

How do we describe coaching? An exploratory development of a typology of coaching based on the accounts of UK-based practitioners

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Abstract

This study is exploratory and looks for meaningful ways of differentiating coaching approaches used by UK practitioners as a way of establishing a more solid foundation for comparative and evaluative research. The paper briefly explores how coaching is defined, arguing that current definitions provide an inadequate foundation for theoretical and evaluative research, compared with multi-dimensional models. A methodology for developing multi-dimensional models is sought within and outside the coaching literature. With little existing methodology to follow, a pragmatic approach is developed using a range of techniques from different traditions: data collection and analysis through interview (from Grounded Theory); synthesis through repertory grid (originally from Personal Construct Theory, but used in other contexts); and simplification of the resulting dimensions through qualitative clustering techniques. Interviews with 5 UK-based practitioners produced a five-dimensional typology reflecting attitudinal and conceptual differences. Potential applications of the typology are discussed.

Keywords: typology, coaching, evidence-based, grounded theory.

Introduction

Coaching means different things to different people. Definitions are many and varied. While certain features recur, there are significant differences depending on political and theoretical perspectives, and to this body of definitions is constantly added a stream of new slants and nuances. Some writers have questioned whether coaching is really any different from earlier forms of helping (Williams & Irving, 2001), or at least that there is a need for clearer differentiations between approaches (Stalinski, 2003). Yet this is not about splitting hairs. Practitioners like myself are familiar with the experience of potential purchasers, whether representing their own private interests or corporate bodies, expressing reservations and concern about the nature and value of coaching. They want to know what exactly they are getting for their money. It is difficult to answer their questions when we know that reviewers have identified a lack of rigorous empirical studies into the effectiveness of coaching (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Grant, 2003a; Grant, 2003b) and called for a stronger research base (Cox & Ledgerwood, 2003).

The two problems go hand in hand. In order to speak meaningfully about coaching effectiveness, we must first define more accurately what it is. A clearer understanding of

meaning would create a better foundation for theoretical and evaluative research, thereby contributing to clarity in the marketplace.

The first section of this paper looks at definitions in general, and how they can be most usefully constructed, culminating in an argument for typologies. Examples of systematic differentiations between different forms of coaching are discussed, and found to be limited in terms of defining the whole field. However, two-dimensional models do offer the opportunity to compare approaches, thus supporting the argument for multi-dimensional approaches. The second section traces the process and analysis of interviews with practicing UK-based coaches. The subsequent analysis results in the formulation of a typology. This section constitutes the main body of the paper. Concluding remarks are offered in third section, and explore the potential application and limitations of the typology.

Coaching Definitions

The nature of definitions

Debate about what constitutes a definition is potentially endless and is outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that, since every real-life example to which a definition refers is ultimately unique, definition is merely an exercise in abstraction. In discussing definitions, therefore, we are not discussing right and wrong; rather, we are only really identifying that definitions correspond to different areas (or *scope*) of real world experience, that they abstract that real world experience to different levels of *generality*, and within that abstraction they provide more or less *differentiation*. I will refer back to these key attributes of a definition in the paragraphs that follow.

Many writers on coaching, for example, differentiate their own approach using terms such as ‘behavioral’ (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003), ‘cognitive-behavioural’ (Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Neenan & Dryden, 2002) or ‘developmental’ (Laske, 2000). These labels suggest certain characteristics of the particular coaching approach, which may be familiar to some of their readers. They are not definitive, nor are they meant to be. Referring back to our earlier discussion, they are *high-level abstractions* of relatively broad *scope* with minimal internal *differentiation*. They are what most people would call a label, or something like it, and as such entirely appropriate to the title of articles and books from which these examples were drawn.

Many writers offer definitions at the next level of complexity where scope, generality and differentiation become more explicit. In this form, definitions implicitly or explicitly specify one or more dimensions and simultaneously specify a point on those dimensions. The following can be taken as an example:

Coaching is a pragmatic approach to helping people manage their acquisition or improvement of skills (Clutterbuck, 1998, p19).

Here it might be inferred that things can be differentiated by

- a) whether they are more or less pragmatic (and that coaching is more pragmatic),
- b) by the core activity of the agent (helping), by the object of that activity (people), and the purpose for which it is enacted (to manage their acquisition or improvement of skills).

Changing any of these things, we might suppose, will describe something that is other than coaching (according to this definition). This particular definition *differentiates* coaching from many other things, at a fairly high level of *generality*, though it focuses on a relatively *narrow* area of activity. It is the feature of simultaneously specifying both the conceptual dimension and the actual point on that dimension that means that such definitions have a narrow scope and do not effectively differentiate between types of coaching.

We have a tendency to look at definitions such as Clutterbuck's and examine whether we agree or disagree with it. This is asking the wrong question, for in reality we know that coaching is not always the same: that there are multiple models and multiple approaches. Rather we should ask ourselves, is there a possibility of establishing dimensions which represent the variations within coaching, that is to say, specify the dimensions such that any combination of points along them still constitutes a member of a hypothetical set we call coaching. This is exactly the point of a typology, or a model that "can perform the important service of functioning as a bridge between systematic substantive theory and relatively unstructured empirical data" (McKinney, 1966, pp38-39). In response to the various calls for greater empirical research, therefore, especially in the area of coaching effectiveness, my proposal is that we should start with a definition that reflects the *breadth* of coaching activity, to a level of *abstraction* that makes the information more useable than real-world data, and that *differentiates* effectively between different practices.

Typologies in the coaching literature

Searches of the peer-reviewed literature produced no general typologies of coaching, though it is worth acknowledging that there are examples of attempts to differentiate between types of coaching in coaching books.

Zeus & Skiffington (2000), for example, identify three main types of coaching: life skills coaching, business coaching and executive coaching. Specific dimensions are not made explicit, but the descriptions of the different types are presented mainly in terms of their focus and context. Consequently, the groupings are not entirely exclusive. For example, the executive coaching heading includes a sub-category of "*coaching for the executive's agenda* [which] focuses on the executive's larger work and/or personal agenda" (Zeus & Skiffington, 2000, p9). This represents a significant overlap with "Life skills coaching [which] is about clarifying values and visions, and setting goals and new actions so that an individual may lead a more satisfying, successful and fulfilling life" (p6).

Clutterbuck (1998, pp30-32), more systematically characterises coaching approaches along two dimensions: directiveness vs. non-directiveness of the coach on one hand, and attention to extrinsic observation (externally derived performance standards) vs. intrinsic observation (the learner's own thoughts and feelings) on the other. The four resulting styles are characterised as "assessor" (directive/extrinsic); "tutor" (directive/intrinsic); "demonstrator" (non-directive/extrinsic); "stimulator" (non-directive/intrinsic). These are further described in detail. This model shows how helpful a typology can be in terms of making key differences between activities or approaches more explicit. Nonetheless, many people would argue that some of its scope lies outside coaching and that it is limited in the extent to which it differentiates between coaching approaches.

The beginnings of typology therefore exist in the literature, but only the beginnings. The next section describes how a typology was derived from interviews with UK-based practitioners.

Developing a grounded typology

This study is exploratory. It looks for meaningful ways of differentiating coaching approaches used by UK practitioners as a way of establishing a more solid foundation for comparative and evaluative research. It is descriptive (looking at what is happening) rather than prescriptive (setting out what should happen) and is interpretivist in that it is more interested in the development of understanding individual behaviours than (at this stage) in cause-effect relationships or general theories (Cohen *et al* 2000). The techniques selected are intended to reflect this outlook and to generate as rich a picture as possible.

In this section, I have described the methodology and results together. They are presented together for two reasons. Firstly, the choice of methods emerged to some extent from the nature of the findings as the research progressed, so the logic of the methods is more apparent when described in the context of the data. Secondly, the description of the methodology would appear somewhat convoluted without illustration and the actual data provides the best illustration. The analysis took place in three stages, and is described in three sub-sections: the discovery of concepts; the discovery of dimensions; the reduction of dimensions.

The discovery of concepts.

Initial data was collected using semi-structured interviews of practicing UK coaches. The interview questions were designed to invite the interviewee to talk about their practice from the following perspectives: their own background and how it relates to the way they coach; any social or psychological paradigms they carry into their coaching; any frameworks they apply; and any ontological paradigms they carry into their coaching. Semi-structured questions were intended to give the interviewees enough structure to enable them to respond fully without further guidance, to retain the data within some kind of scope, but to collect as full and rounded a data set as possible without at the same time defining a structure for the results (Flick, 1998, p77). Interview

prompts were adapted in the individual interviews with further probing and clarifications added in.

Eight practicing coaches in the UK were approached by email with a request to carry out a 30-minute telephone interview. These were selected using a random number generator applied to the appropriate category from the dmoz Open Directory Project (dmoz, no date). Organisations consisting of more than one individual were not approached. Five interviews were carried out. The purpose and scope of the research was explained and interviewees confirmed their understanding and gave permission for the interview to be recorded. An assurance of anonymity was given. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and coded using open coding. The open coding consisted of identifying concepts expressed by the interviewee and any attributes that emerged from what they said. Concepts were numbered sequentially within each interview. As the first stage of open coding is to generate as wide an understanding of a field as possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) each interview was coded separately, without relating the coding of one interview to another, or looking for persistent themes. This resulted in 58 concepts being described, with many of them potentially overlapping (see Table 1 for a sample of open coding). Personal responses were recorded at the end of the transcript in order to capture any emerging themes, research difficulties, and to create an opportunity to make sense of any development or change in the research process.

<i>Are you able to identify any key assumptions that that underpin your approach to coaching?</i>	
<p>Mmm Yes. I think it comes out of the sort of um you know . person-centred approach you know sort of Rogers stuff [mm hm] so I suppose it's you know person-centred it's unconditional positive regard ...its . um . sort of assuming a relationship of equal not patient cl... you know patient umm expert ... [umm .. can you go on] Ummm err ... Well when you say what underpins it I suppose it it's that. Um .what underpins it? .. well it's it's the idea that the person who's sitting in front of me holds the .. holds the key really [m hm] and um that yeah they're sort of the expert in their own life and that that I'm there to help them .. you know sort themselves out not me tell them what to do [right]</p>	<p>5. Paradigm 5 i) Rogers/person-centered 5 ii) unconditional positive regard 5 iii) equal relationship 5 iv) client as expert in their own life 5 v) coach as helper</p>

Table 1: Sample of open coding.

Axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) subsequently produced 8 main concepts in two groupings. It should be noted that subjects tended to speak relatively little about the techniques they used, and there was little differentiation between them. Hence the actual coaching activities they described could be classified simply as: asking a question, listening, staying silent, or offering a critical perspective. These activities were consistent across subjects and were not emphasised by them in interviews. The concepts that emerged were generally more abstract and are shown in Table 2.

Intentions and horizons	
Making things happen now	Basic responses. Getting the client to say or do something.
Creating enabling structures	Creating the environment in which the coach and client can work together
Stage models	Models of what will be done when
Heuristic models	Models of how to decide what direction to take with a client
Stable structures	
Systems of approach	Patterns of handling information or situations.
Systems of belief	Assumptions about people and the world
What coaching is for	Beliefs about the purpose of coaching interventions
The coach as a person	The influence of personality and experience

Table 2: Concepts emerging from open, axial and selective coding

The first grouping represents the way coaches plan and implement their interaction with the client. The second grouping is of concepts relating to aspects of the coach's general outlook. These features may inform the way they coach, but are more like attitudes than intentions.

These concepts are clearly not dimensions in themselves. However they are a means of classifying and representing the rich interview data that can then be transformed into dimensions. This is the second stage of the analysis.

The discovery of dimensions

Based on the concepts discovered and with further reference back to the coding and transcripts, a summary of each of the interviews was prepared, and characteristics related to each of the 8 concepts to construct a comparative table. Repertory grid technique (see Cohen *et al*, 2000) was used to generate 10 dimensions (one for each combination of 3 subjects – see Table 3). Descriptions against each of the 8 concepts were further reviewed for differentiating features and an additional 8 tentative dimensions emerged (see Table 4). For the sake of brevity, these dimensions are not described in full at this stage, though their main features will be recur in the descriptions of the reduced dimensions that emerge from the next stage of the analysis.

Triad	Descriptor 1	Descriptor 2
1	Personal presence driving client	Methodology driving client
2	Personal belief system	Doctrinal belief system
3	Concrete	Philosophical
4	Coaching plus	Just coaching
5	Theoretical frame of reference	No theoretical frame of reference
6	Work experience relevant	Work experience not relevant
7	Uses stage model	Does not use stage model
8	Practice clearly modelled	Practice mysterious
9	Targeted	Exploratory
10	Toolkit of techniques	Emergent techniques

Table 3: summary of differentiators between subjects (rep grid)

Concept	Descriptor 1	Descriptor 2
Intentions and horizons		
Making things happen now	Specific coaching behaviours	No specific coaching behaviours
Creating enabling structures	Based on values	Based on procedure
Stage models	Fixed	Flexible
Heuristic models	Tight	Loose
Stable structures		
Systems of approach	Personal	Doctrinal
Systems of belief	Explicit	Unconscious
What coaching is for	Open	Closed
The coach as a person	Self emphasised	Skills emphasised
Other		
	Influence of established therapies	

Table 4: summary of further dimensions (looking at each concept in turn)

Some of these dimensions may overlap or correlate strongly in the real world. Certainly a model consisting of 18 dimensions is unlikely to be helpful. The intention here was to generate a wide a range of descriptors as possible, based on the data emerging from the interviews. The next stage of analysis reduced these 18 dimensions to just 5.

The reduction of dimensions

A number of techniques were considered for reducing the 18 dimensions down to a more useable number, but no individual procedure appeared to offer the ideal solution. Two in particular might be considered, but were judged inappropriate for different reasons. The first, laddering, is described as a method of ordering constructs in a “sequence that has a logic for the individual and that can be arranged in a hierarchical manner of subordinate and superordinate constructs” (Cohen *et al*, 2000, p341). While much of the data generated was inherently subjective and my own perceptions as researcher were a significant influence, the emphasis on personal constructs was no longer appropriate to the current study. The second, factor analysis, while well understood, was also rejected as it both relies on large amounts of parametric data, and implies a degree of quantitative precision than is neither supported nor appropriate to the data in this study (Bryman & Cramer, 1994).

In the absence of a single procedure, two alternative approaches were selected with the intention of comparing the results: a pragmatic reduction, looking at clusters of meaning among the polar descriptions of the dimensions; and an elementary linkage analysis, using non-parametric measures of similarity. The two approaches are described here, followed by a description of how the outputs were combined.

Pole	Descriptor	Characteristic	Similar poles
1 a	Personal presence driving client	Talks about own feelings Talks about what they are	12a; 18a
b	Methodology driving client	Labels techniques Talks about what they do	12b; 3a; 10a; 18b
2 a	Personal belief system	Describes influence of doctrine as appealing or congruent (beliefs about people). Refers to doctrine as authority	3b; 10b; 15a
b	Doctrinal belief system		3a; 10a; 15b
3 a	Concrete	Operates to planned, designed scheme. Refers to set routines.	10a; 12b 18b
b	Philosophical	Operates from principles. Refers to values.	10b; 18a 12a
4 a	Coaching plus	Incorporates other helping strategies.	6a; 17b
b	Just coaching	Delivers only coaching	6b; 17a
5 a	Theoretical frame of reference	Identifies theoretical source of techniques and approaches.	16a
b	No theoretical frame of reference	Talks only about the application of techniques and approaches.	16b
6 a	Work experience relevant	Makes links between professional experience and performance as coach.	17b
b	Work experience not relevant	Describes content-free or process approach.	17a
7 a	Uses stage model	Relates activities to stages of relationship	13a
b	Does not use stage model	Relates activities to presentation of the client	13b
8 a	Practice clearly modelled	Clearly describes fundamental aspects of approach	16a
b	Practice mysterious	Explores meaning in individual cases	16b
9 a	Targeted	Sets measurable objectives at or near outset	10a
b	Exploratory	Follows emergent themes as they develop	10b
10 a	Toolkit of techniques	Describes standard toolkit	11a; 14a; 18b
b	Emergent techniques	Rejects standard toolkit	11b; 14b; 18a
11 a	Specific coaching behaviours	Describes key competencies	18b
b	No specific coaching behaviours	Rejects idea of key competencies	18a
12 a	Enabling based on values	Describes holding the client by values	18a
b	Enabling based on procedure	Describes holding the client by procedure	18b
13 a	Fixed stage model	Does not describe stage model as flexible.	
b	Flexible stage model	Describes stage model as flexible	
14 a	Tight heuristics	Describes types of people. Has clear expectation of intervention-outcome.	
b	Loose heuristics	Describes intervention as experimental	
15 a	Personal systems of approach	Describes influence of doctrine as appealing or congruent (how to handle the client).	
b	Doctrinal systems of approach	Refers to doctrine as authority	
16 a	Explicit beliefs	Expresses beliefs readily and coherently	
b	Unconscious beliefs	Finds difficulty identifying beliefs (or their existence)	
17 a	Open scope	Accepts any area of content	
b	Closed scope	Accepts only specific areas of content	
18 a	Self emphasised	Talks about presence in coaching relationship	
b	Skills emphasised	Talks about action in coaching relationship	

Table 5: Polar descriptions and similarities

implication of whether the subject area for coaching is relevant or not (D17). In describing this last dimension, I have used the term “*pragmatic*” to describe the acceptability of using other helping strategies (as opposed to purely *facilitative*), and “*competency*” to express the influence of knowledge and expertise in a particular area (contrasted to “*open-scope*”).

The four dimensions derived from these groupings can therefore be summarized as follows (Table 6):

<p>A: Methodological orientation – Personal orientation Evidenced by the use of toolkits, enabling procedures, concrete concepts of coaching actions and competencies, and adherence to recognised approaches. The personal orientation is characterised by a much greater emphasis on the person of the coach, personal values and beliefs, and the impact of their personal presence eliciting progress in the client.</p>
<p>B: Strong influence of stage model – Weak or no influence of stage model Evidenced by rigid adherence as opposed to flexible adherence or absence of stage models.</p>
<p>C: Explicit foundations of practice – Less explicit foundations of practice Evidenced by the coach’s ability and readiness to identify their beliefs, theoretical influences and model of practice.</p>
<p>D: Pragmatic competency coaching – Facilitative open-scope coaching Evidenced by the incorporation of previous knowledge or experience into practice, the acceptance of non-coaching helping strategies as part of a coaching intervention, and the limitation of coaching to relatively narrow areas of competency.</p>

Table 6: Dimensions derived from a pragmatic reduction.

Elementary Linkage Analysis

The basic steps in the elementary linkage analysis were adapted from the description in Cohen *et al* (2000). *Step 1*: elements (subjects) are ranked against each construct (dimension) - these rankings were based on my own assessment of the data; *Step 2*: a matrix of rank order correlations was produced using Spearman’s rho (a non-parametric test); *Step 3*: clustering is achieved by an iterative process of a) finding the highest correlation in the matrix, thereby identifying a core of two constructs, then b) including in the cluster any further constructs which have a higher correlation with the two core constructs than they do with any other; *Step 3 is repeated*, excluding any constructs already clustered.

Using this procedure, a different, though overlapping set of four groupings was derived (Table 7):

<p>E: Fixed systematic approaches – Flexible personal approaches (D2; D4; D7; D10; D11; D13; D16) Evidenced by use of standard toolkits and stage models, a model of coaching competencies, reference to doctrinal authority, relatively relaxed attitude to the use of other helping strategies and less explicitly expressed belief systems.</p>
<p>F: Personal presence achieves outcomes – Procedure achieves outcomes (D1; D8; D9; D15) Evidenced by an interest in the person of the coach, an emphasis on exploration rather than targets, an interest rather than adherence to doctrine and a tendency to treat each case as different.</p>
<p>G: Open, person-centred scope – More explicit areas of expertise (D6; D12; D17) Evidenced by an acceptance of broad areas for the subject for coaching and little influence of previous work experience.</p>
<p>H: Concrete actions – Philosophical experimentation (D3; D5; D14; D18) Evidenced by a preference for routines rather than values, high degree of confidence in the predictive value of heuristics, an emphasis on actions rather than ideas, and a greater tendency to relate to theory.</p>

Table 7: Dimensions derived from an elementary linkage analysis.

Integrating the two models

A comparison of these two sets of results shows a number of features. Firstly, there are some very close parallels. Cluster D (*Pragmatic competency coaching – Facilitative open-scope coaching*) is similar to Cluster G (*Open, person-centred scope – More explicit areas of expertise*). Clusters A (*Methodological orientation – Personal orientation*) and E (*Fixed systematic approaches – Flexible personal approaches*) are also similar, though Cluster E expresses the influence of doctrine that appeared to be missing from the first reduction exercise. Cluster B (*Strong influence of stage model – Weak or no influence of stage model*) appears subsidiary to this combined A/E cluster.

Differences between the analyses are informative. The pragmatic reduction produced Cluster C (*Explicit foundations of practice – Less explicit foundations of practice*) from dimensions that were not grouped together in the elementary linkage analysis (D5, D8, D16). Cluster C appears independent from other clusters. At the same time, the grouping of D8 (*Practice clearly modelled – Practice mysterious*) in Cluster F (*Personal presence achieves outcomes – Procedure achieves outcomes*) in the elementary linkage analysis seems anomalous and makes more sense as part of Cluster C.

Finally, Cluster H seems not very distinct from Cluster E. It does, however, contain the interesting dimension D3, which expresses the tendency to describe practice in terms of the stable structures grouping of concepts.

These observations suggest a combined model of five dimensions (Table 8 - the letters used in the previous analysis are retained to indicate the primary source).

<p>Systematic methodology – Flexible personal methodology (A/E/B) Evidenced by reference to doctrinal authority, the use of stage models and standard toolkits, a model of coaching competencies, a high degree of confidence in the predictive value of heuristics, emphasis on action rather than ideas, and an approach to enabling the client based on procedure rather than values</p>
<p>Explicit foundations of practice – Less explicit foundations of practice (C) Evidenced by the coach's ability and readiness to identify their beliefs, theoretical influences and model of practice.</p>
<p>Pragmatic competency coaching – Facilitative open-scope coaching (D/G) Evidenced by the incorporation of previous knowledge or experience into practice, the acceptance of non-coaching helping strategies as part of a coaching intervention, and the emphasis on coaching in relatively specific areas of competency.</p>
<p>Personal presence achieves outcomes – Procedure achieves outcomes (F) Evidenced by an interest in the person of the coach, an emphasis on exploration rather than targets and an interest rather than adherence to doctrine.</p>
<p>Concrete – Philosophical (H) Evidenced by a general preference to consider activities rather than philosophical underpinnings of practice.</p>

Table 8: A combined five-dimensional model

Discussion

In the introduction to this paper, I argued that the unqualified term “coaching” affords too little on which to base meaningful evaluation. In this final section, I apply the typology to existing definitions to illustrate how it can be used to tell us more about differences between approaches, and I discuss both how that application might be used as a foundation for further research, and how the current study might be further developed.

Relating existing definitions to the typology

By relating some current definitions to the five dimensions we can see two things: firstly, that these definitions may imply very different practices; secondly, that they might be more thoroughly understood and compared by reference to a framework such as the five dimensions.

Taking Clutterbuck's (1998) definition described earlier, we can see how a particular model of coaching might map onto at least some of the five dimensions suggested in this study. For example, as it “focuses on skills and performance” (Clutterbuck, 1998, p18), it would be fair to characterise Clutterbuck's idea of coaching as lying towards the *pragmatic competency coaching* end of the scale rather than *facilitative open-scope coaching*. In contrast Grant (2003a, p254) is specific in saying that the coach “facilitates

the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment” of the client. The dimensions can, to some degree, be used to differentiate between models of coaching even at the abstract level of a definition.

Looking at different models in more detail shows that they may be differentiated on more than one dimension. Grant’s definition suggests a model of coaching is facilitative, but it is also a “solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process” (Grant 2003a, p254). Grant goes on to describe the specific foundations of this approach in brief solution-focused therapy and cognitive-behavioural counselling psychology. In the terms of the five dimensions Grant’s formulation is *systematic*, and *procedurally* oriented, it has very *explicit foundations of practice*, and focuses on the *concrete* rather than the *philosophical*. Compare this to Flaherty (1999 p13), for whom “coaching is a principle-shaped ontological stance and not a series of techniques”. Flaherty later argues that “our capacity for relating is a constitutive part of the kind of being that we are” (p24). Though Flaherty shares the *facilitative open-scope* aspect with Grant – he warns practitioners not to “slide out of coaching and into some other mode of interacting [such as] managing or teaching” (p97) – he is overtly more *philosophically* oriented, with a strong emphasis on *personal presence achieving outcomes*. Thus different approaches can be seen to have some commonality in some dimensions, but differences in others.

The application of a typology to evidence-based coaching

The impact of the previous discussion is that evaluative research could recognize differences in a systematic way. This has not been done to date. In their comprehensive review, Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson (2001) describe seven empirical studies into the effectiveness of ‘executive coaching’. None of these attempted to investigate the relative effectiveness of different types of coaching, though one (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997) was specific about the type of coaching under investigation (behavioural as opposed to psychodynamic). Grant also investigates the impact of a particular, well documented, coaching approach on specific psychological indicators of “the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment” (Grant, 2003a, p254), as defined within that study. A typology raises the possibility of comparing the effectiveness found for one approach with that achieved by other approaches that may differ on one or more dimensions. How significant, for example, was the use of the specific approach described by Grant? Could we predict different results for an intervention using coaching of a different ‘type’? This kind of research could have a significant impact on the effectiveness of buying decisions by individuals and organisations, and ultimately, in the reliability of coaching interventions.

There may also be individual differences that make one type of coaching more suitable than another. Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson (2001) review Laske’s (1999) study into the effect of coaching on the coachee’s developmental stage. They report Laske’s reformulation of his hypotheses based on the conclusions drawn from the study:

- (a) in order to experience transformative (ontic-developmental) effects of coaching, one must be developmentally ready to experience them, and

- (b) coaching may have a transformative (ontic-developmental) effect, but the developmental level of the coach must also be such that it allows the coach to co-generate these effects in the coaching relationship (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001, p220).

These hypotheses raise three questions that might be addressed using a typology. Firstly, what type of coaching is most effective at facilitating what Laske terms a transformative effect? Secondly, if the coachee is not ready to experience such an effect, is another type of coaching more effective in helping them become ready, or in developing in other ways? Thirdly, is the coach's preference for, or ability in practising, a particular type of coaching related to their developmental stage? These questions have implications for the matching of appropriate coaching strategies to the client, and for the development of coaches, particularly in the currently developing area of coaching supervision.

Further development of the typology

The typology proposed in this paper should be considered in the context of the data and methodologies employed and a number of methodological enhancements could be employed in further research. Most significantly the study population was very specific and the sample relatively small. Thus research into the perceptions of coaches working in specific marketplaces, or of other stakeholders altogether (such as clients or supervisors) may reveal very different constructs. Within the context of UK-based independent coaches, a larger sample would both increase confidence and facilitate some of the procedures (for example, there were a large number of perfect correlations in the rank order correlation matrix created for the elementary linkage analysis). It should also be noted that the methodology relied on a large amount of interpretation on the part of the researcher. Even with the same data and the same procedures I have no doubt that a different researcher would produce a different result. Further work may also be undertaken in seeking to validate or further develop the typology using quantitative methodologies, and especially in looking at whether it supports empirical research *between* coaching approaches.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that existing definitions of coaching do not adequately support the processes of evaluation and research demanded by the needs of the marketplace and of an evidence-based discipline. Within the specific context of UK-based independent coaches, I have proposed a tentative typology, which I have applied to descriptions of different conceptualisations of coaching. I hope this can be used as a meaningful first step towards meeting "the need for evidence-based research as a key aspect of the field's wider acceptance and credibility amongst corporate and private clients" (Cox & Ledgerwood, 2003).

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