

The aim of this assignment is to critically examine a range of coaching and mentoring theories and perspectives and to evaluate the relevance and value of coaching models within my workplace which is a university library.

Although the library forms part of the wider university structure, it operates as a subculture which can be seen by collaboration, trust, mutual support and a strong commitment to staff development. These characteristics have become particularly evident during a period of university-wide organisational restructuring, where individuals have experienced change in very different ways.

The essay aims to show my own recent coaching practice and reflections from working with three coachees during this period of organisational change. To maintain confidentiality, individuals will be referred to as coachee one, coachee two and coachee three, with supporting evidence contained within the accompanying portfolio.

The essay critically explores person-centred coaching, positive psychology, cognitive behavioural coaching, transpersonal coaching and directive coaching. It also considers the distinction between coaching and mentoring, the importance of reflective and ethical practice, and evaluates the relevance of coaching models including GROW, OSCAR, CLEAR and MAGIC. I will aim to show that no single theory or model is universally effective and that coaching approaches must be adapted according to both individual needs and organisational culture.

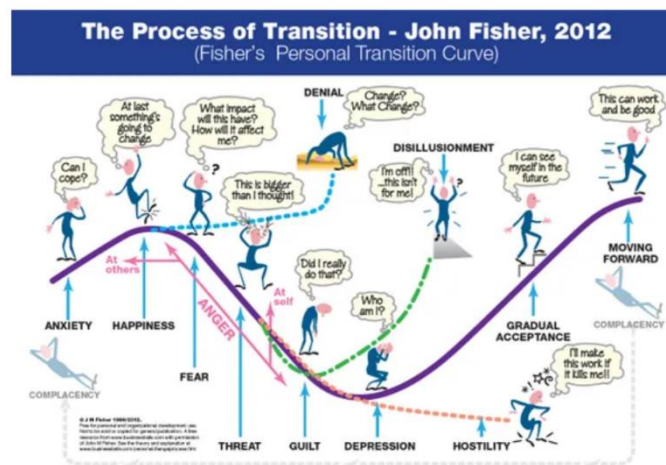
Before considering coaching theories, it is important to understand the organisational context within which coaching takes place. Organisational culture influences employee behaviour, relationships, expectations and responses to coaching interventions.

Johnson and Scholes' Cultural Web provides a useful framework for understanding organisational culture through stories, rituals, routines, symbols, control systems, organisational structures and power structures. Applying the Cultural Web to my organisation suggests that the library operates as a supportive and developmental subculture within the wider university. Evidence of this can be seen through high levels of collaboration between teams, strong staff retention, informal support networks and an emphasis on both personal and professional development.

The library culture places significant value on people. Staff wellbeing is viewed as important, and colleagues regularly support and show kindness to each other during challenging circumstances. There is also a strong sense of psychological safety, which encourages individuals to take risks, share ideas and seek support without fear of judgement. This type of culture naturally lends itself to coaching approaches that prioritise trust, autonomy and reflection.

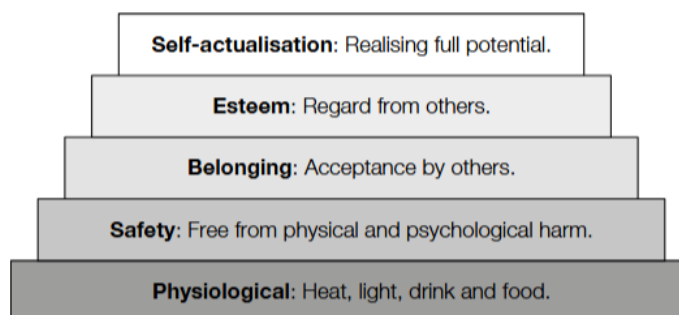
However, the wider university context has been characterised by significant organisational change. Departments have undergone restructuring at different times, resulting in varying levels of uncertainty across the institution. Fisher's Transition Curve provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals respond differently to change. Some people

embrace opportunities and move quickly towards acceptance, whilst others experience anxiety, resistance or feelings of loss.



This variation was clearly noticeable through my coaching experiences. Although two of the coachees experienced organisational change, each individual responded differently. Coachee one viewed the changes positively and was excited about the new opportunities. Coachee 3 experienced concerns and worries about her confidence and capability within her new role. These experiences suggest that coaching approaches must be flexible to respond to different emotional and psychological needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also provides insight into employee behaviour during organisational change. Employees who feel secure, valued and supported are more likely to demonstrate motivation and engagement. Whereas when individuals feel threatened or uncertain, higher-level goals such as achievement and development may become less important. This has important implications for coaching because approaches that are effective for one individual may be ineffective for another depending on where they are within the change process.



Source: Maslow, A.H. (1943) 'A theory of human motivation', *Psychological Review* 50(4), pp. 370-96.

Person-centred coaching originates from the humanistic theories of Carl Rogers. Rogers believed that individuals possess an inherent capacity for growth and self-development when

provided with an environment characterised by empathy, authenticity and unconditional positive regard.

Within coaching, the person-centred approach focuses on creating a safe space in which individuals can reflect, explore challenges and identify their own solutions and adjusting communication styles accordingly. The coach remains non-directive, trusting that the coachee is capable of generating meaningful insight and action.

This perspective aligns strongly with the culture of the university library team. The emphasis on listening, trust and development reflects many of the values already present within the culture. Staff are encouraged to learn from one another, share experiences and develop professionally, making person-centred coaching a natural fit.

My work with coachee three highlighted the value of this approach. The coachee had recently moved into a new role and was experiencing significant anxiety regarding her ability to perform effectively. Initially, much of her concern centred around a perceived lack of knowledge and confidence. Through coaching conversations that prioritised listening and empathetic questioning, the coachee felt able to explore these concerns in a psychologically safe environment and this was shared by her in her reflections and feedback.

A significant strength of person-centred coaching is its ability to build trust and encourage honest reflection. The coachee retains ownership of the conversation and develops solutions that are personally meaningful, rather than simply following advice from others.

However, person-centred coaching is not without limitations. Critics argue that highly non-directive approaches may lack structure and can result in conversations that fail to progress towards achievable outcomes. This can present challenges in organisational settings where deadlines and operational objectives are important. During the implementation of changes to staff rota arrangements in the customer services team I worked in, for example, listening to concerns was important; however, the organisational requirement to implement the new rota system remained unchanged. In these situations, a purely person-centred approach may not provide sufficient direction.

Therefore, while person-centred coaching aligns particularly well with the supportive culture of the library, it may need to be combined with more structured and solution focused methodologies such as CLEAR and OSCAR when action and accountability are required.

Positive psychology coaching is associated with the work of Seligman and focuses on strengths, wellbeing, resilience and human flourishing. Rather than concentrating on problems, the approach seeks to identify what individuals do well and how these strengths can support future success.

This perspective proved particularly relevant during my coaching work with coachee one. Unlike some colleagues, this individual approached the restructure positively and actively sought opportunities arising from the change by applying for several new roles, all with the same level of enthusiasm. The coachee was optimistic about moving into a new role and

viewed the change as an opportunity for growth and development and was looking forward to a fresh start.

A coaching wheel was used throughout the coaching relationship to support self-assessment and reflection. The coachee evaluated a range of factors relating to confidence, wellbeing, workplace relationships and integration into the new team. As we had a good rapport and trust had been established, the coachee felt comfortable engaging honestly with and in the process and she reflected this back in her feedback.

Several weeks after beginning the new role, she completed the coaching wheel again. This allowed the coachee to compare their initial evaluation with their current perceptions. The visual nature of the tool made the progress easy to see and enabled the coachee to recognise improvements in self-confidence, CPD, health and wellbeing. This supported her motivation and reinforced the belief that she was successfully integrating into her new team and growing in skills and knowledge.

The strengths of positive psychology coaching include its ability to develop confidence, resilience and optimism. It encourages individuals to recognise achievements and build upon existing strengths, rather than becoming overwhelmed by difficulties.

However, this approach can also present limitations. During periods of organisational change, individuals may experience feelings of loss, frustration or anxiety. An excessive focus on positivity could risk dismissing these emotions or encouraging individuals to ignore genuine concerns. For example, such an approach would have been inappropriate when supporting coachee two as a close family bereavement happened while the coaching sessions were taking place. In those circumstances, empathy and emotional support were more important than encouraging positive thinking.

Therefore positive psychology coaching can be highly effective when individuals are ready to focus on growth and opportunity but should not be used in a way that minimises difficult experiences.

Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) derives from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and is based upon the relationship between thoughts, emotions and behaviours. The approach seeks to identify unhelpful assumptions and support individuals in developing more constructive perspectives.

Elements of CBC proved particularly valuable when working with coachee three. The coachee consistently expressed concerns about their ability to perform effectively in a new role involving responsibilities that felt unfamiliar. Through coaching discussions, it became evident that many of these concerns were linked to assumptions regarding competence and capability.

Questions such as "What evidence do you have that you cannot perform this role?" and "What transferable skills already exist?" encouraged the coachee to challenge their own assumptions and consider alternative perspectives. Over time, she began to recognise that they possessed many of the skills required and she had been new to new library role when she

moved from a teaching career and she had previously known nothing about the library and she learned the skills required over time. She was able to reflect on this and then saw that a lack of confidence did not necessarily indicate a lack of capability.

The strength of CBC lies in its ability to support confidence building, behavioural change and the development of self-awareness. During periods of transition, it can help individuals identify barriers to progress and develop more empowering ways of thinking.

However, the approach also carries risks. One criticism is that it may inadvertently place responsibility for difficulties solely on the individual. In organisational contexts, challenges are not always caused by unhelpful thinking. For example, coachee three's concerns were partly linked to limited training and support within the new role. In this situation, it would have been inappropriate to suggest that the problem existed only within the individual's thinking. Organisational factors also required attention.

Therefore, whilst CBC can support personal development and confidence, coaches must remain mindful of wider organisational influences rather than focusing exclusively on the individual.

Transpersonal coaching adopts a deeper perspective, exploring values, purpose, identity and meaning. Unlike approaches focused primarily on goals or performance, transpersonal coaching seeks to support personal transformation and self-understanding.

This interesting perspective became particularly relevant during organisational restructuring. Several colleagues were not simply learning new responsibilities; they were adjusting to significant changes in professional identity. Individuals who had spent many years working in familiar roles suddenly found themselves questioning where they belonged and how they would contribute in the future.

The MAGIC framework introduced by Rosie Nice proved valuable in these circumstances. It highlighted the importance of presence, reflection and silence within coaching conversations. One of the most important lessons from my own development as a coach was recognising the power of silence. Initially, there was a temptation to fill pauses with questions or suggestions. However, allowing space for reflection often generated deeper insights than further questioning.

Transpersonal coaching was particularly useful where individuals needed time to explore personal values and identity rather than immediately establish goals or action plans. It encouraged self-awareness and deeper reflection regarding what was important to them.

The limitation of this approach is that outcomes can be difficult to measure. Transpersonal coaching may also appear less practical within organisations focused on performance and operational priorities. Nevertheless, during periods of uncertainty and significant change, its emphasis on meaning and identity can provide valuable support.

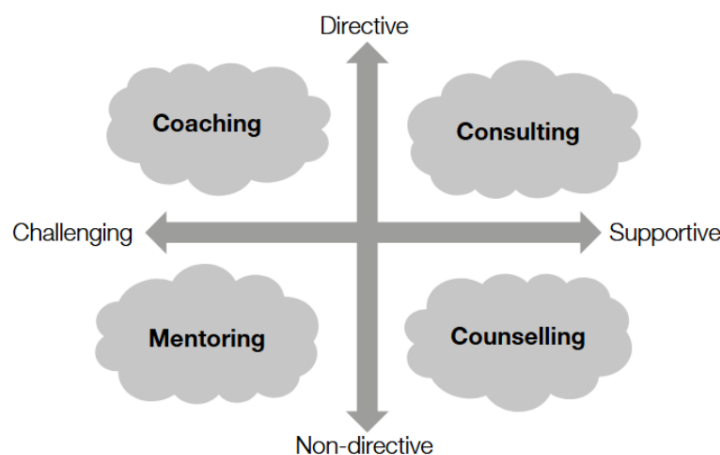
Whilst coaching and mentoring share a common objective of supporting development; they differ in their underlying approaches. Mentoring typically involves the sharing of experience,

expertise and knowledge. The mentor provides guidance based upon their own professional journey and assisting by navigating challenges through advice and support.

Coaching however focuses on facilitating learning through questioning, reflection and self-discovery. Rather than providing answers, the coach creates conditions in which individuals can generate their own insights and solutions.

My growing understanding of coaching has made me increasingly aware of this distinction. Prior to undertaking coaching training, I would often adopt a more mentoring-oriented approach, drawing upon my own experiences and suggesting what I might do in a particular situation. Whilst this can be valuable, particularly when supporting colleagues who require practical knowledge, coaching has encouraged me to become more comfortable with listening, silence and curiosity.

Within the library environment, both approaches have value. Mentoring can support the transfer of organisational knowledge and professional expertise, whilst coaching can help individuals build confidence, navigate change and develop their own solutions.



Bates, B. (2015) *The little book of big coaching models: 76 ways to help managers get the best out of people*. 1st edn. Harlow: Pearson, p xxi

Reflective practice has played a significant role in my development as a coach. Schön argues that professionals learn through reflection both during and after practice. This has become increasingly important as I have developed coaching skills and gained experience supporting colleagues through organisational change.

Working with coachee three highlighted the importance of reflection. As I am someone who naturally tends towards optimism, my initial instinct was to focus quickly on positive opportunities and future possibilities. However, reflecting on coaching sessions helped me recognise that the coachee needed space to process emotions and uncertainty first. This realisation encouraged me to slow down, embrace silence and adopt a more person-centred approach.

Reflection also enabled me to evaluate which theories and frameworks were most effective in different situations. It reinforced the understanding that coaching is not about applying one model rigidly but about adapting approaches to meet the needs of the individual. Reflection therefore benefits both coach and coachee, supporting continuous learning and improvement.

Ethics are fundamental to effective coaching practice. Regardless of the theory or model being applied, coaches have a responsibility to operate within recognised professional standards.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) Core Competencies emphasise the importance of trust, confidentiality, ethical behaviour, active listening and psychological safety. These principles apply regardless of whether a coach adopts a person-centred, cognitive behavioural, positive psychology or transpersonal perspective.

My coaching experiences during organisational change have reinforced the importance of ethical practice. Coachees have discussed concerns relating to wellbeing, confidence, career aspirations and organisational change. Establishing a safe and confidential environment has therefore been essential.

Ethics also require coaches to remain aware of personal biases and assumptions. Reflecting on my work with coachee three highlighted the possibility that my own optimistic outlook could influence coaching conversations. Ethical coaching requires genuine curiosity and respect for the coachee's perspective rather than directing them towards conclusions.

I recognise that ethical practice should be viewed as underpinning all coaching approaches. Whatever theory or model is selected ethical principles ensures that coaching remains professional, supportive and focused on the developmental needs of the individual.

Coaching theories explain how learning and development occur, whereas coaching models provide practical structures through which coaching conversations can take place. The GROW model consists of Goal, Reality, Options and Will. It is one of the most widely recognised coaching models and provides a simple, structured process for exploring objectives and actions.

The model proved useful when coachee three began to gain greater clarity regarding future aspirations. As confidence increased, conversations shifted towards identifying goals and considering possible routes forward. The structure provided by GROW helped transform reflection into practical action.

However, GROW assumes that coachees are able to identify meaningful goals. During periods of uncertainty, individuals may not know what they want. Consequently, introducing GROW too early may be limiting, particularly when emotional processing remains a priority.

The OSCAR model focuses on Outcomes, Situation, Choices, Actions and Review. OSCAR and CLEAR Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Action and Review are solution-focused approaches, these are particularly useful where clear outcomes are required.

The implementation of changes to staff rota arrangements provided an example of where OSCAR could be valuable. Although consultation and discussion were important, there was a clear organisational objective that needed to be achieved. Structured conversations focused on actions and solutions.

However, these methods may be less appropriate when individuals are experiencing high levels of uncertainty or emotional distress because it can encourage movement towards solutions before the concerns have been fully explored.

The MAGIC framework aligns closely with person-centred and transpersonal perspectives. It encourages deep reflection, self-awareness and meaningful conversation. The questioning framework can prove valuable when supporting coachees through uncertainty and change. The emphasis on silence and reflection can help individuals develop deeper insights regarding their experiences and future direction.

This essay has attempted to critically examine a range of coaching theories and perspectives within the context of a university library undergoing significant organisational change. The discussion has demonstrated that person-centred coaching, positive psychology, cognitive behavioural coaching and transpersonal coaching each offer valuable insights but also possess limitations.

Analysis of coaching practice showed that different individuals responded differently to the same organisational change. Coachee one benefited from strengths-based approaches and reflective tools such as the coaching wheel. Coachee two benefited from person-centred and cognitive behavioural approaches that supported confidence building and self-reflection. These experiences demonstrate that no single coaching theory is appropriate in every situation.

The essay also highlighted the importance of mentoring, reflective practice and ethical awareness. Adherence to professional standards, including the ICF Core Competencies, helps ensure that coaching remains trustworthy, professional and focused on the individual's development.

Evaluation of coaching models suggested that GROW, CLEAR, OSCAR and MAGIC each provide valuable structures, although their effectiveness depends upon context and readiness for change. Therefore the most appropriate approach within the my organisational structure is a blended one. Humanistic values of trust, empathy and psychological safety should underpin coaching relationships, whilst structured models can be introduced when greater focus on actions and outcomes is required. Such an approach reflects both the developmental culture of the library and the complex realities of organisational change.

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