



A Heuristic Inquiry
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*An exploration of the
role of coaching in
supporting
non-traditional
students in Higher
Education in the UK*

Context and problem



Research questions

1

What are the HE experiences of non-traditional students leading to and during their undergraduate studies?

2

How can coaching support non-traditional students?

3

What are the experiences of coaches in the process of supporting non-traditional students?



Literature Review



1

Widening participation
and the experiences of
non-traditional
students in HE in the
UK

2

Self-theories and
coaching to support
aspects of self

3

Coaching in education
in the UK

Heuristic Inquiry

(Moustakas, 1990)

- Important to explore a phenomenon that has a personal challenge.
- Allows the researcher to have a direct experience of the phenomenon.
- Illustrates core meaning of experiences through individual depictions.
- Demanding process involving self-search, self-dialogue and self discovery.

Heuristic Inquiry

(Moustakas, 1990)

6 Phases

1. Initial engagement
2. Immersion
3. Incubation
4. Illumination
5. Explication
6. Creative synthesis

7 processes

1. Identify the focus of inquiry
2. Self-dialogue
3. Tacit knowing
4. Intuition
5. Indwelling
6. Focusing
7. Internal frame of reference

Heuristic Inquiry

Phases and processes

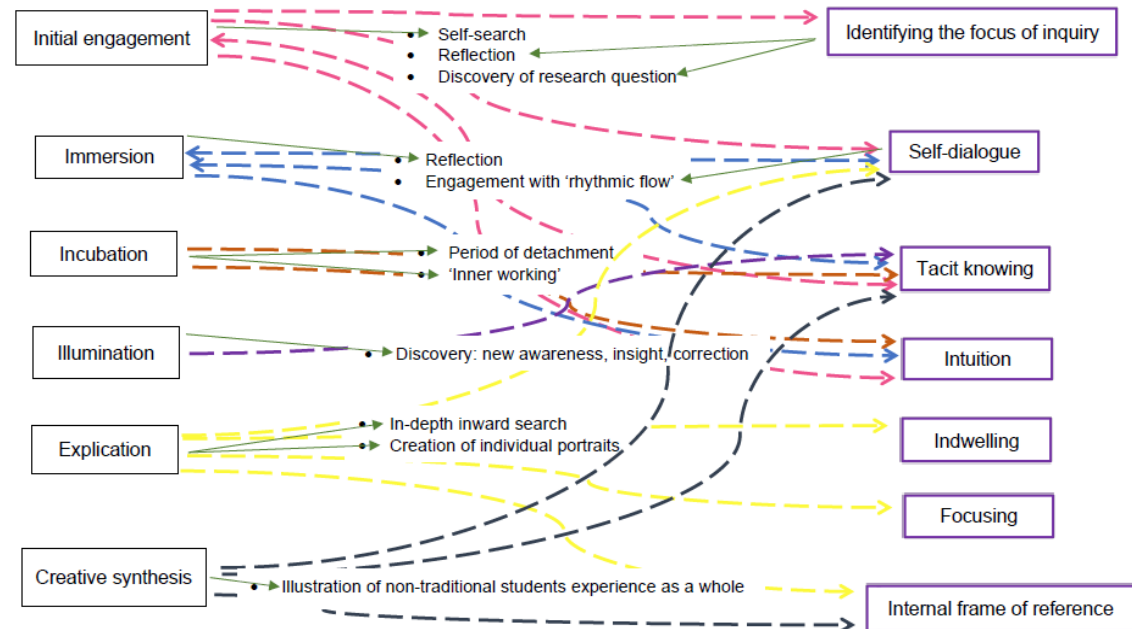


Figure 1 Phases and Processes of Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic Inquiry Key:
- - - -> Links between Phases and Processes
- 6 Phases
- 7 Processes

Student participants

Self selected under-represented group categories:

- Disadvantaged- location occupation; education and income
- Minority ethnic group
- First generation HE student
- Mature student

	Age	Year of study	Ethnicity	Education
Anastasia	19	1	White British	Foundation course
Anna	29	4	White British	Level 3 Diploma
Ruby	19	2	Black or Black Caribbean	A/AS Level
Ella	19	2	Black or Black British	A/AS Level
Danika	20	3	Black or Black British	A/AS Level
Malcolm	27	2	White British	Level 3 Diploma
Paula	18	1	Mixed Black & White Caribbean	A/AS Level
Octavia	19	1	White British	Foundation course
Tara	23	1	White British	Level 3 Diploma

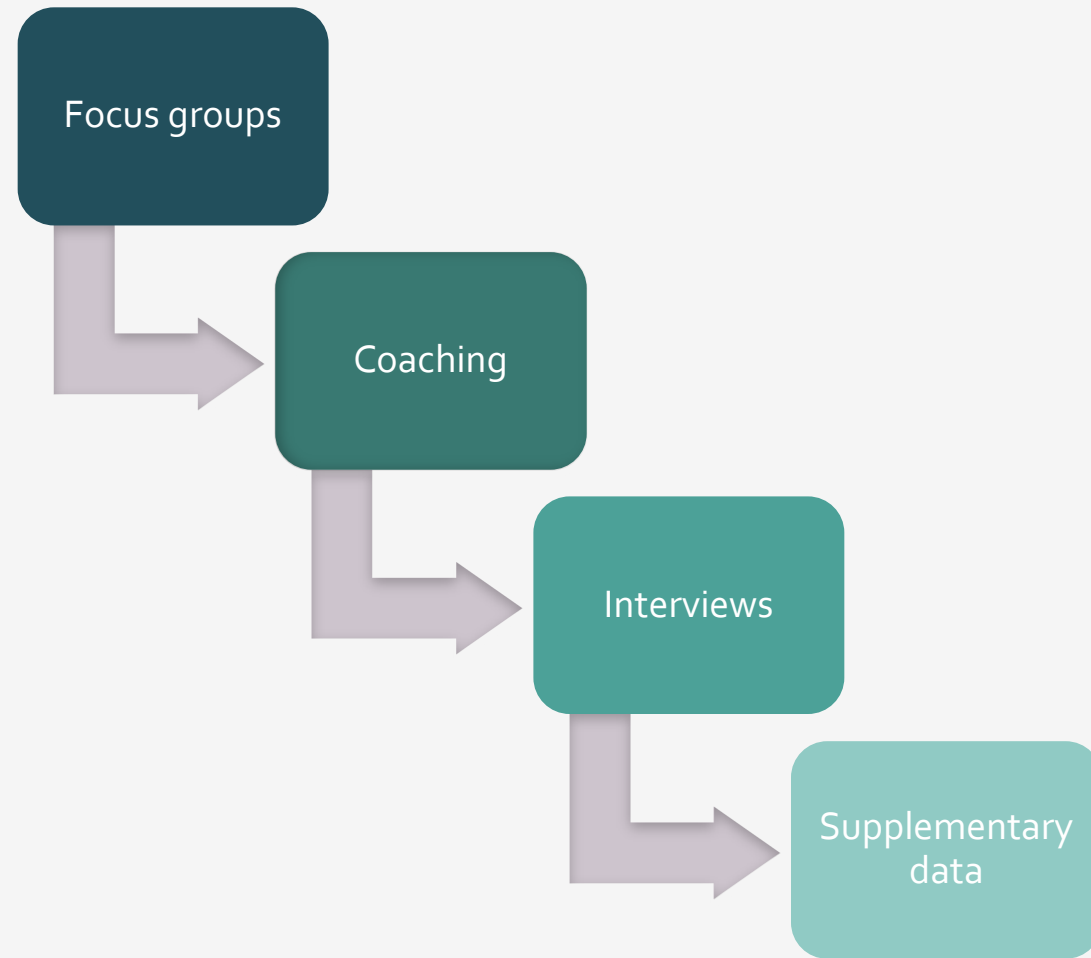
Coach participants

Criteria:

- Internal coaches
- Several years experience
- ILM Level 5 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring

	Age	Years of experience	Ethnicity	Education
Carolina	46	3	White British	First degree
Donna	41	6	Black or Black Caribbean	Masters degree
Melanie	45	7	White British	First degree
Phil	51	4	White British	First degree

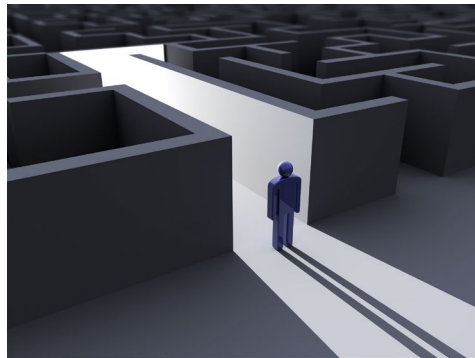
Data collection methods and process



Data collection and analysis process



Findings



Individual journeys are similar yet different

- Vignettes
- 4 student journeys
- My journey

The coaching experience of non-traditional students

- A space for an impartial dialogue
- When I talk I feel and think differently
- My confidence is not the same as others

Understanding the experiences of coaching non-traditional students

- The challenges of the intervention of coaching
- The perceived need to be more directive
- The ambiguity of identifying and facilitating confidence through coaching

Findings

A space for an impartial dialogue



It's nice because its not judgemental, I don't have to think oh my God if I say this your gonna mark me down or hold that against me.

My coach allowed me to be as open as I wanted to be. I felt comfortable talking to her although she did not know much about my actual course.

I wouldn't say, what I was telling you. I wouldn't bring it up in conversation you know with someone else, so it was good to find that out, otherwise I would not know.

Just that kind of relaxed dynamic that this is means that you can be honest. You can say something and be like oh actually I didn't think of that before.

It's nice to have someone impartial to talk to but not like a therapist, that is scary.

Findings

When I talk I think and feel differently



Instead of me thinking I am going to fail that's it I am a complete failure. I actually flip it round. Whereas before I would have been very, very negative and like really upset about it.

When I used to finish the session I would feel so much more motivated especially at the beginning of the third year. Before I was just like I cannot do this.

I just had a lot on my mind it was cluttered with so much thoughts about what I was going to do... it's overwhelming. When you talk you get it all out. It's like it is leaving your mind as soon as you say it kind of thing.

I feel at ease and not stressed...and at the end of it you kind of start thinking of solutions. Although this is a stressful time it made me think there is a way to go about it to make you not as stressed.

The most helpful thing was the use of reflective thinking and self-assessing my abilities.

Findings

My confidence is not the same as others



I don't like asking for help. I'd rather figure it out on my own I am more confident that way. In my head I know I am confident, but they don't always trust me.

I do doubt myself a lot but when I see the grades and the feedback that I get then I don't need to doubt myself as much.

I would like to be confident in my skills so when I leave I can definitely get a job. I don't actually think I am good enough compared to other people.

I would like to be confident that I am good enough or just as good enough as everyone else. My confidence is ok but I never tell people what grade I get.

I do not like to ask for help I am embarrassed that it would be considered as being weak.

The role of coaching

in supporting non-traditional students

Create a space for an impartial dialogue

- Non-judgement
- Neutral and impartial
- Comfortable and relaxed
- Challenge

Think and feel differently

- Increased motivation
- Reduced stress
- Emotional awareness
- Not used as an intervention

Confidence is not the same as others

- Facilitate conversations
- Perceptions
- Overcome barriers
- Ideal self

Implications

- Alternative methods of support need to be considered to support an increasingly diverse body.
- The same coaching approach for all non-traditional students should be treated with caution.
- Difficult situations and emotions can derive from challenging coaching conversations.
- Confidence in coaching can be multifaceted.

Significance of the study



Gives non-traditional
students a voice



Insight into benefits of
coaching



Importance of non-
judgement



Offers alternative
coaching approaches



Challenges of
stereotyping and
assumptions



Contributes to
theoretical and
professional
knowledge

Limitations

- The methodological approach may make the study difficult to replicate.
- Fewer students participated as hoped.
- Limited to one University.

Personal Reflections



Intense journey



Emotional



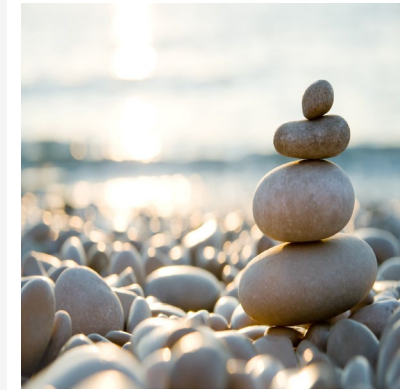
Challenging



Growth



Personal transformation



Fulfilment

*Thank you
for listening*

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