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Academic Paper

Understanding the coaching experiences of non-traditional students in Higher Education in the UK

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Abstract

In coaching there is a lack of research that focuses specifically on the coaching experiences non-traditional students during their undergraduate studies in the UK. This heuristic inquiry research draws upon the experiences of nine non-traditional students to gain a better understanding of the role of coaching in supporting them during their undergraduate studies. Participants reported that coaching was free of judgement, enabled action and improved motivation. The study identified nuances in the coaching experience and suggests that certain conditions need to be created for non-traditional students to embark on a coaching conversation.

Keywords

coaching, higher-education, non-traditional students, support,

Article history

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Introduction

Over the last 15 years considerable effort has been made to widen participation in the Higher Education (HE) sector (Harrison & Waller, 2018) to readdress the under-representation of certain social groups accessing and participating in universities in the UK (Wilkins & Burke, 2015). Despite enhancing retention through scholarships and bursaries and offering support through the provision of specialist staff teams or peer mentors, non-traditional students are at greater risk of withdrawing from their studies (Cotton, Nash & Kneale, 2017). Although there is a range of support available there is also the possibility of stigmatisation via adverse perceptions of requiring remedial support (Mckendry, Wright & Stevenson, 2014).

Coaching in education, in part, is considered as “a one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning” (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). A number of studies have evidenced coaching as a useful intervention that provides support to students across various ages and stages of their journey (Passmore & Brown, 2009; Briggs & Van Nieuwerburgh, 2010; Short, Kinman &

Baker, 2010; van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013). In the HE sector in the UK, coaching as an intervention has supported students with stress management (Short, Kinman & Baker, 2010) academic attainment through peer coaching (Andreanoff, 2016) and self-confidence (Lech, van Nieuwerburgh & Jalloul, 2018). While there are studies that have identified the benefits of coaching in HE (Lancer & Eatough, 2018), little empirical research has been conducted to explore how coaching supports non-traditional students, specifically in the UK. Furthermore, little is known of the coaching experience from the perspective non-traditional students themselves.

This heuristic inquiry was guided by two core questions:

1. What are the coaching experiences of non-traditional students?
2. What is the role of coaching in supporting non-traditional during their undergraduate studies?

Researchers, coaches and practitioners interested in understanding the coaching experiences of non-traditional students will benefit from this research. Similarly, services that support widening participation initiatives and undertake coaching practices with non-traditional students in other sectors will benefit by understanding how coaching supported students during their undergraduate studies.

The article begins with an overview of relevant literature followed by the reasons for selecting heuristic inquiry as a chosen methodology. The findings and discussion will present the key themes that emerged from the students' experiences of coaching. The limitations and considerations for future research will be presented, followed by a conclusion of the study.

Literature

This literature review presents four key articles of relevance to this study. These seminal studies focus on the experiences of coaching in HE from the perspective of the students across the UK.

In 2014, Thomas and Hanson provided an account of a coaching initiative that used the GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) model as a conversational method to develop social integration at one HE institution, aiming to enhance the resilience, retention and success of under-represented student groups during their first year of study. The study provided insight into the HE experiences of four non-traditional students and the support offered by staff using the GROW model. The evaluation of the study by way of semi-structured interviews suggested that students saw adjusting to university in the first few weeks as a learning curve. Most students recognised the value of building social relationships for either social or academic purposes, yet none had formed strong social relationships. The study also found that some students experienced doubt about staying on at university and lacked confidence to approach staff for guidance. Despite finding staff approachable, the students' lack of unfamiliarity with university procedures caused them to experience insecurity and limited confidence in times of crisis, which inhibited their ability to access staff. The Student Engagement Team (SET) used coaching conversations to provide appropriate support and guidance to students during their transitional turning points and their knowledge of university processes to signposting students to relevant individuals during stressful times. This aspect was identified as invaluable to students who would not have successfully negotiated access to the right sources of guidance without the help of the SET.

In 2018, Lancer and Eatough conducted a longitudinal phenomenological study that explored the experiences of nine undergraduate students who received coaching. The emergent themes of the study highlighted that coaching facilitated confidence, self-belief, assertiveness and reassurance. The students experienced accelerated development and were able to make problems and tasks more manageable. First year students within the study considered that coaching would benefit first year university students who lacked confidence. Although there is mention that "the students were

highly articulate and academically able", the study did not identify the demographics of the Russell Group university participants. It is therefore difficult to identify whether it was considered that all students, traditional and non-traditional, who lacked confidence would benefit from coaching. Nevertheless, the findings from the students' perspectives identified some benefits to receiving one-to-one coaching during their undergraduate studies.

In 2018, a study by Lane and de Wilde took a mixed method approach to explore the impact of coaching doctoral students from a student perspective. The study took place at a higher education institution (HEI) that offered a range of workshops and activities in addition to the 'traditional support' offered to support student wellbeing. A total of five students took part in the study. The emergent themes identified that coaching developed professional skills around time management, confidence in writing and the ability to overcome procrastination and perfectionism. Coaching was also reported to provide a "safe" and "non-judgmental" environment to build confidence, develop assertiveness and enhance the self-awareness and personal effectiveness of research students. The study provided useful insights into some of the challenges faced by doctoral students and made a case for coaching as a beneficial method of support. Lane and de Wilde, (2018) reported that one of the limitations of the study was that participants' profiles and information such as their socio-economic background, prior academic achievement or ethnicity were not collected as part of the interview. It is therefore difficult to identify whether the challenges faced, and the way in which coaching helped to address these challenges, represented the experience of a range of student groups, for example traditional and non-traditional doctoral students. Nevertheless, this study provided useful insights into the experiences of doctoral students from the perspective of the students themselves.

In 2018, Lech, van Nieuwerburgh and Jalloul 2018 applied a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to explore the in-depth experiences of six PhD students who received coaching at one HEI. Six themes emerged from the study in relation to the experiences that were explored: feeling motivated; effect of coaching on self-confidence; made me think; resourcefulness; being supported and having someone to talk to. These then led to two broader categories – intrapersonal and interpersonal. Findings within the first theme (feeling motivated), identified that some participants experienced a certain level of demotivation. One participant in particular claimed to be more focused and motivated after a session. Within the second theme (effect of coaching on self-confidence), a participant reported that they did not feel very confident in comparison to their experience as a Masters student. The findings acknowledged that building self-confidence is one of the most common issues addressed in coaching (Cox & Bachkirova, 2007). In this study PhD students claimed that coaching played a role in boosting their self-confidence. Coaching was considered overall as a powerful tool that made students more self-consciously aware of certain aspects of themselves and their contexts.

The review of the literature provided useful insights into the benefit of coaching in educational contexts and offered an understanding of how coaching supports individual student needs from the perspective of students. From the studies we know that coaching conversations have helped identify support and enabled signposting to relevant services (Thomas & Hanson, 2014). We also know that coaching helped develop the professional skills of doctoral and PhD students around time management, and overcoming procrastination (Lane & de Wilde, 2018; Lech, van Nieuwerburgh & Jalloul, 2018). Coaching was also reported to provide a "safe" and "non-judgmental" environment (Lane & de Wilde, 2018) and facilitate confidence, self-belief and reassurance of students (Lancer & Eatough, 2018).

Methodology

This study employed a heuristic inquiry approach (Moustakas, 1990) an adaptation of phenomenological inquiry. The methodical approach moves away from the idea of bracketing one's

experience, allowing the researcher to overtly acknowledge their direct experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). The choice of methodology reflects the epistemology of constructivism, concurring that truth or meaning is constructed through our engagement with the realities in our world (Crotty, 1998) rather than existing in a world that is "out there" and independent of our knowledge of it (Gray, 2014). The ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher are merged together believing that meaning and existence of the world does not exist independently without a mind (Guba & Lincoln, 1994): it is constructed through the multiple realities that exist through the perspectives, experiences and accounts of others (Mason, 2018).

Heuristic Inquiry is a suitable approach for providing a deeper and richer exploration of experiences (Moustakas, 1990). This study explored how coaching supports non-traditional students during their undergraduate studies. It used heuristic inquiry to portray the voices of non-traditional students from the unique perspective of the researcher, who has direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation. At the time of writing, only two other studies were found that explored how coaching supports non-traditional students; one study in the UK (Thomas & Hanson, 2014) and another in the US (Lefdahl-Davis et al., 2018). None had explored the experiences of coaching from the unique perspective of the researcher.

Participants

Following ethics approval from Oxford Brookes University Research Ethnics Committee, nine students self-selected by responding to an invitation to take part in a study on how coaching can support under-represented groups during their undergraduate studies. The invitation was sent through the University's Widening Participation Team and Schools considered to have a closer professional relationship with students from a widening participation background.

Purposive sampling was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the coaching experiences of non-traditional students (Denscombe, 2017). Students self-selected and identified themselves as an undergraduate student that fit into one or more of the following categories:

1. At a disadvantage based on geographical location, occupation, previous education and income either household or individual.
2. Minority ethnic group Black Minority Ethnic (BME).
3. First generation HE student – first within the family to study at university.
4. Mature student.

Table 1: Student participants and demographics

Student participants	Age	Year of study at the time of coaching	Ethnicity	Previous Education
Anastasia	19	1	White British	Foundation course
Anna	29	4	White British	Level 3 Diploma
Ruby	19	2	Black or Black Caribbean	A/AS Level
Ella	19	2	Black or Black British	A/AS Level
Danika	20	3	Black or Black British	A/AS Level
Malcolm	27	2	White British	Level 3 Diploma
Paula	18	1	Mixed Black and White Caribbean	A/AS Level
Octavia	19	1	White British	Foundation course
Tara	23	1	White British	Level 3 Diploma

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore and to gain insight into the experiences of the student participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Each interview lasted between 90 minutes and two hours and were audio recorded. Notes were also taken during the interviews. The notes were used to help transcribe and analyse the interviews. Supplementary data such as student

reflective diaries, email feedback, music lyrics and diagrams received from students were also collected and used in accordance with heuristic inquiry to offer additional meaning and depth of the experiences obtained by interviews (Moustakas, 1990).

Individual interviews were transcribed and shared with the participants to ensure they were an accurate depiction from their perspective. Participants could make alterations as part of the heuristic process should they wish to do so (Moustakas, 1990) however, no requests were received for any additions or deletions to be made.

Transcripts were uploaded into a qualitative analysis software programme (NVivo) and text was grouped and categorised into themes. Data analysis was undertaken manually and with the use of NVivo to cross check the interviews and the supplementary data. Each individual experience was analysed and lead to a collective account described as a "composite depiction" (Moustakas, 1990) of the students' coaching experience.

Context

Coaching in education is still a relatively new field (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The term coaching was not a term that students found easy to define or distinguish from other fields or disciplines such as "mentoring" and "counselling" (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2018). The students' lack of knowledge and understanding of coaching did not appear to prevent them from engaging with the process. All students inadvertently referred to core aspects of coaching with words such as "non-judgemental", "talk", "conversation" and "comfortable" being used to describe their coaching experience.

Findings

Three aggregated themes were identified from the collective accounts of the students' coaching experiences.

Figure 1: Summary of aggregated themes

1. A space for open impartial dialogue

Neutral and impartial

The findings of the study identified that coaching created a space for an open and impartial dialogue to occur. The coach's disconnection with the tutor and their course was a consistent theme that students commented on. From the students' perspective knowledge of the course, their prior educational experiences or prior insight of their background as students was not required to engage in a one-to-one conversation.

Ruby reported that her coach "allowed" her to be as "open" as she wanted to be when discussing conflict with her Course Leader and students.

Danika described coaching as an opportunity for her to "go somewhere away from her course." She did not consider there to be much support for her during her studies. Danika reported other students as being "competitive" and as having "similar stresses" to herself. She felt that it was "good to talk to someone that could look at things from a different perspective" when talking to her. Similarly, Octavia found it "helpful" to "vocalise" and have her own "objective view" during coaching. She reported that she would always talk to her parents about how she worked, but it was "nice to talk with someone that she did not know".

Anna described herself as having "nobody to talk to" and stated that it was "nice to have someone impartial to talk to". She reported being reluctant to access support services offered by the University and would only do so as a "last resort" describing a therapist as "scary".

Paula indicated that "talking to someone that she did not know" about her "feelings" was a "positive experience".

Non-judgement

The ability to converse with a coach who was free of judgement was a key aspect in the role of coaching in supporting non-traditional students during their studies. Analysis of their coaching experiences indicated that, for students, coaching created a perception of a situation that was free of judgement. Octavia did not have a specific goal, agenda or preconceptions about coaching. She reported coaching as being about "how" she" worked and why", as opposed to "some judgy thing with a tutor, that's got some reason behind it". She described her coaching experience as one where there was "no assumptions" or reasoning behind why she was "acting" in a particular way.

Anna reported coaching as "not judgemental". She felt that she could express herself freely without thinking "Oh my God, if I say this, you are going to make me down" or "hold something against [me]".
Paula expressed judgements made of her past educational experiences by one of her closest friends during a coaching session. She felt that the "assumptions and judgements" at school made her worry about what other people think of her.

Comfortable and relaxed

The notion of a comfortable and relaxed environment was another key aspect identified. Most students felt they were able to engage in an open and honest dialogue with their coach and in doing so were able them express themselves without any inhibition or limitations. The comfortable and relaxed environment appeared to support their specific need as they identified it at the time. Octavia reported that the "relaxed" dynamic meant that she could be "honest" and was "comfortable just to talk about things". Ruby felt "comfortable" talking to her coach about a project brief even though her coach did not know much about her course.

Anastasia discussed her "progress" with her coach. She confirmed that ordinarily she "would not bring it up in conversation" but felt "comfortable" in doing so. Anastasia reported that she became "aware" of the things she had to work on and what she considered to be "weak" in, otherwise she "wouldn't know."

Challenge

Not all students appeared to be receptive to coaching. Anastasia was initially apprehensive. She found the time allocated to focus on herself without an agenda to be unnerving. At first she felt "a

bit strange" and found it hard to talk about herself for an hour. She stated that after a while "it was alright" and she "got used to it".

Paula appeared to be challenged by a coaching conversation that embarked on assumptions and judgements of past educational experiences. Paula was challenged by the thought of "not being good enough" and found it difficult to change the perception that she had of herself during coaching.

2. When I talk, I feel and I think differently

Increased motivation

Non-traditional students' that participated in this study expressed how coaching assisted them to feel and think differently. This was particularly important when challenged with procrastination or lack of motivation. As a student in her first year of studies, Anastasia reported that talking to her coach motivated her to "take action" and "plan out" what was required to get the work done. Hearing her words aloud assisted Octavia with organisation and making sense of what she had to do. She felt "more motivated" to study rather than engage in non-academic activities.

Danika described coaching as something that motivated her to act and to "tackle" her "procrastination." She struggled to motivate herself throughout her studies and in particular her final year. She described coaching as giving her the "push" that she needed to start her research and make progress in terms of her academic work.

Reduced stress

Danika also expressed how talking enabled her to feel "at ease", to "think" and feel "less stressed". She reported that coaching came at the "right time" for her. If she did not have so much to contend with she would have found it "difficult to engage with coaching". Danika stated that coaching made her realise that "although it was a stressful time" it enabled her to "think of ways" that made her "not as stressed".

Anna described how talking to her coach brought a sense of "relief" when thinking of ways to perform specific tasks or challenges. Anna talked about supressing her emotions because she did not have anyone to talk to. When she "spoke" and her coach "listened" it enabled her to change her thoughts about receiving a 'C' for her essay. Although she did not achieve the grade for an assessment that she wanted, over a number of sessions Anna began to think differently and turned a situation that she perceived to be negative into one that was more positive Instead of thinking "that's it I'm a failure" and being "very, very negative" and "really upset" about it, she "flipped it round" and saw it as a "good thing" to "push" herself.

Emotional awareness

Paula struggled with negative emotions during coaching and did not know how to challenge the thought of "not being good enough." Paula spent most of the session crying. In response to her emotions, she was asked whether the session should end. Paula chose to continue and described "being able to see things from a different perspective" as a good outcome of the coaching session. Despite the declaration within the session of "feeling good", "content", "happy" and "comfortable", Paula attended one coaching session and did continue with further sessions. She was signposted to other University services such as counselling which she appeared to welcome. It is not known if Paula accessed this service.

3. My confidence is not the same as others

Perceptions

All students either recognised confidence as something that they already had, or that others had more of, or as something that they sought to be able to achieve a desired outcome. Most students' confidence was determined by previous experiences, prior knowledge of their achievements and where they perceived themselves in relation to their current studies.

Anastasia considered herself to be "quite strong" and "confident" in her ability to write essays. She reported services such as Academic Support as "not a requirement for her". Anna described her confidence to be a "mixture" and something that she "constantly battles with." As an "individual" in her managerial role she perceived herself to be "confident" at instructing and delegating.

Anna spoke of her "lack of confidence" in writing essays reporting that writing had been a "challenge throughout her school life". Paula wanted to "stop worrying" about other people's opinions and have "her own opinion". She felt that she tended to rely on the opinions of others before making decisions. Danika reported being "less confident" in her ability to carry out her work independently. She described having moments of "self-doubt" until she received her grades and feedback. Then had moments when she "didn't doubt herself" as much.

Ideal self

Anna felt "belittled" when a peer secured a placement that she desired during her studies. She wanted to feel "confident", "good enough" or "just as good as everyone else" in securing a placement of her choice.

Anastasia compared herself to her peers and did not think she was "good enough" to secure an internship. She wanted to be "confident" in her "pattern cutting skills" and her ability to "get a job" after university.

Discussion

1. A space for open impartial dialogue

This study explored the coaching experiences of non-traditional students' and the role of coaching in supporting them during their undergraduate studies. The study identified that one student was initially apprehensive about coaching for two reasons. First, coaching was not a term that students that participated in this study found easy to define (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2018) and therefore did not know what to expect. The lack of knowledge and understanding of coaching, did not appear to prevent them from engaging with the process. Second, the student found the time allocated to focus on themselves unnerving. Apprehension and scepticism are concerns that are featured in coaching relationships (de Haan & Gannon, 2017) and not solely attributed to non-traditional students. It is worth acknowledging that non-traditional students with limited experience of coaching may require longer than perhaps anticipated by coaches to alleviate their apprehension, establish relationships and identify topics of discussion within their coaching sessions (Rossiter, 2009).

Despite the apprehension, most students were receptive of coaching and felt comfortable talking to someone disconnected from themselves and their course. Students used coaching conversations to discuss topics they may have otherwise discussed with significant others and mostly discussed matters they were reluctant to discuss with their tutor, peers or staff within other university services.

The sense of impartiality for students created a space for open and honest dialogues to occur that were free of judgement and of negative repercussions (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019).

A key aspect in the role of coaching in supporting non-traditional students was to recognise the importance of adopting a non-judgemental stance, as not doing so could have been detrimental to the coaching relationship and likely to have disrupted any sense of safety that may have been created (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019). HEI coaches would benefit from training in understanding the implications that perceived judgements could have on establishing coaching relationships with non-traditional students in the context of HE in the UK.

It could be argued that the "active ingredients" (de Haan, 2008) of non-judgement, honesty and a comfortable, relaxed environment created the conditions in which most students could be open, honest and encouraged to share their thoughts more freely (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019). Where coaching was not receptive it is likely that the "active ingredients" or the non-judgemental stance created by coaches were not met enough for the relationship to be established.

2. When I talk, I feel and I think differently

Coaching supported non-traditional students to think and feel differently during their studies building on the work of Lech, van Nieuwerburgh and Jalloul (2018). The slight distinction for students in this study was coaching was not used as an intervention to address specific needs, such as enhancing student performance or overcoming learning difficulties (Grant, Green & Rynsaardt, 2010). Coaching dialogues mainly occurred without students having a specific goal in mind. Even with ambiguous goals, the benefits of coaching for non-traditional students did not appear dissimilar to the benefits experienced by students in previous studies (Lancer & Eatough, 2018).

Whilst coaching supported most student to feel and think differently, not all demonstrated the desire to commence the process of change through coaching. Paula in particular found coaching challenging when addressing personal issues. Although challenge is considered an important aspect of coaching (Rogers, 2016). For coaching to be effective, it is important that there is an appropriate balance of support and challenge (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019). The role of coaching in supporting non-traditional students is to have an awareness that coaching could highlight issues and anxieties that students are not ready to face in terms of their readiness. Not doing so could be problematic, exacerbating emotions and discomfort during coaching.

3. My confidence is not the same as others

Confidence was an area of discussion that emerged either implicitly or explicitly during coaching and appeared to be a particular issue for non-traditional students in this study. The challenge in this study was identifying common themes that depict students' experiencing confidence or portraying it in the same way. These students, similar to those in the study by Tett et al. (2017), are considered to be non-traditional and whilst it might be anticipated that they would have shared experiences, in practice the accounts they shared were multi-layered and varied.

Two participants were confident in areas of familiarity, their previous knowledge, achievements and accomplishment of tasks (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Anna and Danika were less confident in their academic abilities in areas of unfamiliarity such as essay writing (Bandura, 1993). When comparisons were made with others, Anna was less confident in areas she perceived her peers to have more of an advantage, for instance securing a placement (Schunk, 1987). Anastasia wanted to develop confidence in her practical skills in preparation for future career. Representing the aspirations and beliefs of the 'ideal self' that she would like to be (Sebastian, Burnett & Blakemore 2008).

Whilst the accounts in this study did not directly address the issues of confidence when the topic arose implicitly or explicitly during a coaching conversation, the findings demonstrated that coaching facilitated conversations where non-traditional students discussed the issue of confidence (Lancer & Eatough, 2018; Lane & de Wilde, 2018). It was therefore considered an important aspect of this study in exploring the coaching experiences of non-traditional students.

Limitations and future research

Heuristic inquiry provided a deeper, richer exploration of the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1990), but the methodological approach may make the study difficult to replicate. A different approach would be needed to ascertain the generalisability of such exploratory findings.

Given the focus of the research and the purposive sampling, recruiting self-declared non-traditional students to participate in the study was a challenge. Targeted support can be problematic as it tends to perpetuate deficit discourse (Wilkins & Burke, 2015) suggesting students require additional help to complete what is required of them and that they may be reluctant to engage. This could have contributed to the fact that fewer students participated than hoped. However, self-selection was an important aspect in recruiting students who would consider themselves likely to benefit from coaching and would most likely follow through with coaching commitments (van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013).

This study identified that confidence appeared to be a particular issue for non-traditional students. It would be valuable to use the findings to extend the study to develop a framework that can be used to support non-traditional students specifically. It would also be relevant to conduct larger studies to include universities in the UK and overseas to further explore the role of coaching non-traditional students during their undergraduate studies.

Conclusion

Acknowledging the results from this study cannot be generalised due to the methodology, it is nonetheless useful to consider the potential implications of the study's finding for HEIs in the UK, and for coaches and practitioners that support non-traditional students.

Institutions with successful practices in supporting student progression have found it helpful to enhance the support of students by understanding their learners better and more holistically (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2017). The context provides an understanding of the coaching experiences of non-traditional students and the importance placed on an HE environment that is free of judgements. The study indicates the value of coaching and the significance of the coaching relationship in creating a safe and non-judgemental space but also acknowledges the difficulty in securing and sustaining that space for non-traditional students in a context imbued with historic stereotypes of who can access and achieve success in HE. HEIs should firstly invest in coaching for all students as a way of identifying and enhancing significant relationships, especially since the study indicates that non-traditional students are less likely to engage with targeted interventions. Training by way of coaching could be provided to equip staff to understand, support and sustain a non-judgemental environment within HE.

The second contribution to knowledge is making HEIs aware that support, and how it is perceived, is still a controversial issue for non-traditional students (Mckendry, Wright & Stevenson, 2014). Careful consideration would need to be given to how coaching is portrayed to non-traditional students. In addition, the timeliness of support was a key factor for engagement with the coaching. Macqueen (2018) indicates that the journey through HE for non-traditional students is highly individual and not predictable. This study echoes that finding and suggests that students are more likely to access support at various points across the duration of their studies. As such there is a

need for HEIs to be more agile with their support offering to meet the specific needs of non-traditional students: this study recommends HEIs move away from targeted homogenous approaches in a bid to support them and offer individual coaching as a tailored approach to meet their specific requirements.

The study identified nuances in the coaching experience for non-traditional students and proposes "active ingredients" (de Haan, 2008) such as non-judgement and a comfortable environment as conditions for non-traditional students to embark on a coaching conversation. Coaches and practitioners may want to consider allowing non-traditional students more time to establish rapport, openness and trust (Starr, 2011) to alleviate apprehension and identify topics of discussion (Rossiter, 2009). Finally, coaches may want to think about the effectiveness of challenge when non-traditional students present challenging issues during a coaching conversation. Consideration would need to be given to applying the appropriate balance of support and challenge. Further consideration would need to be given to identify whether coaching could be more effective over a period of time with the right support and challenge (van Nieuwerburgh & Love, 2019). Additional consideration could also be given to exploring how effective coaching is for non-traditional students who find it difficult to think or to feel differently when reflecting or going through adverse experiences. Coaching is considered as unlocking potential (Whitmore, 2009), but identifying potential may present challenges for some non-traditional students if positive experiences or previous achievements are difficult to identify.

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