



Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice

ISSN: 1752-1882 (Print) 1752-1890 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcoa20

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To cite this article: Ursula Clidière & Martine George (22 Jul 2025): Lived experience of the developmental journey for a coaching practitioner training as a coach supervisor: an interpretative phenomenological analysis, *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, DOI: [10.1080/17521882.2025.2537015](https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2025.2537015)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2025.2537015>



Published online: 22 Jul 2025.



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Lived experience of the developmental journey for a coaching practitioner training as a coach supervisor: an interpretative phenomenological analysis

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ABSTRACT

This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study explores the lived experience of coaching practitioners undergoing coach supervision training, with a focus on how they understand and make sense of their developmental journey. Drawing on adult learning theory, adult development theory, and reflective practice, the research examines the interplay between horizontal development (competencies, skills, knowledge) and vertical development (complexity of meaning-making, identity shifts, and ambiguity tolerance). Five experienced coaches who had completed supervision training within the previous 12–18 months participated in in-depth interviews, guided by a semi-structured questionnaire focused on developmental experiences. The analysis revealed three interrelated meta-themes: (1) personal growth and awareness, (2) interpersonal dynamics, presence, and embodiment, and (3) adaptability in navigating ambiguity. These meta-themes reflect emergent capacities that transcend skill acquisition and development of competencies by highlighting profound shifts in reflective capacity, self-awareness, identity, emotional regulation, embodiment, and relational attunement. The findings underscore the importance of coach supervision training as a context for adult development and adult learning. This practitioner research study offers implications for training design, emphasising the value of developmental frameworks, psychologically safe learning environments, and reflective practice. It positions coach supervision training as a catalyst for developmental potential.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 7 January 2025
Accepted 15 July 2025

KEYWORDS

Coach supervision/training;
adult development; adult
learning; reflective practice;
relational dynamics;
embodiment; self-
awareness; emotional
regulation; ambiguity;
Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis
(IPA)

Practice points

- Design supervision training as a developmental space that supports both horizontal learning (skills, knowledge, competencies) and vertical growth (complexity of meaning-making, identity shifts, and ambiguity tolerance)
- Embed structured reflective practices, embodiment, and psychological mindedness to foster deeper self-awareness, consciousness, relational capacity, and meta-awareness to scaffold developmental progress and promote lifelong learning.

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- Ensure a psychologically safe, supportive environment to catalyze identity transformation and adaptive presence in complex contexts.

Introduction

In recent years, the field of coaching – and with it, coach supervision – has evolved from a focus on performance and skill development to a broader framework emphasising personal growth, reflective practice and ethical responsibility (Turner & Passmore, 2018). Within this shift, coach supervision has emerged as an essential developmental space where practitioners engage in reflection not only to enhance competence, but to deepen self-awareness and professional identity (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006). Coach supervision is uniquely positioned at the intersection of coaching practice, ethics, adult learning, and adult development. In addition, building the skills of reflection-in-action and creating the space for reflective activities (Kuhn & Whybrow, 2019) is another fundamental key ingredient.

For coaching practitioners, the transition into coach supervision training can evoke more than professional learning. The coaching practitioner needs to develop their own understanding of how they practice in each domain, coaching and coach supervision (Lucas, 2024b). It can be experienced as a process of profound expansion but also as a phase of disequilibrium. Especially at the onset, participants may find themselves stretched beyond their familiar capabilities and capacities. This ‘stretch’ can feel both exhilarating and destabilising. What enables such shifts? Intrigued by this question, these authors further deliberated if moments of growth are a predictable outcome of the training process or if they are by-products? And if they hold developmental potential, can they be deliberately pursued?

These were some of the initial questions that gave rise to and shaped this research. We sought to understand not only what participants learn, but how they make meaning of the experience – particularly in moments of uncertainty, emotional shift, or identity transition.

The process that unfolds together with coach supervision training emphasises the importance of psychological insight and the ability to engage meaningfully with both self and others, which is essential for navigating the relational and ethical complexities inherent in coaching practice (Carroll, 2014). Hence, becoming a coach supervisor requires more than the refinement of advanced skills and competencies; it involves cultivating reflective capacity and engaging with one’s beliefs, values, and developmental edges (Lawrence, 2017). Such training ideally aligns with adult developmental theories, which propose that adult learning is not limited to acquiring knowledge, but includes identity-shifting, transformative experiences that foster deeper development – greater complexity, adaptability, and depth of meaning-making (Laske, 2023; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

The training environment also plays a pivotal role. A psychologically safe and supportive climate allows practitioners to ‘use themselves as instruments’ (Adamson & Brendgen, 2022), engaging in coach supervision as a dynamic process of becoming. This also resonates with Bachkirova et al. (2017) who consider that a learning process is built on the co-creation of knowledge within communities of learning, where both instructors and learners can freely exercise critical reasoning. Also, as adults are subject to natural

development over the lifespan of their thinking and emotion, and at times need help (Laske, 2006), this becomes particularly relevant to the demands of coach supervision training. Within this context, this study explores how coaching practitioners experience their own developmental journey during coach supervision training, and how meaning-making, identity shifts, and psychological growth unfold through this process.

Literature review

The literature review will focus on the complex interplay between coach supervision, adult learning, adult development, and reflective practice, all core elements of coach supervision training. As coaching and coach supervision evolve, the focus is shifting from performance to developmental learning that fosters adult growth beyond behavioural learning outcomes. Rather, the integration of adult learning and adult development theories, reflective practice, and coach supervision offers a rich framework for understanding and facilitating professional growth. However, it also requires careful consideration of ethical implications and a nuanced approach that respects individual developmental trajectories and contexts. Future research in this area could meaningfully explore the specific mechanisms by which coach supervision training facilitates adult development and promotes developmental capacities and capabilities.

Coach supervision: evolution and current practices

Coach supervision has evolved significantly since its inception, transitioning from its roots in clinical supervision to a distinct practice tailored to the coaching profession. Initially, it focused on ensuring ethical conduct, developing practitioner competence, and providing structured support. This early emphasis on skills and ethical foundations laid the groundwork for coach supervision to become an essential aspect of professional coaching practice (Hawkins & Smith, 2006).

As the coaching profession matured through the 1980s and 1990s, coach supervision itself began to formalise, drawing from a diverse range of disciplines including psychology, human resources, therapy, and adult education. This convergence of influences catalyzed more integrated models of supervision – not only focused on safeguarding practice, but also cultivating reflection, growth, and systemic awareness. By the early 2000s, coach supervision had become more widely recognised as its own field of practice, with dedicated training programmes, professional standards, and communities of practice (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006).

A central shift during this period was the redefinition of coach supervision as a cocreative partnership – a space of reflective dialogue that supports both personal insight and professional development (Carroll, 2014). Coach supervision is increasingly understood not merely as an oversight function, but as a qualitative, developmental, and resourcing practice (Hawkins et al., 2019). These dimensions position coach supervision as an evolving, co-created space that engages coaches in deeper examination of their work, values, and ways of being with clients.

Today, the ever-growing complexity of coaching practice demands more than coaching skills and competences. Practitioners are called on co-navigating ambiguity, ethical nuance, relational depth, and intercultural realities. In response, coach supervision

continues to emerge as a distinct and essential discipline – one that not only supports performance goals, behavioural change, and competence, but also strengthens capacity and capability for reflective presence, interpersonal capabilities, and adaptive reasoning.

This shift in the coaching field – from an emphasis on performance and behavioural competence toward reflection, ethics, and inner development – necessitates a parallel expansion in the ‘container’ of coach supervision itself. Supervisors must grow in their capabilities and capacities, engaging not only in adult learning but in adult development that enables them to hold complexity and support development. Despite its growing relevance, there remains limited research on the lived experience of becoming a coach supervisor – a developmental process that encompasses identity formation, emotional regulation, relational maturity, and embodied awareness. This practitioner research study seeks to contribute to this underexplored area.

Adult development in coach supervision

The field of adult development provides a rich tapestry of theories, processes, and contextual factors that inform coach supervision. These frameworks offer a nuanced understanding of how adults grow, learn, and change throughout life, with relevance for professional fields such as education, leadership development, coaching, and social work (Bluckert, 2005; Laske, 2023). At the core of adult development theory is the idea that adults evolve not only by acquiring more knowledge but by transforming the way they make sense of their experiences – through cognitive, social – emotional, and relational growth.

A growing body of research suggests that evolving cognitive and social-emotional capacities shape how individuals engage with complexity, reflect on their practice, and form professional identities (Kegan, 1994; Laske, 2023). In coach supervision, these evolving capacities are critical, as they influence a supervisor’s ability to maintain presence, hold multiple perspectives, and support others in their developmental processes.

Contextual factors – such as socio-cultural and geo-political environments, organizational dynamics, and life transitions – play a formative role in shaping these developmental trajectories. Readiness for growth is often catalyzed by transition points or disorienting dilemmas that challenge existing ways of knowing and being (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). This reflects the inherently situated nature of development: it unfolds in context and is responsive to both external pressures and internal shifts.

Reflective practice also plays a vital role in fostering adult development, particularly in coach supervision. As King and Kitchener (2004) as well as Lucas and Turner (2023) suggest, ongoing self-inquiry and epistemological reflection are critical for advancing from dualistic or rule-based reasoning toward more complex, interpretive, and constructivist modes of knowing. In coach supervision, this reflective depth enhances relational presence and ethical discernment, enabling practitioners to respond to subtle interpersonal dynamics and emotional undercurrents.

A key conceptual lens emerging in recent scholarships is that of the coach supervisor as a developmental instrument (Bachkirova, 2016; Jackson, 2022). This perspective reframes the coach supervisor not as a neutral observer or evaluator, but as a person whose own inner development is essential to their effectiveness. Coach supervisors are called to engage with themselves as ‘subjects’ (Kegan, 1994) in the developmental process – to cultivate psychological mindedness, embodied awareness, and

metacognitive capacities. This aligns with Bachkirova's (2008) proposition that depth of practice comes from working with one's internal processes and reflective capacities, not simply external techniques. It also echoes Laske (2006) stating that adults mentally construct their world from the inside out in ever more systemic ways.

Collectively, these insights reinforce the view of coach supervision as an inherently developmental practice – one that requires not only skills and competences but also inner maturity, cognitive flexibility, and relational sensitivity. Adult development theory provides a generative framework for understanding how these capacities emerge, how they can be supported, and how they influence coach supervision as both a process and a profession.

The intersection of adult learning and development

The relationship between adult learning – often described as 'horizontal' (Bluckert, 2019) and adult development – often described as 'vertical' – is not black and white or as two-dimensional as the descriptions may suggest. Rather, the interaction and intersectionality of adult learning and adult development occur at multiple points and in complex ways throughout adulthood. Merriam and Bierema (2014) posit that learning is inextricably linked to development, as cognitive growth both facilitates and is facilitated by learning experiences, while social-emotional growth supports increasingly complex meaning-making. As coaching and coach supervision evolve, the focus shifts from performance to developmental learning that fosters adult growth beyond behavioural outcomes. For example, a person's sense of autonomy is closely tied to their Frame of Reference (FOR), also referred to as 'worldview' (Laske, 2023), with each successive phase of emotional or cognitive development marked by a change in how meaning is internally constructed. While these constructions are sharable through language, the meanings attached to the same word or concept may vary significantly between individuals.

Adult learning and adult development are not separate processes but interdependent, and as Lawrence (2017) notes, developmental capacity shapes how one learns, and learning experiences can trigger developmental progression. Bachkirova (2016) expands on this by suggesting that one's developmental stage influences not just cognitive capacity, but also relational maturity and the ability to deal with complexity – key attributes for supervisors navigating dynamic coaching relationships.

Kegan's (1994) constructive-developmental theory early on contended that an individual's ability to engage in transformative learning is closely tied to their developmental stage. Kolb (1984) similarly describes learning as a cyclical process that integrates experience, reflection, and conceptualisation – while Kohlberg (1976) highlighted that moral reasoning evolves across stages, influencing how adults interpret responsibility and ethical complexity. Thus, adult learning is not merely about acquiring new knowledge but about transforming how that knowledge is understood, integrated, and applied in life and practice.

Importantly, Adamson and Brendgen (2022) underscore the role of relational mindfulness in learning environments. They argue that a compassionate, emotionally attuned dialogical process creates psychological safety, which in turn enables authentic exploration, reflection, and the freedom to learn. Both the relational and experiential dimension as well as the importance of the learning context is particularly relevant in coach supervision training, where vulnerability, interpersonal presence, and meaning making are central to development.

Illeris (2003, 2018) portrays a holistic model that integrates three dimensions of learning: content (knowledge), incentive (emotion and motivation), and interaction (social context). This framework further supports the view that adult learning is both cognitive and emotional, embedded within relationships and context. When coach supervision training is designed to engage in all dimensions, it can support both horizontal and vertical growth.

Petrie (2014) emphasises that vertical development – higher orders of consciousness – enhances one's capacity to navigate ambiguity, hold multiple perspectives, and respond adaptively to complex challenges. This resonates with Laske's (2023) developmental theory and Cook-Greuter's (2005) ego development stages, both of which suggest that development includes expanding one's epistemological, emotional, and relational complexity.

Despite the extensive theoretical foundations, empirical research examining how adult learning and adult development interact within coach supervision training remains limited. This practitioner research study explores this gap by investigating how coaching practitioners experience and make sense of their developmental journey. Through the lens of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this research explores how learning becomes developmental – and how new perspectives, emotional growth, and relational insight emerge in the training space.

Methods

This study employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design to explore the lived experience of coaching practitioners undergoing coach supervision training. IPA was chosen for its emphasis on understanding how individuals make sense of significant subjective experiences – in this case, the developmental journey of not only training but becoming a coach supervisor. Grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, IPA allows for rich, contextualised interpretation of meaning-making processes as expressed by participants. This methodological approach is particularly suited to examining reflective capacity, identity shifts, and emotional complexity within adult development, all central to the coach supervision context.

Research question

This practitioner research study seeks to answer the following research question: What is the lived experience of the developmental journey for coaches undergoing coach supervision training?

Grounded in adult learning and adult developmental theory, this research explores how coaching practitioners experience and make sense of their transition into the role of supervisor. The study aims to uncover how this developmental process unfolds, what capacities emerge, and how these are shaped by reflective practice and coach supervision training.

Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences (Rajasinghe, 2019) of coaching

practitioners who recently completed coach supervision training. IPA is particularly suited for studies seeking to understand how individuals make sense of personally significant life events (Smith et al., 2009). The aim was not to generalise findings across a population but to engage deeply in the subjective, contextualised meaning-making of a small, purposefully selected group of participants who share the experience of transitioning from coach-to-coach supervisor. This necessitates various shifts, not only from a behavioural or knowledge perspective but also considering a coaching practitioner's level of maturity (Lucas, 2024a).

The sample consisted of a small, homogeneous group, consistent with IPA guidelines, which prioritise depth over breadth. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria – namely, the recent completion of coach supervision training and extensive prior coaching experience – to ensure a shared and meaningful experience of the phenomenon under study. This purposive sampling approach enabled access to rich, detailed accounts that reflect both personal transformation and professional development (Patton, 2002).

The design of this study was informed by a critical realist ontological stance and a constructivist-interpretivist epistemology. From a critical realist perspective, we recognise that while a reality exists independently of our perceptions, our understanding of it is always mediated by subjective experience and interpretation. Epistemologically, we consider that knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction between researcher and participant, between researchers, and shaped by both personal context and relational dialogue. These assumptions are aligned with IPA's methodological commitment to double hermeneutics, whereby participants interpret their own experiences and researchers, in turn, interpret those interpretations (Smith et al., 2009).

These considerations influenced the authors' choice of semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection, providing the flexibility to explore participants' narratives in depth while also allowing emergent themes to surface organically. They also shaped our reflexive analytic approach, which emphasised meaning-making, researcher transparency, and interpretative depth. The quality and validity of the research were upheld by adhering to IPA's methodological rigour, maintaining an audit trail, and ensuring transparency in both data collection and analysis (Rajasinghe, 2019).

Participants

This study involved five participants who had completed a formal coach supervision training programme within the preceding 12–18 months. All participants had a minimum of five years of professional coaching experience and were actively practicing coaches at the time of data collection. Purposive sampling was used in accordance with IPA methodology, which emphasises the selection of a small, homogeneous group who share a meaningful experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Smith et al., 2009). The goal was not statistical generalizability, but rather in-depth exploration of how coaching practitioners experience and make sense of their developmental journey during coach supervision training. In addition, the sample size is consistent with IPA's idiographic approach, which emphasises depth of analysis over breadth (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants were selected to represent a range of training experiences, with individuals drawn from two well-regarded training institutions (CSA and Oxford Brookes

University). The sample was designed to be homogeneous in terms of key inclusion criteria: all participants had recently completed a supervisor training programme, had substantial prior coaching experience, and demonstrated reflective capacity in their engagement with the research. Three of the five participants identified as female and two as male. All participants were anonymized and coded I1–I5 for reporting purposes.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through the professional networks of the researchers and through outreach to alumni communities from CSA and Oxford Brookes, the two training institutions in which the researchers had professional involvement. Initial contact was made via email, and participants were provided with an information sheet, informed consent form, and a demographic questionnaire prior to scheduling the interviews.

The researchers were mindful of pre-existing relationships and their potential to influence the research process. Hence, the interview design process was structured to ensure that neither author held formal teaching, supervisory, or evaluative roles with any participant. These boundaries were clearly communicated, and ethical integrity was maintained throughout the process.

Reflexivity was embedded into the research process, and the researchers actively bracketed their assumptions during data collection and analysis. Interviews were conducted via secure video conferencing platforms and lasted approximately 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized prior to analysis. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to explore their lived experiences while enabling the researchers to follow relevant lines of inquiry in alignment with IPA.

The semi-structured interview questionnaire (included as Table A in the Appendix) was designed to explore three core domains: (1) social-emotional and cognitive development, (2) transformative learning experiences, and (3) learning design preferences. These areas were selected to elicit rich reflections on participants' experience of developmental shifts, identity transformation, emotional landscape, and the training environment. The semi-structured interview questionnaire was designed in alignment with the study's theoretical foundations, drawing on adult learning and development theory and development of reflective judgement. The various domains explored reflect the interplay between horizontal learning (skills, knowledge, competencies) and vertical development (complexity of meaning-making, identity shifts, and ambiguity tolerance). The research was ontologically grounded in critical realism and epistemologically in a constructivist-interpretivist stance, consistent in turn with the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This approach, emphasising double hermeneutics, was enriched by the Constructive Developmental Framework's (Laske, 2023) focus on developmental lines, which guided both question formulation and interpretation of participants' evolving reflective, cognitive, and psychological capacities.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), following the six-stage process outlined by Smith et al. (2009). This approach was selected to

explore how participants made sense of their developmental journey through coach supervision training, which then in turn led to the double hermeneutic inquiry layered on by the two researchers.

- (1) Reading and Re-reading: Each transcript was read multiple times by both researchers to ensure deep familiarity and immersion into each participant's narrative.
- (2) Initial Noting: Descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments were developed line-by-line to capture meaning, tone, and nuance.
- (3) Development of Emergent Themes: These notes were transformed into emergent themes reflecting significant insights.
- (4) Clustering of Themes: Themes were organised into subthemes through conceptual grouping and collaborative reflection.
- (5) Cross-Case Analysis: After each case was analyzed independently, shared patterns across participants were identified. Only subthemes that appeared in all five interviews were retained.
- (6) Abstraction to Meta-Themes: Subthemes were further distilled into three overarching meta-themes representing broader domains of developmental growth.

Throughout the analysis process, a comprehensive audit trail was maintained, including annotated transcripts, coded data extracts, thematic matrices, and analytic memos. Continued reflexive dialogue between the two researchers supported the transparency and trustworthiness of interpretive decisions. The initial coding was informed by the semi-structured interview questionnaire (see Table A) which informed the early thematic architecture, particularly influencing the identification of subthemes related to reflective capacity, relational depth, and adaptability. The questionnaire's 17 open-ended prompts served both as a tool for eliciting rich, reflective data and as a framework for ensuring coherence between participant narratives and the research study's adult developmental lens.

This lens also allowed the researchers to examine the interplay between adult learning or horizontal development (acquisition of knowledge and competencies) and vertical development (shifts in meaning-making, identity, and complexity tolerance). Growth was observed across multiple developmental lines, including cognitive, emotional, and embodied domains (Bluckert, 2019; Laske, 2023). Here, Watkins (2015) outlines a broad spectrum of developmental lines, ranging from physical and cognitive to ego maturity, morals, values, and interpersonal connection. Laske (2023) consolidates these into a comprehensive adult development framework, emphasising the cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological lines as particularly salient. This constructive developmental perspective (Laske, 2023) was adopted by the researchers to focus the analysis on how participants' meaning-making evolved across these core dimensions, while acknowledging interrelated developmental factors.

By applying this integrated developmental perspective, the analysis illuminated how participants experienced coach supervision training not merely as skill-building, but as a profound developmental transition, i.e., deepening their capacity for reflection, relational presence, and ambiguity tolerance. This iterative and interpretative approach aligns with the evolving literature positioning coach supervision as working with oneself as an instrument (Bachkirova, 2016). Coding procedures reflected this

developmental focus, and participant quotes are cited using anonymized identifiers (e.g., I2 = Interviewee 2). Earlier internal tracking codes (e.g., Q1A) used during the analytic process were removed in the final presentation to enhance clarity and ensure emphasis on participant voice and thematic coherence.

Results

Upon analysis of the five research interviews, three overarching meta-themes emerged, each representing significant areas of developmental growth, and even transformation, reported by the participants. These themes reflect what can be described as emergent capacities – not merely skills or competencies, but broader developmental shifts in how participants perceive, relate, and adapt. These capacities were illuminated through participants' responses to a series of open-ended prompts designed to elicit reflection on their social- emotional, cognitive, and psychological experiences (see Table A). The structure of the semi-structured interview questionnaire helped to scaffold participants' meaning-making, which in turn supported the emergence of the thematic framework presented below.

These capacities arose from the interplay between two dimensions of development: horizontal development, referring to the acquisition and refinement of knowledge, tools, and behaviours; and vertical development, which entails deeper changes in meaning-making, self-concept, and the ability to navigate complexity and ambiguity (Laske, 2023; Petrie, 2014). Rather than existing in isolation, these dimensions intersected in the participants' experiences, leading to integrative growth across multiple domains, including cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and embodied awareness. For several participants, this growth also included a spiritual dimension – expressed through a deeper sense of purpose, inner grounding, or connectedness – which complemented the cognitive, emotional, and embodied aspects of their development.

The resulting meta-themes – (1) personal growth and awareness, (2) interpersonal dynamics, presence, and embodiment, and (3) adaptability and navigating ambiguity – reflect this integrative development. Each theme encapsulates a range of reflective, relational, and adaptive capacities that extended beyond individual skill enhancement to signify transformational change.

A wide array of subthemes emerged through analysis; however, to ensure analytical robustness, only those that appeared consistently across all five participants were retained. These subthemes were:

- Category 1: Personal Growth and Awareness
 - Deepening of reflective capacity
 - Development of self-awareness
 - Enhanced emotional regulation
- Category 2: Interpersonal Dynamics, Presence, and Embodiment
 - Sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics
 - Development of embodied presence and relational attunement
- Category 3: Adaptability and Navigating Ambiguity
 - Comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity
 - Flexible, adaptive responses in complex situations

Table 1. Table of meta themes and sub themes.

Meta Themes	Sub-Themes
Personal Growth, Awareness	• Engage in and deepening of Reflective Capacity • Developing Self-awareness • Emotional Regulation
Interpersonal Dynamics, presence and embodiment	• Interpersonal Dynamics (boundaries and will in Relationships) • Developing Presence and Embodiment (incl. sensitivity to others)
Adaptability, dealing with Ambiguity	• Dealing with Uncertainty & Ambiguity • Adaptability

These subthemes serve as the foundation for the meta-themes, illustrating how participants experienced multifaceted developmental movement through and beyond the acquisition of coach supervision competencies (Table 1).

Meta-theme 1: personal growth, awareness

Sub theme 1: engage in and deepening of reflective capacity

In the study, participants reported engaging with a range of reflective practices, from journaling to meditation, which enabled them to explore their internal worlds more deeply. Through these methods, participants expressed a heightened awareness of their thoughts and emotions, as well as an openness to experiences that transcend purely cognitive understanding.

For some, the act of writing served as a tool for processing and dispersing complex thoughts. As one participant remarked, ‘Writing things down is a diffusion process ... so maybe there’s something to be said for that’ (I1, Q6). This reflective writing was seen not only to organise thoughts but also to gain new insights and clarity about subjective experiences.

Another participant noted how reflecting on emotions facilitated a deeper understanding of them: ‘Reflecting on my emotions helped me understand them better’ (I2, Q2). This exploration of emotions was central for many, providing a way to engage with and process feelings in a structured manner, which contributed to a more comprehensive self-awareness.

A few participants described how the course encouraged them to connect with dimensions of selfhood beyond intellectual reasoning. One participant explained, ‘The course helped me be more aware of all the other dimensions that make me human beyond the cognitive’ (I3, Q1A). This acknowledgement of a holistic self, encompassing emotional and physical aspects, appeared to broaden their sense of personal identity and complexity.

The commitment to creating space for reflection also emerged as a significant theme. One participant articulated the intention to integrate a regular meditation practice into their daily routine: ‘It’s now the time for me to dedicate a daily place for meditation ... embody something like love’ (I4, Q1D). This highlights a deliberate effort to cultivate mindfulness and presence, suggesting a move toward personal practices that support ongoing self-care and grounding.

Additionally, an increased comfort with uncertainty was frequently mentioned. One participant described this transformation by saying, ‘I accept now more easily uncertainty,

not knowing. I'm very at ease with uncertainty now much more than before' (I5, Q2G). This openness to ambiguity reflects a shift from rigid understanding to a more flexible, accepting approach to complex and unclear situations.

Finally, some participants reported a newfound appreciation for silence and intentional time use. As one participant observed, 'I think I give more time and use silence more' (I5, Q5), underscoring a tendency toward slowing down and allowing space for thought and introspection. This commitment to mindful pacing and contemplation appeared to be a common thread in participants' evolving reflective capacities.

Overall, these themes indicate that participants not only embraced various reflective practices but also experienced a deeper connection to self, an openness to uncertainty, and a commitment to allocating time for ongoing reflection.

Sub theme 2: developing self-awareness

The subtheme of 'Developing Self-awareness' emerged prominently, with participants sharing reflections that display their journey toward greater introspection and self-understanding. Through this journey, participants reported cultivating metacognitive skills, building self-compassion, redefining personal success, applying self-knowledge professionally, discovering joy in self-exploration, and revisiting long-standing self-perceptions. These aspects contribute to a rich picture of self-awareness, where individuals not only gained insight into their own thoughts and feelings but also developed a more compassionate, flexible approach to self-concept.

For some, this process involved fostering patience and recognising personal growth. One participant described, 'I developed more patience ... seeing my own sort of conceptual development' (I1, Q1D). This awareness of their own evolving mindset reflects a metacognitive shift, where they observe and value changes in their thinking patterns over time.

Others noted an increase in self-compassion, allowing themselves to take time for growth without self-criticism. As one participant put it, 'I feel I was gentle towards myself ... I let the time that was needed pass' (I2, Q1A). This sentiment illustrates a softening of self-expectations, highlighting an acceptance of their own pace and process.

Participants also described redefining their concepts of success, moving away from rigid, singular goals toward a more inclusive understanding. One participant shared, 'I've come to a broader understanding that success can be many small things, not just one goal' (I2, Q3J). This reframing reflects a shift toward valuing smaller, everyday achievements as equally meaningful, contributing to a more holistic and satisfying view of success.

Additionally, self-knowledge was often extended into professional contexts. For instance, one participant noted, 'Learning about myself helped me then to apply it in a different sense with my clients' (I3, Q1A). This illustrates how self-awareness gained through personal reflection can enhance professional relationships, with individuals drawing on their insights to empathise and connect more effectively with others.

The journey of self-awareness also sparked joy and a sense of discovery for some participants. One individual described the pleasure of self-exploration, saying, 'I felt joy to create this type of link and joy of discovering a new place for myself' (I4, Q1F). This joy highlights a positive, enriching aspect of introspection, as individuals find satisfaction in uncovering new aspects of themselves.

Finally, some participants challenged and revised long-standing self-perceptions, often experiencing a shift in how they understood fundamental aspects of their identity. One participant reflected, 'Yeah, I realized for example that I thought I was more like an angel, very mental. And I realized through the journey that I was fed up with that side of me' (I5, Q1A). This re-evaluation of identity suggests a deep, transformative experience where self-reflection brought a new and perhaps more balanced self-concept into view.

Collectively, these reflections demonstrate the multifaceted nature of developing self-awareness. Participants' increased introspection fostered a nuanced understanding of themselves, allowing them to engage in self-compassion, apply insights in professional settings, and challenge old self-perceptions, contributing to their personal growth and psychological mindedness.

Sub theme 3: emotional regulation

The theme of 'Emotional Regulation' highlights participants' enhanced capacity to understand, process, and manage their emotional experiences. Through various reflections, participants conveyed how they have cultivated a more constructive relationship with their emotions, learned to use emotional insights constructively, embraced greater courage, and developed strategies for maintaining calm and perspective. These skills contribute to a comprehensive understanding of emotional regulation as a vital component of psychological mindedness, equipping individuals to navigate their emotions with increased balance and intentionality.

For some, this journey involved reframing their relationship with challenging emotions. One participant, for example, noted, 'Frustration has changed for me ... I've learned to be more curious about it' (I1, Q3F). This shift from resistance to curiosity demonstrates a constructive approach to dealing with frustration, where understanding replaces avoidance, allowing them to engage with emotions in a more productive manner.

Increased emotional awareness was also a recurring theme. One participant shared, 'My awareness of my own emotions has increased, and I've learned to use them as data' (I1, Q2). This perspective highlights a metacognitive shift where emotions are seen as valuable information, fostering a sense of curiosity and learning from emotional experiences rather than reacting impulsively.

Some participants reported a reduction in fear and an increase in their willingness to take risks. 'Taking risks isn't that frightening anymore. I've become more courageous', one participant explained (I2, Q3J). This sense of courage reflects a growing resilience and openness, where participants feel more confident in facing uncertain situations.

A number of participants described a new acceptance and expression of emotions, particularly in professional settings. One participant observed, 'I'm much more aware of my own emotions, I allow them, and share them with my clients' (I3, Q2). This acknowledgment of emotional experiences reflects an increased ability to manage and appropriately express emotions, enhancing authenticity and connection in interpersonal relationships.

For others, emotional regulation is manifested as an ability to maintain inner calm. One participant illustrated this by saying, 'I developed my capacity to keep profoundly myself as an area of calmness' (I4, Q2). This sense of calm suggests an internalised resilience, where participants can centre themselves amidst emotional turbulence.

Another strategy involved the ability to step back and reflect rather than react. One participant described this as ‘the reflex to just step back and not get stuck, ask myself what the learning is, and let go, go through it’ (I5, Q1D). This approach illustrates a process-oriented view of emotional challenges, where stepping back fosters perspective, allowing for reflection and growth rather than emotional entanglement.

Collectively, these reflections portray the various dimensions of emotional regulation that participants developed, including curiosity, awareness, courage, acceptance, calm, and perspective-taking. This enhanced capacity for emotional regulation not only allowed participants to manage their emotions more effectively but also to respond to life’s complexities with greater insight and balance, reinforcing their overall psychological mindedness.

Meta-theme 2: interpersonal dynamics, presence and embodiment

Sub theme 4: interpersonal dynamics (boundaries and will in relationships)

The subtheme of ‘Interpersonal Dynamics’ captures participants’ growing understanding of the complex nature of human interactions and their evolving relational skills. Through reflection, participants described their increased empathy, heightened sensitivity to others’ motivations, awareness of non-cognitive needs, and improved emotional intelligence. This enhanced relational understanding allowed them to cultivate more meaningful and balanced connections, with a clearer sense of both their own and others’ boundaries and intentions. These insights reflect a key aspect of psychological mindedness, as participants learned to navigate the nuances of interpersonal relationships with greater attunement and respect.

For some, this development manifested as an increase in empathy and understanding of how others present themselves. One participant shared, ‘It’s helped me grow empathy ... understanding how others show up’ (I1, Q1B). This empathy highlights a deeper awareness of others’ perspectives, fostering an openness to see people as they are and recognise the complexity behind their behaviours.

Other participants became more attuned to the motivations underlying others’ actions and words. One participant described this change, saying, ‘It has made me more sensitive to what might be behind how people act or talk’ (I2, Q1E). This sensitivity to underlying motivations represents a shift from taking behaviours at face value to considering the often-unseen influences from and on other people’s actions, enhancing the participant’s ability to respond thoughtfully in social situations.

Another dimension of this interpersonal growth involved recognising and addressing others’ non-cognitive needs. One participant explained, ‘I learned much more about others’ non-cognitive needs and how to deal with them’ (I3, Q1B). This awareness of emotional and relational needs beyond purely cognitive interactions indicates an expanded understanding of the full spectrum of human needs, which contributes to more compassionate and responsive relationships.

Emotional intelligence (i.e., interpersonal capacity) also emerged as a significant aspect of deepened interpersonal dynamics, with participants noting how their heightened emotional awareness positively impacted interactions. One participant observed, ‘My increased ability to sense, experience emotions, and work with them has increased the quality of our interaction’ (I3, Q9). This enhanced emotional intelligence reflects a

refined capacity to both recognise and manage emotions in relational contexts, contributing to more open and constructive exchanges.

Moreover, the importance of attunement was highlighted by some participants, who likened it to harmony in music. One participant shared, 'I learned the importance of (at)tuning with the other, like practicing music as a metaphor' (I5, Q1B). This metaphor of attunement suggests a commitment to aligning with others' emotional states and needs, facilitating a deeper and more harmonious connection.

Together, these reflections provide a comprehensive picture of the participants' evolving interpersonal dynamics, which include empathy, sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and attunement. Through these developments, participants demonstrated an enhanced awareness of boundaries, motivations, and the importance of mutual respect in relationships. This deeper interpersonal insight allowed them not only to engage with others more authentically but also to cultivate a clearer understanding of their own needs and limits within relational contexts.

Sub theme 5: developing presence and embodiment (incl. sensitivity to others)

The subtheme of 'Developing Presence and Embodiment' encapsulates the participants' deepening ability to be fully present, to embody their values authentically, and to foster meaningful connections with others. Through reflection, participants described how they have come to appreciate the role of physical presence, authenticity, and non-verbal communication in building more genuine relationships. This development reflects a shift from a solely cognitive or role-driven stance toward a more integrated, embodied way of interacting, where values, physical presence, and professional identity converge to create impactful, authentic exchanges. This growth also fosters a heightened sensitivity to others, as participants reported feeling more attuned to subtle cues and needs, enhancing their interpersonal effectiveness.

For some participants, this growth manifested as an increased sense of courage and alignment with their values. One participant described, 'I feel like I've grown in courage, standing up for what I believe is important' (I1, Q6). This courage in embodying personal values reflects a commitment to authenticity, where participants are not only aware of their core beliefs but also willing to express them openly in their interactions.

Others experienced a shift in their professional roles, perceiving themselves as more equal and connected with those they work with. One participant expressed this transition, saying, 'I feel more like a colleague now rather than just the professional ... being with them' (I2, Q17). This quote illustrates a move toward relational authenticity, where participants step beyond formal roles to engage with others as peers, fostering a sense of shared humanity and respect.

The importance of physical presence and non-verbal communication also emerged as a key theme. One participant described how they bring their entire self into interactions, sharing, 'I coach my clients with my body and my presence. More silence' (I4, Q17). This approach emphasises the role of embodied communication – using silence, body language, and presence to convey support and understanding, beyond words alone. By adopting this integrated approach, participants can connect more deeply with others, cultivating a space of trust and attentiveness.

Together, these reflections demonstrate participants' development of presence and embodiment, characterised by a commitment to authenticity, relational equality, and

non-verbal attunement. This enhanced capability allows them to engage in a grounded and holistic manner, where their values and physical presence enrich each interaction. By moving beyond a purely cognitive or role-based approach, participants demonstrate a crucial aspect of psychological mindedness – engaging with others through a more embodied, sensitive, and authentic way of being. This way of connecting not only deepens interpersonal relationships but also reinforces participants' personal integrity and self-awareness.

Meta-theme 3: adaptability, dealing with ambiguity

Sub theme 6: dealing with uncertainty & ambiguity

The subtheme of 'Dealing with Uncertainty & Ambiguity' highlights participants' increased ability to handle ambiguous and unpredictable situations with greater acceptance and resilience. Through self-reflection, participants described their journey toward embracing the lack of control over certain aspects of life, learning to face vulnerability in uncertain contexts, and finding a sense of ease amidst the unknown. This enhanced comfort with uncertainty forms a significant aspect of psychological mindedness, enabling individuals to adapt to new experiences, reduce anxiety, and maintain emotional balance despite unpredictable circumstances.

For some participants, this shift involved acknowledging the inherent unpredictability of life and learning to release the desire for control. One participant articulated this realisation, saying, 'I learned that we can't control things ... they just emerge, and I have to go with the flow' (I2, Q1C). This acceptance of the uncontrollable nature of life reflects a move toward openness and flexibility, allowing the participant to engage with experiences as they unfold without resistance.

Others described learning to embrace vulnerability in uncertain contexts. For example, one participant shared the experience of allowing themselves to feel exposed, stating, 'Being in a situation where I felt so vulnerable, exposing myself without doing anything against it' (I3, Q16). This conscious acceptance of vulnerability highlights a major step toward self-acceptance and resilience, as participants recognised that facing uncertainty sometimes requires a willingness to be open and unguarded.

An increased sense of ease with uncertainty was also a recurring theme. One participant reflected on this transformation, stating, 'I accept now more easily uncertainty, not knowing. I am very at ease with uncertainty now much more than before' (I5, Q2G). This comfort with the unknown demonstrates a significant shift toward psychological flexibility, where the participant no longer experiences anxiety when facing unclear situations but instead embraces them as part of their experience.

Collectively, these reflections illustrate participants' evolving ability to navigate and accept uncertain situations, encompassing a willingness to let go of control, embrace vulnerability, and approach the unknown with calm and openness. This enhanced capacity to handle ambiguity has practical implications, as participants reported feeling more open to new experiences, able to make decisions without complete information, and emotionally stable even when outcomes are uncertain. By fostering a balanced approach to unpredictability, participants demonstrated a crucial aspect of psychological mindedness – one that allows them to respond to life's complexities with resilience, adaptability, and insight.

Sub theme 7: adaptability

The subtheme of 'Adaptability' captures participants' enhanced ability to respond flexibly and resourcefully to a variety of situations. Through their reflections, participants highlighted a willingness to release control, expand their comfort zones, and adapt their communication in a way that is context sensitive. This adaptability reflects a shift in perspective, where challenges are viewed as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles, allowing individuals to navigate complex environments with resilience and creativity. Such adaptability forms a vital component of psychological mindedness, as it equips participants to respond to uncertainty with emotional stability, openness, and a readiness to adjust as circumstances evolve.

For some, adaptability involved learning to let go of control and make the most of emerging situations. One participant expressed this realisation, saying, 'I've learned to let go of control both with myself and others and turn what comes into the best result' (I1, Q3C). This willingness to release the need for control enabled the participant to embrace flexibility, finding constructive ways to respond to situations as they unfold.

For others, adaptability required stepping out of their comfort zones, often in ways that initially felt daunting. One participant described this experience, noting, 'The programme pushed me out of my comfort zone into the panic zone, expanding my comfort zone significantly' (I3, Q3D). This push into unfamiliar territory expanded their range of adaptability, allowing the participants to become more comfortable with discomfort, building resilience, and broadening their capacity to handle diverse situations.

Improved adaptability also included the development of more nuanced communication skills. One participant shared, 'I developed the capacity to keep silent ... just waiting for the right moment for the answer' (I4, Q8). This ability to pause and respond in a manner sensitive to the context highlights a refined communication approach, where timing and patience enhance the effectiveness of interactions.

Collectively, these reflections demonstrate participants' evolving adaptability, characterised by flexibility, resilience, and situational responsiveness. This adaptability allowed participants to approach unexpected challenges with creativity, adjust their behaviour to suit various contexts, and maintain emotional balance in the face of change. By viewing challenges as opportunities for growth, participants showed a significant shift toward a learning-oriented mindset, where adaptability supports both personal development and psychological well-being.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that coach supervision training can facilitate both horizontal learning (the acquisition of knowledge and skills) and vertical development (the evolution of meaning-making, emotional maturity, and relational complexity). Through the lens of adult development and learning theory, the findings highlight that coach supervision training is a space of holistic growth – influencing how participants think, feel, relate, and reflect. These insights were made possible, in part, by the structure of the semi-structured interview questionnaire (see Table A), which explicitly invited participants to explore psychological, somatic, relational, and developmental dimensions of their experience. This design encouraged reflective depth and coherence with the study's developmental lens, supporting the emergence of nuanced perspectives across multiple lines of development.

Participants experienced a range of developmental changes, suggesting that training programmes can serve as meaningful catalysts for transformation. Reflective practice emerged as a central mechanism through which coach supervisors cultivated greater self-awareness, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. These developmental shifts were not solely the result of content or techniques, but of an integrated learning process situated in supportive, experiential, and emotionally safe environments. The importance of such conditions reinforces findings across adult learning literature which emphasise the social and affective dimensions of transformation (Mezirow, 1991; Illeris, 2018).

Moreover, the developmental outcomes observed in this study carry broader relevance beyond coaching, with implications for adult education, leadership training, and helping professions more broadly. These findings underscore the importance of intentionally designing coach supervision and training programmes to foster not only professional competence but also deeper psychological and relational development. Specifically, the data suggests that elements such as embodiment, psychological mindedness, and meta-awareness are valuable in scaffolding long-term developmental growth and promoting lifelong learning and intercultural competence.

Personal growth and awareness

This meta-theme encompasses the internal growth and heightened self-understanding that participants experienced throughout their training. It is characterised by three key sub-themes:

Engaging in and deepening reflective capacity

Participants reported a significant increase in their engagement with reflective practices. This included activities such as journaling, meditation, and structured reflection exercises. These practices served as tools for coaches to systematically examine their experiences, decisions, and interactions with clients, leading to deeper insights and personal growth. The unfolding 'reflective trajectory' reported as increasing depth and levels of awareness but also suspension of judgement is consistent with the research of King and Kitchener (2004) who detail the series of stages that lay the foundation for reflective thinking, and the development of reflective judgment. Reflection is perceived as positive and providing a road to self-consciousness, or stated differently, self-awareness, as well as a route to learning (Kolb, 1984).

Developing self-awareness

A consistent outcome of the training was an enhanced understanding of one's own thoughts, behaviours, and patterns. Participants noted a growing ability to recognise their internal processes (Laske, 2023) and how these influence their coaching practice. This heightened self-awareness contributed to more effective and authentic interactions with clients. This is supported by Carden et al. (2021) by inviting that the development of self-awareness taps into all components and layers of the construct (of self-awareness). Carden et al. (2021) even suggest designing training programmes where the full construct of self-awareness is in focus as a learning outcome. Bachkirova (2016) helpfully adds that self-awareness and self-understanding would allow for the

experience of being a client and therefore an opportunity to imagine oneself in the position of the other.

Emotional regulation

The ability to recognise, understand, and manage one's emotions emerged as a critical component of personal growth and is connected to self-awareness (Gross, 1998/1998). Participants reported an increased capacity to label and use their emotional experiences as valuable data in their coaching practice, leading to more nuanced and effective interventions. Mark Brackett (2023) portrays emotions as signals, and his research proposes to process our emotions as information, especially when the emotions are triggered by challenging circumstances. The capacity of paying attention to emotions and of appropriately identifying emotions and discriminating between different emotional states, facilitates thinking and as well as the capacity of managing them in order to appropriately adapt to social and relational situations (Rieffe et al., 2008) which is essential in coaching and coach supervision settings. Brackett et al. (2019) have extensively researched the process of process of integrating cognition, emotion, and behaviour which will be taken up in the recommendations for future research.

Interpersonal dynamics and embodiment

This meta-theme highlights the integration of physical presence and relational awareness in the coaching process. It encompasses two primary sub-sub-themes:

Developing presence and embodiment

Participants noted a growing awareness of their physical state and its impact on the coaching relationship. This included an increased attention to non-verbal cues, both in themselves and their clients, and a more comprehensive approach to coaching that incorporated bodily awareness. Jackson (2022) helpfully offers Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodiment which encapsulates a reimagining of an individual's bodily relationship with their environment, with relevance of the interrelationship of knowledge, feeling, and communication with the body. Relevantly, Jackson (2022) also introduces Claxton's (2015) thinking who explores in depth the role of the body in education and learning, and with a particular interest in intuition. This brings in that complex intermingling of bodiliness that we experience as an aspect of consciousness as well.

Burkitt (2012/2012) concludes that with these embodied emotions and meanings, built through experience of engagement with the world, is how we make sense of the world and the other consciousnesses that we experience within it.

Interpersonal (relational) dynamics

The training enhanced participants' ability to navigate complex relational aspects of coaching. This included improved skills in building rapport, understanding client needs, and managing boundaries within the coaching relationship. Participants reported a more nuanced understanding of how to attune to their clients and adapt their approach accordingly. Eric De Haan (2012) captured early on the value of relational patterns in the

relationships of coaching practitioners (2012) and how, based on reflection, these relational patterns can be improved. This is also an important connection to the first meta-theme addressing reflective capacity and self awareness. Adamson and Brendgen (2022) echo this by adding that relational consciousness can even reach an intentional shift between inner (self) and outer world (others).

Adaptability in dealing with ambiguity

The third meta-theme reflects the participants' growing capacity to navigate uncertainty and complexity in their coaching practice. It comprises two sub-themes:

Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity

Coaches reported feeling more comfortable with ambiguous situations and uncertain outcomes. This comfort with the unknown was seen as crucial in the dynamic and often unpredictable field of coaching and coach supervision. Birch and Welch (2019), along with their co-authors, validate the need for coach supervision, equipping practitioners to deal with the demands of a highly uncertain, complex, and ambiguous context.

Adaptability

Participants noted an increased ability to adjust their approach based on the needs of the client and the situation. This flexibility enabled coaches to respond more effectively to diverse client needs and unpredictable situations, enhancing their overall effectiveness as coaches and supervisors. Laske (2023) captured that richness and adaptability of human consciousness itself testifies to the nature of the (human) transformational systems are driven to explore.

In summary, the findings underscore the transformative potential of coach supervision training, positioning it at the intersection of adult learning and development.

The emergence of the meta-themes and sub-themes suggests that the training programmes effectively incorporate principles that address both horizontal development (skills, competencies) and vertical cognitive growth (capabilities). Participants not only acquired new skills in areas such as emotional regulation and interpersonal competencies but also developed more sophisticated ways of perceiving themselves, others, and the coach supervision process.

The research also highlights the importance of reflective practice, embodied presence, and adaptability in the development of coach supervisors. It suggests that coach supervision training fosters a holistic growth process that encompasses cognitive, social-emotional, and relational dimensions. This multifaceted development enables coaches to navigate the complexities of their practice and the context with greater skill, awareness, and flexibility.

These insights have broader implications for adult education and professional development practices beyond coach supervision training. They emphasise the value of creating learning environments that support both cognitive and emotional growth, incorporate experiential learning, and foster self-reflection. The findings suggest that professional development programmes, particularly in helping professions, benefit from incorporating

elements that enhance self-awareness, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and adaptability.

This research illuminates the developmental journey of coaches undergoing coach supervision training, revealing key aspects of a practitioner's adult development (maturity). It highlights the emergence of reflective capacity, the impact of supportive learning environments, and the evolution of epistemological beliefs. The study emphasises the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in complex coaching scenarios. Diverse perspectives in training contribute to intercultural competence and foster lifelong learning. The research underscores the role of reflective judgment in adult education, showing how coach supervision training programmes promote both horizontal skill development and vertical cognitive growth. These insights offer valuable guidance for designing training programmes and inform broader approaches to adult learning and professional development across various fields.

Conclusion

This IPA study has illuminated the developmental potential of coach supervision training, particularly as experienced by coaching practitioners transitioning into supervisory roles. Participants described a shift not only in what they know and do (horizontal development) but also in how they perceive, relate, and reflect (vertical development). These findings position coach supervision training as more than a credentialing or skills-based process – it is a catalyst for deeper self-awareness, identity evolution, and relational maturity.

By applying a developmental lens informed by adult learning and development theory, the study identified three overarching meta-themes: personal growth and awareness, interpersonal dynamics and embodiment, and adaptability in the face of ambiguity. These themes reflect integrated growth across cognitive, emotional, relational, and, in some cases, spiritual dimensions, reinforcing the need for coach supervision frameworks that nurture reflective capacity, emotional regulation, embodied presence, and perspective-taking.

This research supports a growing body of evidence positioning coach supervision training as a space for vertical development – growth that fundamentally reshapes how individuals make meaning of their experiences. It contributes to a deeper understanding of coach supervision as both a professional learning context and a site of adult development. To activate this developmental potential, training programmes must be intentionally designed to include structured opportunities for reflective practice, emotional processing, psychological mindedness, and embodied experience – scaffolded by a safe and relational learning environment. This is echoed by Lucas (2024a) who explored the influence of both coach and supervisor maturity on the supervision dialogue and how training programmes equip supervisors to navigate role clarity and contracting.

Moreover, the developmental outcomes observed in this study carry broader relevance beyond coaching, with implications for adult education, leadership development, and other helping professions. As the coaching field continues to evolve, recognising and facilitating vertical growth in coach supervision settings may prove central to preparing practitioners for the increasingly complex ethical and interpersonal demands of contemporary practice (Table 2).

Table 2. Coach Supervision training programme design considerations

Sub-Themes	Suggested Training Foci and Training Elements/Activities
- Engage in and deepening of Reflective Capacity - Developing Self-awareness - Dealing with Uncertainty & Ambiguity	Reflective Practice - Structured journaling exercises - Case study analysis: Present complex coaching scenarios for group reflection and dialogue - Peer reflection groups - Mindfulness meditation sessions
- Emotional Regulation - Interpersonal Dynamics (boundaries and will in Relationships) - Dealing with Uncertainty & Ambiguity	Psychological Mindedness - Role plays with scenarios involving interpersonal dynamics 'Heat experiments' with scenarios that challenge coaches to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics - Individual supervision and peer reflection - Mindfulness practices to enhance present-moment awareness and reflective capacity - Psycho education modules addressing key psychological concepts
- Developing Presence and Embodiment (incl. sensitivity to others) - Adaptability - Emotional Regulation	Embodiment - Somatic awareness exercises - Reading and using body language effectively - Experiential learning activities (indoors and outdoors) - Breathing and centreing techniques
Across all subthemes	- Reflective practice logs - Multi-modal feedback sessions - Personal development plans - Experiential workshops - Live demonstrations

While this study focused on individual and interior developmental experiences, it highlights a major area for future exploration: the relational dimensions of learning and development.

Future research should examine how dialogical and interpersonal processes within coach supervision training contribute to the development of meta-awareness, relational mindfulness, and systemic insight – capabilities essential for coach supervisors navigating complex human systems.

The use of a purposefully designed semi-structured interview questionnaire was instrumental in surfacing reflective depth and developmental insight, reinforcing the alignment between method and theoretical framing. And while this study focused on individual, interior developmental experiences, it points toward the importance of relational dimensions as an area for future exploration. Coach supervision training offers a unique opportunity to expand meta-awareness across both intrapersonal and interpersonal domains. Wright et al. (2019) likewise emphasise the importance of engaging in continuous personal and professional development, including education in systems theories, systemic approaches, adult development and dialogical approaches. In doing so, it reinforces the potential of coach supervision not only as professional training but as a deeply human, developmental journey.

Limitations

This IPA study comes with limitations commonly associated with qualitative, idiographic inquiry. The small sample size of five participants limits generalizability, although this is

consistent with IPA's focus on depth and richness over breadth. The research prioritised participants' individual, interior experiences rather than their interpersonal interactions, which may constrain insights into relational dynamics within coach supervision contexts.

The study was primarily grounded in Western adult development theories and coach supervision frameworks, potentially overlooking cultural or systemic differences in developmental processes. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data via semi-structured interviews may introduce bias, as participants may unconsciously present themselves in a favourable light or struggle to articulate tacit dimensions of their experience.

Temporal limitations apply as well: participants had completed training within the past 12–18 months, which may not fully capture longer-term developmental shifts. Furthermore, the inherently complex and subjective nature of adult development made it difficult to quantify emerging capacities, and the use of multiple theoretical frameworks introduced challenges in maintaining a singular analytical lens.

Importantly, as researchers with prior professional experience in coaching and coach supervision, our own developmental orientations and interpretative frameworks may have shaped the way meaning was constructed from the data. While bracketing and reflexive dialogue were consistently used to mitigate bias, we acknowledge that our positionality influenced the interpretative process – an accepted dimension (and limitation) of IPA's double hermeneutic methodology.

Suggestions for future research

This study has not only provided valuable insights into the developmental potential of coach supervision training but has also opened several promising avenues for future research. To further advance our understanding of this field, we propose a range of research directions that could significantly contribute to the body of knowledge. These include conducting longitudinal studies to track the developmental trajectories of coach supervisors over extended periods, which would provide a more comprehensive view of long-term growth patterns. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons of coach supervision training outcomes and developmental patterns could shed light on the role of cultural context in supervisor development.

Further investigation into the specific mechanisms by which reflective practice in coach supervision training enhances cognitive complexity and perspective-taking abilities would deepen our understanding of the growth processes at work. Exploring the relationship between a supervisor's developmental level and their effectiveness in supporting coaches' growth could also yield valuable insights for training programme design. Also, the importance of emotion management and regulation as a process of integrating cognition, emotion, and behaviour in the coach supervision process is another research opportunity revealed by this IPA.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank all coach supervisors who participated in this study as research participants for their time, authenticity, trust, and valuable insights. We also want to thank Dr. Alison Hodge for her guidance on the Informed Consent process. Our research questionnaire was inspired by Drs. Cook-Greuter (2004, 2005), Kegan (1994), and Laske (2023). We do further wish to express our appreciation to the CSA and Oxford Brookes colleagues who gave us their support, input, and review.

Contributors

The primary researchers/authors include Ursula Clidiere, PhD and Martine George, PhD. These are the individuals who designed the study, conducted the research, analyzed the data, and authored the paper.

Disclosure statement

The authors do not have any financial relationships, support, or interests with the training organisations that could potentially influence or be perceived to influence their work. This includes research funding or grants, employment or consulting relationships, stock ownership or options, patents or royalties, or reimbursement of any kind. One of the authors maintains an adjunct role with CSA in the capacity of an assignment reader and none of the study participants has been assessed in that role by the author. The study was self-funded. The authors' contributions were evenly distributed between both parties, including research design, recruitment, interview process, data analysis, evaluation and conclusions drawn. Findings from this research study have been presented at the Annual Conference for Coach Supervision at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK on May 15, 2025. Portions of the manuscript, including assistance with language refinement, citation checks, and formatting consistency, were supported by OpenAI's ChatGPT, used by the authors as a writing and editorial aid.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request. However, access is restricted in accordance with the provisions of the informed consent forms signed by

the study participants. Data may be shared only in a manner that respects participants' confidentiality and complies with the criteria under which the data were collected.

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Appendix

Table A. Semi-Structured Interview Questions – Developmental Journey

Semi- structured Interview Questionnaire* Here is a list of questions designed to reflect on and analyze your experience and growth as a Coach Supervisor during and after your training period. These questions aim to explore a range of topics including self-awareness, emotional insights, practical applications, and changes in your coaching approach: *this questionnaire closely follows the developmental assessment interview guides developed by Dr. Otto Laske (2023) for the developmental assessment of cognitive and social-emotional developmental levels	
1.	Reflecting on your 12–15 months of training as a Coach Supervisor, what have you acquired in terms of: a. Knowledge or insights about yourself b. Knowledge or insights about others c. Clarity in how the world works d. Self-awareness and awareness about your awareness (witnessing yourself) e. Sensitivity to others f. What emotions did you experience? Please recall emotions across the spectrum, including challenging ones (fear, anxiety, anger, shame) and positive ones (joy, curiosity, exuberance, love). Were there states like disorientation or confusion?
2.	How has your awareness of your own emotions and their impact on others evolved since completing the coach supervisor training?
3.	Can we explore your emotional landscape further by going through the following ten prompts? Share your thoughts in a few sentences for each prompt: Success Change Control Limits Outside of Frustration Important to me Sharing Strong stand/conviction Taking risks
4.	What specific practices did you engage in to self-regulate your lived emotional experience during your training? (e.g., reflective practice, creative practice, physical exercise)
5.	Did you utilise social support during your training, such as peer groups, trusted persons, or family?
6.	Can you summarise the transformative shifts you experienced during or because of your training as coach supervisor?
7.	Describe a recent situation where you felt empathy and understanding towards a coachee or supervisee. How did this differ from before the training?
8.	Do you feel that your capacity, maturity, or developmental stance unfolded as part of the coach supervisor training?
9.	In what ways has your ability to establish trust and rapport with coachees or supervisees improved since completing the training?
10.	How do you recognise and respond to cultural differences and diverse perspectives in your coaching supervision sessions, compared to before the training?
11.	Sense making can be envisioned as traversing the following ‘Four Eras’ of thinking. Which era resonates most for you today and has this changed because of supervision training? Have you applied these concepts with your clients? a. Common Sense b. Understanding c. Reasoning d. Practical Wisdom <i>Common Sense:</i> Tends to overlook contradictions, either not recognising them as problematic or lacking the ability to address them. It operates on intuitive and habitual thinking patterns, influenced by cultural norms and personal biases. <i>Reason:</i> Excels in working with contradictions, viewing them as essential for intellectual growth. It acknowledges the existence of a broader totality that reconciles opposing concepts A and non-A, demonstrating a more advanced level of cognitive maturity. <i>Understanding:</i> Confronts contradictions directly, recognising that something cannot simultaneously be both A and non-A. However, it tends to manage contradictions in a limited manner, e.g., the potential for synthesis beyond conflicting concepts. <i>Practical Wisdom:</i> Integrates rationality and intuition, emphasising insight and awareness of the relativistic, uncertain, and paradoxical nature of human problems. It involves synthesising diverse perspectives and navigating complex moral dilemmas with wisdom and compassion, highlighting the inseparable characteristics of mature thinking.
12.	Have you noticed any changes in how you manage your aspirations and the pressures you face in daily life after the training?

13. Can you identify any practices or experiences that enhanced your sense of fulfilment and alignment with your purpose as a coach supervisor?
 14. Knowing what you know today, how would you approach, view, or do things differently at the beginning of your training?
 15. What would be helpful changes in the supervision training curriculum, practice, focus, or support, based on your experience?
 16. What was the most surprising aspect of your lived experience with the training?
 17. How has your coaching changed since you took the supervision training? Do you work differently with your coaching clients now, and if so, how, and why?
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