

# Assignment

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BMPF7303/D Coaching and Mentoring

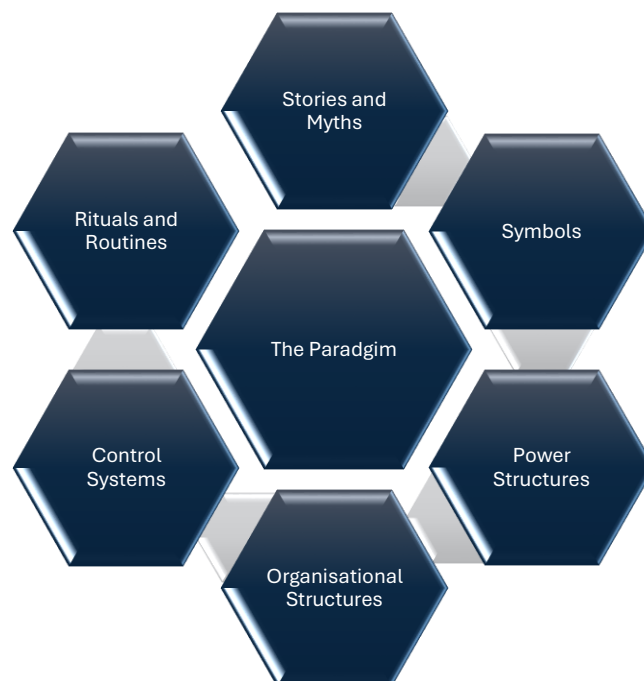
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Critically evaluate the relevance and value of a range of coaching or mentoring models and identify a model/models appropriate for the needs and culture of their organisation.

I work as an Information Skills Librarian in the newly created Digital Learning and Library Services within the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). My role is to deliver information literacy training to all students to help them with their research and referencing skills. My team comprises the previous Digital Services (DS) team and the Library and Learning Resources (LLR). They have been restructured into one team providing digital and library services. For this assignment I will critically evaluate a range of theories and coaching models appropriate for my Organisation, and I will focus on the organisational culture of the original LLR team. The new team is yet to be established, and I believe merging two distinct cultures will change the overall culture of the library service, but as this is still ongoing it is difficult to predict how the culture might change within the new team.

To determine which coaching models are appropriate for UWTSD I started by looking at the culture of UWTSD as a whole and then the subculture of the LLR using Johnson and Scholes' Cultural Web Model (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes, 2012). To understand a culture, it is important to be able to analyse it. The Cultural Web is a tool we can use to map the culture of an organisation and understand the influences that affect organisational culture, (Johnson, Whittington and Scholes, 2012). It can be used to highlight specific practices and beliefs and to align them with a company's preferred culture and strategy. This model looks at the stories, symbols, power, organisation, controls, rituals and routines that contribute to the overall culture of an institution.



Being a multisite University there are different stories and myths from the distinct areas of each original university, which carries through in the various departments including

the different sites in the LLR. There are also differences when considering the University as a whole and when looking at the LLR as a subculture of UWTSD.

The subculture of the LLR is evident when you consider symbols across the University. There is a standard branding that has been adapted by UWTSD, however the LLR has developed its own brand including lanyards, Power Point styles. The LLR also created its own mission statement and ethos which was done in consultation with all library staff, and this was displayed in Y Fforwm, which is the main university library in Swansea.

The power structure in the library is flatter than the wider University. Library staff tend to have a more coherent ethos and value set than the wider University as members of staff tend to have similar professional skills. There is a shared ethos from the senior members of staff to the library assistants of putting students first to ensure they are supported throughout their academic journey. Considering the power structure in the wider University, staff members may be coming from very different career backgrounds, such as management or marketing, as opposed to teaching and research. There is a more hierarchical structure, and staff may not share the same ethos or values.

I found that overall, the University is hierarchical and formal with clear organisational structures, and staff charts. There is a structured routine to the year based around term dates, inductions, exam timetables and graduation, so even staff not directly involved in teaching have a predictable rhythm to the year.

In addition to this, I completed the Organisational Culture Questionnaire adapted from Roger Harrison's Diagnosing Organisational Ideology. This framework divides the organisational culture into four sections; Power, Role, Task, and Self. It was created so that leaders had a credible, repeatable way to describe culture beyond anecdotes. By completing the questionnaire, you can assess the prevailing culture objectively, compare subcultures, surface aspiration versus reality, and guide targeted changes (Umbrex 2025).

I answered questions about the University and assigned points from 1-4 according to which scenario best describes the culture of the university. My results showed UWTSD to have a Role-based culture, closely followed by a Task-based culture. Power and Self had the lowest scores in my answers. This shows that UWTSD is a bureaucratic place of work with a hierarchical structure, with rules and policies in place. However, as it scored highly in the Task section, I believe it is also an institution that relies on some agility and collaboration between departments and teams within the structure. It also values the expertise of its members. The fact that it scored low in Power, shows that the university doesn't work with just one person in control, but is reliant on various departments, and their individual experience and expertise. Therefore, as a large institution it has a coherent structure, but it isn't one person-centred. The lowest score was for Self, which shows that the emphasis in the organisational culture is not on the individual, but the organisation and structure.

I repeated this exercise and answered the questionnaire again and identified my ideal organisational culture. I scored Task the highest, closely followed by Self, my lowest score was Power. I think this showed that I would prefer a working environment where collaboration between departments and respect of other people's expertise is valued, but I would also like to have an organisational culture where the individual has autonomy and has more control over their own work.

Coaching is a far-reaching practice that Peterson and Hicks (1996) describe as 'a process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to develop themselves and become more effective' (p. 14). I examined the organisational subculture of the LLR and looked at several coaching theories to determine which would be appropriate. From my research, I felt that the Humanistic approach to coaching would be a good fit for the LLR and I intend to explain my rationale for selecting this approach below.

In psychology the Humanistic approach is often called the "third force" following Psychodynamic and Behavioural. It was pioneered by figures such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and was developed in rebellion to the limitations of preceding Psychodynamic and Behavioural psychologies (McLeod, 2026).

Humanistic coaching principles developed from this approach as a person-centred approach to coaching. Humanistic theory states that we already contain a blueprint for full potential, but need the right environment to grow, and Humanistic coaching focuses on providing that environment. It states that when people have the right conditions to grow and develop, they can fulfil their potential (Connor & Pokora, p. 17). A metaphor often used to illustrate this is an acorn, which given the right conditions and balance of sunlight, water, and nutrients from the soil, will grow into an oak tree. If it doesn't have these it will fail to reach its full potential (Joseph, 2024, p. 70).

Therefore, at its core philosophy Humanistic coaching is a view of human nature which when motivated can lead to 'growth, development, and autonomy of the individual' (Joseph, 2024, p70). This is known as self-actualisation, the inherent drive to reach full potential. In the same way that the acorn needs the right conditions to grow, Rogers concluded that there were conditions needed to build a relationship between coach and coachee:

- Congruence: the coach must be genuine and authentic; this builds trust and safety for the client.
- Unconditional positive regard: there is no judgement or conditions, this allows client to admit failures and take risks.
- Empathy: viewing conversations through the client's eyes, this makes the client feel seen and understood. (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 30).

These are not tools but are a way for the coach behave with a coachee and is a key part of creating the right environment for the coachee to grow. By adopting this behaviour and being congruent or genuine to connect with a coachee, a coach needs to use their own feelings rather than hiding behind a façade or professional veneer. Also respecting

the coachee and accepting their decisions can be extremely powerful for the coachee, and having empathy communicates to the coachee that the coach is listening and understanding their viewpoint rather than imposing their own (Connor & Pokora, 2012, p. 40).

There needs to be trust on both sides of the relationship between coach and coachee. As it is characterised by the concept of self-actualisation, the coach needs to trust that the coachee will take the coaching in whatever direction is needed. And the coachee needs to trust the coach to do this. This can also be called non-directional coaching, which means that the coach doesn't direct the coachee in anyway, not to be confused with the coaching not having a direction (Joseph, 2024, p. 71).

A core skill that the coach needs to practice is to practice active listening, this differs from diagnostic listening where the coach may end up leading the conversation (Conor & Pokora, 2012, p43). When a coach practices active listening, they allow the coachee to lead the conversation, and it communicates to the coachee that they are being supported. This builds trust between the coachee and coach.

I feel this would be a good approach to introduce coaching within our team, as we are a motivated team with a shared purpose, and respect for each other. We have built up good working relationships, and we genuinely care about the work that we do. A style of coaching that can build on existing trust and genuine care would work well.

Engagement coaching is a type of coaching that is used when there may be tensions between organisational goals and individual ones (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 77). This sits under the Humanistic umbrella and is often used to manage cultural change and restructures. Considering the university sector, and the frequency of organisational change, and having personally experienced two restructures of the LLR, this approach is useful. It is 'a process which recognises the value of relationship in learning and change' (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 77).

Engagement coaching is also the belief that performance is about alignment, not just talent. A person's values, strengths, and sense of purpose need to align with their role. Engagement coaches may assess:

- Autonomy: Does the person feel they have control over how they do their job?
- Mastery: Is the person being challenged enough to grow without being overwhelmed?
- Purpose: Does the person understand why their work matters in the grand scheme?
- Connection: Do they feel like they belong to a community or a team? (Pink, 2010).

However, it is important that this type of coaching is carried out by skilled coaches and isn't purely focused on the needs of the organisation.

Developmental coaching also sits under the Humanistic umbrella. This type of coaching works with clients using empathy and helps the coachee to define their own goals and ultimately transforming and improving their performance (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 82). Developmental coaching it can require the coachee to look at new ways to face a challenge, therefore the coach's role is to help them to look at new perspectives and consider alternative options to find a solution (Grant, Cavanagh, & O'Connor, 2024, p. 63).

Through my reading I've concluded that the characteristics of Humanistic coaching are:

- Growth-oriented and non-directional.
- Self-actualisation.
- Active listening.
- Client led solutions.
- Relationship between the coach and client.

All these characteristics would be suitable for working with the LLR. It gives the coachee respect and trust and trust in the team needed for various types of Humanistic coaching, such as, Person-centred, Engagement, and Developmental is well suited to the LLR team. These are committed and skilled team members and it is crucial that the coaching style adopted can demonstrate trust in those team members. This in turn will emphasise to team members that they are in control of developing and improving their skills. As this style of coaching is coachee-led it should have long-term sustainability, because the ideas and solutions are coming from the coachees themselves.

I also considered Cognitive Behaviour Coaching (CBC) and how appropriate it would be to use as a coaching theory in the organisational culture of the LLR. CBC 'is an integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coachees to achieve their realistic goals.' (Palmer & Szymanska, 2019, ch. 9). The focus of CBC is around problem solving, and there is a basic premise coachees have 'underdeveloped problem-solving and solution-seeking skills or may not apply those skills they already have successfully when under pressure or stress' (Palmer & Szymanska, 2019, ch. 9).

Because of the focus on reframing behaviour, and what Palmer and Szymanska describe as 'thinking errors' (2019, ch. 9) I felt was not appropriate as a style of coaching for the culture of the LLR. I believe focusing on the LLR as having problems, and needing a problem-solving approach, may create tension in a team that already works well together. We have a history of successfully solving issues and working together during periods of change.

CBC is also more direct than a person-centred approach and coaches use 'Socratic' questioning (Neenan & Palmer, 2001, cited in Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2024, p. 39). This involves the coach directing the questions unlike in person-centred coaching where the direction of conversation is dictated by the coachee. There is also less emphasis on empathy (Williams, Palmer & Edgerton, 2024, p. 39) which is so central to

Humanistic coaching, and which was one of the main reasons I felt a Humanistic style of coaching was more appropriate to use in the LLR.

After deciding on the coaching theory that I felt was most appropriate, I looked at coaching models that were compatible with Humanistic coaching. Using a coaching model can be a helpful for coaches to structure coaching sessions. The first one I considered was the GROW model. The GROW model is quite straightforward and perhaps the most widely used coaching model (Bates, 2015, p. 154). It was developed by John Whitmore who was seeking to use humanistic values within his coaching. He describes needing to adopt an optimistic view of the capacity of people (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 105) which is consistent with the humanistic view of the inherent drive of people to fulfil their potential.

The acronym stands for:

G – Goal: establish the goal

R – Reality: examine the reality

O – Options: consider all the options

W – Will: confirm the will to act. (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 105).

Whitmore likens the GROW model planning a journey in which you decide where you are going, and it is intended to be a simple but powerful way to structure a coaching session (Bates, 2015, p. 154). The coach is there as a facilitator not as someone to provide the answers. This is consistent with Humanistic theory where the coachee is the one who has the inherent drive to fulfil their potential. The intention of GROW is to provide a framework for coaches so they have an awareness of which type of question will be the most productive, but it doesn't have to be followed strictly. (Culture at Work, no date).

There are some criticisms of the GROW model however, and one drawback is that it can sometimes be off putting for coachees. They may not be ready to set goals when they begin coaching sessions and this may not be a helpful start (Connor & Pokora, 2012, p. 18). Goals also must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (Bates, 2015, p. 155), but this can also put additional pressure on coachees who may not know exactly what they need to work on yet.

The next model I looked at is the OSCAR model. This stands for Outcome, Situation, Choice and Consequences, Action and Review, and builds upon and enhances the GROW model (Brockbank & McGill, 2012, p. 109). I preferred this model for several reasons. By using the word 'outcome' rather than 'goal' this model can be more effective as a coaching tool. 'Goal' is linked to targets and pressure, and as I mentioned previously, can be difficult for coachees to decide when they first start attending coaching sessions. 'Outcomes', however, are often linked to collaboration and involvement, and so it can be easier to agree on a mutually agreed plan (Gilbert & Whittleworth, 2009, p. 79).

Gilbert and Whittleworth suggest that their model OSCAR is solution focused and that by focusing on solutions rather than problems it is possible to work out what is working

well and to replicate that. (Bates, 2015, p. 124). OSCAR places a stronger emphasis on the choices available to the coachee and explicitly builds in a review phase. Including a review stage is also helpful to develop momentum and maintain motivation (Gilbert & Whittleworth, 2009, p. 82). Using this model, it is important to get the coachee to visualise where they are and where they want to be, it is the coach's role to support them to get there (Bates, 2015, p. 125).

Working in the LLR team which can feel caught between top-down institutional mandates, such as restructures; and ground-level realities, working with academic staff and students. I feel that using the OSCAR model can help staff to identify what is genuinely within their control, and what choices they can make to control their working situations. As mentioned above it is solution-focussed and I believe it is important for staff and management to understand what is working well. There is a lot of good practice in the team which it is important to be able to replicate. This is particularly relevant moving forward into a new team and merging with Digital Services. In the LLR we have worked well as a team together, and built up a lot of good working relationships, expertise, and good practice which we wouldn't want to lose. A coaching programme would help to recognise and preserve this and help staff to learn and grow as a department.

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