

Book review

Values and Ethics in Coaching by Ioanna Iordanou, Rachel Hawley and Christiana Iordanou (2017) London: Sage

Malgorzata Ciesielska [✉](mailto:malgorzata.ciesielska@northumbria.ac.uk) (Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University)

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Coaching and mentoring are fast developing concepts not only to improve individual achievement but also in terms of business performance (Passmore et al, 2016). It is considered among the most used and most effective talent management activities (CIPD, 2015). At the same time coaching seems less institutionalised as a practice and as a profession, and hence still lay in a grey zone. The discipline is still relatively new and there is limited understanding what coaching is (Pelham, 2016). How do we know who is a good/bad coach, what are the key responsibilities of a coach? What aspects of personal, professional or business activities are outside coaching relationship? More importantly coaching philosophy enters the educational setting as well which evokes new discussion around expectations and support in relation to student's fees and how this can be placed in the standardized curriculum. It is important for coaches to pay attention to ethics, awareness of ethical issues, ethical resilience and maturity to be able to practice coaching and to help developing those qualities in their clients. The book by Ioanna Iordanou, Rachel Hawley and Christiana Iordanou „Values and Ethics in Coaching” allows us to explore those issues.

Part I of this book discusses the nature of personal and professional values and ethics. Although the authors familiarise the reader with the codes of ethics of professional coaching associations and psychological societies, they also conclude that there is no ultimate ethical guide. Most professional code of ethics would however point out that importance of respect, duty of care, knowing own limits and no harm rule, but in principle ethics, as our values, culture and assumptions are changing over time, and differ between countries, societies, industries and professions. Understanding personal and professional values is a continuous process from reflexion, critical thinking, to reflexivity (p.45).

Part II of the book is dedicated to ethical practice, the cornerstone of which is coaching relationship. The coaching relationship should primarily be based on trust, confidentiality and reflexivity and equally depend on skills and openness of the coach and the coachee. Coach should also be explicit about which, if at all, professional background one is willing to bring to the coaching relationship. Further, ethical coaching practice can be maintained by continuous professional development and supervision (professional mentoring) of other coach. The authors emphasise that ethical coaching practice should be evidence-based, in a way that coach is enhancing his/her knowledge by research. This suggests that coaches should have at least basic understanding of research and their practical implications and be able to apply research findings in the appropriate

context. I find this remark particularly important, as it will help coaching rising the effectiveness of the interventions and ultimately be recognised as a profession in its own rights. Finally, professional context of coaching is analysed. Although there are a range of similarities among expectations and practice of coaching across fields (van Nieuwerburgh, 2015), the differences have to be acknowledged and addressed in development of ethical coaching practice.

Part III of the book focuses on those ethical issues in three coaching contexts: business, education, sport and healthcare. Here the authors emphasise the importance of managing expectations, trust, and confidentiality and explicit coaching contract to determine purpose and relevant stakeholders.

I found this book valuable as they present coaching and mentoring as a continuum rather than two different concepts. I believe that both in business support and in higher education it might be difficult to apply puritanical approach to coaching although this is also an option. However, the reason why my personal coaching-mentoring philosophy is to consciously choose and indicate when I act as a mentor and when I am only coaching the process, but to an extent be able to do both. In the same way as football coach should know about football, voice coach about singing/speaking and business coach about business activities. This fusion between coaching-mentoring might be challenging at first, but this style has been applied for many years to doctoral supervision, although with an emphasis on mentoring. Also, recent studies suggest that support of entrepreneurial individuals should be a mixture of coaching to understand processes and explore innovative ideas, and actual business mentoring to enhance networking, skills, and understanding of the industries (Hunt & Fielden, 2016).

On a personal note, I also appreciate this book for being written in a coaching style. It features not only discussion of issues and ethical considerations, but it also contains reflective activities enabling the reader to understand own position and explore it with further reading.

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