TITLE

How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

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List of abbreviations

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

CFT – Compassion-focused Therapy

ESs – Experiential Statements

GETs – Group Experiential Themes

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

MRQ – Main Research Question

PETs – Personal Experiential Themes

SDT – Self Determination Theory

SQs – Subsidiary Questions

Abstract

Contemplating low retention and achievement rates in management apprenticeships, compassionate coaching can be considered an option for facilitating learning. This paper acknowledges the limitations of contextual research in apprenticeship settings and examines educational literature. Including an examination of the challenges of an andragogical learning approach in apprenticeships (Armitage and Cogger, 2019). A humanistic approach to learning is examined (Freire, 2021), and acknowledgement of the challenges associated with traditional disempowering teaching practices is noted (Broom, 2015). Motivational interviewing (Wells and Jones 2016) is examined from a humanistic and collaborative learning perspective. Neuroscience suggests that the environment can influence how individuals respond to emotionally stressful situations from the contrasting perspectives of a biological perspective (Damasio, 2019) and a socially constructed perspective (Feldman Barrett, 2018). Seeking the perspectives of apprentices using an IPA study, this paper examines how apprentices experience compassion during coaching. Results show that apprentices can have an increase in self-confidence following a compassionate intervention.

Key words: andragogy learning theory, apprenticeships, compassionate coaching, emotions, feelings, humanistic learning, motivational interviewing, stress

Introduction to the paper

This research paper primarily aims to understand how apprentices experience compassion during interactions with their assessor-coach on a management and leadership apprenticeship. The aim of the main research question (MRQ) and subsidiary questions (SQs) which are explained later, is reinforced by the research gaps found on experiences of compassion in the context of apprenticeships. Examining the literature identifies connections between the literature and the research findings, including explaining new knowledge emerging from the findings. Studying the literature through the lens of support for apprentices offers the opportunity to identify the benefits and scrutinise the limitations. The research adds to the existing literature on compassion, including compassion in educational settings, by offering specific findings from the context of learning on an apprenticeship. A

discussion of ontological and epistemological positioning defends the approach to this small-scale Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. Examining the ethical framework and reviewing journal entries from a reflection diary supports reflexive responses to ethical issues. I reflect on my research findings and discuss what this means for assessor coaches, employers, apprenticeship providers, and apprentices. I conclude by referring to the literature and research findings, including how they can direct future orientations for additional research. A concise narrative of my MA journey provides insights into critical moments of learning.

Introduction to the research

MRQ

How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

SQs

- What is the collective understanding of compassion?

- How do relationships influence the apprentice learning experience?

- How does relationships and experiencing compassion influence apprentice stress levels?

Rationale

According to Rubitek (2023), apprenticeship training providers have lost over £1.8 billion in revenue due to apprentices withdrawing from apprenticeship training programmes between 2018 and 2022. Rubitek (2023) reports a drop in apprenticeship achievement rates over the same period. Professional standards for teachers and trainers across the FE sector, including apprenticeships (Education and Training Foundation, 2022), are recommending the use of

motivational and coaching techniques when supporting apprentices learning during an apprenticeship as an approach to reducing withdrawal rates and increasing achievement rates. Further clarification on approaches to motivating apprentices would assist teachers and trainers in understanding how they can coach. Additionally, as some apprenticeship providers are evolving and appointing individuals into coaching roles, further clarification could guide approaches to coaching within an apprenticeship setting. In addressing the recommendations in the professional standards referring to adopting coaching when supporting apprentices (Education and Training Foundation, 2022), some apprenticeship providers are appointing assessor-coaches, who can provide coaching and mentoring to apprentices. Examining how approaches to coaching apprentices on a management apprenticeship can positively influence retention and achievement rates is challenging due to the limited number of contextual research studies that examine the lived experience of individuals completing a management apprenticeship.

Research Context

The apprenticeship training provider that supported this research study by providing access to their apprentices has operated for over twenty-five years. They specialise in leadership and management development, management apprenticeships, and people development. They have key performance figures as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 – Performance figures for the supporting organisation compared to the national level

Operations or Departmental Manager- ST0385	National Average (2022/23)	Supporting Organisation (2022/23)
Retention Rate	51.8%	*50%
Achievement Rate	51.2%	*50%
Pass Rate	98.9%	*100%

Team Leader or Supervisor-ST0384	National Average (2022/23)	Supporting Organisation (2022/23)
Retention Rate	55.2%	*50%
Achievement Rate	54.0%	*50%
Pass Rate	97.8%	*100%

*Includes Operations or Departmental Manager-ST0385 and Team Leader or Supervisor-ST0384 (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk., n.d.)

The retention rate is calculated by assessing the proportion of leavers that successfully complete the full apprenticeship standard (GOV.UK., 2023). The achievement rate is calculated by assessing what proportion of leavers successfully complete and pass the full apprenticeship standard (GOV.UK., 2023). The pass rate is the percentage of completers who successfully pass the apprentice standard (GOV.UK., 2023).

The figures below (Figure 1) indicate the reasons provided by apprentices who have withdrawn from a management apprenticeship with the apprenticeship training provider to date. Some of the reasons for apprentices withdrawing from a management apprenticeship may not be preventable, but this research assists in understanding how a compassionate approach to coaching may positively influence future retention and achievement.

Figure 1 – Apprenticeship withdrawal reasons

Reasons why apprentices have withdrawn from their apprenticeship programme

- Deceased
- Functional Skills (not passed)
- Ill heath — 2.63%
- Inbetween employers
- Left employer — 25.79%
- No longer wants to be on programme — 7.37%
- No reason given — 14.21%
- Personal issues — 11.58%
- Retired
- Withdrawn by employer — 15.79%
- Work issues
- Work-life balance — 12.11%
- Workload increased — 5.79%
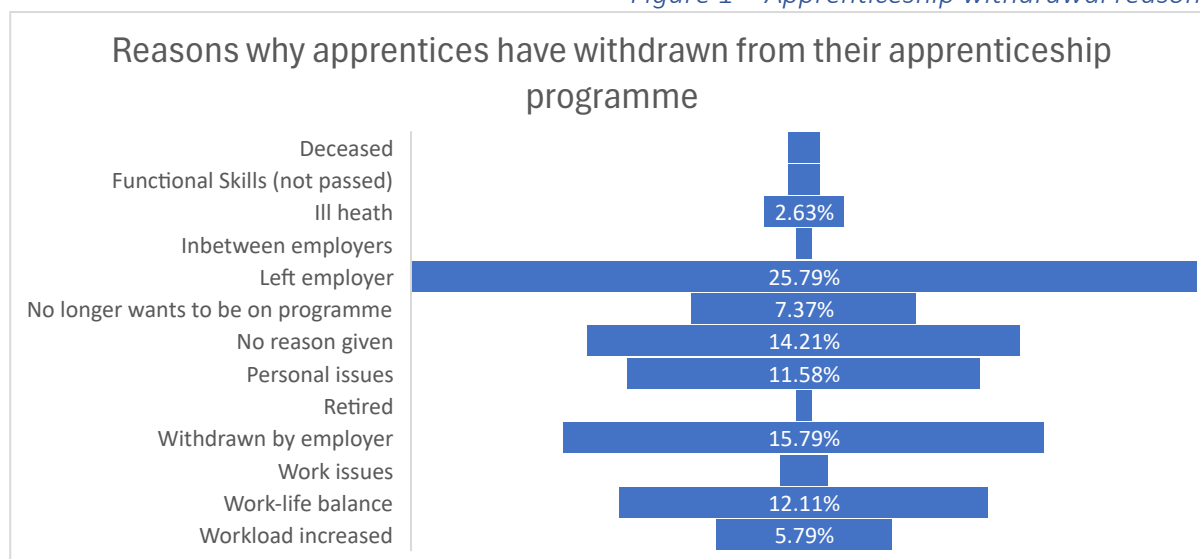
Research Positionality

My work as an assessor-coach has primarily influenced my research topic choice because I experience apprentices appearing to struggle with managing their emotions, which in turn affects how they learn. Additionally, my work with talented and elite-level athletes from the perspective of human well-being indicates the importance of understanding how individuals and teams process emotions and feelings. Through my professional coaching practice, I have witnessed how a non-judgmental environment can be the first step towards someone learning something they previously thought was impossible for them. It appears that the figures for achievement rates on management apprenticeships are low, so my commitment is to taking action as a researcher and an assessor-coach so that more apprentices can pass an apprenticeship.

Conceptual Framework & Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review critically examines the literature relating to the key concepts of learning theory and motivational interviewing. The review discusses compassion from a coaching perspective. It examines concepts of how ambivalence and stressful experiences can influence individual approaches to learning. It addresses the humanistic perspectives of motivational interviewing, positive learning experiences, and the neurosis of stress. Additionally, it explores definitions of compassion, varying approaches to being compassionate, collective approaches to well-being and learning, and examines the current landscape of compassionate coaching and training in educational settings.

A coaching perspective on motivational interviewing and learning theory

In my experience in an educational setting, motivational interviewing approaches such as summarising, affirmations, open-ended questions, and reflective listening can help learners develop. This approach supports collaboration, empowering, engaging, and motivating learners to control their own learning in collaboration with an educator (Wells and Jones, 2016), which can assist a learner to develop their confidence during learning. A criticism of motivational interviewing is the lack of consideration for social structures within educational settings by only focusing on the experiences of the individual learner (Wells and Jones, 2016). This could imply that focusing on the apprentice experience alone would lead to a lack of consideration for the wider context of learning, which includes their workplace. Motivational interviewing aligns with andragogy theory (Knowles, 1978), which acknowledges the notion of self-concept and recognises that adult learners can take ownership of their own learning. Recognising that andragogical approaches and self-directed approaches to learning are still evolving (Merriam, 2001), the exact benefits of an andragogical approach to learning are not clear. One criticism of andragogy theory is that it assumes that children and adults learn differently (Taylor and Kroth, 2009). Critics suggest that some adults require structured learning and guidance from an educator (Taylor and Kroth, 2009). In response to such criticism, it is worth considering that some adult learners may have had experiences with a pedagogical approach to learning that has resulted in a lack of self-confidence and negative feelings towards education (Van Nieuwenhove and De Wever, 2023). Furthermore, adult learners may not have subject-specific or workplace experiential learning to draw upon (Taylor and Kroth, 2009), which can be the case with some new management apprentices. Understanding how apprentices integrate with andragogy theory can be beneficial for employers and apprenticeship training providers, particularly when acknowledging their

existing knowledge and their potential to develop via experiential learning. This includes understanding approaches to coaching support and defining a self-directed learning approach in the context of apprentices working towards a set of standards.

A three-way relationship between the coach, apprentice, and employer

In the context of an apprenticeship, a three-way coaching approach that includes the line manager of the apprentice aligns with apprenticeship guidance (Education and Training Foundation, n.d.) in supporting the professional development of apprentices by including their employer. Adopting an approach that aligns with Knowles andragogy theory (Armitage and Cogger, 2019) would put the apprentice at the centre of their professional development, meaning the assessor-coach is adopting a position of facilitator rather than teacher. Contrasting approaches to andragogy theory, including behaviourism (Skinner, 1938) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), suggest that learning is effective when externally controlled and regulated by rewarding and punishing individuals based on their behaviour. This approach does not align with the principles of a coaching relationship that acknowledge the individual is resourceful and the role of the coach is to develop the individuals resourcefulness (Rogers, 2016). Furthermore, the relationship between the coach and the apprentice is potentially more complicated than that between the learner and the teacher. There are multiple relationships, including the apprentice's line manager, to consider. Overlapping andragogy theory is social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), which posits that individual performance is a result of reciprocal social interactions, suggesting that motivation to learn is a combination of internal thoughts and feelings based on the learning environment and subsequent individual actions.

A humanistic social approach to supporting motivational interviewing

Social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) also recognises the influence of the social learning environment. Benefits of social constructivism in an educational setting include learners developing critical thinking, the promotion of independent learning, learners developing problem solving skills, and it supports learner retention (Saleem, Kausar, and Deeba, 2021). Critics of a constructivist approach argue that minimal guidance from educators can lead to learners being unsure about what they are learning and unable to relate learning to a related need (Alanazi, 2016). However, social constructivism supports the development of episodic memory and positive self-esteem by encouraging the learner to adopt an active role during the transformation of learning with guidance and support from a social perspective (Vera, Akpan, Udodirim, Igwe, Blessing, Mpamah, and Okoro, 2020). In an apprenticeship setting, the social environment can consist of the apprentice, their line manager, their colleagues, an assessor-coach, and other educators.

In addressing the concept of the learning organisation, Fielding (2001) recognises that learning is a collaborative process, which supports the views of Wells and Jones (2016) when referring to learning as a collaboration. Considering motivation for learning from the perspective of developing self-concept and collaboration, motivational interviewing appears to be an effective approach to supporting learners to address emotional learning challenges through adopting empathetic approaches (Wells and Jones, 2016). This study, however, concentrates on the effects of motivational interviewing in the classroom, and the authors acknowledge that they were unable to quantify instances of change discussion, which is not fully supportive of understanding the benefits of motivational interviewing in a coaching setting. Research on motivational interviewing is scarce, particularly when it comes to

apprenticeships. A study by Strait, Williams, and Peters (2019) supports the idea that motivational interviewing can improve performance in an educational setting. They also identified that performance improvement was not significantly different for learners who received study tips. Conversely, Strait, Williams, and Peters (2019) refer to the research of Reich, Sharp, and Berman (2015), which is more favourable to the benefits of motivational interviewing interventions. However, it is noted that the author of this study recommends that future studies with larger sample sizes verify their findings. While there appears to be evidence that motivational interviewing interventions are valuable, further studies would provide additional information that would assist in understanding how motivational interviewing interventions can support learning. Furthermore, examining interventions within the context of coaching and supporting apprentices would provide useful information for those involved in apprenticeship delivery.

Additionally, motivational interviewing may have a disadvantage in that it ignores social structures in preference to focusing on the individual. According to Wells and Jones (2016) comments about concerns associated with motivational interviewing, adopting motivational interviewing as a method to improve retention and achievement rates may lead educators to focus on the individual as the issue, resulting in approaches that aim to persuade learners to learn (Wells and Jones, 2016). Therefore, in an apprenticeship setting, it can be considered crucial that coaches using motivational interviewing empower apprentices to recognise the importance of collaboration and acknowledge that, even though individuals are primarily accountable for their own education, they are also a part of a social environment at work that shapes their actual learning experiences.

A humanist perspective on autonomous approaches to learning

A humanist perspective on learning (Freire, 2021) considers the influence of the social environment and acknowledges that a learner can benefit from being critical of the learning environment and being more active in participating in developing their learning through reflection. However, this can be challenging because traditional teaching practices can disempower learners (Broom, 2015). Furthermore, the foundation of traditional approaches to education is the power dynamic, which places the teacher above the learner as the one responsible for learning (Broom, 2015). In my experience, when apprentices have autonomy to manage their own learning on an apprenticeship but are lacking the necessary knowledge and skills, this can become challenging. Therefore, adopting behaviours that can lead to learners feeling valued (Broom, 2015) and addressing methods to empower learners to control their own learning development (Broom, 2015) addresses some of the criticisms of an andragogical approach.

Developing the perspective of learners having free choice and autonomy for learning, including social belonging, and developing competencies, Ryan and Deci (2020) identify that self-determination theory (SDT) can positively influence the motivation of individuals in an educational setting. According to SDT, individuals displaying autonomous motivation engage in learning and experience increased levels of well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2020). While SDT offers an approach to consider when supporting learners who are motivated, there is a lack of consideration for learners who develop ambivalent feelings towards learning. When individuals challenge their own self-concept or competence and are critical or doubtful of their own capabilities, this can influence their readiness to learn. In my professional experience, some apprentices on a management apprenticeship voice their desire to

complete their apprenticeship, but at the same time, they voice concerns about their ability to do so. Often, apprentices cite their lack of ability to write assignments and are overwhelmed by the amount of work required to compile a portfolio of evidence. It can be considered that apprentices who are creating a concept of themselves are identifying that they are not academic and that learning isn't something they are good at, leading to withdrawing or delaying completing their apprenticeship. In my experience, coaching offers the opportunity to allow an apprentice to understand challenges and identify the root cause by exploring their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.

Supporting individuals in feeling positive about learning experiences

There are those that argue that empowering individuals to learn can lead to positive feelings of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and building self-confidence (Broom, 2015). Proponents of behaviourism (Skinner, 1938) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) argue that external methods of motivation can provide the direction of learning. However, most coaching methods offer contrasting approaches that support the development of internal motivation for the individual being coached to be autonomous and develop self-awareness (Rogers, 2016). While various coaching methods offer models and methods that provide the impression that a coach simply needs to apply them once they have acquired the skills, this may be a simplified view (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2023). Therefore, while acknowledging that supporting learners to be intrinsically motivated can lead to positive feelings for learners, supporting coaches to develop the skills required to support individuals to learn is critical. In terms of self-awareness, a coach can benefit from developing intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (Dryden, 2004), with Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck (2023) expanding on the views of Dryden (2004) by identifying the differences between the

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current landscape of acquiring coaching skills compared to skills in being a qualified therapist. In contrast to therapists who must acquire a theoretical knowledge base, coaches can become professionally recognised after finishing a relatively short course approved by a coaching association (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2023). It is therefore arguable that before deciding how best to assist others, coaches would do well to cultivate their own professional growth and self-awareness. Addressing the ambiguity of self-awareness in literature, Carden, Jones, and Passmore (2021) propose that self-awareness consists of intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects, which align with connectedness with oneself and others, providing the opportunity to be compassionate towards oneself and others. These approaches, especially behaviourism, consider the learner to be passive, although Bandura (1986) acknowledges the cognitive role of the learner in becoming more active towards becoming motivated to learn. During learning, individuals are changing and evolving, but not always in a linear process (Foster, 2022), including prior knowledge changing as the learner adopts different views. This can influence the concept of self, including the learners confidence of their capacity to learn. As a result of changes to the concept of self, learners can become ambivalent and simultaneously want to learn but believe they can't due to a lack of confidence. In my experience, coaching can provide a safe space for apprentices to plan their own approaches to learning during an apprenticeship, with varying levels of co-development, and independent development supporting them to feel positive about learning, especially as they are achieving.

Definitions of compassion and empowerment

Understanding approaches to being compassionate can be complex, especially as there is no single definition of compassion (Strauss, Lever Taylor, Gu, Kuyken, Baer, Jones, and Cavanagh, 2016). In the context of supporting apprentices the definition of compassion from Seppala,

Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Brown, Worline, Cameron, and Doty (2017), which is a desire to alleviate another person's suffering or unmet need after first showing concern for them, provides some clarity while recognising that individuals are likely to understand experiences of compassion differently. However, if a coach adopts an approach that concentrates on alleviating the suffering of an apprentice, both parties might perceive the role of the coach as being to relieve the suffering the apprentice is feeling towards their learning experience. This can result in the apprentice relying on the coach too much, due to adopting a position in which they are unable to resolve their own suffering (Burgess, 2005). Adopting a role during learning that is disempowering for adult learners can prevent them from developing problem-solving skills and the ability to relieve their own suffering (Burgess, 2005). Adopting a coaching role that leads to the coach resolving problems disregards the idea that the coachee, or apprentice, in this instance, is resourceful (Rogers, 2016).

Managing stress and seeking homeostasis during an apprenticeship

When apprentices are learning on a management apprenticeship, they may find it challenging as they are developing a sense of self-confidence based on the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to apply skills and behaviours. When apprentices withdraw from an apprenticeship, that might be an attempt to protect their feelings and well-being. At this stage, they may not be ready to continue learning due to being in a stressful state, which can include self-doubt. Damasio's theories (2019) would support the argument that the apprentice withdrawing due to stress may not trust the coach or other members of the collective social group associated with the apprenticeship to continue developing their learning. This can be because after the apprentice has dealt with the unconscious emotions associated with the challenges of learning and processed their feelings, they view the learning environment as a threat and a

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danger to their survival or well-being. In alignment with the opinions of Damasio, Wilson (2023) would suggest providing an environment where a learner, or in this case, an apprentice, feels comfortable accepting their feelings and embracing the opportunity to develop new feelings both during coaching and during moments of self-reflection. Both Damasio (2019) and Wilson (2023) argue that individuals feel similar basic emotions that they associate with physiological and neural states. Emotions are biological, unconscious responses that influence the decision-making process leading to how individuals consciously feel, according to Damasio (2019). On the contrary, Feldman Barrett (2018) claims that brain networks socially construct emotions. However, Damasio (2019) and Feldman Barrett (2018) agree that feelings are not fixed and that an individual's view of a phenomenon, its context, and neural processes can all affect how they feel. This presents a view that how an apprentice might be feeling about themselves as a learner or about a particular aspect of the apprenticeship can change, either positively or negatively. Despite the differences in a biological perspective (Damasio, 2019) or a socially constructed perspective (Feldman Barrett, 2018) of emotions, both acknowledge the influence of the environment.

The apprentice's understanding of the context of learning can influence how they are feeling during an apprenticeship, and understanding this can support the assessor-coach in adapting their behaviours so they can contribute to an environment that supports the apprentice in developing their sense of self as a learner. They continue to explain that challenging an individual to learn too much can lead to distress, and choosing not to challenge an individual to learn can lead to sustress. In implementing this approach, educators have no clear way of understanding what will be considered the right approach because individuals will react differently. Therefore, educators require a connection with the learner so they are clear on

how the learner is feeling at a given movement through verbal feedback from the learner. Damasio (2019) refers to homeostatic feelings and the concept of consciousness for individuals and social groups by explaining that homeostatic feelings provide feedback on the state of life in a living organism at a given time. In my experience coaching apprentices, there are situations when apprentices are feeling energetic and flourishing, and then there are moments where they are feeling malaise or fatigued. Acknowledging the changes apprentices can have in their feelings can support approaches to coaching, as can understanding the temporality of feelings.

> Damasio (2019: p46) continues to explain that 'the essence of homeostasis is the formidable enterprise of managing energy, procuring it, allocating it to critical jobs such as repair, defense, growth, and participation in the engendering and maintenance of progeny.'

In the context of well-being and learning, Wilson (2023) identifies that learners can attempt to seek equilibrium because they view learning as a threat to their well-being, which may not support them to flourish. In attempting to seek equilibrium, learners can influence learning negatively, which supports the notion of educators facilitating a state of eustress (Lu, Wei, and Li, 2021) by combining challenging the learner with a compassionate approach from the educator and a self-compassionate approach adopted by the learner.

A collective approach to well-being and learning

During an apprenticeship, the apprentice's line manager contributes to supporting the personal and professional development of the apprentice during three-way coaching sessions and in the workplace. A three-way relationship between the apprentice, their line manager,

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and an assessor-coach has many social interactions, which can result in positive or negative associations with learning for the apprentice. Adopting a collective approach to well-being, focusing on supporting each other mutually and seeking social homeostasis as a group (Matthews and Tye, 2019), may lead to improvements in collective well-being. In an educational setting, when educators are considering the benefits of learners experiencing eustress (Lu, Wei, and Li, 2021), this can be considered challenging in understanding how best to support a learner to reach their learning potential. Providing social support in educational environments through meaningful interactions with learners that include empathetic ways of being with each other is often associated with being a pre-requisite to being compassionate (Riess, 2017), although Aldrup, Carstensen, and Klusmann (2022) suggest that recognising positive outcomes in educational settings due to educators being empathetic towards learners is limited. Recognising that most of the research about teacher empathy in educational settings is based on self-reported feelings of being empathetic is problematic. Most teachers are unlikely to accept that they do not express empathy to learners and will probably state that they respond to others when they recognise suffering. There seems to be a battle between reaching empathetic potential and experiencing compassion fatigue. Aldrup, Carstensen, and Klusmann (2022) observe that teachers might not be using their full capacity when it comes to being empathetic towards learners, and they caution against teachers experiencing undue distress because of excessive empathic approaches towards learners.   Additional research that addresses the relationship between empathy and educator-learner relationships would benefit from understanding the views of learners. Adding to the views of Aldrup, Carstensen, and Klusmann (2022), an argument against the use of empathy when supporting others compassionately is the view of Bloom (2017), who significantly draws upon the notion that being empathetic is flawed due to the biases of being

empathetic towards those you have morally evaluated as deserving of empathy, such as learners who are doing what is expected. In the context of an apprenticeship, Bloom (2017) would argue that an assessor-coach may be less likely to be empathetic towards an apprentice they felt wasn't doing what was expected. Offering a distinction between being empathetic and being compassionate, Bloom (2017) identifies an approach to being compassionate without aiming to understand another by applying rational compassion. Rational compassion is clearly a different approach to a verstehende approach, which Weber (1936) identifies as an attempting in understanding the meaning another person applies. While Bloom (2017) suggests that people are likely to be empathetic towards those who are similar, MacCannell (1986) identifies the challenges of verstehen (Dilthey, 1977) from the perspective of attempting to understand others, demonstrating arrogance. Shields (1996) supports and expands on this view by identifying how any approach to understanding others leads to ambiguity. In the context of an apprenticeship, adopting a coaching approach that stems from a desire to support another person in reducing their suffering rather than trying to understand the suffering of an apprentice may lead to supporting more apprentices. If educators support a culture that enables or encourages learners to connect with their own feelings and emotions, then more people might be able to learn and develop as learners. While all educational environments can promote this, coaching conversations offer a way to help learners develop from a position of emotional awareness.

Compassionate practices in educational environments and compassionate mind training

When considering what compassionate training approaches are relevant for professional development and supporting an individual in the role of the assessor-coach, there is a lack of empirical evidence that identifies the intricacies of coaches and mentors adopting

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compassionate approaches to supporting others (Giraldez-Hayes, 2021). Prominent psychologist, Gilbert (2010) offers an approach called compassion-focused therapy (CFT) which includes compassionate mind training to support those dealing with the challenges of shame and self-criticism, Gilbert (2010) claims that CFT supports individuals in developing a more compassionate inner voice. CFT can align with the approaches of motivational interviewing by addressing, although it is not clear how CFT supports learner well-being and performance. Gilbert (2010) identifies a benefit of CFT and compassionate mind training as supporting teachers to be self-compassionate and measuring self-compassion (Neff, 2003).

Two studies on the benefits of compassionate mind training (Maratos, Montague, Ashra, Welford, Wood, Barnes, Sheffield, and Gilbert, 2019; Matos, Palmeira, Albuquerque, Cunha, Lima, Galhardo, Maratos, and Gilbert, 2022) suggest that there are benefits to compassionate mind training, including effective interventions for promoting self-compassion and being compassionate to others. Matos, Palmeira, Albuquerque, Cunha, Lima, Galhardo, Maratos, and Gilbert (2022) add to the research of Maratos, Montague, Ashra, Welford, Wood, Barnes, Sheffield, and Gilbert (2019), although they did not address the previous limitations of conducting research with a control group. The research by Maratos, Montague, Ashra, Welford, Wood, Barnes, Sheffield, and Gilbert (2019) and Matos, Palmeira, Albuquerque, Cunha, Lima, Galhardo, Maratos, and Gilbert (2022) addresses the well-being of teachers who completed compassionate mind training. There appear to be benefits, including teachers reducing feelings of depression, stress, and burnout. Some of the research participants refer to being more compassionate to themselves and to learners following the completion of compassionate mind training. It would be beneficial to understand the influence of

compassionate mind training or other training approaches to developing compassionate behaviours on learners.

Arguably, supporting individuals to be more connected can be a preventative approach to suffering rather than a compassionate reaction to either the suffering of the self or the suffering of others. Considering a preventative approach from a rhizomatic perspective, Worline and Dutton (2021) assess approaches to the well-being of management teachers and students. While this is from the perspective of classroom teaching in the United States, it promotes the significance of classroom design and relationships in recognising the suffering of management teachers and students and supporting them compassionately. Worline and Dutton (2021) recognise the importance of providing a space for individuals to have a voice and developing networks, roles, and relational practices that foster approaches to suffering. The benefits of connecting align with the views of Adair, Fredrickson, Castro-Schilo, Kim, and Sidberry (2017), who report that social connections built by mindfulness practices result in an ability to view different perspectives and an increase in positive emotions. Increasing positive emotions can assist in creating a learning experience that can prevent some negative homeostatic feelings while recognising that emotional responses fluctuate (Damasio, 2019). This aligns with approaches to coaching that focus on establishing a safe environment, which can help the apprentice open discussions about any difficulties they may feel safe sharing with others.

Theoretical Framework

Ontology

Ontology is the science of being and a belief system that indicates how an individual assumes a position when contemplating reality (Blaikie and Priest, 2019). When choosing an ontological perspective, there are two philosophical options to consider: subjectivism or objectivism (Wilson, 2010). According to Wilson (2010), if the researcher believes that social actors create a phenomenon, they will assume an ontological position of subjectivism, or if their belief is that the world is external to social actors, they will assume a position of objectivism. Subjective thought assumes that individuals develop an understanding of their being in the world (McKenzie, 1997) and their understanding of the truth based on subjective experiences of reality, which is considered the creation of a human phenomenon according to Somekh and Lewin (2005). In contrast, Rand and Peikoff (1999) identify that objectivism would suggest that reality exists independently of human construction. My position is that reality is a perceptive thought that creates meaning by recalling explicit and implicit memories (Nosek, 2007; Amodio and Ratner, 2011). By assuming that individuals interpret their own reality in the world, understanding is a unique and subjective experience for everyone (Heidegger, Schmidt, and Stambaugh, 2010). Reflecting on human experience and creating meaning using metaphors can help to interpret a lived experience (Ricoeur, Czerny, Mclaughlin, and Costello, 2003), and individuals narrating their thoughts over time can lead to developing an understanding of the lived experience (Ricoeur, 1984). Supporting the ontological position of constructed reality is neuroplasticity, which indicates that humans can experience historical events stored in their memory differently due to the rewiring and strengthening of neurons based on new learning and experiences (Cunnington, 2024).

Epistemology

Considering existentialist claims, individuals acquire knowledge based on their experiences and often declare a truth to their understanding of the world, including the meaning of life. Such claims clash with the notion of absurdity (Sartre, 2020), meaning there is no inherent meaning to life in the world (Cancian, 2018; Hyde, Kopp, and Zimmerman, 2019; De Beauvoir, 2020), and searching for it is irrational. Assuming existentialist beliefs that the essence of life is continuously developing based on existence (Cancian, 2018; Hyde, Kopp, and Zimmerman, 2019; De Beauvoir, 2020), as opposed to finding an inherent meaning to life, my epistemological approach to acquiring knowledge is based on understanding the lived experiences of others. Epistemological beliefs are in alignment with the philosophical views of existence preceding essence (Sartre, 1948; Sartre, 2020) and grounded in the notion of humans being in the world, which leads to knowledge and understanding evolving over time due to the influence of lived experiences (Heidegger, Schmidt, and Stambaugh, 2010). Additionally, acknowledging that meaning evolves when social actors (Bryman, 2012) are interacting socially (Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 2002), I recognise that research participants attach meaning to their experiences based on being with others within the context of the research study, which includes their manager, coach, colleagues, non-participating apprentices, and other research participants. Acknowledging that research participants will attach meaning to interactions with each other (Somekh and Lewin, 2005) I accept that this will influence the research study. Recognising that I may influence the experience of participants (Heidegger, Schmidt, and Stambaugh, 2010) and my understanding of each participant's experience, it is essential that I allow my interpretation of each research participant to develop by suspending my own biases and presumptions before trying to understand the collective experience, and that I reduce my interference with research participants during conversations.

Methodology

In alignment with my ontological and epistemological beliefs, I adopted an interpretivist paradigm that acknowledges that phenomenologically, individuals can experience multiple realities based on the social world being socially constructed (Denscombe, 2021). The research inquiry aimed to understand how research participants perceived and experienced compassion in a coaching context as part of an apprenticeship. Based on the knowledge-structured ideas of idiography, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) research study was employed (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). To understand the phenomenon experienced by each research participant, it was determined that a combined multiple perspective, longitudinal, and group design (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022) would be used. This design enabled research participants to present their lived experience (Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, and Lavoie-Tremblay, 2020), and it aligned with the socially constructivist philosophy that individuals construct their knowledge based on interactions with others (Rannikmäe, Holbrook, and Soobard, 2020) and that their understanding evolves over time (Heidegger, Schmidt, and Stambaugh, 2010). I considered adopting a descriptive approach (Husserl, Moran, and Ralph, 2012) for the research study before choosing an interpretive approach (Heidegger, Schmidt, and Stambaugh, 2010) that acknowledged that the meaning associated with the phenomenon that the research participants experienced would evolve during the research, and this would be linked to the evolving self of the research participants and my own self as a researcher (Sartre, 2020). In comparison to other phenomenological approaches, this approach recognised that I would be interpreting the experiences of the research participants based on my own perceptions (Merleau-Ponty and Landes, 2014). Specific to an IPA study, I adopted a hermeneutic approach (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022) that assisted in understanding the

essence of the meaning of each research participant's experience based on how the phenomenon made sense to them, which aligned with the idiographic commitment of an IPA study (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). To counter the argument that an IPA study can be too subjective to be a credible approach (Tuffour, 2017) I had regular conversations with my supervisor and completed a reflective journal as recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). To add further credibility to my interpretative approach, I engaged with the data by reading the transcripts and listening to the interviews so that I could develop my understanding of the data. My approach recognised the distinction between a researcher interpreting or describing a phenomenon as part of an IPA research study, which led to an interpretation-focused approach that informed my methods for collecting and analysing data. Furthermore, when contemplating my involvement as an IPA researcher based on the evolving self as explained by Denscombe (2021), which states that the researcher suspends their own perspective to discover the perspectives of participants without bias, my approach included using a hermeneutic circle (Heidegger and Hofstadter, 2013), which was recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). By using a hermeneutic circle (Heidegger and Hofstadter, 2013), it led to gaining an understanding of the unique lived experience of each research participant (Peat, Rodriguez, and Smith, 2018) before seeking a collective understanding. To reduce the probability of research participants being influenced by another relationship to that of research participant and researcher, potentially leading to them explaining their experienced phenomenon differently during the research due to having multiple identities (Denscombe, 2021), participants were invited from a purposive sample (Smith and Osborn, 2003) based on having experienced the required phenomenon and having had no previous connection to myself.

Methods

Introduction

As illustrated below, an adapted simplified model of research (Figure 2) provides an overview of the approach that was taken during the pre-empirical and empirical stages, including how my methodology and research questions informed decision-making during the methods stage, which included designing an approach, then collecting and analysing the data.

Figure 2 – Adapted simplified model of research (without hypotheses) (Punch, 2006: P19)
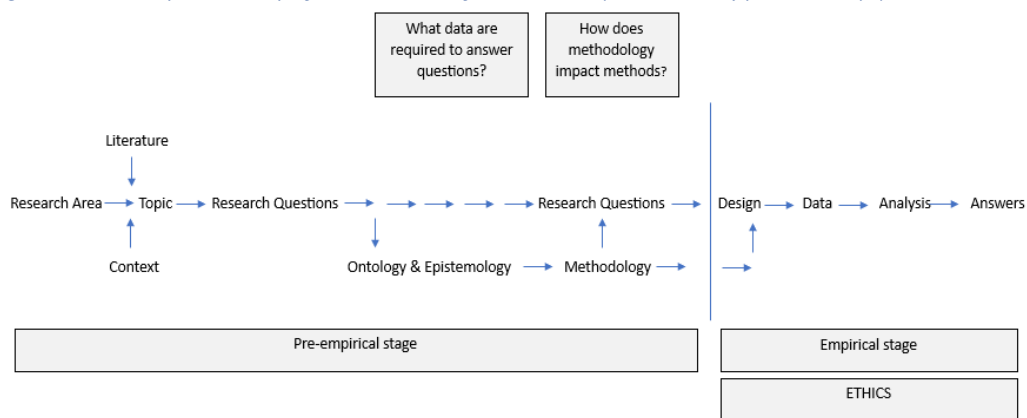
Sampling

A purposive and homogeneous sampling strategy chosen was theoretically consistent with finding a sample for an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) research study (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). Interested research participants were recruited via an apprenticeship provider, who acted as a gatekeeper for initially identifying that potential research participants met the required criteria, which was that they were apprentices and that they had experienced compassion during coaching as part of an apprenticeship. Potential research participants were also asked by the gatekeeper if they could commit to providing four hours of their time as part of a longitudinal data collection process that included one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Based on self-critical reflection, the time commitment and the number of interviews was reduced, which will be explained in the data collection section.

It was essential that research participants represented a perspective of their lived experience rather than a part of the population (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). Selecting a sample based on individual lived experience ensured that the sampling strategy aligned with the idiographic approach that is associated with an IPA research study. In the context of this study, reference to a homogenous sample, meant that research participants were all apprentices on a management and leadership apprenticeship who had experienced compassion at least once during a coaching session. Consistent with a small-scale study and suggested sample size for a Master's-level IPA Study (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022) the initial number of research participants engaged was five, which was later reduced to four due to a withdrawal.

Data collection

A considered approach to collecting the data was applied based on the theoretical positioning of an IPA research study. The theoretical objective of collecting the data was to provide an opportunity for each research participant to deliver a recalled narrative of their personal experience. To achieve this objective, semi-structured interviews were used as part of an innovative approach that also included focus groups. Following self-reflection and a conversation with my supervisor, amendments were made to the collection of the data timetable from the original design (Table 2) because, after completing initial transcriptions from the first interviews, it was deemed that the data collected for a small-scale study was rich and sufficient.

Table 2 – Longitudinal data collection design

Activity	Duration (Design)	Duration (Actual)
Interview 1 (1:1)	60 mins	60 mins
Focus Group 1	30 mins	30 mins
Interview 2 (1:1)	60 mins	10-20 mins
Focus Group 2	30 mins	30 mins
Interview 3 (1:1)	60 mins	Not required
TOTAL	**4 hours**	**2 hrs 10/20 mins (approx.)**

By adopting an approach that included interviews one-on-one with each participant and focus groups, it enabled multiple perspectives from research participants to be collected over time, which included developing a social understanding of the phenomena within the research group. Collecting the data using two methods supported the emergence of the essence of what the participants experienced individually and collectively. The recordings of interviews provided an accurate verbal account of the research participants recollection of their experience of the phenomenon. Interview data was collected by zoom video recordings, and data for focus group activities was collected using Google Jamboards, allowing a narration of the individual experience (Ricoeur, 1984) and a detailed account of the collective understanding.

As a novice researcher with no previous experience with interviewing as part of a research study, I chose to adopt an approach to interviewing that Larsen (2023) identified as aligned with the phenomenological school of care and being. A Dasein approach was adopted with the intention of gathering data relating to caring behaviours because this aligned with the phenomenon I was researching (Larsen, 2023), which was research participants experiencing a coach being compassionate. I examined interview methods that applied to an explication interview developed by Vermersch (1994, 2018) that Høffding and Martiny (2015) recommended. As a result of my examination, I adopted an explication interview approach
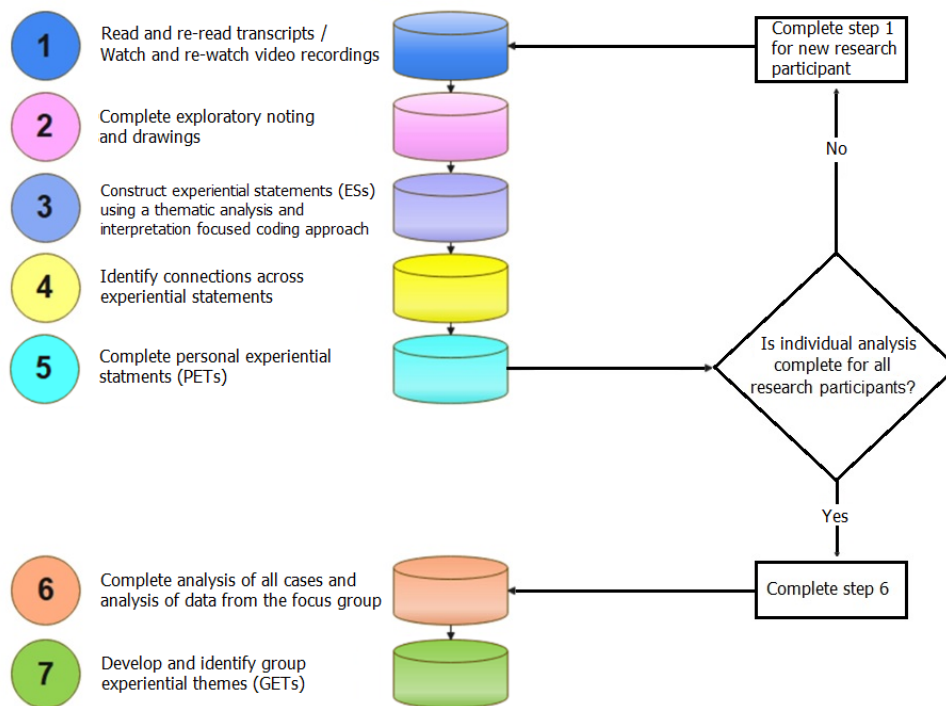
during one-on-one interviews so that I avoided questions that may have induced conceptualisation. This approach to interviewing resulted in asking a series of questions that avoided asking a why question, which is prohibited in phenomenology because it can lead to a causality-based experience (Larsen, 2023). During one-to-one interviews, how and what questions were asked, which were based on explication interview methods (Vermersch, 1994, 2018), with the aim of helping the research participant understand their experience. Interview questions were semi-structured, which allowed the content of the answers to be revealed, and I asked further questions based on the responses from each research participant. The first round of interviews started by asking the research participant to recall the phenomenon they experienced, which followed the recommendation of Vermersch (1994, 2018) as explained by Larsen (2023). As a novice researcher, I complied with the advice of Larsen (2023) to structure questions with an emphasis on action, as recommended by Vermersch (1994, 2018). This allowed me to guide each research participant from the beginning of their compassionate experience to the conclusion without implying any theoretical position. I acknowledged that the conclusion and a final understanding of the experience would also evolve during focus groups and another interview.

Data analysis

Data analysis was completed using an adapted version of the seven steps of IPA data analysis (Figure 3) designed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). This approach provided some flexibility and accounted for using NVivo to read the transcripts, listen to the audio and view the video recordings.

Figure 3 – Adapted sevens steps of IPA data analysis

Read and re-read transcripts /
Watch and re-watch video recordings

1

Complete step 1
for new research
participant

2 Complete exploratory noting
and drawings

No

3 Construct experiential statements (ESs)
using a thematic analysis and
interpretation focused coding approach

4 Identify connections across
experiential statements

5 Complete personal experiential
statments (PETs)

Is individual analysis
complete for all
research participants?

Yes

6 Complete analysis of all cases and
analysis of data from the focus group

Complete step 6

7 Develop and identify group
experiential themes (GETs)

Coding of data in NVivo was applied within the main research question and subsidiary questions categories (Appendix A). It was also flexible in accommodating the completion of drawings (Appendix B) as part of the exploratory stage of understanding the experience of each research participant, which helped in allowing the data to speak to me by using different approaches to interpreting the data. A hermeneutic circle was used (Figure 4) to understand the words, sentences and paragraphs within the context of the phenomenon research participants had experienced. After transcripts and annotations (Appendix C) were exported from NVivo, the information was used to assist in producing detailed interpretations of individual interviews one (Appendix D) and two (Appendix E). Interpretations from the focus group sessions (Appendix F) were used alongside the interview interpretations to produce GETs (Appendix G).

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Figure 4 – Hermeneutic circle
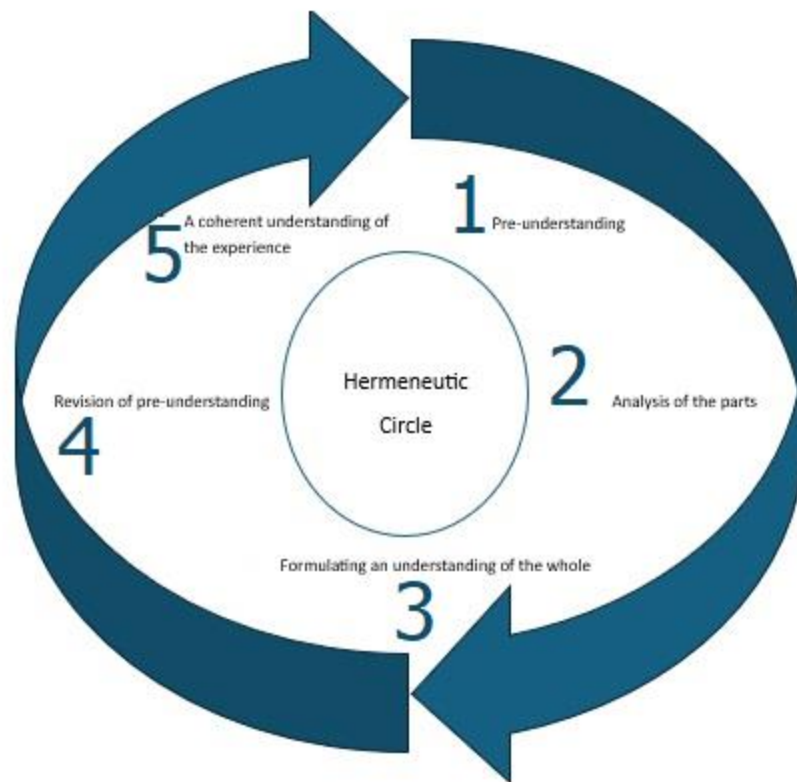
A thematic analysis approach (Adu, 2019) was used to identify and interpret data, and it was acknowledged that the meaning of some of the data was explicit by nature, while other elements of the data were implicit (Adu, 2019). This resulted in an interpretation-focused coding strategy being adopted in NVivo, although some initial coding was more description-focused (Adu, 2019) during the initial coding process.

Ethics

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles and criteria stated by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Written approval to gain access to research participants was obtained from the supporting organisation (Appendix H), and ethical approval was confirmed by St. Mary's University (Appendix I). The supporting organisation was provided with an information sheet that also outlined ethical guidelines

(Appendix J). Research participants were provided with a detailed information sheet (Appendix K) that they were able to read before completing an application form (Appendix L).

To complete research in accordance with a revised ethical framework (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009) and as advised by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022), ethical monitoring was applied during data collection and analysis. It was acknowledged that sceptics of IPA as a research study contend that because there are no fixed methodologies, this research approach limits the validity of scientific standards because it would be difficult to replicate findings (Giorgi, 2011). However, in accordance with a commitment to IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022), the research embraced the subjectivity of the lived experiences of research participants. Furthermore, to fully understand the individual experience, a Dasein approach (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, and Dowling, 2016) was adopted, which enabled the experiences of each research participant to be viewed in isolation. As recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022), this led to the production of personal experiential statements (ESs) and personal experiential themes (PETs) before producing an overall group experiential theme (GET).

Completing an approach to research that included data triangulation (Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021) by completing semi-structured interviews and focus group tasks increases the validity of the findings. This approach assisted in understanding a collectively agreed understanding of compassion and compassionate interventions between coaches and the apprentices.

A reflection diary was completed throughout the research study, along with regular conversations with my supervisor and a peer researcher. This was invaluable in addressing various ethical dilemmas that evolved during the research study. While this ethics section

does not identify all the ethical dilemmas, entries from the reflection log below cover two of the critical ethical issues that were addressed.

Main Ethical Issue 1

Ethical Concern - During a conversation with my supervisor, I identified that my approach to using NVivo was too mechanical. Accessing the transcripts and applying coding in NVivo had resulted in a superficial understanding of the data. The results were being viewed as a group, which meant I had not applied a Dasein approach and gone into sufficient detail with each individual research participant before addressing the experiences of the group as a collective.

Solution - In addition to coding already logged, detailed annotations were logged in NVivo before data was exported so that experiential statements (ESs) and personal experiential themes (PETs) could be produced. This ensured an idiographic approach in understanding each individual research participant's unique experience in relation to the phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022).

Reflection – As a novice researcher, it may have been overly ambitious to try using NVivo computer software to assist with the analysis stage of research before I had established myself as a researcher. Nevertheless, by using a strategy that emphasised reflexivity, as defined by BERA (2018), I was able to employ IPA research principles.

Main Ethical Issue 2

Ethical Concern – There were a couple of issues with research participants not attending a session, and then not reply to follow up communication.

- The first instance, a research participant failed to attend a second interview.

- The second instance, a research participant failed to attend a second focus group.

The concern was how both incidents impacted on the rigour of the data and the research study.

Solution - The solution for the first issue came from having a robust research design that recognised that some research participants might withdraw (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). This meant the research study could cope with up to two withdrawals and still meet the suggested guidelines for an IPA small-scale study (Alase, 2017). As a result, the decision was made to not work with any of the data provided from interview one for research candidate 004. The choice to proceed with the second half of a focus group, which had been rescheduled because of IT problems and scheduling restrictions, was the spontaneous response to the second issue. Due to the timing of this, it was acknowledged that rearranging could lead to a greater risk, such as a reduction in the number of research participants available. Consequently, this has been identified as a research study limitation, although one that does not significantly reduce the significance of the findings.

Reflection – As a novice researcher, I feel that I responded to both issues well. While I acknowledge there may have been other options, I am confident that my reactions were ethical and ensured honesty and integrity.

Discussion of findings/claims to new knowledge

The key findings and claims to new knowledge relate to the MRQ, SQs, and emerging knowledge. Throughout the findings, the theme of relationships with others and oneself appears to influence the emotions and feelings of an apprentice. The challenges experienced by apprentices varied and included feelings of being overwhelmed, self-doubtful, anxious, and distressed. Apprentices who experienced a compassionate intervention from their coach described co-developing solutions with their coach to their challenges. This ensured that positive actions were implemented in the beginning, and the relationship between the coach and the apprentice was significant in the development of solutions. Relationships with others, such as the line manager and colleagues, were viewed either positively or negatively, with two apprentices experiencing a relationship that appeared to affect their self-confidence. As their apprenticeship progressed, apprentices appeared to develop positive relationships with others and themselves. It appears that because of their experience of perceiving their coach to be compassionate, apprentices started being more self-compassionate or self-caring, and some apprentices appear to have been compassionate towards others. A full overview of GETs explains what apprentices appeared to experience (Appendix G).

How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

One apprentice was experiencing distress over the conflict with their line manager, whom they perceived as unsupportive. Additionally, they were awaiting the results of an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) assessment, which added to their distress due to the uncertainty. The apprentice perceived that the coach was someone who listened and was

neutral and non-judgmental, which aligns with motivational interviewing techniques (Wells and Jones, 2016).

> *'It was kind of causing me to have. I was having difficulties with the the structure of the course and certain things.'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 18 – 1:47.1 – 1:56.5)
>
> *'…But the the coach sort of listened with a very open ear and sort of non-judgmental just neutral perspective.'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 20-22 – 2:00.6 – 2:19.8)

It appears the coach responded to the apprentice's perception that they might not be a competent manager by using an approach that aligns with motivational techniques (Wells and Jones, 2016) and compassion-focused therapy (CFT) approaches (Gilbert, 2010).

> *'I felt like, well, is it me, that cannot manage, is it me that is not a good manager, am I not supportive enough?'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 48 – 6:16.5 - 6:24.2)
>
> *'… my coach has been brilliant, listening to me…'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 3 – 0:25.2 - 0:35.2)

The apparent coach's belief in the apprentice seems to have helped them when they were self-conscious. The apprentice may have been able to develop their managerial self-concept and increase their chances for achievement thanks to the coach's supportive approach.

> *'… [the coach was] understanding from my point of view as a manager …'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 8 – 1:05.5 - 1:11.7)

It emerged that the apprentice's perception of their relationship with their coach was important, and this perception may have had a beneficial impact on the apprentice's achievement and retention rates.

> *'II know myself like I'll I'll get stuff done. But just kind of having that reaffirm to you, especially by my apprenticeship coach is. It's just really nice that they know.'*
>
> (Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 82 – 9:21.6 - 9:32.8)

The apprentice had a relationship with themselves at the beginning that was preventing them from getting started. They appear to be self-critical and applying blame to themselves, and the way the coach responded aligns with a technique associated with motivational interviewing where change is non-judgemental and collaborative (Wells and Jones, 2016). There also appears to be an alignment to CFT by supporting the apprentice to develop an inner voice that is more compassionate (Gilbert, 2010).

> *'I felt completely overwhelmed. I had no idea …so I didn't do any of the work until a week before, which added to my stresses, which was my own fault'*
>
> (Research Participant 005, Interview 1, 4 – 0:41.4 - 1:04.7)
>
> *'He he didn't. He didn't dwell on the fact that I hadn't started the the coursework at all…'*
>
> (Research Participant 005, Interview 1, 9 – 2:16.2 - 2:29.6)

What is the collective understanding of compassion?

The focus group presented a cohesive understanding that being compassionate towards someone else involves understanding the feelings of the other person, then taking action that is interpreted as being compassionate. As a collective group, the research participants stated that they believed that a coach should understand the apprentice. This appears to align with positions on being empathetic (Zhou, 2022), although it contradicts the position of rational compassion (Bloom, 2017). However, the use of the term 'understanding' may have been in a broader sense of the coach recognising that an apprentice can experience various challenges during an apprenticeship. Therefore, using this interpretation of understanding, a coach who is aware that an apprentice might be suffering and provides a safe environment for the apprentice to express their feelings may be considered to understand the apprentice.

How do relationships influence the apprentice learning experience?

It appears that apprentices experienced positive and negative emotions from relationships that they had with others and themselves (Table 3).

Table 3 – Apprentice experiences of positive and negative emotions on an apprenticeship

Feelings of someone being unsupportive or critical.	Feelings of someone being supportive, understanding or non-judgemental
'I was having difficulties with the the structure of the course and certain things and my line manager wasn't very compassionate.' (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 18-20 – 1:47.1 - 2:05.6)	*'I was having quite a lot of emotional kind of response to what was happening at the time, because I had. I guess, kind of the the the point at which he [the coach] was really helping me the most. I'd experienced a couple of panic attacks.'* (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 24-25 – 2:26.4 - 2:45.3)
'Challenge very challenging [member of staff], not achieving deadlines which then affects my deadline, so impacts on my work.' (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 18-20 – 1:47.1 - 2:05.6)	'She [the coach] was very understanding of it from my point of view and how it was affecting, how it was affecting me…' (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 18-20 – 1:47.1 - 2:05.6)
'… I mean, all the other comments were really positive [360 feedback]. And there was this one sort	'Yeah. I always look forward to them, and I think a sense of thought of anticipation, but not like a

of slightly negative comment. And of course, as humans, we focus on that one negative.'	nervous anticipation. More that I knew we'd we'd kind of reach, you know, form a plan of action.'
(Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 231-232 –24:50.7 - 25:03.6)	(Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 100-103 – 11:08.2 - 11:31.8)
'But I'm a bit of a put my head in the sand kind of person, so that's what I did.'	'It [the coaches approach] just made me feel at ease, and that I can do this, and I know I can. And it just gave me that little push I needed. But in a really sensitive way.'
(Research Participant 005, Interview 1, 4 – 0:41.4 - 1:04.7)	(Research Participant 005, Interview 1, 19 – 4:15.2 - 4:29.2)

All coaches adopted a similar approach: they initially demonstrated that they recognised that the apprentice encountered an issue that could be considered a challenge with themselves or that the apprentice was going through a difficult relationship with someone else. When apprentices are explaining the coaching environment or their relationship with the coach, the words they use are positive. It appears that the feelings of the apprentices were validated by the coach, and then a plan of action was co-developed. It also appears that the relationship between the coach and the apprentices included mentoring and coaching (Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck, 2023), with a movement towards a coaching approach as each apprentice developed their self-confidence, with one apprentice describing being nurtured and coaching and mentoring being an effective hybrid approach.

> *'…and just like really nurtured as well,…'*
>
> (Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 30 – 3:29.2 - 3:37.2)
>
> *'Hmm. I think it's it's an effective hybrid [coaching and mentoring]. definitely.'*
>
> (Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 159 – 17:23.4 - 17:30.0)

The same apprentice explains how they needed less support once they became familiar with what they were required to do and were beginning to see progress. This may indicate that the apprentice was developing a concept of themselves as a learner, following initial

collaboration with the coach, which would align with motivational interviewing (Wells and Jones, 2016).

> *'I think I probably don't need as much mentoring, perhaps, now that I'm sort of finding a bit of a rhythm, routine with it all.'*
>
> (Research Participant 003, Interview 1, 169 – 18:21.0 - 18:28.0)

It appears that coaches provided a safe environment that enabled the apprentice to develop their own resourcefulness at a pace that was suitable for them, which aligns with the coaching principles of Rogers (2016).

While there appeared to be relative consistency with the approaches from coaches behaviours towards the apprentices, there were some discrepancies with the behaviours from line managers. One apprentice perceived their line manager to interfere with their learning and professional development. The reaction from their coach to this situation was supportive and encouraging, and they recognised that it was a relationship issue that needed to be resolved. Aligned with the guidance from the Education and Training Foundation (n.d.), the coach encouraged the apprentice to take part in a three-way conversation that included their line manager and the coach. A significant feeling that the apprentice felt a connection with the coach, and even though they knew the coach was going to be impartial, having someone who was impartial felt like they were on their side.

> *'it was like he was on sort of team me rather than just obviously he was neutral, but I felt like he [the coach] was kind of there in my corner to facilitate that conversation.'* (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 169 – 18:21.0 - 18:28.0)

The three-way conversation supported the apprentice and provided them with an opportunity to be listened to by their line manager. The apprentice explained the various challenges they were having, including how a work performance plan was adding to their levels of distress. During their apprenticeship, they experienced a change of manager, but the apprentice acknowledged how the relationship did improve.

> *'…I pushed myself to be really honest with this previous manager and have a frank conversation about the ADHD diagnosis, and I think she really appreciated that kind of honesty, and it did move our relationship on. So towards the end it was actually much improved than it had been previously.'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 2, 25-26 – 2:54.0 - 3:12.5)

This approach to including the line manager in conversations about the challenges the apprentice was having appeared to have a positive influence. However, it is imporant to recognise that there may be occasions when the apprentice does not want to share their experiences with their line manager, especially if relating to self-doubt in their role as a manager. If coaches are to provide an apprentice-centred service that is supportive and non-judgmental, they need to accept that some non-safeguarding challenges will be confidential, unless the apprentice chooses to share them with their line manager. There are benefits to three-way coaching sessions being used to support positive connections, which include adopting a collaborative approach to learning. A collaborative coaching approach to learning may help apprentices by providing a foundation to work towards, with coaches choosing to adopt a coaching or mentoring approach based on the individual and the situation.   A collaborative learning approach may help the apprentice to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, independent learning, and support achievement (Saleem, Kausar, and

Deeba, 2021). By understanding if the apprentice is ready to learn independently, the coach can choose either a coaching or mentoring approach. If the apprentice is ready to learn independently, the coach can facilitate learning using an andragogical approach (Armitage and Cogger, 2019). However, this can be problematic if left solely to the judgment of the coach to determine what approach to learning is suitable for an apprentice. In recognition of adult learners having different levels of leadership knowledge and experience, McCauley, Hammer, and Hinojosa (2017) provide a suitable framework for teaching that may be useful within the context of overall apprenticeship delivery.

How does relationships and experiencing compassion influence apprentice stress levels?

There is evidence to support the idea that when an apprentice perceives the coach to be compassionate towards them, it can lead to positive changes in how they view themselves or their situation. Completing a management apprenticeship can be overwhelming for apprentices as they develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours. The apprentices explain being given an opportunity to be with their feelings, process them with the support of another human, reflect on themselves, and, in certain situations, adopt a new mindset. This is consistent with the view of Wilson (2023) and supports the approach of providing a positive learning environment for individuals who are dealing with difficult emotions.

> *'Where you are sort of in the you are in the eye of a storm that feels like everything is just horrendous.'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 98 – 10:09.7 - 10:16.1)
>
> *'So it was taking some of the overwhelming out.'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 1, 98 – 10:09.7 - 10:16.1)

It appears that a compassionate intervention with an apprentice who is experiencing distress can have a positive influence.

> *'I went on sick. I've I've been on sick through it through stress.'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 329 – 41:30.9 - 41:34.2)
>
> *'…It has made me realise that I am human. I do have feelings and I am doing the best that I can.'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 52-53 – 6:43.4 - 6:54.8)
>
> *'Talk it out and and make me feel human again.'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 1, 351 – 43:37.6 - 43:43.5)

Furthermore, another apprentice explains that feeling compassion and empathy resulted in their anxieties disappearing, which also influenced how they approached other potentially challenging situations with a calmer disposition.

> *'Okay, because xxx [the coach] shows such compassion and empathy. It completely dissolved all of my anxieties about the course.'*
>
> *(*Research Participant 005, *Interview 1, 18 – 3:53.9 - 4:14.9)*
>
> *'I've [I] also don't stress [calmer tone adopted] about it as much which is not a state of mind I would have had at the beginning of the course.'*
>
> *(*Research Participant 005, *Interview 1, 51-52 – 10:11.6 - 10:48.0)*

Overall, it appears that coaches recognised the importance of providing a safe environment for apprentices to express their feelings while remaining emotionally intelligent themselves. Using this approach seems to allow apprentices more time to comprehend and establish their feelings, which is consistent with neuroscience from both a biological (Damasio, 2019) and

socially constructed (Feldman Barrett, 2018) perspective on emotions, acknowledging that the environment can affect how emotions are processed.

Confidence levels increase after apprentices perceive the coach to have been compassionate

As apprentices developed relationships with others and themselves, it led to an increase in self-confidence. After perceiving their coach to be compassionate, the apprentice was able to develop a trusting relationship with their line manager, which led to them trusting themselves.

> *'I think the main thing speaking about the word trust. I think it what it did for me on reflection. Now, looking back, is it gave me the confidence to trust myself, and trust my judgment and trust my experience. …'*
>
> (Research Participant 001, Interview 2, 70-72 – 7:28.1 - 7:51.2)

When an apprentice describes how their coach encouraged them to have a conversation that they thought would be difficult, it demonstrates just how significant the coach's role can be in helping the apprentice build confidence.

> *'I felt I should have had the confidence as a manager to have that conversation [difficult conversation with member of staff] earlier and sooner, really, and I wish I had her done but to be honest with you, it was my coach, my my apprenticeship coach, that gave me the encouragement to do that. And said you are within your right to do this. You can have this conversation.'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 2, 41-42 – 4:46.0 - 5:09.9)

Furthermore, as the apprentice developed their self-confidence, they found that they needed the coach less.

> *'So it just as each module came, and certainly from that first meeting after module one, my confidence grew and grew, and I needed my coach less and less to be honest.'*
>
> (Research Participant 002, Interview 2, 32 – 6:15.0 - 6:29.1)

It is evident that after they initially perceived a compassionate intervention from their coach, the self-confidence of the apprentice grew. Their levels of self-confidence evolved through having a safe space, an opportunity to get clarity, and receiving feedback and support from their coach, which aligns with findings from senior leadership transitions (Kilpatrick, 2022).

Compassionate interventions and motivational techniques

Based on feedback from the research and existing literature compassionate interventions alongside motivational interviewing techniques can be beneficial for supporting apprentices to overcome challenges. This addresses the specific requirements for apprenticeship training providers to adopt motivational practices as outlined in the guidance provided by the Education and Training Foundation (2022).

Limitations & Delimitations

The methodology and research design of the study imposed limitations that could impede another researcher from reproducing the findings (Adu and Miles, 2024). Completing an IPA study using the seven-step framework for the analysis of data (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022) required my own interpretation of the lived experience of research participants. Another researcher can interpret the data differently and therefore generate different findings. The narrowing of the study served as the primary delimitation and recognised that the findings do not claim to be true for the general population (Adu and Miles, 2024). A small

sample size of four research participants from one apprenticeship training provider signifies that changes to working practices are specific to the context. A small sample size of four research participants from one apprenticeship training provider signifies that changes to working practices are specific to the context. Therefore, the findings are based on the perspectives and understanding of four research participants in a particular setting, which is an appropriate sample size for a small-scale IPA study (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2022). Due to technical issues, the focus group had to be completed in two stages, which meant that one research participant was unable to contribute some of the questions covered during the focus group. The study's data was richly and ethically gathered and evaluated within this specific context. The aim of this study was to present findings within a specific apprenticeship setting that can contribute to existing and future research in education and apprenticeships.

Changes to working practices

The following changes to working practices are recommended, and it is acknowledged that there may be changes to policies arising from the suggested changes:

- An induction for line managers to encourage positive relationships that includes methods to supporting existing approaches to learning adopted by the apprenticeship training provider and the initial learning requirements of the apprentice. Additionally, it will help increase the line managers knowledge of the apprenticeship, which can be beneficial when considering developing an understanding of what challenges an apprentice might face.

- Coaching and line manager support can be adapted to the needs of the apprentice. It can include an instructional approach initially that directs learning, with an aim to support the apprentice to develop an andragogical approach to learning through helping them to develop their relationship with learning. This can support the apprentice to develop their identity as a learning and manager.

- The introduction of three-way coaching sessions between the apprentice, the coach and the line manager. This can be an option that the apprentices choose, which would be consistent with supporting them to develop an andragogical approach to learning.

- Add to existing optional enrichment sessions by specially providing a session that is focused on helping the apprentice to develop self-compassionate behaviours towards themselves and others.

- Coaches to receive training aimed at expanding their understanding of compassion, delivering compassionate interventions, and providing motivational strategies. This training should cover how to create a supportive approach in collaboration with an apprentice and their line manager.

- Provide coaching training for assessor-coaches that explains how apprentices can experience emotions and feelings from a biological perspective (Damasio, 2019) and a socially constructed perspective (Feldman-Barrett, 2018). Training will specifically focus on how both perspectives explain how the environment can affect emotions and feelings.

Philosophy on change management

Acknowledging that an initial top-down approach to changes in working practices only considers change in one direction, steps have been built into the change timetable, allowing for feedback. This approach recognises that a process for change can be purposeful and multidirectional (Viennet and Pont, 2017). The initial method of supporting change in the timetable aligns with a diffusionist epidemiological approach (Trowler, Saunders, and Knight, 2003) by assuming the position of an enthusiast, disseminating information, and delivering training sessions. Acknowledging that change can be purposeful and multidirectional (Viennet and Pont, 2017), the addition of steps in the change timetable that allow for feedback recognises that this is an ongoing process that values a kaizen approach to change management (Trowler, Saunders, and Knight, 2003). Adopting this approach ensures that coaches and other stakeholders can contribute to change in a working environment that values a bottom-up approach to change management.

Proposed timetable of change management

A timetable provides guidance in delivering change and recognises the chosen philosophy for managing change in organisations (Table 4).

Table 4 – Proposed timetable of change management

Change Proposal 1 – *To develop and deliver an induction programme that can be delivered to line managers with the aim of increasing line managers knowledge of apprentices and develop a social approach to supporting the apprentice.*

To discuss findings with senior management and identify how their induction programme can incorporate the proposed change.	16th August 2024
As a result of discussions with senior management, develop and deliver training to staff involved in delivering inductions.	7th September 2024
Receive feedback and comments from staff involved in inductions.	14th September 2024
Implement any changes required based on feedback.	27th September 2024
Implement changes as part of a pilot.	31st October 2024
Receive feedback from all stakeholders involved in the pilot.	29th November 2024

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Implement any changes required based on feedback from the pilot.	20th December 2024
Introduction of changes for all inductions.	6th January 2025
Communicate the feedback process for all stakeholders to provide continuous feedback.	6th January

Change Proposal 2 – *Deliver a training session designed to support coaches on how to effectively contract and deliver three-way coaching sessions that effectively support an apprentice to develop.*

To discuss findings with senior management and identify how three-way coaching can support the apprentice to learn.	16th August 2024
Develop and deliver training to staff involved in delivering coaching.	27th September 2024
Implement changes as part of a pilot.	31st October 2024
Receive feedback from all stakeholders involved in the pilot.	31st January 2025
Implement any changes required based on feedback from the pilot.	17th February 2025
Introduction of changes for all inductions.	24th February 2025
Communicate the feedback process for all stakeholders to provide continuous feedback.	24th February 2025

Change Proposal 3 – To support coaches in developing compassionate behaviours towards apprentices with the aim of supporting them to achieve on programme. Content to include understanding approaches to learning and motivational interviewing.

To discuss findings with senior management and identify how training for coaches can support CPD.	16th August 2024
Develop and deliver training to staff involved in delivering coaching.	27th September 2024
Coaches to coach from a compassionate perspective that uses motivational interviewing techniques to support learning.	30th September 2024
Communicate the feedback process for all stakeholders to provide continuous feedback.	30th September 2024

Change Proposal 4 – Deliver a training session designed to support coaches that explains different perspectives to how they can support apprentices that experience challenging emotions and feelings.

To discuss findings with senior management and identify how training for coaches can support CPD.	16th August 2024
Develop and deliver training to staff involved in delivering coaching.	27th September 2024
Coaches to coach from a compassionate perspective that uses motivational interviewing techniques to support learning.	30th September 2024

|	
Communicate the feedback process for all stakeholders to provide continuous feedback.	30th September 2024

Change Proposal 5 – *Develop online content for apprentice enrichment sessions that covers self-compassion and being compassionate to others.*

To discuss findings with senior management and identify how content can be developed for apprentice enrichments sessions.	16th August 2024
Develop and deliver training to staff involved in delivering coaching.	27th September 2024
Receive feedback from apprentices at the end of each enrichments sessions.	27th September 2024
Evaluate content of enrichment session based on ongoing feedback.	30th April 2025

Evaluation of change management

An overall Kaizen approach to change management provides the opportunity for the apprenticeship training organisation to implement change in a way that aligns with their values. In harmony with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism learning theory, Kaizen, as a workplace transformation strategy, can help coaches and other stakeholders bring about change and develop methods for helping apprentices succeed.

Figure 5 – Kirkpatrick Model
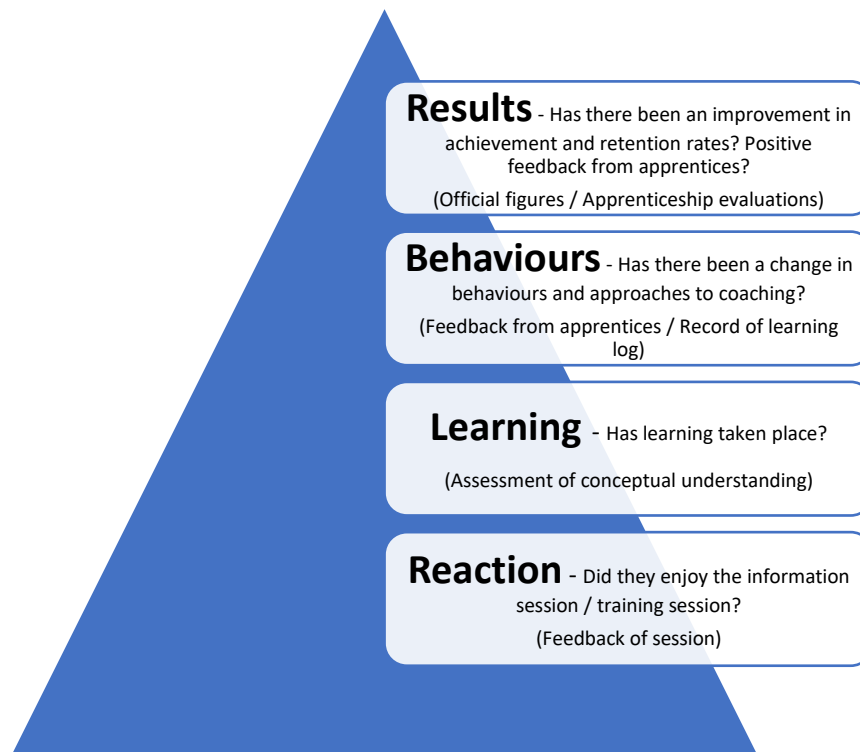
Using Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model (Figure 5) that they revised and clarified from their original (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2016), a detailed evaluation will be created and completed after discussions with senior management. The above diagram provides details on what can be included in the evaluation of all four levels of the model.

Recognising a Kaizen approach to change (Trowler, Saunders, and Knight, 2003), coaches and all stakeholders will be encouraged to provide regular feedback through existing and new methods for doing so. This will include bi-annual coach development days and online discussion forums.

Future Orientations of Research

Due to the limitations of small-scale studies, a suggested next step would be to increase the number of studies within a specific area over a period of time (McDermott, 2023). In the

context of apprenticeships, this would mean widening the scope of research to further understand the lived experiences of apprentices. Additionally, examining the experiences of all stakeholders in apprenticeship settings can assist in understanding different perspectives from a systems perspective. Examining a wider perspective would help if the aim were to understand the landscape of apprenticeship delivery and the experiences of all those involved. Identifying the challenges that apprentices face that lead to breaks in learning (BIL) or withdrawals from an apprenticeship may provide valuable findings that can identify approaches to supporting apprentices and employers. Additionally, research that examines the influence of compassionate approaches on supporting the development of learners and apprentices would add value to existing research findings. Further research into apprenticeships would contribute to a significant gap in the availability of research in this field and could provide valuable findings that could support policy development.

Reflections on the MA learning journey

During this period of studying for an MA, I made the choice to complete other significant training and qualifications relating to being a coaching professional. I feel this has enhanced my experience because I was able to connect moments of learning. My experiences completing an MA have been fulfilling and beneficial for me, and I can relate them to a professional coaching context. My experience being coached as a learner will be beneficial to me as I implement strategies for facilitating individual learning transformations.

Having a study partner significantly influenced my approach to learning. Regular conversations outside of the scheduled online classroom session meant that I had the opportunity to debate various ontological and epistemological positions, which assisted me in raising my awareness. I became more conscious of how fragile my own knowledge can be

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as I began gaining insight into human emotions and feelings, including learning about physiological and neurological states. Whatever path I take, expanding my understanding of feelings and emotions from a neuroscience perspective will be enjoyable. Considering my experiences on the MA, I expect many breakthrough moments.

One soft skill I continued to develop was the ability to compartmentalise tasks that needed to be done for both employment and university. By approaching things step-by-step, I think I was able to avoid becoming overwhelmed and, in the end, finish my work and studies as best I could on time. As I continue to learn, I intend to improve my ability to present my opinions effectively after reading a broad spectrum of literature. This will help me articulate my viewpoint effectively and guarantee that my academic voice is more apparent in future assignments.

Conclusion

It appears that an apprentice's relationship with others and with themselves affects how they learn during their apprenticeship. Some apprentices require assistance from an educator to support a positive learner experience. Having an understanding coach or a supportive manager can provide valuable support during moments when an apprentice may be experiencing distress, either with the content of the apprenticeship course materials or challenging workplace relationships. Evidence suggests that when apprentices perceive a coach as being compassionate towards them, they adopt compassionate behaviours. This can lead to the apprentice being self-compassionate and compassionate towards others. As a result, there appear to be improvements in their well-being, reductions in distress, and an increase in self-confidence. The relationship apprentices have with themselves is a critical one that can have a positive effect on their learning experience. During coaching, coaches can assist apprentices by offering a space where apprentices can feel comfortable acknowledging their emotions and having the opportunity to experience new emotions through introspection. Evaluating changes to working practices will be beneficial, especially in understanding the influence of compassionate training for coaches and apprentices. Further research studies that assist in widening the scope of research and examining compassion from a systems perspective will add clarity to understanding an ecological approach for assisting apprentices in being learners.

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Appendix A – Initial Coding for MRQ and SQs

Appendix B – Example of drawings and analysis for research participant one

Research Participant – 001 Before coaching
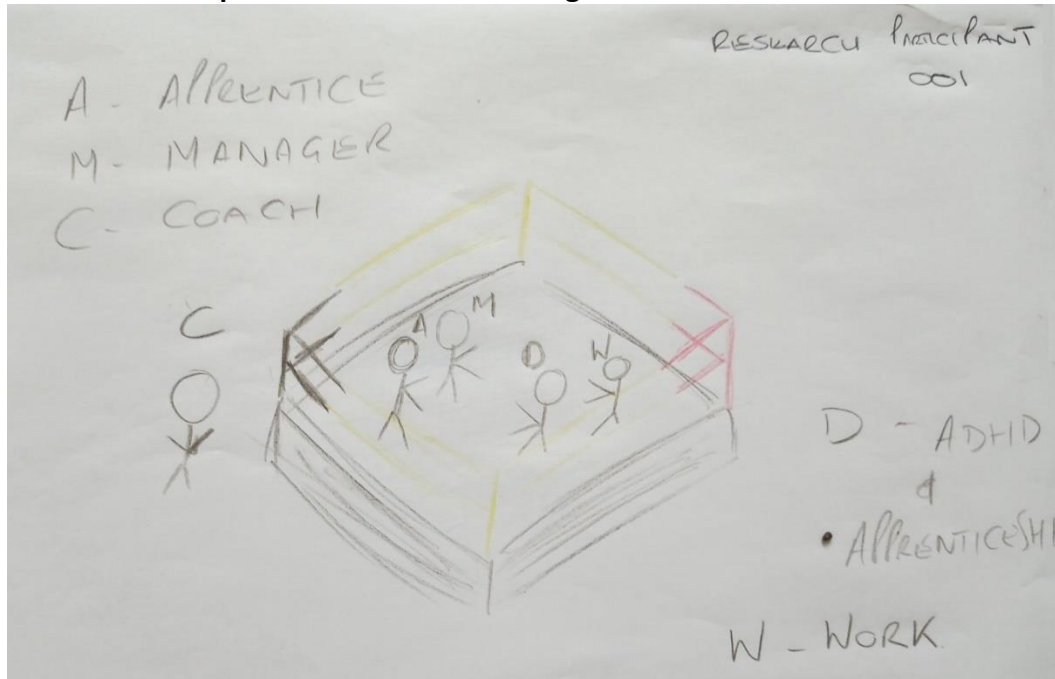
The research participant (apprentice) experienced a metaphorical fight between them and their manager.

Research Participant – 001 During coaching
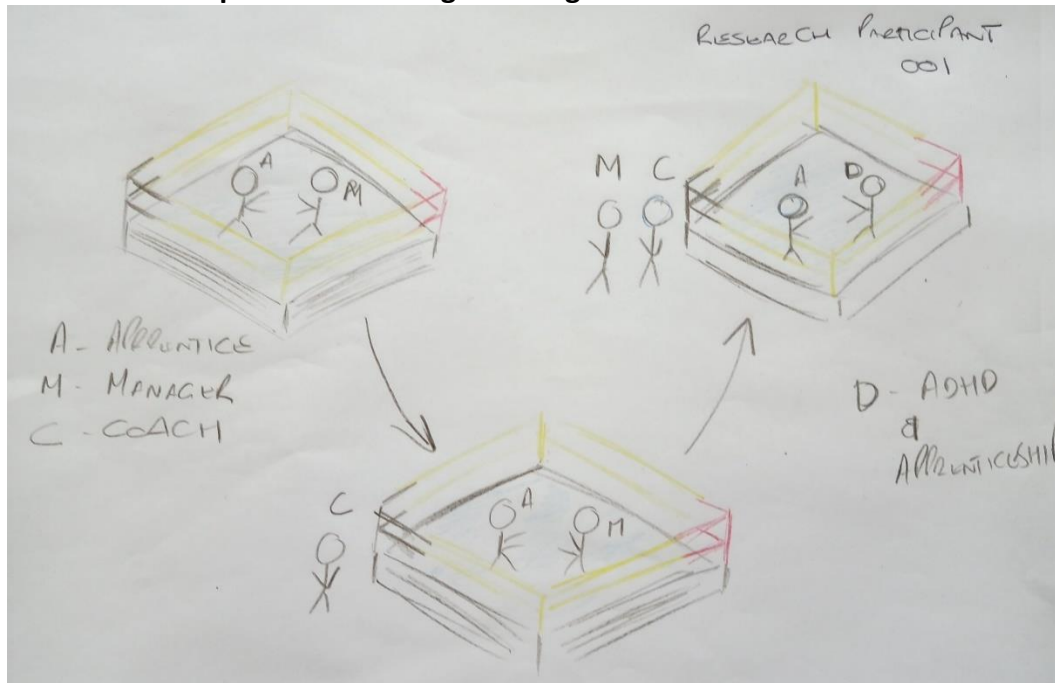
The research participant perceived the coach to be supportive and compassionate, with reference to them being in their corner.

Research Participant – 001 After coaching
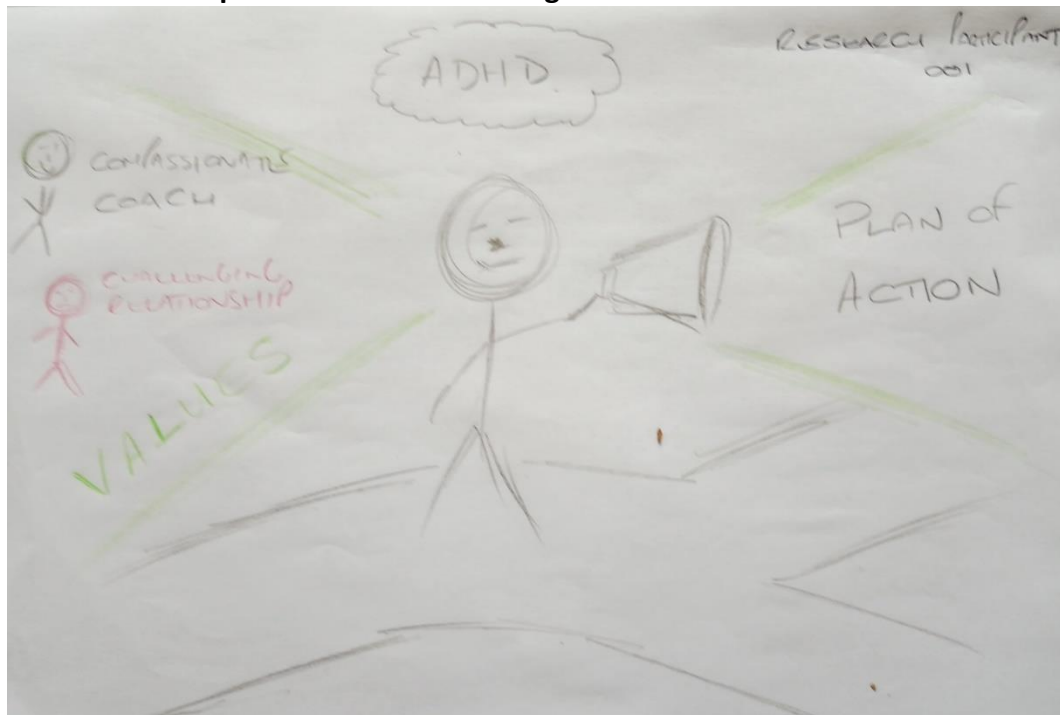
The research participant explained how the challenging relationship between them and their manager was in the past, and that they had a plan of action regarding dealing with their ADHD diagnosis.

Appendix C – Example of transcript and annotations for research participant one

Research Participant – 001 (Transcript 1:29.8 – 3:52.0 and Annotations 1-10)

14	1:29.8 - 1:33.8	001: to be assessed for
15	1:34.0 - 1:38.2	001: something that I suspected was neuro divers divergent
16	1:38.5 - 1:43.2	001: condition. So I was on a waiting list to get assessed for Adhd
17	1:43.2 - 1:46.5	001: which was something that I was
18	1:47.1 - 1:56.5	001: challenged by, because it was. It was kind of causing me to have. I was having difficulties with the the structure of the course and certain things2
19	1:57.2 - 2:00.3	001: and my line manager
20	2:00.6 - 2:05.6	001: wasn't very compassionate. But the the coach3
21	2:07.4 - 2:15.2	001: sort of listened with a very open ear and sort of non-judgmental
22	2:15.4 - 2:19.8	001: just neutral perspective.
23	2:20.5 - 2:25.3	When I was, I was quite stressed at the time, and quite sort of
24	2:26.4 - 2:35.7	001: I was having quite a lot of emotional kind of response to what was happening at the time, because I had. I guess, kind of the the the
25	2:36.8 - 2:45.3	001: the point at which he was really helping me the most4. I'd experienced a couple of panic attacks. So, as I was going through this
26	2:46.4 - 2:47.8	001: experience I
27	2:47.9 - 2:57.1	001: realized, I need to get assessed for this, but but knew that I was going to be on a very long waiting list, and that that was going to be the case throughout the remainder of the course of study.
28	2:57.3 - 3:03.5	001: I had a situation where.
29	3:05.2 - 3:11.0	001: during stop me, if you need more questions, I'll just. I'll kind of carry on explaining.
30	3:12.2 - 3:13.3	001: So
31	3:14.9 - 3:20.1	001: I was having. I'd had a couple of one to ones with my line manager
32	3:20.3 - 3:22.5	001: that I'd had panic attacks
33	3:22.5 - 3:28.5	001: in [intake of breath] the session in in the one-to-one meetings. So
34	3:28.6 - 3:31.4	001: this was with a new line manager. So the
35	3:31.4 - 3:50.3	001: meetings didn't go very well, and it was quite upsetting and this person asked me to [pause] There were certain elements within the course of study where certain things needed to be kind of signed off
36	3:50.5 - 3:52.0	001: by a line manager.

Annotations

NO.	TIMESPAN	CONTENT
1		Research explained that they had been struggling with their studies due to not having confirmation of their neurodivergent condition at that moment in time.
2		The research participant was having difficulties with the structure of the course and based within the context of the interview, it would appear that due to not having been diagnosed with a neurodivergent condition participating in an apprenticeship was challenging.
3		The research participant explained that their line manager wasn't compassionate towards their needs but indicated that the coach was being compassionate by listening, being non-judgmental, and adopting a neutral perspective.
4		The research participant perceived the coach to be the most supportive to their situation.
5		Manager not wanting to or not being able to support the research participant as part of their apprenticeship.
6		It appears the research participant perceived they were being asked to work on their apprenticeship in isolation, rather than with the support of their manager.
7		The coach focused on the research participant building a relationship with their manager.
8		The research participant was going through some challenges and felt that the added complication of having to do things differently on the apprenticeship stressful. *There appears to have been a disconnect between what the apprenticeship providers was saying and what the manager was prepared to do (further details in next time frame).
9		The research participant appeared to value the relationship with the coach, referring to it has being 'human'.
10		Further reference to a 'human approach'. The coach offered practical solutions (see time frame before) in an empathetic way. *Consider that this might be offering what is required for another person at the time that they require it.

Appendix D – Example of interview one analysis for research participant one (ESs/PETs)

Research Participant 001 – The hermeneutic circle – Interview 1

Personal Experiential Themes (PETs)
Relationship with the coach and their line manager

- The apprentice was experiencing the challenges of completing an apprenticeship alongside the uncertainty of an assessment for neurological difference to how they learn. At the same time, the apprentice was experiencing a lack of support from their line manager. As a result, the apprentice was experiencing negative emotions and feelings of distress.

- During coaching, the apprentice perceived the coach to adopt a humanistic approach to understanding them from a whole person perspective. The apprentice perceived the coach to be relaxed and trustworthy, which helped them to co-develop practical steps that assisted the apprentice to overcome their challenges and the distress they were experiencing.

- The compassionate coaching intervention resulted in a 3-way meeting between the coach, the apprentice and the line manager. At this stage the apprentice was considering leaving their job. However, this intervention was the beginning of the apprentice taking control and developing a working relationship with their line manager.

- The apprentice explains that they were able to make choices without being emotional. They suggest this was due to the coach offering a new perspective. Additionally, the apprentice identifies they became more self-compassionate when asked to consider themselves as a human.

Experiential Statements (ESs)

- The apprentice experiences of their relationship with their coach and line manager within the context of completing an apprenticeship, including have other challenges.

- The apprentice experienced negative emotions and distress due to uncertainty, which they were able to resolve following conversation with their coach.

- The apprentice experienced a lack of support from their line manager.

- The apprentice found the coach to be compassionate when compared to their relationship with their manager.

- The apprentice explains that the coach helped them to manage their emotions and not make any emotional decisions, but to act based on a new perspective.

- The apprentice felt that the coach took a humanistic approach to understanding the challenges they were having. The coach recognised the needs of the apprentice and adopted an approach that was reassuring and that helped the apprentice get organised.

- A 3-way relationship to address the concerns of the apprentice as a collective. This apprentice felt that the coach understood them and supported them before and during a 3-way meeting.

- The apprentice was struggling with being on a performance improvement plan at work because they were doing their best to overcome a neurodiverse struggle that had not been diagnosed. They felt they were not getting the support they needed and they shared this with their coach because they were in distress.

- The apprentice perceived that the coach was trustworthy and that coaching was completed in safe space where they could confidentially share something they felt vulnerable about.

- The apprentice explains that if that coach had not provided a compassionate intervention, which included a 3-way meeting, working on the relationship the apprentice had with their manager, they would have left their job.

- The apprentice explained that the coach being compassionate was being with them, as a human, in a coaching environment.

- The apprentice explained that following a model or steps without developing a coaching relationship can be experienced as less compassionate.

- The apprentice explains that the coach must have an approach that enables them to support an apprentice to move forward. This involves more than just beyond just being understanding of the apprentices situation.

- The apprentice explained that after perceiving the coach to be comforting and reassuring that they felt they were able to make better choices because they were less emotional.

- The apprentice explains that the coach encouraged them to think of other identities that they have and view themselves from a whole person perspective. The apprentice explains this encouraged them to be more self-compassionate.

- The apprentice refers to the relationship between them and the coach when asked about what they meant by being human. They refer to the coach being relaxed and referring to other identities that the apprentice has. There is also an element of sharing through having a conversation.

- The apprentice explains that being involved in creating practical steps that were meaningful for them helped them to overcome feelings of being overwhelmed.

- The apprentice explains how compassionate coaching led to them working on their relationship with their manager and that they improved the relationship due to following practical steps. This may have included a compassionate approach from the apprentice.

Two examples of process followed for producing experiential statements (ESs)

Statement (ES) – The apprentice experiences of their relationship with their coach and line manager within the context of completing an apprenticeship, including have other challenges.

18	1:47.1 - 1:56.5	001: challenged by, because it was. It was kind of causing me to have. I was having difficulties with the the structure of the course and certain things.2
19	1:57.2 - 2:00.3	001: and my line manager
20	2:00.6 - 2:05.6	001: wasn't very compassionate. But the the coach

Pre-understanding	Analysis of the parts (words & sentences / initial coding in NVivo)	Formulating an understanding of the whole (context / included the drawings)	Revision of pre-understanding	A coherent understanding of the individual experience
The apprentice had experienced	The apprentice was having difficulties	Additionally, their line manager	The challenges that the apprentice was	The apprentice perceived the coach

compassion during coaching.	with the ==structure of the course== and ==other things==.	wasn't being compassionate.	facing included the apprenticeship and the relationship between them and their manager.	to be compassionate at a time when they didn't perceive their line manager to be compassionate towards them.

20	2:00.6 - 2:05.6	001: wasn't very compassionate. ==But the the coach==[3]
21	2:07.4 - 2:15.2	001: ==sort of listened with a very open ear and sort of non-judgmental==
22	2:15.4 - 2:19.8	001: ==just neutral perspective.==

Pre-understanding	Analysis of the parts (words & sentences / initial coding in NVivo)	Formulating an understanding of the whole (context / included the drawings)	Revision of pre-understanding	A coherent understanding of the individual experience
The apprentice perceived the coach to be compassionate.	The ==coach listened== and was ==non-judgmental.==	The coach listened at a time that the apprentice perceived their line manager to be unsupportive.	During a time when the apprentice was facing challenges, they found support from their coach when their line manager was perceived to be unsupportive.	The coach listened and was non-judgmental at a time when the apprentice required support. The coach was perceived to be compassionate when the line manager of the apprentice was not.

==Experiential Statement (ES) – The apprentice experienced negative emotions and distress due to uncertainty, which they were able to resolve following conversation with their coach.==

23	2:20.5 - 2:25.3	==When I was, I was quite stressed at the time, and quite sort of==
24	2:26.4 - 2:35.7	001: ==I was having quite a lot of emotional kind of response to what was happening at the time, because I had. I guess, kind of the the==
25	2:36.8 - 2:45.3	001: ==the point at which he [the coach] was really helping me the most==[4]. ==I'd experienced a couple of panic attacks.== So, as I was going through this
84	8:28.0 - 8:35.7	001: because it was. ==It was all feeling really, really stressful because I was. I was struggling from the fact that I was sort of==[8]
85	8:35.8 - 8:40.5	001: sort of realizing the fact that I've got this Adhd, which is a sort of a a
86	8:42.4 - 8:54.5	001: a disorder with the executive functioning. So I was struggling just with some of kind of organisational aspects ==and feeling quite stressed anyway== and so, having this kind of additional layer of no, you need to do it completely differently.
98	10:09.7 - 10:16.1	001: you know, these things happen in the live in life, don't they? Where you are sort of in the you are the ==eye of a storm== that ==feels== like everything is just 114
99	10:16.6 - 10:18.0	001: ==horrendous.==

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111	11:06.9 - 11:22.5	001: being on a really long waiting list for an assessment, <mark>because I was not able to say to anyone</mark>, my manager, or the training provider, or my coach <mark>I have this condition</mark>. It was just, I think I might have it. I am having some serious difficulties around certain things. 13

Appendix E – Example of interview two analysis for research participant one (ESs/PETs)

Research Participant 001 – The hermeneutic circle – Interview 2

Personal Experiential Themes (PETs)
Relationship with oneself and their line manager

- The apprentice experienced distress and low levels of confidence with their own ability as a manager and learner on an apprenticeship. They felt that at that moment in time, they had no support from their line manager, who they believed as actively preventing them from developing.

- The apprentice experienced a compassionate approach from the coach during coaching that encouraged them to focus on self-reflection. This led to the apprentice feeling empowered and was the beginning of them actively addressing their suffering.

- The apprentice actively addressed their own relationship with trust before building trust with their line manager. Open and honest conversations between the apprentice and their line manager provided an opportunity for them to understand each other's position, especially once the apprentice received clarity on an ADHD assessment. This resulted in the apprentice increasing their levels of confidence.

Experiential Statements (ESs)

- The apprentice values an honest professional relationship with their line manager because this means that they feel they can share any challenges that they may be having.

- The apprentice explains how their relationship with the initial line manager improved followed an open and honest conversation between them. This provided them the opportunity to talk about their challenges with learning, and it appears that the apprentice also understood their line managers position more clearly.

- Following a coaching session the apprentice felt empowered to actively improve the relationship they had with their line manager. This resulted in an improvement to the relationship, which appears to be more trusting.

- The apprentice developed their relationship of trust with themselves before building trust with their line manager.

- The apprentice talking about how they experienced low levels of confidence and distress due to the structure of the apprenticeship and how they perceived their manager to be affecting their confidence levels.

- The apprentice explains that they developed confidence over time after the coach encouraged them to self-reflect. Additionally, receiving clarification on their ADHD assessment provided clarity, which meant they could address it.

Two examples of process followed for producing experiential statements (ESs)

Experiential Statement (ES) – The apprentice values an honest professional relationship with their line manager because this means that they feel they can share any challenges that they may be having.

3	0:30.9 - 0:34.3	001:My current relationship with my manager is 1
4	0:35.6 - 0:36.9	001: excellent.
5	0:36.9 - 0:40.0	001: It's a different manager.
6	0:40.2 - 0:44.0	001: To the last time that we spoke we had a bit of a change in our team.
7	0:44.6 - 0:52.6	001: and the relationships going really well, so far it we had a recent one to one, and I felt able to be
8	0:52.7 - 0:59.5	001: really honest and share some things that had been a bit challenging in my previous relationship with my previous web manager. 2
9	0:59.7 - 1:08.0	001: and it's working really? Well, it's yeah, honest professional relationship 3
10	1:08.3 - 1:09.8	001: relationship.

Pre-understanding	Analysis of the parts (words & sentences / initial coding in NVivo)	Formulating an understanding of the whole (context / included the drawings)	Revision of pre-understanding	A coherent understanding of the individual experience
Not sure if the relationship with their manager had improved.	The relationship with their current line manager is excellent.	Being able to be honest and share challenges as led to the apprentice perceiving their relationship with their manager to be excellent.	There is clarity on what an excellent relationship allows, specifically referring to being honest.	The apprentice is able to be honest with their line manager about challenges that they are having.

Experiential Statement (ES) – The apprentice explains how their relationship with the initial line manager improved followed an open and honest conversation between them. This provided them the opportunity to talk about their challenges with learning, and it appears that the apprentice also understood their line managers position more clearly.

12	1:23.8 - 1:25.4	001: very difficult. 4
13	1:25.5 - 1:29.1	001: But I think
14	1:30.7 - 1:36.0	001: I can't remember what I shared in the last conversation.
15	1:36.6 - 1:40.0	001: but actually it did improve over time. 5 So the relationship was
16	1:40.4 - 1:50.6	001: I think the context that I gave you was it was. It was really bad during the course of the apprenticeship, because I wasn't supported to complete some of my assignments. 6
17	1:50.7 - 1:55.5	001: I was actually actively blocked from completing some some of my assignments, because that manager 7
18	1:55.6 - 2:04.6	001: didn't want to sign off some of the documentation within the apprenticeship and asked me to get that signed off by someone else which created a lot of work. And it was really really difficult. 8

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19	2:04.8 - 2:11.1	001: and also over the course of last year, when I was working for that manager.
20	2:11.4 - 2:26.1	001: I think I mentioned this to you before, but I was going through a process of being diagnosed and well assessed for a neurodiversity condition which I then had a diagnosis of Adhd. During the course of that 9.
21	2:27.5 - 2:29.4	001: I
22	2:29.7 - 2:34.5	001: towards the end, when what what happened is that manager?
23	2:37.3 - 2:47.8	001: decided to hand her line management responsibilities within our team of 4 to one of the other managers because she was, didn't have the capacity to do the line management back, which is
24	2:47.8 - 2:53.5	001: great. So that's why I've got a new manager in the team. She's managing everyone else in the team as well.
25	2:54.0 - 3:03.3	001: But I pushed myself to be really honest with this previous manager and have a frank conversation about the Adhd diagnosis. 10
26	3:03.4 - 3:12.5	001: and I think she really appreciated that kind of honesty. And it did move our relationship on. So towards the end it was actually much improved than it had been previously. 11
27	3:12.5 - 3:13.6	001: So
28	3:14.2 - 3:23.3	001: yeah, it was. It was good. And I think now she's kind of in a position as a senior manager. Well, kind of director.
29	3:23.5 - 3:28.1	and it was. It's all just working much better. It's kind of a better dynamic 12 So

Pre-understanding	Analysis of the parts (words & sentences / initial coding in NVivo)	Formulating an understanding of the whole (context / included the drawings)	Revision of pre-understanding	A coherent understanding of the individual experience
Not sure if the relationship with their manager had improved.	The relationship improved over time due to the apprentice having a conversation with their line manager.	The apprentice was able to be honest about their situation regarding adhd and neurodiversity.	The relationship improved over time due to the apprentices having an open and honest conversation about their challenges.	The relationship improved over time due to the apprentices having an open and honest conversation about their challenges.
The relationship improved over time due to the apprentices having an open and honest conversation about their challenges.	The apprentice talks about being blocked by their manager from getting work signed off. This was causing a problem, especially with the uncertainty of an adhd assessment.	The apprentice developed an understanding for their line managers situation.	The relationship improved over time due to an open and honest conversation about the challenges both parties were having.	The relationship improved after an open and honest conversation about the challenges both parties were having. It appears both the apprentice and line manager developed a better understanding of each other.

Combined Focus Group Feedback – The hermeneutic circle

In a professional environment in a mentoring session, compassion is the ability to actively listen, call upon your emotional intelligence to be able to support and guide the person

through professional challenges.

*Group definition of compassion

Focus Group Findings

- An agreed collectively acceptance of what being compassionate within the context of an apprenticeship can be and provided a collection of understanding of the definition of compassion (see post it notes.)

- The group identified various skills a coach requires when aiming to be compassionate. They were clear that this involved being empathetic, listening, asking questions, and being present and committed to the apprentice it can help to develop a positive relationship.

- Before experiencing compassionate coaching, the group collectively recognised that they delayed asking for help and were self-critical.

- During coaching they experienced that the coach was not critical, and once they experienced compassion from the coach, they experienced clarity and a sense of relief having had the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts in safe space.

- Some of the group collectively agreed they became more self-compassionate, and they are more mindful of the needs of others. They also mention being more efficient in managing their own study.

Appendix G – Group Experiential Themes (GETs)

Research Group

Group Experiential Themes (GETs)

- All apprentices faced individual challenges during their apprenticeship that coaches addressed with compassion, which included listening to the apprentices before co-developing a practical way forward.

- The challenges that the apprentices experienced were varied, such as being overwhelmed, focusing on negative feedback, having feelings of self-doubt, and worrying about uncertainty. This led to them feeling varying emotions and levels of distress.

- Relationships affected the apprentices experiences both positively and negatively during their apprenticeship. This included having challenging relationships with others and oneself. It also included positive relationships with others and oneself.

- The relationship that the apprentices had with the coach was significant and instrumental to the apprentices addressing their individual challenges.

- After perceiving their coach to be compassionate, apprentices explain how they are either more self-compassionate or self-caring, and some apprentices refer to being more compassionate towards others.

- During the apprenticeship, apprentices improved their levels of self-confidence and experienced reduced levels of personal distress.

- It appears that at the start, the main relational focus was on the apprentice's relationship with their coach; over time, the relational focus was more focused on a relationship with oneself and others.

Appendix H – St. Mary's Ethical Approval Letter

11 August 2023

Dear ███████

I am writing to confirm that your application for ethical approval of your research enquiry has been approved at Level 1.

Student's name: ███████
Regnum: 703386
Course: MA Education: Coaching and Mentoring
Tutor: ███████

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

M. Mihovilović

Dr Mary Mihovilović
Institute of Education Ethics Sub-Committee Representative

Appendix I – Supporting Organisation Approval Letter

14th August 2023

Dear 703386

How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

Thank you for your request to gain access to XXX apprentices who are on a management and leadership programme studying at either level 3 or level 5.

You have confirmed that the title of the research project is as above, that it will be approved by St. Mary's University (Twickenham), and that you will be the principal investigator. It is understood that the research project will be completed between September 2023 and June 2024 and that it will be conducted online via a St. Mary's University Zoom account.

I can confirm that XXX are supportive of you having access to apprentices who volunteer to take part in the research project.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Kind Regards

XXX
Head of Training and Operations

Appendix J – Supporting Organisation Information Sheet

SUPPORTING ORGANISATION INFORMATION SHEET

The Research Project

Title of the project:

What factors can lead to individuals experiencing compassion during coaching and does the experience help to reduce stress for apprentices while they are completing a management and leadership apprenticeship?

Principal investigator and contact details:

[name of principal investigator] / 703386@live.stmarys.ac.uk / [mobile number]

Supporting organisation:

Thank you for your interest in supporting this research project as described above in the title of the project. I am pleased that you are supporting this research project by providing access to participants.

It is recognised that you are not directly involved with this research project either as a sponsor or a collaborator and as a result there will be no reference to [name of supporting organisation] in the published findings.

Out of courtesy you will be provided with details of the findings from the research study and can discuss them with the principal investigator (703386) prior to publication if you have any comments or questions.

Who is organising the research?

The research has been organised by 703386

Further information

Research will only commence after receiving approval from St Mary's University Ethics Sub Committee.

St Mary's University Twickenham London

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Section A: The Research Project

Title of the project:

How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

Principal investigator and contact details:

[name of principal investigator] / 703386@live.stmarys.ac.uk / [mobile number]

Invitation to participate:

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research project as described above in the title of the project. Following a pre-interview to confirm the details of the research project and your suitability based on the intention of the research project you are invited to take part.

Who is organising the research?

The research has been organised by 703386

What will happen to the results of the study?

All collected data will be held for a minimum of 10 years under the Data Protection Act (2018) and GDPR.

Source of funding for the research:

Not applicable.

Contact details for further details:

[name of supervisor] (Supervisor) / [email of supervisor]

Section B: Their Participation in the Research Project

Why you have been invited to take part?

> You are studying on a level 3 or level 5 management & leadership programme that includes coaching support throughout the apprenticeship.

Can you refuse to take part?

> Yes, you will be required to give consent and will be provided with a code so that you remain anonymous.

Whether they can withdraw from the project at any time, and how.

> Yes, should you wish to withdraw from the research, then you will be able to at any time. To do this you will need to contact the principal investigator (703386)

What will happen if you agree to take part?

> Qualitative data will be collected via 1:1 online interviews and online focus groups as data collection strategies as part of an interpretative phenomenological analysis.

> Files will be recorded, and transcripts will be produced.

> You will be provided with details of the findings from the research study and can discuss them with the principal investigator (703386) prior to publication if you have any comments or questions.

Are there are any risks involved (e.g. side effects, psychological distress) and if so, what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety?

> Due to the nature of exploring stress whilst completing an apprenticeship it may lead to a strong emotional reaction of fear or worry. Due to this, information will be provided for relevant support groups so that you have access to specialist services that can provide support if required.

Are there any preparations or special precautions they must take before, during or after taking part in the study, or things to avoid (for example stressful exercise, stimulants such as caffeine)?

> No, you are encouraged to behave as you normally would.

What will happen to any information/data/samples that is collected?

> Deposited research data will be openly accessible wherever possible, unless there are specific legal, ethical, contractual, or intellectual property-related reasons to do otherwise. (Please note that information/data/samples collected will be anonymous).

Are there any benefits from taking part?

There are no direct benefits from taking part in this research project, although you will be contributing to research that may influence how coaches can support apprentices via coaching.

How much time will you need to give up taking part in the project?

Your commitment to the research project will be for 4hours over a period that would typically involve 3 coaching sessions. This will include personal online interviews and online focus groups.

How will participation in the project will be kept confidential?

You will be provided with a code so that you remain anonymous.

To mitigate the risks of a data leak, the data will be stored on the St Mary's University password secured One Drive with the password shared only between the contributors.

AS A PARTICPANT OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY PLEASE ACCEPT THIS AS COPY OF YOUR PARTICPANT INFORMATION SHEET

YOU CAN KEEP THIS PARTICPANT INFORMATION SHEET WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

APPLICATION FORM

Section A: The Research Project

Title of the project:

> How does an apprentice completing a management and leadership apprenticeship experience compassion during coaching?

Principal investigator and contact details:

> [name of principal investigator] / 703386@live.stmarys.ac.uk / [mobile number]

Further details about the research project can be found on the:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET GUIDELINES.

Section B: Personal Details

Name:			
Email:		Mobile:	
Age on 1st September 2023 *Participants must be 18+			

Section C: Apprenticeship Details

Title:		Start date:	
Level:		Expected end date:	