

Appendix C Practice Example thematic analysis

Code 1 Defining conversational consulting = Insights that explore and open up what this phrase means both in terms of practice and as an abstract construct.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub themes</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Exploring what the experience of conversation feels like in consulting relationships			Code 1 is a very broad code which captured material that relates to a significant number of other codes. The theme and its associated sub-themes do however represent patterns within the data set.
	Hosting group conversations	'For me, a dialogic approach means hosting both one-one conversations with clients as well as group or organisation-wide conversations helped along by processes like World Café(Brown & Isaacs, 2005) and Open Space(Owen, 2008)'	A feature of the data is the interchange-ability of client relationships with the experience of consulting with groups. It suggests that separating the two is not easy. The inference is that consistency of approach when working one-one or with groups is a feature of conversational consulting
	A spirit of service	'By weaving Appreciative Inquiry (AI) with conversational processes I sense new opportunities to be of service to people.'	Implicit in the data and occasionally explicitly is the idea and feeling that a spirit service forms part of the approach.
	A connection between 'inquiry' and 'conversation'	'It felt like you were offering the opportunity to inquire with you into what would work best for the school. ' 'The use of questions to promote conversation was absolutely key and Stefan used questioning and active listening techniques with me also to best understand what my aims were for developing the staff'	A pattern in the data is the links being made by consultant and client with forming questions and conversation. Implicit in this for the consultant is the notion of being engaged in an inquiry process.

		<p>'All of this 'data' enabled me to access my own thoughts about the questions that staff might be asking during this difficult time in the schools' life, and indeed for some in their own professional lives. '</p> <p>'The planning of the questions was fundamental.'</p>	
	The role of listening	<p>'This deep listening was fundamental to developing a sense of what might be useful to offer you'</p> <p>'Alongside this is a practice of listening to our own intuitions and responding appropriately'</p>	Conversation and listening are referenced together within aspects of the data
	A receptive client	<p>'You get it with your mind and your heart and there was never a need for me to struggle to explain what we might be attempting to do.'</p>	The responsiveness of the client to a conversational approach is a feature of the data

Code 2 Contracting with the client =Descriptions of experiences where conversation is perceived to have impacted on how the initial relationship with the client started and developed.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub Themes</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Content and process in initial client/consultant conversations			Given the frequency of references in the data to the initial contact between client and consultant this appears to be particularly vital in establishing the relationship and setting the tone for the whole engagement
	Connecting in conversation by referencing previous shared experiences	'You spoke of previous experiences in changing attitudes and behaviours of staff at one of your previous schools and how you found that a very	Narratives of past experiences form a pattern and seem to help make both client and consultant secure in the developing relationship. Both find common ground.

		rewarding experience. We also talked about a session I led in 2011 on Appreciative Inquiry during your Coaching Masters programme. There was sense you had that we were on the same wavelength in our approach to leading change.'	
	Staying with uncertainty about what is emerging	<p>'Indeed, I really found your willingness Wendy, to stay with the uncertainty about what might emerge as really exciting.'</p> <p>'I sensed freedom and potential emerging in our early contact. As I shared some initial ideas and we bounced them between us you signalled your interest and willingness to take fair risks and this left me excited at what conversational approaches might take shape.'</p>	Common ground and safety seems important given the perception that there are risks for the consultant and for the client in starting a relationship
	Recognising client capabilities and experience	<p>'Also I use collaborative group techniques to allow for greater interactions. I was therefore really interested in the World café approach during my early conversations with Stefan. I had not heard of this approach before. In conversational OD the conversational processes and the changes that happen within them are the key focus.'</p> <p>'Holding to the familiar in peoples experience as they engage in</p>	The client asserts on a number of occasions in the data that they have capabilities and past experience upon which to draw. They are not to be considered by the consultant as entirely helpless. They view the consultant as there to support them with their practice and purposes and the client needs to respect that.

		conversational change also seems important. ‘	
	Using early conversations to play with ideas and noting areas for inquiry	An important factor for me in our initial discussions was discussing and mulling over ideas and Stefan guiding me with framing the most important questions to ask.	Offering the client opportunities in the early stages a change to be creative and play with ideas worked well in this particular context
	Making things concrete with the client—what actually will we be doing	The planning of the questions was fundamental. The structure of the day was important as it allowed for flexibility if staff needed to have longer conversations	There is a pattern in the data of the client emphasising what they perceive as the practicalities of the engagement—what will happen when. At the outset there is a concern for what the engagement enable.

Code 3 Helping the client=The inquirers intuitive sense that their conversational approach benefited the client. This may or may not have been confirmed by the client.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Perceived benefits of a conversational approach to the client			The data contains a number of examples of how the client perceives the value of conversational consulting in this relationship.
	Conversational consulting contributing to clients own leadership	‘It was important that I set the scene for the conversational approach with the staff from the outset of my Headship there’	Albeit nuanced there is a pattern of comments that suggest the conversational approach is helping build confidence in the client about their own leadership
	Encouragement and support	‘There was sense you had that we were on the same wavelength in our approach to leading change’.	This example frames the relationship as one of mutual encouragement and support in times of uncertainty for both client and consultant
	Focus on benefits for the school	‘It felt like you were offering the opportunity to inquire with you into what would work best for the school’	There is a pattern in the conversation of a continuing looping back to the benefits for the school rather than just the client as an individual.
	Desire for a long term relationship	‘You also signalled that you saw this	The wish to extend the relationship suggests

	as evidence of a successful contracting process	as a long term project rather than a one off assignment and that also opened up new possibilities in my mind.'	satisfaction by the client
	Learning for the client about new approaches	'I had not heard of this approach before and it fitted well with my own style of delivering training.'	A benefit for the client is to learn new approaches for themselves

Code 4 Conversation as an organisational change process= Either explicit or implicit illustrations of how conversation changed either relationships or meanings or understandings.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Organisational change and conversational consulting	'Indeed, when Stefan delivered a session on the AI approach I realised that this was the approach that I had used at Kobi Nazrul primary school to lead the school into being a successful primary school' 'So emotions, gut instincts, past narratives, longings for a better future and a passion to further develop ourselves and those around us all contributed to the liveliness in conversation we both enjoyed with one another and in some strange way infected those we worked with. '	The pattern in the data is essentially a set of implied assumptions that conversation is a form of organisational change process in its own right. The few explicit examples recount the clients' previous experience where it was perceived to be effective in the context of Appreciative Inquiry. This speaks of the desire on the part of the consultant and the client to be 'right' about the power of conversation to effect change

Code 5 Development of conversational consulting skills=Description of skills or aptitudes that have appeared to developed through the inquiry process

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
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Skills and attitudes referenced by client and consultant		There is a pattern in the data of both client and consultants referring either implicitly or explicitly to skills and attitudes which they have found to be important in their practice. These are therefore relevant to this inquiry.
	The development of the coaching culture at Kobi Nazrul was organic in its nature. I didn't originally set out to use this particular approach. I did .however, set out with the intention to build a solutions focused team who incorporated open questions and active listening into their approach	Holding intention in relation to organisational culture change Solutions-focussed approach Encouraging open questions Active listening skills
	the conversations I encouraged amongst professionals seemed to make the most difference	Encouraging conversations amongst professionals
	I was keen to be more explicit about using coaching [including appreciative inquiry] as an approach to develop the staff and pupils. This was, therefore, clearly outlined in the school improvement plan	Building conversational change approaches into organisational plans (and thereby into structures)
	I felt that listening to staff and beginning to build a culture of professional dialogue was absolutely necessary	Listening Enabling professional dialogue
	I have learned that if a client is open to the unknown, holding lightly to specific processes and frameworks then this augurs well for something really interesting to be co-created. It felt like you were offering the opportunity to inquire with you into what would work best for the school.	Learning not to advocate specific processes for change to early in the consulting relationship. Maintaining an inquiring mind-set

	‘Sometimes empathy with the staff and children, sometimes for you, and sometimes recollections of my own life experiences that resonated with the situation.’	The consultant connecting past experiences and feelings with what they are experiencing in the moment with the client
	‘At one level, for me, the conversations between staff around questions that matter <u>are</u> the work.’	The consultants own understanding of conversation and the meaning they attach to it.
	‘All these thoughts and impressions I held as I stepped back to take a reflexive position, to consider how and why I was reacting to what I was hearing. This deep listening was fundamental to developing a sense of what might be useful to offer you’	Stepping back and taking a reflexive position in relation to what the consultant is hearing.
	‘creative conversational support from Stefan [particularly as he was not directly involved with primary education’	Using conversation between client and consultant as a creative opportunity.
	You did not attend the morning session Stefan, but when you arrived you ‘fitted into’ co-hosting the session seamlessly. I feel this was due, in part, to the fact that we had planned the session so well together	Planning activities in advance.
	‘is a practice of listening to our own intuitions and responding appropriately. So emotions, gut instincts, past narratives, longings for a better future and a passion to further develop ourselves and those around us all contributed to the liveliness in conversation we both enjoyed with one another and in some strange way	Listening to self and accessing personal values.

	infected those we worked with’.	
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Code 6.Naming and describing skills=Skills specifically identified as relating to conversational consulting

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
See code 5		A review of coding indicated that codes for 5 and 6 often overlapped and given the chosen theme no additional theme is needed.

Code 7 Development of confidence in Conversational consulting=Narratives in which inquirers either explicitly or implicitly indicate that their confidence in using conversational consulting skills has developed over time.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Commitment to professional development	‘a passion to further develop ourselves and those around us’	A pattern in the data is less about confidence and more about a desire to do the work well. Alongside this is a sense that both consultant and client are committed to their own development. This example illustrates this well.

Code 8 Perceived improvement in consulting effectiveness=Judgements of inquirers in relation to how clients experienced the effectiveness (as defined by inquirers) change over time.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Impact of conversational		In this case study the client gave feedback about the

consulting on the clients organisation		outcomes of the activities on school life
	'The staff felt truly empowered by the day and commented on the fact that they had never had the opportunity to talk and interact with each like this before.'	Using conversational approaches offered ways of giving power to staff and offered a new way of interacting
	'This important day has set the scene for developing the conversational practice at the school and is always part of staff training. Developing the school as a coaching school is becoming part of the reality. Fifteen members of staff have expressed an interest in taking coaching training. Staff are becoming more reflective, they have space to discuss their ideas and the energy of the staff group has become more focused and less 'pent up.'	This example connects conversational practice with coaching. It also indicates a desire to continue to discuss ideas as part of the way the school operates
	'We are currently in the process of developing our vision and values'	The client used the conversational process as a precursor to developing the future direction of the organisation