

# COACHING PROGRAMMES FOR AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS

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# BACKGROUND TO THIS STUDY

An organisation in Australia was offering coaching courses to those working in education and wanted to know what the impact of those coaching sessions were on the participants. Together there was an agreed focus for the research which would have two phases

1. An on-line questionnaire
2. Targeted Skype interviews

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

# What is the impact of coaching programmes for Australian teachers?

### Sub questions

- How do schools select teachers to undertake coaching programmes?
- Does the experience and impact of coaching programmes vary with the teachers' role in their school?
- Do teachers see coaching programmes as helpful prior to taking on a leadership role?
- Do teachers see coaching programmes as appropriate only if they already have leadership roles?
- What has changed in their practice after completing a coaching programme?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

# What is the impact of coaching programmes for Australian teachers?

### Hypotheses to test

- If teachers choose to undertake coaching activities the application of those skills is greater than those who have been sent
- The decision to undertake coaching towards the end of a teaching career is focused on gaining experience and qualifications for alternative employment routes

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Ethical approval via the University ethical approval committee including details of all the instruments survey and interview schedule to be used in the study.
- An agreement with the coaching organisation that they would facilitate the delivery of the survey to their clients and this agreement seen by the University as part of the approval process
- For the second phase of the survey to be undertaken an opt in for Skype interviews

# METHODOLOGY

**Design and methods of data collection:**

The parts of the study reported here are some of the results from an on line survey with a total of 15 questions to access as many teachers who had undertaken a coaching course as possible at a distance in Australia. Questions were multiple choice with open ended questions to elicit more detailed responses

Questions covered the following areas

Gender

Age range

Phase of education

Role in organisation

Years of experience

How had they been involved in the coaching programme

How long was the programme they attended

What were the most useful and least aspects of the training

How coaching was used in their role

In what situations was coaching used

Had roles changed since attending the coaching training

The use of contracting as part of coaching

The length of coaching relationships

## RESPONDENT PROFILES

- 195 respondents.
- 70% female.
- 44% 51-60 in age.
- 40% worked in the primary school phase.

## RESPONDENT PROFILES

- Head teachers were the largest single group (25+%) in relation to their roles with the next one those in supporting roles across a wide age phase of education. Of the second group there were people who already identified their role as 'coach' in a variety of settings.
- Across all respondents their experience of teaching was varied but the largest group had 26-30 years as a teacher.

## EARLY MESSAGES

- In relation to their decision to become involved in coaching 32% decided that it was something they were interested in and wished to pursue.
- 30% decided that coaching skills would be used in their current school.
- The majority of respondents had received 4 days of training for coaching (45.7%) though a number had a longer training.

## USE OF COACHING SKILLS

In relation to the use of the coaching skills developed on their training

- 45% said they use coaching every day in conversations

*'In the position I'm in at the moment - no formal coaching contracts, but use skills in interactions with team and department colleagues and in general personal interactions if it's the right moment'*

- 58% stated that coaching relationships had no limit.

## FOCUS ON THEMES EMERGING FROM RESPONSES

Themes from the responses to open ended questions about the programme followed centred around how coaching skills had changed the ways in which they had conversations with others.

For example with students

*'before the lesson starts, if you feel the student needs a personal lift before work begins again'*

With colleagues

*'I use it daily when I am mentoring Practicum student teachers. Once a month with other members of staff'*

## OTHER THEMES EMERGING FROM RESPONSES

- For the majority of the respondents their roles had not changed as a direct result of the training but they reported changes in ways of working '*I approach the role differently*' or '*My effectiveness within my role has improved. Enhanced my: listening skills Questioning techniques*'
- The use coaching skills though not in a formal coaching relationship as exemplified by the following: '*I use elements of the coaching process but not the whole process formally*'
- Relationship between mentoring and coaching particularly an issue in education because of the traditions associated with teacher training.

## CONCLUSIONS

The training has had an impact of the teachers practice particularly in relation to the conversations they have with others for example

*'Significantly enhanced conversation skills used in the role'.*

The majority of the teachers use coaching skills everyday but only 35% of the respondents' contract before coaching.

## FURTHER WORK

- Selection of respondents to interview
- Collation of the data from interviews and the survey to support answers to the research questions
- To compare results from teachers in other locations to see if coaching has the same impact on practice elsewhere