



**Bournemouth  
University**

# Recognising the Value and Impact of Coaching in Higher Education: A Provocation

Staff Development Forum Annual Conference, Sheffield

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Based on a project funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

# Purpose of the Stimulus Paper

## **A Project Funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education**

The purpose of the Stimulus Paper is to provide a snapshot of coaching in Higher Education and to provoke thought leadership and debate within the sector on how coaching is used and valued and how impact is measured

### **Project Partners:**

Dr Colleen Harding, Bournemouth University, Project Lead

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# Background to the Stimulus Paper

This work maps onto the workforce change strand of the Innovation and Transformation Fund Phase 2 which explores trends and developments in Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) within HE. In particular the LFHE funded this Stimulus Paper to explore the investment that HE is making in its workforce through coaching and commences with the following questions:

- How is coaching being used across the UK HE sector?
- How is coaching valued in HE?
- How do we know if coaching works?
- How is coaching impact measured in organisations, and in HE?

And to:

- Provide a provocation for HE that relates to the value of coaching; how it measures its impact; and to what extent coaching has the potential to drive, or support, improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in HE.

# Format of the Stimulus Paper

The Stimulus Paper will include three parts:

- Part One: A Written Evidence Base of Coaching Impact (*based on the general literature on coaching*)
  - *Definitions; Evaluation; Instruments and Models*
- Part Two: A Snapshot of Coaching in Higher Education
  - *Definitions; How Used; How Valued; How Evaluated; Why Evaluate*
- Part Three: Coaching Evaluation: Six Provocations
  - *Challenge of writing provocations for insiders!*

# 'Taxonomy' of Coaching Impact

## From the Literature

### Factors that Impact on Coaching

Purpose

Environment

Coach Characteristics

Coachee Characteristics

Relationship

Coaching Purpose

Administration of Coaching i.e  
contracting; targeting; managing;  
evaluating

### The Impact that Coaching Can Have

#### ***Tangible Benefits:***

Achieve Goals; Improve Performance

Promotion and Retention; Return on  
Investment; 360 Feedback; Academic  
Outputs; Cultural i.e. ripple effect

#### ***Intangible/Less Tangible Benefits:***

Perspectives on the Self; Working with  
Others; Wellbeing; Skills and  
Behaviours; Engagement  
With/Commitment To Organisation;  
Supporting Change

# Task for Today

- Consider three of the six provocations from the Paper
  - A challenge that we have not done enough to demystify coaching
  - A challenge that it will cost too much to evaluate coaching properly
  - A challenge to the notion that anyone actually cares about evaluating coaching impact
- Take-away thought - consider how/if the provocations could be applied to other areas of Organisational and Staff Development practice

# The Six Provocations

- **Provocation #1: The Coaching profession hasn't done enough to de-mystify coaching**
- **Provocation #2:** Insufficient attention is given to the 'value chain' associated with coaching, and as such the contributions to value arising from the coachee themselves, their line manager and the commissioners of coaching are largely ignored
- **Provocation #3: The level at which evaluative work would be meaningful and useful is the level at which it would cost too much**
- **Provocation #4:** The way we currently measure coaching is distorting its value, and adversely affecting its contribution
- **Provocation #5:** If we were to properly evaluate coaching we would discover that it didn't offer value for money for the organisation
- **Provocation #6: The truth is that no-one really cares about evaluating coaching impact**

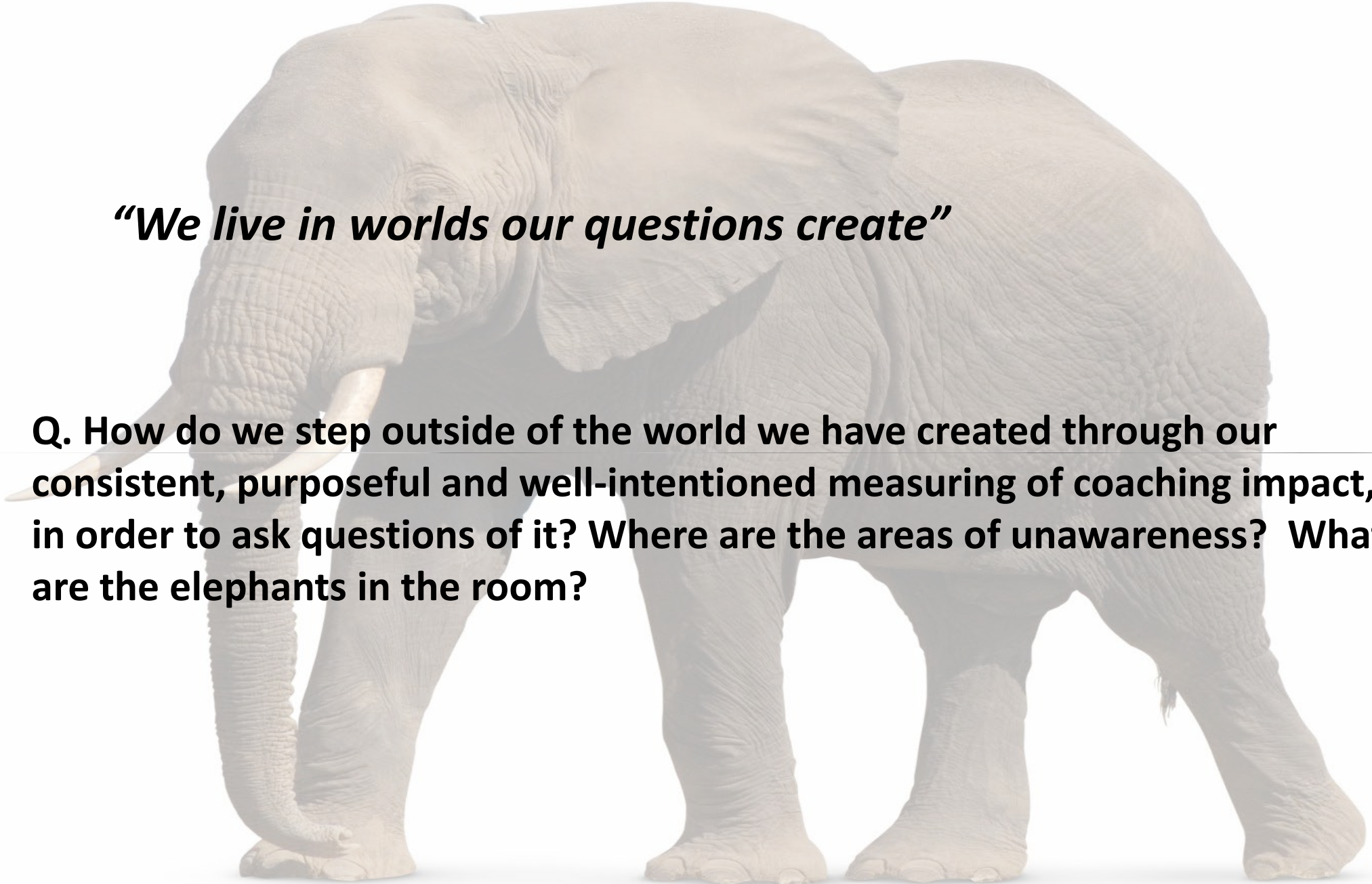
***“Human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about”***

David Cooperrider

- The questions that we ask
- What we talk about
- The quality of the discussions that we have








***“We live in worlds our questions create”***

**Q. How do we step outside of the world we have created through our consistent, purposeful and well-intentioned measuring of coaching impact, in order to ask questions of it? Where are the areas of unawareness? What are the elephants in the room?**



With regard to the use of coaching in the HE sector,

what are the realities we are not facing?

## **Provocation #1: The Coaching profession hasn't done enough to de-mystify coaching**

- The coaching process is usually closed and confidential
- There is a proliferation of terms, techniques, qualifications and definitions
- There are a variety of opinions about who should be coached and what it does



**Provocation #2: Insufficient attention is given to the 'value-chain' associated with coaching, and as such the contributions to value arising from the coachee themselves, their line manager, and the commissioner for coaching are largely ignored**

- In comparison to the coach, there is a significantly smaller responsibility on the other actors (coachee, line manager, commissioner etc) in the coaching intervention to deliver success
- Value cannot be created by the coach alone
- Who should be the arbiter of value?



**Provocation #3: The level at which evaluative work would be meaningful and useful is the level at which it would cost too much**

- The full costs of coaching evaluation are often not known
- The work to establish a baseline POC at the beginning of the intervention, establishing a clear attribution methodology for outcomes, longitudinal work for enfolding outcomes, data generation from a basket of hard and soft indicators, all take time and therefore money
- A way to extract the data covered by confidentiality to bring it within scope does not yet exist



**Provocation #4: The way we currently measure coaching is distorting it's value, and adversely affecting its contribution**

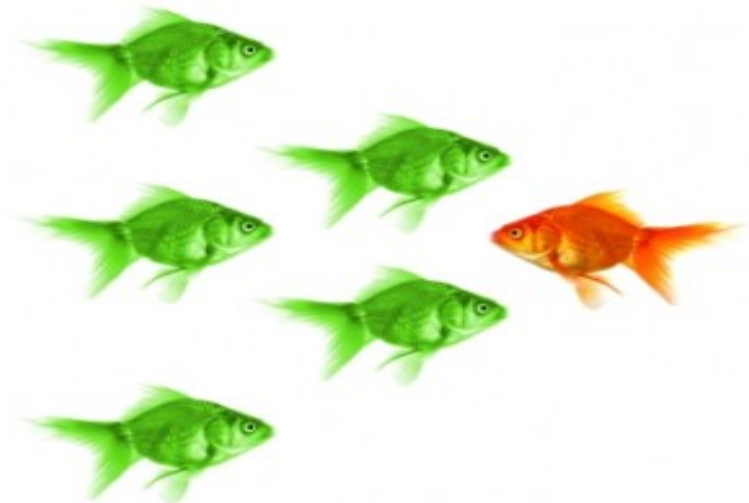
- Current methods drive a focus on what is measurable rather than unfolding or paradigm shifting
- The lack of agreed and consistent evaluative methods creates a confusing picture of the benefits of coaching
- Many evaluative processes are intrusive and distracting and get in the way of the coaching





**Provocation #5: If we were to properly evaluate coaching we would discover that it didn't offer value for money for the organisation**

- Coaching is highly geared to the individual and despite efforts, the coaching territory is largely selected by the coachee
- In the coaching process the organisational voice is usually very quiet and under-represented
- There may be undesirable outcomes for the organisation, the coachee might decide to leave, change their working hours, gain a competitive advantage over colleagues who haven't experienced coaching



## **Provocation #6: No-one really cares enough about evaluating coaching impact**

- **There is a widely held consensus that coaching has a positive impact and is “a good thing” so the organisational risks are small**
- **Coaching rarely represents a significant cost to institutions as a percentage of their total expenditure**
- **If coaching impact evaluation were to cease, there would not be any serious existential threats to institutions**





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**Provocation questions to consider in your groups:**

- 1. To what extent is there a truth in this provocation?**
- 1. How fixable is the situation? Should it be fixed at all?**
- 1. Based on your thinking, what is the smallest action that would have the greatest positive result for coaching in the HE sector?**

## *Feedback from Provocation 1*

**The Coaching profession hasn't done enough to de-mystify coaching**

## *Feedback from Provocation 3*

**The level at which evaluative work would be meaningful and useful is the level at which it would cost too much**

## *Feedback from Provocation 6*

**The truth is that no-one really cares about evaluating coaching impact**

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