What is going on when I am coaching the team? An autoethnography

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Sharing the story of my doctoral research

- Why research team coaching?
- The challenges
- The theoretical landscape
- My approach
- Your questions and reflections
Why research team coaching?
Why is team coaching relevant to HRD?

Our internal coaches are being called in to help. Are they equipped?

Teams are a core organisational entity. Many fail to perform.

Team coaches have a variety of backgrounds and approaches. Buyer beware!

Team coaching forms a piece of the coaching strategy.

In a study of 120 leadership teams only 21% were described as excellent. 79% described as mediocre or poor. (Wageman et al 2008)
Research aims and objectives

- What is the purpose of team coaching; what outcomes are we seeking?
- What is going on in a team coaching intervention? How do we decide what to do?
- Is team coaching distinctive from other team-based interventions? What can we learn?
- How does the experience of 1:1 coaching inform my team-coaching practice?
The challenges

- The fields of group theory, team effectiveness and team-based interventions are extensive.
- Language is inconsistent.
- Draws concepts from across multiple disciplines.
- Need to distinguish coaching team as a whole vs coaching in group context.
- Teams are complex dynamic systems.
The dynamic team as open system indicating elements of team effectiveness

Organisational context, Policies, climate, constraints

Team purpose, goals and tasks
Task work processes: task planning, coordination, monitoring, problem solving & decision making activities

Team work processes: Interpersonal, monitoring, learning, transforming

Cognitive Emergent states: Mental models, team climate

Affective and Motivational Emergent states: Cohesion, Psychological safety, trust, team efficacy.

Team leader

Team Performance outcomes as measured by stakeholders, other teams and team members themselves

Other Teams

External environment

External customers & stakeholders

Time

Newcastle Business School
You need a team intervention

Team development
Facilitator
Process consultant
Expert in group dynamics
Action researcher
Action learning expert
Cooperative inquiry expert
A team coach

Team development: Wheelan, 1994
Facilitation: Schwartz, 2002
Action research: Reason & Bradbury, (2008)
Action Learning: Revans, (2011)
Cooperative Inquiry: Heron, (1996)
What is team coaching?

- There is very little written about team coaching that draws from a theoretical or empirical basis.
- Hackman and Wageman 2005 (only empirical paper)
- Scholarly practitioners include:
  - David Clutterbuck
  - Peter Hawkins
  - Christine Thornton
  - Anthony Grant & Saul Brown
Perspectives on team coaching

All agree:
- It's about the team as a unit achieving goals.
- Appropriate timing of interventions.
- Systemic context.

Task appropriate
- Timings significant
- Motivation to work together
- Task strategies
- Learning and skills
- Process focus

Clutterbuck, (2014)

A range of coaching approaches
- Guided reflection
- Motivation for change
- Analysis

Hawkins, (2011)

Systemic
- External stakeholder focus
- A range of tools and techniques
- Guided dialogue
- Assessment and feedback

Thornton, (2010)

Draws from Group analytic theory.
- Focus on the psychodynamic perspective

Brown & Grant, 2010

Goal Focus, incorporate ideas of dialogue and group dynamic theory

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Issues with team coaching literature

- Practitioner led
- Underpinning theories not always apparent
- Volume of tools and techniques can be overwhelming
- Does not incorporate contemporary research on team learning processes
- How do I apply vast range of available knowledge to my practice?
My identity as a scholarly practitioner

- **Autoethnography**
  - Writing about the self to explore a culture
  - Externalize inner dialogue of choices

- **Epistemology of practice**
  - Explicit and Tacit knowledge
  - In context

- **Social Constructionism**
  - Action and reflection

- **Relevance and resonance for others**
- **Evocative, reflexive, real.**

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My research project

Two Cooperative Inquiry Groups

Two operational teams in two organisations
What is going on?

Identify themes, tell the story, make knowledge explicit with theory artifacts, metaphors and reflexive transparency.
Potential contributions

- To conceptualize a framework of team coaching that integrates diverse theoretical perspectives and disciplines.
  - Develop my own practice
  - Enable me to develop team coaching capability with others
Thank you!

- Your reactions, questions...
References

- **Epistemology of Practice**
References

- **Autoethnography**
- **Action Research, Action Learning, Action Science**
References

Group Research, Team Research Team Learning


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Team Coaching and Team based interventions


Initial observations

- Context plays a significant role
- Coach needs to be aware of different perspectives - time, context, relational, goals
- Importance of contracting
- Use of the self in the group
Root Constructs

Systems thinking: Bertalanffy (1951); Lewin, (1946)
Group Development: Tuckman (1965); Wheelan, (1994); Gersick (1988)
Experiential learning in groups: Lewin, (1946), Heron (1996), Senge (1990)
Team Learning

Effective storage and retrieval of learning applied to the team's work.

Effective team learning processes such as sharing and dialogue, constructive conflict.

Recognising a need to learn, initiating inquiries inside and outside the team.

Supportive, trusting environment and a belief in the team's capabilities and shared purpose.

Approach to learning changes over time