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Coaching Psychology: Exploring definitions and contribution to coaching research and practice?

Abstract

This paper aims to provide an analytic review of contemporary coaching evidence and future research directions through reviewing the development of coaching (e.g. executive, health and career coaching) and coaching psychology definitions. We offer alternative perspectives from psychologist and non-psychologist coaching practice in the development of both traditions over the past two decades. As part of this paper we will summarize systematic reviews and meta-analyses in workplace coaching and outline the key messages for evidence-based practice. Three key messages are identified from this review. First, coaching itself is a professional helping relationship since the process mainly relies on reciprocal actions between the coach and coachee. Second, coachees should be placed in the centre of coaching relationship, recognizing their motivation to change is the essential antecedent for coaching success. Third, social psychological perspectives are an important element in dyadic coaching interactions. Our aim in this paper is to refocus the efforts of coaching scholars and practitioners towards future research collaborations.

Introduction

Since coaching started its journey of development as a separate discipline in the late 1970s and 1980's (Brock 2012; Passmore & Theeboom, 2016); definitions of coaching have been part of the debate within coaching practice and research. While there has been broad agreement over these years, different writers have adopted different perspectives, each emphasizing different aspects of coaching in their personal definitions.

The search for a formal definition of coaching may be considered to be an academic pursuit. However, Grant (2011) argues that a clear definition is needed for the purpose of the development of evidence-based practice, such as coach training and education. Summarizing from previous discussions on the need for a standardized coaching definition, we conclude that marking the boundaries of a domain is vital for three reasons. Firstly, it is essential for practice, a standardized definition of an intervention makes it clear to clients what they can expect from a service provider (their coach), namely a regulated professional service. This view is shared by the International Coach Federation (ICF), who encourage coaches to include an exploration of the nature of coaching during the contracting phrase with clients, ensuring both have a shared understanding of the process and what the client can expect (ICF, 2017; Passmore & Sinclair, 2021). Secondly, it's vital for research. We need to clearly delineate the domain to understand the phenomena

being studied. As coaching is still an emerging research domain, it is crucial to define the key components to differentiate coaching from other similar helping interventions (e.g. counselling) and provide a platform from which theoretical contributions can develop. Thirdly, a consistent definition is vital for coaching education and qualification; with a scientific-based framework to support its pedagogy. Meanwhile, we consider a distinct description and characterization of coaching helps us to have a better understanding of whether coaching psychology is a unique discipline as well as what the essential body of knowledge is to support it theoretical domain.

But what is coaching? How is it different for other developmental interventions? Is there a difference between coaching and coaching psychology? What has coaching psychology got to offer the wider coaching profession? We start with an analytic discussion of the most frequently quoted coaching definitions following various popular application of coaching (e.g. executive or health coaching). To distinguish coaching from other similar professional helping interventions, we summarize comparative analyses between parallel interventions; coaching and mentoring, counselling/therapy and change agent, with the aim of improving our understanding of the distinctive aspects of coaching psychology. Finally, we consider the role psychology has played in contemporary coaching scientific evidence through an exploration of recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses published papers.

Defining Coaching

Grant (2001) indicated the first reference to coaching in the workplace dates back to 1937. This has been subsequently been cited by multiple research papers over the past two decades. The paper, a journalist's report by C.B Gordy, the Detroit editor of *Factory Management and Maintenance*, examined the role of worker development (through training and coaching) to improve factory processes. The journalist offered little in the way of a formal definition of coaching. In fact, the only reference to coaching by Gordy comes at the very end of the paper: "*whereas supervisors found it advisable in the early years to coach employees in the importance of spoiled work and cost reduction, it is now found the older men voluntarily assume this task in training the younger employees*" (Gordy, 1937, p83). Gordy appears to suggest that coaching and training are almost synonymous, with a progress from what might be a short and informal approach to training (coaching) to a more formal role.

Our literature search has revealed earlier references to the term 'coaching'. As early as 1911 the term was being used in journals to reflect its use as an educational tool within university and school debating societies; helping members improve their debating skills (Trueblood, 1911; Huston, 1924). As with Gordy, there is little description in these papers of the process, nor explicit definition of the term. Also like Gordy, the term appears to be used inter-changeably with training. More workplace coaching papers continued during the 1930's (Bigelow, 1938). At the same time sports coaching was developing too, where the first connections were made between coaching and psychology (Griffiths, 1926). But these works were relatively few and far between, until the eruption of coaching in the 1980's.

As the literature evolved from a sporadic collection of papers, often with little if any definition of terms, Whitmore's seminal book placed a marker in the

sand, and provides a clear definition of coaching. For Whitmore, coaching was about *"unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them – a facilitation approach"* (Whitmore, 1992, p8). Whitmore drew heavily on Timothy Gallwey's inner game model. Gallwey had noted in sport performance that the internal state of a player was a significant factor. He went further to argue that it was more significant even than the opponent in individual sports like tennis and golf. If the individual could control their self-talk, sizable performance gains could be made (Gallwey, 1986).

At the core of coaching for John Whitmore was a belief that the purpose of coaching was helping individuals develop greater self-awareness and personal responsibility: *"Performance coaching is based on awareness and responsibility"* (`Whitmore, 1992, p173).

Other founding writers offered alternative definitions. Laura Whitworth (Kimsee-House et al, 2011), one of the pioneers in the US, along with Thomas Leonard (Brook, 2009), developed co-active coaching which defined coaching as *"a relationship of possibilities….based on trust, confidentiality "*.

These perspectives highlighted the nature of the coaching process and its dependency on people, interpersonal interactions and collaboration. This relational aspect distinguishes coaching from other tutoring, or training interventions, where arguably knowledge exchange is at the heart of the process and has led to one stream of coaching research focusing on interpersonal and relational aspects, in the belief that if the relationship is sound, effective outcomes will result.

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) offered a more process-based definition in an attempt to differentiate coaching from mentoring, counselling and other conversation-based approaches to change. They suggested coaching involved "a *Socratic based dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (client) where the majority of interventions used by the facilitator are open questions which are aimed at stimulating the self awareness and personal responsibility of the participant"*.

Bachkirova and colleagues have suggested that coaching is *"a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee…"* (Bachkirova, Cox and Clutterbuck, 2010, p1). While Lai (2014) suggests coaching is defined as a *"reflective process between coaches and coachees which helps or facilitates coachees to experience positive behavioural changes through continuous dialogue and negotiations with coaches to meet coachees' personal or work goals"*. Again, positive behavioural changes are pointed out as the main purpose of coaching, with a recognition that a structured process is involved. Moreover, "negotiation" is put forward in Lai's re-interpretation of coaching that reflects back the previous definitions, coaching is a relationship-based learning and development process.

Specialist approaches to coaching

As coaching has grown, definitions have split into a series of sub-sets of coaching. These have included 'executive coaching', 'health coaching', 'life coaching',

Executive coaching

The application of coaching in the workplace and specifically with senior managers has led to the development of what has been labeled executive coaching. At its simplest executive coaching could be defined as coaching for senior, or c-suite, managers. Kilburg went further and suggested executive coaching was distinctive in being "a *helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement"* (Kilburg, 1996, p142)

Similarly, de Haan and colleagues (2013), echoing earlier relational definitions, suggested executive coaching is a relationship-focused development intervention. Their research and practice perceive executive coaching as a form of leadership development that takes place through a series of contracted, one-to-one conversations, with a qualified "coach." The process itself is tailored to individuals, so that they learn and develop through the reflective conversation, but that such learning occurred because of the unique relationship based on trust, safe, and support.

Both definitions highlight the professional working relationship in the coaching process and the importance of "contracting" beforehand. However, the definition by de Haan and colleagues (2013) specifies the term "qualified coach" which raises the awareness of a "standard" coaching qualification. Given, de Haan's own background as facilitator and coach trainer, this is not surprising, but his definition opens up the discussion, what does "qualified coach" mean and who decides.

Health coaching

A further strand that has emerged and is continuing to grow in popularity is health coaching. The approach has grown in both the UK, within the National Health Service (NHS) (Evidence Centre, 2014), in the US through private providers and globally. A literature review identified 275 published studies, with the approach now widely used by nurses, doctors and allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and health advisors (Evidence Centre, 2014).

The study defined health coaching as: *"a patient-centred process that is based upon behaviour change theory and is delivered by health professionals with diverse backgrounds. The actual health coaching process entails goal setting determined by the patient, encourages self-discovery in addition to content education, and incorporates mechanisms for developing accountability in health behaviours"* (Evidence Centre, 2014, p3),

A similar definition was offered by Palmer and colleagues, who defined health coaching as "*the practice of health education and health promotion within a coaching context, to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and to facilitate the achievement of their health-related goals*" (Palmer, Stubbs & Whybrow, 2003, p91). The distinction being the focus on self-discovery, which echoes Whitmore's primary aims of coaching: self-awareness and personal responsibility.

However, what is less clear from these definitions is where health coaching starts and finishes. If coaching is employed to help individuals with chronic

conditions and to improve health outcomes, does this include approaches such as Motivational Interviewing, which are widely used for drug and alcohol treatment, or brief solution focus therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, which might be considered to be included within the definitions above, but which the practitioner delivering it might consider to be counselling or therapy. This lack of a more clearly defined boundary has made it difficult to study and compare coaching interventions within this health (Boehmer et al., 2016).

One useful, although controversial, distinction we have offered is to use the time focus of the conversation, with coaching focused on future behavioural change for health improvement, while counseling or therapy focus on coping with, managing or making sense of the past.

Life Coaching

A parallel sub-domain to health coaching is 'life coaching'. Like health coaching, life coaching has become a popular means of helping non-clinical populations in setting and reaching goals and enhancing their well-being (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006).

Life coaching can be broadly defined as a collaborative solution focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, non-clinical clients (Grant, 2014). In simply terms life coaching has been often considered to be coaching outside of the work arena, for example in education (Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007) or coaching for wellbeing (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006).

One possible distinction between life coaching and health coaching is that while health coaching is often defined in terms of the qualification of those providing it: Health coaching is coaching delivered by health professionals, while life coaching is delivered by those outside of the health sector. In the UK and Australia, the term itself has slipped in popularity being replaced by the term wellbeing coaching. Although the term life coaching remains popular in North America, coaching continues to grow and spread to new areas beyond business and sports to area including driving development (Passmore & Rehman, 2012; Wilmott, & Wilmott, 2018), safety coaching (Passmore Krauesslar, & Avery, 2015), maternity and childcare (Golawski, Bamford & Gersch, 2013) and marital relationships (Williams & Williams, 2011; Ives & Cox, 2015).

Reflections

Reflecting back on the wide-ranging definitions, a common theme is the facilitative nature of coaching. The role of the agent (the coach) is not to guide, direct or instruct, but to 'facilitate'. The process is to support the client (coachee) in new discoveries, insights and move closer to their goals. A second observation from reviewing these multiple definitions is that coaching has been refined and redefined continually over this period as it has changed, developed and spread into new areas. This brings not only challenges, but could also be considered to be coaching's strength, reflecting a vibrant, dynamic and developing area of practice. As Palmer and Whybrow note *"definitions seldom stay static, unless the area has stagnated"* (2007, p. 3).

The situation has been less fluid in coaching psychology. While there have been various definitions of coaching psychology offered since the turn of the millennium, the variety and volume of change has been markedly different.

The differences between coaching and other helping interventions

One way of understanding the essential defining elements of coaching is a comparison to other relevant facilitation activities. Traditionally, coaching has been compared to therapy / counselling and mentoring (Bachkirova, 2008) because they share very similar features and process. In this discussion we also include a discussion about organizational change. Various writers have discussed the key similarities and differences among coaching, therapy/counselling, mentoring and change agent (e.g. Bachkirova, 2008 and Passmore et al., 2013). The table below summarises the key features subsequent to reviewing a number of related papers and book chapters (Joo, 2005; Gray, 2006; Bachkirova, 2008; McDowall & Mabey, 2008; Passmore et al., 2013)

Aspects	Counselling/Therapy	Coaching	Mentoring	Change agent
Ultimate purpose and benefits.	Development and well-being of individual.	Development and well-being of individual (if sponsored, also benefit for the sponsoring organisation).	Development and well-being of individual (if sponsored, also benefit for the sponsoring organisation).	Development and organisational change.
Initial motivation.	Eliminating psychological problem and dysfunctions.	Enhancing life, improving performance.	Enhancing life, improving performance.	Enhancing life, improving performance at the workplace.
Context of interventions.	Open to any and potentially to all areas of client's life.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.
Client's expectations for change.	From high dissatisfaction to reasonable satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.
Possible outcome.	Increased well-being, unexpected positive changes in various areas of life.	Attainment of goals, increased well-being and productivity.	Attainment of goals, increased well-being and productivity.	Attainment of goals, increased well-being and productivity.
Theoretical foundation.	Psychology and philosophy.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management, health and social care etc.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management, health and social care etc.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management and organistaional change theories etc.
Main professional skills.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.
Importance of relationship in the process.	High.	High.	High.	High.
Importance of the client's commitment.	High.	High.	High.	High.
Role of the practitioner's self in the process.	Very important.	Very important.	Important.	Less important.
Degree of formality	High.	High.	Less formal.	High.
Frequency.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, usually based on the original contract with the organisation.
Ownership of data/feedback.	It is confidential data. Only shared between therapist and client.	Coach and individual, some data often shared with line manager. It depends on the agreed contract.	Mentor and the mentee. Some data and information are shared with the organisation based on the initial agreement.	Most of the data and information are shared with the organisation.

(Revised from Joo, 2005; Gray, 2006; Bachkirova, 2008; McDowall & Mabey, 2008; Passmore et al., 2013)

Coaching compared to counselling/therapy

The need for a clearer differentiation between counselling/therapy and coaching is emerging as the use of psychological models and tools in coaching interventions has increased considerably (Bachkirova, 2008). Such a differentiation is essential to ensure a quality coaching engagement if the clearer orientation and required knowledge are defined in the coaching evaluation and training agenda. The similarities between the counselling/therapy and coaching domains are that both are concerned with the 'relationship', the is a need for engagement or 'client's/coachee's commitment' and both rely on the 'practitioner's (coaches)self-awareness' to facilitate both the relationship and keep the conversation moving forward. In both cases the aim is to facilitate a person's change through an interpersonal interactive process, the relationship between practitioner and client and how the practitioner facilitates an effective relationship are essential for a positive outcome. In addition, the counselling/therapy and coaching principle share a number of basic required professional skills such as listening, questioning, summaries, reflection and affirmations.

We suggest there are at least three differentiating aspects. First, the initial motivation of clients to undertake counselling/therapy is different from coaching. For example, the individual usually expects to eliminate psychological problems and dysfunctions through counselling/therapy sessions. In this sense it may be considered to be primarily problem focused. In contrast coaching clients are seeking more. The coachee arrives in anticipation of an improvement in personal and professional development. In this sense it may be considered to be solution focused. Second, the focus of counselling/therapy may involve any matters relevant to the client's personal wellbeing, while the coaching process is usually restricted to the agreed and contracted goals. The expected outcomes and evaluation methods are usually defined prior to the first session with the involved parties (e.g. coachee, supervisors and other stakeholders). Third, the time horizon for the work is longer. While the coach may contract for four, six or possibly twelve sessions, the therapists, contracts week by week, with a view that it takes as long as it takes.

Coaching compared to mentoring

The similarity between coaching and mentoring is that they both provide a one-to-one relationship that is designed to enhance a person's career development (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). However, there are notable differences between these two activities. First, mentoring is a form of tutelage, which means a more senior or experienced mentor conveys knowledge and insight to a junior mentee about how to improve in a specific job, role, vocation or organization. Passmore (2013) referred to the definition of mentoring from Eby et al. (2007, p.16): workplace mentoring involves a relationship between a less experienced individual (protégé) and a more experienced person (the mentor), where the purpose is the personal and professional growth of the protégé. The mentor may be a peer at work, a supervisor someone else within the organization, but outside the protégé's chain of command. Both coaching and mentoring disciplines highlight the importance of "relationship", however, coaching is typically conducted without the expectation of a more equal relationship between the two parties, with less focus on technical knowledge (Joo, 2005). Besides, the main purpose of coaching is considered to be on improving performance or workplace wellbeing through self-awareness and learning, whereas

the purpose of mentoring varies widely from socialization of newcomers to management development (Joo, 2005). Some have also argued that coaching also differentiates from mentoring in its use of a structured process, involving specific tools and assessments, to provide both awareness in the client and the development of specific plans for improvement (Joo, 2005), which is in turn reflected in the timelines, with mentoring often running over several years and coaching over several months.

Coaching compared to change agent

A change agent is defined being an individual who initiates and managing change in the organization (Lunenburg, 2010). Similar to the coaching intervention, the change agent can be assigned from internal (e.g. managers or in-house HR professionals) or hired from external specialists (Tschirky, 2011). Integrating contemporary theoretical interpretations between the coach and change agent, these two roles share several common features and historical development process. First, coaches and change agents are commissioned to transform individuals to fit into the norms (e.g. behaviours, attitudes, performance, thinking styles) of societies or organizations at the early stage of both practices (Bennis, Benne and Chin, 1969; Kilburg, 1996; Parsloe, 1999). A "planned" change in the organizational setting is usually expected by the change agency (i.e. the sponsored organization) back to the late 1950's (Lippitt, Watson and Westley, 1958). The primal definitions of coaching also emphasis on the purposes of coaching are related to "corporate vision and goals", "team performance", "organizational productivity" and "professional development" (Parsloe, 1996; Sperry, 2008). These descriptions of being a coach and change agent focus on the task, instead of people; and the process is viewed as an instrumental tool generating the conformity in the organization. Nevertheless, a broader view of both practices is established alongside with the development of relevant theories, such as motivation to change. For instance, Zaltman and Duncan (1977) indicated the change agent is any individual who transforms the state quo even though the operation is not sanctioned. In addition, Caldwell (2003) indicates the role of change agents has been shifted away from a planned approach to change; a bottom-up approach is encouraged to meet the unprecedent level of change. Meanwhile, the objective of coaching is expanded from specific corporate-related goals to a stimulation of personal potential and responsibility (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). The evolution of both practices is grounded on that people's behavioural change is highly associated with their intention (i.e. motivation) to change (Webb & Sherran, 2006). Accordingly, the focus of changing process research transfers to change recipients' needs and intrinsic motivation in this changing and learning process. Second, facilitating a collaborative and equal working relationship is encouraged in both practices. Zaltman and Duncan's study (1977) indicates change agents are more likely to be effective if they keep a flexible working relationship with the change recipient; for instance, acknowledging their needs, maintaining a collaborative process and being receptive to new ideas. In the meantime, the quality of the professional helping relationship is recognized as an essential antecedent for positive coaching outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018; de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013) through numerous primary studies. Third, psychology takes an essential part in both practices. The involvement of psychology in the change process can be

traced back to 1970's. Several papers indicate change agents as 'consultants in behavioural clothing' or 'psychological consultants' (Reddin, 1971; Pearl, 1974).

The explicit inclusion of a psychological perspective within coaching can be attributed to Grant (2001). Following Grant's (2001) PhD the consideration of the psychological effects of coaching, both process and outcomes have been a popular area of research (Bono, Purvonova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; Smither, 2011). More recently several systematic reviews and meta-analyses have established psychological informed research at the vanguard of coaching research (Theeboom, Beersma & Vianen, 2014; Jones, Woods & Guillaume, 2016; Bozer & Jones, 2018; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). Nevertheless, in terms of practice some papers (e.g. Bono et al., 2009; Passmore, Palmer, & Short, 2010) have argued that there is little evidence of differences in practice between coaching psychologists and non-psychological trained coaches. Despite these debates as to whether psychological training informs coaching practice, we would argue there is little doubt that psychology theory, be it behavioural change theory or psychological theories of human relationships, have informed all coach training. The understanding of human behaviour, emotions, cognition and motivation are key skills for all coaches, not just psychologists. Fourthly, both practices involve managing a complex social context. According to O'Neill (2000), the change agent often has no direct authority over the implementer; therefore, it is a natural triangle working relationship between the sponsor-implementer-agent. A similar relationship exists in the coaching context. More and more coaching studies (Louise & Fatien Diochon, 2014; Ianiro, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Kauffled 2015; Shoukry and Cox, 2018) have acknowledged the significance of the social dynamic in the coaching process. For example, Ianiro and Kauffled's study (2015) highlighted the importance of interpersonal interactions between the coach and coachee and how these are altered by different social circumstance.

Defining Coaching Psychology

Given this debate the question remains, what, if anything, is the difference between coaching and coaching psychology? At its birth, coaching psychology's Godfather, Anthony Grant, offered a definition of coaching psychology that subsequently established the foundation of coaching psychology definition within the British Psychology Society. According to Grant (2001, p:10):

"Coaching psychology can provide a useful platform from which to investigate the psychological factors involved in purposeful, directed behavioural change in normal populations, and in this way further the contribution of psychology to the enhancement of performance, productivity and quality of life of individuals, organisations and the broader social community."

In Grant's (2001) definition coaching psychology is:

(1) an empirically-validated framework of change which facilitates the coaching process.

(2) a model of self-regulation which allows delineation of the processes inherent in self-regulation, goal setting and goal attainment. 3.

(3) a methodology of how behaviour, thoughts and feelings interact, and how behaviour, thoughts and feelings can be altered to facilitate goal attainment.

Drawing on Grant's PhD thesis, Palmer and Whybrow reformulated the definition for the British Psychological Society SGCP. 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).

Passmore (2010), as noted above, argued such definitions draw a false distinction between non-psychologist coaches and coaching psychologists. He argued that many coaches draw upon psychological models in their practice and that coach training has over the past two decades has become more evidenced based approaches, thanks in part to the work of Grant, Cavanagh, Green and Palmer, who have published widely, and argued the case for evidenced based coaching. Passmore's position appears to be supported by research evidence, which suggests in terms of behaviors (Jenkins, Passmore, Palmer & Short, 2012), and in wider practice (Passmore, Brown & Csigas, 2017), there is little difference between coaches and coaching psychologists and coaches.

In contrast to focusing on psychological approaches, Passmore and colleagues sought to recast coaching psychology as a separate domain of study, parallel to occupational, health or forensic psychology. He defined coaching psychology as *"the scientific study of behaviour, cognitive and emotion within coaching practice to deepen our understanding and enhance our practice within coaching"* (Passmore, 2010, p. 4).

Passmore suggested that while there are few observable differences between coaches and coaching psychologies in their practice, the study of psychology can enhance practice, and may lead to materially different outcomes. This view however remains the subject of debate. In this paper we might go further to suggest that coaching psychologists may be able to more clearly articulate what they do and the underpinning theory supporting their approach. Further, as a result of the robust ethical standards set by national psychological societies such as the British Psychological Society (BPS), Australian Psychological Society (APS), New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS). Psychological Society of South Africa (Psyssa), Canada Psychology Association (CPA) and American Psychological Association (APA), psychologists may act to higher ethical standards when working with coaching clients. This last point of course is highly contentious, given the complex, and diverse nature of ethics, what is ethical and the diversity of ethical standards between different coaching body members (Passmore, Brown & Csigas, 2017).

In response to an invitation (Passmore, Stopforth and Lai, 2018) researchers and practitioners have responded with their own definitions of coaching psychology. Our role here is not to suggest that one is right or wrong, but recognize that different traditions, cultural perspectives and working environments shape and influence these different perspectives.

Grant offers a fresh take from the vantage point of Australia. *"Coaching psychology is branch of psychology that involves the systematic application of behavioural science to the attainment of professional or personal outcomes that are valued by the coachee. Such outcomes or goal typically focus on the enhancement of personal or professional life experience, work performance and/or well-being, and can be used for individuals, groups and/or organisations. Coaching does not aim to treat issues related to mental illness"* (Grant, Personal Communication 2018).

Michel Moral, a leading name in French coaching researcher and practitioner, has suggested that *"coaching psychology is a way of doing coaching which uses and combines all the theatrical and technical resources of psychology in intrapersonal, interpersonal and systemic areas of knowledge. It allows the coach to be fully aware of what they are doing in service of the coaching mission"* (Moral, Personal Communication 2018).

The South African Psychologists Coaching Group draw on the work of Odendaal, & Le Roux, (2016, p3) in the following definition of coaching psychology: *"Coaching Psychology, as practiced by a registered practitioner, is a conversational process of facilitating positive development and change towards optimal functioning, well-being and increased performance in the work and personal life domains, in the absence of clinically significant mental health issues, through the application of a wide range of psychological theories and principles. The intervention is action-orientated with measureable outcomes, and is also reflective towards creating greater self-awareness and meaning, and is directed at individuals, groups, teams, organisations and communities within a culturally-specific context"* (Gail C. Wrogemann, Chair Group Sub-Committee, Psyssa, Personal Communication, 2019).

The New Zealand Psychological Society Special Group have opted for the following definition: Coaching psychology…*"draws on and develops established psychological approaches, and [is] the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress."* (Jonathan Black, Co-Chair of CPSIG, Personal Communication, 2019).

While different psychological groups, and practitioners hold differing perspectives, a common feature is the link to psychological theory and a common purpose to promote evidence-based practice through a psychological understanding of what it is to be human, within a 'normal' (non-clinical) range of functioning.

Coaching psychology is "the well" which refreshes the wider coaching profession. It is the heart of scientific enquiry about coaching practice for work with non-clinical populations and while practices may not diverge, understanding of psychological theory, ethical standards and contribution to research, mark coaching psychologist, and coaching psychology apart.

Key findings from recent systematic reviews on coaching psychology

While the on-going debates between the psychologists and non-psychologists have continued, several systematic reviews on coaching psychology have identify key factors for a positive coaching outcome (Bozer and Jones, 2018; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). First, the working alliance which refers to the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between the client and therapist (Hatcher & Barends, 2006) has been recognized a key indicator of coaching outcomes (Lai & McDowall, 2014; Grover & Furnham, 2016). Second, self-efficacy which focuses on how individuals' perceive their acquisition of a skill or knowledge (Gist & Mitchell, 1992)

has been found to be an important antecedent of affective coaching outcomes as reflected in perceived coaching effectiveness (de Haan, Duckworth, Birch, & Jones, 2013; de Haan, Grant, Burger & Erikkson, 2016; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Third, the coachee's readiness to change (i.e. motivation to change) is a critical variable to outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Moreover, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Aryee, Budhwar & Chen, 2002), which explains the support from the coachee's leader and organization to their coachee, has a key role to play in outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018).

Summarizing from these critical reviews on existing coaching evidence, we can conclude psychology continues to play a significant part in shaping contemporary coaching research, specifically, frameworks from psychotherapy (e.g. the working alliance framework) and organizational psychology (e.g. motivational theory and LMX). As coaching research continues, we suspect that the contribution of both psychological theory and psychological research methods will inform and shape the development of evidence based coaching practice. Secondly, that evidenced based practice will increasingly become the core modality for qualified coaching practitioners, as the draw from the well of coaching psychology research.

Discussion

This review paper answers several questions on contemporary coaching study, practice and the need for coach's training and development. We can initially conclude that coaching intervention cannot be detached from psychological perspectives in considering that the main activity embedded in the coaching process replies on "interpersonal interactions", such as dialogues and conversations. In addition, some research (Ianiro et al., 2015) indicated "body languages" and "unspoken manners" between the coaching dyad act a key role for a successful coaching outcome. Therefore, the psychological professional relationship is embedded in all coaching setting, regardless of the technique or framework. Second, most of the current research evidence indicated theories in psychotherapy, such as therapeutic working alliance, provides a theoretical foundation in coaching alliance study. Nevertheless, social psychological perspectives are highlighted in recent coaching research domain due to the power dynamics and cultural differences in most of the coaching contexts (e.g. hierarchy in the social settings of coaches and expectations in different cultural backgrounds). Moreover, motivational theories which are usually studied in organisational psychology and adult learning areas are identified as the fundamental factor for an effective coaching alliance. Therefore, building trust and rapport at the beginning of the coaching relationship is the key to open up the coachee's mind and enhance their motivation to change. Consequently, we argue that while psychology is not the only theoretical discipline to facilitate an effective coaching process and outcome, it plays an essential part in this human-relationship focused intervention.

Conclusions

The evidence for investment in coaching intervention will continue to be a major concern for scholars in relevant domains, as well as for organizational stakeholders While, the development of coaching is been transformed from a

"business model or service" (Briner, 2012) towards a more scientific rooted profession, more rigorous research is still required to inform practice.

Coaching research has evolved from the "infant" stage and has moved towards its teenage years. It has established that coaching works and produces moderate effect sizes (Theeboom et al, 2014). Further, it has a role beyond the coaching dyad, such as sponsoring organizations, cultural influences and coachees' social environments (Passmore & Theeboom, 2016). It's next stage of development must be to identify the active ingredients in coaching, and measure what effect each has. Secondly, it must start to differentiate between individuals and presenting problems. What type of coaching fits what type of person and what type of issue. To suggest that all are equal (Kilburg, 2005) is not supported by the growing evidence from other behavioural change domains, such as MI and CBT. These have shown that different approaches can be better suited to specific types of presenting problem. We hypothesis that coaching will find that personality factors of the coach and coachee, as well as presenting problems and levels of readiness to change all influence outcomes: My coaching need, is not your coaching need. To move closer to this understanding a renewed energy is needed, with closer collaborative between coaching psychologists with the research skills and coaching practitioners to deliver the hundreds of data points needed for this type of research to bear fruit. If the past 15 years of coaching psychology have been growing and learning, the coming decade of coaching psychology will be a coming of age.

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