Toward a profession of coaching: Sixty-five years of progress and challenges for the future.

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Abstract

The coaching industry has reached a key important point in its maturation. This maturation is being driven by at least three interrelated forces: (1) accumulated coaching experience; (2) the increasing entry of professionals into coaching from a wide variety of prior backgrounds; and (3) the increasing sophistication of management and Human Resource professionals. There is increasing awareness among coaches of the need to ground their practice in a solid theoretical understanding and empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of "one size fits all" proprietary coaching systems. Further, there is a growing disenchantment with perceived pseudo-credentialing mills. In response to these forces we are beginning to witness increased interest in coaching-related research and the theoretically grounded approaches central to evidence-based coaching practice. This paper provides an overview of the existing academic literature on coaching, and explores five key trends in coaching-related research; *(a)* discussion articles on internal coaching by managers; *(b)* academic research on internal coaching; *(c)* research on external coaching by a professional coaches; *(d)* coaching as a means of investigating psychological mechanisms and processes involved in human and organisational change, and *(e)* the emergence of a theoretical literature aimed at the professional coach. It is argued that an explicit movement towards the scientist-practitioner model of coach training and practice is vital for the development of the coaching industry, and that such a move is vital in a movement from a service industry, towards a respected cross-disciplinary profession with a solid research base.

Introduction

The 19th Century Englishman, John Henry Newman, once said, "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often". By this criterion, coaching is alive and well - and has plenty of living left to do! There are signs that the coaching industry has reached a key point in its maturation. This maturation is being driven by at least three interrelated forces: (1) coaching experience; (2) the increasing entry of professionals into coaching; and (3) the increasing sophistication of management and Human Resource (HR) professionals.

In terms of coaching experience, there appears to be an increasing awareness among coaches of a need to ground their practice in a solid theoretical understanding and

empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of "one size fits all" coaching systems. The complexity of human behaviour and human systems requires coaches to respond and adapt their coaching in multiple ways, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many coaches who have been trained in standardised proprietary coaching systems feel the need for the theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge required to make these contextualised responses.

At the same time, the profile of coaches in the industry appears to be changing. Individuals, whose primary training is in evidence-based organisational and human change, are stepping forward as professional coaches. These include psychologists, psychiatrists, adult education specialists and organisational change experts with postgraduate qualifications in business, human resources and other professions. Aside from a range of domain specific knowledge, these people often bring with them a set of practice standards and ethical understanding derived from their previous professional training.

Thirdly, and by no means least, the consumers of coaching services have grown progressively more sophisticated. Human Resource professionals who employ coaches for their organisations are increasingly well informed, and coach assessment and interview processes for corporate coaching assignments have grown more demanding. Indeed, HR professionals often have a more detailed understanding of the range of coaching services on offer, and their applicability to various organisational needs and challenges, than do many coach service providers. Human Resource professionals are increasingly wary of what they perceive to be pseudo-coach credentialing mills, and increasingly ask searching questions about the theoretical foundations of the coach training and the validating empirical evidence. Private clients are also requesting facts and data about the effectiveness of coaching.

In response to these forces we are beginning to witness a new interest in coaching-related research, and we are starting to see the emergence of a scientist-practitioner model of coaching. There has been a three-fold increase in the number of published theoretical and empirical peer-reviewed papers between 1993 and 2003 – with much of this work done by academics who are also practicing coaches. Partnerships and collaboration between coaching service providers and academic researchers are appearing, and doctoral level research is on the increase. These collaborations recognise that solid research and theory development are the life-blood of this new industry.

This paper provides an overview of the academic literature on coaching, and explores some key trends in coaching-related research. It is argued that an explicit movement towards the scientist-practitioner model of coach training and practice is vital for the ongoing maturation of the coaching industry. Despite the fact that no existing profession holds a corner on the market of coaching knowledge, coaching cannot move from a service industry to a genuine profession without the development of a common body of empirically tested knowledge.

Distinguishing Between a Coaching Profession and Professional Coaching

At present, the coaching industry is far from meeting the basic requirements of a true profession. This is not to say that coaches are not operating in a professional manner. Rather, it is a consequence of coaching being a relatively new discipline. Nevertheless, professional status is defined by several key criteria. These include: (1) significant barriers to entry, (2) a shared common body of knowledge rather than proprietary systems, (3) formal qualifications at university level, (4) regulatory bodies with the power to admit, discipline and meaningfully sanction members, (5) an enforceable code of ethics, and (6) some form of state-sanctioned licensing or regulation (Bullock, Stallybrass, & Trombley, 1988; Williams, 1995). While individual coaching organisations have developed accreditation systems and codes of ethics for their own members, coaching as an industry does not adequately meet any of these criteria.

The distinction between professional *coaching*, and a *coaching profession* is important for at least two key reasons. Firstly, naming coaching as a profession, when in truth it is not, obscures the issues that the industry needs to address as it matures and grows – issues such as establishing an empirically tested knowledge base, minimum industry-wide skill sets, and generally enforced barriers to entry. Secondly, representing coaching as a profession, when it is not, diminishes the credibility of such individuals and the industry in general in the eyes of those who are informed about the true status of coaching and professional institutions.

The road to professional status is not an easy one. Along that journey, potential members will be required to make many difficult, unpleasant and often unpopular decisions. For example, there will be a need to submit to some form of regulation, normally at a government level, and decisions will need to be made about "who should be in" and "who should be out" based on skills and knowledge. All of the key criteria for professionalisation of the industry rely, at some level on the development of a shared body of applied knowledge that forms the foundation of coaching.

We believe that this shared body of knowledge needs to encompass a number of core areas. Clearly, as means of achieving behavioural change, all forms of coaching must be linked into the broader knowledge base of the behavioural sciences. For business coaching, additional expertise in business and economics is also important, as is an understanding of adult education principles for those involved in coach training and education programs. To have confidence of the efficacy of coaching across the diverse contexts in which it is practised we must have well-conducted, peer-reviewed coaching-specific research. This requires a shift towards a new model of coaching practice and the emergence of the scientist-practitioner model of coaching.

Towards a Scientist-Practitioner Model of Professional Coaching

The scientist-practitioner model of professional coaching practice draws on practice and educational frameworks established in the behavioural sciences. Within this framework practitioners are trained to have a working understanding of the principles and methodology of research. This understanding then enables them to apply informed critical

thought to the evaluation of their practice, drawing on and being informed by relevant academic literature to design and implement evidence-based interventions (Haring-Hidore & Vacc, 1988), evaluating client progress and adhering to ethical practice (Barnett, 1988).

Scientist-practitioners are not expected to be significant producers of research (Parker & Detterman, 1988). Rather they are positioned as informed consumers of research, with their practice professionalised by their ability to utilise related research. Whilst the scientist-practitioner model in the behavioural sciences has its critics (O'Gorman, 2001), it has nevertheless formed a vital part of the professionalisation of the behavioural sciences (Shapiro, 2002).

Movement towards a scientist-practitioner model requires that coach training programs explicitly address the theoretical and empirical foundations of coaching, and provide training in sound research methodologies, basic statistical and data analysis skills, and foster informed critical thinking skills in student coaches. Such an approach would form the basis of an evidence-based coaching paradigm. Experience and anecdotal evidence suggests that current coach training is generally woefully inadequate in preparing students to understand and utilise empirically sound research.

Although many professional coaches and potential student coaches may applaud a move toward such professional training, current industry practice well may act as a significant barrier to a widespread transition to an evidence-based training. Firstly, many commercial coach training schools teach their own proprietary coaching systems which incorporate little or no reference to the broader knowledge base (Grant, 2000). Secondly, while there are undoubtedly many coach practitioners trained in research methodology, it is uncertain whether at present the coaching industry incorporates enough practitioners able to develop and teach a sophisticated evidence-based approach to coaching. Finally, this means that for many coach training schools, there needs to be a significant investment in personnel and course development so as to produce a truly professional curriculum. Coach training schools already have a large financial investment in their existing intellectual property, and the addition of practitioner- research training may be seen as a costly exercise rather than an investment in an emerging profession.

Despite these difficulties, evidence-based coaching is not complex or ethereal. At its simplest it involves the intelligent and conscientious use of best current knowledge in making decisions about how to design, implement and deliver coaching interventions to clients, and in designing and teaching coach training programs (Sackett, Haynes, Guyatt, & Tugwell, 1996). Best current knowledge can be understood as being current information from valid research theory and practice. Thus, evidence-based coaching is not cookbook coaching. It requires the coach to have the ability, knowledge frameworks and skills to be able to find such information, understand it, determine its applicability, apply it and finally evaluate its effectiveness. At present few coach training programs prepare their students for such tasks.

Such an approach to coaching of course requires that such research exists. Although the coach-specific academic press dates back to 1937 (Gorby, 1937), and many thousands of articles about coaching have been published in newspapers, magazines and professional

and trade journals, there is little academic literature specifically on coaching. However, there is a vast body of established research in fields intimately related to coaching. These include the behavioural sciences, business and organisational studies and the field of adult education. The task for coaching is to mine these rich depths, all the time adapting and refining this knowledge for coaching contexts. In this way coaching can develop its own domain specific body of knowledge.

Fortunately, coaching has already gone some way down the track of developing this body of knowledge. Before offering our thoughts on the key challenges facing coaching it is useful to briefly overview the academic literature on coaching and past and current trends within this literature.

An Over-View Of The Academic Research On Coaching

In November 2003, an electronic search was conducted of the behavioural science databases PsychInfo and Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI). The search sought to identify all peer-reviewed papers that focused specifically on executive, business and life coaching. Mentoring (the transfer of domain-specific personalised knowledge from a more experienced mentor to a less experienced protégée) and peer coaching papers were excluded. The search was restricted to peer-reviewed psychological journals, purposefully excluding professional and trade journals and newsletters, sports coaching and educational one-to-one tutoring (often termed coaching).

The search identified a total of 128 such papers (Figure 1), with the first published peer-reviewed paper on coaching being published in 1937 (Gorby, 1937). Published papers on coaching have steadily increased over time.

Between 1937 and 1994, only 50 papers or PhD dissertations were citied in the PsychInfo and DAI databases. Between 1995 and 1999 there were 29 papers or PhD dissertations. Between 2000 and Nov 2003 there were 49 citations. Between 1935 and Nov 2003 there were a total of 33 PhDs.

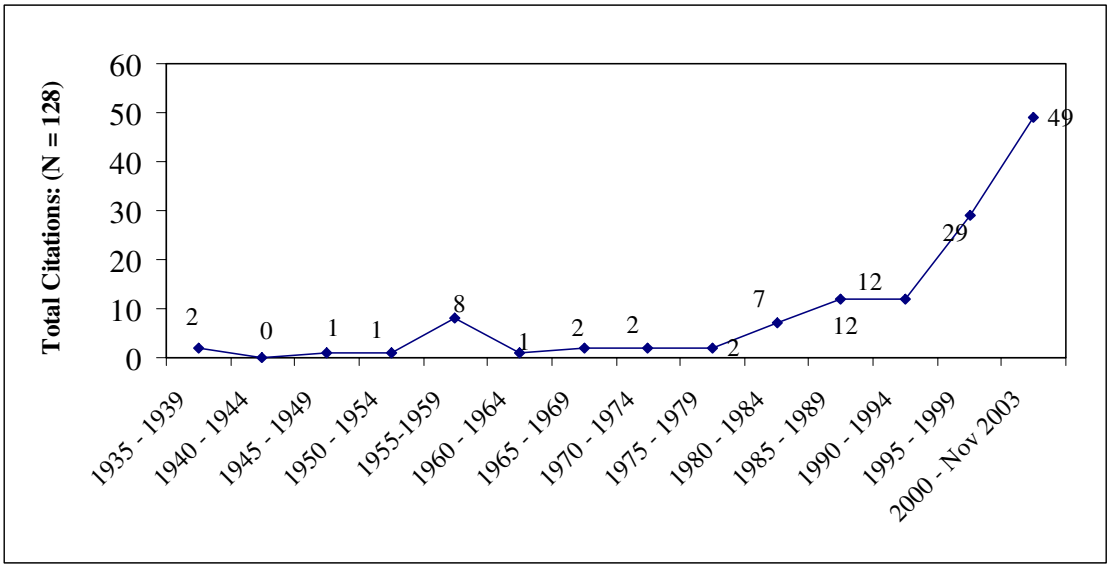

Figure 1: Total Number of Coach-specific Peer-reviewed Papers Since 1935

Of these 128 citations, 73 were articles which discussed coaching, theories of coaching or application of techniques, and 55 were empirical studies of various types (see Figure 2). The majority of empirical investigations were uncontrolled group or case studies. The following discussion does not aim to be totally inclusive; rather it highlights papers which are representative of the key themes or research trends.

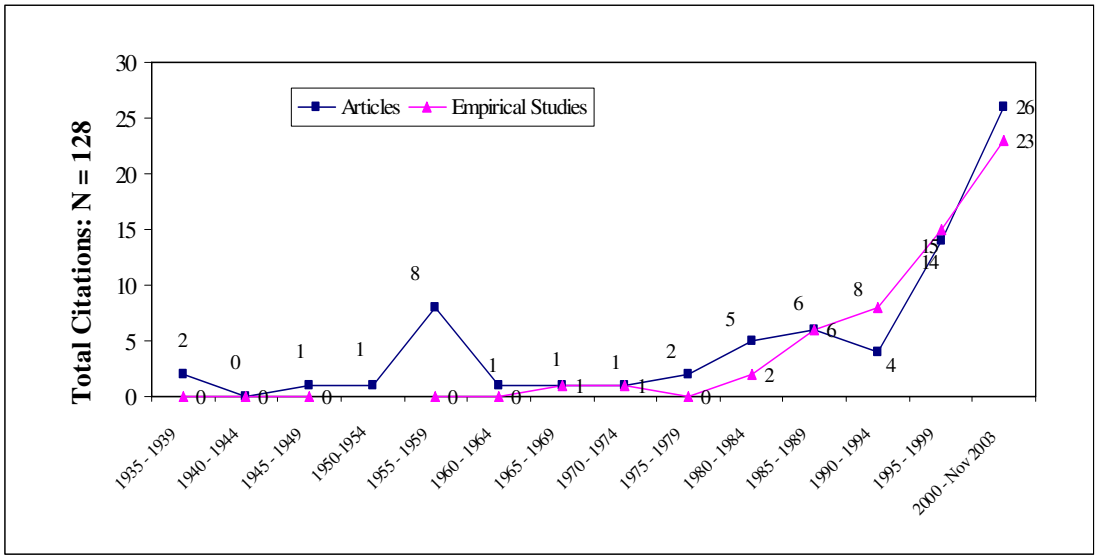

Figure 2: Peer-reviewed Articles Compared with Empirical Studies Over Time

Five Broad Research Trends

There are five overlapping phases or thrusts to coach-specific research: *(a)* discussion articles on internal coaching conducted by managers with direct reports; *(b)* the beginnings of more rigorous academic research on internal coaching and its impact on work performance; *(c)* the extension of research to include external coaching by a professional coach as a means of creating individual and organisational change, *(d)* the beginning of coaching research as a means of investigating psychological mechanisms and processes involved in human and organisational change; and *(e)* the emergence of a theoretical literature aimed at the professional coach. Three primary means of reporting and investigating coaching have been used throughout these five phases: descriptive articles; empirical evaluations based on case studies; and empirical evaluations based on group studies.

The first research thrust involves descriptive reports of internal coaching in organisations, with managers or supervisors acting as coaches to their subordinates and staff. This is most clearly evident in the literature between 1937 and the late-1960s and it continues through to the present day. The first paper in the literature (Gorby, 1937) describes how older employees coached newer employees in reducing waste in order to increase profit and maximise employee bonuses as part of a profit sharing program. Bigelow (1938) discussed coaching by sales managers as a means of improving sales training. Hayden (1955) argued that follow-up coaching was an effective way to improve performance

appraisals, and Mahler (1964) noted that most organisations have difficulties in getting their managers to be effective coaches.

In an early case study presentation which foreshadowed later coaching applications, Mold (1951) reported on a manager-as-coach training program in which priority was placed on enhancing the manager's interpersonal skills. The program focused on establishing a coaching culture in which each manager was coached by their superior and encouraged to explore and accept their own personal fears and aggressions – an early example of the use of emotional competencies (Goleman, 1998) in the workplace.

The late 60s saw the beginnings of more rigorous academic research in the form of doctoral dissertations with a continuing focus on internal organisational coaching. In the first coach-specific doctoral research, Gershman (1967) evaluated how supervisors who acted as effective coaches could improve subordinate's attitude and job performance. Kondrasuk (1974) discussed the role of coaching in job enrichment, and Carroll (1975) marked the emergence of research that positioned coaching as being part of the role of human resource practitioners. Some of the published research continued to focus on job performance enhancement (e.g., Cohen & Jaffee, 1982; Holoviak, 1982; Tyson & Birnbrauer, 1983), but nearly all of the literature still consisted of discussion articles (e.g., Frohman & Kotter, 1977; Ponzo, 1980) rather than empirical studies. This balance began to shift slightly in the 1980s with early doctoral work from Duffy (1984), Wissbrun (1984) and Gant (1985) who conducted empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of coaching. Nevertheless, discussion articles continued to dominate the academic literature (e.g., Kelly, 1984; 1985; Leibowitz, Kaye, & Farren, 1986; Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari, 1987).

The beginning of the 1990s saw levels of doctoral research accelerate (see Figure 3) and empirical coaching research in general, at last, began to gather momentum – typically in the form of case studies. Strayer and Rossett (1994) reported on the design, implementation and evaluation of an in-house coaching program for Century 21® real estate salespersons. Tobias (1996) discussed a case study in which a technically excellent, 44 year old male manager whose strengths lay in attention to detail, was coached in relation to being over-controlling, lacking in empathy and self-awareness and poor appreciation for creativity.

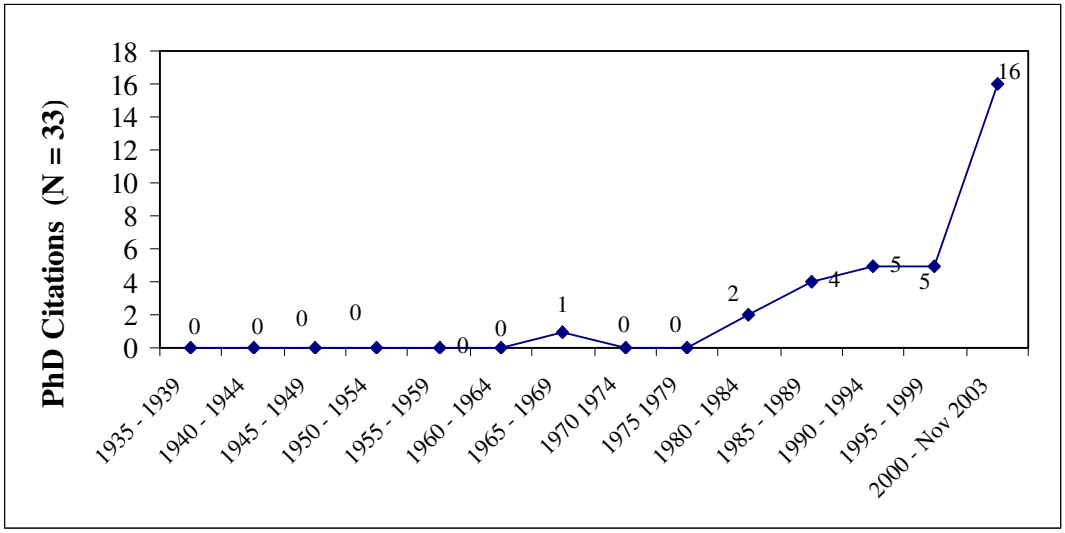

Figure 3: Coach-specific PhD Citations

The empirical research literature in the nineties began to reflect the emergence of professional external coaches. Diedrich (1996) presented a case study of a technically outstanding male manager in his mid-40s who had poor interpersonal and team-building skills and was perceived as being an inflexible, unreasonably perfectionist and overly task-focused. Drawing on a systems perspective Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, and Doyle (1996) reported on a 40 year old male star performer who was described as being intimidating, needlessly competitive and with "immense interpersonal problems" (p. 73). From a psychodynamic perspective, Kilburg (1996) presented a case study of "several months duration" (p.282) with a female computer programmer who had high technical skills but poor inter- and intra-personal skills. Adapting multimodal therapy (Lazarus, 1976) for use in the coaching context, Richard (1999) presented a case study involving a senior female executive. Foster and Lendl (1996) reported four case studies using eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (Shapiro, 1989).

While most of the empirical research was based on case studies (e.g., Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999; Sauer, 1999; Laske, 1999b), some group-based empirical evaluations were reported. Graham, Wedman, and Garvin-Kester (1993) reported an evaluation of a coaching skills program for 13 sales managers with a total of 87 account representatives. McGibben (1995) evaluated the effectiveness of management training on coaching skills. The Olivero, Bane, and Kopelman (1997) study is noteworthy, in that it focused on evaluating the additional effectiveness of coaching in comparison and in addition to skills trainings. However, although the study was group based, allowing for qualitative analysis, there was no control group.

Large-scale studies have been conducted. Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, and Kucine (2003) reported a quasi-experiential field experiment of the impact of coaching on 404 senior managers who received 360 degree feedback and coaching, and found that feedback and coaching enhanced performance and re-evaluation scores on the 360 tool. However, although a welcome move towards larger scale studies, this study had methodological shortcomings as the pre-coaching and post-coaching 360 raters were different people. This

study highlights some of the problems in conducting large-scale research within organisational settings – jobs change, people move, business units are restructured. Coaching research will need to develop research methodologies that deal with such issues.

Current trends in research: Using Coaching To Understand Human Change Processes

The fourth identifiable phase or thrust of the literature can be seen from the late 1990s onwards. About this time case study and group-based empirical research began to develop a new and potentially very interesting direction - namely investigating the relationship between coaching and interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, and using coaching as a real-life experimental methodology for discovering psychological mechanisms involved in individual and human change. For example, Taylor (1997) investigated the relation between resilience, coaching, coping skills training and stress, and Wageman (1997) found that coaching was a critical factor in the development of superb self-managed teams.

Wachholz (2000) examined the role of expressed positive emotion in corporate coaching, finding that expression of positive emotions can be transferred to coachees when modelled by coaches, and that this process improved communication between the coachee and other individuals. An interesting and unusual study was conducted by Norlander, Bergman, and Archer (2002) who investigated the relative stability of personality characteristics and the effectiveness of a 12-month coaching program with 15 employees of an insurance company. They found that, as expected, many personality traits remained stable, but individuals' emotional stability was enhanced, their norms and values were reinforced and their openness to new experiences improved. This study is important because there is a long running debate as to whether interventions (coaching or otherwise) can impact on personality traits. This study indicates that some personality traits are indeed flexible and responsive to coaching interventions.

In terms of life coaching, the empirical literature is almost silent. Grant's (2003) paper is the first, and at present only, peer-reviewed published empirical evaluation of the impact of life coaching. Grant found that life coaching was effective in facilitating goal attainment and well being and suggested that coaching was a useful platform for an applied positive psychology and the investigation of the psychological mechanisms involved in purposeful change in normal, non-clinical populations. Personal communication with researchers suggest that in the near future we are likely to see several new empirical studies of life coaching in the peer reviewed press.

The Emergence Of Literature Aimed At The Professional Coach

The 1990s also mark the emergence of coaching as an identifiable industry and a shift in emphasis in the literature shows that papers were now being written for a new audience of professional coaches. Many papers focused on delineating theoretical frameworks for coaching. Delgado (1999) discussed ontological approaches, Orenstein (2000) presented an integrative model, and the work of Kilburg (1996; 1997; 2001) focused on psychodynamic and systems approaches, as did Sperry (1997), Tobias (1996), O' Neill (2000) and Rotenberg (2000).

Cognitive behavioural frameworks were also presented including the work of Anderson (2002). Richard (1999) detailed a cognitive and behavioural framework for executive coaching presenting an adaptation of multimodal therapy (Lazarus, 1976; 1997), Kopf and Kreuze (1991) proposed an Experiential Learning Model as a basis for coaching practice, and Laske (1999a) presented an integrated model of executive coaching which outlines an approach to coaching derived from constructive-developmental psychology, family therapy and theories of organisational cognition. Howatt (2000) discussed the use of Reality Therapy and Choice Theory as a framework for coaching, and Page (2003) offered contributions from Adlerian perspectives.

Although aimed at the professional coach, the majority of these theoretical papers were once again discussion articles about the nature, practice and evaluation of external professional coaching. One key paper is the first compressive review of the executive coaching literature (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Other areas of discussion were the distinction between coaching and therapy (e.g., Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001; Sperry, 1993), the credentials, competencies and roles of coaches (e.g., Brotman et al., 1998; Witherspoon & White, 1996), definitions of coaching (e.g., Kilburg, 1996; Levinson, 1996), and techniques and methodologies (e.g., Kilburg, 1997; Peterson, 1996). Despite the rapid increase in peer-reviewed literature, empirical evidence for the efficacy of these theoretical models, techniques and methodologies remains elusive.

Where To From Here?

In the development of a coherent body of coaching knowledge there are a number of key tasks to be completed. The most basic of which is defining and delineating the field. Theoretical elaboration of coaching practice and empirical validation of these theories and methodologies remain key challenges.

Challenge 1: Defining and delineating coaching

Strangely, to date there is no clearly agreed definition of what the term coaching actually denotes. The term "coaching" has been applied to a huge range of activities used with a wide range of populations and issues. These include: coaching individuals to fake malingering on psychological tests (Suhr & Gunstad, 2000); peer coaching in educational settings (Scarnati, Kent, & MacKenzie, 1993); cognitive training for learning difficulties and disabilities (Dalton, Morocco, Tivnan, & Mead, 1997); resolving relationship difficulties (Jacobson, 1977); coping with infertility (Scharf & Weinshel, 2000) and premature ejaculation (Maurer, Solamon, & Troxtel, 1998); career coaching (Scandura, 1992) and job coaching to help disadvantaged individuals gain and retain employment (Davis, Bates, & Cuvo, 1983); improving performance in interviews (Maurer et al., 1998); improving executive performance (Tobias, 1996) and sales performance (Rich, 1998). The list could go on, and we have not even begun to list different types of life coaching, developmental coaching or remedial coaching.

A profession of "coaching" which is grounded in research will need to find a way to establish a clear identity, and it must do this by establishing clear boundaries around what

is professional coaching and what is not. These are difficult issues and difficult conversations are yet to be engaged. For example, should 'aura' coaching, or coaching using 'personality assessment' based on facial structure be considered professional coaching alongside cognitive behavioural coaching? By what criteria should such decisions be made?

We would argue that professional coaching is distinguished by the nature and quality of: its process and intention, its focus, the quality of the coach/coachee relationship, and the issues with which it deals. Firstly, in terms of process, the professional coaching process is a theoretically grounded, systematic, goal-directed process designed to facilitate sustained change. It is intended to foster the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee (Grant, 1999). Hence, the primary focus in professional coaching is on constructing solutions rather than analysing problems. Professional coaching is also distinguished by the collaborative and egalitarian, rather than authoritarian, relationship between coach and coachee; an emphasis on collaborative goal setting between the coach and coachee; and the recognition that although the coach has expertise in facilitating learning through coaching, they do not necessarily need high levels of domain-specific expertise in the coachee's chosen area of activity. In terms of the issues with which coaching deals, professional coaching is aimed at skills development, performance enhancement and personal development with non-clinical populations; that is, individuals who do not have abnormal levels of psychopathology or acute mental health issues. While often therapeutic, coaching is not a substitute for appropriate medical or psychological therapy. Hence there is an assumption that professional coaches are able to distinguish between clinical and non-clinical issues.

Challenge 2: Elaboration of the theoretically grounded approaches to coaching

Although worldwide there has been considerable media interest in coaching (Garman, Whiston, & Zlatoper, 2000), to date the development of rigorous and coherent theoretical frameworks for coaching remains in its infancy (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998). Coaching is a broad area dealing with a huge range of issues. Hence the development of multiple theoretical approaches is important. The key issue here is not that coaches should all accept the same theoretical foundations. Rather, it is the scientific and conceptual rigour associated with the approach used that is the key issue. Without such rigour, our interventions as coaches run the risk of being either the slavish following of coaching 'recipes', or the unreflective enactment of 'gut instinct'. Our clients, rightfully, demand more of us.

It is encouraging to see the ongoing development of a vibrant theoretical debate and an academic discussion on core facets of professional coaching. These debates will form the basis of a theoretically grounded, evidence-based approach to professional coaching as it develops over time. If these debates are to continue and become more and more rich, it will require an increasing level of openness among professional practitioners. The secrecy and reluctance to divulge methodology often encountered at gatherings of coaches needs to be seen as a significant limitation to the development of a coaching profession. What other profession is made up of members who seek to hide best practice from each other?

Challenge 3: the development of an empirical research base

If the development of theory is to continue in a healthy and rigorous way, reflective practice and empirical research must be the fuel and touchstone of theoretical debate. At present there is precious little solid empirical research validating the efficacy of executive and life coaching (Kilburg, 1996), Overall the literature indicates some measure of empirical support for the efficacy of both internal and external coaching, but it is clear from this overview of the academic literature that empirical research into coaching is in its infancy and far more systematic and rigorous research is needed. Discussion articles still dominate the literature and much of the outcome research is based on case studies. Group studies are becoming more common, but many of these group-based studies are methodologically flawed. While all these types of research do make an important contribution, we need more large scale, methodologically rigorous, controlled outcome studies.

Future research may do well to focus on the evaluation of coaching by following established research methodologies, including random assignment to intervention and control groups, and group-based research as opposed to single case studies. Further, it would be useful to see an increasing emphasis on objective quantitative outcomes measures and on investigating the relative efficacy of different approaches to coaching.

To support this necessary theoretical and empirical development, the establishment of journals, symposiums and conferences, which incorporate good quality peer-reviewed publishing processes, is important. We need to foster and support such initiatives and be vocal in demanding that the bar be raised progressively higher in these professional forums.

Conclusion

In this paper it is argued that professional coaches should be calling for explicit movement towards the scientist-practitioner model of training and practice, and that such a move is vital for the maturation of the coaching industry and its movement from a service industry, towards becoming a truly respected cross-disciplinary profession. Coaching-specific research is far from being an ethereal academic pursuit restricted to the ivory towers. It is the core and the lifeblood of an emerging profession. If coaching is to be more than the last management or life style fad, then we need to train coaches in the scientist-practitioner model, so that we share a common language and can communicate our practice professionally. If we do this well, in time we will see a real profession grow.

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