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Editorial

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This special issue of IJECM comprises articles produced by Masters and Doctoral students following their presentations at the 9th annual Coaching and Mentoring Research Conference, held at Oxford Brookes University on 17th January 2013. The conference is held every year and provides an opportunity for postgraduate students to share their research in coaching and mentoring with a much wider, international audience.

There are ten papers in this special issue, three employ an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to explore the experiences of coaches in relation to: working with the body, working on the telephone and working with assigned goals. A further three papers describe case studies set in public sector organisations in order to explore either coaching or mentoring interventions, or both.

Our final four papers all report on action research studies that test specific models of coaching: a group coaching model for people with long term health conditions; a model to identify and raise levels of hope for clients; a model of leadership development aimed at sustainability and transfer of learning; and a model of coaching for leadership aimed at encouraging leaders to take brave action.

The first paper is by Moira McLaughlin and is entitled 'Less is more: The executive coach's experience of working on the telephone. In this article Moira adopts an IPA approach with executive coaches and finds that telephone coaching can be a powerful mechanism. Her findings suggest that coaches find the medium complex and dynamic and this has specific implications for providers of coach education and development.

In our second paper Katherine Cowan looks at the experiences of external executive coaches working with coachees' assigned goals. She uses IPA to examine how organisationally assigned goals, set to determine outcomes for the business and individual impacts on the external executive coach's experience. Findings highlight the significance of coaches' beliefs about goals and the complex nature of multi-stakeholder contracting.

Our third paper provocatively titled 'More than a brain on legs' is by Trish Matthews. It too uses an IPA methodology to explore coaches' experience of working with the body in the coaching session. Issues such as embodied awareness and intuition are discussed.

David Coates uses a mixed-methods case study approach in the fourth paper, and looks longitudinally at the role coaching played in the effectiveness of an Integrated Leadership Development Programme set in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The study surveyed 530 public-sector managers and concluded that increasing the coaching component leads to improved learning transfer and retention.

The fifth paper is Colleen Harding's interpretive case study looking at the role of coaching *and* mentoring in supporting the development of academic staff and organisational strategy during a period of organisational change at one UK university. This doctoral study found that coaching and mentoring provided a transitional space for staff to work through the challenges. The study looks at the roles of both coaching and by mentoring and the different types of support they offer.

Rhianon Washington's doctoral research also used a qualitative case study approach, but focused on mentoring rather than coaching in a National Health Service regional scheme. In our sixth paper, entitled 'Distal Mentoring: An Antidote to Toxicity?' Rhianon presents a case study of a regional, public services mentoring scheme and discovers that distal mentoring, i.e. outside of line management, results in a lower incidence of toxic relationships. The paper concludes that having a professionally or organisationally distant mentor may help avoid the problems encountered in some other more proximal mentoring relationships.

Our seventh paper is an action research study by Sally Whitley, entitled 'Group coaching as a support mechanism for changing lifestyle for those diagnosed with a long-term condition'. Sally carried out five group coaching sessions with seven participants, exploring how such coaching can help people with long term conditions to make changes to their lifestyle. From the findings a group coaching health and wellbeing framework has been developed.

In our eighth paper Tony Worgan examines the concept of hope and how clients responded to interventions based on Snyder's theory of hope. An action research approach enabled Tony to look at the challenges in identifying, improving and measuring levels hope in clients using the Snyder construct. From the findings, Worgan was unable to conclude any useful assessment of the hope scale for enhancing coaching practice.

Our ninth paper is also an action research study. Here Janice Cook uses the collaborative action research approach in the UK voluntary sector to look at whether coaching is merely an expensive conversation or whether it is a return on investment. She concludes that both the coach and the leader have individual and shared responsibilities in the transfer and sustainability of learning. From her own model of coaching, honed over a number of years, and with the collaboration of leaders in the voluntary sector, she develops a Collaborative Action Coaching for Leaders model, designed to elicit transfer and sustainability of learning from the coaching session to ensure a return on investment.

Mike McLaughlin's report of a participatory action research study completes our 7th Special Issue. The paper focuses on how a coaching model for brave leadership was developed. In this doctoral research six leaders agreed to help evolve and also be coached using the brave leadership coaching model. Findings report that the model could augment existing leadership theories and in practice could support decision making and enhance bravery for the individual.

As well as editing the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, **Elaine Cox** is Director of the Coaching and Mentoring Programmes at Oxford Brookes University and has authored many journal articles and book chapters. She has a PhD from Lancaster University and has recently published several books: *Coaching Understood* (published by Sage), *Goal Focused Coaching* published by Routledge and has co-edited *The Complete Handbook of Coaching*, also published by Sage (2nd edition forthcoming).