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'Two sides of the same coin?' Coaching & mentoring and the agentic role of context

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Short Title: Two Sides of the Same Coin

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Abstract

This article depicts and interrogates the claims for seeing coaching & mentoring as being distinct from each other, and rather suggests that context is agentic in determining which aspects of these two helping orientations are likely to be used by practitioners. To start with, this article traces the development of coaching and mentoring as two separate discourses. Traditionally, coaching has been associated with a shorter-term performance focus with the coach portrayed as a process rather than content knowledge-based expert. In contrast, mentoring has a longer term, holistic focus where the mentor has direct experience and knowledge of the setting that the mentee is operating in. Then we discuss some limitations of seeking conceptual distinctiveness in purely theoretical terms, including accentuating differences of practices that cannot easily be disentangled from each other in practice. Therefore, on the basis of a case study where coaching and mentoring behaviours are used by leaders and managers, we argue that context plays an agentic role and influences which of the helping orientations is used by practitioners. We conclude that, context being multifaceted, it leads to a kaleidoscope of coaching/mentoring behaviors, which supports a practice-based approach to the debate.

Introduction

Whilst coaching and mentoring are often mentioned in the same context or even the same sentence, there are, for some people, some important similarities and differences to consider. Indeed, as Clutterbuck argues[1], coaching and mentoring have traditionally been intended as different and distinct helping relationships for different purposes and for different people. Conflating them is unhelpful as it does not recognise those differences, and this neglect raises both a conceptual and practical problem. A conceptual lack of clarity about what both coaching and mentoring are has practical implications for those seeking to use these skills and behaviours within work organisations. This is because the lack of clarity runs the risk of creating confusion (a) in the minds of those purchasing such services and (b) in the minds of scheme participants as to what behaviours they should be engaging with. In turn, this confusion could lead to disengagement with these helping processes if they fail to meet the expectations of those using them. Therefore those writing on both coaching and mentoring have sought to respond to this by trying to provide greater clarity about each practice by contrasting them.

A common way to seek this conceptual clarity is to develop clear and distinct theoretical definitions of mentoring and coaching. This has the virtue of providing academics and practitioners with clear boundaries around each activity and is presented as vital to assess the benefit or utility of coaching[2] and mentoring[3].

Therefore, our article first explores coaching and mentoring as separate discourses, identifying a set of key dimensions in each discourse (see Figure 1).

However, seeking conceptual distinctiveness in purely theoretical terms has some limitations, including accentuating differences of practices that cannot easily be disentangled from each other in practice. Therefore, we explore this practical issue using a case study example of where coaching and mentoring behaviours are used by leaders and managers. On the basis of this, we argue that, rather than seeking to decouple coaching practice from mentoring practice, it is more helpful to recognise the fundamental interconnectedness of the two. Indeed, doing so, as we will show, allows scheme participants to draw on a range of different helping behaviours - some more traditionally associated with coaching and some more traditionally associated with mentoring – in order to meet developmental challenges. We conclude that context plays an agentic role in determining which aspects of these two helping orientations are likely to be used by practitioners when faced with significant challenges when working in their organisations.

We will now, in turn, explore coaching and mentoring discourses, in order to understand and examine what helping behaviours are traditionally associated with each label. Our purpose in doing so is to be able to distil, from this analysis, the key characteristics of these behaviours as well as some understanding of which contextual factors have most effect on the efficacy of these behaviours. Nevertheless, we recognise that this analysis only represents a selective snapshot of these two discourses and that, like all discourses, they are subject to change.

Coaching Discourse(s)

The amount of organizations claiming to use coaching as a learning and development tool has risen dramatically, with claims being made regarding improved leadership skills and enhanced job performance[4]. However, how coaching is defined and constituted seems to differ considerably. This is well illustrated by Sansur & Parente's[5] study of 20 experts in coaching who work in Portugal. Their research reveals a relative lack of consensus around how coaching might be defined although they agree that there is some consensus in terms of its benefits for organisations and its focus on the person. Despite this current breadth and variety of coaching models, we argue that there are some core characteristics that link these approaches together. In order to identify these, we will start by examining the roots of coaching discourse.

In terms of the historical roots, Garvey, Stokes & Megginson[6] claim that the earliest uses of the term 'coaching' in the English language can be traced to 1849 in Thackeray's novel Pendennis.

Following Thackeray's publication, the term 'coaching' seems to have been associated with supporting university students and academic attainment. For example, Smedley[7] (p. 240–1) writes:

'Besides the regular college tutor, I secured the assistance of what, in the slang of the day, we irreverently termed 'coach', which vehicle for the conveyance of heavy learning (from himself to his pupils), consisted of a gentleman, who but few years older than those whom he taught, possessed more practical knowledge, and a greater aptitude for the highest scientific research, than it had ever before been my fate to meet with combined in one individual. Under his able tuition I advanced rapidly, and reading men began to look upon me somewhat as a formidable rival.'

It is not clear why the term was regarded as irreverent but here is a direct historical link to rapid **performance improvement** and academic attainment through coaching. In modern day coaching, this is a feature of what Western[8] has referred to as the Managerialist Discourse on coaching, which focuses on the performance and utility of coaching in the modern workplace. Furthermore, in securing the assistance of a tutor, this suggests a more **formal** relationship, which today takes the forms of a clear paid contract of what services are to be provided. Whilst there is emphasis on the expert academic knowledge that the coach possesses, the tuition **process** is the vehicle through which the coachee acquires similar content expertise.

In a similar way, the term 'coaching' was used extensively in association with the development of boating and rowing skills as well as to enhance performance in these activities[9]. For example, the Evening Standard, on 14 February 1867, reported the crew 'being coached by Mr. F. Willan and Mr. G. Morrison, from the former gentleman's steamboat.' And, the Manchester Guardian, on 28 March 1885, reported: 'A thoroughly clever coach was able to advise them from first to last. Under his careful tuition the crew have improved steadily.' Also associated with boating in 1889 the Daily News, on 29 January, commented on the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race: 'The President superintended the coaching from horseback.'

There is comment in the 1866 edition of the London Review, on 18 August (180/1) (in Oxford Reference Online, 2006), which says: 'The coach and the coachee can soothe their consciences by the reflection.' This is a very interesting reference for two reasons. First, it is probably the first recorded use of the term 'coachee' to describe the focus of the coach's activity. Second, the emphasis on reflection contrasts with the rather more didactic stance of the previous citations associated with coaching. This perhaps places this version of coaching within what Western[10] has captured with the 'Soul Guide discourse' term. Nevertheless, there is still emphasis on performance, services offered and process expertise.

Another interesting piece of work on the historical roots of coaching is Stec's[11]. His critical review of coaching history resonates strongly with Garvey, Stokes & Megginson's[12] work. Like them, Stec reflected on how understanding the historical roots of coaching can be helpful in explaining what coaching means to organisations and to organisational life. As a result of his analysis, he identified five characteristics that he sees as being common to coaching:

1. Its post-technological nature - what it means to be a coach is argued to have shifted from being about an object (a form of travel) to being a human process, which focuses on personal **growth** and development.
2. Its impure nature - coaching draws from a mixture of different disciplines and is hybrid in nature and was therefore considered tainted/ impure as a result.
3. The importance of **reciprocity** - the recognition of the roots of coaching as being concerned with cooperation of bodies in teams and the interdependent relationships between leaders and followers in such teams/ groups
4. Extremes - the recognition that effective coaching involves those involved seeking to work at the outer boundaries of their competences so as to improve performance beyond its original limit
5. Aesthetics - the recognition that coaching is intrinsically related to the notion of beautifully executed **performance** and an acknowledgment of this as an embodied/ felt experience.

In exploring these characteristics, Stec makes an interesting point about the technological roots of coaching, in particular. He argues that "the evolution of this technology stands in stark contrast"[13] (p. 433) to negative visions in films and literature about how technology would increasingly disconnect us from our humanity. In this case, coaching has evolved from a transport technology to enable people to reach their physical destinations, to one where it is "now a soft management practice, encouraging self-development, growth and independence" (op cit). In other words, this transformation has gone in the opposite direction to that seen in information technology (see Zuboff[14] for an in depth discussion of this), from where machines replaces human activity, to one where human processes have replaced technology and machines, in a sense. Technology and machines, as discussed here, would include manpower saving devices such as coaches for transportation but would also include information technological devices such as computers, smart phones and other such vehicles for human communication. In terms of capturing the essence of the discourse of coaching, it is therefore important to recognise its post technological nature as a human, developmental process. However, as Garvey, Stokes & Megginson [15] have argued, this is not to suggest that information technology does not play a role in coaching theory and practice- very much the contrary. Nevertheless, it means that such technology might be seen as the channel by which such development is delivered rather than the substance of what is delivered. In developing all of these criteria, Stec argued that they help us better understand what coaching is, given its impure, hybrid nature.

To summarise, then, coaching has its roots in the sixteenth century in terms of the original technological object of the coach. The development of expert coachmen, used to make the coach work effectively, marks the beginning of the transition of coaching as being a process for managing a team of horses and a coach, to one where the human process comes more to the fore[16]. The coach's process expertise in facilitating coaching conversations seems to mirror that of the coachmen

managing the team of horses to work co-operatively so as to move towards a given destination. The modern day coach, therefore, can be seen to have a **distinctive skill set** which enables personal **change** and **development** to take place. As Garvey, Stokes & Megginson[17] have argued, the term began to be used more in relation to the development of others, first in education, but then in sport and finally in organisational life more generally. However, following Stec[18], we argue that there some fundamental characteristics of coaching that seem to link together across otherwise disparate arenas. These are the recognition of **process expertise**, **contracting** and the expectation of a specific **behavioural change** taking place. This process expertise is often evidenced with a university-based **qualification i**n coaching[19]. We will now move on to conduct a similar analysis of the discourse on mentoring.

Mentoring Discourse(s)

A number of writers have pointed to Homer's epic poem, The Odyssey, as being the starting point for mentoring (see Garvey, Stokes & Megginson[20] for an examination of this debate). This refers to the role that Mentor, an advisor to King Odysseus, plays in the development of the King's son, Telemachus. Through a series of challenges posed to him by the Mentor, as well as an initiatory voyage, Telemachus experiences life to find an answer to his questions. This story lays the ground for the educational roots of mentoring, portrayed as a development journey, which emphasizes the role of experiential learning in mentoring[21]. The mentor is often a more experienced person who takes care of a protégé, often based on a voluntary informal basis.

The age of this narrative (The Odyssey was written approximately 3000 years ago) certainly has played a role in granting credibility to mentoring itself as an established helping relationship (Garvey[22] in Clutterbuck et al[23]). However, writers such as Colley[24] have taken a more critical approach to the poem, questioning how issues, such as gender role representation, are treated within the text, hence sounding a note of caution on how appropriate it is to make links between modern mentoring and its ancient roots. This is because, like Garvey[25], Colley[26] argues that modern writers on mentoring make selective use of the Odyssey, emphasising the benevolent behaviours of Mentor. Colley, in particular, argues that the less palatable aspect of the story - portraying sexism and violence - are excluded from modern treatment. Nevertheless, there is a clear emphasis on one-to-one personal development, drawing explicitly on the **experience** of a wiser, older individual who is able to act as sounding board to Telemachus, to enable him to make decisions about the future of his kingdom and his role within it.

Gray, Garvey and Lane[27] have sought to trace the roots of mentoring through more recent writings in the 18th Century and pointing to how they may provide a more reliable touchstone to modern mentoring practice. They record the first use of the term 'mentoring' in the English language in 1750 in a letter from Lord Chesterson to

his son. They also cite a number of references, from Fénelon, tutor of Louis XIV's heir to Rousseau to evidence the educational roots of mentoring, and how leadership is something that can be learned through reflective questioning, listening, challenge and support.

In modern mentoring research terms, the seminal work on mentoring was conducted in the early to mid 1980s by the mentoring researcher, Kathy Kram. Kram[28][29] provided us with one of the first attempts to model how mentoring works, particularly in an organisational context. A key contribution to the mentoring discourse[30] was her identifications of two core functions of mentoring - career functions and psychosocial functions. Kram[31] defined career functions as 'those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance career advancement' (p. 614) while psychosocial functions were defined as 'those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance sense of competence, clarity of identity and effectiveness in the managerial role'. Her 1983 study[32] was based on a study of 18 developmental relationships within a large public utility within the north-eastern United States and the unit of analysis was the dyad as opposed to the individual mentor or mentee.

While career functions tend to connect mentoring with **performance** issues, the psychosocial ones, one of which being **"Friendship"[33]** (p. 614), alludes more to the human dimension in mentoring where one engages in a relationship with someone, without expecting direct return on investment. Whilst Kram's definition of psychosocial support (above) ultimately focuses on performance in the managerial context, there is still a sense that this is done by feeding the mentoring relationship in a less instrumental way so as to enable growth in confidence and competence. In other words, mentoring raises the possibility of the mentor **giving something back** to the mentee/ wider society with no direct financial incentive being provided for that service.

For our purposes here, it is particularly interesting to note that, included in Kram's (ibid) list of career functions of mentoring, is coaching, perhaps anticipating the blurring of the terms that was to follow.

These career and psychosocial functions, coupled with Kram's identification of phases within mentoring relationships i.e. initiation, cultivation, separation and re-definition, have in turn influenced more recent research and writing on mentoring. For example, Grima et al's[34] work builds on Kram's[35][36] work on mentoring functions and uses it to examine the benefits of mentoring - against these functions - to the mentor, based on a study of 161 French managers. They conclude that **psychosocial activities** are much more likely to be accrued by mentors than career functions. Similarly, Lejonberg, Elstad and Christophersen[37] use the idea of **social exchange** in mentoring to compare and contrast the idea of developmental mentoring, embedded in Kram's work, with that of what they refer to as 'judgementoring'[38] in the Norwegian higher educational context.

In sum, mentoring is often historically anchored in The Odyssey, with the emphasis on one to one development using experiential learning as the key mechanism for the development process. The **knowledge** and **experience** that the mentor possesses is seen as a key ingredient in the relationship. There is less emphasised placed on their process expertise and more emphasis on the quality of the relationship. Friendship is seen as possible outcome from the relationship and there is clear emphasis on the psycho-social benefits that working with a more experienced peer can bring. We will now move on to explicitly examine these two discourses in terms of the differences and similarities between them.

Difference & Similarity

Traditionally, as we have argued above, there have been attempts to clearly differentiate coaching from mentoring, in conceptual terms. Clutterbuck & Megginson[39] have argued that writers in coaching and/or mentoring tend to define them in relation/ contrast to the other, and often in a pejorative way. Mentors have characterised coaching as narrow and directive, whilst coaches have characterised mentoring as being about advice giving, whilst each claiming that their preferred label/ approach is holistic and learner centred. It is our view that these might indeed be defined in relation to each other, but in a more positive way.

If, thus far, we have sought to engage separately with the discourses of coaching and mentoring, it is now important to address the core issues of their similarities/ differences and why they matter. Clutterbuck[40] makes the distinction below, between coaching and mentoring:

> Coaching in most applications addresses performance in some aspect of an individual's work or life; while mentoring is more often associated with much broader, holistic development and with career progress (p.9).

This distinction alludes to the **objectives of the relationship**, which we suggest to capture through the axis 'Performance-orientation' versus 'Growth/learning orientation' (see Figure 1 below). A *performance-oriented* relationship often relies on specific goals defined in a contract - typically a three party contract in coaching[41][42]- with an explicit expectation of change. In contrast, a *growth/learning orientation* emphasizes development, both personal and professional, with objectives more broadly defined in terms of career/ life goals. As we have argued above, it is possible to find elements of performance orientation within the mentoring discourse and element of a growth/learning orientation within the coaching discourse. However, we argue that is more likely for a performance-orientated relationship to be labelled as 'coaching' but more likely for growth/learning orientation relationship to be labelled as 'mentoring'.

A second axis we suggest relates to the **nature of the relationship**. We capture it through considering the formal versus informal dimension. *Formal relationships* are typically contract based, defined by time boundaries, with a paid relationship where

the client is paying a service provider a **distinctive skill set.** An *informal relationship* relies on looser boundaries or frontiers. The relationships can start as a conversation between colleagues, in the context of peer exchanges. Here, a more reciprocal process is adopted which underpins the nature of the relationship. Individuals see themselves are mutually informed, such as friends and partners. They engage in a reciprocal encounter where both parties benefit from the relationship. Again, we find evidence of formal relationships, that are time-bound, in both mentoring and coaching discourses. However, we argue that paid, formally constituted relationships requiring the purchase of a distinctive skill set, are more typically found between coaches and coachees. More informal relationships, which are more reciprocal in nature and which often do not involve formally contracted, paid conversations are more typically found between mentors and mentees.

Thirdly, we suggest that another pertinent axis when explaining coaching & mentoring activity is the time-related element. In some relationships, there may be an immediate requirement to acquire new knowledge and expertise to meet an urgent organisational need which we characterise here as *High time pressure.* Conversely, some relationships may be characterised by a longer term focus, where immediate time boundaries are more loosely set. As a result, the time pressure is much lower.

A fourth axis captures the **skill set involved** in the relationship. We synthesise it through the 'expertise' versus 'industry/job experience' axis. When they refer to coaching and/or mentoring, some researchers emphasize the expertise engaged, referring to the skills and knowledge that have been acquired by the helper, which is often verified by a degree. In contrast, experience in the industry or the job constitutes the main basis for other relationships. Again, there are examples in both coaching and mentoring discourses of qualification based process expertise, verified by a professional/ university based qualification. However, formal academic qualifications in helping professions are more likely to be associated with coaching as opposed to mentoring. Conversely, expertise that based on prior knowledge and industry expertise that the person being helped wishes to acquire, is more commonly associated with mentoring.

In terms of furthering this debate, we could now go through a process of comparing and contrasting Clutterbuck's[43] definitions of coaching and mentoring with those of others. We could use these comparisons to try and understand where the consensus lies in terms of the differences and similarities between coaching and mentoring. Whilst it might be interesting to see where this balance lies, simply comparing and contrasting definitions might leave us in relativist position where we are, by default, saying that all definitions are valid, without developing any clear criteria for that decision. In addition, Salter and Gannon[44] argue that there are some instances where hard and fast distinctions between what constitutes coaching and mentoring seem to break down. For example, when examining the premise of similar backgrounds of mentor and mentee, they cite the example of mentoring of young

people where having the same background may not be applicable or appropriate. This is supported by Colley's[45] study of social inclusion mentoring, where it was important that mentors were not from the same background as the young people they were mentoring as a key part of the mentoring was to help mentees gain access to the domain that the mentors operated in i.e full time employment. In a similar fashion, Salter and Gannon also argue that coaching is often claimed to be more facilitative and non-directive in relation to mentoring. Hence, they argue, it is often claimed that coaches and coachees do not need to share the same background. However, they cite the example of sports coaching whether shared knowledge and experience is seen to be crucial to the success of the relationship.

Additionally, we might face a dead end in pursuing definitional clarity through theoretical means. In their effort to work on establishing coaching as a discipline, Bachkirova, Spence and Drake[46] point out the lack of consensus on coaching definitions. They therefore wonder why coaching is so difficult to define, what would be the implications of not achieving a unified definition, and whether a unified definition of coaching is even necessary. Then they ask whether it is possible to define coaching using empirical means. Turning to empirics is an approach indeed embraced by some authors who favour practical relevance, to emphasize practical behaviours that work best in particular contexts. This is an approach taken by Garvey, Stokes and Megginson[47] following Garvey[48]. In a similar vein, Fatien Diochon et al. (2019) turn to practice and have argued that context is vital in understanding how each of these different practices are enacted, particularly within organisations. What are their arguments to turn to practical relevance rather than seek conceptual clarity?

We can first look at Garvey, Stokes and Megginson's argument. They position coaching and mentoring in the "swampy lowlands"[49] (p.10) of applied management processes because of the many different, and sometimes, contradictory forms it takes within organisational life. In making this point, they are seeking to draw attention to the capacity of both coaching and mentoring, as disciplines, to account for the many different forms and contexts that coaching and mentoring appear in, thus emphasising their richness and complexity. Furthermore, they are critical of what they refer to as 'misplaced concreteness' within social science more generally, where writers seek to draw clear and neat distinctions between phenomena: they question the intentions of those who wish to impose such things on coaching and mentoring. They insinuate that these motives come from a desire to manage the uncertainty that a relative lack of clarity can evoke. Like them, we will argue here that using rigid definitions of what is mentoring and what is coaching is not helpful to practitioners who are seeking to identify practical solutions to organisational issues. As Stec[50] pointed out, in relation to coaching, it is drawn from a range of disciplines and is hybrid in nature. There is no reason to assume that mentoring is any different from coaching in this respect. Extending this argument further, we might also argue, based on our dimensions framework (See Figure 1) that it is possible to conceive of

a hybrid of what might traditionally considered as coaching or mentoring behaviours. We will expand on this further following our examination of practice below.

In the following section of this article, we will consider a brief case study example based on the practice of one of us (Otter) and seek to examine how this can help us become clearer about the similarities and differences between mentoring and coaching.

Case Study Example

In a dynamic and evolving healthcare context, a fast growing healthcare company, has embarked on a multiyear program to transform the company into a learning organization[51]. In other words, learning and development is viewed a primary strategy of the organization to more effectively adapt to the changing world of healthcare while positively contributing to its future. The top 25 senior managers are all enrolled in a multi-year leadership development program, in which leadership and learning is to become distributed throughout the organization as its primary strategy in becoming a learning organization.

There is an internal purpose for becoming a learning organization as well. Many topics are need of attention in the organization as well, including incorporating organizational-wide values and norms, helping people managing transitions, cross-functional collaboration, and succession planning. Hence, coaching & mentoring processes are seen as vehicles through which these organisational objectives might be achieved.

While a formal managerial coaching and mentoring program has yet to be implemented, informal 'coaching and mentoring' is expected from the senior managers to key members of their teams drawing upon the practical knowledge gained from the program, and folded into the managers repertoire of responsibilities. In this way, this managerial coaching and mentoring is seen as one primary means by which learning and development becomes embedded in the organization.

One senior manager, let's call him Ted, who is new to this level of responsibility, reports to Richard the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Ted has two decades of senior management experience and is close to retirement. Ted and Richard are working closely together on making Ted's functional area profitable. In the midst of their work to develop and execute this plan, a strong developmental relationship is emerging between Richard & Ted. In interviews with Ted, he has described incidences of 'coaching and mentoring' by Richard taking place alongside other kinds of work activities and interpersonal interactions. For example, there was a breach of trust between Ted and the CEO Ellen, when Ted initiated a project that the CEO felt was out of alignment with a plan she believed Ted had agreed to. This left Ted feeling concerned about his future advancement in the company and ultimately his job.

Richard has arguably employed a variety of mentoring and coaching techniques to help Ted navigate this particular challenge. For example, Richard shared his experience of working with Ellen to help Ted understand what matters most in working relationships with Ellen and how to align with it, in particular Ellen's way of attending to conflict. When Ted showed Richard an email he had composed to Ellen, Richard worked with him in thinking through the email. In addition, Richard engaged Ted on identifying important developmental goals and learning edges and what can he do to take action on them in order to be successful in his new role and level of responsibility.

In this example, we can see elements of **informal** practice in terms of Richard helping Ted with her role. We can see Richard using aspects of his **experience** - more traditionally associated with mentoring - to help Ted in here relationship with the CEO. However, we can also see aspects of Richard using **process** expertise to help Ted to clarify his thinking and identify his own learning goals and identify actions in order to improve his **performance** in the future - these behaviours are more traditionally associated with coaching. How helpful would it be to seek to separate out Richard's 'coaching' behaviours from his 'mentoring' behaviours? The probable answer is- not very helpful. Richard and Ted relationship is fundamentally embedded within the context they are operating in. It is clear that they are operating in a constructive developmental relationship and the fact that some of these behaviours might be labelled as mentoring or coaching is less important than the fact that the relationship is actually taking place. Similarly, new managers are working with more senior managers helping them step into greater competence and confidence as a newly promoted senior managers and how to become effective in their roles. Is this coaching or is this mentoring? It is likely that it is a hybrid of two sorts of helping and seeking to separate and unpack these could be an exercise in futility.

Furthermore, as participants in the leadership development program, Ted, Richard and Ellen are acquiring practical knowledge in leadership skills and competencies, which are traditionally associated with effective coaching and mentoring practice. For example, the program presents activities to acquire such skills and capacities as: presence, communications skills, asking generative questions, emotional and social intelligence, developing social capital, self-awareness, critical reflection, and facilitating action learning[52,53]. Moreover, the senior managers participating in this yearlong leadership program receive **individual** and **team** development, which allows them to experience these skills in action.

The agentic role of context

Applying our framework to this example is helpful in terms of understanding similarities and differences between coaching & mentoring. Firstly, it is clear that the context in which the behaviours are introduced is critical. In the case of Richard & Ted, the objectives of the relationship are multi-faceted. On the one hand, Ted needs to work more effectively with the CEO, which suggests a more **performance** related

agenda - we have argued that is more typical of coaching relationships. On the other hand, Ted is also using the relationship with Richard to identify key **developmental** challenges that he has and how he might work on these in relation to her broader life and career - behaviours more akin to traditional notions of mentoring. However, the relationship is located within the context of a **formal** contracted relationship about achieving better financial results for the company so is formal in that sense but more informal in terms of the developmental outcomes for Ted. That said, there is a need to make **timely** changes in Ted's functional area and in his relationship with Ellen, such that the better financial and organisational results can be realised. Richard is not directly being paid to support Ted as a specialist executive coach might do, but is acting, in some ways like a coach. Nevertheless, he is using his **personal experience** -verified by having a successful working relationship with the CEO - to help him.

Moving onto the top 25 manager leadership development initiative, again, we can see, in the leadership development workshops, that many of the core skills explored are generic to **both** coaching & mentoring and the skills within themselves cannot be used to differentiate between coaching & mentoring as distinct approaches. What comes out equally strongly in this example is the importance of the context in which this takes place. Here context is defined as the broader system and environment in which the helping relationship is situated[54]. Building on Fatien Diochon et al.[55], we argue that this context is not neutral but is agentic, in that it plays an active role in the way mentoring and coaching techniques are used and adapted. Coming back to Figure 1, we suggest four dimensions of context that are likely to shape which and how coaching or mentoring behaviors are used.

The first that we offer is, the **learning** context. This we define as the taken-for granted organisational assumptions as to how learning and development should be conducted within the organisation. These assumptions can be rooted in the history of the organisation's approach to development or from its current conscious orientation towards learning. Therefore, it is likely that the learning context will shape whether the focus of the relationships will lean more towards a performance orientation, with an explicit expectation of change and specific objectives defined within a three party contract, or a growth/learning orientation, where there is less pressure to showcase results. In our case example, the organisation has clearly committed to a growth/learning orientation by seeking to move towards becoming a learning organisation. Whilst there are some expectations around improving results in the longer term, there is not yet a formal coaching or mentoring programme where specific performance goals are agreed.

Our second dimension is concerned with **economic** context. This examines both the internal and external financial position of the organisation and its impact on development activity within the organisation. This can be a contingent factor in determining the degree of formality/ informality of coaching and mentoring activity. Where the organisation is well resourced in terms of its development activity, there is

more scope for formal contract based relationships where skilled helpers are brought into the organisation on a paid basis to work with particular managers. The economic context will therefore influence whether the helper is more perceived as a partner/friend versus a service provider. In our case, within the health care sector, the rate of growth that the company is experiencing is clearly having an impact on the key actors within this scenario, with Richard working with Ted to make his area profitable This suggests more of a pull torwards formal helping relationships within the company, in contrast to the learning context.

Thirdly, the **temporal** context is defined by the perception and relationship to time. We suggest that high time pressured contexts are more characteristic of coaching relationships which are likely to be defined by stricter time boundaries, while low time pressure would be typical of mentoring with loose time boundaries. In our case, there is a pressure to move quickly within a fast growing healthcare sector on the one hand, set against a longer term leadership development agenda on the other. Hence we would expect to see the temporal context having a mixed effect on coaching and mentoring behaviours with some development interventions being tightly time bound e.g. Ted's relationship with Ellen whilst on the other a more longer term orientation, less time pressured engagement on the other e,g the multiyear leadership development programme.

Finally, we have the **socio-cultural** context. Following Law[56], we recognise that the cultural context, in relation to coaching & mentoring means that there are "unique aspects of every intervention, as all behaviour changes and value shifts are contextualised but not automatically transferable" (p.101). Nevertheless, as in the Learning Context discussed above, we argue that the organisation's socio-cultural history will influence the extent to which process expertise is valued against content expertise.   It is likely that, in an organisational context where on the job experience is highly valued, behaviours more favoured in traditional mentoring discourse will be selected. On the other hand, if technical/ process expertise is more valued, where then development processes will display behaviours more typically associated with traditional coaching discourse. In our case study, in the example of RIchard, Ted and Ellen, there seems to be more of a pull torwards relevant organisational and personal experience.

Towards an Integrated Framework for Coaching & Mentoring in Context

To summarise, we have argued in this article that it is problematic to strive for conceptual distinctiveness between mentoring and coaching in purely theoretical terms. This is because mentoring and coaching are both deeply rooted in practice and cannot easily be disentangled from each other. Coaching and mentoring practitioners use the same process skills in order to achieve the objectives of the

relationship (e.g. active listening, questioning, summary). However, as we have argued here, these approaches can be differentiated on the grounds of the learning context within which the relationship is located (performance vs growth); the economic context of the relationship (formal vs informal), the temporal context (low vs high time pressure) and the socio-cultural context used (process expertise vs experience). In addition, by using the case example, we have also argued that the role of the context within which the coaching & mentoring is located plays a critical role. This is because context is agentic in terms of determining which aspects of these two helping orientations are most useful to practitioners when faced with significant challenges when working in their organisations.It is important to recognise that the four dimensions (learning, economic, temporal and socio-cultural) of context might not pull in the same direction, resulting in a myriad of different coaching or mentoring behaviours. Therefore, in practice, the helping behaviours demonstrated appear as a combination of both coaching and mentoring characterics, to different degrees. This kaleidoscope results from the fact that context is multifaceted, heterogeneous and liveable. That is why we suggest that seeking to neatly separate out coaching from mentoring in practice is ultimately futile as practitioners will inevitably 'borrow' from both discourses when identifying practical behaviours that work best for them.

In conclusion, we argue for more practice-focused research to be undertaken in order to better understand how practitioners make choices on which coaching and mentoring behaviours to draw upon within their specific contexts.

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