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Editorial

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Following the tradition of previous special issues of the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* (IJEBCM), this special issue provides a publication platform for post-graduate students who recently completed their MA or Doctorate in Coaching/Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University, and subsequently presented their research at the annual Coaching and Mentoring Research conference that was held in Oxford Brookes on Thursday 19 January 2017. Like previous special issues, this issue provides Oxford Brookes students and graduates with the opportunity to share their research methodologies and findings with IJEBCM readers around the world.

The issue comprises ten papers. The first six papers discuss – in one way or another – specific coaching issues in organisational settings. The first four of those focus on the ‘intangible’ outcomes of coaching, coaching in a VUCA setting, cross-cultural coaching, and maternity-return coaching. Our fifth and sixth papers investigate the role of coaching in leadership transition and development. Our seventh paper examines the – at times – blurry boundary between coaching and counselling. Two papers follow on coaching supervision, exploring both the perspective of the supervisor and that of the supervisee. The special issue concludes with the sole article in this publication on the effectiveness of mentoring.

Pallavi Sharma’s paper is the first of a series of articles on the use of coaching in organisational contexts. Moving beyond the established research tradition on the measurable outcomes of coaching effectiveness, Pallavi Sharma explores and reveals some significant intangible and even unplanned consequences of executive coaching. Employing a grounded theory methodology, her study synthesises the views of 29 employees – including coaches, line managers, and organisational decision makers – across public and private sector organisations, to show that the intangible personal outcomes of coaching provide a vital contribution to leadership development and employee engagement in organisations.

Our second paper focuses on a specific organisational context: a fast-paced, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Using a case study methodology that is based on interviews with 14 professionals in a medium-sized data and telecommunications organisation, Pam Williams discusses the perceived challenges of introducing internal coaching in a VUCA context. The study reveals some surprising insights about the scope, role, and format of coaching for this particular environment, and concludes with some key implications for theory and practice.

The next paper on coaching in organisational settings investigates cultural differences and their impact on the process of executive coaching. Andrea Roth's study asks the pertinent question of whether executive coaches with a multicultural clientele need to pay particular attention to cultural differences. Exploring the coaching experiences of coaches who have worked with clients from different cultural backgrounds, the paper suggests that coaching is not an objective entity but, rather, a subjectively interpreted concept. More interestingly, Andrea's study contends that, within the wider narrative of cross-cultural coaching, the impact of cultural diversity might have been overestimated.

Remaining in the organisational arena, our fourth paper shifts to a very specific type of coaching in organisational contexts: maternity-return coaching. Grounded on research conducted in two multinational organisations operating in the United Kingdom, Germany, and India, Christine Vitzthum's study explores the value of maternity-return coaching, that is coaching that is pursued in the return-to-work period of females across various managerial levels in the organisation. Employing an action research methodology, the paper shows that this type of coaching can complement organisational benefits by supporting mothers, on an individual level, to avail of existing organisational support, or simply by clarifying and communicating expectations.

Sally Bonneywell also adopts a gender-specific viewpoint, by exploring the value of utilising coaching as a medium for leadership development amongst female leaders in a global organisation. Employing a social constructionist and interpretivist perspective, her paper highlights female leaders' distinct positive experiences of coaching interventions. It also discusses the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of her research and suggests potential implications for practice and further research.

Also focusing on senior leadership roles, our sixth paper takes us to a well-bounded setting of the National Health Service (NHS). Anne Gill's case study explores the contribution of coaching in effective leadership transition within the fast-paced environment of the NHS, investigating the experiences of NHS professionals who have recently transitioned to more senior roles within their organizational setting. Her findings reveal the perceived benefits of coaching in the critical phases of the leadership transition journey. These include confidence and resilience development, capacity building, and provision for self-reflection.

Our seventh paper moves beyond the remit of coaching, to explore the much talked about yet poorly researched boundary between coaching and counselling. In this piece of research, Abi Eniola explores how novice business coaches manage to identify this boundary in their practice. Her study is conducted via a constructivist grounded theory approach. Through interviews with novice coaches and coach supervisors, the paper proposes a new theoretical framework and highlights some of the key challenges experienced by novice coaches.

Our next two papers centre on the pertinent topic of coaching supervision. Andy Homer's study, in particular, focuses on peer-coaching supervision. Employing a grounded theory methodology, the paper examines a specific supervisory framework used by a peer coaching group – what the author terms their *modus operandi*, and reveals the social and behavioural conventions that the group have devised – their *modus vivendi*. The study concludes by

identifying and discussing the practical benefits and challenges of this model of peer supervision.

Moving from the (peer-) supervisor to the supervisee, our eighth paper investigates the supervision process from the perspective of the supervisee, an area of coaching research and practice that still remains largely underexplored. Through her study, Louise Sheppard offers clear empirical evidence that shows how supervisees can enhance or impede the supervision process. She also addresses three key gaps in the extant coaching supervision literature: a) lack of empirical research on the lived-in experiences of coaching supervisees; b) lack of evidence in relation to several key themes in the literature, including power differentials, self-sabotage, anxiety, ruptures and repairs; and c) lack of an empirically informed framework with guidelines for how supervisees can get the most from their coaching supervision.

Finally, this special issues concludes with a thought-provoking paper on mentoring. In her study, Annita Clarke presents her research on the effects of mentoring on what would be considered academically underachieving college students. In particular, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Annita recounts the experiences of college students who were mentored by police officers, concentrating on 'high risk' circumstances and their possible influence on the study participants. The article provides a brief description of findings to illustrate the holistic effect of the mentoring journey, and concludes with a brief discussion on the limitations of the study and the implications for practice and further research.