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Team coaches' experiences of coaching to develop conditions for shared leadership

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Abstract

This paper explores how team coaches make sense of working within shared leadership situations. Adopting an interpretive research lens, an under-developed area of research within team coaching literature, the study reported captures team coaches' experiences of coaching amidst decentralised hierarchies. The findings draw attention to how coaches work with two mutually independent and compatible dynamics of unity and energy in fostering conditions for mutual influence. To conceptualise the findings a 'Unity and Energy Matrix' has been developed, depicting four emergent team states: tentative, eager, functional and conscious. Each state reflects significant in-practice moments of coaching and offers insights regarding adopted interventions in response to the emergence of unity and energy.

Introduction

Studies have revealed a shift in organisational design focus (Deloitte, 2017). New organisational architectures are emerging, including; collaborative communities (Fjeldstad et al., 2012), pod-ularity, holacracy (Robertson, 2015; Bernstein et al., 2016) and teal (Laloux, 2014). The intention of the new structures is to develop an expertise-led, distributed, collaborative and non-hierarchical workforce. Organisations are therefore becoming flatter (Fitzsimons et al, 2011; Robertson, 2015).

The flat organisational structure requires greater workforce collaboration (Pearce et al., 2004). The traditional individualistic command and control leadership paradigm (Schein, 2010) is marginalised as leadership becomes decentralised and democratised (Lee and Edmondson, 2017). The result is a movement in scholarly attention towards leadership being a 'collective activity' (Fletcher and Kaufer, 2003 pp23) owned by the team. Alternative theories of leadership are emerging, and this study focuses on one theory; shared leadership.

Team coaching has become an increasingly popular team developmental intervention (Hawkins, 2014). However, while the field's reputation is growing for being effective in supporting organisation change (Passmore, 2010; Hawkins, 2018), team coaching literature remains limited (Peters & Carr, 2013). Little is known about team coaches' experiences of coaching interventions, and even less is known regarding their experiences within shared leadership situations. The purpose of this study is to explore team coaching engagement and the environment to understand how coaching supports team participation in shared leadership situations.

Contextualising shared leadership

Shared leadership, a leadership theory emphasising the collaborative process of influence in achieving a shared purpose, has emerged as an alternative to traditional vertical leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Carson et al., 2007). At an individual level, shared leadership is a participative act of influence in either adopting a leadership role or as accepting a follower role that is reliant on the individuals' desires to co-operate with colleagues (Spillane, 2005). At a group level it is an act of collective participation, a 'sharedness' of leadership (Wang et al., 2014) reliant on a supportive team environment being experienced, instilling a willingness to participate (Carson, et al., 2007; Serban & Roberts, 2016).

Newly conceptualised team architecture, such as shared leadership, has been developed to increase a team's adaptability and agility in responding to the changing needs of the market place (Mathieu et al., 2017; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). The onus is on the workforce sharing responsibility and ownership, where expert knowledge holders influence the progression of organisational goals rather than a formally appointed leader (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Meindl, et al., 2003; Fitzsimons et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2014; Robertson, 2015; Lacerenza et al., 2018).

Research suggests for shared leadership to emerge from within the team it requires advanced efficacy at an individual and team level, facilitated by a supportive internal team environment (Spillane, 2005; Carson et al., 2007; Serban & Roberts, 2016). To determine individual and group-level conditions for shared leadership, Morgeson (2005) and Carson et al., (2007) have identified positive effects of external team coaching as an effective intervention. The intervention is one of a supportive and empowering developmental journey for the team (Carson et al., 2007; Serban & Roberts, 2016). The purpose of coaching is in fostering a supportive space where collectively the team's understanding has the opportunity to grow and become aligned. Research recognises shared leadership needs to be developed (Carson, et al., 2007); it cannot be assumed team members have the capabilities to engage with the paradigm (Lacerenza et al., 2018).

While studies report on a need for team level interventions to support shared leadership, it was not until Mackie's (2019) study that team coaching began to be explored again in relation to the paradigm, within literature. MacKie (2019) has undertaken a theoretical review of team coaching models for supporting a team transitioning from hierarchical to shared leadership. MacKie's study echoes Carson et al., (2007) and Serban and Roberts (2016) understanding regarding success' reliance on team-wide acceptance of shifts in authority, responsibility and ownership (MacKie, 2019). Mackie's (2019) review identifies the relevance of coaching to support team-level sense-making regarding leadership. Despite the recognition that team coaching is an effective intervention for shared leadership development, its contribution has yet to be fully explored.

Exploring Team Coaching Literature

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) have defined team coaching as an emerging profession. The field of research is known to be practitioner-led; the focus on advancing the field by exploring processes and ideas to describe and understand the phenomenon (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Peters & Carr, 2012; Hawkins, 2014; Lawrence & Whyte, 2017). However, this optimistic perspective in describing the field is not the norm. In studies that have sought to define team

coaching, the discussion often concludes that research is sparse (Peters & Carr, 2013) and under-developed (James, 2017).

Direction in how team coaching research is to expand is much debated (Cavanagh et al. 2005, Grant et al., 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Peters & Carr, 2012). Cavanagh et al. (2005), Grant et al. (2010) and Peters and Carr (2012) all advocate a focus on coaching outcomes within a business context. Outcome focused research is believed to develop greater measurement of the impact of coaching theory within organisational settings, validating team coaching interventions.

A small but growing body of research has taken a different direction in developing practitioner-led research; the emergence of the voices of practitioners has entered literature: team coaches' voices challenge the direction of theory development by moving away from traditional case studies to capturing personal experiences of coaching (James, 2017; Hastings & Pennington, 2019; Lawrence & Whyte, 2017). These studies challenge the proposed focus of theory and measurement as a means to advance the field. All believe team coaches adopt not one theory or approach, but multiple coaching theories and philosophies. The studies of team coaches' experiences indicate they do not work exclusively with a single theoretical approach but eclectically. According to James (2017), personal practice is built by developing a broad mix of theory and techniques to apply in the myriad of situations coaches face whilst coaching. The respondents in Hastings and Pennington's (2019) study support this belief that contextual situational experiences are a key factor in learning and development of personal practice. Whilst in the act of coaching, specific theory is not always considered, coaches respond in the moment (Hastings and Pennington, 2019). For James (2017), Hastings and Pennington (2019) and Lawrence and Whyte's (2017) research, through a coaching theory lens, would assume following a static or staged approach to coaching in practice, whereas in reality the suggestion is coaches are adaptable, making decisions fluidly whilst in action (Schon, 1983).

By adopting subjective experiences as accepted knowledge to be explored in pursuit of meaning (Bryman, 2006; Smith, 2004) team coaches' sense-making of their coaching experiences is seen as valuable insight (Cavanagh et al. 2005; Schon, 1983). James (2017) explains how, for her, the field has proved helpful to a point. Hastings and Pennington's (2019) thematic analysis of six coaches and Lawrence and Whyte's (2017) grounded theory study of 36 coaches voiced similarly a limitation in the literature; as real world situations are complex and emergent, their own coaching experiences were not perceived to be reflected in the theory. What is expressed in all three studies is a level of dissatisfaction with current literature from the lack of parity with what is experienced whilst coaching.

These three studies capture coaching-in-practice to some degree by discussing views of the efficacy of theory in relation to their daily applications (Cavanagh, et al. 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The lived experiences in these studies changes the starting point of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Rather than an investigation through a theoretical lens, such as those presented in the current literature, practitioner perspective invites deep exploration of what is happening for a coach - their thoughts, feelings and considerations as they work with teams (Cavanagh, et al. 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The broader use of qualitative research methods has allowed personal experiences and interpretations to enter into the literature (Dreyfus and Wrathall, 2006). In doing so it challenges perceptions of how team coaches coach. Insight from coaches' experiences, such as presented by James (2017), have provided fresh information to literature and have broadened what is known about the act of coaching, what is faced whilst working within team coaching settings and how coaches respond. Coaches use an eclectic mix of tools and techniques to progress in team coaching situations (James, 2017).

Methodology

In pursuit of capturing subjective experiences of team coaching and to continue to broaden the qualitative research methods adopted in literature, Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) was undertaken. IPA allows for insights and knowledge to be explored in pursuit of the meaning of phenomena such as shared leadership (Schon, 1983; Bryman, 2006; Ormston et al., 2014). IPA positions the team coaches as experiential experts (Eatough & Smith, 2017) and the researcher is positioned as the instrument for interpretation. The resonance of the methodology positioning is fitted with personal philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Smith et al., 2009), providing the study's methodological congruence (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2013).

The non-prescriptive nature of IPA has come under criticism (Larkin et al., 2006; Giorgi, 2008), recommendations for how to undertake research is available. Recommendations from Smith et al., (2009) resulted in six homogeneous participants being gained for the study. For homogeneity, criteria for defining 'team coaches' was developed: accredited, with a minimum of five years' experience, offering team coaching as a consultancy service.

Although purposive sampling was undertaken to identify relevant participants, it proved slow. The backup method deployed was snowball sampling (Noy, 2009) before a unified and transparent process of engagement was adopted, as recommended by Tracy (2010). Firstly, an initial telephone interview established participant fit with criteria, and enabled the purpose and the requirements of study to be fully explored. Once interest was gained, each signed a Participation Information Sheet, Consent Form, and a Privacy Policy and the option of withdrawing without prejudice or further explanation was reiterated throughout the process (Baez, 2002; Ellis, 2007; Wiles & Boddy, 2013)

The adoption of semi-structured interviews came from further recommendations from Brocki and Wearden, 2006. Eaghton and Smith, (2017) regards IPA as offering freedom to adopt imaginative approaches of research, resulting in photo-elicitation being undertaken as an additional data source (Harper, 2002). A random selection of abstract images was presented to participants at interview (Glaw et al., 2017). Each selected a representative image to reflect their view of team coaching amidst shared leadership situations (Harper, 2002). Photo-elicitation evoked unexpected layers of sense-making (Harper, 2002; Glaw et al,. 2017), and the use of semi-structured interview explored the metaphors and interpretations of each participant's understanding of the paradigm.

Prior to progressing the data gathering process, two pilot interviews were undertaken, (Creswell, 1998; Smith et al., 2009) before progressing six face-to-face interviews. Each digital audio recording of the interview was transcribed via an online audio-to-text transcription program, in preparation for data analysis (Bryman, 2006; Smith et al., 2009).

IPA does not prescribe a specific analysis process (Howlitt, 2010), which has been heavily criticised (Larkin et al., 2006; Giorgi, 2008; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). To develop a framework, Bengtsson's (2016) four stages of analysis proved most influential, coupled with advice from Smith and Osborn (2008) and Smith et al. (2009). The four stages of Bengtsson's (2016) process include: 'decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation, and compilation' (Bengtsson, 2016 pp8). Decontextualisation encourages the transcripts to be explored dynamically (Eatough & Smith, 2017) using the hermeneutic circle; an interpretation process of using differing perspectives of the whole and abstract. The whole is the context of coaching in shared leadership situations and the coaches' wider experiences. The abstract is where the layers of interpretation of the coaches' experiences are explored (Smith, 2004). Decontextualisation seeks to use this circle of analysis as a way to break the data down into meaning units where codes are assigned (Bengtsson, 2016). The principle of coding process is to bring a level of meaning and order to the abstract observations gathered through interviews (Bengtsson, 2016).

During the recontextualisation process, any uncoded text is re-examined and non-essentials deleted to eliminate redundant data (Bengtsson, 2016). Stage three is the categorisation phase, where the essence is editing and seeking connection. Essentially the meaning units move from chronological lists, held within the context of the transcript, to connected lists linked by themes (Smith et. al, 2009). Each theme was represented on post-it notes, colour coded by participant, and moved as connections formed; an iterative process of forming and reframing clusters of themes is undertaken. Overarching shared sense-making based on themes are developed into superordinate themes guided by reflecting on theoretical knowledge (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009; Creswell, 2013; Betgessson, 2016). The final stage that requires mediation is the compilation phase (Smith et al., 2009) where underlying meanings extracted from the data are reconciled with participants' own words to gain an essence of their experience which are formed into the final superordinate themes.

A final consideration recognised the importance of procedural ethics and maintaining privacy and confidentiality of the six participating team coaches. In line with Tracy (2010) recommendations to protect anonymity six fictional names were assigned; Andy, Bina, Claire, Delia, Erik and Felix.

Findings

'Collective fusion,' an overarching superordinate theme derived through interpretative analysis of the participating team coaches' experiences, explore the metaphors identified through photo-elicitation regarding shared leadership. 'Collective fusion' particularly concerns team coaches focus on developing a shared understanding where team ideas fuse together.

Bina believes that conditional requirements must be established within the coaching process before a team can engage in shared leadership. Bina's account charts her experience of how coaching facilitates shared leadership and conceptualises the emergence of a team ready to share leadership as a sensation. Bina uses an explosion as her metaphor to reflect the energy in the room she senses. The energies for her are tangible:

> Bina: *'Shared leadership starts to emerge when the chemistry is right, and that tends to be when they understand, they have a common purpose and then they move from having little understanding of who they were collectively to a sense of what they are capable of. That is powerful for the team and sparks energy.'*

The conditions Bina describes relates to team members attaining a shared understanding of their purpose and fostering personal attitudes that support common sense-making of teamwork and shared leadership. Coaching focus, for Bina, is on reframing individual team members' sense-making in relation to contextualising the team's purpose. As common understanding develops, members are believed to become more individually motivated, committed to progressing the team's goal.

In addition to knowledge being shared, a certain energy is noticed by Bina. The energy emerges from within team members, to which Bina assigned significance. She embodies the energy, and it becomes a key data source for her coaching. She interprets such energy and adjusts her role, practice and presence as a coach accordingly 'to encourage the team to collectively progress understanding'. Bina describes how her role in the room changes in-the-moment; authoritative or leader figure, to informative or educator, facilitating or merging into the background to 'put my feet up and have a cuppa'. What becomes evident from her account is the importance of being in the moment with the team and following their lead.

For Bina, the fusion of a team's diverse interpretations within a team into one unified understanding or collective knowledge is a foundational element of her coaching practice in pursuing shared

leadership. Again, Bina senses the energy that emanates from a team. The energy provides the team with an enthusiasm or a momentum for collaboration, however she recognises that a lack of understanding can lead to 'collective dysfunction.'

Although Bina is working diligently as a coach to facilitate shared understanding, what emerges for her is a moment when energy outweighs unity. By interpreting the energy, she is able to engage with the team's enthusiasm and eagerness, which is in contrast with the team's depth of contextual understanding regarding the purpose as this is insufficient to provide the team with shared leadership conditions. What Bina is describing is the coaching intervention as a journey of shifting perceptions, which is not linear. She follows the team, using the energy in the room as part of her own sense-making, before making a decision relating to the coaching intervention.

A cup of tea is Andy's vehicle for conveying his sense of shared leadership.

> Andy: *Sharing leadership is about creating an environment to enable everyone...anyone can make it happen, to allow for a greater good'.*

The environment Andy is referring to is one which 'allow[s] emergent collaboration'. Andy's hands continuously move in a circular motion, emphasising the dynamic nature of teams as they continuously shift; unifying, separating and re-unifying. For Andy and Bina, unification is a journey which requires a conscious act to enable a team to come together, it is not something that automatically occurs because 'a team is labeled a team.'

Andy believes some teams do not have natural energy, and that it needs to be cultivated. He believes the approach to be in the same manner as unity by intentionally 'blending' understanding to cultivate enthusiasm and motivation within the team. Andy emphasises how the process of developing unity and energy is not a singular encounter; instead, it requires continuous maintenance, as teams fragment over time as team membership and goals evolve.

A jigsaw was Claire's metaphor. She uses such symbolism to illustrate her view that the paradigm necessitates the unification of individual talents and expertise, like the various sizes and shapes of a jigsaw into a configuration that favours shared leadership. Unity for Claire reduces a team's sense of fragmentation that comes from different people, with different perspectives, skills and expertise being brought together for a purpose. Claire, like Bina and Andy believe a team have to be brought together. The act of bringing them together is to contexualise the 'why', and if not answered 'a team becomes 'disruptive';

> Claire: *'this is why we're going for it, this is what they're hoping for, this is what it will bring us, and it's kind of all purpose stuff of "why" that needs to be set out'.*

Clarifying vision, purpose and goals for the team within the context of the organisation goals is foundational for Claire. From Claire's perspective, these factors set contextual boundaries for team understanding which, once understood, give rise to unification. Claire's metaphor emphasises that unity progresses and reduces the sense of fragmentation within the team through the development of an agreed and accepted knowledge-base.

Claire discussed freely on several occasions how she sensed energy in the room, how it could be 'visceral' and, like Bina and Andy, she used the experience of the energy to make decisions on how to progress with the team in the pursuit of shared understanding.

For Delia she quickly identifies with a caterpillar-track as her visual for shared leadership. She is confident in her choice and immediately discusses her precise and succinct understanding of shared leadership.

Delia: *'Why the caterpillar tracks? Because there is no beginning or end, is there? It just is. And it's continuous, and every bit is continuously moving, and it's independent of the other bit, but everything is just as important as every other bit. And that's the same as shared leadership. Eventually, everything will be at the front of some point, pushing forward [Laugh]'*.

According to Delia, the distinct but interconnected parts symbolises a group of individuals with different expertise and responsibilities, who are unified. She believes that the sole purpose of the team is to progress forwards, and each member of the team will eventually assume a leadership role and relinquish it to another member of the team as requirements shift. Although unity is implicit within this metaphor, momentum is not. Delia identifies 'something is missing'; her role is to work with this sensed lack of energy to enable the team to take action.

Erik interprets the orchestra's resonance as the sense of team unity on the basis of a shared understanding of their purpose. In that moment, the team performs to their full potential. They are responsible, energised and eager to collaboratively progress towards the goal, 'take the lead' and assume accountability for it remaining 'in tune'.

Erik: *'Resonance with goal, resonance with the team, resonance within the team...the job is to play in tune, or it needs to be tuned-up by the team itself'*.

According to Erik, like Bina, Andy and Claire, unification is not automatic; one cannot simply form a team and expect organisational structures and processes to unify them. Erik describes it as a team not knowing 'any better than they are a team who is to share leadership.' In his experiences with teams, he recognises the fluidity of goals; 'project teams, management teams, agile team…their purpose is always moving'. The shifting nature of the team's understanding affects the team's continuous performance. The metaphor illustrates that higher energy and enthusiasm correspond to superior team performance and this is echoed in Felix's account. Felix clearly visualises a team that is playing with speed and accuracy when discussing the importance of understanding roles, positioning and responsibilities within his metaphor of a football team;

Felix: *'The ball moves faster around the pitch when all the team is in the right roles in the right position, yer, and the ball can now play with any person, yer, it can be played by any person on the pitch and passed onto any other team member. There is a shared consciousness that they all know what happens now and next'*.

From Felix's perspective, unity is achieved when individuals possess a strong contextual understanding of their position, their role and an understanding of when to take the lead, echoing all of the participants' perceptions. It seems that a tacit knowledge arises once a team is unified and performing. Each member understands what's expected of them, and each will step in and lead, and when required perform a supporting role. This metaphor like Erik's expresses that an eager and energetic unified team will take action when required in pursuit of the team's goal.

Discussion: Conceptualising team coaches' metaphors

The analysis highlights for participating team coaches the existence of unity and energy within team coaching situations of shared leadership. What all participants express is the varying degrees of unity and energy experienced whilst working with teams. Variance emerges from the varying degrees of understanding, or the discrepancies of individual sense-making in relation to the team's purpose. The depth and strength of understanding affects the team's capacity to engage with the shared leadership paradigm. The findings indicate during team coaching sessions, the participating team coaches are continually making decisions regarding what the team requires to deepen shared understanding. The coaches are responding the perceived shift in needs emerging from the team

regarding unity and energy. To conceptualise the differing experiences of unity and energy a matrix diagram has been developed (Figure 1), composing of four quadrants and two axes. The axes represent a low-to-high spectrum reflecting the level of unity and energy experienced by team coaches. Each quadrant represents the four team states: Tentative, Eager, Functional and Conscious. Each team state reflects a coach's in-practice moment and offers insight of team coaches' interventions.

Figure 1: Unity and Energy Matrix
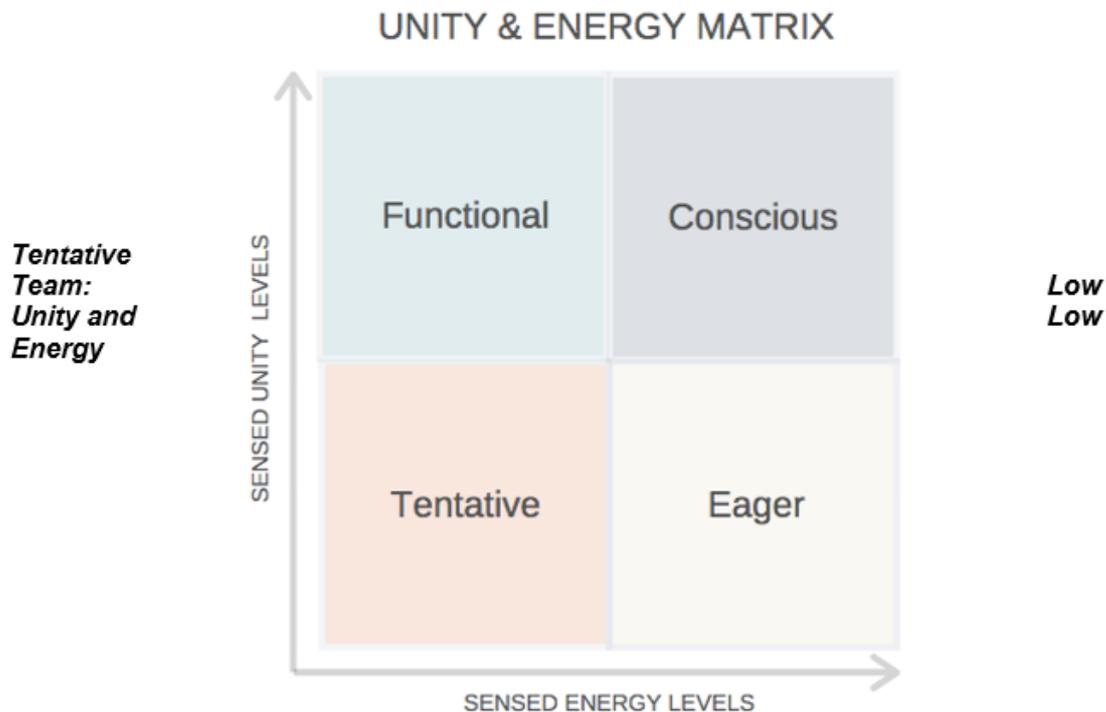
The participants highlight when a team has not developed the collective consciousness to be able to effectively work together results in tentative behaviours. The early stages of team formation is characterised by a team's lack of understanding and awareness of their purpose as a collective (Hackman and Wageman, 2005; Peters & Carr, 2013; Hawkins 2018). For the team to evolve, they require support in developing a framework of understanding of existence, regarding purpose, goal, team capabilities and roles (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Carson, et al., 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007; Hawkins, 2014). At the same time, the team's energy and eagerness have yet to be harnessed (de Vries et al., 2006; Rod & Fridjhon, 2016). The findings indicate the team has yet to tap into their own energy source for mobilising themselves towards reaching the goal (Katzenbach & Smith, 1983; Bruch & Vogel, 2011; Hawkins, 2017). The coaching process is positioned to open-up dialogue, which will focus on contextualising the team's purpose and contextualise the team's collective efforts in relation to supporting organisational aims (Bruch & Vogel, 2011). The output of the process is a shared agreement, or a co-created understanding where personal sense making aligns with what is expected of the team in pursuit of the goal (Hawkins, 2014).

Eager Team: Low Unity and High Energy

The research highlights how an Eager Team lacks maturity; what characterises an Eager Team is that members are connected to the overarching vision, there is a general understanding of their purpose (Bruch & Vogel, 2011). The missing element is a collective knowledge regarding the

team's specific purpose. Without shared understanding, subjective perceptions are known to impact team performance. The findings indicate conflict could arise from incompatible perceptions (McGrath, 1991; Tuckerman, 1977). Providing space for team members to 'voice' (Carson et al., 2007) and build contextual understanding regarding the team's purpose, specific roles and team members capabilities is the role of the coach (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Carson, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007). The coach uses and refocuses the energy in the coaching environment to work on developing collective understanding (Thornton, 2010).

Functional Team: High Unity and Low Energy

What characterises a functional team is a level of maturity is already established resulting in a strong interconnection within the team. A team's eagerness and therefore the momentum of the team is however tempered. A functional team is task driven rather than collaboratively working (Hawkins, 2018) The research highlights how coaches encourage reflection to develop a shared learning experience, demystifying held personal perceptions or sense-making relating to the team's purpose and individual capabilities (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). By collectively reframing and aligning team understanding, what emerges is a positive team energy (Bruch & Vogel, 2006).

Conscious Team: High Unity and High Energy

The characteristics of a Conscious Team are they possess two dynamics of unity and energy. The dynamics emerge from an in-depth shared knowledge being owned at a team level (Weick, 1995; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Mathieu et al., 2008). Team members who have a strong sense of unity will focus on the needs of the team (Kegan, 1994); team members will adopt and relinquish leadership as the needs of the group shift (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The team's cooperation is set within the shared frameworks of understanding and is owned by team members. The findings emphasise a Conscious Team will not implicitly remain conscious; continuous support is required to allow the team and its purpose to evolve (Hawkins 2014).

Conclusions

The research reveals that for shared leadership to develop, coaching focuses on developing a co-created collective awareness and enthusiasm regarding purpose of the team. The findings identify three coaching priorities; developing space for open dialogue, developing a shared framework of knowledge and responding to the team needs as they develop in-the-moment.

The first priority is developing and maintaining a space for teams to openly voice personal sense-making of perceptions of team purpose, roles and responsibilities (Carson et al., 2007; Edmondson, 1999; Britton, 2013). Coaches initially employ the foundational elements of team coaching, namely a safe space where the development of trust, reflection and reframing are a crucial transition tool in the journey of a team forming or developing in maturity (Edmondson, 1999; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Carson et al., 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007). Team coaches are combining theory and personal experience of team coaching to inform their decision on how to embark on a coaching engagement and how to set up a coaching environment in readiness for a team to engage in shared leadership (Edmondson, 1999; Clutterbuck, 2007; Britton, 2013; Hawkins, 2014).

The second priority for the coaches is to develop a shared framework of understanding where individual sense-making is unified. The study identified two emergent dynamics of unity and energy which are reliant on the development of a collective or unified knowledge held by its team's members. Unity specifically is connected to a sense of shared knowledge regarding purpose and common goal which supports Carson et al's. (2007) and Ensley et al's. (2006) understanding of the role of these factors in promoting shared leadership. Energy relates to shared understanding of

how the team's goal supports the organisational aims, de Vries et al., 2006 believe the wider perspective connects personal contribution or efforts to supporting the organisational aims. The awareness brought about by contextual understanding develops in team members a sense of empowerment, willingness and eagerness to participate as part of the team (de Vries et al., 2006).

Combining unity and energy produces an energy and motivation to take action (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993), combined with aligned knowledge or a collective awareness contextualised within team level and organisational setting (Carson et al's., 2007). This is an important foundational element tin the team's journey towards sharing leadership.

Insights also indicate energy has a further powerful quality as an emergent team state; an outcome of a team forming produces an energy (Rod & Fridjhon, 2016). Once a team has formed, the study reveals team development is not linear; the dynamic qualities of a team results in different developmental paths where the team express different energy and unity states (McGrath, 1991; Hawkins, 2014). Energy can be productive if developed and managed, or corrosive when neglected (Bruch & Vogel, 2006). Similarly, the shared knowledge that unifies a team and contextualises team membership, without collaboration in its development, leads to personal sense-making. The study reveals personal sense-making is linked to misaligned assumptions or ambiguous perceptions, weakening the strength of the knowledge framework (Weick 1995) and changing the energy produced by the team (Bruch & Vogel, 2006).

Finally, coaches take the lead from the team, working in-the-moment and using the experience of unity and energy within the room to inform coaching interventions. What emerges from the study is that team development can be viewed as a non-linear journey which requires conscious acts of management (Hawkins, 2014), requiring the coach to continuously shift roles, behaviours and presence (Hackman and Wageman 2005. Coaches fade in and out of the coaching engagement (Rod & Fridjhon, 2016), informed by what team dynamics emerge in the coaching environment. Unity and energy is therefore a co-created process with the coach (Thornton, 2010). The notion positions team coaching as an ongoing relationship (Hawkins' (2014), rebuffing the singular encounter Carson et al. (2007) and Morgeson (2005) positioned the role for coaching in. As teams continually shift over time, so too does a team's energy and unity states which may require interventions to realign the team (Hawkins, 2014).

Implications and Recommendations for Research

The insights gathered in this study have captured the voices of team coaches reflecting on their experiences whilst coaching in shared leadership situations. The study draws attention to the value in subjective real-world experiences in providing fresh insights to team coaching literature. The findings emphasise how team coaching environments are fluid, teams do not develop on a linear trajectory, and team coaches' interventions are in fact informed by what team dynamics emerge in the coaching environment. These findings echo James (2017), Hastings and Pennington (2019) and Lawrence and Whyte's (2017) studies and give weight to further research reflecting on how team coaches respond to different team situations. Theory and practice would benefit from being brought together to reflect the adaptable nature of team coaches' situations. Research would benefit from further exploring personal experience and sense-making of coaching whilst in-action in understanding decision making, what informs which theoretical interventions are adopted and what role, behaviour and presence to bring to the coaching engagement. The coaching-in-practice focus would respond to the level of dissatisfaction held within current literature of the lack of parity with what is experienced whilst coaching to what is reflected in theory.

The subjective experience has also revealed contributory understanding to the processes undertaken in developing conditions for shared leadership and the importance placed on developing shared knowledge. Collective understanding unifies a team and contextualises team membership. Variances in understanding strengthens or weakens a team's capacity to engage with

the paradigm. To conceptualise the variances in collective knowledge the coaches experienced, the Unity and Energy Matrix has been developed depicting four emergent team states; Tentative, Eager, Functional and Conscious. The matrix serves as a reflection tool as part of in-the-moment coaching or in-reflection of coaching actions (Schon, 1985). Although it applies an experiential lens, it has the potential to develop into a model for understanding shared leadership coaching situations. Therefore, with more vigorous testing, it could prove to be an interesting tool for team coaching literature. Although the present study offers insight specifically into two shifting dynamics, further research is required to reveal other contributory dynamics that coaches experience and work with whilst coaching.

At present, the literature lacks longitudinal research that combines team coaching within situations such as shared leadership. Such inquiry could reveal the effectiveness of team coaching over a longer period of time and clarify how teams evolve within this environment. The study indicates coaches could take on a more significant role and potentially replace specific leadership or management functions in combination with working with self-managed teams of shared leadership. Thus, for this reconceptualisation to be validated, further evidence-based studies are warranted.

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