Sustaining change through inter-professional coaching; developing communication-rich pedagogies

Rachel Lofthouse¹, Bibiana Wigley², Jo Flanagan²
¹Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, ²Clarity (TEC), Derby, UK

This research focuses on the development and impact of video-based inter-professional specialist coaching which enabled workplace learning between speech and language therapists and nursery and primary practitioners. The original settings for this work were primary and nursery schools serving multi-cultural and multi-lingual communities in the East Midlands, UK. The approach was informed by models of teacher coaching (Lofthouse et. al., 2010) and video interaction guidance (Kennedy et al., 2009), and was rooted in learning which made deliberate and explicit work processes, learning activities and learning processes Eraut (2007). The development of the coaching model allowed the speech and language therapists to engage teachers and teaching assistants in conversation about their own classroom practices. A Theory of Change approach enabled multiple voices to inform both the development and evaluation of the intervention. This helped us to answer the following questions:

How do school leaders conceptualise their Theory of Change in relation to developing communication-rich pedagogies in their nursery and primary settings, and what is the contribution of inter-professional coaching in enabling and sustaining these changes?

The initial Theory of Change interviews yielded significant evidence of the expectations of the headteachers. The interview notes were mapped out as flow charts and used as the basis of return interviews with the headteachers and participants in the specialist coaching. Analysis of the interviews indicated that inter-professional coaching can play a significant part in creating the conditions for bespoke workplace learning. Coaching can create a productive, non-judgmental space in which teachers’ own interactional practices can be exposed and made open to co-construction based on the relationship between pedagogic and communication knowledge and skills. Coaching formed a key component of an ecology for focused professional development, providing participants with common understandings, a shared language, a willingness to share ideas, and to be more open to self-evaluation and critique. It also provided some of the ‘glue’ which supported access to and learning from other CPD and the development of new leadership and support roles.


