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Contents

THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY
1st International Coaching Psychology Conference
18th and 19th December 2006

To be held at City University, London, UK

Invited speakers and facilitators include:

Judith Bell, Dr Tatiana Bachkirova, Prof Michael Carroll,

Dr Michael Cavanagh, Jonathan Coe, Stefania Grbcic,

Dr Kristina Gyllensten, Angela Hetherington,

Clare Huffington, Prof David Lane, Dr Otto Laske, Dr Ho Law,

Dr Alex Linley, Dr. Almuth McDowall, Prof Stephen Palmer,

Prof Ernesto Spinelli, Dr Dianne Stober, Pauline Willis,

Dr Alison Whybrow

Masterclass topics include:

- Dr Michael Cavanagh: The practice of coaching psychology: Advanced models, tools and techniques for change
- Clare Huffington & Judith Bell: A systems- psychodynamic model of coaching psychology practice
- Prof David Lane: Building a model of supervision
- Dr Alex Linley: Strengths and the coaching psychology engagement
- Prof Ernesto Spinelli: Existential coaching psychology: An introduction
- Dr Dianne Stober: Evidence-based practice in coaching psychology: Integrating perspectives and methods to serve your client

Parallel papers and poster sessions provide some of the latest thinking, research and case studies in coaching psychology.

For Booking Information and full Conference Programme please visit www.city.ac.uk/sgcp or e-mail: events@city.ac.uk. Participants will receive Conference and Workshop attendance certificates as evidence for CPD Logbooks or Practitioner-in-Training Logbooks.

The 2006 membership fee to join SGCP is £3.50. SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'. BPS members can join now and obtain the discounted conference fee.

Editorial – The theory, practice and research base of Coaching Psychology is developing at a fast pace

Michael Cavanagh & Stephen Palmer

WELCOME TO THE SECOND ISSUE of the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. We would like to thank members of the Australian Psychological Society, Interest Group in Coaching Psychology and the British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology for the useful feedback you have given us. In this issue there are slight changes to the publication, for example, we now include a contents page on the inside too.

It is often said that a week in politics is a long time. Of course, it is a well-worn cliché. However, six months in the rapidly expanding field of coaching psychology really is a long time and keeping up with developments is now becoming more challenging. A quick Google of 'coaching psychology' now brings up over 27, 400 links. Admittedly this search includes *Chess Coaching Psychology* and many similar links. More realistically, using Google Scholar when doing a search for 'coaching psychology' only brings up 127 entries. However, this still highlights the growing influence of coaching psychology around the world. There are two coaching psychology publications dedicated to publishing reviewed articles, *The Coaching Psychologist* and the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. The articles from both publications are easily found on the internet and on Google/Google Scholar. This is helping to promote coaching psychology internationally and now we are receiving correspondence from overseas practitioners and researchers who are happy to have found a new professional home.

We would like to welcome Dr Sandy Gordon onto the Editorial Board as the fourth Australian co-editor. Sandy brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role of co-editor. A prolific author in his own right, Sandy has been a reviewer for numerous scientific publications and has served on the editorial boards of *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* and the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Sandy teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in psychology and coaching at the School of Human Movement and Exercise Science, University of Western Australia. He is a practicing coach and consultant with many years experience working with elite sports teams and in organisations. We are pleased to have him on board!

In this issue we have seven papers and one book review. The first paper by Vincenzo Libri and Travis Kemp adds to our understanding and knowledge of the efficacy of cognitive behavioural techniques for performance enhancement within a non-clinical setting, such as those found in organisational environments. The study examined the effects of a cognitive behavioural based executive coaching intervention for a finance sales executive and found that a cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme enhanced the executive's sales performance, core self-evaluation, and global self-ratings of performance following his participation in an executive coaching intervention.

Anthony Grant and Blythe O'Hara lift the lid off Australian life coaching schools. Their research had four major objectives: (1) to identify the types of qualifications,

certifications and accreditations offered by Australian life coaching schools; (2) to provide an overview of the advertised content and cost of life coach training courses; (3) to identify how life coaching schools differentiate between life coaching and mental health treatment; and (4) to explore the marketing statements made about courses, schools, owners and trainers. Surprisingly they concluded that the self-promotional statements of the Australian life coach training industry were flamboyant but not considered outrageous. It would be interesting to undertake further research into life coaching schools in North America and Europe too.

Gavin Dagley's research focused on 17 human resources (HR) professionals' perceptions of executive coaching and their views on efficacy, benefits and return on investment. Structured interviews were employed to elicit their perceptions. The HR professionals indicated strong support for the use of coaching in the future, and all rated their programmes as at least moderately successful. The practitioners also identified a large range of benefits for the individual executives and a smaller range for the organisations. Interestingly, only one practitioner indicated completing a formal measurement of return on investment.

So what are the right questions and when should we ask them in coaching? Carola Hieker and Clare Huffington build on principles and methods originally developed in the family therapy arena, and demonstrate how reflexive questions can be used in coaching psychology. They apply Tomm's taxonomy of questions to Dilts' model of change and bring together theories from systemic therapy with a change management framework based on neurolinguistic programming. They illustrate this with three case studies.

Ho Law, Sara Ireland and Zulfi Hussain's paper is on evaluation of the Coaching Competence Self-Review (CCSR) online tool within an NHS leadership development programme. Their objectives were to develop a Universal Integrated Framework of coaching and evaluate its effectiveness in terms of its impact upon the participants and the organisations. The CCSR consisted of four dimensions (Personal, Social, Cultural, and Professional) and 18 elements with 110 questions. The CCSR was evaluated using linear regression and analyses of variance, supplemented with qualitative review as part of triangulation process. The results found that the competence increased with age/life experience and that there were no differences in competence scores between male and female participants. Personal and Social and Social and Cross-Cultural competences were co-related. However, there were possible cultural differences. Black participants seemed to benefit from the cross-cultural dimension framework as they scored significantly higher than White participants. Asian participants scored somewhere in between the two categories.

Peter Webb suggests that executive career derailment seems to coincide with one of the most significant transitions in life – the midlife 'crisis'. He asserts that career derailment is most commonly caused by insensitivity; both to others needs and to the individuals own developmental needs for authenticity. He believes that executive coaches can form strong developmental relationships with derailed executives through engaging them in the behaviours of individuation and supporting the development of a more authentic self. In his paper he describes this coaching journey illustrated by a case study.

The last paper by Alison Whybrow and Stephen Palmer present the findings from a follow-up survey exploring the practice and opinions of the membership of the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP). It included topics relating to training, supervision, and experience required to become a coaching psychologist. It is worth noting that this follows on from the previous article published in the first issue of the ICPR. This survey of Coaching Psychologists was

conducted in December, 2005, 12 months after the formation of the SGCP. They found that participants wanted the SGCP to maintain a strong presence in the broader coaching arena, and to promote the value that psychology brings to this field of practice. The desire for inclusive methods of accreditation was also a focus. The survey found that a wide range of coaching approaches are popular with coaching psychologists although the facilitation, cognitive and solution focused coaching approaches were the most popular with respondents.

A correction to the editorial published in Issue 1 of the *ICPR*. The paper written by Palmer and Whybrow on 'The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society' (pp.5–11) was largely an historical article intended to cover only the 'nuts and bolts' of how the special group was formed. The confusion regarding the intention of the paper was due to some overly enthusiastic editorialising on my [MC] part (apologies to Stephen and Alison). Of course, it would not have been possible to celebrate all the people who have so selflessly contributed to the development of the coaching psychology in the UK in such a brief article. That undertaking would require tomes, not pages. Our apologies and thanks to all whom by their efforts have helped to create such a vibrant community of coaching psychologists.

Given the salutary reminder we have received regarding the impossibility of writing an all-inclusive history of any group, let alone one as complex as an interest group, the promised paper outlining the formation of the APS Interest Group in Coaching Psychology has been abandoned. Nevertheless, we are forever indebted to all whose contribution led to the formation of the APS IGCP. The establishment of the IGCP was a landmark event in that it appears to have been the first time a professional Psychological Association had formally recognised coaching psychology.

Future developments

In 2007 we intend publishing three issues of the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. The Spring Edition with be a Special Symposium issue on Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology. We are keen for additional papers for the Summer and Autumn issues. Due to the reviewing process, papers can take a while to be accepted. Therefore, if you are keen to submit a paper, please do not leave it until a few weeks before the publishing deadlines! It's been a great year for coaching psychology. Play your part and write a paper for the *ICPR*. We look forward to your contributions in 2007.

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1st International Coaching Psychology Conference
18th and 19th December 2006

To be held at City University, London, UK

A 'not to be missed event', offering a series of keynote papers, full-day masterclasses, research and case study presentations, skills-based sessions and round-table discussions.

Keynote speakers will be:

Dr Dianne Stober: Evidence-based practice in coaching psychology: Another medical model…not!

Prof Stephen Palmer: When 'coaching' isn't enough.

Dr Alex Linley: Coaching psychology and positive psychology: Points of convergence and new perspectives.

Dr Michael Cavanagh: What makes for a professional coach? Or What every good coach needs to know?

Prof David Lane: Coaching psychology research - what will it take to build a profession?

Pauline Willis: Bringing it all together: What does the future hold for coaching psychology?

Themes of the Conference include:
- **Ethics, Professional Practice and Supervision**
- **Psychometrics and Coaching**
- **Coaching Competence**
- **Positive Psychology in Coaching Psychology**
- **Multi-cultural, Diversity and Gender Coaching**

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Assessing the efficacy of a cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme

Vincenzo Libri & Travis Kemp

Objectives: *Cognitive behavioural techniques have been the mainstay of psychological treatment for many psychologists in clinical practice. However, there is little known in relation to the efficacy of cognitive behavioural techniques for performance enhancement within a non-clinical setting, such as those found in organisational environments. The present study examined the effects of a cognitive behavioural based executive coaching intervention for a finance sales executive.*
Design: *A within subject, ABAB single case design was utilised in this study.*
Methods: *The participant was a 30-year-old Australian male, employed as a full-time finance sales executive. Each phase of the single case design had a duration of three weeks. Follow-up measures were taken at six months (week 36) and at 18 months (week 88) after the conclusion of the intervention.*
Results: *It was shown that a cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme enhanced a 30-year-old Australian male finance executive's sales performance, core self-evaluation, and global self-ratings of performance following his participation in an executive coaching intervention.*
Conclusions: *The present study suggests that executive coaches should consider incorporating cognitive behavioural techniques into their coaching programmes. Further research into executive coaching models, approaches and outcomes, is needed, particularly by academics within the field of organisational psychology.*

The context of executive coaching

KILBURG (2000) DEFINES EXECUTIVE coaching as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation, and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals. The consultant seeks to improve the client's professional performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement.

Within the literature, this definition appears to represent a comprehensive view of what executive coaching is (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kiel *et al.*, 1996; Olesen, 1996; Peterson, 1996; Richard, 1999; Saporito, 1996; Sperry, 1993, 1996; Whitherspoon & White, 1996a, 1996b; Cavanagh *et al.*, 2005). It has also been reported that executive coaching is a professional relationship characterised by a highly confidential personal learning process that focuses not only on interpersonal issues, but also intrapersonal ones (Diedrich, 1996; O'Brien, 1997; Witherspoon & White, 1996a).

The coaching literature is deficient in empirical investigations, with much of the peer reviewed literature focussing on the conceptual and theoretical analysis of coaching. Indeed, much of the literature to date has focussed on the development of models, techniques and methodologies for coaching (Diedrich, 1996; Frisch, 2001; Giglio *et al.*, 1998; Hellervik *et al.*, 1992; Jay, 2003; Katz & Miller, 1996; Kemp, 2006; Levinson, 1996; Peterson, 1996; Richard, 2003; Saporito, 1996; Storey, 2003; Waclawski & Church, 1999;).

While many models have been presented within the literature, there has been little effort in the empirical validation of models or the scientific study of executive coaching

interventions and the evaluation of outcomes of such interventions (Kilburg, 1996). Whilst there is a lack of empirical research concerning executive coaching, there are studies within the psychological literature supporting the concept and positive outcomes of executive coaching (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

The executive coaching literature has several issues to address. Specifically, research must consider validating coaching models as well as coaching processes in order to best explain how such processes can account for positive behavioural change and performance outcomes. The coaching relationship is perceived as being central to the change process, yet the literature largely devoid of any deeper exploration of such matters (Hargrove, 1995; Kilburg, 2000; O'Neill, 2000).

It has also been asserted within the executive coaching literature that psychologists are perhaps the best qualified for offering executive coaching services (Kilburg, 1996, 2000). Therefore, psychologists would appear to hold some responsibility in conducting, supporting and participating in the research being conducted on the efficacy of executive coaching as an intervention (Brotman *et al.*, 1998; Diedrich & Kilburg, 2001; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

Psychology has many tools, techniques and strategies that lend themselves to enhancing both the coaching relationship and processes for eliciting positive outcomes, personally and professionally. Examples include cognitive and behavioural techniques as well as problem solving strategies and communication techniques.

The present study

Whilst it has been acknowledged that there has been little research concerning the efficacy of specific psychological tools and executive coaching psychology (Brotman *et al.*, 1998), there is a substantial body of research concluding that coaching psychology has a positive impact on leadership skills (Conway, 2000; Kilburg, 1997; Saporito, 1996) and also

emotional competencies (Laske, 1999; Tobias, 1996). Although such conclusions indicate the positive effects of coaching, Olivero *et al.* (1997) note that there have been few studies examining the efficacy of executive coaching psychology and objective performance empirically.

A major technique reserved for psychologists is cognitive behavioural therapy, yet there is little research in regards to the application of cognitive behavioural techniques and executive coaching outcomes. Perhaps the most conclusive study of the positive effects of cognitive behavioural techniques and psychology is that of Grant (2002). With a sample of first year tertiary level accounting students, Grant (2002) compared the effects of a cognitive only approach (CT), with a behavioural only approach (BT), with a cognitive behavioural approach (CBT) on students' grade point average (GPA), self-regulation, self-concept, general mental health, private self-consciousness, self-reflection, and personal insight.

Overtly, the main goal of coaching psychology is to increase performance, thus in this case the goal was to increase students' GPA (Grant, 2002). However, one of the central constructs of goal attainment is self-regulation. Locke and Latham (1990) concluded that goal setting increases performance from 10 per cent to 30 per cent. Implicit in such performance increases is the individual's ability to self-regulate.

According to Garcia (1996) self-regulation refers to the process by which the individual controls and directs their actions in the pursuit of their goals. Therefore, goal-directed self-regulation is a series of processes where the individual sets a goal, devises a plan of action, initiates such action, monitors their performance, evaluates their performance by comparison to some standard, and based on such an evaluation adjusts the action plan for further enhancement and goal attainment.

Grant (2002) notes that the process of self-regulation provides basis for the individual's ability for efficient goal attainment.

Based on the social-learning theory of Bandura (1986), there are three key processes involved in instigating directed change and goal-directed self-regulation. The first is self-monitoring (of thoughts and behaviours); the second is self-evaluation (making comparisons of performance to some standard); and thirdly self-reaction (creating purposeful change in order for goal attainment).

Through empirical investigation, Grant (2002) concluded that the cognitive behavioural coaching approach was indeed the most powerful in enhancing performance and goal attainment, as well as enhancing self-regulation, self-concept, and general mental health. The cognitive behavioural coaching programme was also found to maintain and elevate performance increases at post and follow up measures. Neither the cognitive approach, behavioural approach, nor the cognitive behavioural approach had any effect on private self-consciousness, self-reflection, or insight. Similar studies such as that reported by Grant and Greene (2001) also conclude that the cognitive behavioural coaching psychology approach increased performance and decreased stress and depression.

The present study sought to replicate the study of Grant (2002) by applying cognitive behavioural coaching psychology principles within an organisational context. Indeed Grant (2002) himself recommended that the coaching study be replicated with an adult population in attaining 'real life' goals such as enhancing work performance.

The present study also sought to validate the above findings by applying coaching psychology to a finance executive. The executive in question acts as a lending broker, finding clients the best possible loan for the purchase of domestic and commercial real estate. The present study applied a cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme for the performance enhancement of the finance sales executive.

Research questions

The present study sought to support the conclusions of Grant (2002), namely the efficacy of cognitive behavioural techniques within a coaching psychology paradigm.

Specifically, the following research questions were explored.
- Would the performance of a finance sales executive improve as a result of his participation in an executive coaching intervention that utilised cognitive behavioural methods?
- Would the core self-evaluation ratings of a finance sales executive improve as a result of his participation in an executive coaching intervention that utilised cognitive behavioural methods?
- Would the subjective global self-ratings of a finance sales executive improve as a result of his participation in an executive coaching intervention that utilised cognitive behavioural methods?

Method
Participant
The participant of the present study was a 30-year-old Australian-born male. The participant was a full-time finance sales executive who voluntarily took part in the present study.

Single case design
The present study employed an A (baseline) – B (intervention) – A (intervention withdrawal) – B (intervention) single case design. Each phase of the single case design had duration of three weeks, thus the total length of the study was 12 weeks. Follow-up measures were taken at week 36, six months after the conclusion of the intervention, and at week 88 giving an 18-month follow-up period. These follow-up periods enabled the collection of valuable longitudinal data.

The single case design, or time-series approach, provides multiple data points that allow for a 'fine grain' analysis of the co-variation of the executive coaching intervention and the outcome variables over time (Grunzig, 1988; Moran & Fonagy, 1987).

This is advantageous as time-series data provides immediate feedback for the investigator and the participant. Consequently, the programme could be evaluated instantaneously and modified if and when required.

Interpretation of the significance of the coaching intervention, practically speaking, is also much easier than an experiment (Jones *et al.*, 1993). The A–B–A–B single case design attempts to control for extraneous variables and also attempts to show cause and effect when the programme is introduced, withdrawn and introduced once more in distinct time phases. In essence it allows a comparison between stages, in order to get a better 'view' of the effects of the executive coaching programme through control phases, rather than control groups.

Inferential statistics are not necessary, as practical significance can be determined through the observation of trend within the graphical data. Graphical data reveals changes in trend and slope from baseline to intervention, and between control phases, also highlighting latency of change. The single case design provides a practical way of evaluating a theory or hypothesis, in this case substantiating the conclusions of Grant's (2002) cognitive behavioural coaching programme with an academic sample, and applying the coaching programme for performance enhancement within an organisational context.

Measures

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)
The BAI is a 21-item self-report inventory, with each item representing symptoms of anxiety. The BAI was used as a screening instrument for study inclusion. The participant is required to rate the degree that they have experienced a symptom of anxiety in the past week using the rating scale not at all (0), mildly (1), moderately (2) or severely (3). Examples of symptoms are nervous, terrified and feeling hot.

Higher scores are indicative of anxiety. According to Beck and Steer (1993) the BAI has an internal consistency of 0.94 and a test-retest reliability of 0.75. In reference to validity, the BAI was found to significantly correlate with the Hamilton Anxiety Scale ($r=0.51$) and the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) ($r=0.58$ for trait and $r=0.47$ for state) (Beck & Steer, 1993).

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II)
The BDI-II is a 21-item self-report inventory, with each item representing symptoms of depression. The BDI-II was used as a screening instrument for study inclusion. Each item has four statements which the participant is required to select from; circling the statement which best describes their experience of that particular depressive symptom in the past week.

An example is the item sadness and it's associated four statements; 'I do not feel sad', 'I feel sad much of the time', 'I am sad all of the time', and 'I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it.' Each statement is rated from 0 to 3 and higher scores are indicative of depression. According to Beck, Steer and Brown (1996) the BDI-II has an internal consistency of 0.92 and a test-retest reliability of 0.93. In reference to validity, the BDI-II was found to significantly correlate with the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression ($r=0.71$) and the BDI-I ($r=0.93$), (Beck *et al.*, 1996).

Sales performance
Sales performance, an outcome measure, was assessed through the average of four separate but related measures. Such measures were the amount of client leads generated per week, the number of client loan interviews per week, the number of loan applications submitted per week and the number of loans approved per week. All measures were recorded on a weekly basis.

Core self-evaluation scale (CSES)
The CSES, an outcome measure, is a 12-item scale measuring the higher order trait of core self-evaluation. Judge *et al.* (2003) found the CSES indicative of four well established personality traits of self-esteem ($\alpha=0.80$ to 0.89), generalised self-efficacy

(α=0.80 to 0.89), neuroticism (α=0.87 to 0.89), and locus of control (α=0.57 to 0.70).

Examples of items are 'When I try, I generally succeed' and 'Sometimes I feel depressed.' The participant rates each item using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The CSES has also been found to predict job satisfaction (r=0.82 to 0.83), job performance (r=0.96), and life satisfaction (r=0.81 to 0.85), (Judge *et al.*, 2003).

Subjective global self-rating of performance
An outcome measure, the participant was asked to rate their own performance on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicated absolute worst performance, 5 indicated average performance, and 10 was indicative of absolute best performance. Qualitative data was also gathered during performance interviews with the participant, discussing the participant's subjective rating of their performance relative to their goals, values, and problem solving skills.

Procedure
In seeking to replicate the methodology used by Grant (2002), the participant was first screened for psychopathology, specifically measured for symptomology of anxiety and depression using the BAI and BDI-II respectively. The participant exhibited no such psychopathology and, therefore, met the inclusion criteria of the study.

The A (baseline) – B (intervention) – A (intervention withdrawal) – B (intervention) single case design began with three weeks of baseline measures. Every Sunday morning for the first three weeks of the study, the participant was measured on all outcome measures, namely sales performance, core self-evaluation and also provided a subjective global self-rating of performance.

The second phase of the study introduced the executive coaching intervention. The intervention was a cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme based on the cognitive behavioural coaching programme of Grant, (2002). The intervention took part

at the end of week 3 and was taught in one four-hour session on a Sunday morning.

Based on Locke (1996), and Latham and Locke (1991), the participant was taught to set specific, measurable, attractive, realistic, and time framed goals (SMART goals). The participant was also informed about the cyclical nature of moving through the stages of change, as described by the Transtheoretical model of change (TTM) of Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente (1994). The Transtheoretical model of change describes six stages of change; pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and relapse. It was emphasised to the participant that change would not occur linearly from one stage to the next, but rather cyclically, where relapse was a common and natural part of the process.

The participant was shown how to monitor thoughts and feelings using the downward arrow techniques (Burns, 1989) and the laddering technique (McKay & Fanning, 1991). These techniques are a series of self-questioning statements which lead the participant to an understanding of any dysfunctional schemata, self-defeating beliefs and feelings. The participant was taught to modify negative or self-defeating thoughts and feelings by using motivational self-talk, a process of cognitive restructuring (Manning & Payne, 1996; Neck & Manz, 1992; Nelson-Jones, 1997). The participant also kept a logbook of successful work performance, specifically the number of finance loans approved, finance loans submitted, generating finance sales leads and finance sales interviews with prospective clients.

Also, the participant identified a core set of values and monitored behaviour that was congruent with such values in order to enhance work performance as suggested by Swenson and Herche (1994). The final aspect of the executive coaching programme was instruction on problem solving. The participant was taught problem solving techniques, as poor problem solving has been shown to contribute towards anxiety and depression (Cassidy & Long, 1996) and has

also been shown to impair performance (Blankstein *et al.*, 1992; Priester & Clum, 1993).

The participant was interviewed weekly during the intervention phase and provided outcome data, namely sales performance, core self-evaluation and a subjective global self-rating of performance. The intervention phase lasted a total of three weeks. At the end of the sixth week, the intervention was withdrawn and the participant was asked to return to their original methods of work. The participant again provided weekly outcome measures of sales performance, core self-evaluation and a subjective global self-rating of performance during the intervention withdrawal phase.

The executive coaching intervention was re-introduced in the final three weeks of the study and the participant was again measured weekly on all outcome measures, namely sales performance, core self-evaluation and a subjective global self-rating of performance. The participant was also asked to provide data on outcome measures six-months after the conclusion of the study (week 36) to evaluate the long-term outcomes of the executive coaching intervention.

Results

The A–B–A–B single case design shows weekly changes in the outcome variables of sales performance, core self-evaluation and subjective ratings of performance over time. The changes in outcome variables can be observed, beginning at baseline, through to the introduction of the intervention, intervention withdrawal and the reintroduction of the intervention through to the six-month follow-up measures. On all outcome measures, it was observed that initial baselines exhibited clinical stability to warrant the introduction of the treatment variable, namely the cognitive behavioural coaching programme.

It can be observed from Figure 1 that the finance sales executive exhibits an increase in sales performance from baseline (weeks 1A to 3A) through to the introduction of the executive coaching programme (weeks 4B to 6B). The trend of Figure 1 also shows a dip in performance in the first week of the intervention withdrawal phase (week 7A) and the first week of the reintroduction of the executive coaching intervention (week 10B), both dips, however, were immediately followed by recoveries in performance.

Overall, Figure 1 shows the utility of the executive coaching programme, highlighting an increase in performance from baseline through to the end of the 12-week study and continues to show performance maintenance at six-month follow-up (week 36F) and 18-month follow-up (week 88F) relative to baseline. Such a trend supports the efficacy and utility of the executive coaching programme in enhancing sales performance within the finance sales executive and the sustainability of this performance enhancement over time.

In regards to core self-evaluation, it can be observed from Figure 2 that the finance sales executive exhibits a sound core self-evaluation ranging from 51 to 58, where 60 is the highest core self-evaluation score possible, indicating maximum positive adjustment.

Figure 2 shows stable core self-evaluation ratings in baseline (weeks 1A to 3A), followed by some variability in core self-evaluation scores within the second phase of the study, the introduction of the executive coaching programme (weeks 4B to 6B). Within the intervention withdrawal phase (weeks 7A to 9A) core self-evaluation scores again stabilise, followed by a continuous increase of scores within the final phase of the study, the reintroduction of the executive coaching intervention (weeks 10B to 12B).

Overall, Figure 2 shows the utility of the executive coaching programme, highlighting an increase of core self-evaluation from baseline through to the end of the 12-week study and continues to show core self-evaluation maintenance at six-month follow-up (week 36F) relative to baseline. Longitudinal data (week 88F) indicates a

Figure 1: Weekly changes in the average sales performance (KPI) of the finance sales executive.
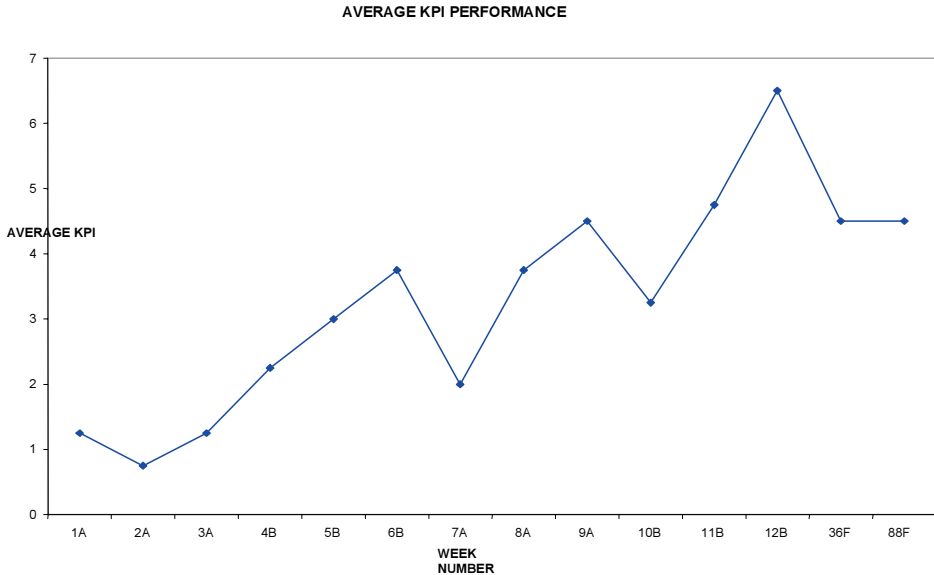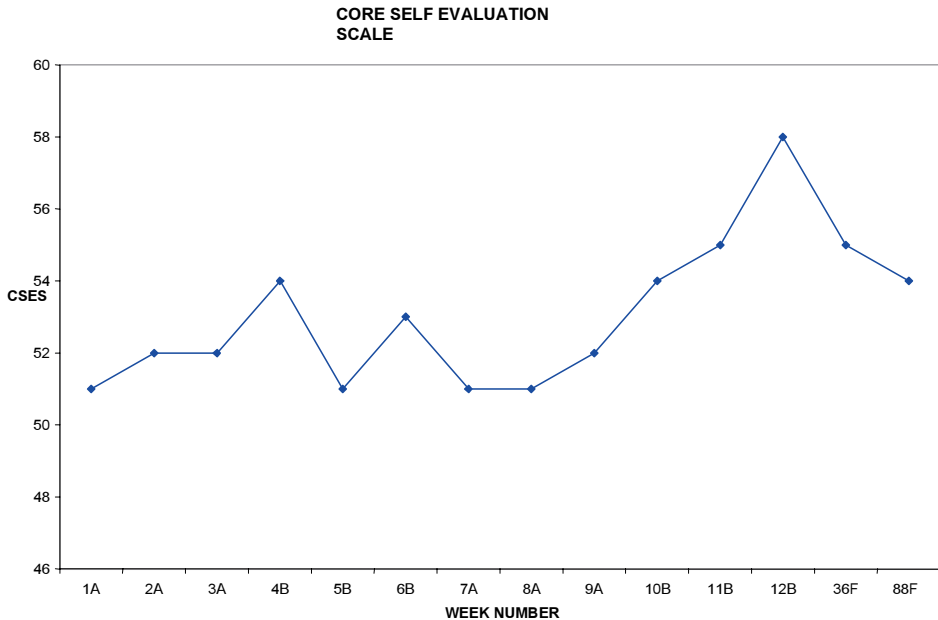
AVERAGE KPI PERFORMANCE

Figure 2: Weekly changes in the core self-evaluation (CSES) of the finance sales executive.

CORE SELF EVALUATION SCALE

minor decrease in core self evaluation over time. Such a trend supports the efficacy and utility of the executive coaching programme in enhancing core self-evaluation within the finance sales executive.

The finance sales executive was asked to rate their own performance on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 indicates maximum performance and 1 indicates poorest performance and 5 is indicative of average performance.

Figure 3 shows the global self-rating of performance of the finance sales executive throughout the 12-week study and at 6-month follow-up. It can be observed that the general trend of Figure 3 shows an increase from baseline through to the conclusion of the 12-week study in the global self-rating of performance of the finance sales executive. It can also be observed that the increase in the global self-rating of performance of the finance sales-executive is maintained at the six-month follow-up measure (week 36F) and the 18-month follow-up measure (week 88F), relative to baseline.

Overall, Figure 3 provides support for the utility of the executive coaching programme, highlighting an increase in the global self-rating of performance from baseline through to the end of the 12-week study and continues to show maintenance of the global self-rating of performance at both the six-month and 18-month follow-up measures relative to baseline. Such a trend lends specific support to the efficacy and utility of the executive coaching programme in enhancing global self-rating of performance within the finance sales executive.

Discussion

Due to the nature of the single case design or time series approach, the results in this study included no statistical analyses. Instead, the interpretation of the efficacy of the cognitive behavioural executive coaching programme was completed through the observation of graphical trend data. By observing changes in data through graphical analysis, the effects of the executive coaching programme could be determined over time (Jones *et al.*, 1993).

Graphical trend analysis supported the efficacy of the executive coaching programme in enhancing sales perform-ance, core self-evaluation and global self-ratings of performance. The graphs of each outcome variable showed consistent improvements over time, which were all maintained at follow-up relative to baseline measures. This trend was most evident in the performance outcomes of global self-ratings of performance and core self-evaluation ratings. In comparison, the graph of average finance sales performance, whilst overall showing general performance enhancement over time, also showed two significant dips in performance in weeks 7A (the first week of

Figure 3: Weekly changes in the self–rating of performance of the finance sales executive.

PERFORMANCE SELF-RATING
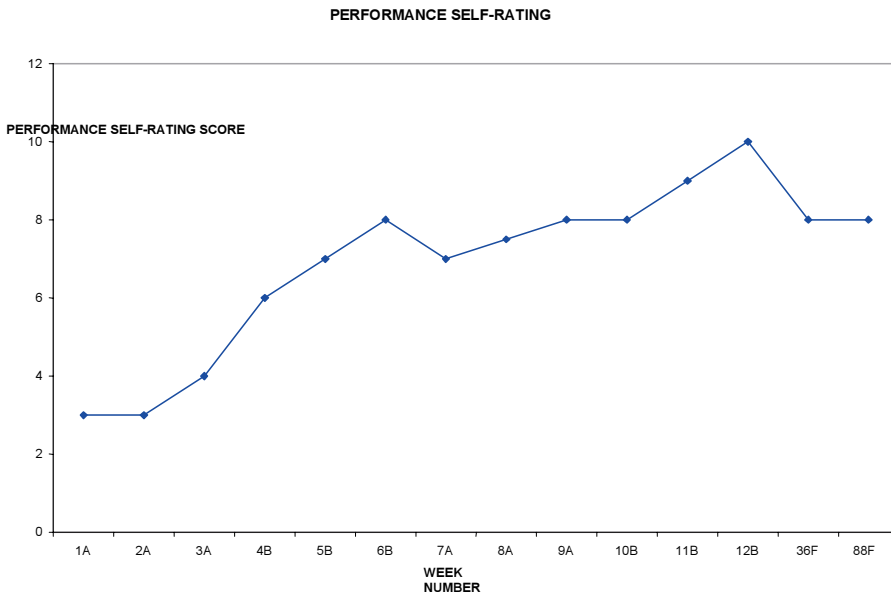
intervention withdrawal) and 10B (the first week of the reintroduction of the executive coaching intervention).

The participant accounted for such performance dips by explaining that in week 7A, it proved difficult to maintain performance when having to revert to old methods of work without setting weekly performance goals and having a specific goal plan. The dip in sales performance in week 10B was also due to adjustment, in particular returning to the executive coaching intervention, specifically setting weekly sales performance goals and adhering to a specific goal plan. It should be noted that although dips in sales performance occurred in weeks 7A and 10B, both weeks elicited sales performance measures that were higher than baseline measures.

It is observed that performance did not return to baseline levels at either intervention withdrawal or at follow up measures. Therefore, it appears that a positive cumulative effect over time of the coaching intervention occurred and hence these results appear to support and replicate the findings of Grant (2002) upon which the present study is based. Grant (2002) found through empirical investigation, that a coaching programme based on cognitive-behavioural techniques was most powerful in enhancing performance and goal attainment, as well as enhancing self-regulation, self-concept, and general mental health. Grant (2002) also concluded that the cognitive-behavioural coaching programme maintained and elevated academic performance at post and follow up measures. Similar studies such as that reported by Grant and Greene (2001) also conclude that the cognitive-behavioural coaching psychology approach increased performance and decreased stress and depression.

Current literature suggests that executive coaching must be shown to have positive outcomes that are measurable and observable (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kilburg, 1996, 2000). It has also been purported (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson,

2001; Kilburg, 1996, 2000) that such outcomes should be focussed on overall organisational performance and development through the behavioural change of the executive. The present study was able to highlight this by showing performance enhancement of the individual executive, thus having a positive effect overall on the organisation. Simply put; the greater number of finance sales, the better the bottom line, both for the individual finance executive and for the organisation as a whole.

This is perhaps the single most important factor in executive coaching. Executive coaches are required to provide positive outcomes for their clients, and within the organisational context the organisation should benefit overall from the productivity and performance enhancement of the executive being coached (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

The present study goes some way in addressing the lack of empirical evidence for executive coaching outcomes and assessing particular psychological techniques for the enhancement of executive coaching and overall performance enhancement. The present study found the cognitive behavioural techniques provide an effective framework for executive coaching and found support for executive coaching as an intervention for job performance enhancement, personal development and organisational benefit. Furthermore, the added strength offered by the often overlooked longitudinal data gathered at 18-months post-intervention provides for compelling support for the efficacy of such an intervention.

Study limitations
Whilst the present study found positive outcomes as a consequence of executive coaching, it is unable to conclude cause-and-effect. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the executive coaching intervention was solely responsible for sales performance enhancement, core self-evaluation improvements or enhanced global self-ratings of performance. The reason for this is due to

the nature of the methodology of the study.

Whilst the present study did not utilise a pre and post intervention, treatment and control group, quasi- experimental design, its single case design does provide for a high degree of internal validity. The single case design or time series approach also provides a practical way of evaluating a theory or hypothesis, in this case substantiating Grant's (2002) cognitive-behavioural coaching programme and its practical applications to an organisational context. However, it is noted that reliability is compromised, due to the lack of inter-observer reliability in particular. Unfortunately this is mainly due to the study taking place in an applied environment and therefore the generalisability of results is limited.

A further limitation of the present study is the time allocated to baseline, treatment and withdrawal stages (three weeks per stage). However, due to the limited time practitioners have available to interact with their clients together with the commercial expectations of such coaching interventions, it is difficult to justify long periods of inactivity for the purposes of establishing baseline stability.

Engagement of cognitive behavioural coaching is subject to the commercial nature of an organisation, influenced by the practical constraints of time, budget and organisational objectives, and, therefore, provides no opportunity to conduct a true experiment. In order to assist clients and ascertain whether an executive coaching programme is efficacious, an organisational psychologist may employ a single case design using a multiple baseline A–B–A–B approach, satisfying both agendas.

Conclusion

The present study found that a cognitive behavioural executive coaching intervention was shown to be efficacious in enhancing the sales performance, core self-evaluation and global self-rating of performance of a finance sales executive. Executive coaches who seek to enhance the performance and well-being of their clients should consider incorporating cognitive behavioural techniques into their coaching programmes.

It is suggested that further research be conducted investigating and validating executive coaching models, approaches and outcomes, as well as validating the efficacy and utility of specific psychological techniques for the basis of executive coaching. It is also suggested that further research concerning executive coaching be conducted by academics within the field of organisational psychology. Such research should provide empirical evidence for executive coaching and psychological techniques for organisational performance enhancement, via sound experimental designs such as the use of experimental and control groups.

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The self-presentation of commercial Australian life coaching schools: Cause for concern?

Anthony M. Grant & Blythe O'Hara

Objectives: The study had four major objectives: (1) to identify the types of qualifications, certifications and accreditations offered by Australian life coaching schools; (2) to provide an overview of the advertised content and cost of life coach training courses; (3) to identify how life coaching schools differentiate between life coaching and mental health treatment; and (4) to explore the marketing statements made about courses, schools, owners and trainers.

Design: This study employed a qualitative research design in which information on Australian life coaching school's were drawn from their websites. Emergent themes were coded and analyses conducted on the basis of those themes.

Methods: Following an internet search, the emergence of broad categories and themes related to the aims of the study were documented, leading to the identification of a group of core categories and a final process of comparison between schools.

Results: Of the 14 Australian life coaching schools identified, six claimed to be International Coach Federation accredited and five offered courses under the Australian Qualifications Framework. Cost for courses varied between A\$1070 and A\$9990. Nine of the 14 schools made no explicit distinction between life coaching and treatment for mental health issues, and one school stated that life coaching could be used to deal with anxiety-related problems. Self-promotional statements about teachers and owners varied greatly from claims of university affiliations to prior experience as a cordon bleu chef. The claims made as to the earning potential of life coaches were not unrealistic.

Conclusions: In general, the self-promotional statements of the Australian life coach training industry were flamboyant but only a few were considered outrageous. Recommendations made include that schools become Registered Training Organisations, that students check the claimed accreditations, academic affiliations of schools, and validity of qualifications and credentialing, and that schools make explicit the distinctions and boundaries between mental health treatment and life coaching.

Keywords: Life coaching, coach training, evidence-based coaching.

L IFE COACHING CAN BE BROADLY defined as a collaborative solution focused, results orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and professional life of normal, non-clinical clients (Grant, 2003). Because of its emphasis on enhancing well-being, personal functioning and goal attainment, life coaching can be considered to be a para-therapeutic methodology. The professions of therapeutic helpers such as psychologists, psychiatrists or social workers and their training is regulated and carefully governed in Australia. However, there are no regulations governing life coach training. Indeed, little is know about the characteristics of Australian life coach training schools, their marketing claims, the kinds of qualifications and certifications they offer, the qualifications of the owners of these schools, or how they address mental health issues. This paper presents the results of an exploratory study that sought to examine the above issues, and makes a series of recommendations for the future development of the life coach training industry.

Past research on the Australian life coaching industry

We do not know much about the key characteristics of the Australian life coaching industry. One investigation into the characteristics of Australian coaches, based on responses from 148 Australian coaches (Spence *et al.*, 2006), found that only 12 per cent of respondents had more than five years coaching experience. Although only a minority of coaches had a background in psychology or counselling, some of the most common issues dealt with in coaching were reported as being relationship and interpersonal skills issues, and approximately 10 per cent of the coaches surveyed indicated that they commonly coached clients in relation to issues of self-esteem, self-worth, personal loss, life crises, social isolation and distress.

To the present authors' knowledge the only other study into the characteristics of Australian coaches is a working paper focused specifically on business coaching (Clegg *et al.*, 2003). Surveying 42 business coaching firms, they found (and along similar lines to Spence *et al.*, 2006), that business coaching firms in Australia tended to be young and small, with 65 per cent of firms in business for less than five years, 86 per cent employing less than five people and more than 50 per cent of businesses working out of home offices. Thus coaching in Australia thus appears to be a young, cottage industry in the early stages of maturation.

The training of life coaches and mental health issues: One size fits all?

Coaches appear to be committed to receiving coach-specific education and training. Spence *et al.* (2006) found that 90 per cent of respondents reported have taken some form of coach-specific training. An international survey of 2529 coaches by Grant and Zackon (2004) found that 90.3 per cent of respondents stated that they had enrolled in a coach training programme of some sort, and over a 12-month period, the majority of coaches (58.5 per cent) surveyed had engaged in at least 30 hours of coach-specific training.

However, quantity is not necessarily quality. Many life coaching training programmes are heavily-marketed, atheoretical proprietary 'six-steps-to-your-perfect-life' coaching systems, rather than a rigorous theoretically-based education in the helping skills of human change. There have been concerns that such atheoretical coach training programmes result in inappropriate one-size-fits-all coaching interventions (Kauffman & Scoular, 2004), and these may cause harm to clients who have undiagnosed mental health problems (Berglas, 2002).

Although coaching is aimed at non-clinical populations it may be that some individuals seek coaching as a socially-acceptable form of therapy. Indeed, recent studies have found that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of individuals presenting for life coaching met clinical mental health criteria (Green *et al.*, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005). Thus an important part of any life coach training programme should be a clear distinction between coaching and therapy or counselling. Indeed, ethical and professional practice demands that life coach training programmes should teach life coaches how to recognise mental health problems and how to make appropriate treatment referrals.

To date no research has examined the characteristics of Australian commercial life coach training schools. In an environment of rapid growth and frequent hyperbole such as in the life coaching arena, it is important to determine what Australian life coaching schools offer in their courses, and their marketing and self-promotional claims. Such factors are likely to have an impact on the kind of students attracted to the courses, students' expectations about course outcomes, and will have an impact on public perceptions of life coaching and the future development of the life coaching industry.

Given that life coaches work as paratherapeutic helping professionals, life coach training schools have a clear duty of care to offer qualifications, certifications and accreditations that are meaningful, to explicitly address issues of mental health in their

promotional materials, and to provide a well-grounded education in life coaching in a way that models ethical professional practice (Auerbach, 2001; Berglas, 2002)

Delineating qualifications, certifications and accreditations

Life coaching schools operate within an unregulated commercial market. Any one can offer life coach training. In a highly competitive market, a key factor in the process of attracting students may be the perceived credibility and status of the award or title bestowed on the student after completing the course. Awards and titles such as 'Level 7 Master Coach', or 'Certified Master Mentor Coach' abound.

Terms such as 'qualification', 'certification' and 'accreditation' and are widely and interchangeably used in the promotion and the marketing of life coach training. These terms have different meanings. It is not clear that either the schools themselves nor the general public is able to distinguish between these terms. Suck lack of clarity does not help potential students evaluate the worth of such awards and make well-informed decisions about which life coach training school to choose.

A *qualification* is a formal award 'issued by a relevant approved body in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs' (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002, p.v). In Australia, each State or Territory has the legislative responsibility for authorising the issuance of a qualification. These are ordinarily carried out by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) or by a body authorised under statute such as a public or private university (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002). Such bodies deliver training and conduct assessments, and are authorised to issue nationally recognised qualifications in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006).

The only non-university vocational qualifications below a bachelor degree that are formally recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) are Certificates I to IV, the Diploma and the Advanced Diploma. These are vocational training awards equivalent to trade certificates. A Certificate IV is generally held to be the equivalent of six to nine months of a bachelor degree, with an Advanced Diploma being approximately equivalent to one to two years of a bachelor degree (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002). In Australia training for these non-university awards is conducted by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, adult and community education centres, and private RTOs. Private RTOs vary in size from home-based one-person business to large corporations.

In contrast to the rigour associated with the standardised assessment necessary for the award of a qualification, a *certification* is merely a formal acknowledgement of successful achievement of a defined set of outcomes (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006). Thus a 'coaching certification' carries far less weight than a formal government-recognised qualification. There have been concerns that the sheer number of 'coaching certifications' on offer has undermined the currency of the term 'certification', and that commercial coaching certifications are primarily a marketing tool and revenue generator for commercial coaching schools and do little to guarantee training standards or protect the public (for an extended discussion of these issues see Carr, 2005).

An *accreditation* refers to the official recognition of a course by a requisite body or authority. The real value of any accreditation is dependant on the authority of the accrediting body. Accreditation normally involves the meeting of a set of standards in terms of the qualifications of the teachers, and specific levels of rigour in the teaching and assessment process itself. Formal qualifica-

tions within Australia are accredited by the requisite State or Territory course accrediting body in accordance with the standards for state and territory Registering Course Accrediting Bodies (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006). However, many coaching schools have established their own accreditation bodies, and are in essence self-accredited (Carr, 2005).

The issue of self-accreditation and the self-awarding of impressive sounding titles is an important one as the general public is not well-informed as to the worth of established academic qualifications and accreditations (Lancaster & Smith, 2002) let alone coaching-related titles, and may rely on impressive sounding titles to guide them in their selection of a coach training school. Although such titles may sound impressive to potential students, the real value and credibility of these is uncertain.

Summary of the aims of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the number, nature and type of life coaching schools available in Australia. In particular the objectives of this study were:

- To identify the types of qualifications, certifications and accreditations offered by commercial Australian life coaching schools.
- To provide an overview of the advertised content, assessment processes, cost and duration of courses by which people can be trained as life coaches.
- To identify how the promotional material of life coaching schools deals with the relationship between coaching, mental health and therapy.
- To explore the marketing claims and associated strategies used by life coaching schools in relation to the course, the school, the organisation and the owners and teachers.

Method

Over a period of four months, from December, 2005, until the end of March,

2006, information related to Australian life coaching schools was downloaded from the internet. As life coaching is a highly internet-dependant industry (Williams & Thomas, 2004), the internet is a useful and relevant research platform from which to study the self-presentation and self-promotion of life coaching schools.

The information was selected through an internet search engine using the keywords 'life coaching' and was restricted to Australian information only. Google was used in recognition of its reputation as a comprehensive search engine and its effectiveness in ranking websites in order of relevance (Infopeople, 2006; Search Thingy, 2006; UC Berkeley Library, 2006).

The search yielded in excess of 600,000 possible matches, the first 20,000 matches of website references were analysed and the sample was restricted to those sites who offered training to become a life coach. To ensure that this information was as inclusive as possible this information was cross-referenced with a search of the International Coach Federation *(www.coachfederation.org)* and National (Australian) Training Information Service *(www.ntis.gov.au)* websites. This process resulted in the identification of a total of 14 Australian life-coaching training organisations.

To analyse the information, a process of emergent thematic coding was undertaken. The information from each school's website was categorised and coded. The emergence of broad categories and themes related to the aims of the study were documented, leading to the identification of a group of core categories and a final process of detailed categorisation and comparison between schools.

Results

This section provides the analysis of the information obtained from the internet search. Firstly, we report details related to the accreditation of courses. Secondly, we report on information related to course duration, cost and assessment. Thirdly, we

report on the types of marketing claims made about the schools. Finally, we examine how the schools' marketing materials deal with issues related to mental health.

The legitimacy of qualifications, certifications and accreditations

There were three key ways coach training organisations used to establish the credibility and legitimacy of their courses: (a) accreditation through the Australian Government Vocational Training Framework (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002); (b) accreditation by the International Coach Federation (ICF); and (c) self-accreditation or accreditations through a range of miscellaneous organisations. Of the 14 life coaching schools, 11 claimed that their courses were accredited by an external body of some sort.

The most common accrediting body was the ICF, and six schools reported that they offered an ICF Accredited Coaching Training Programme. One school claimed this accreditation but the information provided on the Australasian International Coach Federation website did not support this claim.

The second most common accreditation process, claimed by five schools, fell within the framework provided by the AQF and National Training Information Service, which allows for RTOs to provide recognised qualifications that are accredited by Australian jurisdictional Government training organisations.

Two life coaching schools did not detail any affiliation with an accreditation or regulation body. One organisation stated that its training courses would 'qualify you to earn a coaching credential from (XYZ) university'. This credential was a non-award completion certificate, associated with finishing a non-degree continuing education course. Another school claimed to offer a Graduate Certificate that was recognised by the relevant Government Agency, but details of this qualification could not be found by the authors of this paper on the Australian National Training Information Service.

Another organisation offered a self-accredited Diploma that was not recognised by an appropriate Government Agency. See Figure 1 for distribution of accrediting bodies.

Course cost, duration and assessment

In relation to the cost of life coaching courses; five organisations did not detail the costs involved in undertaking their courses on their websites. Of those who did give this information, the cost of courses varied considerably ranging from A\$1070 for (self-accredited) individual training programme modules to A\$9995 for a Diploma of Life Coaching (awarded within the AQF).

Similarly, the quality of information publicly available about the length of courses varied considerably and in some cases was ambiguous. One organisation did not provide any information at all. Others gave the length of the course in hours, others detailed total number of days, weeks or months. The time frame for completion of these courses ranged from 16 days to 12 months.

In relation to assessment processes, seven organisations did not detail at all how students would be assessed in order to complete the course. Of the remaining seven organisations, six indicated that the assessment process would incorporate a practical component, in addition to evidence of coaching skills, along with written assignments and exams, and one organisation indicated that its assessment process was based on assignments only.

Marketing claims

In relation to marketing claims the information obtained from the schools' website were found to fall into four main categories: (a) marketing claims about the school; (b) marketing claims about the course; (c) marketing claims about the teachers or owners; and (d) general marketing claims.

Marketing claims about the school. Marketing claims about the school fell into four key themes: (a) longevity; (b) being the best school; (c) reputation; and (d) best practice.

Figure 1: Accreditation of life coaching schools in Australia.
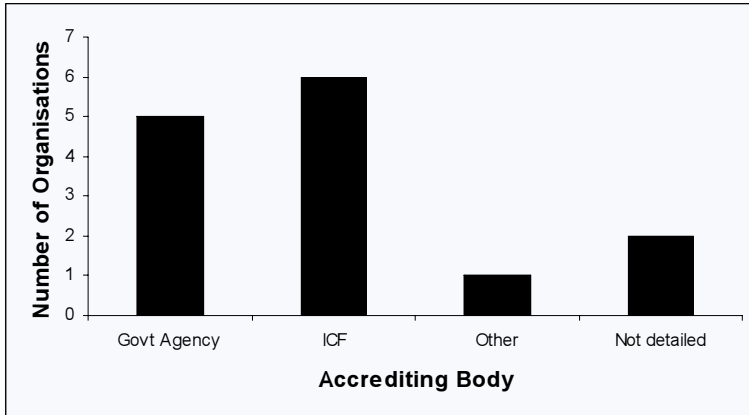

Table 1 provides a number of quotes taken from the websites in relation to these claims.

Marketing claims about the course. In relation to marketing claims about the course offered by the school four key themes emerged: (a) exclusiveness; (b) comprehensiveness; (c) sets the standard; and (d) recognised credentials. Table 2 provides examples of such claims.

Marketing claims about the teachers or owners. A number of claims were made regarding the teachers or owners of the life coaching schools. Table 3 provides examples of the types of claims that were made in relation to personal involved in the life coaching school. These can be incorporated into three key themes – claims about: (a) academic affiliations; (b) personal charisma; and (c) relevant life experience.

General marketing claims. A number of categories of general marketing claims were delineated. These can be characterised into four themes: (a) earning potential; (b) time frame; (c) growing business and benefits; and (d) profession of coaching and qualifications. Table 4 provides examples of quotes that characterise these themes.

There did not appear to be any distinction in the marketing claims based on the type of accreditation the organisations had undertaken.

Mental health issues

In relation to how the organisations in this study dealt with mental health issues three questions were of interest, (a) does the life coach school make a distinction between coaching and therapy or counselling, (b) does the life coaching school detail the manner in which their course will equip students to recognise and appropriately deal with mental health issues, and (c) does the life coaching school claim that coaching can deal with issues more appropriately dealt with by therapy or counselling?

Four categories were used in analysing this information. The first category applied to those schools who made a very clear distinction between mental health issues and coaching (that is, who explicitly detailed the differences between coaching and therapy or counselling). The second category applied to those schools who provided a somewhat clear distinction (that is who mentioned that coaching was different from therapy or counselling). The third applied to those schools who did not address or mention mental health issues at all, and the fourth applied to those schools who claimed that coaching could be used to treat mental health issues, and thus blurred the boundaries between mental health treatment and coaching practice.

Nine of the organisations did not articulate a distinction between mental health

Table 1: Marketing claims about the life coaching school.

Type of claim about the school	Example of claim
Longevity	● 'We have a 20 year history' ● 'XX remains at the forefront of the industry, providing quality education ... for over 33 years'
Best school	● 'XX is Australia's premier life coaching educator' ● 'We have trained more coaches in Australia in the last four years than any other coach training organisation'
Reputation	● 'XX is a world leader in coach training operating in countries around the world' ● 'XX offers coaching programmes in 10 different countries and is one of the leaders of innovation in training coaches world wide' ● 'We are the number one life coaching certification school on Google'
Best practice	● 'XX combines the best practices in the field of coaching' ● 'Course is modelled on world's best practice'

Table 2: Marketing claims about the course.

Type of claim about the course	Example of claim
Exclusiveness	● 'We are the only providers of a Diploma of Life Coaching in Australia' ● 'It is the first and only Graduate Certificate in NLP offered in Australia'
Comprehensiveness	● 'Most comprehensive coach training available in Australia' ● 'Is the most complete and comprehensive coaching programme in Australia' ● 'The complete life coaching package'
Sets the standard	● 'Developed over six years ... coaching models, training curriculum and coach support services are cutting edge' ● 'This postgraduate qualification sets the standard ... sets a new benchmark in NLP training'
Recognised	● 'You can confidently demonstrate recognised credentials to the market place'

Table 3: Marketing claims regarding teachers and owners.

Type of claim about teachers or owners	Example of claim
Academic qualifications	● 'Claims to hold university affiliations' ● 'Claims to hold a Certificate in Coaching Psychology'
Personal charisma of teachers	● 'Once in a while someone comes along who truly inspires and motivates you with her vitality, passion and energy' ● 'B funny director, B happy director, B great director, B sexy director'
Relevant experience	● 'Owns and runs two businesses' ● 'At 23 established and ran her own direct marketing business, generating over $1 million in sales in first year' ● 'Qualified as home economist and cordon bleu chef, author' ● 'Successful financial planer, author and life coach'

Table 4: General marketing claims.

Type of claim	Example of claim
Earning potential	● 'Coaches can earn between $75–$400 per hour' ● 'As a life coach in Australia, approx $250–$500 per month is an acceptable, average charge' ● 'When starting out coaches tend to charge a monthly retainer of $250, average of $500 per month' ● 'With as few as 15 regular clients, a diligent coach can earn $50,000 a year working from home just a few days a week'
Time frame	● 'You can become a professional coach within six months'
Growing business and benefits	● 'Coaching is a growing business, now is your opportunity to benefit from this high growth phase' ● 'Life coaching is a dynamic and growing field' ● 'One of the most popular career choices of people wanting a more balanced life' ● 'Coaching and mentoring have never been in higher demand. This programme will show you how to ensure your ongoing success and of those around you' ● 'Watching clients grow and change with your support is what life coaching is all about , its an incredibly rewarding career'
Profession of coaching and qualifications	● 'Don't need a university degree or possess any specific educational qualifications to be a life coach, all you need is determination, commitment and a willingness to learn' ● 'The profession of coaching is similar to the practice of physician, attorney or psychologist'

issues and coaching at all, only two organisations provided a somewhat clear distinction, and three organisations blurred the lines between coaching and therapy and provided unclear distinctions. Of particular concern in this category was the life coaching school that claimed that the 'profession of coaching is similar to the practice of physician, attorney or psychologist.'

Examples of those life coaching schools that provided a somewhat clear distinction between mental health issues and coaching are given below:

- 'Just some of the things you will learn … how to know the difference between coaching, therapy and counselling.'
- 'What you will learn … the important differences between coaching, counselling and therapy.'
- 'Define life coaching and differentiate it from other professions such as psychotherapist, counsellor, personal trainer and so on.'
- 'Is coaching like counselling? Coaching is not about how you came to be who you are; its about helping your clients get from where they are now to a specific point in the future. One way of making a clear distinction would be to say that counsellors are in the business of recovery, whereas coaches are in the business of development.'

There did not appear to be any differentiation on how mental health issues were dealt with according to the accreditation process the life coaching school had undertaken. Only three schools explicitly stated that their course would teach students how to make a distinction between coaching and therapy or counselling.

Somewhat disturbingly one life coaching school, which although stating that students would learn the important differences between counselling and coaching, also stated that coaching was an appropriate intervention for dealing with anxiety, and that coaching delivered

> '… increased energy (that) transforms your life … watch your energy levels,

passion for living, and youthfulness soar to new heights, your health issues, sleepless nights and anxiety patterns dissolve. Your ideal weight, lust for life and sex drive as you live the life you want.'.

This appears to be an unfortunate example of the blurring of the distinctions between coaching and therapy as anxiety, sexual health and general health issues may be far better dealt with by qualified counsellors or health professionals.

Discussion

This study is the first to explore the self-presentation characteristics of the Australian life coach training industry. Given that much of the commercial life coaching and personal development industry is grounded more on hyperbole and rhetoric than solid behavioural science (Grant, 2001), the authors of this paper expected to find far more examples of outrageous, excessive and exaggerated self-promotional claims than were in fact found. With one or two exceptions, we were pleasantly surprised by the general restraint shown in the self-promotional material of Australian life coaching schools.

It was encouraging to find that 11 of the 14 schools had sought to gain some kind of accreditation for their courses. Meaningful accreditation processes can provide students and the public with a measure of quality assurance and a route for the effective addressing of complaints (Bellamy, 2005). Six schools claimed that their course was accredited by the ICF. Whilst the ICF is a leading industry coaching body and has put considerable time and resources into coach accreditation processes, the ICF is in essence a self-accrediting body, and membership is voluntary.

Complaints to the ICF against any specific ICF accredited school can thus, at most lead, to a school losing its ICF accreditation status. On the other hand, accreditation within the Australian Qualification Framework and status as a RTO may provide

a more rigorous protection for students, as complaints against the school could potentially lead to a school loosing the right to deliver formal qualifications. We recommend that Australian life coaching schools seek to become RTOs and seek Government accreditation for their courses, at least to Certificate IV level.

Training schools should also avoid ambiguous claims about the cost, timeframes and academic and accreditation status of their courses. Australian trade legislation prohibits misleading advertising, omitting important information, or making false or inaccurate claims about products or services. Under this law it is not necessary to prove that the conduct actually misled or deceived anyone, and it irrelevant whether the misrepresentation is intentional, deliberate or accidental. What matters is the overall impression that is given to the customer (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 2006).

Course costs varied considerably. The cost of completing a Certificate IV ranged from A$2995 to A$7995, and one of the most expensive courses found in this study was A$9800 for an 18-day (self-accredited) Master Practitioner Life Coach award. It should be noted that a one-year full-time Australian university Masters degree costs in the region of A$10,000. We recommend that potential students carefully consider the financial cost and true value of such life coach training programmes before enrolling.

Most schools put forward claims as to longevity, and nearly all claimed to be the best, the most comprehensive, the most cutting edge or the world leaders in the field. One school promoted themselves as the number one life coaching school on Google, although it is unclear how ranking on an internet search engine testifies to the validity and rigour of a training course. However, whilst many of these claims were somewhat flamboyant, in general, with only a few exceptions, we considered the marketing claims about the courses not to be outrageous or excessive.

Academic qualifications enhance credibility (Clark & Salaman, 1998). Personal charisma, and a life experience which embodies an overcoming of adverse or tragic life events, are central to the promotion of personal development leaders as being powerful individuals who can point the way to a more positive future (Salerno, 2005). Thus it was not surprising that all schools made a range of such claims about their teachers and owners. One individual stated that 'during the mid 1970s I was a single parent … struggling to survive on a Government pension …'.

Another's biography stated that he/she was qualified as home economist and cordon bleu chef, was the co-author of several cooking books, and was once offered the opportunity to study advanced cordon bleu cooking in Europe. Whilst this would be highly pertinent to teaching a restaurant management course, it is unclear how such a background is directly relevant in teaching the para-therapeutic skills inherent in life coaching. Others stated that they held academic positions at a various universities. We recommend that students check all claimed academic qualifications and affiliations with the relevant academic institution, and determine for themselves if the stated qualifications and life experience are indeed relevant to the teaching of life coaching.

The potential to earn a substantial income in a relaxed part-time fashion, was strongly emphasised by all schools. Schools claimed that students could earn between A$75 and A$400 per hour. One school claimed that a diligent coach could earn A$50,000 a year.

In an international survey of 2529 coaches Grant and Zackon (2004) found that most coaches worked part-time, and that 52.5 per cent of respondents earned less than US$30,000 annually, and 32.3 per cent earned less than US$10,000. Just over half the respondents (50.7 per cent) charged between US$50 and US$149 per hour. The top fee range of US$300 per hour and over was charged by 10.3 per cent of respondents.

Thus the potential earning claims made by Australian life coaching schools are within the broad financial region identified in past research.

However, claims made about the degree of growth experienced in the life coaching industry should be interpreted with some caution. A common claim made on many life coach schools' websites is that coaching is a US$100 million business second only to the Information Technology industry in its US growth rate, and that life coaching is one of today's fastest growing industries. We could find no empirical research to support this claim. The primary source for this claim appears to have been a 1999 press release by a US coach training organisation that was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and subsequently repeated in a number of popular magazines.

Whilst it is true that experienced, qualified and competent coaches are able to make a very comfortable living from coaching, this is a minority sector of the coaching industry. Indeed, anecdotal reports suggests that there may be high level of industry turnover, with new individuals completing life coach courses, then attempting to set up a life coaching business and finally leaving the industry after two years or so, and some research supports this view (Grant & Zackon, 2004; Spence *et al.*, 2006).

Further, the claimed absence of a need for university degrees or specific educational qualifications to be a life coach (see Table 4) is somewhat disturbing. In fact, within the corporate coaching arena, organisations see a university degree in the behavioural sciences as the second most important criteria for coaches, with the most important being significant coaching experience (Corporate Leadership Council, 2003).

Of disappointment to the authors was the finding that the majority of the life coaching schools did not explicitly state in their promotional material or course descriptions that life coaching is quite separate from counselling and therapy, and they failed to give information on how coaches would be taught to recognise what is most appropriately dealt with in coaching, and how and when to make referrals to qualified mental health professionals. This is despite the fact that many schools provided a wealth of information about the details of their curriculum.

The limitations of this study are that it only included those organisations which used the internet as a means of self-promotion and provision of information about their courses. The study only included the information that was freely available from public websites, and thus did not allow for any further investigation of collection of information outside this medium.

In closing, the move towards offering government-recognised qualifications in life coaching is to be applauded. However, presently the wide range of courses and different qualifications and awards on offer means that potential students may find it virtually impossible to make meaningful comparisons between the different courses and schools. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that life coaching training is more than just a training programme designed to help people set up a life coaching businesses. It is essentially an educational process which should prepare people to work as professional skilled helpers in a para-therapeutic modality. It is questionable whether the same standards should apply to the advertising of life coach training as those that apply to the promotion of other commercial products. We recommend that life coaching training schools fully recognise their responsibilities as providers of professional para-therapeutic education, and help consumers to make informed choices based on clear and accurate information that allows for meaningful comparison between schools and provides a solid foundation for professional life coaching.

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Human resources professionals' perceptions of executive coaching: Efficacy, benefits and return on investment*

Gavin Dagley

Objectives: *Human resources (HR) professionals represent a large and relatively untapped source of experiential knowledge about executive coaching. The purpose of the study was to record the perceptions of these HR professionals.*
Design: *The study was a survey design.*
Methods: *The practitioners completed structured interviews to elicit their perceptions of the overall efficacy of executive coaching, the specific benefits derived and drawbacks experienced from the programmes, their estimates of the cost/benefit of the programmes, and their interest in using executive coaching in the future.*
Results: *As a group, the 17 participants were responsible for more than 1000 individual executive coaching programmes and $15.4 million of expenditure on executive coaching in the preceding two years. The practitioners indicated strong support for the use of coaching in the future, and all rated their programmes as at least moderately successful. The practitioners also identified a large range of benefits for the individual executives and a smaller range for the organisations. The two most commonly expressed drawbacks were difficulty with executives making time for sessions and the expense of executive coaching. Although the practitioners indicated that benefits exceeded costs, only one practitioner indicated completing formal measurement of return on investment.*
Conclusions: *Discussion included consideration of the pressure for more structured and measurable intervention approaches, and the influence such approaches may have on the efficacy of the programmes themselves.*

ALTHOUGH THE TOPIC OF EXECUTIVE coaching has received increasing attention over the last decade (Grant 2005), surprisingly little research has involved one of the largest groups of purchasers of executive coaching – human resources (HR) professionals. This group includes practitioners with considerable experience of and knowledge about the use of executive coaching. Executive coaching, however, also represents something of an unknown quantity to many HR professionals. Does coaching work? What can one expect to gain? Does it deliver value for money? These have become important questions because executive coaching is a rapidly growing industry, functioning as a virtually unregulated service sector in which outcome delivery and quality assurance can be uncertain.

Coaching can be costly, and corporate leaders want to know that they are getting value for money. Peterson and Kraiger (2004) argued that there is a rapidly growing body of personal testimonials, case studies, and other diverse research methods that gives clear indications that coaching has a positive impact on both people and organisational results. Supporting this positive view of coaching, Garman *et al.* (2000) investigated media perceptions of executive coaching and concluded that favourable views of executive coaching far exceeded unfavourable views.

Morgan *et al.* (2005) reported on results from a multi-national, multi-sector, multi-industry survey of coaching practices. Although 19 countries were represented in the data, the US, Canada and Mexico accounted for approximately three-quarters of the 235 participants, with Europe accounting for the next largest group, and Asia represented by less than five per cent of the participants. In response to a question regarding the effectiveness of past coaching interventions, 75 per cent of respondents rated coaching as 3 or higher on a 1-to-5 scale (5 indicating 'very effective' and 1 indicating 'not effective').

Yet researchers have provided relatively few methodologically sound outcome studies of executive coaching programmes. In addition, much of the efficacy research appears to have been conducted by coaching organisations keen to promote their work. Even the few studies that are commonly cited as evidence of coaching efficacy should be interpreted with some care. For example, the 88 per cent productivity gain reported Olivero *et al.* (1997) is widely quoted in literature expounding the benefits of executive coaching. The case illustration provided by the researchers, however, provided little support for their conclusions. Results from the case indicated productivity gains of 143 per cent post-training, and 159 per cent (over baseline) post-training and coaching. What these numbers do not display is that, despite the researchers' focus on the dramatic gain in the *proportion* of units correctly completed post-training and coaching (the researchers' underlying measure), the addition of executive coaching actually *reduced* the per-person *volume* of work and volume of properly completed work. That is, the purported 88 per cent productivity gain from executive coaching was illustrated by an example that showed a 16 per cent gain in the proportion of correctly completed work, and a decrease in the volume of that work.

Other research approaches, although methodologically sound, have been unable to provide a linkage between results and observed behavioural change. Chapman (2005) described the effects of a four-phase emotional intelligence intervention within a housing services organisation. Her results indicated that the programme led to increases in self-reported emotional intelligence scores, and to positive evaluations from participants. Although the study supported the efficacy of the intervention approach, no structures existed to calibrate the results to the on-the-job effects of the programme.

Though measuring the effect of coaching on performance is complex, measuring and establishing the financial returns on executive coaching is an even more difficult task. The elements that make executive coaching effective (the essentially human and interpersonal character of the work) are also what makes its effects nearly impossible to quantify (Sherman & Freas, 2005). McGovern *et al.* (2001) used an innovative way to estimate the direct bottom-line effect of executive coaching. They sidestepped the difficulties of establishing the direct linkages between coaching and organisational net profit, and asked their participants simply to estimate the financial benefits to the organisation of the coaching they received. The researchers then applied multiple layers of discounting to those estimates in an attempt to correct for uncertainty and the multiple other factors that can influence change. McGovern *et al.* found that the return on investment for executive coaching averaged $100,000 per executive or 5.7 times the amount invested for each coaching programme ($17,500 on average). That is, despite using a strongly conservative method for calculating the return on investment (due to the discounting), the results were remarkably and strongly positive. (Anderson [2001] also produced a study that quoted similar remarkable returns on executive coaching programmes [529 per cent return on investment], but provided little detail regarding the calculation of the returns.)

An alternative research approach has been to investigate not only the overall efficacy of the intervention, but some of the specific gains derived. The Association for Coaching (2004) completed a web-based survey of UK-based purchasers of coaching services and individuals who had been coached in an organisational setting. Although the researchers indicated that there was minimal agreement as to what the measurable benefits from coaching were, observed gains from coaching included increased confidence, better strategies for coping with work demands, improved personal performance, increased productivity, better people management skills, increased job motivation, and improved work/life balance.

The purpose of the current study was to extend the knowledge-base about the efficacy of executive coaching services by tapping into the experiences of HR professionals who have used executive coaching in their organisations. In particular, the study addressed questions regarding the efficacy, benefits and drawbacks, and return on investment of executive coaching, and practitioners' interest in using coaching in the future.

Method
Participants
The 17 practitioners who participated in the research were all Melbourne-based HR professionals who had experience of using executive coaching services in their organisations. The practitioners had spent an average of 2.5 years in their current roles, and 15 held primary or joint-primary responsibility for the executive coaching programmes in their organisations. The remaining practitioners held administrative or support roles in relation to the coaching programmes.

The 17 participants represented 16 organisations from both the public and private sectors, and included governmental and government-owned organisations, local bodies, and service, professional and manufacturing organisations (including eight of Australia's largest and most well-known trading companies).

Materials
The questionnaire that provided that the structure for the interviews contained items regarding: the definition of executive coaching; the extent to which the practitioners had used coaching; the efficacy, benefits, drawbacks, and return on investment of executive coaching; and interest in future use of the services. Questions regarding efficacy included broadly-based questions (e.g. 'Overall, how effective as executive coaching been in your organisation?'), and narrower specific questions (e.g. 'Which of the following specific gains for the individuals have you become aware of that resulted from executive coaching work?'). Practitioners responded to questions regarding whether or not they assessed the cost/benefit of executive coaching, the amounts they paid for coaching, and their estimates of the extent to which the benefits exceeded, or were exceeded by, the financial costs. Practitioners also indicated how much interest they had in using executive coaching services in the next two years, and commented on the factors that might affect that interest.

The document contained a standard briefing for participants, and questions related to demographic information. The questionnaire was designed both to classify responses for numerical analysis and to record comments. Existing research, discussions with executive coaches and HR professionals, and pilot interviews provided the source data used in the construction of both the questions and the response options.

Procedure
The sampling method was opportunistic and based on a combination of the location of the organisations (Melbourne, Australia) and access to the contact details for the practitioners. HR professionals were located through the Australian Human Resources

Institute's mailing list, private contact lists, and from referrals. The practitioners were contacted directly, most commonly by mail. All interviews occurred face-to-face, and, prior to commencement of the interview, practitioners completed an informed consent declaration.

Kilburg (2000) defined executive coaching as 'a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to assist the client to achieve a mutually defined set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formerly defined coaching agreement' (pp.66–67). For the purposes of the study, all the practitioners agreed to use this definition.

The study was exploratory and the data are descriptive. For this reason, inferential statistics were not used in the data analysis. Based on the extent of executive coaching use, the organisations fell into one of two distinct groups; those that had spent more than $1 million on coaching in the last two years ('larger programmes'), and those that had spent less than $200,000 in the same period ('smaller programmes'). Comparison of results from the two groups indicated few differences. Any important differences that did occur have been reported separately.

Results

All but three of the HR professionals had used executive coaching in their organisations for at least two years, with three describing that use as extensive, seven reporting moderate use, and the remaining seven reporting only occasional use. As a group, these practitioners were responsible for an estimated 1033 individual coaching programmes in the preceding two years (with the participation of 25 per cent of the executive population eligible for coaching in those organisations), and had spent $15.4 million on these programmes.

Efficacy, benefits and drawbacks.

Practitioners rated the overall effectiveness of their executive coaching programmes on a five-point scale, with 5 indicating 'outstandingly effective', and the remaining points indicating, respectively, 'very effective', 'moderately effective', 'marginally effective' and 'not effective'. All practitioners rated their programmes as at least moderately effective ($M = 3.5$), with six indicating their programmes were very effective, and one indicating an outstandingly effective programme. The average rating for larger programmes (3.6) was higher than that for smaller programmes (3.4), although both averages fell between the 'moderately' and 'very effective' ratings.

Some practitioners provided estimates of the range in the success ratings of individual programmes. They estimated that, on average, 11 per cent of programmes were rated as outstandingly successful and a further 14 per cent were rated as marginally or not successful. Of the remainder, 47 per cent were rated very successful, and 28 per cent as moderately successful. Practitioners were unable to consistently differentiate the success of programmes based on the type of programme objectives chosen (e.g. skill development, support in transition), and three of the practitioners commented that success depended more on the individual executives than on the objectives of the programmes.

In an attempt to differentiate their own success ratings for programmes from those of the participating executives, the practitioners provided estimates of how they thought the executives would rate the programmes. Practitioners estimated executive ratings at 4.1 (or better than 'very effective"), compared to the practitioners' own average ratings of 3.5. Once again, larger programmes (4.4) fared better than smaller programmes (3.9).

Practitioners indicated the specific gains or benefits they had noticed for the executives and that had resulted from the executive coaching. Practitioners chose from a list

of 20 possibilities and noted any other gains not covered by this list. (The only additional gain provided was 'health/relief from anxiety'.) The practitioners allocated two points for strong gains and one point for some gain. Table 1 presents the list of gains and the total points awarded.

Table 1: Gains for individuals from executive coaching.

Gain observed by HR professional	'Strong gains' frequency	'Some gains' frequency	Total points*
Clearer understanding of own style, automatic responses and the issues arising from these	16	1	33
Improved communication and engagement skills	7	9	23
Improved coping with stress/robustness	6	7	19
Clearer understanding of own professional performance	7	4	18
Clearer understanding of organisational issues and how to resolve or overcome them	3	11	17
Improved ability to deliver feedback	2	13	17
Improved professional relationships – with directors/managers	4	9	17
Improved professional relationships – with subordinates	2	13	17
Improved decision-making skills	2	12	16
Improved assertiveness/self-assurance/ leadership strength	5	6	16
Improved professional relationships – with peers	3	10	16
Improved motivation in role	2	10	14
Clearer career plans and actions	4	6	14
Improved work/life balance	2	9	13
Clearer strategic perspective	1	10	12
Quicker to move to action in dealing with issues	3	6	12
Improved change agent skills	2	7	11
Improved measured personal performance	2	7	11
Improved delegation abilities	0	8	8
Improved work throughput	2	4	8

* Calculated by allocating 2 points for 'strong gain' and 1 point for 'some gain'.

The most widely supported benefit was a 'clearer understanding of own style, automatic responses, and the issues arising from these.' All of the practitioners indicated at least some gain in this area. The other widely supported benefits included (in order): communication and engagement skills, ability to cope with stress, and a clearer understanding of both personal professional performance, and of organisational issues and how to resolve or overcome them. Practitioners indicated an average of 14 and a minimum of five areas of benefit for executives participating in their programmes.

One practitioner commented on benefits from her executive coaching programme that were difficult to measure.

'There are intangible benefits. It's recognition of the individual, time out to review their careers. It's special. It improves motivation and feeling valued and recognised. People do like to talk about themselves. It can be pretty lonely in executive roles. It is the opportunity to open up, possibly for stress relief. There is a bravado required of executives. They don't have the opportunity to show any chinks. Executive coaching deals with the wants in all of us without outside scrutiny.'

Practitioners also spoke about the range of coaching experiences for executives. 'Anecdotally, I'm hearing 'I like my coach, I'm getting a lot out of it, he's challenging me, I'm learning a lot about myself, he's getting me to commit to things.' The range of responses goes from 'I never thought it would be this good' to 'I'm not so sure about this, whether it is for me.''

As separate from the gains made by individuals, practitioners could identify an average of five organisational benefits resulting from executive coaching, and all identified at least one. The list of benefits for organisations from executive coaching was much shorter, with only seven items. The results are shown in Table 2. Development of the talent pool and organisational capability was the most commonly identified benefit,

with all except one of the practitioners indicating some gain in this area. The other major area of organisational gain was in talent retention and morale.

One practitioner elaborated on the effect of coaching on morale. 'Many of these younger managers thought it was nice to be part of the group above the thick black line.' Another commented that executive coaching 'became a badge of honour.' One practitioner commented that these perceptions can be variable, saying that 'those who have used [the coaching] view it as positive, but others are less so. They often feel there might be suspicion something is wrong with me.'

Organisational benefits related to performance management and remediation, team cohesion, and conflict resolution received only half the support from practitioners as talent pool development. Practitioners described three additional organisational benefits from coaching; career change for an executive, better understanding of organisational strategic direction, and clearer staff meetings and communication.

Practitioners indicated there were a number of drawbacks to using executive coaching. From a list of 10 possible drawbacks, the most commonly reported concerns were difficulties for executives in making time for sessions and the expense of executive coaching. Table 3 presents the results.

A number of practitioners commented that the expense of executive coaching was an issue, although a few commented that this was less of an issue than might be expected. Comments included 'it's considered expensive, but that doesn't matter if it works', 'there has been no push back on costs', 'money [is an issue], but not as much as expected' and '[the executives] will pay once they have started. They don't question the amount.'

One of the common concerns related to poor translation of coaching outcomes into behavioural changes. The opinion was not universal, with one practitioner commenting

Table 2: Organisational gains from executive coaching.

Gain observed by HR professional	'Strong gains' frequency	'Some gains' frequency	Total points*
Professional development of talent pool/ building capability	8	8	24
Talent retention and morale	6	6	18
Effective leadership	4	7	15
Team cohesion	3	6	12
Cultural change	3	6	12
Conflict resolution	1	9	11
Performance management and remediation	3	5	11

* Calculated by allocating 2 points for 'strong gain' and 1 point for 'some gain'.

Table 3: Drawbacks related to using executive coaching.

Drawback	'Big drawback' frequency	'Some drawback' frequency	Total points*
Difficulties for participants in making time for sessions	1	12	14
Considered expensive	4	6	14
Negative perception of coaching (e.g. perceived as a sign of poor performance)	3	6	12
Poor translation of learning to behavioural changes	3	6	12
Difficulty in locating or identifying good coaches	3	5	11
Difficulty in demonstrating relationships between EC and organisational performance	1	9	11
Poor or variable delivery by coaches	2	5	9
Difficulty in generating senior management support	1	4	6
Difficulty in generating participants enthusiasm	0	2	2
Difficulty in successfully matching coaches and participants	0	2	2

* Calculated by allocating 2 points for 'big drawback' and 1 point for 'some drawback'.

that 'executive coaching generates long-term snowballing behavioural changes. That is, the benefits increase over time.'

Comments regarding the quality of available coaches included 'there are a lot of quacks in the business', 'lots of quantity but not necessarily quality' and 'it is very difficult to source appropriately qualified and experienced coaches'. One practitioner commented on his reaction to the number of calls he receives from 'coaches looking for business'. He reported that his most common response was 'you've got to be kidding!' This practitioner indicated he had received 10 such calls in the preceding year even though his organisation was neither large nor high-profile.

Other drawbacks raised by practitioners (that were not listed in the questionnaire) were the sustainability of behaviour changes, 'managers outsourcing their people leadership responsibilities' and 'getting traction' for programmes.

Cost/benefit and future interest

Programme costs also varied widely. Practitioners provided estimates of the average cost of individual programmes within their respective organisations. Total programme costs ranged from a low of $600 for a four-session programme, through to $45,000 for an 18-session programme. The cost of an individual programme as an unweighted average across the organisations was $12,600 per executive. Larger programmes averaged $22,100 and 10 sessions per executive, and smaller programmes averaged $7500 and eight sessions per executive.

The average hourly rate for executive coaching across all organisations was $717 per hour. The median rate of $488 per hour indicates that some of the higher hourly rates may be skewing the data. Larger programmes paid an average of $1018 per hour and smaller programmes paid $569 per hour. Hourly rates ranged from a low of $150 to a high of $1,650.

Only five of the respondents indicated that they engaged in any analysis of return on investment for their programmes, and four of these indicated that such analysis was informal. The only practitioner who had engaged in formal assessment of return on investment indicated that one of the methods he used was to compare the cost of coaching and development to the cost of replacing the executive.

Nine practitioners were prepared, nevertheless, to make an estimate regarding the cost/benefit of their programmes. Only one of the practitioners indicated that she felt the financial returns were less than the programme cost. A further two practitioners thought that programme costs and returns were about equal, and, of the remaining six, four indicated returns exceeded cost, and two indicated that returns greatly exceeded cost. Practitioners from larger programmes had a more positive view of the cost/benefit of executive coaching than those from smaller programmes, with all but one of the practitioners indicating that benefits exceeded costs, and this last practitioner indicated that costs and benefits were about equal.

Most of the practitioners had comments regarding return on investment. A common theme was how practitioners handled cost/benefit measurement. 'We don't do it very well. We need better measures. The industry does not like to be measured. The tools are lacking.' Another practitioner commented 'we have not been good at being able to quantify returns. This is partly due to the one-off nature of the work and the restriction of information due to confidentiality.' A third practitioner commented 'cost/benefit is really not done. I don't know how it could be done properly. The view is that [executive coaching] is expensive, but when people are helped, it doesn't seem so expensive to me.'

Some practitioners commented on why they thought executive coaching represented a good return on investment. One practitioner indicated that executive coaching provided a better return than university-based education programmes.

'It's effective. If you spend $3000 for a programme it is cost-effective. For example, a [university-based training] module – what do you get?' Another evaluated the expense on a comparative basis commenting that 'As a percentage of salary it's weeny.' The third practitioner put the matter succinctly. 'Senior executives wouldn't support executive coaching (or pay for it) if they didn't think it was really worthwhile.' This practitioner's programme was funded entirely from the participating executives' budgets.

Practitioners rated their interest in using executive coaching in the future on a four-point scale, with '4' indicating strong interest, and '1' indicating no interest. Only two of the 17 practitioners indicated anything other than strong interest in using executive coaching in the future, and these two rated their interest at '3'.

One practitioner articulated a theme common among respondents. 'There is not a lot around to develop executives. Executive coaching is customised, intensive, and tailored – and you can't get that off-the-shelf.' Another practitioner commented that 'self-awareness is not part of normal executive development, and this is where executive coaching can be helpful. Most executives don't have the opportunity otherwise.'

Factors that practitioners identified might affect their use of executive coaching in the future were demands driven by organisational change, issues with or the needs of senior leaders, turnover in the leadership, and organisational appetite and endorsement. The most common reason offered by practitioners regarding any future reduction in their use of executive coaching was budget constraints.

Discussion

Does executive coaching work? As a general statement, the answer is unequivocal – yes, at least from the perspective of the practitioners who are responsible for the programmes and who have spent more than $15 million on such programmes in the last two years. No practitioner rated programme efficacy below 'moderately successful.' This result supports the findings of Morgan *et al.* (2005) who reported that 75 per cent of their respondents indicated that they had found coaching at least moderately effective.

The strongest evidence for the efficacy of these programmes, however, is the level of interest the practitioners reported in using executive coaching in the future. Only two respondents indicated their interest was anything less than the highest option offered to them, 'strong interest'. Given that the practitioners in the study were heavily invested in their coaching programmes, this result may not be surprising. For most of these professionals, however, executive coaching was only one offering in their development suite. Strong support for coaching, if indeed it were both an expensive and ineffective intervention, would last only as long as the first few bad experiences – and many of these practitioners have had extensive exposure to executive coaching and its outcomes.

The question of efficacy is, however, multifaceted. How does the organisation benefit? How do the individuals benefit? Was the intervention cost-effective? These more focused questions produced subtly different answers. Although practitioners described a large number of objectives for executive coaching programmes, most of these objectives could be described as having developmental themes, whether or not driven by remediation needs. That is, practitioners seemed to indicate that they were seeking to achieve both the organisational and individual benefits through the personal and professional development of the executives. Differentiation of these strands, organisational versus individual gain, was an underlying theme in the data from the study.

The individual executives, despite variation in the success of individual programmes, seemed to derive the greatest range of gains. Of the top five rated executive benefits, three emphasised the gains from a clearer understanding of personal and organisational issues. By way of compar-

ison, of the benefits identified in the Association for Coaching (2004) study, only better people management skills (in the form of communication skills) made the top eight in the current study. The remaining benefits identified by these researchers (increased or improved confidence, coping strategies, personal performance, productivity, motivation, and work/life balance) were also identified by the practitioners in the present study, but tended to fall in the bottom half of the ranked list of benefits.

The identified gains may represent sequential steps along a developmental path, rather than simply a shopping list. Although the gains identified in the Association for Coaching (2004) study were also identified in the current study, these more behavioural gains are likely to be built on a foundation of greater self-awareness, identified as the most common coaching benefit for executives. Whether or not executives translate new-found awareness into behavioural change is a less certain outcome from executive coaching work.

Practitioners enumerated fewer organisational benefits than individual benefits, although all practitioners were able to identify some. The biggest organisational benefits seemed to be in the development of the talent pool, and increased morale and talent retention. Cost-benefit, however, was an area where most practitioners expressed uncertainty, and for which they held little, if any, data. The collective opinion of those practitioners prepared to venture an opinion was that benefits, nevertheless, exceeded costs, albeit that the results were equivocal.

These data indicate a complex relationship between the responses: cost is high, organisational benefit is moderate, and cost-benefit is uncertain. Yet practitioners, almost without exception, indicated strong interest in using executive coaching in the future. At first glance, this relationship does not appear to make intuitive sense. The explanation may lie in the differentiation of organisational and individual benefits from coaching. The reasons that these practitioners are so enthusiastic about using coaching in the future may due to one of two reasons. The first is that practitioners may have witnessed particular and highly valuable gains for individual executives that have little direct and measurable organisational benefit (e.g. extraordinary personal insight or interpersonal behaviour change).

Alternatively, executive coaching may provide solutions to issues that practitioners struggle to deal with using alternative interventions. Their interest in the future use of executive coaching may be no more than a demonstration of the lack of alternatives practitioners have for executive development. The use of executive coaching in these circumstances may be particularly evident in smaller programmes in which there is a strong remedial component, and which, due to a low rate of use, fall within the discretion of the HR executive and budget.

The separation of larger and smaller programmes on the basis of the amount spent did not provide a good predictor of the variation among the programmes. Larger programmes (those who spent more than $1 million in the preceding two years) tended to have a greater number of sessions per individual programme than smaller (less than $200,000) programmes, and a higher dollar per hour cost (which was nearly double that of the smaller programmes).

If larger programmes were prepared to pay more per executive, did they achieve better outcomes? The results indicate that larger programmes seemed to have slightly higher overall ratings of efficacy both from the organisational and the executive standpoint, and the practitioners also indicated more favourable cost-benefit estimates. These results, however, should be viewed with some caution as the study was not designed to make such comparisons. Furthermore, these more favourable results for larger programmes do not necessarily imply causality. The higher ratings may be the result of practitioners' greater commitment to executive coaching (resulting in higher ratings for programmes that may be

no more effective), or of small and successful programmes that have been expanded on the basis of that success, but without any increase in returns in spite of the greater scale.

HR professionals are, however, also subject to the business imperative of being able to demonstrate the financial value of costly programmes. Demonstration of a financial return on investment usually requires a structured approach with highly visible and measurable outcomes. The commoditisation of executive coaching interventions is evidence of a shift in service delivery to meet these demands by providing structured psycho-educational and skill-based approaches. What is not yet clear is whether such structured approaches to executive coaching provide better outcomes, or whether they are simply easier to sell, measure and justify.

'Touchy-feely', 'soft-and-fluffy', 'psychologist' and 'remedial' are not words and phrases that endear executive coaching to the hearts and minds of hard-nosed decision-makers. Neither does 'trust me, I know what I'm doing.' Setting expectations, realistic expectations, for both executives doing the coaching, and for those whose budget is being spent, is one of the major challenges for HR practitioners using executive coaching. The development and refinement of effective and practical measurement techniques may go some way to help practitioners to identify and put numbers around the benefits and gains to individuals and the organisation as a whole. The development of such tools may prove to be a most effective way of justifying future expenditure on coaching programmes. Likewise, the development of qualitative information resources may be an important component of any evaluation exercise.

The most obvious weakness of this research is that the results are built on the subjective opinions of practitioners who are highly invested in the success of their programmes. As an extension of this, asking these practitioners to comment on the thoughts of other executives on their executive coaching experiences is drawing rather a long bow. It is, nevertheless, these same practitioners who are making many of the purchase decisions around the use of executive coaching, and their opinions, therefore, are important information for the industry.

To be able to comment on whether or not executive coaching is, on average, effective as an intervention is not particularly helpful to those considering establishing programmes. A logical extension to the current study would be the investigation of the various factors that influence the success of executive coaching programmes. Such an extension study is already well advanced, and the results may provide an interesting insight into the factors that HR professionals consider are the most important for programme success.

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Reflexive questions in a coaching psychology context

Carola Hieker & Clare Huffington

Asking the right questions at the right time is an essential tool of coaching psychology so as to generate self-awareness in the coachee as well as a sense of responsibility and the will to make a change.

In this article, building on principles and methods originally developed in the family therapy arena, the authors show how reflexive questions can be used in coaching psychology. The target group for this article is, therefore, coaching psychologists and executive coaches in general who want to enhance their skills in asking effective questions.

By applying Tomm's taxonomy of questions (Tomm, 1967, 1988) to Dilts' model of change (Dilts, 1996), the authors bring together theories from systemic therapy with a change management framework based on neurolinguistic programming. The deliberate and perhaps provocative combination of two different approaches derived from the therapy field might be especially useful for coaching psychologists who are involved in change processes in organisations and who are open to applying new ideas to their practice.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT QUESTIONS to ask when we are coaching and at what time? In this article, the authors focus on the application of questioning techniques from systemic family therapy (Tomm, 1987, 1988) linked to a change management framework from neurolinguistic programming (Dilts 1996) which has been applied in both therapy and organisational consultancy settings. The relevance of techniques from systemic therapy to coaching psychology is that they link one-to-one work to the whole system or organisation where the coachee works.

Executive coaching involves a one-to-one relationship between a coach and coachee, usually a manager or leader who wishes to become more effective in their role in the organisation. The coach is usually external to the organisation and he or she may bring expertise in terms of experience of management and leadership; psychological knowledge and therapeutic practice, in the case of coaching psychologists; or knowledge of that organisation's particular business (O'Neill 2000). The coach's role, however, is to start with the experience and issues brought by the coachee and to facilitate their own analysis and solution of problems in a process

of 'assisted self-exploration' (Huffington, 2006). As Gebelein *et al.* (2001) say, 'coaches do not develop people; they equip people to develop themselves.'

'Coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches' (Palmer & Whybrow, 2006, p.8). It is important that coaching psychology is not individualised and split off from the organisational client that legitimises and sponsors it. Therefore, the coaching psychologist needs to pay close attention to the links between the issues brought by the coachee and what this represents in terms of organisation or system dynamics as well as individual or personal dynamics; and also to help the coachee make these links and develop their own systemic thinking and capacity to influence the organisation in their leadership role (Campbell *et al.*, 1989, 1991). This will, in turn, benefit not only the individual but also the organisation in that the coachee will then be acting to improve the organisation's functioning as well as his or her own functioning (Huffington, 2006). The techniques used in coaching psychology can thus assist in this

process of helping the coachee develop and use this systemic perspective to their advantage. Reflexive questions can be a key tool in helping the coachee do this.

Systemic questioning

Systemic practice emphasises the power of questions in facilitating change; and particularly the use of systemic questions, or questions that help the coachee to develop a systemic perspective on their issues or problems rather than seeing them purely as personal concerns (Mueller & Hoffman, 2002) This has been called 'interventive interviewing' (Tomm, 1987, 1988) and is clearly of relevance to clients who are being coached.

Tomm (1988) defines certain types of systemic questioning:

● **Lineal questions**
These are asked to orient the coach to the coachee's situation and help him/her to investigate it. Lineal questions are factual and based on 'Who did what?, Where?, When? And Why? These are mostly used in the beginning of a session to get initial information. For example:
'How old are you?'
'What is your role in the organisation?'
'Can you describe your organisation's culture?'

● **Circular questions**
The coaching psychologist as an explorer tries to find the patterns that connect persons, objects, actions, perceptions, ideas, feelings, events, beliefs, context, etc. For example:
'How is it that we find ourselves together today?' (I called because I am worried about my relationship with my boss)
'Who else worries?' (my colleagues)
'Who do you think worries the most, etc.'

● **Strategic questions**
These tend to open up new avenues of thinking and, if the coachee accepts the challenge of strategic questions, they can help to promote change. A coaching psychologist might ask strategic questions like:
'What has stopped you so far from talking to your colleague about your conflict with him, instead of telling your boss?'
'Wouldn't you like to stop your arguments rather than being so preoccupied by them?'

● **Reflexive questions**
As the coaching psychologist introduces a hypothetical future scenario or the coachee is asked to take the observer perspective on his or her situation, the coachee is encouraged to mobilise his or her own problem-solving resources. Continuing the above dialogue, reflexive questions could be:
'If you were to share with your colleague how you experience the conflict and how it was getting you down, what do you imagine he might think or do?'
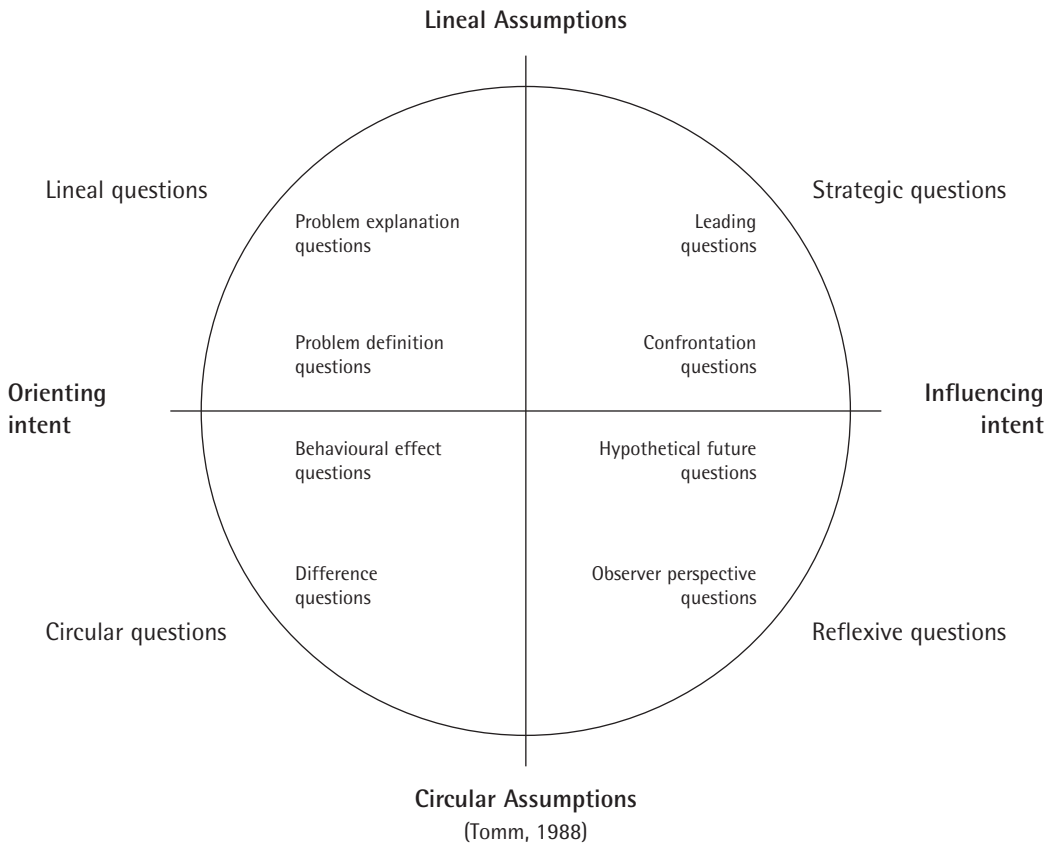'How do you think others experience the conflict you are having with your colleague?'

Figure 1 (alongside) represents the four main types of questions, the assumptions upon which they are based and their intent (Tomm, 1988, p.6).

The application of reflexive questioning to executive coaching

Tomm's assumption is that a therapist should adopt a 'facilitative posture and deliberately ask those kinds of questions that are liable to open up new possibilities for self-healing' (Tomm, 1987, p.167). The role and the goal of the coaching psychologist and the therapist therefore have similarities; however the coaching psychologist is more likely to be working with 'normal, non-clinical populations' (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005, p.7) whereas the therapist is more

Figure 1: Diagram showing four main types of systemic questions, the assumptions upon which they are based and their intent (Tomm, 1988, p.6).

Lineal Assumptions

Lineal questions

Strategic questions

Problem explanation
questions

Leading
questions

Problem definition
questions

Confrontation
questions

Orienting
intent

Influencing
intent

Behavioural effect
questions

Hypothetical future
questions

Difference
questions

Observer perspective
questions

Circular questions

Reflexive questions

Circular Assumptions
(Tomm, 1988)

likely to be working with people who are suffering from some kind of psychopathology.

Tomm points out that, in asking 'reflexive questions', the therapist acts more as a coach or guide as they trigger reflexive activity. Using effective questions rather than instructions or commands to raise awareness and responsibility has already been identified as one of the most important tools of a coach and one of the most important skills a coach has to develop (Whitmore, 2002; Starr, 2003).

The coaching psychologist, like the therapist, needs to be aware of the effects of different questions and the most appropriate timing for each.

Dilts' change management framework
Robert Dilts, a leading figure in the field of training in neurolinguistic programming, has developed a model for change, which has also been used in coaching (Stoeger, 1996). Given that the goal of executive coaching is to support change, Dilts' change management framework helps to identify the level of the required change and suggests ideas about possible interventions.

Dilts (1996) identifies five different levels of change:
● Environment;
● Behaviour;
● Capabilities;
● Beliefs;
● Identity.

Environment

Environment refers to everything outside yourself. It consists of things such as the type of office layout, location, room, food, noise level. Environmental factors are often very easy to change and may have a major impact on work performance and job satisfaction.

Behaviour

This level concerns the specific actions or reactions of a person within an environment. If you take the picture of an iceberg, behaviour is probably the part above the surface that can observed by others, while capabilities, beliefs and identity stay below the surface.

Capabilities

'Capabilities' or competencies have to do with the mental strategies and maps people develop to guide their behaviour based on their assessment of their abilities.

Beliefs

The level of belief provides the reinforcement that supports or inhibits capabilities and behaviours. Next to helping to develop behavioural skills and capabilities, a coach must also address the presuppositions, beliefs and values of his or her clients. Beliefs and values are both personal and organisational and influence the amount of *motivation* and authorisation people bring to their roles and tasks.

Identity

Identity involves a person's role, mission and/or sense of self. It refers to personal as well as professional identity, or sense of identity derived from a work role and membership of a work group or organisation.

Dilts (1996) makes clear that changes at a lower level could, but would not necessarily affect functioning at higher levels. However, changing something on a higher level would always change things at lower levels.

Dilts' model can be criticised for being simplistic; however, one major goal in the coaching process is about bringing clarity to

clients to help them become proactive in solving their own problems. The experienced coaching psychologist will be aware of the limitations of the model as well as being aware how the levels are connected and how change at one level can support change at another level. The model helps the coaching psychologist to clearly identify the area of change needed by the client and suggests concrete ideas about where to start work with the coachee.

The application of systemic questioning in Dilts' change management framework

When the purpose of a coaching session is to support the coachee to develop strategies for change, it is clear to see how the four major types of systemic questions are applicable to each level of Dilts' model of change.

Environment

Lineal questions can be a useful and quick way to generate information about the environment. For example, a coachee who feels she should not be involved in the daily work of her team members might be asked by the coaching psychologist how far away she sits from her team members, if there is a kind of informal meeting room (e.g. kitchen), who is sitting next to whom, etc. At the same time, this kind of question might highlight that sitting far away (maybe even on another floor) or a lack of an informal or formal meeting room might have a major impact on the communication in the team.

Behaviour

Questions at this level need to be more action-oriented as well as exploratory, so could be lineal as well as circular. They help to understand the context and clarify meanings.

Lineal questions are mainly focused on WHAT is to be done, WHEN and by WHOM, for example, the above mentioned team manager could be asked:

● What could you do to foster the communication in your team?
● When do you want to improve the communication?

Focussing more on the interaction in the team/system, the questions become circular to help the client to re-examine their assumptions and prejudices:

● Who might be the one who has the best network in your team?
● Who else wants to get the communication in the team improved?
● Who do you imagine suffers the most? Who has the most conflicts in your team?
● What do you do when your team member complains about the increasing conflicts in the team?
● If she were to be more supportive of you, what would you be seeing her doing?

Capabilities

When it comes to the level of capabilities, development may be needed by the client so learning on and off the job is important. Questions at this level are directed to improving the understanding and skill-set of the coachee. As the coaching psychologist behaves more like a teacher or instructor, strategic questions might be helpful. These are asked in order to influence or even train in a specific manner.

Therefore, taking an example of someone who has a conflict with his female boss, strategic questions might be:

● Why don't you tell her that you cannot read her hand-writing?
● What competencies do you need to tell her that you are too busy to take all her private calls?
● What would happen if you suggest she reads her e-mail directly instead of you printing them out for her?
● Can you see how your smile and inability to say no keeps her asking for more?

The coaching psychologist has to be aware that the challenging nature of strategic questions might provoke resistance from the coachee, or even a disruption in his or her relationship with them.

Beliefs and identity

At the levels of beliefs and identity, the role of the coaching psychologist is much closer to the role of the therapist than at all other levels because this is when the coaching psychologist or therapist is focussed on changing or modifying self-limiting beliefs. Reflexive questions are an essential tool for the coaching psychologist to facilitate self-awareness and to help the client to find solutions.

Tomm (1987) differentiates between **different types of reflexive questions**. An awareness of his typology is useful in the coaching process as it enables the coach to use reflexive questions more deliberately as well as being more aware of the influence of different kinds of question. The most useful kinds of reflexive question for the coaching process are:

● Future-oriented questions;
● Observer-perspective questions;
● Hypothetical questions
    Unexpected Context–Change questions
    Embedded–Suggestion questions
    Normative–Comparison questions.

Future-oriented questions

In the coaching process, future-oriented questions help a coachee to change his or her perspective and focus on possibilities he would like to see. It stops him or her repeating all the reasons why a problem cannot be solved, which he might have repeated several times before and convinced his coach that there is no hope of change. These kinds of questions are goal-oriented and solution-oriented and are probably the best known 'systemic questions' used in the coaching process. They are used to move someone forward from a problem to a solution.

Helpful future questions in the coaching process might be:

● If this discussion ended in a satisfactory way, what would be happening? How would you recognise a successful outcome? What do you want to achieve long term?
● How much personal control or influence can you gain over your goal? What is your short term goal along the way? When do you want to achieve it by?

- How does a possible solution look and is that positive/challenging/attainable?
- What would be described as a success for the department in a year's time?
- What would be a good solution for you?
- How do you see your organisation in five years time?

Observer-perspective questions

As conflict resolution is one important topic in a coaching psychology , the first step is the ability of the coachee to find a position where he/she is less emotionally involved. Observer-perspective questions are a helpful tool to support the client to become less involved and try to take a neutral position. The following questions are helpful in this process:

- When you have this angry discussion with y, how would x describe the conflict?
- … and what might x be feeling at that point?
- How would others see your approach to the problem?
- How would x react to a problem solving approach from you?
- What do you do that others most appreciate/or most dislike …?
- How much – do you think – is x interested in solving the problem?
- In having the angry discussion with you, what do you think was important to her?
- Listening to your angry voice, what do you think her experience was?
- How would you react to a problem solving approach from x's side?

Where a team leader has to mediate between conflicting team members, a useful tool is that of triadic questions. In triadic questioning, the person being addressed is not included, so the coachee is enabled to become a neutral observer.

- When x and y stop communicating how does z react?
- Does he gets involved or stay out of it?'

These might be useful questions to help the coachee to understand 'the system' and to see 'the bigger picture', that means they realise who else is involved in the conflict, who agrees, who disagrees and who profits because of the conflict.

Hypothetical questions

When it comes to hypothetical questions, the types of hypothetical questions most often used in the coaching process are probably the following three:

Unexpected context–change questions

People often get themselves locked into seeing certain events from one perspective and do not see any other behavioural options. Questions to explore opposite content, context or meaning (Tomm, 1987) might be helpful to enable the coachee to entertain other perspectives. Coming back to our example of conflict in the workplace, helpful questions might be:

- When is the conflict not present?
- How would the world look, if the conflict had gone? What would be different?
- How would you notice?
- If the situation changes, what do you not want to change?

Embedded–suggestion questions

An unintended effect of questions can be that, the more open a question is, the less 'detailed' information the coaching psychologist gets. Embedded-suggestion questions encourage the coachee to be more specific. The coaching psychologist can 'include some specific content that points in a direction he or she considers potentially fruitful' (Tomm, p.177). The coaching psychologist needs to be aware by using embedded-suggestion questions that they become more directive and dominant. Nevertheless, if good rapport is sustained, embedded-suggestion questions can help the client to find alternative solutions. For example:

- If, instead of complaining to your colleagues you simply told your boss that you cannot read her handwriting and a short e-mail would be more efficient, what would she do?
- If you tell her that you need sometimes up to 30 minutes to read her hand-

writing, would she be more likely to accept that she send you the information via e-mail?

Normative–comparison questions

These questions help to define the position of the coachee in comparison to his peer-group. For example, a very ambitious young team-leader who wants to 'be perfect' and is never satisfied with his results, might realise by these questions, that they are already doing a very good job and his ambition is not appropriate. Questions to ask of a role model and how this model behaves are:

- Do you think you meet more often with your team members or less often than other team leaders?
- Do you know a project leader who finishes his projects in time without working additional hours? What does he do?
- Think of someone who is a good leader. What does he/she do? What is different to your performance?

Case examples

The following case examples show how different kinds of questions asked at different levels facilitate the coaching process.

Case study 1

Gerlinde is a senior consultant in a global consultancy company. The reason for the recommendation of coaching psychology was that in her appraisal she was told that she does not come across as mature enough with senior partners and clients. Valued because of her potential and competence, the company suggested coaching and agreed to pay for it.

In our first meeting, I asked a lot of lineal questions to find out about her background, her work experience and her reaction to the feedback she got. I found out that, because of her personal situation (she lives with her husband in Switzerland) she was not based in the main office of the company in Germany and, therefore, did not have high visibility with senior partners in the firm. On the few occasions she met with them, she felt under pressure to perform really well, which made her behaviour stiff and insecure.

We discussed the situation and I used circular questions like 'What do you think the senior partner expects from you', strategic questions like 'What would happen if you stopped trying to make a mature and professional impression when you meet the senior partners in informal settings and be yourself and relax?' and a reflexive question 'If your colleagues in Switzerland whom you work much closely with could observe you while you try to impress senior German partners, what would they think?'. I then discovered that Gerlinde had certain beliefs about what the senior partners think about her which made her insecure.

Her main concern was that she was female and came from Eastern Germany where she studied before the re-unification. She was convinced that the mainly male, in Western Germany, UK or US-educated partners believed that she was in the company mainly for diversity reasons and not for her competence or her university degrees. In addition, informal settings scared her particularly because she had the feeling she did not have the right tools for small talk and networking. She reacted by getting straight down to business and overloaded the senior partners with detailed information about the cases she worked on. The partners did not consider this to be a very professional or mature approach to senior people in the company and did not believe that she would be able to build a rapport with senior clients.

By looking at the Dilts' model, we worked on different levels. On the environmental level, Gerlinde became aware that even though she lived in Switzerland, she had to spend much more time in the German office to get familiar with the German partners and feel less under pressure by knowing them better. On the behaviour and capability level, we worked out how Gerlinde could build up rapport with the partners by

'pacing'[1] them (Knight, 1995, p.123 ff). We looked at the skills she needed to feel confident in talking to senior partners and how she could transfer positive experiences to new and difficult situations. The change at the beliefs and identity levels was a mixture of new and positive reactions to her different behaviour on the one side and a result of intense self-reflection mainly provoked by reflexive questions on the other side. When I asked her, for example, what she thought senior partners most appreciate about her, she found out that they liked her different way of thinking and approaching problems. It even turned out that, especially with new clients from Eastern Europe, her Eastern German background and the fact that she was a woman was considered as very helpful to build a good relationship with the client.

Gerlinde became much more open to new challenges and realised that often her own prejudices stopped her from being valued as a senior team member.

Case study 2

Gregor was part of a high-potential programme in a global company which ran over two years and involved coaching psychology sessions every six to eight weeks. As he was not getting coaching psychology for a specific purpose, his general expectation of the coaching psychologist was 'to have a sparring partner, who gives me advice on important career decisions.'

When I saw Gregor for the first time, my first impression was one of a smart, confident high-flyer in his late 30s whose career seemed to be running smoothly, but who nevertheless was impatient to make his next career step. In the first minutes of our session, he started complaining about an immense workload without appropriate reward and having no one to delegate to. During the following month, a big change took place in this department and we focused in the coaching sessions on what he really wanted in his job and what

he could do to support the changes so as to make the department more successful. Asking lineal and strategic questions proved to be just the right tool for this. During this restructuring process, Gregor got his own team and no longer reported to his former boss who he never really felt supported him. Gregor clearly benefited from a changing environment allowing him to establish a team he felt supported by.

Nevertheless, soon after the first euphoria Gregor continued complaining about his workload and that he had not no one to delegate to. Looking at the different levels of change, Gregor was convinced that he could (environmental level) and did (behaviour level) delegate. Having attended a leadership programme he also saw himself of knowing what delegation means and how you do it (capability level). Therefore, we looked more at the belief and identity level. By asking reflexive questions, for example, 'How would others value your intention to delegate?', 'What would happen if you did not control the work of the others at all?', Gregor realised different things. He had a picture of himself as a leader who trusts and believes in the team members' potential. However, in the new situation he had not worked together with most of the people in his team before and had no idea about their knowledge and potential. Instead of finding out where they stand and which tasks might be successfully taken over by the individual, he put himself under pressure to delegate as much as possible without knowing if his team member could really do it. At the same time he had a very clear picture that the task had to be performed in a certain way within very high standards. His reaction in this dilemma was that he continued doing the tasks himself and controlled nearly every task in his team. Obviously neither the team nor Gregor were happy with this situation.

Reflexive questions helped him to get an awareness of his dilemma and to look at role

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[1] Pacing is an element in rapport building. You can pace people by matching their values, their expectation, their language and even their body-language.

models when he was asked 'Do you know a team leader where the team members work mainly independently? How does this team leader do it? What is the reaction of his team? How do they get on?'. Gregor realised that he needed to give himself and his team some time to get familiar with each other and that the atmosphere of trust he wished to have in his team needs time to grow. In addition, he felt that being more patient with himself and his team made him an even better leader.

Case study 3

Kate was a consultant in a high reputation global professional services company. She was very successful at winning large projects and had excellent relationships with clients. At work, however, her colleagues found her brusque and uncaring and she overloaded administrative staff because she managed time poorly. As Kate wanted to be made a partner and this depended on support from colleagues, it was important for her to improve relationships in the office. At our first meeting, we began with lineal questions about the environment in which Kate worked and how she used her time. It became apparent to her when she described this to me that she knew little about the organisation out of her immediate area and resolved to find out more and report back. I used circular questions linked to the behaviour level like, 'What do you think your colleagues feel about your performance with clients?' and strategic questions like, 'How do you think junior colleagues would react if you offered to mentor them on how to win new projects?' This resulted in Kate deciding that 360 degree feedback interviews would be useful in helping her to understand exactly what colleagues did think about her. She thought she tended to be so focussed on client reactions that she did not pick up sufficiently on feedback from colleagues. Other questions that were helpful in tuning Kate into her impact concerned questions about the beliefs or identity level; such as future-oriented reflexive questions on where she

expected to be in five years' time and how she would then like to be described as a partner of the firm; and observer-perspective reflexive questions on how she comes across, such as 'When you are brusque with your secretary, what do you think others feel about you?' or 'What do you think people at work most like/dislike about you?'

Kate was able to spend a few months gathering data about her environment and her colleagues and meeting with them to discuss feedback about her, with the result that colleagues formed a far better impression of her interest in them and wish to change. She was able to work on her behaviour at work and became a partner later that year.

Conclusions

Tomm points out that questions tend to call for answers and statements tend to provide them (Tomm, 1988, p.2). Therefore, questions are less directive than statements and coaches are actively drawn into a dialogue with the coaching psychologist, become curious about themselves and the organisation and stimulated to think through problems on their own. In this way, the coaching psychologist becomes a facilitator rather than an expert in the developmental journey of coachees. Whilst it is clear that the coaching psychologist's use of systemic questions can help coachees to develop more systemic awareness, the coaching psychologist must also bear in mind that coaches are often chosen by coachees because of their theoretical know-how or because of their management experience. Coachees may be looking for a 'sparring partner' they can share experiences with, get opinions from and can argue with. Coaches may be required to take a position on certain issues to build up a relationship of confidence and trust with coachees. When coachees are asked about their preferences in having a psychologically trained coach, people often mention that they feared having someone who only asks questions in a very hierarchical way and would not show their own 'personality'. It is important for the coaching psychologist to take a position on

issues sometimes, if this is what the coachee needs; however, too many statements in the coaching process can be experienced as directive by the coachee and can provoke resistance. Therefore, a good balance between questions and statements is what a professional coaching psychologist needs to achieve, based on a flexible client-centred approach. This paper has attempted to show how the coaching psychologist can become more effective when asking questions by carefully considering the nature of those questions, their intent and the likely outcome.

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Evaluation of the Coaching Competence Self-Review online tool within an NHS leadership development programme

Ho Law, Sara Ireland & Zulfi Hussain

Objectives: The objectives of this case study were to: (1) develop a Universal Integrated Framework (UIF) of coaching; and (2) evaluate its effectiveness in terms of its impact upon the participants and the organisations.

Design: 49 participants assessed themselves on coaching indicators using the online CCSR tool as part of a leadership development programme within the National Health Services (NHS) in UK. The tool consisted of four dimensions (Personal, Social, Cultural, and Professional) and 18 elements with 110 questions.

Methods: The tool was evaluated using linear regression and analyses of variance, supplemented with qualitative review as part of triangulation process.

Results: Statistical analyses indicated that the Coaching/mentoring competence was predicted by Personal competence. The competence increased with age/life experience. There were no differences in competence scores between male and female participants. Personal and Social and Social and Cross-Cultural competences were co-related. Black participants seemed to benefit from the cross-cultural dimension framework as they scored significantly higher than White participants. Asian participants scored somewhere in between the two categories.

Conclusions: The results supported the underpinning coaching philosophy that was advocated that in order for the framework to be universal (non-biased), it was important to include a cross-cultural dimension within the core coaching and mentoring competence. It was recommended that future research should aim to explore the validity of the individual elements of the CCSR using a larger sample size.

Keywords: coaching psychology, coaching, competence, continuous professional development, cross culture, diversity, emotional intelligence, evaluation, leadership development programme, mentoring, National Health Services (NHS), online, review, Universal Integrated Framework.

Context

AS GLOBALISATION LEADS TO MORE intense competition, organisations need to continue to recruit, develop and deploy the best people in order to stay ahead and survive. We have seen unprecedented change at rapid pace in our organisations, our communities and societies across the globe over the last decade or so. This change has happened in the obvious fast growing communication industry as well as public organisations. Corporate leaders have begun to realise that the traditional training methods may not be able to cope with these rapid paces of change. Hence organisations have turned to coaching and mentoring to help develop their people and broaden their talent pool and develop a learning organisation. In this paper we shall demonstrate these developments with a case study within the context of the National Health Service in the UK. The study links the core of coaching and mentoring to the psychology of emotional intelligence across cultures. First, to clarify the terminology, there has been much debate about the meaning of the words mentoring and coaching and broad interpretations have generated a diverse portfolio of provision. For example, the term mentoring is described in various ways:

'Mentoring is an interaction between at least two people, in which the knowledge, experience and skills of one or both are shared, leading to growth and self-understanding'.
(East Mentoring Forum, UK, 2005)

'Help given by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking to aid personal development career planning or performance improvement and leadership.'
(Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995)

Note that in both of the above definitions, there is a common ground of transferring knowledge between two or more people. Similarly, coaching has characteristics of unlocking people's potential to maximise their performance (Law, 2002). The approaches may vary from facilitation approaches, helping them to learn rather than teaching them, to instructional approaches, which are directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills.

Coaching and mentoring may be differentiated in the following way. Mentoring may be regarded as a person development centred approach, primarily embracing career issues and personal development. On the other hand, coaching tends to be more performance centred. Coaching may take place in the line relationship in specific areas but co-coaching is always outside the line with a manager with experience in some aspect of improvement and who is undertaking supervision. Mentoring may be a long-term relationship, which continues through job changes, while coaching may be relatively short term linked to a project or performance issue.

The focus has often shifted from what works to the distinctions between strands of mentoring and coaching schools. Whilst the debate and the variety of the definitions and approaches have extended choice for mentees/coachees, there is a risk that the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring (such as impact assessment, supervision and quality assurance) may be undermined through the confusion with the issues of meaning and transferability.

While the ideas of emotional intelligence (EI) and coaching have become very popular trends in our profession recently, the assessment of emotional intelligence as a coaching and mentoring competence self review process is relatively novel. We shall focus on EI within a learning context as it assists learning. There have been some evaluative studies to show the benefit of the EI measurement. For example, college students with low learning abilities were found to have lower EI scores than their peers (Reiff *et al.*, 2001). Pupils with high EI scores performed better at school than their peers (Petrides *et al.*, 2004). Low EI pupils had higher rates of truancy and exclusion from school. (Petrides *et al.*, 2004). EI was found to positively correlate to job performance and satisfaction (Wong & Law, 2002). However, the above applications of EI in a practical context so far are limited to academic and educational domains. EI interventions were found to increase EI scores (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003; Cherniss & Adler, 2000). The assumption made here is that by providing the participants 360 degree feedback with EI assessment this will improve their future scores and improve their coaching and mentoring performance.

Introduction
Coaching psychology, as an emerging discipline in the UK, attempts to underpin coaching with models that are 'grounded in established psychological approaches' (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005). In this paper, we advocate that in order to develop coaching psychology as a profession further so that it has a global relevance of supporting both coach and coachees' personal learning and development, we need a framework that is both universal (applicable across cultures in terms of geographical, professional, social and racial dimensions) as well as integrated (applicable across the coaching and mentoring

spectrum). The development of a Universal Integrated Framework (UIF) does not intend to diminish the diversity of available approaches but focuses on the universality of the features that work across different cultures and contexts. We shall explore this framework further in the next section. In Section 3, we demonstrate how such a conceptual framework can be implemented in a leadership development programme to help the participants and organisations to improve their overall performance. The programme was within the context of Health and Social Care Setting in the East of England, UK. As part of the programme, a web-based coaching and mentoring competence self-review (CCSR) tool was developed to enable participants to assess their coaching and mentoring competence. The CCSR tool, which embodies the UIF framework, is based on Goleman's (1998) Emotional Competence Framework with two dimensions added: Cultural Competence and Coaching Professional Competence with 360 degree feedback built into the system. This enables the tool to become both universal (applicable across cultures) as well as contextual (applicable within the coaching context). Section 4 describes the method of evaluation of the CCSR tool. Finally the results of the evaluation are presented and recommendations are discussed.

Conceptual framework of cross-cultural EI

Whilst the idea of EI was made popular by Goleman (1995), the concept of EI is certainly not new and can be dated back to the 1920s with work by Thorndike on social intelligence (Thorndike, 1920). Gardner (1983) advocated the concepts of both intra-personal and inter-personal intelligence as alternative attributes for individual achievement. A formal definition of EI was developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later redefined as:

> *'the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to*

> *understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.'*

(Mayer & Salovey, 1997)

In the latest empirical definition, Petrides and Furnham (2001) define EI as:

> *'a constellation of emotion-related dispositions and self-perceived abilities representing a distinct composite construct at the lower levels of hierarchical personality structures.'*

Universal Integrated Framework (UIF)

As discussed in the previous section, some schools of thought tend to encourage separateness between mentoring and coaching stressing the personal and performance distinction. However, a rigid distinction might cause mentoring to be marginalised in the organisational business agenda, and become distanced from performance personal development.

From our practice, we have observed that there is a link between coaching and mentoring underpinned by the same skill set. For example, when coachees and mentees are driving a goal centred process in an exploratory way, the outcome of both mentoring and coaching is 'Action'. Despite the differences between coaching and mentoring discussed in the previous section, we recognise the portrayal of coaching and mentoring as a *continuum*. It links personal development with performance improvement underpinned by the same skills set would enable us to develop a more coherent integrated framework. This would ensure that mentoring remains by association at the core of the business agenda and that coaching addresses leadership development as well as organisational improvement. The emphasis on the connections between coaching/mentoring and the core business processes would ensure that it stays at the heart of the business agenda. Embedding mentoring/coaching within the organisation would also ensure its sustainability. If it is a scheme or an initiative one expects it to be a strand of work outside the main agenda

and as such it is vulnerable in a world of changing priorities. Organisations are more likely to stop add-on schemes or programmes, which are not well embedded within core processes. Sustainability is achieved through an integrated approach, which ensures that mentoring and coaching is part of the way we support reform and develop leaders.

We have developed our integrated framework that is grounded in the latest established psychological approaches in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1994, 1998). Although Goleman's Emotional Competence Framework was popular, its cultural competence dimension was under developed. We have expanded the framework with two dimensions added: *Cultural Competence* and Coaching Professional Competence with 360 degree feedback built into the system. UIF thus consists of the following four dimensions:

1. Personal Competence;
2. Social Competence;
3. Cultural Competence;
4. Professional Competence.

The UIF emphasises the following aspects in coaching and mentoring practices:
● Significance of culture;
● Coach/Mentor/mentee fluidity;
● Support supervision and Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Significance of culture

The UIF accepts that the unique aspects of culture as values are contextualised and not automatically transferable. Working with individuals to celebrate the uniqueness of all situations and circumstances reflects real universality and encourages best-fit solutions. In our mentoring and coaching programme we encourage the coachees and mentees to identify the individual and cultural differences based on their own experience. They should then reflect on the experience during their one-to-one session with their coach or mentor. The roles of the coach/mentor in this context are two-fold:

● Challenge the coachee/mentees' cultural assumptions, personal beliefs and values as well as their own;
● Provide constructive support in their development of insight.

Figure 1: A Universal Integrated Framework.
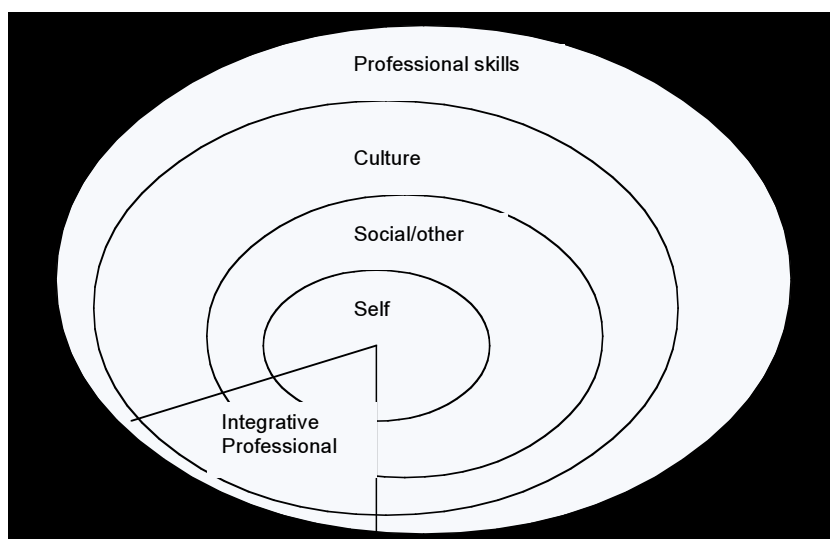
Coach/Mentor/mentee fluidity

Mentor/coach training has traditionally focused on the development of the mentor/coach. In the UIF model the mentee/coachee is also trained as a mentor/coach so that they are more able to drive the process as a mentee from having the knowledge of the whole process. Individuals are encouraged to be both mentee/coaches and mentor/coaches so that they recognise the learning opportunities in both roles and identify them as transitory roles to aid learning rather than set and 'boxed-in' positions. Our research evidence (discussed later) shows that mentors learn as much if not more from mentees than mentees do from mentors.

Continuous development

Supervision and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offers the chance for participants in the mentoring process to review the process and optimise their learning. External and internal managers can be mentors and coaches. For top executives there are requirements to use external coaches/mentors to assure confidentiality and comfort for those in the most challenging and demanding positions. In a mixed economy of external and internal mentor/coaches it offers an opportunity to share best practice within one framework. The UIF can map onto the CPD learning cycle very well (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: CPD cycle (adopted from Department of Health CPD project in UK).
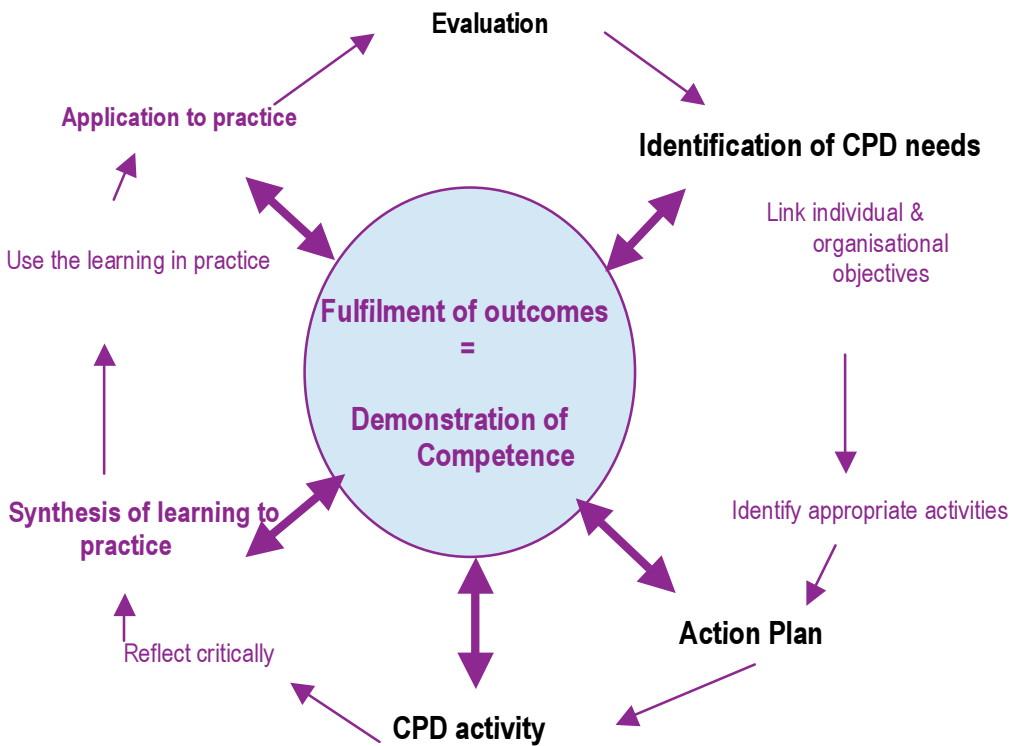
Tools to assess the impact on individuals' performance and satisfaction are key to realising the benefits of mentor coaching and ensuring that it offers value to the business. Impact assessment forms part of our evaluation strategy and is discussed in Section 4.

Implementation

In this section, we demonstrate the feasibility of the UIF with a case study of a coaching and mentoring programme introduced in a health and social care setting in the east of England. The programme required delegates to commit to mentoring and coaching for up to four days over a 12-month period. They were introduced to the UIF with a wide range of coaching/mentoring techniques and practical exercises. According to our guiding light of coach/ coachees/mentees fluidity (discussed earlier), all participants first became coachees/mentees paired with appropriate coaches/mentors within the organisation. They themselves then became coaches and mentors for the others after they gained competence.

To help participants in the programme to get feedback on their performance from their coachees/mentees, we developed an on-line tool called the Coaching Competence Self-Review (CCSR). This provided assessments on their personal effectiveness and automatically generated a personal development plan for them to use in supervision. Individuals were asked to assess themselves on coaching indicators using the online tool. CCSR was developed based on the UIF as described in Section 2. It aimed to help mentors and coaches with their development particularly of emotional intelligence from a cultural perspective. In total, the tool consisted of four dimensions (Personal, Social, Cultural and Professional) and 18 elements with 110 questions (see Table 1).

A total of 18 elements of core competence were identified within the above dimensions. Taking into consideration the need to balance the number of questions at each dimension and element, a total of 100 questions were created. This is summarised in Table 2.

The above 18 elements are comparable with Petrides and Furnham's (2001) 15 components of trait EI, which is summarised in Table 3.

Petrides and Furnham's framework consists of overlapping elements, which are not logically distinct. Furthermore like other EI tools, their framework left the cultural component undeveloped. We believe that the EI elements are better organised in a hierarchical structure as exemplified by our CCSR. As far as we are aware, our CCSR represents the most comprehensive and efficient framework for EI assessment at present. This needs to come out-kind of bragging-let results speak for themselves.

The CCSR tool formed one part of an approach to measure the impact of mentor/coach training as well as aid individuals in supervision. The programme required delegates to commit to mentoring and coaching for up to four days over a 12-month period. The participants undertaking the training including coachee/mentees also contributed to surveys and

Table 1: Dimensions of CCSR.

Competence	I. Personal (Self)	II. Social (Other)	III. Cultural (Culture)	IV. Professional (Competence)
Awareness	Self-Awareness	Empathy	Enlightenment	Reflective Practice
Management	Self-Regulation	Social skills	Champion	Continued Professional Development

Table 2: Elements of cross-cultural EI.

Dimensions	Elements	Q's
I. Personal competence	1. Emotion	5
	2. Cognition	5
	3. Motivation	5
	4. Control	5
	5. Trustworthiness	5
	6. Conscientiousness	5
	7. Flexibility	5
	8. Creativity	5
II. Social competence	9. Understanding	5
	10. Empowering	5
	11. Communication	5
	12. Facilitating conflict resolution	5
	13. Leadership facilitation	5
	14. Coaching the team	5
	15. Coaching for change	5
III. Cultural competence	16. Appreciation	10
	17. Respect	10
	18. Champion cultural diversity.	5
Total		100

Table 3: Petrides and Furnham's (2001) 15 components of trait EI.

Facets	Perception
Adaptability	Flexible to adapt to new conditions.
Assertiveness	Willing to stand up for one's rights.
Emotion expression	Able to communicate one's feeling to others
Emotion management	Able to influence others' feelings.
Emotion perception	Clear about one's own and others' feelings.
Emotion regulation	Able to control one's emotions.
Impulsiveness (Low)	Able to hold back one's urges.
Relationship skills	Able to have fulfilling personal relationships.
Self-esteem	Successful and confident.
Self-motivation	Able to drive in the face of adversity.
Social competence	Able to network with excellent social skills.
Stress management	Able to regulate stress and withstand pressure.
Trait empathy	Able to take others' perspectives.
Trait happiness	Cheerful and satisfied with one's life.
Trait optimism	Able to 'look on the bright side' of life.

focus groups to supply qualitative information on the competencies measured in the CCSR and their perceptions of the process. (Paper to be published on these other findings in full soon.)

Evaluation and impact assessment

The literature in coaching has tended to illustrate different coaching techniques or psychological approaches. There is a need for evidence-based evaluation on the effectiveness of coaching. We advocate in this paper impact assessment as a methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching programme. The key question is: *How will we realise the benefits?*

The benefits of the UIF framework identified were that we were able to embed the core skills and process into the organisation in a sustainable way and as a result of the universality of these core skills significantly impact upon the way we work.

To realise the above benefits we designed measurement of how supervision and CPD (described in Section 3) contributed to the success of the leadership programme. The online CCSR tool provided information in this area as well as feedback through supervision that yielded qualitative data. These allowed us to gather the evidence acquired on best practice and make recommendations for future practice.

In order to ensure that the CCSR tool developed was amenable for statistical analysis, we needed to decide the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for EI. Evidence of increase in work performance and progress in terms of:

- Quality;
- Quantity;
- Personal effectiveness;
- The overall effectiveness of the organisation.

For the statistical evaluation of the CCSR tool with the above 18 elements described in the previous section, a linear multi-variate regression could be used. The demographic and user ethnicity as well as their Emotional Intelligence scores across the three dimensions of the UIF became explanatory variables. Thus the CCSR tool had the user categories as demographic data according to the census. The KPI included coaching competence, salary earned and scores from the 360-degree feedback.

As stated earlier a fuller evaluation of the Mentoring and Coaching Strategy and its implementation as an approach to support leadership development, was carried out using questionnaires, focus groups and the Coaching competence online CCSR tool, the results will be reported elsewhere.

Results

The data from the online CCSR tool was statistically analysed using the participant competency scores against overall rating scores. Owning to missing values in some data fields, the initial 49 respondents were reduced to 23 (the complete data set after the missing data were excluded in the analyses). The findings supported the survey and the use of the UIF model for coach mentoring. The results are summarised as follows:

- Personal competency with its link with authenticity was the best predictor of all-round competency ($p<0.04$).
- Competence increased with age/life experience, see Figure 3 (ANOVA $F=9.7$; $p<0.00015$).
- There were no gender differences, see Figure 4 ($p=0.5$).
- There was a significant co-relationship between the personal competence, social competence (understanding, empowering, communication, facilitating conflict, leadership facilitation, team coaching and coaching for change) and cultural competence (appreciation of, respect for and championing different ways of being or doing) ($r=0.7$).
- Similarly to the Mentee/Coachee survey, the highest rated coach mentors were Black participants, followed by Asian participants and then White participants in respect of the analysis of total competency scores, see Figure 5 (ANOVA $F=6.6$; $p=0.06$).
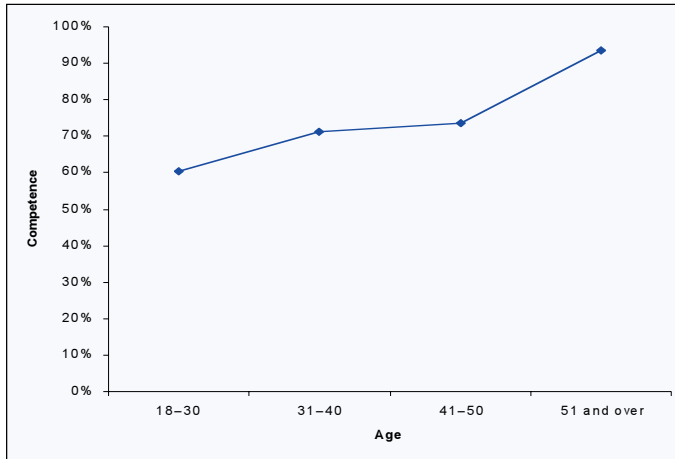
Figure 3: Competence increased with age.

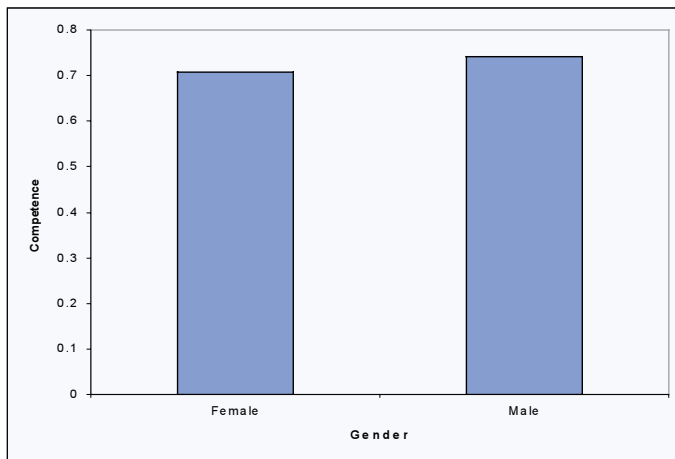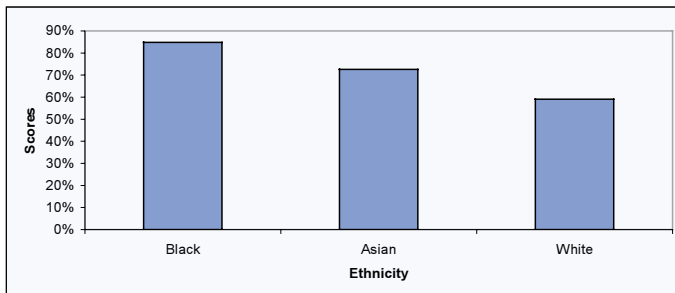**Figure 4: Coaching competence: Female vs Male participants.**

Figure 5: Coaching competence: Differences between ethnic groups.

Conclusions, discussions and recommendations

Our results have shown a positive correlation between the personal competence, social competence and cultural competence. The results may come as no surprise, as one would expect from the theoretical perspective of EI. If people were more self-aware, they would manage the social and cultural situations more competently. However, the implication of our study to the current debate in EI research in terms of its concept, measurement and evaluation could be quite profound, as discussed next.

From our view, the issues on the theoretical concept of EI, its measurement and evaluation are interrelated, and therefore should be tackled together in a systemic way as demonstrated in our case study reported in this paper. For instance the debate about whether EI is a cognitive ability or a trait like personality (Mayer *et al.*, 1990; Mayer & Salovey, 1993 1997) would have important implications to its measurement and hence evaluation.

In terms of measurement, the academic discussion has been focused on two key questions:

● Should EI be measured by self-reporting (as administered in the coaching and mentoring programme reported in our case study)?

● Should the respondents' performance be measured instead?

For example, some researchers tend to make a rigid distinction between EI trait and cognitive EI and propose the following conditional rules (for example, see Petrides, *et al.*, 2004):

● If one regards EI as a trait-like personality, then it should be measured by self-reporting.

● If EI conceptually were regarded as a cognitive ability, then the measurement should be performance-based.

We feel that it may not be helpful to adopt a binary 'position (either/or) rigidly if we were to use EI as a learning tool for intervention and enable users to learn from experience. Nevertheless, the above distinction may be used to guide us to design and evaluate the research and development of EI and its applications such as coaching and mentoring. For example, many current EI measurements in both academic research and commercial markets (e.g. in a form of tests or inventories) may be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Do they have a clear theoretical framework?

2. Do they have complete coverage of all relevant dimensions and essential elements?

3. Have they addressed measurement issues, i.e. defining responses, internal consistency, factor structure and construct validity?

4. Have they adequately matched the measurement to the theoretical concept?

Our case study has shown that we could use self-reporting complemented with 360-degree feedback to assess EI and infer the correlation between self-perception and performance-based ability in our evaluation. The correlation between personal competence, social competence and cultural competence also supports the approach that coaching is never culturally neutral. However, we must be cautious in drawing our conclusion from the results, as a correlation does not mean causation. The results may imply that change is culturally sensitive to context and that both the coachee/mentee and the setting need to be fully understood and engaged to ensure success. Best practice cannot be established and sustained using techniques devoid of tuning to the context for implementation. The players involved need to feel valued and appreciated.

BME participants did well in the overall coaching competence ratings. This is consistent with the UIF, which identifies the importance of cross-cultural working as it applies to individuals and settings. This finding might also be attributed to the greater training of BME leaders through the coaching and mentoring programme compared with white senior managers, who

were relying on previous training and experience. We thus recommended that more coaching and mentoring programmes as part of the diversity training for white staff working with BME groups as coaches/mentors should be warranted. From the feedback of those who participated in the programme, white delegates would have much to learn and to gain by including BME participants in coaching and mentoring as well as organisational change. The BME participants seem to show an aptitude for a higher cultural appreciation as applied to the context for application as well as in engagement with the players. It adds support to the approach of integrated work streams of coach/mentors to make the most of talent pools and backs the UIF approach of the importance of having black and minority coach/mentors as part of any wider coaching and mentoring initiative.

Recommendations

While further research should be continued to explore the validity of the individual elements of the CCSR using a larger sample size and how it can be utilised to aid coach and mentor to develop their competence, some practical recommendations can be drawn out in the following areas:

● Supervision;
● Training;
● Impact assessment.

Supervision

This reconfirmed our approach to supervision underpinned by the UIF that attention to the personal, the social and the cultural dimensions of settings and players are required by the integrative professional coach/mentor. In the sister study that addressed the benefits of training, we replicated these results but also linked the importance of training (T) and supervision (S) to improved quality (Q) of coach/mentors and the increase of benefits cited as direct proportion to the quality of the coach/mentor, i.e.

T + S = > Q = > Benefits.

Our supervision frameworks have therefore focused on continuous professional development and quality improvement through reflective practice, i.e.

S = T(CPD via CCSR tool) + Q (reflective practice).

Participants have used their CSSR reports to inform their reflective practice in Supervision and colleagues in supervision through peer coaching have also contributed to CCSR information on one another. The CCSR tool has been revamped and is aiding the development of good practice in a range of e-mentoring programmes and face-to-face programmes in the UK and overseas.

Training

Our results indicated that many coaches/mentors felt less confident and prepared for the EI and cultural dimensions of coach/mentoring work. Future training programmes for mentoring and coaching should include more focus on development of EI and incorporate cultural appreciation as core element as in world of increased complexity working across unfamiliar contexts with people of a different profession and background are the norm.

Impact assessment

Organisations have an ongoing interest in deriving the benefits they are securing from coach/mentoring and establishing benchmarks for coach/mentor performance in this area when it is a key element of management work. As such the CCSR tool was found to be very effective in helping coach/mentors manage their own development and organisations plan to address areas of reduced mentor/coach performance. The CCSR tool made coach/mentor process more transparent but also ensured it was caochee/mentee driven throughout. It takes us one more step to helping organisations explore and capitalise on the link between coach/mentor quality and coachee/mentee outcomes. We recommend that organisations should continue to adopt the model of

best practice with impact assessment in their programme evaluation as exemplified by this case study.

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Back on track: The coaching journey in executive career derailment

Peter J. Webb

Executive career derailment seems to coincide with one of the most significant transitions in life - the midlife 'crisis'. Career derailment is most commonly caused by insensitivity; both to others needs and to the individuals own developmental needs for authenticity. Executive coaches can form strong developmental relationships with derailed executives through engaging them in the behaviours of individuation and supporting the development of a more authentic self. Coaching is conceptualised as a 'U-shaped' journey exploring 5 levels of meaning: (1) the executive's environment; (2) the executive's behaviour; (3) attitudes, (4) deep structure of the person; and (5) deepest structure.

Keywords: Executive coaching, personality, career derailment, evidence based coaching.

BY THE TIME MANAGERS OF commercial enterprises reach mid-career their tenure in office seems increasingly fickle. Change comes faster than ever. Investors have turned unforgiving. Globalisation, deregulation, consolidation, acquisition, all create new and highly complex environments. Certainly, the degree of 'fit' between the individual executive, the organisation's receptivity to change, and external market forces might help to explain why some CEO's fail (Greiner *et al.*, 2003). But these factors by themselves don't explain the near epidemic of shortfalls and failures. What are the deeper causes of executive career derailment and can executive coaching help?

Life stages

Executive career derailments seem to coincide with midlife, a critical transition regarded by adult development theorists as determining the quality of mental well being in the middle years (approximately ages 38 to 50) and beyond. Jung (1969) highlighted the developmental task of *individuation* in this period, which involves shifting the focus from the ego to the inner core of the self. There is often a lack of conformity to goals and values previously adhered to as 'expected' by society. The individual may feel compelled to explore unconscious aspects of their personality through taking up new activities, experiences, and social arrangements. In relation to Erikson's (1963) stages of life, this period is a time of confronting the discrepancies between the dreams of adolescence and the realities of current achievements or failures. The choice here is to either stagnate or to go beyond self and to help the next generation. Levinson (1978) described middle adulthood as the 'third season' and a time of significant transition during which a great deal of life re-evaluation takes place. These theorists all see midlife as a critical step towards a higher level of self-knowledge, a greater acceptance of strengths and weaknesses, and an increased tolerance and resilience towards others. Indeed, Sheehy (1995) talks about this passage as the 'little death of first adulthood' leading to the optimistic surge of the 'flaming 50s'.

To what extent does this critical stage of adult development impact on mid-career derailment? According to McCall (2003), insensitivity is the most commonly reported flaw amongst derailed executives. What were previously strengths become weaknesses, leading to blind spots, arrogance, and the poor handling of bad luck. A grandiose self-image is often apparent, reflected in the belief that the normal rules do not apply. McCall's dynamics of derailment seem at

odds with Jung's process of individuation suggesting perhaps, that these executives are still dealing with ego needs and have not yet begun to look inwards.

Kegan (1994) described six stages of adult development: incorporative, impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional, and interindividual. Kegan's final interindividual stage involves a struggle with true interdependency, self-surrender, and intimacy in relationships, both work and personal self. This transition typically occurs through midlife and beyond, leading to the development of *wisdom*, although not all are able to master the change.

Van Velsor and Drath (2004) extend Kegan's stages into a set of beliefs about the self in relation to leadership. Leaders are expected to move from the *self-reading* belief that 'identity can be understood by reading it in the way important other people respond', to the *self-authoring* belief that 'one creates one's own identity according to self-generated standards'. Like Kegan, they propose a higher state of *self-revising* beliefs that 'while being the author of an identity, one is responsible for continuously re-creating it in alignment with one's environment' (Van Velsor & Drath, 2004, p.391). In a sample of managers and teachers, 36 per cent were transitioning from self-reading to self-authoring, and 48 per cent were in the self-authoring developmental position. Only one per cent were transitioning from self-authoring to self-revising (Van Velsor & Drath, 2004).

But is all development linear? Adult development theorists believe that each stage has its own challenges and requirements, which must be mastered before moving on to the next stage. Adler (1964) however, defined development in terms of a motivation away from *feelings of inferiority* toward *feelings of superiority*. The four 'life tasks' which facilitate this process can be arranged in a wheel comprising: relating to others, making a contribution, self-acceptance, and developing a spiritual dimension. Hudson (1999) likewise, suggests that devel-opment may be cyclical. Individuals are either in a 'life chapter' or they are undergoing a 'life transition' in moving away from a previous chapter or discovering a new one. Freud (1964) and other psychodynamic theorists have demonstrated that individuals not only fail to progress through stages but can in fact *regress* to an earlier stage under sufficient stress or conflict. Could this be happening in mid-career derailment?

Peltier (2001) suggests that regression – reverting back to earlier, less mature behaviour – may be more widespread in commercial organisations than is admitted. Defensive behaviours represent a resistance to following the 'path of progressive development'. When executives exhibit these behaviours the impact on whole enterprises can be catastrophic (Berglas, 2002).

The coaching journey

The process of coaching a senior executive can take on a unique trajectory. Kilburg (2000) talks about coaching as building 'islands of reflection' through which the coaching client can safely explore the dimensions of his or her life. Kemp (2006) views coaching as an 'adventure' and provides a framework for an 'adventure-based coaching cycle'. Lenhardt (2004) sees coaching as a progressive deepening of levels of identity and meaning for the individual executive. To the extent that coaching is an act of going from one place of meaning to another, particularly over a long distance of time and observation, the coaching process may be conceptualised as a *journey* (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1995, p.733).

The coaching journey must be guided by a theoretical framework that takes account of adult development and learning throughout the lifespan, but nowhere more significantly than the transition of midlife. In executive career derailment the coach recognises the primary developmental stage or belief pattern from which the executive is operating and provides the self-development opportunities and strategies to help him or her along their own developmental path

(Skiffington & Zeus, 2003). In particular, coaches should look for and encourage the behavioural indicators of individuation in derailed executives: (a) looking within for direction and energy; (b) questioning inherited values; (c) relinquishing outmoded aspects of themselves; (d) revealing new dimensions of who they are; and (e) allowing themselves to be more playful and spontaneous (Lyons, 2002).

The coaching journey may be thought of as a progressive exploration of five levels of meaning (see Figure 1). The first two are external and observable:

(1) The *executive's environment*, consisting of his or her strategic thinking, the structures and systems through which he or she implements action, and particularly the establishment and defence of status.

(2) *The executive's behaviour*, which involves paying attention to communication methods, relationship management, and managerial style. Here, the emphasis is on noticing and controlling behaviours and preventing more profound, impulsive behaviour patterns from returning under stress.

The next three levels are internal and invisible:

(3) *Attitudes*, calls into question the executive's beliefs and values, those that govern his or her life, work, relationships, whether to trust or not to trust. And how values influence choices with respect to career, money, success, and power. Included here are the executive's *representation systems*, how he or she sees the world. For example, the executive might view themselves as 'stuck' in a

Figure 1: Five levels of meaning in the coaching journey.

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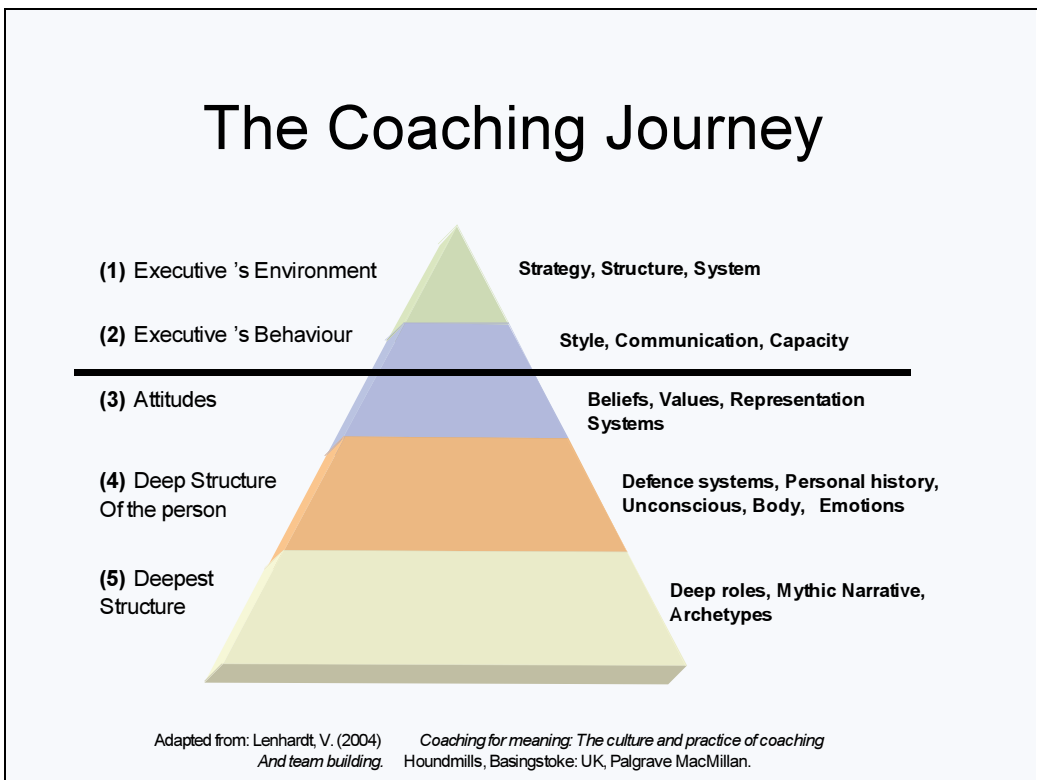
fishbowl because of the way their actions are viewed and analysed by others, or they may see the organisation as a mechanical entity with success dependent on 'pulling the right levers'.

(4) *Deep structure of the person*, or 'character' aspect of personality. This is where the person's defences and unconscious beliefs, developed over their life history, reside. Executive career derailment often emerges as an unconscious response to perceived 'attacks' on his or her structured defence system. Progress is only possible through openness, trust, self-appraisal, and realisation.

(5) *Deepest structure*, constitutes the most intimate development of the person, beyond the defensive systems, to the essential nature of human consciousness or 'spirit'. This is the cornerstone of the architecture of identity. Access to this

level may be gained through deep reflection and meditative practice, and through the recognition of mythic narratives and archetypes that give deep insight to 'life, the universe and everything' (Adams, 1982).

The coach conducts the coaching journey as a 'U-process', starting with the visible elements of the executive's domain of experience and then guiding the person into a progressively deeper exploration of meaning. The process starts out as a series of 'shallow dives', each time coming back to the surface to 'draw breath'. Depending on the nature of the relationship between the coach and the executive, both may be prepared to spend longer periods of time at the deeper levels before returning to the 'visible world' with fresh insights and realisations (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The 'U-process' in the coaching journey.

The Coaching Journey

(1) Executive 's Environment — Strategy, Structure, System

(2) Executive 's Behaviour — Style, Communication, Capacity

(3) Attitudes — Beliefs, Values, Representation Systems

(4) Deep Structure Of the person — Defence systems, Personal history, Unconscious, Body, Emotions

(5) Deepest Structure — Deep roles, Mythic Narrative, Archetypes

Adapted from: Lenhardt, V. (2004) *Coaching for meaning: The culture and practice of coaching And team building.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: UK, Palgrave MacMillan.

A case study

'Charles' was a successful legal partner in a national law firm, aged 47, happily married with two children. At our first coaching session he told me his aim at university had been to become a partner by the time he was 30, and in fact he achieved this at the age of 28. Charles was appointed Partner-in-Charge of the head office at the age of 44, HR Partner and Department Managing Partner at 46, and then he was told he was being groomed to become the next Chief Executive Partner (CEP) at the Board elections in two years time. Charles sought coaching to help him prepare for this likelihood and to enhance his ability to have a positive impact on people and the business in what was a highly-charged political environment.

Coaching dialogue began at Level 1 as an affable leadership development discourse drawing on data from his Hogan Development Survey (Hogan & Hogan, 1997). By session three Charles was reflecting on observations of his own and others' behaviour with comments such as: 'I'm not as bad as I think I am', 'I watched myself in a meeting and noticed that I had a more open frame of mind', 'others seem to be playing to my 'derailers' (Level 2). I asked Charles how he defined his leadership. He reflected for a moment and then admitted that he craved to be the centre of attention. I suggested that his leadership style was like the 'circus ringmaster'. This seemed to resonate strongly with him as a *representation system* (Level 3). At each session I encouraged Charles to 'dip' below the surface of Levels 1 and 2 by asking him reflective questions such as 'what does *detachment* mean to you?' 'What do you *choose* to be attached to?' In this way Charles was able to articulate and reflect on some of his key representation systems in relation to his identity as a leader. At the same time I recommended readings that might facilitate reflection at Levels 4 and 5 (Tolle, 2000; Ruiz, 1997, Coelho, 1994; Chopra, 1996).

However, the journey began to go off the rails at session seven. Charles reported that pressure was being exerted on him to relinquish his Partner-in-Charge and Department Managing Partner roles in order to generate more fees for the firm. He immediately resisted and mounted a vigorous campaign of self-righteous e-mails to the CEP and other Managing Partners. Here was evidence of his deep defence system (Level 4) at work as predicted by the Hogan Assessment (2002). Charles rated in the 'moderate to high risk' category for four of five factors regarded by Kaiser and Hogan (2006) as '*Intimidation*: gaining security by threatening people and scaring them away', and in the 'moderate to high risk' category for all four factors described as '*Flirtation and Seduction*: winning recognition with self-promotion and charm'. In fact, Charles scored in the 100th percentile for *Bold* showing the highest risk for impulsive, self-promoting, unresponsive to negative feedback, competitive and demanding behaviours, broadly consistent with a *narcissistic* personality (Judge *et al.*, 2006).

Ultimately, Charles' actions did nothing to advance his cause, and the CEP unilaterally appointed another Partner to take over Charles' role with no consultation and no evident support for Charles' candidacy for the upcoming CEP elections. Charles felt hurt and 'abandoned'. He announced that he was withdrawing his candidacy, effectively 'derailing' what had been a stellar career.

Some of these 'career risk' behaviours had been pointed out to me by HR and L and D stakeholders beforehand but were certainly not evident in my early coaching experience of Charles. However, as circumstances unfolded I began to see him enacting his 'dark side' (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Yet, at session nine we had collaborated on writing a set of guiding principles for his behaviour (Levels 3 and 4) such as; 'more listening and not interrupting', 'making suggestions rather than giving directions', 'compassionate detachment: not so attached to the outcome as to be emotionally driven by it', and 'ethical integrity – supporting the *higher* ethical stance' as evidence of 're-forming' character (Kaplan, 1990). I believe

this helped prepare the way for Charles' later 'career recovery'.

Four months after our 10-session contract concluded, Charles requested a continuation of coaching. At this stage the story had fully unravelled and Charles reported feeling as though he had been 'thrown off the city wall from a great height!' It seemed appropriate to take a 'deep dive' rather than just 'skim the surface'. We explored the archetypes of *orphan* (how the *hero* experiences, and learns from, adversity), and *wanderer* (how the *hero* rides out to face the unknown) (Pearson, 1998) at Level 5, and then developed more resourceful *representation systems* such as; 'life isn't linear, it's a series of cycles and rhythms', 'I have all these good things going on in my life', 'everyone else (protagonists and victims) is at different stages of their own cycles and rhythms' (Level 3).

By session 14, Charles reported 'being available and present to the situation but not driven by the event', and 'spending more time with people'. He now identified more with the archetype of *wanderer* (seeker of truth) than *orphan* (wounded victim) (Pearson, 1998). 'How do you feel?' I asked him. 'Like being on holidays from my ego!' he said. Our coaching dialogue now regularly took on a more dialectical tone, consistent with Levels 3 and 4: 'realising that both questions and their answers evolve over time, and that the answers to important life questions can differ at different times in one's life' (Sternberg, 2001, p.238).

Charles was now able to see that 'they're attacking my *process*, not me!' We collaborated on transferring competency from his professional negotiating skills with clients to negotiating his relationships with fellow partners to bring him fully into Levels 1 and 2. Charles now felt that he had some behavioural skills to transform his style of influence and regain control of his environment.

Conclusion

Executives can become distanced from their own emotions and from authentic communication with others. As McCall (2003, p.195) points out, 'blind spots matter eventually' and as with Charles, what seemed a benign flaw at one level of development can become lethal with a change in context. Leaders must be committed to lifelong development. Van Velsor and Drath (2004, p.414) point out that organisational environments are more developmentally challenging than ever before and 'organisations today need larger communities of managers who are self-authoring people.'

As executive coaches we will be most effective 'if we incorporate an understanding of where our clients are on the curve of adult development' (Axelrod, 2005, p.125). And we can more fully appropriate deeper levels of meaning for our clients using the 'U-process' described here to help elicit 'executive wisdom' (Kilburg, 2006).

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Shifting perspectives:
One year into the development of the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology in the UK

Alison Whybrow & Stephen Palmer

Objectives: *This paper presents the findings from a follow-up survey exploring the practice and opinions of the membership of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP).*

Design: *The study was cross sectional in design.*

Method: *This survey of Coaching Psychologists was conducted in December, 2005, 12 months after the formation of the SGCP. The survey focused on psychologists' practice as coaches and their views on a number of relevant issues such as the necessary training and experience to practise as a coaching psychologist.*

Results: *Building on the work of two previous surveys (see Whybrow & Palmer, 2006), there are many consistencies with these earlier surveys and some interesting shifts. More psychologists are identifying coaching as a formal, albeit part-time, aspect of their practice. There was a desire for the SGCP to build and maintain a strong presence in the broader coaching arena, and to promote the value that psychology brings to this field of practice. The issue of flexible, inclusive methods of accreditation were a specific focus. Indeed, this area of emerging tensions is captured by the desire on the one hand for a formal qualifications route to demonstrate competence as a coaching psychologist, and on the other the desire for informality and openness captured by the SGCP currently.*

Conclusions: *The outcome of this third survey of the perspectives of coaching psychologists highlights some trends that are ongoing, and points to the first significant challenge for the practice of Coaching Psychology in the UK as the demand for accreditation and recognition increases.*

Keywords: Coaching Psychology, professional practice, supervision, coaching approaches, continuing professional development, British Psychological Society.

Overview

THE BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY (SGCP) came into existence in October, 2005. In this early stage of the development of the profession within the British Psychological Society (BPS), a survey of the SGCP membership was conducted in December, 2005 to provide an opportunity to review and reflect on the shifting perspectives of those working in and around the coaching psychology profession. Whilst this is the first survey of the SGCP membership, this is in fact the third annual survey of psychologists working as coaches/coaching psychologists. Findings from earlier 2003 and 2004 surveys were reported in Whybrow and Palmer (2006) published in the first issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. In this paper, we highlight the consistent themes, changing trends and emerging tensions from the most recent 2005 survey.

Method

Members of the SGCP were invited to complete the survey by general e-mail over a two-week period. One-hundred-and-fifty-one members completed the survey (representing about 10 per cent of the SGCP membership at that time). The data were collected online

using www.surveymonkey.com as the survey platform. The survey consisted of 15 questions and took between five and 10 minutes to complete. Respondents had the opportunity to record their views quantitatively and/or qualitatively by expressing their personal perspective in response to each question. Membership data of the SGCP was gathered from the membership records of the SGCP.

Results

Consistent perspectives

There was a strong theme recognising that the development of coaching psychology within the UK through the SGCP was adding value to psychologists working as coaches. The SGCP was seen as *'Continuing to support professional standards and good practice'*. The SGCP was also adding value to people interested in the field of psychology and how it applies to coaching practice. The SGCP *'provides a home for coaches who use psychological principles to inform their coaching practice'*. Respondents wanted to see the SGCP *'strive to be the UK body at the forefront of coaching theory, research and practice and to work toward being the 'Gold Standard' for professional coaches in the UK'*.

Good leadership and the spirit of *'let's get things done'* were described as positive elements of the growth of coaching psychology. Respondents commented on the inclusive, informal, personal and accessible nature of the SGCP and were keen to retain and build on that. As one respondent highlighted *'it's the flexibility of relationships, and a critical approach to theory and practice that matters most in my view. Prefer to develop inclusive dynamics rather than excluding technocratic barriers.'*

The value of the SGCP as an informative, member driven network was noted. One comment noted the SGCP should develop in *'as non-hierachical a way as possible, membership-centred.'*

Membership within the BPS and other coaching-related professional bodies

Membership across the BPS subsystems is shown in Figure 1. The interest in Coaching Psychology across other areas of applied psychology is evident and increasing.

The psychologists within the SGCP represent many of the other professional bodies associated with coaching. Significant numbers report membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (36.2 per cent), the Association for Coaching (28.7 per cent) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (19.1 per cent). Members indicated they belonged to a diverse range of additional professional associations including professional dance, legal, education, and sports associations.

Practice as a coaching psychologist

It appears that coaching practice continues to be subset of the work of applied psychologists with more respondents working part time as a coaching psychologist than full time. 13.9 per cent of respondents report spending more than 50 per cent of their time as a coaching psychologist, whilst 59.7 per cent report spending less than 50 per cent of their time as a coaching psychologist. This is consistent with the trend from previous surveys (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006), where 11.9 per cent reported working as a full-time coach and 46.8 per cent as a part-time coach in 2004. Results from 2003 were similar, with 11.1 per cent reported working full time as a coach and 48.9 per cent respondents reported working part time coach as a coach.

As previously identified, not everyone who values the development of a group focused on coaching psychology is practicing as a coaching psychologist. A number of respondents worked within the field of coaching in some format, for example using coaching as part of their management style, training others in coaching processes, working along side coaches as part of a broader development programme.

Figure 1: Number of members across the BPS subsystems.
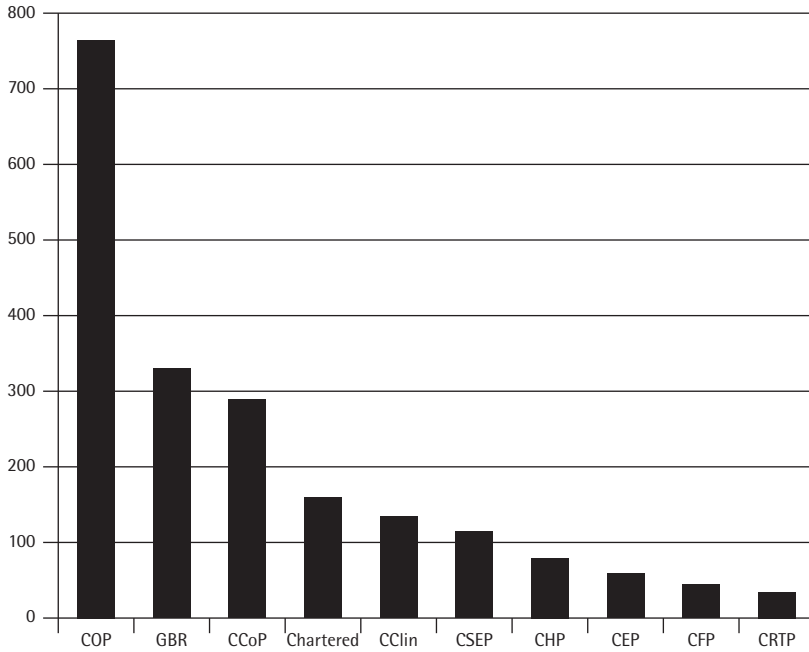
COP = Chartered Occupational Psychologists; GBR = Graduate basis for registration; CCoP = Chartered Counselling Psychologists; Chartered = Chartered Psychologists with no affiliation; CClin = Chartered Clinical Psychologists; CSEP = Chartered Sports and Exercise Psychologists; CHP = Chartered Health Psychologists; CEP = Chartered Educational Psychologists; CFP = Chartered Forensic Psychologists; CRTP = Chartered Research and Teachers in Psychology.

Figure 2: % time spent working as a Coaching Psychologist.
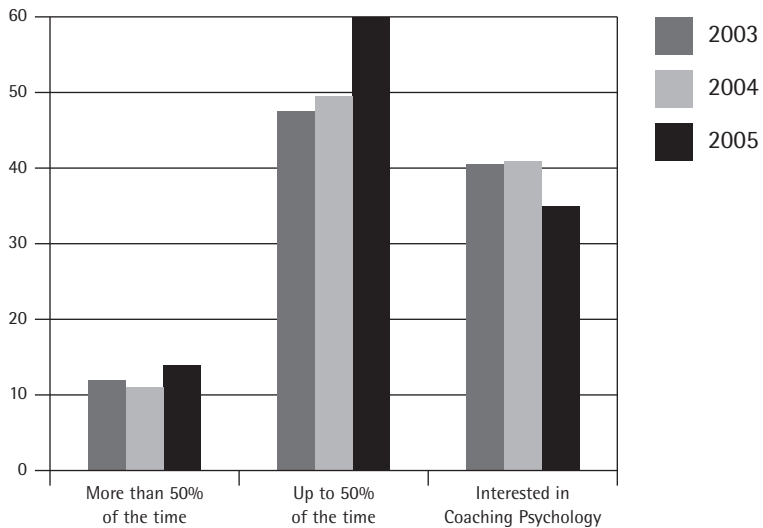
Figures 2–9 show data from three surveys of coaching psychologists. The survey has evolved over the three years, leading to gaps in the data. As a result, where data is not shown for a particular year, or for a specific element of a figure, this is because the data is not available.

Figure 3: Focus of coaching practice.
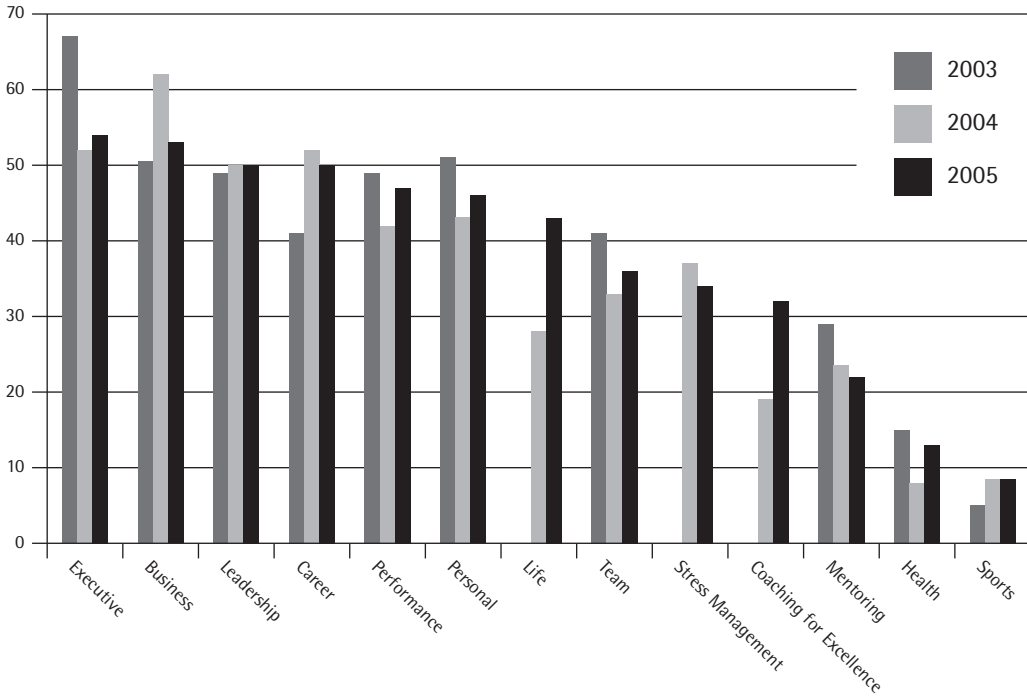
Where are psychologists applying coaching?

The focus of the practice of coaching psychologists is consistent with earlier surveys, with more people emphasising their business and performance focus and fewer psychologists emphasising more specialised areas such as stress management, sports and health coaching. Personal and life coaching were reported as areas of coaching psychology practice by more than 40 per cent of respondents. The reported focus on life coaching for coaching psychologists has increased since the previous survey, where 27.3 per cent reported a focus on life coaching (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006).

Exactly how the practice of coaching psychologists differs within these different fields of practice is not clear. However, it would be useful for this to be explored. Rather than the actual coaching psychology practice differing between particular coaching relationships, the processes supporting that practice may be seen to be different.

What psychological frameworks and approaches are used?

Coaching psychologists are more likely to describe their approach as facilitational rather than instructional which fits with the reportedly dominant person centred or humanistic paradigm of coaching psychology practice (see Figure 4).

Overall, respondents indicate a clear preference for facilitation, cognitive[1], solution focused, goal focused, behavioural and person centred approaches. Since 2004, solution focused coaching has shown a general increase in its use by psychologists from 50 per cent to 68.4 per cent in this

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[1] In the UK, the Cognitive Approach should be more accurately described as the Cognitive Behavioural approach to coaching (see Neenan & Dryden, 2002). This distinguishes it from Cognitive Coaching[sm] often practised in North America (see Costa & Garmston, 2002).

survey. In fact, facilitation, cognitive and solution focused coaching approaches were equally popular with respondents. The survey raises questions. Are the popular approaches more effective than others (e.g. Grant, 2001), or do they fit with the prevailing paradigm within which coaching psychologists operate and their current level of expertise? How does this range of approaches really differ in terms of what the coachee experiences and the outcomes of any coaching relationship (O'Broin & Palmer, 2006)?

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate that 23 approaches are being used. Additional approaches were mentioned by a small number of survey participants (fewer than 10 per cent) for example, psychosynthesis, narrative and systemic. Interestingly, there is little published literature on the application of the majority of the therapeutic approaches and how they are applied to the field of coaching. This suggests that some

psychologists may have been trained in the therapeutic approach and adapted the approach themselves.

One area that reflects the early developments in the field of psychotherapy and counselling is the reported greater use of eclectic approaches over integrative approaches. This has occurred in all three coaching psychology surveys (see Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). It could be predicted that similar to therapeutic fields, as coaching and coaching psychology develops, gradually the use of integrative coaching will become more popular than an eclectic approach to coaching. The psychotherapeutic field now tends to frown upon eclecticism as unsystematic although certain eclectic approaches such as multimodal therapy/coaching claim to be technically eclectic and systematic (Richard, 1999; Palmer *et al.*, 2003). Palmer and Dryden (1995) describe the multimodal approach as *'technically eclectic as it uses techniques taken from many different psychological*

Figure 4: Approaches used.
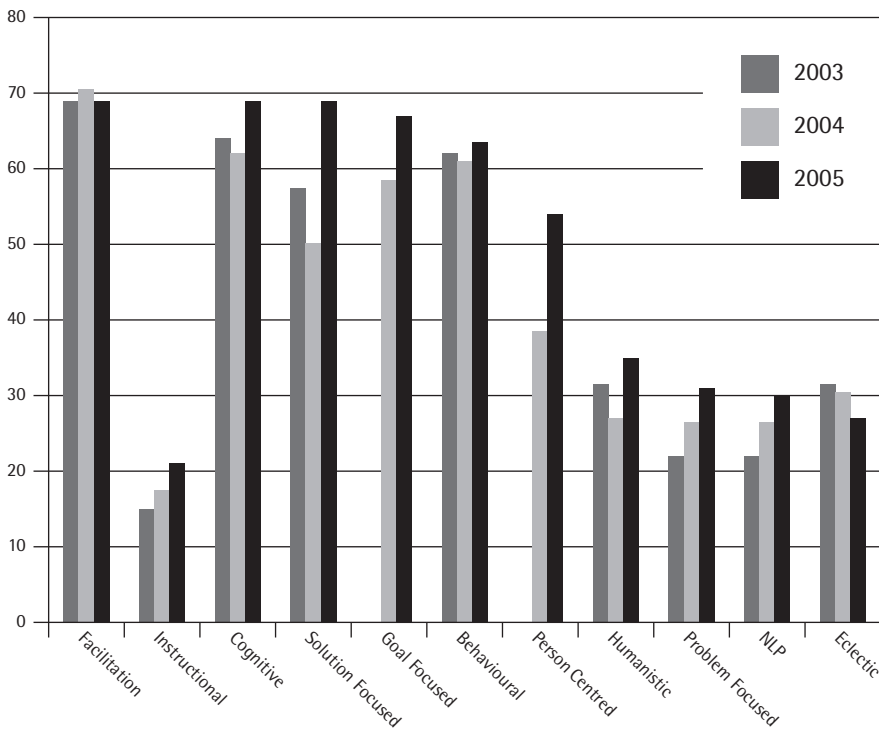
Figure 5: More approaches used.
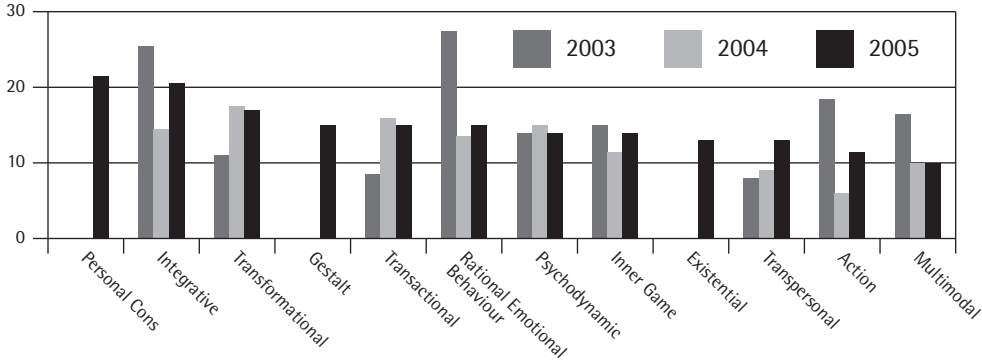
theories and systems, without necessarily being concerned with the validity of the theoretical principles that underpin the different approaches from which it takes it's techniques… The techniques are applied systematically, based on data from client qualities, the counsellor's clinical skills and specific techniques.' (p.ix)

Continuing professional development (CPD)
Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities focused on coaching psychology continue to be highly valued by respondents (see Figure 6). Shorter, focused and more flexible CPD activities such workshops, conferences, short certificated courses, seminars and distance learning were most popular. This enthusiasm may reflect a desire to understand

Figure 6: CPD activities.
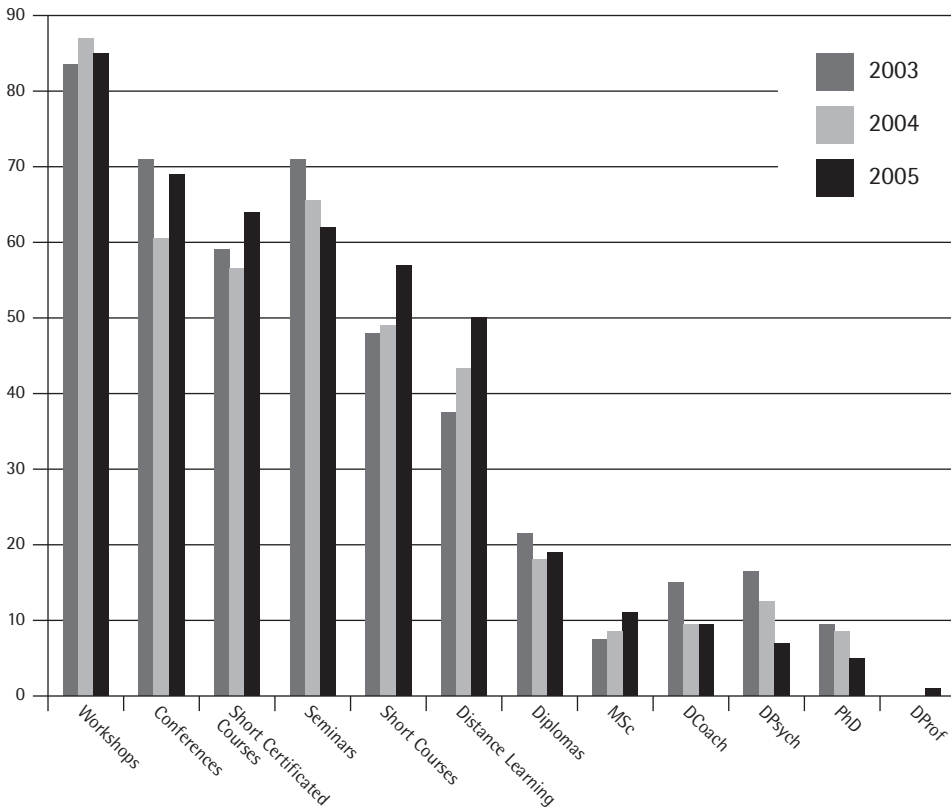
what the field of coaching psychology is, to add to an existing, relevant skill base and keep up-to-date with theoretical and practical developments. There was a strong pull for CPD activities, with respondents noting a desire for more, at a more regional and local level, with distance learning opportunities getting a frequent mention.

The most popular areas for CPD are cognitive and solution focused approaches and events that provide insight into organisational change. There is a desire on the one hand to learn more about the underpinning psychological frameworks around individual development that inform coaching psychology practice and on the other to learn more about the context in which coaching psychology practice is often applied.

These areas of interest may reflect the crossover of the applied psychology domains within coaching psychology practice; the need for applied psychologists working within organisational contexts to develop a deeper understanding of individual develop-

ment frameworks; the need for applied psychologists with more of a focus on individual development to understand group and organisational development frameworks; or perhaps for all concerned to reconsider their psychological frameworks and approaches and how they fit within their practice as a coaching psychologist.

What qualifications, experience and supervision is necessary to practise as a coaching psychologist?

Most respondents thought that a psychology degree providing the graduate basis for registration (GBR) with the BPS remained the key qualification to working as a coaching psychologist (see Figure 7). However, whilst the degree is thought to be necessary, academic qualifications alone are not thought sufficient. Experiential and practice focused qualifications are also considered necessary. Some of the quotes from respondents include:

> *'Hard to be definitive, it's primarily a question of experience, although wisdom in applying key concepts is important.'*

Figure 7: Training requirements.
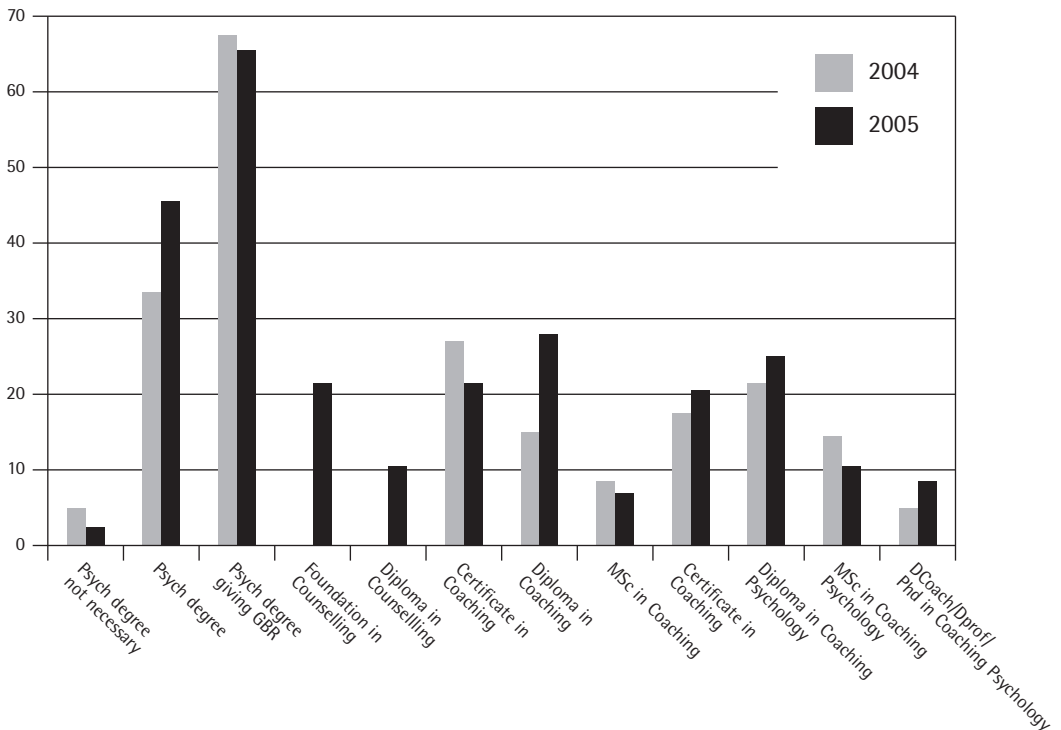
'Coaching skills are not reliant on qualifications. However, it is important that an individual has some understanding of boundaries and some conceptual models.'

'Some form of practical accredited skill training and experience in its application in the given field of use.'

Specifically coaching and counselling qualifications were thought to be useful along with postgraduate qualifications in applied psychological practice.

As previously discussed, at least three years experience in addition to a psychology degree providing GBR was considered necessary by 37.7 per cent prior to gaining competence to practise, whilst 44.5 per cent considered chartered psychologist status should be the recognised practice level (see Figure 8). However, there is currently no route to demonstrate practical competence as a coaching psychologist within the BPS. Respondents placed a value on their own routes to practicing as a coaching psychologist, of which there were many. The need to create a set of competencies and flexible

Figure 8: Experience required.
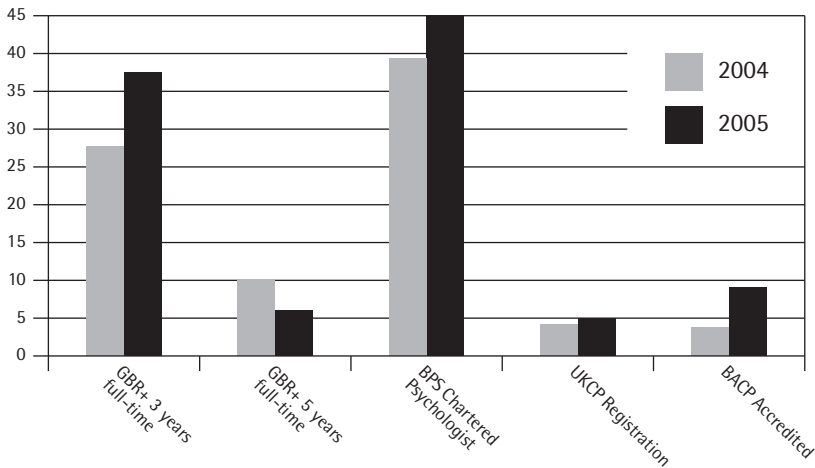
processes for demonstrating competence remains.

Supervision was identified as a key element of good coaching psychology practice by respondents, with the ongoing recognition of the importance of supervision during training and post qualification (see Figure 9).

Changing trends

A greater proportion of respondents to the 2005 survey report working in some capacity as a coaching psychologist compared to earlier surveys. This increase may indicate that:

● Recognising the reality of coaching psychology as an applied area of psychological practice through the formation of the SGCP has created a focus for psychologists already practicing as coaches.

● People are perhaps more prepared to declare or recognise this area of their own practice.

● People may be more likely to create the opportunity to work as coaching psychologists by describing themselves as such.

Figure 9: Views on supervision.
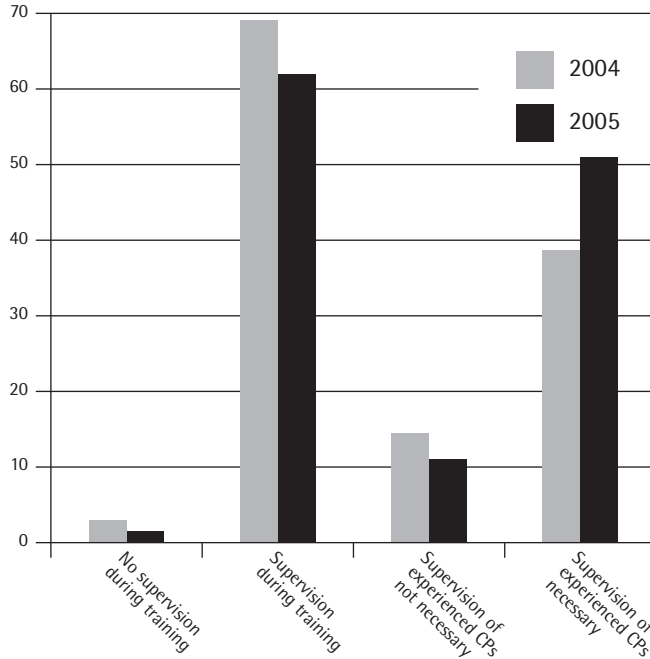
Whatever the mix of underpinning reason, more psychologists are moving towards making coaching activity a more formal part of their practice.

Interestingly the number of people that believe a psychology degree that is not recognised within the BPS is a valuable basic level of qualification has increased to 45 per cent in 2005 from 33.9 per cent in 2004. At the same time more respondents indicated valuing GBR plus three years experience and chartered psychologist status than in previous surveys (37.7 per cent in 2005 compared with 27.5 per cent in 2004). As part of this trend, over 50 per cent of respondents reported that supervision of experienced coaching psychologists was necessary in 2005, compared to 38.5 per cent in 2004.

There has been an ever increasing drive to professionalise coaching psychology practice through a formal accreditation route. Developing the SGCP into a Division was specifically mentioned by many respondents as a way to generate a recognised pathway of professional development for coaching psychology. Whilst the current Division structure is the framework that members of the BPS are familiar with, further exploration of the responses indicated that something more flexible than currently exists as a model within the BPS might be more valuable and engaging.

The routes by which individuals have reached their current practice as coaching psychologists are diverse. Working flexibly and with diversity is an inherent aspect of the coaching field and perhaps is how the question of competence to practise should be approached.

Of particular note were comments that referred to a more informative and integrated way of working between the SGCP and existing areas of applied psychology practice as represented by the Divisions within the BPS.

'To work on the integration and overlap of practice with other divisions within BPS. For example what constitutes coaching with parents as distinct from working with parents as an applied child psychologist would do? Is there a difference in substance or just in terminology?'

'I would hope that it didn't become like many of the other division. Where you can only get in if you've done the right course at the right place at the right time. We should have a more flexible approach to credentialing.'

'I would like to see the group take a broad approach to coaching psychology that encourages its application across BPS divisions rather than encouraging a narrower, professional-practice approach.'

Examination of areas of similarity and difference between coaching psychology and other applied psychologies were called for. The development of inflexible qualifications routes that did not recognise competence within other applied areas of psychology was not welcomed. There was a groundswell of support to bring more integration across the divisions to create a broader approach. This is particularly relevant to the field of coaching psychology as most respondents indicated working as a coaching psychologist formed only part of their work as an applied psychologist.

However a fair, flexible and appropriate route to accreditation may proceed, respondents want a process leading to accreditation of their competence to practise as a coaching psychologist.

Changes were desired to the existing CPD opportunities. This is an important part of enhancing individual competence to practice as a coaching psychologist, and creating a link into coaching psychology for the broader coaching community. Within the responses was a theme that suggested even greater accessibility to the coaching psychology focused activities SGCP would be valued through distance learning, on-line resources, local support cells, regional programmes and bursaries. In particular, people wanted to learn about coaching psychology through discussion forums, with more sharing of knowledge and skills online.

Raising the profile of the SGCP beyond the boundaries of the BPS was indicated as a valuable way to ensure that coaching psychology was one of the leading forces within the coaching community. As part of this theme there was a call from members for the SGCP to become the defining body for standards of practice (both professional and ethical practice) within the coaching field. Additionally, there was a call for the SGCP to market the value of coaching with a psychology background, 'demonstrating pride in our discipline' to business and HR communities and at an international level.

Part of this capability to raise the profile of the value of coaching psychology is developing the underlying theoretical and research base of coaching psychology. Empirical research, increasing our evidence based understanding of coaching psychology practice is essential.

Emerging tensions

The initial energy and enthusiasm for the development of the SGCP within the BPS has now focused on how to create a means of developing this element of the broader coaching profession into a useful and effective area of psychological practice and enquiry.

The call for an accredited route to demonstrate competence to practise as a coaching psychologist is growing. At the same time, the informal, conversation-based aspects of professional development perhaps particularly strong within the coaching field are valued. Respondents were concerned about creating an inflexible, technocratic and exclusive professional body for coaching psychology. A group such as the SGCP, whilst having an explicit focus on coaching psychology, needs to aim for a broader appeal, engaging those who are working in the field of coaching in a different way.

The tensions created by a formal professional development process alongside the value of a more informal approach to the profession will be interesting. A professional body for coaching psychologists cannot logically be the defining body for standards of practice in coaching psychology, and at the same time apply no discrimination to who can or cannot be accredited. By addressing

and defining the explicit need for a set of coaching psychology competencies and through clarifying expectations around standards and approved qualification routes a level of discrimination is being asked for. Who has the capability and who does not have the capability? It is likely that not everyone who desires the accreditation will be able to achieve it. However a fair, useful and considered approach to the development of any such accreditation process within the profession of coaching psychology would be a necessary starting point to enable the diverse membership of the profession as it currently exists and is valued, to continue.

The Special Group in Coaching Psychology sits within the framework of the British Psychological Society. This in itself provides a number of tensions that have to be managed. On the one hand there is great benefit for the professional body representing coaching psychologists to be housed within this existing structure. On the other hand, this limits the SGCP to work within an existing set of boundaries and practices that may or may not fit the diversity of needs of the membership in different areas. This provides three areas of focus for those engaging in the actual development of the SGCP, a primary focus on member needs, a focus on how these can be met within the BPS, perhaps how the BPS can be shaped and reformed to house these needs, and a focus on the external coaching world.

These emerging tensions can be harnessed to enhance the creative development of the profession and maintain a broad inclusive approach. It will be interesting to observe how coaching psychology will manage these tensions as it strives to define itself in the short and longer term.[2]

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[2] Views in this paper reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the SGCP.

Book Review

The Modern Scientist-Practitioner
David Lane and Sarah Corrie
London: Routledge.
ISBN: 1-58391-886-8.
Pages: 272.
Price: Hardback £29.95.

Reviewed by Alison Whybrow

The Modern Scientist-Practitioner is a well thought out contribution relevant for any applied psychologist concerned with understanding the philosophical and pragmatic reality of their practice. The book will be particularly useful for anyone involved in the supervision of psychologists, whether they are experienced practitioners or practitioners in training working towards professional recognition. From a pragmatic perspective, the value of the scientist-practitioner model is underlined in the competitive world of delivering psychologically based services to clients. This excellent text is not a light read, it is challenging and addresses complex conceptual issues.

The Modern Scientist-Practitioner provides a useful insight into the paradigms that inform areas of applied psychology other than those with which the reader may be familiar. The similarity between applied psychologies is apparent and the mindful way in which psychologists practice across the domains is brought to the fore.

Lane and Corrie challenge the prevalent scientist-practitioner model and present alternative examples of the scientist-practitioner from an interesting mix of theoretical, historical and applied psychological perspectives. They successfully redraw the boundaries of the debate to encompass the complexity that we face as applied psychologists.

In simplistic terms it's argued that the concept of the science-practitioner model where empirical science informs practice in a linear, causal sequence is no longer viable.

At the same time, there is a requirement for practice to be evidence based. The appreciation of the messy, complex issues that psychologists wrestle with as practitioners is clear and well presented.

Rather than dictate a new model of the scientist-practitioner, Lane and Corrie call for us to engage in critical reflection as psychologists. There are several reflective exercises throughout the first six chapters, and within the conclusion to engage us in reflection at a number of levels, encouraging us to develop a more personal understanding of ourselves as scientist-practitioners in our domain of psychological practice. We are encouraged to raise our awareness of why we do what we do to ensure that it remains appropriate, up to date with current thinking and, therefore, ethical.

Chapter 1 raises our awareness of the historical tensions between 'pure knowledge' and a more existential view. Here it is argued that the relationship between science and practice is alive, well and necessary, with the influence and inclusion of science in practice more subtle than that credited by the historical debate and the original scientist-practitioner model.

The underpinning philosophical frameworks of decision making are explored in Chapter 2, with the rational, logical basis of our decision making questioned and the phenomenological nature of our decisions in practice explored. A critical appraisal of our models of reason and decision making processes is called for, with our development as practitioners viewed as a lifelong journey.

Chapter 3 reviews arguments around the usefulness of case conceptualisation, and how this might be done in a creative, client centred way. A useful framework for case conceptuali-

sation is discussed with examples. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between science and creativity. The reader is once again invited to reflect, this time on the origins of their own view of creativity and its inclusion or otherwise in their practice. The valuable point that models of new science have a firm partnership with creativity is made.
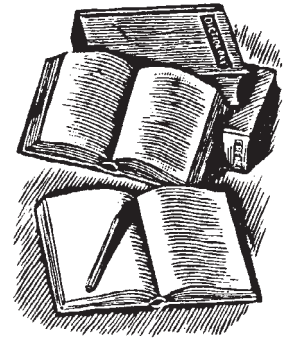
As part of this philosophical journey, Chapter 5 examines the concept of scientific knowledge. The view of science as neutral and of scientific findings as robust is questioned. The value of the empiricist scientific story is acknowledged, but only as one of the relevant factors that inform psychological practice. We are encouraged to identify and critique the paradigms on which our personal practice and the profession of psychology is based, and to use the concepts of falsification science to reflect on the factors we use to inform our choices and actions as practitioners. The world of science is presented as uncertain rather than certain.

This debate leads us to Chapter 6, which reviews our identity as scientist-practitioners. The social and political nature of our profession is exposed and the utility of the scientist as 'expert' discussed in relation to the realities of psychological practice. Rather than a single model of the scientist-practitioner, multiple scientist-practitioner identities are considered to exist and adopted by practitioners.

Chapters 7 through to 11 are invited contributions that explore the scientist-practitioner model in different areas of applied practice. Miller and Frederickson (Chapter 7) provide an insight into the challenges facing educational psychologists and useful models of practice are shared. They recognise that the complex systems approach to the current practice of Educational Psychologists challenges the basic requirements for scientific enquiry of replication and objectivity.

The scientist-practitioner in counselling psychology practice is reviewed by Bury and Strauss (Chapter 8). The individual nature of the therapeutic relationship is raised and the very individual nature of counselling work itself challenges an empirical view of the scientist-practitioner. Yet, the idea of knowing and of appropriately discerning practice is very much central to working in this field.

Haarbosch and Newey bring into sharp relief the pragmatic issues facing the scientist-practitioner in their chapter about working as an applied psychologist with young people who sexually offend (Chapter 9). This chapter, perhaps best highlights the limitations of 'scientific' knowledge and that it is the reciprocal nature of the relationship between science and practice that creates the body of knowledge which can be drawn on by others in the field. They usefully point to the potential scientific nature of our 'intuition' as practitioners, and note that supervision is essential to keep our intuition honed, based on sound factors and not as could equally be argued based on biases and heuristics that are not well founded and damaging.

Coaching psychology and the scientist practitioner model is reviewed in Chapter 10 (Cavanagh & Grant). A critique of the practice of coaching psychology is presented. There is an informative discussion about postmodernism and scientific truth and the useful perspective of individuals as complex adaptive systems is shared. The authors recognise an evidence based foundation for coaching psychology will assist in shifting this emerging applied area of psychology towards embracing the seemingly contradictory elements of rigour and the lived experience of practitioners and clients.

Kwiatkowski and Winter (Chapter 11) discuss the seemingly competing drivers of being right from a scientific perspective and being useful from a client perspective. Their historical overview asks us to consider that psychologists worked from a scientific-practitioner framework before experimental psychology came to the fore. A whole person approach sensitive to the social construction of reality is argued to be the perspective from which occupational psychologists practice.

The final contribution is a thoughtful chapter from Edward de Bono (Chapter 12), in which he discusses how we can think more effectively using parallel thinking techniques. De Bono argues that through thinking differently, we can assist ourselves and our clients design new ways forward, rather than getting stuck within our biases and prejudices, or stuck in the process of analysing the problem. Learning parallel thinking techniques is presented as useful self development in our work as scientist-practitioners.

The Modern Scientist-Practitioner takes the reader through challenging philosophical territory. The work of Corrie and Lane has been thoroughly researched and complex issues are well presented. We can be comforted by the fact that we can find an identity within the scientist-practitioner framework, but to do so requires critical reflection and continuous professional development to ensure that our work is informed, up-to-date and ethical.

The Modern Scientist-Practitioner does highlight the learning journey is life long, perhaps what it also highlights is that the journey can not begin early enough in the lifespan of the applied psychologist. Critical reflection on the paradigms that underpin our practice and our practice itself seem essential elements of our postgraduate and graduate development.

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