Academic Paper

The process of one-to-one coaching supervision from the perspectives of the coach and coaching supervisor: what do coaching supervisors actually do?

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Abstract

To understand what coaching supervisors do, I conducted an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of practitioners' lived experience through semi-structured interviews with three coach/supervisor dyads. The findings suggest coaching supervisors and their supervisees are clear about the defining features and tasks of coaching supervision. I propose a coaching supervision process heuristic, which describes joint exploration as an antecedent to the supervisor choosing interventions that support the functions of coaching supervision. Intuition, the supervisor's coaching experience and their expertise in the process of coaching inform this choice. Further research is needed to develop the heuristic into a conceptual framework for coaching supervision interventions.

Keywords

Coaching supervision, phenomenology, reflective practice, supervision interventions, working alliance

Introduction

While there has been growth in the adoption of supervision in coaching (Hawkins and Turner, 2017), it is predicated on the helping profession model which traces its roots to clinical supervision. And yet as Bachkirova, Jackson, Hennig and Moral (2020, p31) note, "the existing literature in counselling and psychotherapy, although useful in some regard, is not fully applicable to the developing discipline of coaching supervision." There appear to be two strategies for defining coaching supervision. Firstly, the approach that attempts comprehensive definitions comprising detailed descriptions of purpose, process and participants, for example see Hawkins and Smith (2013), Hodge (2016), Association for Coaching (2018). Secondly, an approach that focuses on its essential features, for example see Carroll (2007), Bachkirova (2008), De Haan (2012).

Coaching professional bodies tend towards the former and yet cannot agree on the purpose of supervision. For ICF (2022), it is "capacity building", whereas for Association for Coaching (2018) it is an important practice "to gain ethical competency." EMCC's definition incorporates both these intentions and goes further, suggesting supervision is normative, for quality control, and for the coach's support and development by stating its purpose as:

> *To ensure the supervisee maintains appropriate professional standards; to facilitate the development of the supervisee's professional practice [and] to provide support for the supervisee's well-being. (EMCC, 2022).*

Nor can the professional bodies agree on whether coaching supervision is a "time" (Association for Coaching, 2018), "space" (EMCC, 2022), or "practice" (ICF, 2022), although they do recognise and agree coaching supervision is a reflective dialogue between two (or more) professionals for the benefit of both coach and their clients.

Bachkirova et al (2020) note the lack of empirically researched definitions, although rejoice that, "the conceptualisation of coaching supervision is subject to ongoing inquiry" (p38).

Literature Review

The process of supervision

What actually happens during a coaching supervision session? At one end of the spectrum lie well-documented models and frameworks as taught in coaching supervision schools, such as Hawkins' 7-Eyed Model (Hawkins and Smith, 2013). At the other end of the spectrum, anything goes as long as it is contracted for and co-constructed as part of the concept of a "developmental space" (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2005).

Hawkins and Smith (2013) set out their CLEAR process of supervision, suggesting it is similar to a coaching process, but with significant differences in contracting. Contracting is a core competence for coaching supervisors. EMCC, for example, suggest in Section 1 of their supervision competence framework that a competent supervisor "manages the supervision contract and process" when the supervisor:

> *1.1 Invites exploration of the purpose of supervision and how it is different from coaching/mentoring. 1.2 describes frameworks that underpin their supervision practice [and] … 1.3(b) agrees and reviews professional expectations, which may include roles and responsibilities, boundaries and power dynamics. (EMCC, 2019).*

This shows how explicitly agreeing the process of supervision fits within contracting and hints at the problematic nature of contracting for the boundary and relationship dynamics of supervision.

Boundary dynamics – working alliance and the scope of supervision

Boundary dynamics include practicalities such as the length of sessions, the duration of the programme and fees to be paid. Supervision is a "working alliance" (Hawkins and Smith, 2013) between two professionals, and the place where the sessions are undertaken acts as a container for supervision; a safe place to which the dyad returns to hold the space and reflective dialogue between them. This place may signify the power dynamic in the relationship.

Boundary dynamics also include contracting for scope, such as the supervisee's goals and supervisor's approach, the latter including the use of models, frameworks or philosophical stance. This scope may include elements of coaching and mentoring but is completely defined by neither. Stokes, Diochon and Otter (2020) argue that the context for coaching/mentoring plays an active role in the way that practitioners deploy their interventions, concluding that they will choose from either the coaching or mentoring discourse to identify helpful interventions. One dimension they consider is the sociocultural/relationship dimension: coaches are expected to possess process expertise, whereas mentors are expected to possess relevant experience. I suggest coaching supervisors are expected to possess both.

Relationship dynamics - power in the working alliance

Welman and Bachkirova (2010, p.140) suggest, "The topic of power has largely been ignored in the coaching literature," let alone the coaching supervision literature. There are three ways power could play out in a coaching supervision relationship:

- Lukes (2005) suggests there does not need to be conflict in a relationship in order for there to be a power play, so coaching supervision runs the risk of privileging the supervisor as a more experienced coach, exercising expert power (French and Raven, 1962) over their protégé.
- In contrast, the supervisee may exercise power through inaction or pursuing ulterior agendas. This is analogous to the ways that coachees can exercise power in coaching relationships (Louis and Diochon, 2014; Lukes, 2005).
- Organisationally, the professional bodies exert power through their agenda to professionalise coaching. Garvey (2011) suggests this can be viewed positively as creating ethical and behavioural standards or negatively as a way of excluding coaches of "lower standing". There is a risk the supervisor colludes with this Managerial Discourse, which privileges a corporatist agenda rather than privileging the work of supervision. I use the term privilege here to note that power represents one party exercising control over another. Just as Western (2012) suggests internal coaches need to recognise and engage with the power dynamics within their organisation in order to emancipate their practice, perhaps the supervisory dyad needs to critically engage with the power play from the professional bodies in order to emancipate their practice.

The functions and tasks of supervision

Proctor (1988) sets out the functions of supervision as Formative, Restorative and Normative. Hawkins and Smith (2013) applied these counselling supervision functions to coaching supervision and renamed them as Developmental, Resourcing and Qualitative (respectively). Whatever terminology is used to articulate them, researchers have accepted this three-legged definition of the functions of coaching supervision (Bachkirova et al, 2020; Hawkins and McMahon, 2020; Jackson and Bachkirova, 2018). Hawkins and Smith (2013) suggest the work of supervision is often where these three functions "intermingle." Armour (2018) attempts to integrate these different descriptions of supervision functions along with social work supervision (Kadushin, 1976) and Transactional Analysis supervision (Newton, 2012). Armour (2018) identifies many connections and overlaps but fails to provide compelling evidence that the Hawkins and Smith (2013) definition is lacking.

The process of supervision is "a framework of tasks between supervisor and supervisee within the working alliance model" (Proctor 2000, p.12). These tasks support the functions of supervision and relate to the experience of the working alliance between supervisor and supervisee (Newton 2012; Armour 2018).

There appears therefore to be a need to define the tasks of coaching supervision (Armour, 2018). While Carroll (1996) describes seven tasks of supervision, the linear mapping to the supervisory

functions he proposes is perhaps too simplistic and sometimes contradictory. For example he maps the evaluating task to the formative function, but surely there are normative elements to it. There are other examples. In Table 1, I briefly analyse Carroll's (1996) counselling supervision tasks when applied in a coaching supervision context.

Table 1: The tasks of coaching supervision

Carroll's (1996) supervision tasks	Similarities and differences when applied in a coaching supervision context
Creating the learning relationship	This is a task, but not an intervention. It is initially covered during contracting as part of the working alliance and changes over time.
Teaching	An essential part of supervision that supports the qualitative and developmental functions.
Counselling	Carroll suggests this includes supporting the supervisee, and counselling only in relation to the issues arising from their counselling work. I suggest in coaching supervision, a supervisor would coach the supervisee on anything that is affecting their coaching practice. This intervention might be named Supporting and/or Coaching in a coaching supervision context and predominantly supports the resourcing function.
Monitoring ethics	An intervention that supports both the qualitative and developmental functions.
Evaluating	Carroll describes formal evaluation as a separate stage of the supervision process. There is no equivalent in coaching, where supervision tends to be separated from training qualification. Informal evaluation supports the qualitative and developmental functions.
Consultative	Here, the supervisor takes a systemic view, which is more comprehensively described in Hawkins' 7-Eyed Model (Hawkins and Smith, 2013). It is not an intervention, rather a framework for directing attention during supervision.
Administrative	Carroll describes this as comprising managerial administration and promulgation of good standards. In coaching supervision, the former would only be relevant where the supervisor and supervisee both work together within an organisational setting. The latter could be combined with monitoring ethics as documented in a code of conduct such as the Global Code (EMCC, 2018).

As such the intervening tasks of coaching supervision appear to be:

- Teaching, which supports the qualitative and developmental functions.
- Supporting (or coaching), which supports the resourcing function.
- Monitoring (including Administration), which supports the qualitative and developmental functions.
- Evaluating, which supports the qualitative and developmental functions.

To this list, we can also add an Analysing task. Carroll does not appear separately to identify that the supervisor must help the supervisee analyse and reframe the case or theme they have brought to supervision as a precursor to choosing an intervention. Hawkins and Smith (2013) set out their CLEAR process of supervision. Between the Contracting and Review stages, this process involves Listening, Exploring and choosing Action. These three activities map to three of the stages in Page & Wosket's (1994) cyclical model: Focus, Space and Bridge. In either model, these stages represent both the initial joint analysis, followed by the supervisor's intervention and the subsequent commitment to action. The Analysing task therefore supports all functions.

This task may include exploring what is really going on in the supervisee's case or theme, or exploring the supervisee's values, beliefs and identity through testing and reframing their assumptions.

How do supervisors choose supervision interventions?

There is little research into this topic. Gray (2017) suggests, "there is no specific theoretical model for effective supervision." Kotte (2017) claims Hawkins' 7-Eyed model (Hawkins and Shohet, 1989) is pre-eminent, whereas Lucas (2020) draws together 101 coaching supervision "techniques, approaches, enquiries and experiments" across ten supervisory philosophies, with the 7-Eyed Model being merely one of the 101!

The literature reveals three broad categories of coaching supervision:

- Psychotherapy-based approaches that are lifted from clinical practice - van Deurzen-Smith (1988), Berne (1961), de Shazer (1994), or lifted and adapted to coaching or supervision - Allan and Whybrow (2019), Frawley-O'Dea and Sarnat (2001), Milne and Reiser (2017). Such approaches could be viewed as either models/techniques (Lucas, 2020) or theoretical frameworks (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020), depending on how they are applied.
- Process-based or 'social role' approaches, which focus on the supervisor's role and process. These would include the 7-Eyed model of supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 1989) and Constellations (Whittington, 2020).
- 'Eclectic' (Lucas, 2020), or 'Second Generation' (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020), where the supervisor "recognises that the complexity of the issues brought to supervision requires a portfolio of responses from an eclectic base of multiple disciplines and theoretical approaches." (Lucas, 2020, p1).

These categories are analogous with Clutterbuck's (2010) coach maturity model: (1) Models; (2) Process; (3) Philosophy/Theoretical Framework; (4) "Managed Eclecticism".

I have excluded from my categorisation what Hawkins and McMahon (2020) refer to as "developmental" approaches where the supervisor acts predominantly as a mentor, as they "generally do not attend to professional development needs in post-qualification practice" (p75). Novice coaches might well be seeking a supervisor-as-mentor. This changes over time (Carroll, 1996). It is interesting for this research how the supervisory experience changes as the supervisor's approach matures.

Heron (1991) outlined six categories of supervision intervention: Prescriptive, Informative and Confronting being more authoritative interventions; and Cathartic, Catalytic and Supportive being more facilitative interventions that encourage and affirm the supervisee. This is often suggested as a useful framework for choosing supervision interventions (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020; Lucas, 2020) and has been researched further in other supervisory settings such as training mental health nursing supervisors (Sloan, 2006), but there is little empirical research on its uses and efficacy in coaching supervision.

Clutterbuck suggests the role of 'intuition' in choosing interventions is important and most apparent in the managed eclectic coach, where the critical question the coach asks themselves is,

> *Are we both relaxed enough to allow the issue and the solution to emerge in whatever way they will? Do I need to apply any techniques or processes at all? If I do, what does the client context tell me about how to select from the wide choice available to me? (Clutterbuck, 2010).*

Research questions arising

The overarching questions for this research are:

- What do practitioner supervisors and their supervisees expect from engaging in supervision?
- How does this compare to the existing definitions of coaching supervision?
- How do their expectations compare to their experience of supervision?

The nature of the working alliance between supervisor and supervisee is a specific area of interest. The literature suggests it is not the supervisor who chooses interventions from a position of being the expert coach; from the overseeing, more powerful *super*-visor; but as an equal, a peer to hold space for reflective practice to emerge. As such, contracting is a critical part of agreeing expectations of each other, especially in relation to the scope of supervision and the nature of the relationship: is there an expectation of equality in the working alliance, or not?

The prevailing definitions of supervision tasks and interventions and the maturity of the supervisory dyad indicate three further questions for this study:

- Are the four intervening tasks of supervision – Teaching, Supporting, Monitoring and Evaluating (as derived from Carroll (1996)) - and supplemented with a separate Analysing task - a sufficient description of the tasks of coaching supervision?
- How do supervisors choose their interventions?
- Is this choice based on their supervision training (models or process-based), or who they are as a coach (philosophy or theoretical framework), Heron's (1991) categories, or something else?

Methodology

Phenomenological research is particularly suited to understanding what is happening in coaching, and by corollary coaching supervision, as it focuses primarily on people's lived experiences (Bachkirova, Rose and Noon, 2020). Heideggerian phenomenology, which includes *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* ('IPA') (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), acknowledges the researcher is not separate from the world they examine, but the world is revealed by their being in it.

In this research, it is my intention is to develop knowledge of coaching supervision from the first-person perspective rather than observing it from a third-person position. My role is to analyse the data and interpret the meaning of the research partners' experiences. "Hermeneutic principles justify the IPA researcher in generating a reading of accounts which goes beyond witnessing and description." (Bachkirova et al, 2020). My intention is to seek similarities and differences in the lived experience of coaching supervision, from both the coach and the coaching supervisor's perspectives and not to attempt to generalise it into a theoretical model. However, it does have the potential to generate transferable findings (Smith, et al., 2009).

Research partners

IPA typically studies small samples of homogeneous and purposively selected (Rajasinghe, 2020) research partners who are similarly experienced and who can generate in-depth reflexive accounts of their experiences (Finlay, 2012). The main challenge of undertaking IPA with experienced coaches and supervisors arises due to their tendency to theorise their lived experience and thus lose the "raw and immediate nuances that are most important in phenomenology." (Bachkirova et al, 2020). I have purposively chosen three dyads, each comprising a coach and their supervisor. I wanted some variation in approach to coaching supervision balanced with experience. To assure homogeneity, I therefore sought coaching supervisors with suitable supervision qualifications and length of experience, however, to avoid narrowing my sample, did not limit my search to one particular school of thought.

Similarly, I approached several coaching networks to seek coaches with a suitable qualification and length of experience. Two supervisors came forward and after an initial discussion, approached their own supervisees to propose their chosen supervisee for the research. One coach came forward and approached their supervisor. Each coach has been practising professionally for over ten years. They each have a coaching qualification at postgraduate certificate level or higher. Their self-proclaimed coaching approaches can be described as "managed eclecticism" (Clutterbuck 2010). The coaching supervisors have each been practising for over eight years, and each has a coaching supervision qualification and coaching accreditation from either their training organisation or from one of the coaching professional bodies. I am satisfied there is sufficient homogeneity in the sample.

Each participant volunteered to be interviewed individually. They registered their interest and voluntarily signed a consent form covering the recording of their responses, confidentiality and their right to withdraw. They each provided some information about their practice. Aliases have been used to preserve anonymity.

- Rachel is a Gestalt coach and supervisor with a background in higher education. She provides a safe, "confidential and reflective space" for Ruth, who coaches leaders in the public and voluntary sector on their systemic challenges.
- Erin provides "practical, systemic and exploratory" supervision to Freddie, who has a background in counselling and coaching. He uses a range of approaches to coach executives in organisational settings.
- Xanthe provides "integrative, humanistic and collaborative" supervision to help Ethan focus on his "professional, ethical and learning edges." Ethan coaches business owners and senior leaders, often conducting coaching outdoors.

Interviews

My intention in designing a semi-structured interview was not to provide research partners with specific questions in advance but to give them the opportunity to influence the direction of the interview, to express their views and to revise, remove or add to anything they said during the interview. However, it was important to me to structure the interview in a way that captured the thinking, feeling and doing of coaching supervision and so I structured the interview loosely around what happens before, during and after a coaching supervision session, using questions such as:

- What is your experience of how your supervisor/ee shows up in supervision?
- How does your experience of supervision make you think and feel differently about your practice?
- How do you use what you have experienced in supervision?

The interviews were conducted using Zoom videoconferencing technology over a period of three weeks, with no more than two interviews conducted on one day. Each was approximately one hour in duration. They were recorded and transcribed. I was careful to keep each interview 'clean' by having sufficient time between interviews to break state and engage in other activity. I did not begin to analyse the data until all six interviews had been conducted.

Analysis

I commenced with manual textual analysis to identify emerging themes and capture the "essential meaning" (Borredon, 2000) of each interviewee's experience. My intention was to study the phenomena of supervision interventions and also the wide-ranging intentional relations (Vagle, 2018) that appear in connection with them (expectations, hope, desire, learning, etc.).

This initial analysis followed a three-stage process:

1. Primary distillation. I firstly captured notable experiences on each transcript that made an impression by manually highlighting them, giving each a short title and transcribing it onto a sticky note. I then grouped the sticky notes into themes and titled the theme.
   Example: From Xanthe's transcript, "Working with other coaches gives you a lot of insight. I've learnt a huge amount. So it gives you some wisdom to bring into coaching." This was titled "Supervisor learning", and subsequently grouped with three other sticky notes to form the theme, "Learning".
2. Secondary distillation. I transcribed the thematic titles onto a new set of sticky notes and then grouped these to discern the meaning at the next level. This generated a meta-analysis for each research partner by linking themes and noticing emergent super-ordinate themes.
   Example: Learning linked with Identity to suggest the outcome of supervision that is most critical for Xanthe.
3. I wrote up the findings for each research partner and sent each of them a copy of their transcript and my initial findings for review.

Next, I combined each dyad's findings to generate a rich description of the essential meaning of the dyad's experience of coaching supervision. As in Stages 2 and 3, this required abstractive interpretation and comparison to theory and began to shed light on the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature.

Finally, I arrived at the overarching essential meaning of the research partners' experiences, which I collated as superordinate themes. In the example above, the experience of Xanthe/Ethan dyad linked strongly to both other dyads under the thematic title, "Mutual learning as an outcome."

Findings

What is coaching supervision?

Coaching supervision is a relational space for externalising reflective practice

Whereas the literature is inconsistent, the research partners were all clear regarding their definition of coaching supervision as a relational space to further the supervisee's reflective practice by externalising it with their supervisor. Ruth says her experience of the process of supervision is one of Rachel "holding… a really beautiful, safe space." Erin notes, "I want a relationship with my clients, … there's a human connection, first and foremost… It doesn't feel like it's a process thing. It does feel more relational." Xanthe and Ethan both describe it as a "safe and protected space" rather than a process.

The experience of supervision matches expectations

It is clear each supervisee had contracted with their supervisor for outcomes aligned with their understanding of supervision and their wants and needs from it, principally for their learning and development. The supervisees all compared their experience of being supervised favourably to their expectations. Ruth describes supervision as, "a journey. I'm empowered to wander through the forest and see where it gets me." Ethan suggests Xanthe has been "instrumental in [his] coaching development, philosophy and mastery." Xanthe and Ethan have a matched expectation that the intervention will use somatic or creative techniques, such as constellations, because that is what Xanthe is known for. They both recognise the value of "presence," "grounding," "trust" and "intuition."

Mutual learning as an outcome

As well as his own learning, Freddie describes the outcomes as learning for his supervisor. "You want [your supervisor's] current awareness to be on the edge of the field, and from multiple contributions from different supervisees." The supervisors also note they experience *mutual* learning as an additional outcome. Rachel describes this as "learning together," and expresses "surprise" at learning about herself and about her coaching practice. Erin questions her own practice, "I go, 'Am I really being as effective as I could be as a coach?'… It just keeps me on top of my game. And makes me think about what I am doing. How do I continue to learn, develop, grow?" Xanthe recognises how supervising others has increased her understanding of her own identity as a coach. "Working with other coaches gives you a lot of insight. I've learnt a huge amount. So, it gives you some wisdom to bring into coaching."

The process of coaching supervision

Boundary dynamics

The approach to agreeing protected time for supervision differed between dyads. For example, Erin relies on supervisees choosing to book their next session, whereas Xanthe encourages her supervisees to book a programme of five or six sessions per annum in advance. Session length varies between one and three hours, although longer sessions were typically used for group supervision rather than individual supervision.

All the research partners referred to supervision as a "space" rather than a process. Xanthe thinks of her approach as "framing" that space. That said, she explicitly referred to the CLEAR supervision model (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020 p77), which she recognises as underpinning her process.

All three dyads had transitioned to working using videoconferencing during 2020, due to Covid-19 lockdowns. All research partners suggested this transition had affected neither the outcomes from supervision, nor the supervisory process. Nor had it negatively impacted their relationship. Ethan notes, "I don't think it's less effective. It just is a different dynamic." Xanthe comments, "I often think of it like there's another dimension that is the space we created; we sit in that dimension together," and, "I felt [sessions] wouldn't have been significantly different had I been standing beside him." Rachel notes negligible impact of adopting videoconferencing in her ability to make "contact and connection" when supervising. She suggests, "Actually, in a way, it's too connected. Sometimes I have to be thoughtful about the boundary with it. Because there's no other distraction." Erin and Freddie both suggest that videoconferencing has not negatively affected the relationship. Freddie notes,

> It's the synthesis of wisdom that comes in the evolving emergent relationship between supervisor and supervisee, which always has that sort of magical element to it… It just struck me how good a relationship I feel I have with Erin, and yet this is one person I've never met. The medium is irrelevant. But still, the outcomes can be quite staggering.

The supervisory relationship

The literature suggests a working alliance with an expectation that supervisors possess process expertise (like a coaching practitioner) and experience of coaching (like a coach mentor).

All the research partners mentioned the importance of trust in their working alliance. "I don't quite know where it's going, but I trust in the space," reflects Ethan on Xanthe's process. Erin describes her deepening and emergent relationship with Freddie as one of "vulnerability," "trust" and "platonic love." This supports the importance of process expertise and hints at equality in the working alliance as a partnership of equals. Rachel suggests, "I want it to be in service of the supervisee, first and foremost. … I want to be able to hold reflective space and be with someone properly." Ruth says,

> It feels very well partnered. It feels shoulder to shoulder. … I love the exploration space. I love being able to bring every bit of myself: the good, bad and the ugly. Because I think that it's only in that way that I feel as though I'm being true to a client.

Their relationship has deepened over time, demonstrated through vulnerability and trust. Ruth describes it as "relational."

Xanthe and Ethan's harmonious relationship also includes a specific expectation relating to Xanthe's coaching experience: her mastery of coaching and coaching supervision matches his desire to develop towards mastery of coaching. Xanthe notes, "I've got lots in my body bank. I hesitate to call it a toolkit, but there's a lot in there, and usually something will emerge."

Xanthe approaches her coaching and supervision with academic rigour. She recognises her own mastery. She even defines her practice using five Greek "goddess energies." For her, these energies relate to wisdom, learning and hope (Teaching/Developing), ethics (Monitoring/Evaluating), love (Supporting) and new insight (Analysing). Xanthe takes seriously her "responsibility for the containment and for the leading" of each session. She experiences her supervisees showing up with "excitement" at being there, "grateful" for the space, with "anticipation that some insights will emerge." Ethan seems in awe of his supervisor's knowledge as a coach and supervisor. He is "inspired by how she has a huge toolkit" and is "very inspired by her presence." She has been, "instrumental in [his] coaching development, philosophy and mastery."

Erin also notes, "[Freddie] also values the times when I've offered ideas, or approaches that maybe he's not considered before," indicating their mutual expectation of coach mentoring being part of the supervisory experience.

What interventions are used in coaching supervision?

Developing

All the research partners believe the primary purpose of coaching supervision is for a supervisee's development. Erin and Freddie believe supervision is primarily about learning and developing coaching skills. Erin notes skill development is especially relevant for new coaches.

Xanthe became a coaching supervisor because she "wanted to help coaches develop and grow," and to "support the professionalisation of the profession." Her supervisee Ethan uses supervision to help develop his coaching mastery into what Clutterbuck (2010) would describe as "managed eclecticism."

Ethan believes supervision has helped him to develop his self-awareness, ownership and responsibility. "[Developing] presence and mastery allows me to really check in on my authentic self."

Analysing

The literature overlooks Analysing as a task in itself, tacitly assuming it is present within other supervisory tasks. However, all the research participants talked about Analysing as exploration of their own coaching identity (i.e. as an intervention in itself) or as an antecedent to an intervention.

By following "threads," Rachel and Ruth jointly deconstruct and analyse the theme brought by Ruth. Rachel doesn't "do interventions," rather it is more "like two coaches talking." As such, for Rachel the intervention is the conversation, and the sensemaking that arises from it. "There's a kind of ease about it… I was telling myself just be patient, calm, and if that's where she's going to go, that's where she's going to go."

For Ruth, supervision includes Analysing her triggers, testing assumptions, exploring the "light and shade" of her identity and how she can use her whole self in service of her coaching clients. She uses the metaphor of rolling a penny round one of those spiral, wishing well coin collectors until "the penny drops" to describe her experience of supervision as a journey of exploration, an exercise that exorcises her thematic challenges. The outcomes for Ruth predominantly relate to her being different as a coach, rather than doing coaching differently. "I feel as though getting into the bedrock of [my identity] really empowers my coaching, because it empowers me."

Erin reflects on jointly Analysing with her supervisee Freddie, "I think what he values is the space to be able to just talk through what's going on for him,… he values the space, he values being listened to." Freddie notes the benefit of Analysing his blind spots, "I would miss my supervision, I

would feel like I was flying blind without it. And that's not because of the eyes of my supervisor, so much as my supervisor's capability of opening my eyes."

Xanthe feels supervisees expect to jointly analyse "what it really is" they have brought into supervision. She gently provokes them so that they analyse the reality of their topic and find ways, "… of seeing things as they are rather than how [the supervisee] was imagining they were." She continues, "I will try and interrupt with thoughts… and it will happen from a bit left field to nudge them into thinking about something differently." Ethan values how supervision, "keeps [him] always moving forward, and not getting into set patterns."

So, we see Analysing variously as a reality check, revealing blind spots, reframing and making sense of the supervisee's situation. My interpretation of this is that the coach and supervisor are seeking a new understanding of the case or theme the supervisee has brought to supervision either as an outcome in itself or as an antecedent to moving the conversation forward by choosing an intervention.

Supporting

Each dyad referred to Supporting as an intervention. Rachel and Ruth have co-created a "supportive space" for Ruth's reflective practice. Erin believes one of the tasks of supervision is giving reassurance that what is happening in supervisees' coaching sessions is "normal."

For Freddie,

> It's about having somebody who is a non-enmeshed ally, i.e., they are there for me, in order for me to practise well, they are not there to collude with me. But they're kind of rooting for me at the same time… There's a great deal of safety and there's a great deal of value in that.

Ethan elects to undertake supervision for emotional support reflecting, "It's quite a lonely sort of responsible environment being a coach."

Evaluating

Evaluating interventions were also present in the findings in relation to client outcomes. Freddie says, "We need somebody to hold us to account" to steer his coaching "towards productive outcomes." Ruth asks herself, "How well do I feel able to do the work [that] I feel would really benefit the client?" Erin suggests her supervisee's client is "metaphorically in the room."

However, the research partners referred to it much less frequently in relation to evaluating against codes of conduct, indicating they are less prone to privileging the professional bodies' Managerial agenda by using supervision to assess their practice against codes of ethical conduct. Examples where it was mentioned include Ruth, who referred to "unpicking ethical issues", reflecting further following supervision sessions and putting into practice what she has learnt, such as increasing the speed of her ethical decisions when coaching; Erin, who mentioned the scope of supervision includes exploring ethics and other topics that are "explored by boundary issues;" and Ethan, who wants to "explore coaching ethics and his blind spots in relation to them".

How do supervisors choose interventions?

Your philosophy of coaching informs your philosophy of supervision

Each research partner referred to using their intuition to navigate supervision. All the coaching supervisors use their presence and listening as a cornerstone of their supervision approach. However, Xanthe's recognition of her own proficiency and use of processual interventions contrasts to both Rachel's and Erin's emergent conversational processes.

Rachel facilitates her supervisee's development as a conversation in service of their being (rather than doing). Her dialogic approach is a psychotherapy-based approach (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020), based on Gestalt Psychotherapy, which is her theoretical frame for coaching and coaching supervision.

Erin also uses a dialogic approach, combining listening, support and challenge. This leads her to select interventions intuitively, which sometimes includes sharing her own coaching knowledge. This is an Eclectic approach (Lucas, 2020) to coaching supervision.

As such, these two dyads experience supervision as Analysing a co-constructed reality through dialogue between two professional coaches. The conversation emerges as they follow what they describe as "threads" of conversation to uncover hidden truths about what is really going on and the insight that brings. Rachel holds her process loosely, working "in a very fluid, emergent way," allowing the supervisee to lead. By intuitively following threads, they jointly deconstruct each theme Ruth brings to supervision. Rachel doesn't "do interventions," rather it is more "like two coaches talking."

As such, for Rachel the conversation is the intervention, along with the sensemaking that arises from it. Erin also follows a dialogic approach, noting sometimes it, "Feels more like a coaching conversation than it does a supervision conversation." She uses intuition to select appropriate interventions in-the-moment by noticing her somatic response to what Freddie brings to supervision, and then following the threads to reach productive outcomes.

Conversely, Xanthe trusts her intuition that an intervention will emerge. This is usually a somatic or creative technique, such as constellations. This is a systemic social role intervention, aligned to the Process-based approach to coaching supervision (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020), hinting both at her use of intuition and also her role modelling her coaching experience through her supervision practice. Such role modelling is perhaps closer to coach mentoring than the other two dyads' dialogic peer-to-peer process.

Therefore, to enact the task of supervision each supervisor draws on their philosophy of coaching supervision, which is no different to their philosophy of coaching. Hence, the evidence from this study supports the Coaching Supervision Academy's view that, "Who you are, is how you supervise," (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013).

The role of intuition

Both Erin and Xanthe note how they use intuition to choose supervision interventions and Freddie describes how he and Erin jointly use intuition to identify themes and then "pull at the threads" that lead to productive outcomes. Ethan recognises the supervisory space as suiting his preference for learning through "intuition" and "heart" rather than being "stuck in his head."

Clutterbuck (2010) suggests the role of 'intuition' in choosing interventions is important and most apparent in the Eclectic approach. While the evidence in relation to intuition above is brief, the findings do not fully support this view in relation to coaching supervision. Rather, intuition is an important theme in two of the supervisors' approaches, one being a Process-based approach whereas the other is an Eclectic approach.

Discussion

The findings suggest coaching supervision happens within a co-created relational space. The outcomes of coaching supervision are mutual learning for the coach and supervisor.

The functions of coaching supervision are supported by the activities a coaching supervisor and coach undertake together during supervision. The following five features are inducted from the foregoing analysis and begin to answer the question, 'What do coaching supervisors actually do?'

- *Intuiting* what supervision interventions would be most helpful based on their process expertise and coaching experience.
- (Jointly) *Analysing* each case or theme the coach brings to uncover a new co-constructed reality of the situation.
- This joint analysis leads to *Developing* the coaching practice of both the coach and the supervisor.
- It may also lead to *Supporting* the coach through emotional challenges that arise when coaching or
- *Evaluating* the coach's practice against what is expected of a coach in terms of both client outcomes and codes of good practice.

There is a clear mapping between functional definitions and three of these activities: Evaluating maps to the Qualitative function; Supporting maps to the Resourcing function; and Developing maps to the Developmental function.

What is less clear in the existing literature is the role of Intuiting and the explicit recognition of an Analysing task. Until the dyad has jointly analysed the situation, how does the supervisor choose an intervention? Indeed, in the dialogic approaches, the experience of coaching supervision is that joint analysis and intuitively following conversational 'threads' to uncover a new co-constructed reality is in itself an intervention.

The process of supervision follows these activities. There is clear contracting for time and place. The move to videoconferencing technology has not impacted the outcomes or the process of coach supervision negatively. Nor has it negatively impacted the supervisory relationship.

An effective supervisor is able to use their coaching experience and process expertise, perhaps moving effortlessly between the two, depending on the supervisee's needs for the case or theme they bring to supervision. This requires the supervisor to choose their intervention in-the-moment on a spectrum from experienced coach-as-mentor to collaborative peer coaching practitioner. This latter role fits with other current research into the usefulness of the "Servant-Leader model of Supervision" (Mahon 2021, after Greenleaf, 2002).

The supervisees appear to be comfortable managing the ambiguity between the professional bodies' definitions of good practice and their own practitioners' description of effective coaching. They tend to be more interested in developing themselves into the coach they want to be than evaluating themselves against the coach their professional body says they need to be.

Supervisors draw on their own well-developed philosophy of coaching, in other words, "Who you are, is how you supervise." (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013).

This all suggests an heuristic for the process of coaching supervision that supports the prevailing discourse of the functions of supervision, which I set out in Figure 2.

I have attempted to locate each activity to correspond with the research findings: Contracting yields a relational space within which supervision occurs. The joint exploration phase comprises jointly analysing and intuiting what supervision interventions might be helpful. The supervisor chooses between deploying their *Process expertise* - where they use their skill in the process of coaching to facilitate a conversation between peer practitioners, and coaching *experience* – where they bring the practical wisdom of their coaching experience into their supervision practice, acting as much as a coach mentor. Their coaching approach is experienced as a Supporting intervention (mostly associated with the Resourcing function), whereas sharing their practical wisdom represents an

Evaluating intervention (largely associated with Qualitative function). The most common intervention is Developing, which is experienced as a learning outcome for both supervisee and supervisor.

Figure 2: The process of coaching supervision: a heuristic
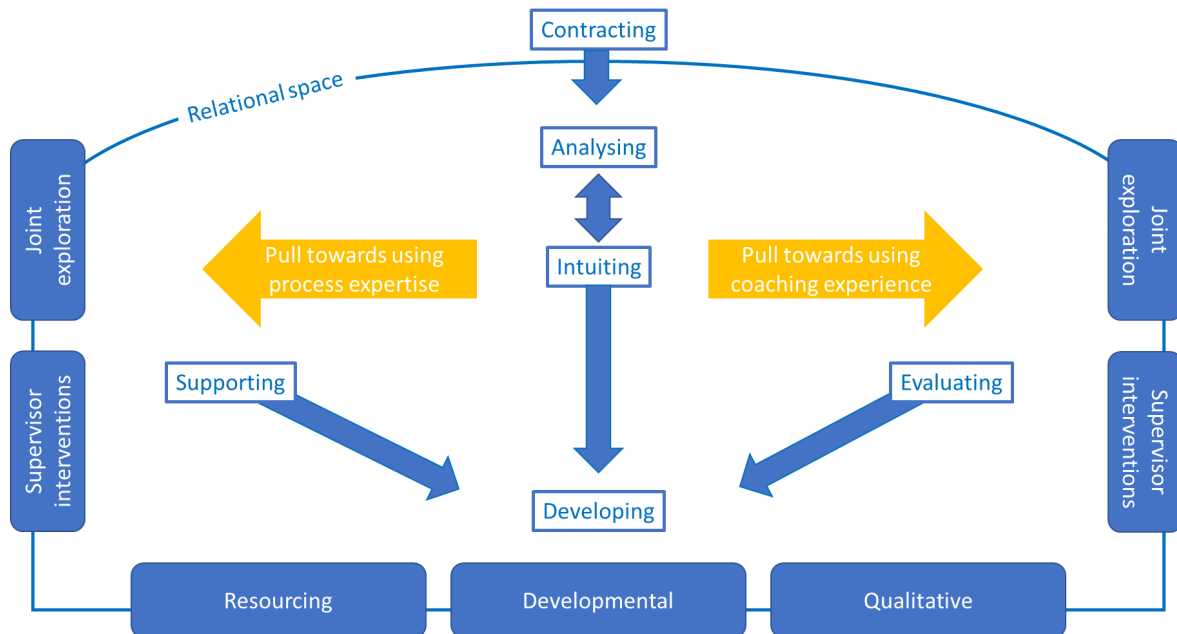
Conclusion

The findings indicate coaching supervision includes a joint exploration stage involving Analysing and Intuiting as an antecedent to choosing supervisory interventions. I suggest this is a richer description than the Listen and Explore stages of the Hawkins and Smith (2013) CLEAR model.

As part of this joint exploration, the supervisor accesses their Intuition to choose suitable interventions. These may draw on their coaching expertise or their coaching experience, and they support the functions of coaching supervision. The intention of intervening aligns to the functions of supervision, and the overarching intention and experience is one of learning and development for the supervisee and supervisor.

I suggest this schematic description of the process of coaching supervision makes a contribution to the practical understanding of coaching supervision and may be a useful reference for helping trainee coaches and coaching supervisors understand the process of supervision and choice of supervision interventions. More research is required to conceptualise these findings further, specifically:

1. To what extent is Analysing an intervention in its own right?
2. To what extent is Intuiting a joint activity?
3. How intentional is the choice of intervention?
4. How does the maturity of the coaching supervisor impact their choice of supervision intervention?

In an attempt to address these limitations and build on the findings herein, I have commenced further research to refine and develop the heuristic into a conceptual framework for coaching supervision interventions.

Acknowledgements

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