Supervision: a meeting of minds and hearts; a coach and facilitator of adult learning reflect on the experience of engaging in supervision as a professional doctoral student in practical theology

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This paper presents coaching as an 'andragogy' for academic supervision. It reflects on the perspective of a professional doctorate student seeking to make connections between her experience as both student and practitioner. Supervision is seen as a relationship with purpose, initiation into scholarship, where minds and hearts meet in professional learning conversations found in the art and science of supervision. The ontological stance of both parties influences the psychodynamic; positions of power need to be understood and negotiated to maximise the benefits of learning. Models of supervision from other helping professions, adult learning theory and a particular framework for coaching are brought together to support empirical evidence found in personal reflection and practitioner research. Particular questions are raised but not answered with regard to this experience being an expression of practical theology, transformation and spirituality.

Keywords: supervision, adult learning theory, coaching, professional doctorates, power dynamics, spirituality

Introduction and context setting

Presented as work in progress, this article is part of broader research into the lived experience of supervision. It seeks to discover conversation partners from supervisors and students in the academy, in a field of enquiry that appears to be little mapped butworthy of research. This study appears particularly relevantgiven the growth of professional doctorates which entail issues ofpower, professional experience and status, and motivation of mature students engaging in work or practice based research. The end of two years' part-time study seems an appropriate moment to reflect upon the novel experience of learning in a supervisory relationship.

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The story of my experience of supervision thus far is one that suggests it is a meeting of minds and hearts, facilitated through an 'andragogy' of coaching. I have observed supervisors, from two very different disciplines, both open to learning, actively creating a climate for purposeful learning to improve performance, using a recognisable range of competences and skills in an identifiable framework, and being person- centred in approach. Hence, my experience of supervision as a meeting of minds and hearts where the reality has had a quality greater than the sum of the above in what is proving an embodiment of Buber's concept of an 'I and Thou' relationship, (Burnard,1999: 35); ontology, 'doing and being' is at the heart of the relationship.

As work in progress, this initial study is rooted in the research paradigm of constructivism; dialogue and hermeneutics are driving the direction of my broader research and its emerging phenomenological design to understand what is essentially subjective experience. Its methodologycould be described as auto-ethnographic as I am an involved reflexive participant. Ellis (2004) describes autoethnography as a form of qualitative research where the focus of the research is the researcher himself, examining the inter-reaction between the researcher and others who participate in the research. It can therefore be described as an autobiographical genre of writing where narrative is a means of demonstrating lived experience and of making meaning. Narrative truth though, is impressionistic,subjective, incomplete and tentative.

Such an approach, using predominately empirical evidence is not without its limitations. It offers little that is either generalisable or transferable. Opportunity for validating data is particularly limited. Likewise, I am aware of the influence of tacit knowledge and professional practice, and the need to challenge, 'taken for grantedness', especially as in this work I do have, 'a personal stake and substantial emotional investment', (Anderson &Herr, 1999: 13).

In addition, I write as a practical theologian where there is a well established tradition of narrative theology,(Loughlin,1996),and more specifically a method of theological reflection upon 'the living human document', 'theology by heart', (Graham et al.,2007). Probably the most well known example is Augustine's Confessions. However, given the limitations of this

approach, the perspectives of, and dialogue with, others are vital to the social construction of this research.

To include the stories of others, I and my theology supervisor jointly designed and facilitated an interactive workshop, 'Supervising the Researching Professional' that involved supervisors and students.Here I am encouragedby the work of Spooner-Lane et al., (2007) who explore a model of co-supervision, and who advocate juxtaposing practitioner stories. The outcomes of this workshop are presented here as initial data that tentatively makes some limited correlation with my experience.

Having experienced the workshop, I reframed my research question, and then reflected on the literature through the lenses of my story as practitioner and student. I position supervision from other helping professions, adult learning theory, and coaching before exploring the supervisory relationship as a coaching relationship. This is presented below. The issues are complex and interrelated.

As a practical theologian, I draw on what is known as Wesley's quadrilateral; that is gaining understanding in balancing experience with scripture, tradition and reason. In this article, the literature offers hermeneutical grounding and testing of the 'truth' of my experience in dialogue with'reason.'

The story begins.....

So I begin with my story of my supervisory experience, grounded in the keeping of a learning journal that is both reflective and reflexive. The article is reflexive in that it tells my story of my experience of my first two years of study, and reflective in considering the perspectives of others and the literature.

Data are presented in two stages: a reflection on my experiences of being supervised as a professional doctorate student, and the outcomes of the workshop,'Supervising the Researching Professional'.

On becoming a student: my story thus far

New to practical theology, returning to study after some years, I did not know what to expect of supervision as a process or relationship. I soon recognised that my supervisor was working in an integrative style that suggested a habitus or way of being where she exploited recognisable coaching skills, competences and frameworks; whether subconsciously or consciously I did not know. I learned much about my own professional practice from such role reversal, understanding more of my clients' perspectives.

From the outset, supervision processes showed engagement and connectedness with the whole person, and appreciation and commitment to adult learning theory in encouraging the sustained use of learning journals, reflection that was explicitly embedded in Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, and peer support that has developed into a community of practice(Wenger, 1998). A climate for learning that embodies conditions for person-centred learning was skilfully created. She recognised that I do not fit the mould and took responsibility to address the 'always/already' assumption (Johnson, et al., 2000). Clearly the expert, she guided reading, setting up a group for those new to the discipline and modelled critical approaches to learning that fulfilled Inskipp and Proctor's(1995) functions of supervision; *normative* as I began to be absorbed into the academy, *restorative* as she built up confidence and self-belief in acknowledging vulnerability; and *formative* as I began to understand the nature of practical theology and my place in this field as a secular practitioner.

My experience exemplifies how a supervisor can exploit the Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005) model and be person-centred. (This model is described in detail later). Self-evidently, my supervisor has an assessor role, having to be directive and give explicit feedback to ensure I understand the demands of scholarship and research. I observe her as demonstrator facilitating peer supervision and sharing her research. In tutor mode she makes suggestions regarding the shifting focus of my research. As I grow in confidence she moves to the stimulator role where through insightful questioning and skills of challenge, I am moving further towards autonomy and independent thought. The agenda is now more mine, but set within academic purposes (Pearson, 2005). Improving my performance is at

the heart of this learning relationship, and goals are set after every session that encourages me to find my own solutions.

The psychodynamics fascinate. She has role power, institutional power, expert power, power to reward (Mackinnon, 2004: 403), but since I too have role power in professional practice and historical power from a previous career, the power is being socialised into that fiduciary relationship. Ontologically she appears genuinely interested and curious, on a journey with me where Hewson's (2008: 46) analogy is apposite, as she models the behaviours exemplified by Evans (1999: 119).

The outcome is a learning climate that feels challenging yet supportive; when outcomes are not as intended, help is at hand and learning sought; practice is questioned and discussed with an attitude of continuous improvement (Connor &Pokora, 2007: 181).

Our relationship is professional even though we might meet in a social context because it is centred on learning and goals for improvement, whilst recognising the need for personal growth. On the one hand, it reflects Delamont et al., (2004: 83) view that, 'Academic partnerships should be seen as business relationships ......, not as marriages with emotional baggage'. On the other, it reflects a commitment to me as a whole person in its therapeutic, empathetic nature whist not being therapy. Owen (2008: 51) is right in suggesting that passionate supervision offers the opportunity for both supervisor and student to develop new understanding about themselves as learning is acknowledged by all parties and individual expertise respected.

I am keen to pursue the work of Grant (2005) who considers models of academic supervision, one she calls the psychological. Here the 'Psy-supervisor' is the caring expert professional and comes to supervision as a whole person. The power relations are that of the therapist- client, but this is blended with symmetry of mutual respect and asymmetry of dependent trust. Grant identifies the risks associated with interpersonal relationships undertaken in the context of institutional and social differences and limitations. This could be pursued as I work further with my supervisor in the area of 'contracting'; this is underdeveloped. Here the work of Carroll and Gilbert (2005) may be useful. This could lead

to evaluating another of Grant's models, the neo-liberal, where education is regarded as a commodity, the supervisor acting as a provider of services, the student choosing a satisfactory exchange of services. This appears to be more of a legal agreement than a relationship and in considering contracting and learning agreements, the challenge will be to ensure the 'I-Thou' relationship is embedded, to engage the heart as well as the mind.

Hawkins and Shohet (2006: 35) could provide further scope for evaluating supervision in their reference to the work of Borders and Leddick as could Wenger's (1998) work in exploring the impact of integrating peer supervision. However, in considering the effectiveness of supervision so far I am grounded in my affective reactions; emotionally I have a safe space in which to explore and be challenged; my understanding of the discipline has certainly grown and I am learning to underpin tacit knowledge; and my behaviours demonstrate increasing confidence (Feldman&Lankau, 2005).

At the beginning of my second year, I gained a second supervisor whose discipline is coaching. A 'trialogue' opened up that is contributing to mutual learning and validating my experience of supervision as coaching from the position of a recognised expert. Both my supervisors are practical theologians with a strong sense of their own personhood, and confidence in their different belief but similar humanistic value systems. In approaching supervision from Grant's perspective of the 'Psy-supervisor', they offer much fertile ground for research into their ontology and spirituality as understood by Carroll (2001), not as objects therefore of research but as, 'the living human document' (Graham et al.,2007: 77). This could lead to considering supervision itself as an expression of practical theology given the concepts of incarnation, habitus, spirituality, the foundation of values that celebrate the fullness of humanity, and the language of transformation.

As work in progress, and given what I am finding to be a lack of documented approaches, this could sit in Shohet's (2008) field of passionate supervision as the reference point to a personal construct (Zuber-Skerritt&Roche, 2004: 84) that both supervisors are interested to pursue as fellow practitioner researchers.

Students and supervisors: their story so far

Further data are generated from a half-day workshop, 'Supervising the Researching Professional', jointly designed and facilitated with my practical theology supervisor. It arose from a vibrant joint supervision session where the idea of supervision as coaching surfaced. The workshop had the broad aim of 'working towards a shared understanding of successful supervision on a professional doctorate' and was designed for a mixed audience of 15 students and 5 supervisors, following the principles of Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry is the work of Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) who developed the model as a way of looking at change from a positive standpoint so that strengths are celebrated and built upon. It is a four stage process: *discover*, appreciation of the best in what is; *dream* where a vision of the preferred future is captured in order to nourish and sustain the proposed change; *design* where strategic plans are co- constructed; and *destiny*, the action stage that will sustain what is the ideal. The model promotes double loop learning as it encourages new ways of seeing the world and, as a consequence new learning accrues around a vision that engages the emotions as well as the intellect.

Having set the context of the workshop and established its broad aim, we set about the '*discover stage*' with an individual reflective activity. Here participants were asked to reflect individually under the following headings: what is working well, what so-so, and what not so well and record on post-its before enteringa plenary that highlighted common emerging themes. All engaged and, although it might have been more illuminating to have gained insights and difference of emphasis from supervisors and students separately, the activity did not appear to reveal any issues of power differentials. Where the source of the comment was evident, this did not appear to indicate that either role felt inhibited.

We began the *'dream stage'* with a visioning activity, the purpose of which was to generate a shared vision that could begin to sustain a lengthy supervisory relationship. Participants were asked to record their thoughts on what characterises supervision at its best, and share their thoughts.

The *'design stage'* opened with a theoretical underpinning of definitions of supervision from academic and therapeutic contexts; some thoughts regarding terminology of roles and what these might look like; the differences between professional and traditional doctorates as explored by Morley (2005); and the functions of supervision, normative, restorative and formative based on the work of Inskipp and Proctor (1995). What also emerged in focusing on the professional doctorate was the significance of the reference to Holloway's (2005) work on utilising 'practice wisdom' in supervision, a point reinforced in the joint design and co-facilitation that demonstrated a balance of power. This session was interactively led and supported by creative power points, modelling invitational learning. Learners' contributions were valued; supervisors and students felt equally able to contribute. It gave a sense of 'the possible' to underpin the 'dream', but on reflection it proved more like 'discovery' as the theory was, in the main, new to the students and we could well have swopped the order of these two activities.

Further 'design' was encouraged as my supervisor and I engaged in live, unrehearsed supervision. This powerfully embodied the art of our coaching/supervisory relationship in its empathetic and authentic expression, and the science in its illumination of adult learning theory. It provided a 'felt experience' upon which all could reflect. Participants were asked to observe evidence that highlighted skills, competences, and their perception of what was happening in relational terms.   Feedback was taken from her, myself, and the group. This proved a powerful method for moving the learning from an immediate response into reflection.

The workshop continued with a short theoretical input on Carroll's (1996) generic tasks of supervision to embed the learning before moving into more focused *'design stage'.*   Here participants worked in three groups to begin to form a strategic response to their own responses in the light of the theoretical models considered. The groups answered the question, 'In the light of our work and learning today, what are the implications for ensuring supervision is effective?'
 As the workshop moved on it became unexpectedly clear that there was significant interest in pursuing the learning beyond the workshop, and a willingness to allow me to use it to reshape my research question. This demonstrates the strength of professional doctorate

supervision in its robust capacity to accommodate joint professional working, new learning by students and supervisors, and person-centred learning.

It also demonstrates impact upon research practices of data collection and the ethics of consent. No thought had been given as to how data could be collected, managed and written up so there are strict caveats surrounding their validity to support my hypothesis. Whilst enthusiastic consent was given collectively, and verbal assurance around confidentiality was made, it is a fault in this initial research that such consent was not sought from the outset. It is, however, typical of the generosity of spirit and the quality of relationship among the practitioner researchers engaged in the programme.

The data are sourced from the transcript of the supervision and verbal feedback of the modelled session, and the responses from the participants evidenced in post-it notes and flip chart summaries.

Transcript data are enriched by having the perceptions of more than the researcher in focusing that data to explore evidence of supervision as coaching. At the time the supervisor's initial comments were as follows: she felt the impact of working in an environment without her reassuring books; she recognised a progressive structure that had achieved an outcome; she felt that she had affirmed and empathised whilst probing. My comments echoed hers and identified specific skills that were employed, including that of silence to keep me focused to an outcome, and competence in self-management to ensure that sympathy did not intrude on empathy. The group, acting as observers, commented on its awareness of her management of my uncertainty, and how connectedness was established in the movement of the conversation. They found it a challenging conversation, but felt that the supervisor had come to the session as a person as she explored my feelings, and was student centred. Value was found in the way processes were explored and surprise expressed that I was not in the same place where the supervisor had previously left me. They noted competency in emotional intelligence and skills of negotiation.

Reflecting back, I find evidence to support the idea of the supervisory relationship as a coaching relationship. Conditions and climate for learning are established. The tone is interested and empathetic, restorative in its encouragement of my progress. I sense

unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy, and respect for my knowledge and practice outside of practical theology in the space given to me to talk. Nevertheless, there are expectations of making use of the time effectively, whilst ensuring that it was I, as student, directing what I wanted to achieve from the session.

The focus is goal orientated with the discussion around work in progress centred within the bigger research question. I am encouraged to share my on-going reflections on the ontology of the practical theologian, and to bring scholarship to bear on my thinking from the literature. There is evidence of the supervisor in tutor mode suggesting that I look to taking stock, of her being pragmatic as to what can be achieved and normative in ensuring that I understand the depth of research at this level. There is mutuality in how she shares her own research interest, briefly and not at my expense, thus remaining person-centred but open to learning.

She recognises that my thoughts are like a firework display, and through skilful questioning, summarising, clarifying, and echoing my words, uses the session as a container that allows me to hold my thoughts together and accommodates my learning style, without it feeling like an exercise in how to use skills and competences for demonstration purposes. In challenging me regarding the wider research question, I agree what I will do before the next session.

It has felt like a colleague-colleague relationship, perhaps because of the context of co-facilitation. I have moved further towards autonomy and had confidence to be free in my responses; indeed I feel surprised what I have shared in open forum, so absorbing was the dialogue in its quality of listening and depth of her presence. She is quite unfazed that the research could take a different shape. She allows me to take the direction, encouraging me to value intrinsic observation and balance this with the extrinsic in testing my motivation.

Although, the other raw data are far less manageable and represent a potential morass of thought, they provide a richness of immediacy and vitality that can inform more formal research methods. It is safer to describe rather than evaluate such data; it is risky even to

categorise especially given the ethical considerations, and the reader should be aware of the power exercised in choice and interpretation.

At the *'discoverstage'* positive responses major on the quality of the relationship with comments under the heading of what is working well such as, 'relationships good-cordial and friendly'; 'good rapport-insightful'; 'affirming-encouraging', whilst only one comment under a 'so- so' heading is , 'place for 'pastoral' aspects'. Issues of power appear in responses that speak of 'peer feel', 'helpful feedback', 'feedback welcomed by student', 'student sticks up for their ideas', whilst one clearly felt the non-directive approach in, 'exploring a new course together'. In terms of the supervisor as expert, a supervisor saw learning in himself and a student valued the knowledge of the supervisor seen in the detailed annotation of work, suggestions for reading. A 'so-so' comment spoke of the limitations of own knowledge in knowing how to draw upon expertise. The only negative response was,'supervisor's own agenda interests'

Personal qualities and attributes of enthusiasm, patience, interest, giving time were noted as was motivation, and skills of engagement, empathy, critical feedback and listening. The supervisor is perceived as helping to provide clarity, 'seeing shapes out of chaos' and ideas coming from confusion. Sessions are described as productive and providing, 'targets and deadlines for work'. Words such as relaxed, interested, positive, enthusiastic, staying open-ended, perhaps hint as to the climate for learning and the art of supervision in its creation.

Negative responses, except the one referred to earlier, all fall under what could be summarised as contracting and administrative issues with responses about record keeping, university procedures, a lack of clarity around deadlines and linking areas of research. There appeared a feeling of need to have clearer expectations, of contact between sessions, the technicalities of returning to study, finding an appropriate supervisor. Getting co-supervisors to talk to each other was another concern.

The so-so responses largely reflect the negative. It is difficult to give weight to the single comment of'sessions resulting in a plan of action' but this could arise from a different understanding of coaching.

The *'dream stage'* offers a wealth of evidence to suggest the value of coaching as an andragogy for supervision. Person-centredness figures in such responses as, 'The supervisor understands who I am as a human being and where I come from', and,'appreciation of what's possible in my situation,' and, 'helps me to be my best'. Power issues are acknowledged but remain unresolved. There is the equality found in the role descriptor of a, 'companion in inquiry' and, 'both parties being prepared', and a desire for mutuality in the comments, 'supervisor seeing his work afresh', 'student keeping supervisor up to date', 'supervisor is generous in the face of contradiction of views', alongside value being found in the supervisor being the expert, having access to key voices and mutual challenge. The journey from dependence to autonomy is found in, 'increasingly blurred boundaries of expert-student with all letting go of their starting points' and,'student leading the supervision'. Principles are articulated in, 'total respect for me as researcher/colleague', a model of a partnership that suggests a professional relationship, although one respondent would welcome, 'weekly chat'.

Professionalism and contracting are found in the number of responses that view supervision as an activity with purpose: achievement of goals, clarity of vision and task, ', 'learning blocks diagnosed and resolved', and, 'clear focus and structure.... but open-ended', this latter suggesting a flexible way of working. Support and challenge are welcomed as is the knowledge of the supervisor, enthusiasm and application, courage. Other personal qualities of sympathy and offering comfort raise further questions as to reaching a common understanding of coaching at the contracting stage.

It is no surprise that at the *'design stage'* the focus from all groups identified ideal outcomes that could be considered contracting, boundary setting; clarity of roles, remit and responsibilities; clarity over expectations and how these are negotiated; understanding the processes being employed all figured in the interests of joint learning. Particular responsibilities were identified for the supervisor in picking up clues and adding clarity, in turning problems into the research question, and managing 'stuckness', and for the student in being prepared and taking responsibility for the session. One group raised the issue of power brokerage in a context of co-supervision, and another identified learning by the supervisor and genuine interest. Other than this, person-centredness did not appear.

In juxtaposing the*'dream'* and the *'design'* stages, it is possible to distinguish the 'doing and being' selves coming together as values influence and shape activity.

The responses that arose from the workshop do not surprise. They reflect the research into adult learning theory, with its emphasis on adults learning in relationship through person-centred facilitation, without there being commonality of understanding of what is meant by coaching. Skills and competences of coaching were identified, albeit unsystematically. Engagement as person to person in a professional relationship figured largely. Whilst no firm conclusions can be drawn, this small enquiry supports the experience that andragogy of coaching where minds and hearts meet.

The story moves to an exploration of the literature

These dataled me to reframe the focus of my research into exploring the lived experience of supervision, and to reflect upon the literature through the lenses of my experiences as practitioner and student.Some literature was familiar but as I positioned supervision, from a range of helping professions, adult learning theory and coaching before bringing these areas together in exploring the supervisory relationship as a coaching relationship, the dialogue between disciplines began to emerge.

Positioning supervision

Definitions of supervision that refer as does Webster's dictionary to,'management by overseeing the performance or operation ....' appear somewhat reductionist.Hawkins and Shohet offer help in the context of the helping professions They quote Hess who sees supervision as, 'a quintessentially interpersonal interaction with the general goal that one person, the supervisor,meets with another......to make latter more effective...'(Hawkins &Shohet, 2006:57).

Key ideas are around relationship, effectiveness and facilitation and these resonate in Hewson's work (2001: 65) which offers a useful distinction between the art and science of supervision.The art is found in managing a combination of educative and assessing/monitoring roles with therapeutic skill, and in developing trust and respect whilst being willing to meet in, 'an encounter of mutuality and mentorship.' The science is to be

found in functions of supervision such as advising and instructing, monitoring and evaluating.

Carroll(1996) identifies seven tasks of supervision; creating a learning relationship, teaching, counselling, monitoring, evaluating, consulting and administrating. These reflect functions identified by Inskipp and Proctor (1995): normative, where the supervisor actsas assessor, appraiser ,challenger, ensuring that the supervisee is working to ethical standards and expected norms; restorative where the supervisor empowers and encourages as counsellor and colleague; and formative where the supervisor acts as tutor or facilitator to improve performance.

Of more interest is Carroll's work on the spirituality of supervision. He writes of this as, '....it's what people are and how they view life and how they live-that is supervision as a way of life......' (2001: 77) He talks of the values of supervision as the values of life, values that resonate with the person- centred values of coaching, and beliefs about adults in 'andragogy' and practical theology, where the comment by Burnard, '...not to help is not to be fully human.'(1999: 43) is apposite.

Perhaps more surprising but resonant, is Delamont et al.'s work that quotes extensively from the experience ofacademic research supervisors, one of whom claims that the most important thing is '....to really give them a love....'(2004: 12).Mackinnon (2004)also acknowledges the centrality of relationship in creating the right conditions for good scholarship to be created.This resonates with the work of Green(2005) who talks of the need for relational space with the assumption that supervision is social practice. The supervisory relationship carries a delicate balance of trust arising from the perception of its inherent power differential. This may shift as the student moves from dependence to autonomy, reflecting the continuum of identified by Carroll (1996) from totally didactic supervisor centred supervision to totally self-directed learning that is supervisee centred and collegial.

Hawkins, writing in the foreword of Shohet's (2008: 9) work on passionate supervision, adds a more nuanced emphasis in asserting that, 'Arguably the most effective gift of the supervisor to the supervisee is to role model full presence.'

None of this precludes the notion of performance; indeed in making the reference to presence Hawkins refers to Senge et al.'s seminal work (2005) on presence, its function and impact in bringing about profound change and transformation.

It is against this backdrop that offers the possibility of supervision in a learning, affective relationship that I offerWisker's definition of supervision cited by Lee (2009: 84) as a pragmatic summary, 'Supervision is a lengthy professional relationship, drawing on coaching,reflective practice, the facilitation of research and professional expertise on the part of the supervisor; and the motivation, adaptability and intellectual capacity of the student.'Nevertheless, the concept of supervision as a meeting of minds and hearts remains implicit, rather than explicit.

Positioning adult learning

Knowles, et al. (1998: 11) define learning as, 'the act of process by which behavioural change, knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired.' They make a case for andragogy as opposed to pedagogy, where the emphasis is on person centred and process driven rather than content centred learning.

 Here the following assumptions are made: that the task of the facilitator is to make learners aware of what they need to know; that given the sense that adults have of being responsible for their own learning, the task is to create learning experiences to help learners move from dependency to self–direction; that the richest resource comes from the adults themselves, and the task to ensure that ways are discovered to help them open their minds to new perspectives; that readiness to learn comes from what is needed to be known, and the task is to give exposure to new perspectives; that adults' orientation is life- centred and the task is application to real life; and finally to identify internal and external sources of motivation.

This focus is also seen in Boyatzis' theory of self-directed learning where learning is prompted by the sense of dissonance between the ideal and the real self, building upon strengths, and experimenting with new thoughts. Underpinning the theory's realisation are trusting relationships that support each step of the process(Goleman et al,2002).

In addition, supervisors and students may benefit from an awareness of the work of Kolb (1984)whose work on experience as the source of learning and development led to his typology of learning styles of individuals.

Knowles et al (1998: 49) offer some particular insight into such person -centred learning, making reference to the work of Rogers who claimed that people cannot be taught directly, learning has to be facilitated.People only learn what they perceive as relevant; as learning is often threatening, a climate of support and acceptance needs to be created; learning is controlled by the learner and engages him as a life process like breathing; and that the learner becomes more content to be a process rather than a product. These ideas resonate in considering the supervisory relationship as a coaching relationship which in turn establishes person-centred, self-directed and self-correcting learning in the promotion of independence and autonomy.

Support for this is found in the work of Brockbank and McGill(2006).Coaching and mentoring are perceived asmeans of facilitating learning through developing a critical approach characterised by questioning the prevailing discourse. They argue that reflection is essential for deep learning, seeing reflective learning as an, 'intentional process where social context and experience are acknowledged, in which clients are active individuals, wholly present, engaging with others and open to challenge, and the outcomes involves transformation as well as improvement for both individuals and their organization.'(Brockbank et al. quoted in Brockbank and McGill, 2002: 27).

Reflective dialogue is perceived as an enabler for clients to move from single to double loop learning that promotes movement from existing ways of seeing the world, and engages the whole person at the edge of their knowledge in relationship with another. In seeing

coaching as a powerful alliance designed to forward and enhance the lifelong process of holistic human learning (2006: 103), they offer anandragogy for supervision.

Likewise, in developing a case for coaching as adult learning, Cox (2006) explores reflective learning and transformation in making reference to the work of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, where reflection has a particular role in reassessing presumptions and acting in a transformed manner.

The implications are self-evident, but the complexity is compounded in a professional doctorate context where the learner may have more expertise and experience in his field than the supervisor who, therefore, has to model learning himself, design processes that show a critical approach to adult learning theory and grapple with the reality of what it means to be person-centred, not only in the framework of the academy, but also in the student's professional organization where the research will have implications for his practice and that of others(Morley, 2005).

Positioning coaching

The terms coaching and mentoring are used somewhat inter-changeably, a position I do not intend to interrogate, accepting Connor and Pokora's position (2007: 6) that, 'Coaching and mentoring are learning relationships which help people to take charge of their own development, to release their potential and to achieve results that they value.'Suffice it to say that mentoring does have overtones of passing on advice from a more expert position.

Rogers(2008) locates coaching activity in learning relationships, making the distinction between the 'being and doing' self; the former found in the inner personality, attitudes, beliefs, core values, the latter in the tasks, skills and roles of the coach.It is in their overlapping that coaching produces results. In this she highlights,'coaching from a humanist perspective' that capitalises on a person's inherent tendency to self-actualise, the main catalyst for growth being found in the relationship.

However, if supervision is indeed a meeting place of minds and hearts,the International Coach Federation's definition is apposite since it speaks of as much about fulfilled lives as performance:'.... an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce

extraordinary results in their lives ...Through ....coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance the quality of life' (Joo, 2005: 467). Brockbank and McGill (2006: 5)focus this in seeing coaching as aiming, 'to achieve reflective learning and transformation.'

Given multifaceted complexity, Clutterbuck and Megginson's(2005: 52) framework of coaching styles positions coaching into the context of supervision.This framework is set into four quadrants that reflect the stance of the coach in assessor, demonstrator, tutor or stimulator modes. These stances are built around the nature of the relationship between coach and client based upon a vertical axis of a spectrum of a directive to non-directive descriptor, and a horizontal axis of extrinsic to intrinsic observation by coach and client.

Considering what it means to be person-centred is focused on the vertical axis on direction. The supervisor will have expectations that may or may not link to her own research interests in academy or organisational contexts. This ownership of the agenda and the power dynamics that surround it may be a source of tension in the balance of power as the supervisor adopts a coach role.Each of the above roles takes a different power stance with the greatest socialisation of power in the stimulator quadrant. This power differential is also exercised along the observation axis as sources of evidence for feedback are explored in the interests of sustaining motivation and promoting reflective learning. The more intrinsic the observation the more power rests with the client and the more person-centred is the coaching.

In assessor mode the supervisor is the one who is making the judgements and telling the student about, for example, university regulations and benchmark standards. As demonstrator the supervisor shows the student examples of her research practice, initiating him into the academy and its norms. In tutor mode the supervisor may suggest, encouraging the student to explore direction, e.g. reading. However, it is in stimulator mode that the supervisor encourages students to think autonomously and come to conclusions regarding the value and/or application of their suggestions and manage any potential conflict. As stimulator, the supervisor helps students to learn through the use of 'insightful questions.'

All styles have value but the choice will depend upon the capability and motivation of the student and the professional judgement of the supervisor.This framework offers both a structured yet flexible model in which to articulate and position thesupervisory relationship and its power dynamicsover the period of the doctorate.

The supervisory relationship as a coaching relationship

Although the manifestation of this will be unique as it is dependent upon the individuals and their particular relationship, there will be some commonality of purpose and underlying principles. Its purposes are professional with,

> 'a focus on the job of supervision as facilitating research student learning; the foregrounding of the dynamics of the research learning environment; and the promotion of critical reflection and engagement with the scholarship of research education and supervision(Pearson, 2005: 18).

Andresen (1999: 31) sees the purpose as,'mentoring into scholarship.' In coaching terms, the coach's,'sole aim is to achieve all of the client's potential – as defined by the client' (Rogers,2008: 7).

Despite the potential tension raised here, it is possible, looking at Clutterbuck and Megginson's model, to be person-centred in the boundaries of Pearson's professional purposes. These are founded within a relational context since learning itself is a socialprocess, organic and dynamic, where the balance of power shifts as the underpinning principles, values and beliefs of the relationship are tested. Rogers(2008)refers to this as the 'being self'influencing and working with the 'doingself'.Reidy and Green (2005: 54) make a helpful distinction in the notion of 'being a candidate' and 'doing a doctorate' that makes the same point but from the student's point of view.Thus, the realisation of the relationship is driven by the ontology of supervisor and student coming together to fulfil professional purposes.

Flaherty (1999: 10) identifies five operating principles: the first, that of mutual respect, trust and freedom of expression; the second, that coaching is pragmatic and requires freshness,

innovation and correction; the third, that coaching is a learning experience for coach and client; the fourth, that clients are always and already in the middle of their lives and coaching must be client centred; and fifthly, that techniques alone do not work, and cannot replace what Flaherty describes as human heart and creativity. Carroll(2001) would describe this as spirituality. Given the unpredictability of human life and relationships,Wosket and Page's (2001)view that counselling supervision is a container in which creativity and chaos can be held is helpful. Here there is a willingness to encounter the unexpectedand leave the security of method and theory as both parties engage in learning.

Like Starr(2003), Rogers (2008) believes in the resourcefulness of the client, with the coach's role being found in questioning, challenge and support. Like Flaherty she believes that coaching addresses the whole person. She stresses the importance of change and action but it is the client who sets the agenda and the coach and client are equal in an adult-adult, colleague-colleague relationship.

All this leads to a consideration of the psychodynamics of, and balance of power in the supervisory relationship, and potential areas of tension around issues of mutuality and equality. Green (2005) sees an inherent power imbalance that reflects the power found in the supervisor's role. Manathunga(2007: 2008)makes a similar point referring to an academy context of,'surveillance mechanisms and institutional power' having an impact upon collegial equal relationships. She talks of asymmetry of power and the need to boundary the roles.

 In the context of psychotherapy, Proctor(2002: 7) picks up on these aspects of power, identifying like Green, role power,societal power arising from structural position in society and historical power arising from personal histories. These latter two may be of particular interest to the professional doctorate in that supervisor and student may have an equality of status and expertise afforded by their social and professional roles in their own contexts; and historically, students may be in positions where the exercise of personal power is demanded. This is a delicate balance to be negotiated.

The familiar models of guru/disciple/, master/apprentice,doctor/patient, teacher/pupil even parent/child need to be critically examined for the relationship to be sustained over a

lengthy period when, if we follow adult learning theory and success characteristics of effective coaching, the student moves along that continuum of dependency to autonomy where there is mutual learning and increasing reciprocity(Wisker et al.,2003).

Mackinnon (2004: 400) sees the potential harm done through inappropriate use of power, but in offering a model of a fiduciary relationship, she sees the focus as essentially ethical where,'differentials in knowledge and power are respected but not exploited.' The responsibility to use power appropriately rests with both parties even though, given the role power, it may fall on the supervisor initially to ensure inter-related strategies are in place to establish such a fiduciary relationship.Without this becoming a mutual and collaborative responsibility, the relationship will founder and impact negatively upon its purposes.

There is therefore need to clarifywhat Hewson(2001) might describe as the science of supervision, and Rogers, (2008)'the doing self,' inthe transparent,tough contractingof expectations, roles and responsibilities that are discussed at the outset. These should humanise university policies and procedures and provide a flexible framework to ask, over the period of the study,'What is happening here that is helping or hindering effective learning that is our core purpose?'Answers may demand re-contracting, and the examination of role conflicts and power dynamics.

Integrative to this, there is Hewson's (2001)art of supervision or Rogers' (2008) 'being self', in establishing what Carl Rogers called 'facilitative conditions' for the belief in innate potential for constructive growth to be realised (Proctor, 2002: 85).This could further be explored as the 'becoming' self, a concept implicit in the humanistic principles of coaching fundamental to the likes of Brockbank and McGill(2006: 21) in their emphasis on being present in facilitating learning through application of Rogers' conditions for personal growth. Congruence or genuineness is about being real, sharing feelings and attitudes rather than opinions or judgements; unconditional positive regard is that 'prizing' of the other, and empathy, not only understanding the feelings of the other but communicating them. In addition, these are a means of balancing power in the 'I-Thou' relationship as each puts the needs of the other first.

What a coach should bring to this is summarised by Rogers (2008: 2)as, '.....a self-confident fascination with how people achieve their potential...a wish to go with them on their journey....curiosity about people.....intuition...self knowledge....self- discipline to keep yourself out of the way....ability to resist giving advice or wanting to be right.'

This contrasts with Mackinnon's (2004: 403) view, 'The academic supplies ideas and information and proposes courses of action. The student takes the course of action and uses the ideas and information or chooses not to do so.'This is balanced byEvans (1999: 119) whose view of the role of a professional doctorate supervisor is more holistic, asserting that it is less about supervising and more to do with clarifying needs and goals, helping students to identify resources. He sees the job of supporting research in the context of the student's personal and professional responsibilities whilst maintaining the traditional functions of rule setting and gate-keeping.

What a supervisor should be able to expect is described by Andresen (1999) as characteristics that embody quality of mind, willingness to engage in scrutiny, a spirit of curiosity and critical reflectivity.

In bringing these together it becomes evident that effective supervisory coaching relationships do not happen by accident, but require appropriate boundary setting and shared understanding of purpose and principle. The relationship engages parties ontologically in a delicate balance of power. This is far from static. Hewson (2008, p.46) writes of the supervisor walking behind, alongside, stepping out in front to protect, as the multi-faceted nature of passionate supervision, surely a metaphor for the meeting of minds and hearts.

The next chapters of the story...

This article does no more than skate the surface of complex multi- and trans-disciplinary thinking but which appears to underpin my view that supervisory relationships can lead to transformational learning.

However, I have confidence in my hypothesis to put this to the academy as the proper place for shaping the research. It offers challenge to students seeking to maximise the benefits of a learning relationship, and to supervisors reflecting upon their practice and learning within a coaching paradigm. Here issues of power in a professional doctorate context remain live.

A further challenge lies in my particular interest in supervision as an expression of practical theology, as the embodiment of theological values and person-centred spirituality found in generating transformational knowledge and practical wisdom. The tradition of narrative theology gives me confidence to pursue auto ethnography as an appropriate methodology to pursue the slipperiness of researching the lived experience.

I am grateful to my supervisors at Chester and Middlesex Universities for modelling with humility, for being prepared to put themselves publicly under scrutiny, and for enabling an environment of peer supervision and for creating a community of practice where the research can take place.

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As a student on a professional doctorate in practical theology at the University of Chester, I am researching academic supervision in the context of transformational learning and coaching, whilst engaging in theological reflection on the spirituality of professional learning relationships. I came new to practical theology but value its capacity to bring theology into dialogue with practice in a radical way that seeks transformation.

My background is in secondary education and for 10 years was a headteacher in the Anglican sector, developing an interest in leadership and spirituality and witnessing the value of coaching to leading and managing sustainable change.