachee | Describing their strengths<br>Self-motivation<br>Professional autonomy<br>Valued experiences |
| | Making a difference | Making a difference<br>Wanting to be good at (my) job<br>Role feels rewarding<br>Supporting wellbeing<br>Supporting children |
| Managing tension and difficulties | Feeling out of their depth; difficult feelings relating to role | Feeling overwhelmed<br>Feeling uncomfortable<br>Managing emotions by turning them off<br>Feeling powerless<br>Feeling challenged |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Experiencing the school context as challenging and/or chaotic | Reactivity and Firefighting<br>Feelings of urgency<br>Managing behaviour<br>Uniquely challenging community circumstances<br>Characterising the school context as uniquely challenging |
| | Managing role related tension | Describing role<br>Multiplicity of role; wearing many hats<br>Other's (mis)understanding of the role<br>Tension between pastoral and academic demands<br>Not having enough time |
| | Navigating role identity within a new/change to role | Doubting the self and skills; "Am I doing this right?"<br>New or recent change to role<br>Enjoying the role<br>Characterising the role as challenging |
| | Lacking social support | Not feeling supported by senior leadership team<br>Not feeling support from others in school community<br>Feeling division and rift<br>Feeling alone in the role<br>Just me doing the whole school (in vivo) |
| New Ways of Understanding | Explicit learning/teaching activities from coach | Receiving suggestions<br>Receiving feedback from observations<br>Receiving practical resources<br>Verbal feedback |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | A new way of seeing things (in vivo) | Gaining insight<br>Reflecting of practice<br>A new way of seeing things (in vivo) |
| | Building on learning from coaching | Building on learning<br>adapting practice<br>Sharing new ideas<br>learning with others |
| | Coachee seeking out new learning and development | Asking for feedback and reflection<br>Similarities of training and coaching<br>Seeking out learning (own time)<br>Seeking out learning (professional)<br>Learning from others<br>Learning new things<br>Receptive and open to learning<br>Receiving suggestions |
| Socially supported action | Social support in school | Accessing coaching through line management<br>Communication with senior leadership<br>Feeling supported in action by senior leadership<br>Feeling supported by others in social network |
| | Feeling supported by coach | Coach supporting specific action or change<br>Feeling supported by the coach<br>Having support at the right time<br>Feeling positive towards coaching |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | Actions taken during coaching | Coach supporting reflection<br>Role play<br>Understanding of coaching<br>Describing coaching process<br>Observing coach<br>Being observed |
| Continuing with calm, confidence, and hope | Gaining hope | Feeling hopeful about the future<br>Supporting resilience |
| | Growing confidence | Feeling more confident than before the involvement<br>Carrying actions from coaching forward |
| | Experiencing success | Others observing coachee's successes.<br>Imagining future success<br>Observing the success of actions from coaching |
| | Calming and containing | A calming influence<br>Feeling reassured<br>Relaxing<br>A voice of reason<br>Putting at ease<br>Decompressing |

**Appendix 20. Examples of reflexive entries within research diary.**



23/3/23.

MEMO –
Research / data immersion

Taking a focussed ~~1~~ week for initial coding has been helpful esp. when considering what "immersion in the data" means – being continually and intensively exposed helps me to make links between codes (comparative method) and think flexibly about the data and how it fits – having space to play around and re-configure, diagram, and abandon.
– also recall where new ideas featured in dd data.
– was worried using NVivo would affect my immersion but ease of use has meant I haven't felt it has created a barrier in this way.

---

24/3/23 → "initial" =

Line by line
used both L + L and reviewing data

thought about resultant focussed coding + where repeat / irrelevant data / codes are + got rid / merged.