INTEGRATING AND NORMALISING COACHING AS A ROUTINE PRACTICE IN DOCTORAL SUPERVISION

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	Recent research highlights the growing decline in doctoral students' mental health and wellbeing, caused not only by the pressures, stress, and isolation of doctoral studies but also by existential issues around personal development and future prospects. Consequently, we argue that there is an urgent need to reassess the supervisory process to support doctoral students in addressing these concerns. This paper offers a potential solution to this challenge by exploring and examining how integrating coaching methods into doctoral supervision can support doctoral students' growth and development, thereby increasing their wellbeing and human flourishing. Coaching aims to help individuals produce optimal performance and improvements in personal and professional settings by deploying a series of tools and models. Coaching is essentially a non-directive form of development, enabling people to identify goals and skills and then extracting the capacity people have within themselves to achieve their ambitions. This paper explores how coaching methods could be made a regular feature of doctoral supervision.
Background	The need to reconfigure doctoral supervision as a practice to address humanistic issues regarding whole-person development, self-actualisation, and personal worth is nothing new. Over the years, researchers have produced models of doctoral supervision, highlighting the growing need for supervision to incorporate more pastoral and emancipatory elements, which facilitate personal growth instead of focusing purely on academic function and criticality. Although coaching is identified in previous studies as being a valuable addition, nothing examines how to modify existing supervision practices to accommodate more pastoral elements.

Methodology	This paper offers a conceptual analysis whereby the argument primarily synthesizes existing research on doctoral supervision to understand why coaching methods may provide a solution to the evolving requirements of student welfare and emancipation. Since the commentary in this paper is not based on the findings of an empirical study, the following two conceptual research questions frame the discussion. First, are coaching methods beneficial when supervising doctoral students? Second, what are the challenges when implementing and integrating coaching methods into existing doctoral supervisory practice?
	The paper utilises the Normalisation Process Theory as a 'thinking tool' to help answer these questions. The theory evaluates phenomena in applied social research settings to help understand how complex practices are made workable and integrated into context-dependent ways. Therefore, the theory acts as an analytical tool, enabling researchers to think through implementation issues when designing complex interventions and their evaluation.
Contribution	This paper contributes to knowledge by highlighting ways in which management responsible for a doctoral provision in higher education settings can modify their organisational structures and systems to encourage coaching methods to become a normalised part of doctoral supervision, thereby legitimising its practice.
Findings	The Normalisation Process Theory has value because it produces a roadmap for integrating and implementing new or modified practices into existing systems of operation. It, therefore, assists by producing an output that enables a current/new practice to be dissected and categorised under specific headings. In this research context, this output assisted in understanding the operational challenges when considering the normalisation of a practice. The theory helped generate something managers tasked with managing doctoral provision could consider (i.e., institutional paradigms, policies, regulations, etc.) when thinking about what may need to be reconfigured to enable coaching methods to become an integrated and normalised part of doctoral supervision over time.
Recommendations for Practitioners	It is recommended that practitioners consider the integration of coaching methods into supervision. First, once implemented, it requires monitoring to ensure the practice's quality and consistency amongst the supervisory community. Secondly, to assess the impact of the practice on other services within the organisation, such as student services or faith services, and thirdly, to ensure training in coaching methods is made timely and relevant to assist all academics involved in doctoral supervision.
Recommendations for Researchers	The authors recommend collecting empirical evidence using the Normalisation Process Theory to evaluate the integration and normalisation of a range of practices in higher education settings. Moreover, once implemented, more research is required on the long-term value of coaching methods within doctoral settings.
Impact on Society	Doctoral education is increasingly significant in a world where knowledge is fundamental to generating economic growth. Identified as having the technical and professional skills needed to fuel the knowledge-based economy, student wellbeing, and mental health must be optimal to ensure they can contribute to the knowledge-based economy as effectively as possible.
Future Research	More research must be conducted on how doctoral supervision can become more humanistic; for example, by focusing on student self-awareness, reflection, and reframing instead of just the traditional academic function. Consequently,

improving these facets is vital in developing sustained wellbeing and life-long success.

Keywords coaching, PhD, research supervision, doctoral students, Normalisation Process Theory

INTRODUCTION

Haider and Dasti (2021) describe doctoral students as "the torchbearers of future generations" (p. 171), converting them into individuals who are critical in expanding knowledge and innovation in society, contributing to both economic and social development (Loxley & Kearns, 2018). To that extent, it is critical for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to nurture and inspire doctoral students to consider continuing as academics and contemplate careers in the industry. Historically, HEIs doctoral provision adopted the Humboldtian model of educating students (Taylor, 2012). This model, characterised by its "master-apprentice" mode of engagement, positioned academics as experts transferring their "expertise to novices" (Manathunga & Goozee, 2007, p. 309), with the expressed goal being the growth and continuation of the academic population (Taylor, 2012). However, this position has changed over the last three decades (Haider & Dasti, 2021; Taylor, 2012). Due to growing student numbers, mixed student populations, divergent study modes, and diversification in the purpose of a doctorate, changes have needed to happen (Comer & Brogt, 2016; Johnston et al., 2016). Although supervisors must still support their students' formal academic needs, which include research ideas, academic career preparation, academic skill development, research funding advice, and publishing opportunities, what is becoming increasingly apparent is the additional need to support other existential issues, such as mental health and wellbeing.

THE CHANGING NEEDS OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS

A recent report by Gower and Covey (2021) evidences the growing responsibilities placed upon doctoral supervisors. When asked, "Do you agree that doctoral supervision has become more demanding over the past five years?" (p. 27), 71% (2,728 respondents) reported seeing an increase in doctoral demands driven by administrative processes and pastoral needs. In addition, out of 2,022 participants, 32% expressed having to deal with student bullying, harassment complaints, sick leave, stress related to caring responsibilities, compassionate leave, and other personal issues. These can range from self-motivation, self-sabotage, personal distress, mental health, and work-life balance (Hazell et al., 2020). The report clearly identifies the increasing need for supervisors to become more aware of the "personal development and welfare of the doctoral candidate", which includes focusing on their "mental health and wellbeing" (Gower & Covey, 2021, p. 32).

In the context of this study, the World Health Organisation's definitions of mental health and wellbeing are applied. Mental health is "a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and can make a contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organisation [WHO], n.d.). Furthermore, wellbeing is defined as a state in which an "individual can realise his or her own abilities and cope with the normal stresses of life whilst working productively in contributing to his or her community" (WHO, n.d.). Another component known as 'human flourishing' is linked to the concept of wellbeing. Human flourishing is defined as a state in which individuals express positive emotions and satisfaction towards their life, evidencing stable social and psychological functioning (Hart, 2021). According to Seligman (2013), wellbeing theory relies on five elements: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, also known as PERMA (p. 16). All five elements are subjective variables and are independent of each other but equally contribute to the notion of wellbeing. Since these conditions are "fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life", it is critical that these issues are of vital concern to individuals and communities throughout the world (WHO, n.d.). It is, therefore, imperative that the personal development needs of doctoral students be considered by educators

responsible for doctoral provision. This is to ensure doctoral students can successfully function in and positively contribute to the development of economies and societies.

It is now recognised that awareness of life outside of academia, life-long and life-wide learning opportunities, the development of emotional intelligence, and soft skill acquisition are vital in producing well-rounded and resilient doctoral students (Gower & Covey, 2021). Shields et al. (2016) further confirm how supporting doctoral student wellbeing and mental health is essential in enabling them to complete their studies and contribute to the wider society and knowledge-based economy. In addition, doctoral holders often have specialist skills, such as critical reasoning and problem-solving, which are deemed imperative to success in today's employment market (Kahn & Lundgren-Resenterra, 2021). However, if doctoral students cannot demonstrate and articulate their value and beneficence outside of the academic environment, then the question arises as to the level of contribution they can fundamentally make. Consequently, it seems doctoral supervisors play a part in ensuring students graduate with the appropriate soft skills, such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and empathy, enabling them to communicate their contribution to audiences outside of academia (Tomlinson, 2010). Student wellbeing and personal growth for self-emancipation, as agents who have a say in shaping their personal and professional lives, are critical (Homer et al., 2021). It, therefore, seems the Humboldtian approach of doctoral achievement through independent, autonomous, and isolated learning no longer fits the needs of modern society and the economy.

One way of dealing with these pastoral challenges would be to consider the integration of positive psychology or coaching methodologies since students exposed to these types of initiatives do show improvements in their wellbeing and resilience (Lech et al., 2018; Nichol et al., 2018). For instance, Lech et al. (2018, p. 60) explored the "potential value of coaching for PhD students" by examining their experiences without, however, explaining how the process was undertaken. Although only six participants undergoing a PhD programme at the UK-based university were interviewed, findings suggested coaching interventions can work, especially when exploring the lived experiences through in-depth interviews aiming at understanding interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects. We, therefore, propose that coaching practice can bring value to doctoral supervision. However, we first need to establish what we mean by the term 'coaching practice'.

DEFINING COACHING PRACTICE

Coaching is defined as a practice that allows an individual to reflect and gain awareness of who they are and what matters to them in order to make changes in their personal or professional life (Whitmore, 2017). It empowers a person to recognise their own potential and strengthen their agency in the pursuit of improved wellbeing (Whitmore, 2017). Agency here refers to a person's belief in personal efficacy to engage in actions that produce desired outcomes over undesired ones for optimal human functioning (Bandura, 2000). Bandura's (2006) agency theory claims that people with increased agency have the necessary power to transcend the injunctions of their immediate social environment to shape their course of life according to their own needs and interests. Furthermore, coaching can involve the application of certain approaches or methodologies, such as team, cognitive, systemic, goal-orientated, or adaptive coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2009). In addition, tools may be applied to enhance dialogue and inspire reflection, such as the GROW, STEPPA, or OSKAR. Effective coaches often share key attributes such as empathy, compassion, care, and courage (Patterson, 2018). They are often skilled communicators who use powerful questioning, active listening, reflection, and effective feedback to assist in the development of another person (Smith, 2001; van Nieuwerburgh, 2020; Whitmore, 2017).

For the purposes of this paper, there is no suggestion supervisors become professional coaches who train in specific methodologies to support their students or become mental health advisors. On the contrary, supervisors should continue to be research specialists. Moreover, it is acknowledged not every academic has the attributes required to enable them to become effective coaches. However, since previous research highlights the benefits of coaching doctoral students, there is arguably a place

for assimilating some level of coaching practice into supervision to support the existing academic function. We suggest, therefore, that 'coaching methods' are integrated into supervision, whereby elements of coaching practice, such as coaching tools and coaching skills, are integrated and normalised as a part of routine supervision. Throughout the paper, we use the term 'coaching methods' to describe the combination of these tools and skills as a practice.

CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper postulates two research questions:

1. Are coaching methods beneficial when supervising doctoral students?

2. What are the challenges when implementing and integrating coaching methods into existing doctoral supervisory practice?

The paper first provides the reader with a literature review, evidencing an increasing need for doctoral students' mental health and wellbeing support. Next, it discusses research on academic supervision and coaching in doctoral settings. The paper then offers a conceptual analysis (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015) of how coaching methods can be integrated into supervisory practice by applying a theoretical model which explains how practices are implemented and integrated into context-dependent ways. Therefore, this paper's methodology uses the Normalisation Process Theory by May and Finch (2009), which examines the integration, implementation, and normalising of practice into small segments, making it possible to plan and evaluate paradigms, workloads, policy, or practice implementation. The model makes it possible for HE stakeholders to examine their organisations and consider ways to coaching methods could be integrated into their current systems of operating.

DOCTORAL SUPERVISION: A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The doctoral landscape constantly evolves, with new forms of doctoral provision emerging. For example, institutions now offer traditional PhDs, professional or practice-based doctorates (Kearney & Lincoln, 2018). In response to this, Taylor (2012) notes how the once-dominant paradigm of the Humboldtian doctorate involving a "master-apprentice" mode of delivery is no longer applicable in what he terms the post-Humboldtian era. This era requires supervisors to be much broader in their vision, with enhanced knowledge and professional skills. Taylor (2012) refers to this as the "extended supervisor" who develops student autonomy through a range of skills and competencies, such as teamworking, self-awareness, communication, networking, and malleability. This new era no longer favours the "restricted … narrow and intuitively based interpretation of being a supervisor" (Taylor, 2012, p. 131). Castaneda et al. (2008) suggest that to improve the chances of successfully completing a doctorate, it is crucial supervisors help reduce student stress and anxiety, thus warding off any possible cognitive impairment and decline in performance. Elevated anxiety levels and prolonged stress periods can cause overuse of mediators that switch the stress response on and off (McEwen & Wingfield, 2003). This accumulation of stress is known as allostatic load. High allostatic load is associated with depressive disorders and may present behaviourally in students as a state of enhanced vigilance, maintained or exacerbated by worry (McEwen, 2003).

Further work by Woolston (2019), discussing Nature's fifth survey of early career researchers (6,300 respondents), reported how 36% of students had, at some point, sought help for anxiety and depression. Of those, 33% sought support from outside their university, and 18% revealed how, even though they sought support from their university, it failed to help them. More recent work by Hazell et al. (2021), which sampled ~3.29% of the whole UK doctoral population (3,352 respondents), found that "70.9% and 74.2% of doctoral students reported clinically relevant (i.e., mild to severe symptoms) of depression and anxiety symptoms, respectively" (p. 7). They also found that more than a third of researchers (35.8%) had considered ending and/or taking a break from their studies due to poor mental health. Work by Homer et al. (2021) supports these findings and argues that the rate of mental health in doctoral students is alarmingly high and should be of concern for HEIs who

operate doctoral programmes. Further research into postgraduate mental health and wellbeing undertaken by Metcalfe et al. (2018) recommended that HEIs train, support and recognise their staff's pivotal role in identifying and intervening in postgraduate researchers' wellbeing and mental health. Their report highlighted how some supervisors were confused about the extent of their pastoral role concerning "wellbeing and mental health in terms of being reactive when presented with a problem and being proactive when noticing a problem" (p. 15). Furthermore, Gower and Covey (2021) evidenced how 71% (2,728 respondents) of supervisors felt doctoral supervision had become more demanding over the last five years. One acknowledged reason for this is the increased responsibility for students' personal development and welfare. Although 76% (3,435 respondents) acknowledged their role involved responding to mental health and wellbeing needs, verbatim quotes evidence how academics know little about addressing these challenges other than directing students to advertised training and public engagement opportunities. The remaining 24% were not convinced it was their responsibility or, perhaps, were unsure of what was meant by mental health and wellbeing (Gower & Covey, 2021, p. 33). Many respondents stated how a lack of training and wellbeing qualifications made them feel anxious and overwhelmed when faced with non-academic issues raised by their students. In addition, the time allocated to supervision and the administrative pressures accompanying it left many feeling overwhelmed and strained. The question arises, what can be done to try and alleviate some of these pressures? Do coaching methods offer any benefit when supervising doctoral students?

LITERATURE REVIEW: COACHING METHODS AND DOCTORAL SUPERVISION

Research on the value and benefit of coaching in supporting postgraduate students is slowly growing. For example, Lech et al. (2018) explored the value of coaching PhD students as an additional support conversation to their actual supervision. Nichol et al. (2018) also focused on integrating coaching through the application of Cook's (2011) CACL method. The model focuses on the collaborative need for coaching to create a shared responsibility for the transfer of learning outside of the partnership, with reflection on practice and innovative ideas generated on both sides for it to succeed. In addition, Godskesen and Kobayashi (2016), using three Danish universities, explored the influence of individual coaching conducted by external coaches as a new pedagogical element to improve doctoral students' sense of progress in doctoral education. Seen as wholly beneficial by 72% (53 respondents), coaching enabled students to overcome the power dynamic inherent in supervision by ordaining the student with the expertise and authority regarding their own progress. Students recorded higher levels of self-confidence whilst promoting their ability to find solutions to their problems. Recent work by Wilson and James (2021) suggests that adopting coaching methods in supervision enables academics to focus more on their students' needs, personality, experiences, and ways of thinking rather than on meeting their objectives. They suggest that to understand student needs, supervisors need to be open to listening to what the student brings into the conversation and realise they have a mutual relationship based on respect and trust.

An example of how coaching methods can enhance aspects of the doctoral journey, as outlined by Lee (2008, 2018), is critical thinking. Lee (2018) deems critical thinking (CT) to be an essential part of doctoral supervision since students need to engage in the "creation of new professional, transdisciplinary knowledge" (p. 882). Scriven and Paul (1987, as cited in Clarke, 2019, p. 5) define CT as:

> [T]he intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action.

According to Wilson and James (2021), CT can be developed by adopting a more informal supervisory style than the functional and directive supervisory approach. Indeed, their autoethnographic study revealed findings of a supervisory relationship based on the student's interests and expressed needs and how beneficial it was in improving student control over goal setting and decision-making.

By adopting a more humanistic approach, the supervisor enhanced the student's critical thinking process for argumentation, analysis, and re-theorising. Moreover, the supervision process integrated coaching methods based on attentive listening and powerful questioning to enhance the student's agency and metacognition. Coaching theory typically states that effective questioning is a powerful technique to encourage metacognition and agency for a successful working outcome (van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). When applied in this particular study, Wilson and James (2021) were able to evidence an increase in student responsibility and accountability, thereby improving the academic outcomes of the students. Furthermore, both parties engaged in a communal appraisal of what worked well or not, thus adjusting the practice to meet the student's needs further, leading to a cycle of continuous supervisory refinements.

In addition, Haider and Dasti (2021) further evidence the value of interventions that support the intrapersonal development of doctoral students. Mentoring was an additional interpersonal service to support doctoral candidates' psychological wellbeing, research self-efficacy, and work-life balance. Whilst their work confirms the value and benefit of integrating meaningful interactions between individuals about various existential issues, it is impossible for all HEIs to operate parallel mentoring or coaching programmes outside of formalised supervisory meetings. This is because resources such as additional staff availability, expertise, and time may render this impossible. Thus, for many HEIs to reap the benefits of coaching, the only realistic option is to make it a part of routine supervision.

If we take these studies and consider their conclusions in relation to the definitions of mental health, wellbeing, and human flourishing presented in the introduction, it is clear to see the synergy between the outputs of coaching in supervision (i.e., student confidence, autonomy, emancipation, etc.) and the things required to maintain balanced mental health and wellbeing (i.e., autonomy, resilience, confidence, problem-solving, etc.) These investigations, therefore, give credence to the notion that coaching methods integrated into supervisory practice can potentially improve student wellbeing and productivity. However, although previous research makes recommendations as to why coaching is a valuable asset in doctoral environments, what is not discussed is the integration and implementation of coaching methods into supervision. A second question is postulated: What are the challenges when implementing and integrating coaching methods into existing doctoral supervisory practice? As such, the NPT offers a lens through which to dissect and analyse the implementation, integration, and normalisation of a practice.

METHODOLOGY: INTRODUCING THE NORMALISATION PROCESS THEORY

Initially used in healthcare to investigate various practices from digital healthcare to surgical assessments, the Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) (May & Finch, 2009, p. 541) has also been used to explore more nuanced qualitative practices. For example, the care given to patients with depression and person-centred care evidences its appeal when establishing more intimate practices (Finch et al., 2014). It, therefore, seems plausible to consider the model in the context of establishing and embedding other forms of personalised care and support. Furthermore, the model has been used extensively in the deliberation of 'intervention design', whereby practices are explored before their execution (Brooks et al., 2015).

Fundamentally, the NPT is a framework that allows for systematic examination of why some processes lead to a practice becoming successfully (or not) implemented, integrated, and sustained by attempting to understand the initiative about the work people do (Tazzyman et al., 2017). May and Finch (2009) describe the NTP as being concerned with the:

> … social organisation of the *work* (implementation), of making practices routine elements of everyday life (embedding), and of sustaining embedded practices in their social contexts (integration) (p. 538).
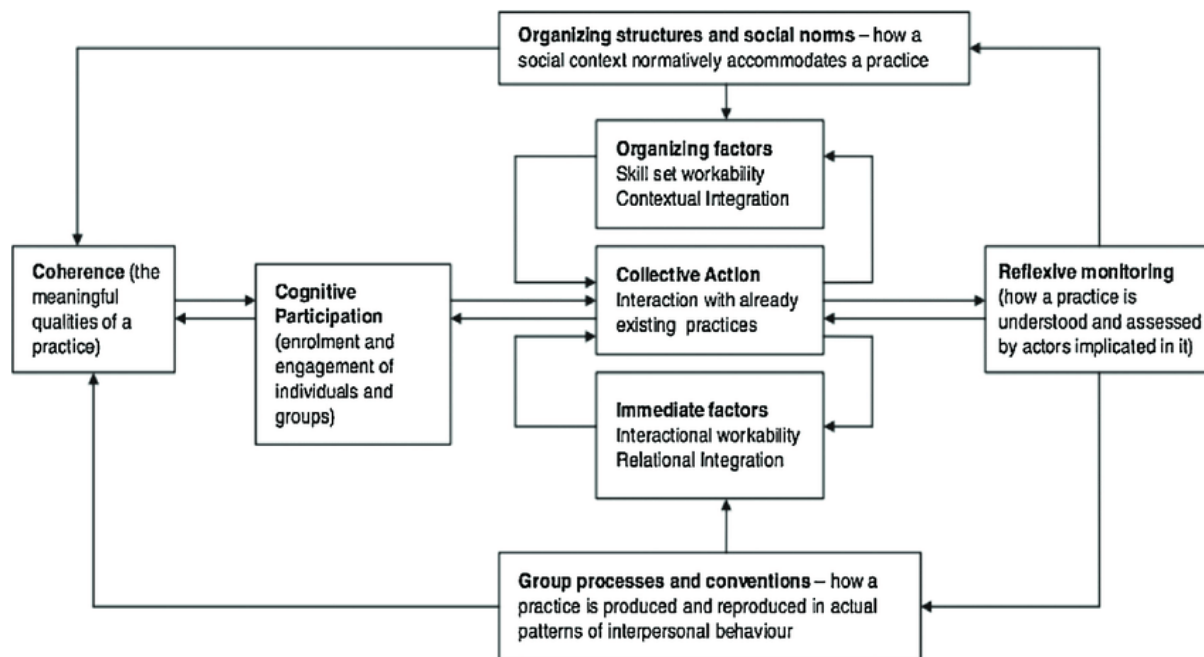
Figure 1. Model of the NPT (May & Finch, 2009, p. 541)

The NPT highlights four key dimensions: coherence, cognitive participation, collective action, and reflexive monitoring. When combined, each element provides a framework to consider the implementation, integration, and normalising of coaching methods as a practice in doctoral supervision. The following sections explore the NPT starting with coherence as the first pillar of the NPT model. This articulates people's underlying beliefs and behaviours, which impact their actions (May & Finch, 2009).

FINDINGS: EXAMINING THE IMPLEMENTATION, INTEGRATION, AND NORMALISATION OF COACHING METHODS INTO DOCTORAL SUPERVISION USING THE NPT

COHERENCE: UNDERSTANDING A PRACTICE

Coherence refers to how an individual makes sense of a practice (Tazzyman et al., 2017). Coherence means that a practice, "an ensemble of beliefs, behaviours, and acts which manipulate or organise others – is made possible by a set of ideas about its meaning, uses, utility … and by socially defined and organised competencies" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 542). These dimensions hold the practice together and make it possible to share and enact. Models of doctoral supervision help coherence by defining and explaining it as a practice. For example, Lee (2008, 2018) outlines a model of supervision that includes aspects such as "functional, enculturation, critical thinking, emancipation, and relationship development" (Lee, 2018, p. 882). Other sources, such as the U.K. Vitae Researcher Development Framework (Vitae, 2011), provide alternative doctoral frameworks. Vitae identifies four knowledge domains that research students should develop whilst studying for a doctorate: domain A includes knowledge and intellectual abilities; domain B covers personal effectiveness; domain C explores research governance and organisation; and domain D covers engagement, influence, and impact. Interestingly, the Vitae framework harmonises with Lee's (2008, 2018) model of doctoral supervision as well as other supervision models, such as Gatfield (2005), Halse and Malfroy (2010), and

Lindén et al. (2013). This evidences how most research focused on doctoral supervision characterises it similarly, strengthening our understanding of the practice.

Taylor (2019) comments on the need for supervisors to focus more on supporting their "candidate's personal, professional and career development" (p. 2). This sentiment is mirrored in a 2021 report on supervision undertaken by the U.K. Council for Graduate Education (Gower & Covey, 2021). The report illustrates the changing nature of supervision over the years, with particular reference made to the area of personal development and welfare of the doctoral candidate, which has grown in depth and breadth. Now identified as a critical part of research supervision, it seems the coherence of the supervision practice is under critical review, with new meanings and definitions being discovered and assigned. However, as stated by May and Finch (2009), "the production and reproduction of a practice require actors collectively invest in the meaning of it" (p. 543). Therefore, we contend that stakeholders must first accept this as an integral part of a contemporary, morphing supervisory practice before anything can be done about it.

Although Lee (2018) highlights "emancipation" as a key supervisory function, regarded as representing autonomy and personal growth, the term was replaced by "transferrable skills" (p. 885) by survey designers in her study. This suggests that even in 2018, stakeholders were still reluctant to accept "emancipation" as a key part of supervision. Furthermore, Lee (2018) hints at the value of integrating coaching into supervision but argues it might stretch beyond supervisory abilities and suggests further research is undertaken on implementing and normalising it as a practice within doctoral settings. Nonetheless, her work legitimates the value of coaching in supporting the research project process, albeit without explaining what needs to happen and how to make integrated coaching possible. It seems, therefore, there is a consensus as to what the purpose of research supervision is as a practice, how it differs from other forms of academic support, and its expected benefits. However, there still seems to be an ongoing debate about whether supervision should include more humanistic elements, thus creating fragmentation within academic communities. However, if we adopt the position here that supervisors *should* deal with emancipatory elements and that coaching *can* meet this requirement, then the question becomes: How do coaching methods become implemented, integrated, and normalised into the social context of doctoral supervision to create a new form of supervisory practice?

COGNITIVE PARTICIPATION: THINKING ABOUT A NEW PRACTICE

Once stakeholders have agreed that the nature of doctoral supervision needs to be reconfigured, the next step is to get supervisors to support the implementation of coaching methods into their existing supervisory practice, thereby creating a new style of supervision. Implementing the new practice is made possible through *cognitive participation,* which involves "symbolic … real enrolments and engagements of human actors" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 543). The NPT model outlines a three-stage approach: *initiation, enrolment,* and *legitimation.*

'Initiation' brings a practice forth. Then people 'enrol' into the new system of practice, which creates a community of practice. Once started, 'legitimation' occurs as actors subscribe and commit to the practice of institutionally held beliefs. The biggest challenge here is getting actors to participate in driving the new proposals forward. For May and Finch (2009), 'initiation' involves invention and a desire to initiate the new intervention championed by key strategic employees. The key here is to articulate the benefit of the practice and why it matters. As Cox (2011) claims, coaching aims to discover a client's hidden strengths and potential to ensure self-awareness, enduring learning, and personal development, thereby increasing the client's agency. This involves using methods such as active listening and powerful questioning techniques to engage individuals (students) in a reflexivity process that challenges the status quo and elicits new insights to increase self-awareness and agential power (van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). As Wilson and James (2021) argued, increasing student agency allows them to take responsibility for their decision-making and action-taking purposefully. By making these benefits known to supervisors, the aim would be to 'enrol' academics into adopting new forms of

supervision, thus encouraging them to cognitively shift from purely functional, directive, and critical approaches to more relational and emancipatory ones (Lee, 2008).

'Enrolment' involves actors working collaboratively in an organised manner to participate in the new practice. This complex work may involve rethinking individual and group relationships between people and things. This would require all stakeholders, from students, staff, managers, and senior leaders, to agree to be involved in the newly reformed supervision practice. However, enrolment is not necessarily mandatory and can, in some cases, be negotiable whilst actors come to terms with what this means for their existing supervisory habits. It is, therefore, critical to provide academic staff with the time to learn more about how coaching methods can benefit their practice and how it can support them in meeting the changing needs of their students. Promoting coaching methods and good news stories and observing coaching in practice and training are key to enabling this. This requires the exposure of supervisors to the benefits of coaching methods by observing another colleague's practice so that the benefits can be truly witnessed. One way of encouraging enrolment would be establishing a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002), formed around common interests and expertise, whereby individual knowledge is shared and converted into a range of shared resources. In addition, academic supervisors would also need to undergo supervision themselves, which is a regular and compulsory practice in coaching but not in academia. Forming a community of practice and making supervision for academic supervisors compulsory would help legitimise the role. Moreover, these functions would enable monitoring coaching methods for quality control and student safeguarding.

The final phase is 'legitimation', which articulates stakeholders' interpretation and acceptance of practice to ensure its production and reproduction (May & Finch, 2009). This acceptance greatly depends on the norms and conventions that already exist within the social structure. For example, concerning current practices, a new practice must bring propriety and value to amalgamate with the existing working method (Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Therborn, 2003). Legitimation is essential for a practice to become activated in "contexts where actors work together to decide the procedures by which it is to be enacted and how engagement with it is defined" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 544). In HEIs, norms, and regulations can either reproduce established collective behaviours and actions, thereby maintaining the status quo. Conversely, they can encourage innovation by having an adaptive culture that is flexible enough to encourage and create new legitimate institutional norms.

Regarding doctoral supervision, once stakeholders observe the benefits of coaching in terms of increasing student agency for self-determination, autonomy, wellbeing, and human flourishing (Hart, 2021; Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2007), it increases the chances of these stakeholders working together to establish processes for future supervisory engagements. The aim is to change existing communal beliefs about the nature of supervision by sharing insights regarding the value and benefit of coaching methods, hoping to change the nature of supervision slowly over time. However, such collective beliefs require 'collective action', which is the next dimension of the NPT model.

COLLECTIVE ACTION: DELIVERING A NEW PRACTICE

Collective action is the "operational work people do to enact an intervention" (Tazzyman et al., 2017, p. 8). As part of a collective, individuals interact with others and thus have to accommodate their own interests, concerns, and needs "to achieve unity of effort within diversity" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). In NPT, collective action includes exploring whether the new initiative can comfortably integrate into people's existing workloads. It further considers aspects such as training, the confidence level of participating colleagues in each other's abilities, and access to other resources, such as time. Once a new intervention starts to gain momentum, individual behaviours and actions change as individuals perceive the benefit of adopting these new ways of working together (May, 2006). New objects and artefacts may be needed or require reorganised relationships and structures. However, what is salient here, is that individuals channel their new thinking towards collective, purposive action focused on a goal. Actors may resist or comply with the new practice, but it always "involves some investment of effort around the practice in play" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 544).

Although blending coaching methods into existing supervisory processes may be viewed as simply integrating a tool or skill, it is more nuanced than this. For many academics, it requires a paradigm shift leading them away from a purely restricted, functional, and critical supervision approach (Lee, 2008, 2018) to a more humanistic attempt (Gower & Covey, 2021). The humanistic approach emphasises the whole person and respects each individual's uniqueness and capacity to fulfil their human potential (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). Therefore, collective action is imperative to ensure that coaching methods are implemented and slowly integrated into existing systems of operation and that all students are being exposed to the same type of intervention. For example, it would be inequitable for one student to experience coaching and its benefits regarding their productivity and wellbeing whilst another student is left to manage alone. Furthermore, students often share their experiences, which has consequences for the HEIs in creating dissatisfaction amongst the student corpora. Thus, collective action must occur to ensure these discrepancies do not exist. However, how agents work together to deliver a practice is determined by the operant conditions of encounters between agents and the conditions that organise these encounters (May, 2006). Thus, depending on their organising structures, social norms, and group processes, HEIs policies and procedures may hinder or enhance collective action. The section below outlines the additional domains that support collective action.

ADDITIONAL DOMAINS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION: ORGANISING FACTORS AND IMMEDIATE FACTORS

There are two further domains linked to 'collective action'. These are contextual integration and skill set workability, referred to as *organising factors,* and interactional workability and relational integration, regarded as *immediate factors*. Organising factors are discussed further in the paper, under the heading Exogenous Processes, which discusses the implications of industry, legislation, and institutional framing on work and the division of labour. Since organising factors concern labour, allocation, and performance, mediated by institutional structures and processes, it makes sense to discuss this under the 'exogenous' heading. However, 'immediate factors' of interactional workability and relational integration are considered 'endogenous processes.' The consequences of these immediate factors on coaching methods integration and implementation are considered below.

Interactional work explores links between existing work conditions and the requirements needed to bring a new intervention into existence (May, 2006). Thus, to facilitate the integration of an intervention, surrounding work must be flexible enough to absorb changes and reduce disruptions. May (2006) refers to this flexibility as "interactional advantage through flexibility" (p. 6), which helps accomplish congruence and beneficial outcomes. In the context of supervision, we argue that existing work, such as meetings, documenting attendance and progression, expectation and goal setting, etc., are already flexible enough to assimilate coaching methods. Therefore, we suggest coaching methods are by no means a complex addition to already established methods of supervisory working. Nevertheless, the consequences of integrating coaching methods could impact interactional workability, mainly work less sympathetic to coaching methods, such as work requiring strict institutional timelines, regulations, systems, and governance. It is, therefore, likely that the integration of coaching methods would require the HEIs and perhaps the more comprehensive HE system of work to be evaluated and potentially reconfigured to give coaching delivered in supervision the time it needs to yield results for the student. For example, reconfiguring localised existing supervisory policies, staff responsibilities, and training and development opportunities. These are coupled with wider sectoral policy changes that seek to embrace and normalise the use of reflective practice in other HE pedagogical functions. Furthermore, these adjustments could reduce doctoral students' attrition rate since poor supervisory relationships often contribute to student dropout (Rigler et al., 2017; Young et al., 2019). Concomitantly, they could also reduce institutional costs linked to doctoral dropouts, help students secure jobs, and increase social justice and economic growth (Realinho et al., 2022). A critical review by Rigler et al. (2017, p. 2) on doctoral student attrition reported doctoral programs to have "attrition rates of up to 50% for face-to-face programs and 50-70% for online doctoral programs". This is primarily (but not only) due to an unsatisfactory relationship between the doctoral student

and the supervisor or committee chair. Likewise, Young et al. (2019) revealed that PhD attrition rates in the USA, across different academic disciplines, ranged from 36% to 51%, mainly due to poor student-advisor relationships. Thus, supervisor and student relationships seem to play a vital role in successfully completing doctoral studies.

Relational integration refers to the network of relations in which encounters between individuals occur and "through which knowledge and practice relating to a complex intervention is defined and mediated" (May, 2006, p. 6). It contains two dimensions, accountability and confidence. By accountability, we refer to the students' understanding of their responsibility in shaping their academic path through increased agency. Confidence relates to their intrinsic beliefs in having the necessary self-efficacy to do so. However, to establish coaching methods as a normal feature of supervision, the knowledge and skill surrounding coaching have to be credible and valid. This gives integrity and authority to the proposed intervention and creates confidence in applying the method in practice. Thus, it is more likely that an intervention will become normalised if it equals or improves accountability and confidence within networks of colleagues. As Gower and Covey (2021) argue, there is a lack of confidence among supervisors when faced with the personal issues of students. To ensure all colleagues feel assured that coaching methods can benefit, not diminish, their practice, they must witness an investment in the initiative championed by senior colleagues who set the tone and culture of the institution. These investments may refer to supervisor appointments, funding, reward, time, and training, thereby communicating the HEIs commitment to the intervention (coaching). This encourages group confidence in the endeavour, which occurs through reflexive monitoring, enabling the new practice's development.

REFLEXIVE MONITORING: APPRAISING A NEW PRACTICE

May and Finch (2009) suggest that patterns of collective action and their outcomes require constant scrutinisation and evaluation, both informally and formally, by participants throughout the implementation process. The formality and intensity of *reflexive monitoring* consider the nature of the cognitive participation and collective action involved in producing the practice. Over time, the new practice shifts from being overt and explicit appraisals by participants to tacit appraisals, which signal the routine embedding of the practice. Reflection is a crucial stage because it reaches beyond institutional regulations, systems, and structures to consider the utility and effectiveness of the new practices from the participant's point of view rather than from the organisation's standpoint (May & Finch, 2009). Practitioners may reflect upon the purpose and benefit of a practice, its suitability, and ways to enhance it. They may share these as a community, engaging in communal appraisals vital to strengthening a new practice. Indeed, a practice can be redefined (coherence) by shifting cognitive participation, collective action, and organisational and group processes to enhance the practice over time.

In the context of integrating coaching into doctoral supervision, it is critical that supervisors or managers of doctoral programmes gather feedback from students regarding the value of coaching before they consider it a worthwhile practice to absorb. Thus, a communal appraisal requires the students, as well as academics, to consider the rationale and benefit of the practice. This would require reflecting on how it helps support aspects of the doctoral journey as outlined by Taylor (2019), Vitae (2011), and Lee (2008, 2018). By sharing these insights, the coherence and cognitive participation surrounding coaching as an intervention should strengthen 'enrolment' and 'legitimisation' (May & Finch, 2009). Moreover, monitoring provides feedback for the organising structures, social norms, and group processes considered exogenous, whereby these modify over time to enhance the integration of the new practice further.

EXOGENOUS PROCESSES: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE, FACTORS, AND LABOUR PROCESSES

There is little use in exploring the normalisation of a new practice without considering the environment in which the work is arranged and operated. As May (2006) outlines, "exogenous processes

comprise how the work is organised, its division of labour, and the institutional structures and organisational processes in which it is located" (p. 6). *Organising structures* and *factors* relate to the infrastructures, systems, and resources which support implementing a practice. This may concern recruitment, investments, technology, time, education, and training. Should the environment not support the integration process and fail to enable the practice to produce and reproduce over time, it is highly likely that the initiative will fail.

Organising structures are challenging to define as different explanations exist within the social sciences of what they entail (Lundgren-Resenterra, 2017). Although beyond this paper's scope to explore these differences, it is essential to consider that they regulate and normalise behaviour over time (Porpora, 1998). Thereby, they are fundamental to how individuals reflect on their practice, group dynamics and conventions, and the overall understanding of the value of a practice. Other structural definitions encompass ideas of law-like regularities within a given social structure, shaping collective actions or social systems which regulate human interrelationships between people holding different social positions (Porpora, 1998). Both definitions have implications for May and Finch's (2009) "collective action" dimension (referring to interaction with existing practices) and "immediate factors", including relational integration (networked relations) and interactional workability (surrounding conditions). Therefore, we have to understand organising elements as englobing both structural and relational factors.

HEIs have internal structures, such as strategic objectives, disciplinary rules, policies, and regulations, but also operate in external normative circles, subject to governmental guidelines, legislation, and industry standards. These all influence how educational practices develop and manifest. So, bringing practice into existence is difficult if the wider environment does not support the venture's objective. Thus, organising structures also affect the organising factors needed to make a practice successful and the social relationships needed to sustain the collective action required to implement a practice (Lopez & Scott, 2000). This supports the argument that the social context normatively accommodates a practice if it aligns with institutional social norms and broader regulations. When this is not the case, integrating new practices can be overruled or adjusted to suit these conditions, influencing production and sustainability.

To appreciate this in an HE context, we use the example of financial pressures impacting HEIs' mission statements and the role of teaching and learning activities. Often financial targets produce practices that improve economic performance rather than educational outputs. Indeed, global governmental funding cuts position HEIs in uncertain territory regarding their futures, forcing them to become increasingly cautious in how they invest their money. Ultimately financial constraints affect staff recruitment, estate improvements, technological investments, learning opportunities, and professional services. Staff are thus expected to do more with fewer resources whilst teaching and assessing larger student cohorts. Consequently, it is evident how external pressures on HEIs can influence their strategic choices and direction, creating organisational conditions that perhaps inhibit new methods of working in favour of maintaining the status quo.

In terms of doctoral supervision, decreasing spending on institutional infrastructure and increasing student numbers and workloads reduces the time and institutional support available to supervisors (Gower & Covey, 2021; Wilson & James, 2021). Moreover, the increasing pastoral needs of doctoral students can often mean supervision meetings are spent talking about relationships, mental health, employment woes, or financial issues. Poor student welfare and wellbeing can harm any study, particularly doctoral education, due to its autonomous and isolated nature. They may induce a lack of self-belief, anxiety, imposter syndrome, feelings of abandonment, and self-castigation (Hazell et al., 2020). Whilst students can be signposted to professional services, backlogs can mean waiting weeks for support, thereby leaving academics to face anxious students again in their next supervisory meeting (Gower & Covey, 2021). This is just one example of how supervision quality is directly affected by other organisational functions within HEIs. Other examples that may directly and/or indirectly influence supervision would be the resources made available to the doctoral school, the availability of

research scholarships, or the research agenda and standing of the university. All these create internal contexts which have implications for the accommodation and integration of new practices into the postgraduate research arena.

We acknowledge that global factors and HEIs' responses are not under the direct control of academic supervisors. However, this does not mean the 'organising factors, immediate factors' (interactional workability and relational integration), and 'collective action' surrounding supervision need to be adversely affected. On the contrary, by establishing a supervision practice that slowly recognises the value of coaching methods (Grant & O'Connor, 2018), supervisors can start working smarter for students through meaningful training and education while taking pressure off other services within the organisation.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This conceptual paper aimed first to explore whether coaching methods are valuable in the doctoral supervisory space. We asked the question:

1. Are coaching methods beneficial when supervising doctoral students?

We contend that the literature contained herein provides ample evidence of the value of coaching doctoral students in research supervision. We argue that it offers one way to sustain students' wellbeing and encourage human flourishing. However, we are not suggesting it is the only way. Clearly, HEIs have multiple professional service offerings supervisors can draw upon to support their students. We are not suggesting supervisors try to be mental health advisors or wear this mantle. Nonetheless, we suggest that coaching can support PhD students (Lech et al., 2018), helping them redefine their goals and responsibilities to increase their academic success (Nichol et al., 2018; Wilson & James, 2021). Moreover, coaching is also seen as a way to overcome power dynamics in the supervision relationship as it focuses primarily on the student's needs and concerns rather than on the supervisor's interests (Guccione & Hutchinson, 2021). Guccione and Hutchinson (2021) refer to coaching methods as an exploratory and facilitatory approach centred on purposeful questioning, active listening, and constructive feedback to support students in developing self-awareness and self-inquiry, moving away from the typical directory and advisory approach. For them, integrating coaching methods into supervision increases the student's sense of self-efficacy by feeling validated and valued, heard, and supported to develop independent critical thinkers. Thus, by making coaching a meaningful quality of supervision, the aim is to show coherence and slowly change the cognition of participating academics. However, whilst these studies demonstrate the benefits, no current study shows how the integration of coaching methods into institutional processes and supervisory meetings can occur or what needs to be considered to make it a reality. This is where we claim a contribution to knowledge by asking the following second research question:

2. What are the challenges when implementing and integrating coaching methods into existing doctoral supervisory practice?

The NPT was applied as a 'thinking tool' to answer this question to enable exploration and contemplation. As a theoretical framework, the NPT addresses the factors needed to successfully implement and integrate interventions into routine work (normalisation). We discovered that as long as academic supervision is regarded as a 'bolt-on' amidst more pressing institutional work for faculty, it might be challenging to convince supervisors to change their practice. The ideal would be to see coaching become a formal part of supervision, whereby the organisational context ingests and accommodates the practice over time through changes to organisational policies, procedures, and culture. Furthermore, the impact for practice is that internal and external institutional and organisational bodies, in accordance with academics and student representatives, engage in communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) to reflect and exchange around purposeful actions to sustain a supervision practice that integrates coaching methods to increase student agency, thereby enhancing their autonomy, wellbeing and human flourishing (Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2007). However, this can only occur if organising

structures normalise such practice by acknowledging the value and benefit of coaching in supervision as an integral part of supervisory work rather than a practice based on academics' goodwill. Indeed, as shown in our Findings sections, the reconceptualisation of the supervisory practice also needs the support of organising structures and resources to enable a new practice to become habitual, as, without them, the initiative is highly likely to fail.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It seems fair to suggest that the needs of doctoral students in terms of wellbeing, welfare, and career prospects will not get easier in the coming years. This paper does not suggest supervisors should take it upon themselves to provide academic and pastoral support. On the contrary, we feel HEIs need to support their academic staff's wellbeing by ensuring other professional student support services exist. Nevertheless, we believe the integration of coaching methods into doctoral supervisory meetings may help alleviate the numerous challenges identified by Lee (2008), Taylor (2021), and Gower and Covey (2021) by empowering students to discover their own inner self-confidence and capabilities. The discussion contained within this paper has led us to make the following tentative recommendations for HEIs:

1. Employees tasked with managing doctoral schools and/or processes within their HEIs reflect on the utility and value coaching could bring to their doctoral students.
2. Employees consider using the NPT to identify the key mechanisms within their own establishments that may require consideration for the integration, implementation, and normalisation of practice within their HEIs to become possible (in this instance, coaching into doctoral supervisions).
3. Employees evaluate the integration of coaching to: (1) ensure quality and consistency of the practice amongst the supervisory community and the benefit to students; and (2) to evaluate the impact of the practice on other services within the organisation, such as faith or student services.
4. Academic supervisors are trained in coaching methods and principles to aid in the embedding and Normalisation of the practice in supervisions overtime.

However, this will only occur if HEIs and policymakers acknowledge the importance of the supervisory process in integrating academic supervision as part of the faculty's profession and not as a mere duty based on the supervisors' goodwill. It is hoped that considering these recommendations will lead to a more fulfilling, agentic, and beneficial doctoral supervisory environment for all stakeholders involved.

CONCLUSION

This paper applied the NPT model to explore the key components required to implement, integrate and normalise a practice in everyday social life (May & Finch, 2009). As identified in this paper, there is a need for a paradigm shift regarding doctoral supervision. The traditional Humboldtian model is now redundant, and a more humanistic approach is required (Gower & Covey, 2021; Haider & Dasti, 2021; Lee, 2008, 2018; Taylor, 2021) if students are going to be successful in their academic and personal lives. Lee (2008, 2018) argues that supervisors need to acknowledge students' needs outside the traditional doctoral criticality and academic functioning processes, labelling these as emancipation and relationships.

This paper argues for the integration of coaching methods, defined tools, and skills to deal with the changing doctoral landscape and the supervisory challenges it creates. This is not about simply mentoring a student, which is much more directive and informative and often focused on career development (Clutterbuck, 2014). Instead, coaching methods allow the coach to empower and emancipate their coachee not by being taught or told but by encouraging and supporting them to discover their own capacity for problem-solving and goal-orientated action (Whitmore, 2017). However, as

outlined, embedding a practice and ensuring its sustainability is complex and multifaceted. By using the NPT, this paper aimed to conceptually analyse how coaching methods could be implemented and integrated into doctoral processes. It further aimed to highlight the areas of concern for anyone wishing to reconfigure or change their university-wide supervisory processes to enable coaching methods to become a normalised practice within supervision.

The theory clearly articulates the need for any new practice to bring something meaningful to the current context. It needs to be clear how the practice (coaching methods) differs from similar practices such as tutoring, mentoring, or clinical talk therapies. This joint understanding holds the practice together, meaning actors can comprehend, share and re-enact it. From coherence, individuals can start to implement the practice purposively. People *enrol* and work together to produce the new practice. *Legitimation* is given to the practice as academics' "buy-in" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 543) to the new idea and witnesses how it enhances and supports other aspects of their work. This creates an institutionally shared belief in the practice as one of value and benefit. From this, *collective action* follows, whereby academics collectively engage in purposive action to increase students' agency and wellbeing for their human flourishing; in this instance, the goal is to improve doctoral supervision to enable students and staff to better deal with the challenges of contemporary society, thus reducing stress, anxiety, and pressures felt by students, academics, and professional services within the institution (Hazell et al., 2020).

Finally, *reflection* on practice is critical. Continuous informal and formal evaluation by participants in implementation processes and the intensity of this monitoring reflects the "nature of the cognitive participation and collective action" (May & Finch, 2009, p. 545). Monitoring focuses attention on standardising elements of practice implementation. This is an important signal to participants, showing that the practice is becoming accepted as an established routine. However, questions about the utility and effectiveness of practice will still exist. This will be the case with coaching in supervision since it takes time for the value of coaching to be realised by both coaches and coachees. Moreover, doubts will exist until the practice becomes a regular, embedded pattern of behaviour and shared organisational beliefs about it shift positively.

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