

Coaches & Academia

A qualitative analysis of workplace coaching
practitioners' perception and use of relevant theory
and research

George Berry

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Introduction	5
Background	5
Focus for investigation.....	7
Rationale for the research	8
Literature Review.....	8
Coaching research.....	8
The Research-Practice Gap	13
Evidence-based coaching.....	16
Methodology.....	19
Paradigm	19
Data collection	21
Ethical considerations and logistics	23
Data analysis	24
Findings	26
The primacy of the subjective experience	26
A subconscious process with a self-conscious approach.....	32
People and practicalities are more central than abstractions and theories.....	38
Accessibility is of serious consideration.....	41
Development and diversity of ideas are valued	45
Discussion.....	51
The Research-Practice Gap (RPG): Aligning Insights.....	51
Coaches' Perceptions and Emotional Engagement with Theory	53
Accessibility of Research.....	56
Contradictions and Discrepancies.....	57
Future Progress.....	59
Limitations	59
Conclusion.....	61
Recommendations	64
For researchers	64
For coaches	65
For intermediaries.....	66
References	68
Appendices.....	81

Sources Mentioned During Interviews	88
Approaches / Tools	88
People / Authors	97
Organisations / Publications	100

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Abstract

This research was conducted to help narrow the research-practice gap in executive coaching by investigating how executive coaches feel about theories and research in their field. Since the turn of the twentieth century, there has been exponential growth in professional coaching practice and research (Graf & Dionne, 2021). However, researchers talk of a divide between theory and reality, recommending that practitioners be actively involved in research (Hinn & Kotte, 2021). By better understanding the current use of theory in practice and how practitioners feel about academic output, more can be done to bridge this divide. To explore this question, semi-structured interviews with 16 coaches were transcribed and analysed using a Reflexive Thematic Analysis technique. Open-ended questions were used to elicit rich data, with flexibility that is well suited to such a relatively unexplored area. I analysed the data using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis to find and define pertinent topics. This resulted in a set of 5 themes which will be presented and discussed. The resultant themes were the primacy of the subjective experience; coaching as a subconscious process with a self-conscious approach; people and practicalities being more important than abstractions and theories; accessibility being a serious consideration; and the value of development and diversity of ideas. These findings are subsequently considered together. I hope this discussion will be a step toward narrowing the research-practice gap by informing the focus and distribution of future academic output, and by presenting views that other coaches can use to develop their own relationships with the philosophies, frameworks, and functions of coaching. This offers opportunities to improve organisational performance and personal development more broadly, implying significant potential societal value.

Introduction

Background

For over a decade, executive coaching has been recognised as one of the fastest growing professions, having been transferred to a business context from the world of sport in the 1970s and becoming increasingly popular and diversified through the 1990s (Martens, 2012). It hasn't stopped evolving since (Katz, 2021). Whether seen simply as "unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance" (Whitmore, 2009: p11) or as a "collaborative solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee" (Grant, 2009, and as defined by the Association for Coaching), for example, there have been many ways of describing the practice but, essentially, it boils down to helping people improve. Of course, there are many factors that influence it (See Appendix 1), along with a never-ending flow of information that is relevant to its evolution. Yet, "questions still... remain about what models, methods, and techniques are most effective" (Passmore, 2015: p10). This uncertainty is unlikely to be dispelled given the complexity of the occupation but a greater connection between the study and the act of coaching is worth striving for, as both can improve when effectively informed by the other.

Even though executive coaching has now "come of age" (Sperry, 2013: p1), a 'research-practice gap' (RPG) in Organisational Psychology has been identified that has been seen to negatively impact on the field (Rynes, 2012). Coaching scholars and practitioners have been encouraged to collaborate through research in the interest of developing evidenced-based practice in coaching (Passmore & Lai, 2020) and narrowing this gap. However, the disparity

between findings from psychology-based research in fields relating to organisational leadership and management and the practices therein is long-established (see Dunnette & Brown, 1968; or Johns, 1993). Despite the longevity of the issue, efforts to work together have not been futile (Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009). There appears to be reason to continue pushing forward. For example, when practitioners work with researchers on mutually valuable questions, more useful data can be elicited which can help overcome common methodological obstacles (Edwards, 2008). Such collaboration can greatly improve research, thus producing more valuable insights for general business management too (Amabile et al., 2001). It is important that the knowledge generated from efforts in research are of practical significance. To achieve this, some have called for reform in the social sciences, proposing alternative or unconventional research tactics (Starbuck, 2006). New ways of thinking about research could potentially springboard our collective understanding onwards and create greater opportunities to improve outcomes in various domains.

When research focuses on helping practitioners deal with real-world issues, studies can be both practically and theoretically important (Keleman & Bansal, 2002). To make discoveries in behaviour-related science which are made in an academic setting more useful in the 'real world', simplification and the involvement of students and professionals in studies are measures worth employing (Latham, 2007a). Such co-operation often leads to higher-quality academic output, especially where challenging questions are shared (Daft, et al., 1987). I would also agree that it is intrinsically motivating (Van de Ven, 2007); as a student being closely involved in the research method it is a more engaging approach to exploring such a personal area of study. So, by bringing coaches into the conversation around what they would like to see more of from studies and how theoretical models could be optimised for effective use with clients (Surely, the ultimate objective?), my intention for this study was to

discover some useful perspectives to inform those of us investigating this evolving vocation, while enjoying personally intriguing conversations with a mix of experienced professionals.

Focus for investigation

This study will therefore focus on the thoughts and feelings of practicing executive/workplace coaches (from here, for simplicity, labelled as coaches) about theories and research that relate to their work. The interview questions covered their feelings around coaching generally, as well as what exposure they have had to theories and academic output and the thoughts and feelings they elicit, such as what makes it valuable to them. This is such an interesting field of study, given the inordinate impact coaching can have on individuals and the networks they inhabit (Kimsey-House et al., 2010). Better understanding of the emotional and intellectual relationships that coaches have to the work that academics produce in this area can introduce new ways of thinking about theories and research, potentially bridging the divide, and increasing the efficacy of both, by informing future research in a way that will better resonate and effectively influence coaching practice. I expected to find a varied array of opinions and broadly divergent views on the utility, attractiveness, clarity, and overall value of research but with general patterns in overall attitudes toward research and theory too. I imagine that these insights could influence the development and distribution of future research to better aid its utilisation. After reviewing existing literature related to the subject, the interview and analysis procedures are described before outlining key themes found from the research. These are then discussed, and a conclusion is offered with consequent recommendations. The references and supporting materials are included at the end of the paper.

Rationale for the research

The reasoning behind choosing to study this was to gain a better understanding of what would make research better and how coaches can benefit more from it. I chose to speak openly with coaches rather than ask them to fill a standardised questionnaire as I wanted to understand perspectives and meanings. The qualitative approach was far better suited for investigating attitudes towards, beliefs about, and concepts relating to normative behaviour (Hammarberg et al., 2016). To allow for nuanced and unpredictable notions to arise from the conversations, I used an inductive approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyse what was said. The resulting concepts and evaluation are presented and discussed in the hope of contributing information that can be used to bridge the RPG.

Literature Review

Coaching research

Not too long ago the growth of coaching research was seen as far behind that of the practice (Linley, 2006). Now there are whole textbooks on “Doing Coaching Research” (Jackson & Cox, 2020, p.1) and academic output has exploded. Despite this, some have stated that the RPG in organisational psychology has been getting larger (Rynes, 2012) along with the literature addressing it (Tkachenko, et al., 2017). However, it has been argued that it, at least in management science, is overstated (Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009). It’s important to progress with a nuanced take on what we do and don’t know and think about how best to proceed. Do coaches themselves believe the RPG to exist? Is it worth focussing on? Both literature and personal views of coaches can offer initial answers to these questions.

There has been a burgeoning flow of papers published relating to coaching for many years now. We know that opportunities to grow, for example with effective training, appeal to good talent (Hiltrop, 1999) and can reduce employee attrition (Arnold, 2005; Herman, 2005). Therefore, opportunities to learn and grow are key to attracting and retaining talent, and so related subjects rightly sit within the core elements of organisational psychology, a discipline applying theories about how people think at work (Truxillo, et al., 2016). In the ongoing 'war for talent' (Michaels et al., 2001), organisations need to critically think about people's needs and, within this context, workplace coaching is an increasingly popular learning and development practice. It was estimated that there were approximately 71,000 coaches globally in 2019, more than the 2015 figure by a third (International Coach Federation [ICF], 2020); it has been reported to be one of the fastest growing areas of consulting (Liljenstrand & Nebeker, 2008), with a 54% increase to approximately 109,200 coach practitioners globally in 2023 (ICF, 2023). However, the coaching industry is barely regulated, which is stifling progress (ICF, 2016). The variation in training length and standards will make a key contribution to the frameworks and theories coaches use. Due to a lack of pressure to demonstrate evidence, practitioners' engagement with coaching research relies heavily on their attitudes (Grant & O'Connor, 2019) but so far, there is little research in this area (Hinn & Kotte, 2021).

Only twenty years ago, the field of coaching generally exhibited scarce research. During the 1930s, it was shown to have a positive impact on organisations and then much later there was a notable increase in the number of studies through the 1990s implying the same (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Many of these earlier studies looked at attributes of effective coaches and later work studied how characteristics of clients impact the results. This is still a key area of development, with the ICF updating their 'Core Competencies' only

three years ago. A recent academic study also identified 46 active ingredients cited in 28 academic articles that impact executive coaching, including characteristics of the coach, the coachee and the relationship between them, among other elements (Pandolfi, 2020). The focus shifted more to the relationship with time (Kilburg, 2001) and has since evolved through phases of asking whether it works and what factors are effective, to a stage now for critically reflecting on the research itself (Schermyly, 2019).

Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) argue that, before we can assess whether or not coaching works, we must first establish how coaching is being employed and utilised; what is its aim? It is important to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of coaching for businesses, but evidence suggests that most organisations make no attempt to evaluate their investment in executive coaching services, lacking faith that the measurements would persuade leaders of its efficacy (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014). Notwithstanding, there is a great body of evidence to show the broader benefits of coaching. The De Meuse, Dai and Lee meta-analysis of 2009 helped reinforce the value of coaching beyond ROI, despite a lack of a consensus among divergent professionals regarding how to evaluate its effectiveness. Coaching has been found to be associated with increased goal attainment, enhanced solution-focused thinking, a greater ability to deal with change, increased leadership self-efficacy and resilience, and decrease in depression, both at work and home during times of organisational change (Grant, 2014). In 2011, a review summarised the decade of coaching literature since Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson's (2001) seminal review which underlined the scarcity of coaching research at the time (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011), including several coach behaviours studies that could help coaches to improve their practice.

In 2013, another study combining the results of multiple scientific studies found that coaching had significant positive effects on performance, skills, well-being, coping, work

attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation (Theeboom et al., 2014). To build on this body of literature, in 2015, Schutte and Steyn synthesized the scientific building blocks of business coaching in a literature review. They showed that a definition can be developed, and that the key relevant models and theories can be identified. Another meta-analysis that same year investigated the predictive power of coaching on relationship and goal-attainment outcomes, finessing our understanding and suggesting stronger effects on the former (Sonesh et al., 2015). Over the past eight years, several other metanalytical studies have been published. Blackman, Moscardo, and Gray (2016) decried a continued lack of sufficient research into workplace coaching and advanced the field with a systematic review (SR) of existing empirical evidence, noting the importance of contact, fit, and personalisation on coaching outcomes. Also in 2016, a meta-analysis focussed on learning and performance outcomes was published which made recommendations, such as ensuring “that a thorough familiarization process is undertaken to enable coaches to have a full and complete understanding of the organizational context of employee learning and performance” (Jones et al 2016, p.35). A meta-analysis of outcomes using randomised control trial studies was published the year later which further indicated that coaching is effective for improving performance and wellbeing (Burt, & Talati, 2017). The year after, Bozer and Jones (2018) published a SR on which factors determine effectiveness, such as interpersonal trust and attraction, and feedback. Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) highlighted areas in which we have insufficient knowledge, including contextual factors, such as coach attitudes, which this research project will explore.

Five years ago, De Haan (2019) published a SR of qualitative coaching studies, claiming that the research has come of age over the past decade and highlighted several important barriers to coachee success uncovered in the research, such as lack of agreement of goals

(Carter et al., 2017). The same year, Kotte (2019) published a synthesis of the extant meta-analyses and highlighted useful empirical insights like the greater impact of multisource feedback and alliance on effectiveness than aspects like setting and duration. The next year, Pandolfi published a SR which consolidated the importance of individual characteristics and the coach-coachee alliance. He also found contextual elements remain largely unexplored and suggested “a collaborative project between coaching practitioners, academics and client organisations... to integrate the best available evidence and theory, to harmonise concepts and operationalisation of key constructs and causal relationships.” (p.19) By asking how coaches operationalise constructs and witness the relationship between them and their effects, we can elucidate our comprehension of such elements.

In 2021, another meta-analysis by Wang et al. found that psychologically informed coaching approaches led to effective work-related outcomes, particularly in goal attainment and self-efficacy, with an integrative coaching approach—combining different frameworks—proving more effective, especially in enhancing coachees' psychological well-being, internal self-regulation, and awareness, while generating better results in work performance rated by others compared to self-reported measures.

It is worth noting when considering coaching research that some research is done primarily for other academics to develop the study, or to gain funding, and so is not primarily intended to be directly applied in practice (Linley, 2006). Some studies may focus on clients, to explore their experiences and perceptions of coaching, perhaps to uncover what works for them and why (Luthans & Peterson, 2003). On the other hand, research may work with coaches specifically to learn what they believe underpins coaching excellence (Linley & Harrington, 2005), for example, or to explore different aspects of coaches' practices and perspectives (Grant & Zackon, 2004) more generally. There is now a rich library of studies

with diverse methods, findings, and contributions that depend on the objectives and the influences of the research. Bringing coaches closer to the academic activities of those who study their practice creates opportunities to align the practice and the study of coaching more reliably. This will become increasingly valuable as developments continue across the spectrum of psychology-based interventions.

Coaching can and does acquire knowledge from fields such as therapy too (Hubble & Miller, 2004; Wampold, 2001). Cognitive-behavioural solution-focused life coaching has been demonstrated to raise goal striving, hope, and well-being in clients (Green, et al., 2006). Foster and Lendl (1996) reported that eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) was effective in helping coachees to desensitise from upsetting events that were impairing their performance. Gyllensten and Palmer (2006) found that coaching was effective in increasing self-confidence and helping clients to manage and reduce stress at work too. As fields of psychology and other fields that relate to the human experience continue to evolve, the influences on our understanding of this area will not stop expanding. How insights from other fields inform coaching will be a fascinating question to follow and how coaching research can influence other fields will be a line of question to follow too.

[The Research-Practice Gap](#)

The coaching industry has been seen as mature for much longer than its study (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) and the RPG stretches back as far as coaching research itself (Campbell et al., 1982). It remains being seen as a problem to this day. In 2008, a survey showed 70% of participating organisational psychologists considered practice to be ahead of research, placing it in the top five largest gaps among 26 areas of industrial psychology (Silzer, et al., 2008). An Australian study also found that coaches do not use scientifically validated

approaches and often are not applying theoretically coherent methods, albeit in relation to life coaches not workplace coaches (Grant and O'Hara, 2006). This divide between the world of coaching practice, evolving through applied experiential evidence, and the academic progress in scientific studies, is hindering the field from developing into an evidence-based practice.

As has been found in the field of clinical psychology (Tasca et al., 2015), I expect the RPG may be worsened by practitioners' tendency not to use research findings to improve client outcomes. Reasons may include a lack of time or other resources, such as access to the information or knowledge of where to find research (Linley, 2006). It has also been shown to be possible that a fear of exposing their own inefficacy may be a factor that impacts coaches' unwillingness to involve themselves in research (Hinn & Kotte, 2021). Three underlying sources of the RPG include a "lack of awareness of what the other side knows and cares about; lack of belief or confidence in the knowledge generated or held by the other side; and lack of implementation of knowledge or ideas, even in the face of awareness and belief" (Rynes, 2012: p.1). There appears to be a great deal of mystery as to how coaches think in terms of relevant theory. What paradigms, models, and terminology they use, and how they adapt their theoretical approach for different situations will be very interesting to explore. With more understanding, researchers will be better equipped to make research more relevant, applicable, and accessible for practitioners. Coaches will then likely benefit from improved outcomes for their clients and, in turn, their organisations.

Recently, Hinn & Kotte (2021) published a study into the attitudes of coaches toward research, particularly participation, and admit there is very little known so far on the subject. They found some coaches expressed fear that research may reveal inefficacies, especially among participants without training and those with less experience. This will need

to be addressed to reduce resistance to newer coaches engaging with academia. While so little is currently known, more advanced disciplines can be used, with caution not to overgeneralise, to help us comprehend practitioner engagement with research. Given numerous similarities between the two therapeutic practices, coaching research can meaningfully benefit from psychotherapy research to inform how to link theory and practice (Latham, 2007b), thus developing the field. The suggestion of bringing practitioners into the research enterprise to define research priorities from the outset can help distinguish which areas practitioners want to see more research done in (Tasca, et al., 2015).

We can also look at studies of coaches in other areas for insight into the RPG. The RPG has been studied since at least 1986, when psychotherapists reported low utilisation of research and “stated that they gained their most useful information from experience with clients.” (Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986, p.11). More recent evidence found that psychology practitioners rely primarily on experience but do sometimes consult literature, especially when provided with empirical evidence (Stuart & Chambless, 2007). Practitioners preferred studies that clearly described process and outcome connections with insights that could clearly improve their practice. Another RPG study found sports coaches acknowledged training needs (Santos, et al., 2010) and recognised the need for more integration of practice with evidence. Turkish sports coaches were found to believe relevant science is important to success but also identified the RPG and stated that finding new information was more likely done socially through networks or events than from papers (Kilic & Ince, 2015), potentially muddying their knowledge. How well this applies to coaching generally is unclear but exploring how research is discovered by coaches may show ways to increase engagement with the material. Williams and Kendall (2007) also found sports science research does not meet coaches’ needs but that they share the view with researchers that

the literature is important and should be applied, but that more accessible language could support this. Could workplace coaching researchers make the literature more accessible, or could they work with intermediaries to translate insights into clearer messages? The field is broad and complex, so there will not be one simple answer to these questions but asking how coaches encounter and interpret research will be a step in the right direction. This is more valuable now than ever before. Despite its well-established nature, broad social, political, and economic factors appear to be increasing the potential benefits of narrowing the RPG (Rynes, et al., 2001).

Evidence-based coaching

While research must look to how it can be more relevant for coaches, there is also an increasing call for coaching to be more evidence-based (Passmore & Lai, 2020). If workplace coaching is a field of study now reaching maturity, this means there is more evidence than ever before to inform the practice. Evidence-based coaching has been seen as an important step in legitimising coaching, as there are many who decry a lack of regulation as saturating the market with poorly qualified coaches, although this is being remedied with greater regulation over time (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). Making evidence from research more accessible could allow for greater absorption by coaches of the insights gleaned from studies. In what ways this could be done is worth exploring.

I have outlined above several studies that can be used to inform practice but, more commonly, theories are used by coaches through models and frameworks. An integrative literature review by Carey, Philippon, and Cummings (2011) yielded 1,414 articles on coaching models published between 1996 and 2010. (Imagine how many more there are now!) From this research, they included ten key papers to study further that highlighted

core components of coaching that can be informed by models, they are the coach–coachee relationship, problem identification and goal setting, problem solving, transformational process, and mechanisms by which the model achieves outcomes. Factors affecting positive outcomes were identified as the ‘coach’s role and attributes, selection of clients, obstacles and facilitators to the coaching process, benefits and drawbacks of external versus internal coaches, and organizational support.’ (p.1) It is worth noting that some of the ten chosen papers came from medical context, yet seven were focused on leadership in a business environment. The source article and objectives of each model from executive coaching are outlined in Figure 1. It will be interesting to see if these are models that coaches currently mention as influencing their practice.

Figure 1. Leadership Development Models

Model	Authors’ article	Objective of the model
Action-Centered Leadership model	John Adair (1973)	Create environments that encourage individual learning, performance and collaboration
GROW	Whitmore (1996)	Offer a simple, powerful structured coaching method
System-oriented model	Keil et al., (1996)	Representing the shared perceptions among organizational constituents
Business-linked executive development	Saporito (1996)	Describes a coaching model based on the unique needs of the executive and organisation

Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching	Giglio et al., (1998)	To develop executive's resilience coaching in the business to adjust to long-term change
Coaching as a Partnership	Sherman & Freas (2004)	To provide a framework that describes benefits to the organisation
Integrative Framework for Executive Coaching	Joo (2005)	To present a framework that integrates executive coaching literature
Integrative Coaching Model	Passmore (2007)	To present an integrative framework that helps enhance performance
Multi-Source Feedback Coaching Models	Hoojiberg & Lane (2009)	To explore multi-source feedback within coaching models and expectations

Other theoretical models that date back for decades have been tested and evidence has supported their validity (Leach, 2020). For example, the GROW model by Whitmore (1996, 2009) has long been seen as a fundamental framework for coaching, although some now believe it should expand (Panchal & Riddell, 2020) or 'Re-Grow' (Grant, 2022) to support modern views on behavioural change. The Action-Centered Leadership model, proposed by John Adair (1973, 2006), is well known to create environments that encourage individual learning and knowledge collaboration along with performance, satisfaction, and ultimately achievement (Braun et al., 2012) but offers still one piece of a larger puzzle. There have been countless more, devised and popularised since the early models, but it is not yet well established how these are presently utilised and perceived.

The call for evidence-based coaching has not been without controversy. Stober and Parry (2005) argued that while evidence-based coaching is valuable, relying solely on empirical research may oversimplify the complexities of real-life coaching practice. They emphasised the importance of integrating practitioner experience, client perspectives, and contextual factors, suggesting that coaching must remain adaptable and responsive to individual client needs rather than strictly adhering to research protocols. They highlighted the need for a balance between evidence-based practices and the flexibility required in the coaching process. I intend to explore how this balance can be attained by considering what complexities in real-life practice may have been overlooked in previous literature and how to help integrate these findings with existing theory and research.

Methodology

Paradigm

To effectively share the knowledge gathered in this study, a framework, or ontology, had to be chosen (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). An interpretivist research paradigm allowed for a nuanced look at the perceptions held by coaches about theories and research through a subjectivist epistemology (Chowdhury, 2014). Positivism, perhaps using surveys, would not give the participants enough freedom to explain their views openly. We don't have enough information to delineate questions and answers before exploring this subject in such a rigid manner, and so it would not be prudent to give choices from preformed ideas and expect something reflecting their personal truths. The findings from these interviews may inform future questionnaires perhaps but, for now, we must assume these social phenomena and their meanings are determined by these actors (Blaikie, 2007).

As this research looks at personal experiences and the subjective perception of the coaches' reality (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), the philosophical foundation is phenomenological (Groenewald, 2004) and while reflecting on my own subjective influence on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2019), I will try to suspend any preconceived assumptions about the findings. This allows for a better understanding of the meanings attached to coaches' relationships with theory and leaves greater potential for theoretical developments in the future (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). Although, it is important to acknowledge that my own experience will have influenced the interviews significantly and in complex ways while we explored this nuanced topic (Das & Long, 2010). Exploratory research is flexible, open, and pragmatic; it makes room for new developments outside established beliefs (Stebbins, 2001). It is not typically as rigorous compared with methodologies used in more conclusive studies, with smaller sample groups (Nargundkar, 2003) but is suitable for this study since I found no extant, solid literature specifically on this subject. This was always going to leave a lot of unknowns beforehand but, vitally, allowed for the discovery of new information (Brown & Saunders, 2006). As we are not quantifying data, but instead analysing non-numerical data, a qualitative approach was necessary (Trafimow, 2014). The qualitative method, however, means we will not be able to make quantifiable comparisons between people or deduct generalisations with any level of certainty (Norman, 2017). Therefore, this is an inductive study (Wong, 2014) that will condense varied raw data into summarised conclusions about my interpretation of how coaches feel about relevant academic output. Nonetheless, we can expect valid and reliable findings that present straightforward insights into the topic (Thomas, 2006).

Data collection

This section will outline the process and reasoning for the method of collecting the raw data. To identify diverse factors of practitioners' perception of theory, collection of large amounts of complex data is suitable. Given that the perspectives of coaches are phenomenological, qualitative analysis is more relevant (Khan, 2014) and to explore the subjective experience and thoughts of the participants, using semi-structured interviews is the best approach (Sullivan & Forrester, 2019). Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible technique for small-scale research (Drever, 1995). This method of collecting the data will allow participants to answer questions openly, as "semi-structured interviewing starts with broad and more general questions or topics" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.5). Without constraining answers rigidly, this method offers an opportunity to gather rich data on coaches' ideas and attitudes (Schmidt, 2004). While phenomenological research is less concerned with generalisations to larger populations, thick, contextual descriptions should offer a wealth of insight into the most pertinent aspects of the question (Gray, 2017), ideal for a subject of this nature.

Data was collected by transcribing the interviews with 16 participants, a realistic figure for the timeframe and the maximum sample size recommended for such a study (Braun & Clark, 2013). Thanks to technological advances, modern ways of interviewing are available (Kenny, 2005). MS Teams is simple to use and suitable while remote work is still common since lockdown. Participants tend to prefer it to in-person interviews, as it is more convenient, but connectivity issues should be considered (Archibald, et al., 2019). Testing beforehand can reduce such problems, but I found that there were still some conversations that were interrupted due to connection issues. This can be remedied by having face-to-face interviews in future studies, although the benefit of immediate recording and transcribing

would be lost. Collecting data from this many people (16), for around an hour per session, meant a great deal of information was communicated, which was challenging to distil. It's easy to empathise with researchers and coaches alike in the challenge to pick out the most relevant things from such a jungle of information. It meant bending the limits of my own analytic ability and respecting the boundaries of my knowledge both in terms of extracting information and processing it.

A focused sample like this helps to identify meaningful themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013) but, as there is no single definition of a coach (ICF, 2016), participants were qualified for this study by some form of professional certification and multiple years of practice. This left room for quite a diverse sample while still ensuring validity. I contacted coaches in my network and by referrals, to book video calls throughout the year. MS Teams was used to record all the interviews and transcribe the speech to text and the transcription were verified against the recording to ensure they were correct.

In advance of the calls, I sent an Information Sheet (See Appendix 2) with example questions to avoid catching participants off-guard. I also performed a pilot interview with a coach I am familiar with to get feedback before proceeding and to iron out any incongruities; a useful way to ensure it generated data that is appropriate and good quality (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The final list of participants was a group of 16 coaches from around the world, demonstrated in Table.1.

Table.1 (Names are pseudonymised to maintain confidentiality where desired)

Participant name	Sex	Country
Abhi	Male	India
Lawrence	Male	UK

Lena	Female	US
Nancy	Female	UK
Fiona	Female	UK
Jane	Female	UK
Canuck	Female	Canada
Lydia	Female	US
Gwen	Female	UK
Willow	Male	UK
Jimmy	Male	UK
Tiffany	Female	UK
Rachel	Female	US
Sue	Female	UK
Silvia	Female	US
Jasmine	Female	Turkey

Ethical considerations and logistics

I followed the standards set in the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics 2021 (BPS, 2021) by demonstrating respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of participants. Consequently, I ensured the nature of the research was clearly explained. I ensured participants fully consented to participate, knowing they could withdraw or destroy any of their data if they request so. I have ensured that they are not personally identifiable, nor any clients discussed in the interviews. I have tried to ensure the study is of sufficiently high scientific standard throughout and is of value to the wider community. I also stayed wary of any unwitting harm that the study could have caused to participants.

Data analysis

To make this research 'an adventure, a journey of exploration and discovery' (Braun & Clarke, 2021: p.27) I opted for reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), given that it is 'a theoretically flexible method... for developing, analysing, and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset' (p.4). As a 'theoretically embedded and socially positioned researcher' (p.56), my subjective position is integral throughout this research process. It is worth interrogating my own experience and how this will have influenced the study. For experiential qualitative research, questions about people's perceptions suit a contextualist approach (Clarke, et al., 2015). Within this critical realist manner, reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) is appropriate to analyse the rich data provided by semi-structured interviews (Clarke, et al., 2015). Due to the unexplored nature of the question, the organic nature of RTA coding is well-suited and will allow for the questions to evolve during the study, suitable for relatively unexplored subject matter like this. I recursively followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, starting with an in-depth familiarisation of the data, I systematically identified relevant features, coding them into groups of concepts. Searching for themes across the data commenced during the interview phase and was repeated during the subsequent data analysis. Then, I reviewed the themes to ensure there was a good fit with the coded data and that each set has a clear, albeit broad, essence, making necessary changes until they did. Each theme was named with a summary and was finally weaved together into this report with some of the vivid, compelling extracts from which conclusions can be drawn. I used Microsoft Word to collect and describe these themes after adding commentaries to the transcriptions. When deciding on the themes, I considered that Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) viewed that the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to

the overall research topic, and that although there is no steadfast rule about the quantity, it's best to limit the amount (Attride-stirling, 2001). The recursive nature of the process allows for reiteratively analysing patterns and concepts that were communicated during the interviews and adjusting them to suit the interpretation of various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Throughout the whole process, I reflected on what assumptions and biases I may be bringing to the process, to reduce unwanted influence from my own preconceived ideas and reduce opportunities for my judgement to influence results much unwittingly.

Due largely to the nascent nature of this area of study, other methods of data analysis are not as well suited. Hypotheses may be deduced from this study for future quantitative research but, for now, a broad and flexible approach is needed. Interpretive phenomenological analysis would also emphasise the strength of inductive questioning, analysing ideographically the participants responses, but it would be better suited to singular case studies as opposed to a general view of coaches' beliefs and attitudes to various aspects of the field (Eatough & Smith, 2008). While appropriate, this method does not imply that the findings are universal, or even common. We can look for general themes to inform our understanding of this topic but mustn't conceptualise generalisability as statistical probabilistic generalisability (Smith, 2018).

Findings

Based on the analysis, I found there to be five broad themes to feature. These are:

1. The primacy of the subjective experience
2. A subconscious process with a self-conscious approach
3. People and practicalities are more central than abstractions and theories
4. Accessibility is of serious consideration
5. Development and diversity of ideas are valued

They form the following subtitles, which are then described, with representative quotes provided. These are nebulous constructs apparent at surface level observation and will be discussed with my opinions afterwards (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Following the analysis of the interview recordings and transcripts, I found a diverse mix of opinions were held by the participants. Each coach came to the conversation in a unique way, bringing distinct views on coaching and its study, but there were interesting patterns to be identified.

The primacy of the subjective experience

The first theme relates to the balance of importance leaning more toward subjective experience than analytical, prescriptive processes delineating coaches' use of theory. This theme emerged from all the participants' responses, where subjective presence often overshadowed the structured use of frameworks. I began this research wondering how coaches decide which theoretical models are valuable and which signals to indicate which are relevant but, after a few interviews I realised (and was quickly told directly) that this is rarely how coaches apply theory and research insights to their practice.

"I would drop a lot of your framework questions. The really interesting question is how does somebody show up for coaching?" – Silvia

This comment highlights a common sentiment among the participants who feel that coaching's core lies not in theories or frameworks. Instead, the experience of the coach in the moment and their perception of the client's behaviour and what that implies is far more important.

"I enjoy when there are those moments where I've asked the great questions and just given space for the client for the coachee to come up with stuff and sometimes the insight, the transition they get is what I was expecting... That's fine, but it's when they get something I hadn't expected. That's really great." - Fiona

Fiona's experience underscores the coaches' belief in the unpredictable nature of insights. Focusing on the process itself rather than a predictable outcome allows for unexpected epiphanies and genuinely surprising growth. Many of the coaches talked more about learning how to be 'present', than about a framework helping them be more effective.

"So, there is sort of like a realm of being present and being anchored in the body and there's not a specific theory I'm drawing." - Tiffany

How it feels to hold the attention on the coachee with an open mind was crucial to the coaches in supporting clients through conscious changes. It was often thanks to their own transformational experience that they were able to better guide others through theirs.

"I stood looking down at the darkness of my mind and I jumped into that pool. I suffered for a few months as a result of it, from a mental health perspective. But I did that consciously, knowing that I was going to suffer, but also knowing that I would be able to learn from the experience. I would come up and climb out and be able to look back on that pool not as a

dark mess but as something that was a lot clearer. I really feel that I benefited from that experience." – Jimmy

Coaches repeatedly emphasised that their self-discovery journeys directly influenced their ability to guide others effectively. Being present for the client is crucial. Trying to think logically about which framework to use is antithetical to that. It is more important to develop empathy and listening skills.

"Coaching - it's just the art of listening. I call it being able to hear the music under the words." - Silvia

The ideas of coaching being an art was a theme that came up several times during the research.

"Staying in the moment and giving 100% in the service of the client is what can make it challenging. And I'm definitely learning this, but there's a long way to go. It's like a sponge, right? I mean, we're soaking in a lot, but sometimes, you know, we gotta squeeze the sponge out and, you know, let all of it out and not just contain it. A lot of people said that as well, that there are two things to coaching. There is a science of coaching and there is the art of coaching, and the art of coaching is something that you continue to develop over years. It's not that someone can teach you the art of coaching because it is about finding your style." -

Abhi

Self-awareness became evidently fundamental; as understanding yourself helps you to help others understand themselves, which in turn helps them understand others, and deal with their unique obstacles to progress. It is reminiscent of the quote attributed to twentieth century writer William Arthur Ward, "When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves".

"The issue is the inner work being done. Are you changed? And the only way you're really gonna help somebody is that if you are." – Tiffany

The need to have gone through coaching and some kind of personal transformation to be able to better identify the journey the client goes through was mentioned by many of the interviewees. The ability to recognise what is happening implicitly during a conversation takes skills and practice. Practicing mindfulness can help coaches get into this 'present' state in order to help empathise with the experience of the client.

"When I talk about being in the flow. It's being mindful of the energy that's going between you." - Lydia

This present awareness in the coaching relationship, intangible though it may appear, is something coaches would like to see more research on too. Not only during sessions are coaches influenced by unconscious factors, such as emotional impulse, but also in choosing this vocation in the first place. It was typically an emotionally charged situation that they gave as a reason to have felt prompted into the profession.

"In traditional materialistic terms, I was very successful, working around the world, enjoying nice houses, nice cars, nice holidays, and all that kind of stuff. Yet, I was still trying to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders until my shoulders said enough is enough. So, I had a little bit of a breakdown, and then a proper one. I found myself at home one day, in my study, on the floor in tears. People mentioned NLP, thinking it was going to fix me. It really allowed me to look at myself, what I was doing with myself, and my place in the world. That started the journey where I determined I didn't want to work in a corporate role anymore. I wanted to work for myself." - Lawrence

Whether a difficult time of life or a profoundly positive experience with another coach, the self-awareness and motivation they felt unlocked an interest in helping other people.

Knowing the satisfaction that came with feeling more self-awareness, self-control, and a sense of progress, coaches felt pleasure in being a part of that experience in others. The fact that this was such a core motivating factor for every coach I spoke to demonstrates the importance of the personal and emotional factors involved with coaching. This is hardly surprising, given the prevalence of emotion in decision-making more broadly (Damasio, 2006). This emotional drive continues through their practice as they are motivated by the experience of the client and how they feel using models with them.

"I do have some preferred tools but it's what's going to suit the coachee best, and I trust my instincts to blend, and when I get the feedback that it works, then I'll keep using it. Not everything suits every client, of course, but it's that ability to keep sort of blending. So you can keep personalising as much as possible." – Fiona

Rather than one approach for one context, an adaptive approach throughout coaching sessions allows coaches to incorporate aspects from distinct sources in a unique way to support the individual in that moment, reflecting the benefits cited by Wang et al. (2021).

Almost all the participants talked about how they love the 'ah-ha' moments, both in clients and through their own experiences.

"Sorry, it sounds like it's off a website [but I enjoy] enabling the journey of people to achieve their potential, even though that is ongoing, it's the best when those a-ha moments come." -

Nancy

It is the emotional drive of wanting to help people, thanks to knowing how valuable the experience it can be, that motivates the participants to decide how they will coach.

"I really love to love people. That's just like my favourite activity in the world. So that's really the biggest one is getting in that relationship, be a source of support, support people in their growth, support people to help see themselves in a bigger, better way and helping people live into the best version of themselves. I really love that." - Tiffany

In fact, one of the main challenges coaches face is clients who are not engaged. It is one of the key demotivating factors and coaches tend to feel organisations should prepare coachees for coaching, so they know what to expect. During coaching though, it is up to the coach to show authentic interest in the client's experience and growth.

"I think the most fascinating thing is if they believe or feel the support from the coach. That's, I would say, you know, 50% of the work. Because people just need to feel supported, be supported, and held accountable." – Tiffany

Rather than rational explanations for how they utilise theories in sessions, coaches tended to struggle to articulate the cognitive process. It often isn't based on conscious decision-making, but on how they feel in their gut. They apply implicit knowledge that they have learnt formally and informally, in educational contexts and in practice, by focussing on the moment and what the atmosphere of the conversation requires.

"A client got out from behind his desk. It was a big step and then he sat there one day and agreed to, you know, close his eyes and, just like, really go for what he's experiencing in his body at that moment." – Nancy

In addressing this question, many participants talked about the theories they apply relying on the present moment and not preconceived notions of abstractions in practice.

"I believe good coaching is in the moment of connection and exchange. So, you cannot have something in your head. Models really have very little applicability if it's to make coaching efficient or uniform; it's a relationship." – Silvia

It was one of the earliest thematic patterns I noticed; the frequency of the subjective, uniquely personal experience being mentioned as the key influence in their practice; that was the most prevalent throughout.

"Being in the flow, it just happened. I didn't sit there and think, 'Oh yeah, that'll be good. I'll pull out that.' It was just like it was going with what she needed and constantly checking in with her." – Lydia

The primacy of subjective experience discussed by coaches highlights a perception shift away from rigid frameworks toward a more intuitive, client-centred approach. By prioritising receptive presence and self-awareness, coaches enable moments of unexpected insight and authentic connection, which they believe are essential for meaningful client transformation. This emphasis on being fully 'in the moment' reflects a foundational belief that coaching is less about applying theory and more about engaging deeply with each unique client journey.

[A subconscious process with a self-conscious approach](#)

The second theme highlights a paradox within coaching practice: while coaches often choose or apply theories subconsciously, relying on intuition rather than a strict step-by-step approach, they still maintain a deliberate awareness of their own role and presence in sessions and when learning new methods. This theme reflects the subtle integration of theoretical knowledge, as coaches frequently 'meet the client where they are,' guided by instinct rather than explicit frameworks. By balancing subconscious prompts with a self-

conscious commitment to client-centred coaching, practitioners demonstrate a nuanced application of theory—one that prioritises responsiveness and adaptability over formulaic methods.

"I will meet the client where they are, regardless of where they are. So, I don't come into a session with any predetermined ideas." – Jimmy

Theories are often applied subconsciously, through intuition based on experience.

"I don't think I'm really conscious. I think I'm like I said, I'm trying to be like, just trusting that, OK, well, you know, I'm hearing this and boom, here's what comes to mind." – Canuck

This process underscores a duality in coaching, where both formal learning and subconscious instinct come together, allowing coaches to adapt fluidly to each session's demands. This is not to say the play between how aware the coach is of the tools they use is not a nuanced relationship. Many coaches noted that, while they may consciously apply theories at first, these concepts eventually become part of an 'embedded' practice, particularly in settings with high expectations for measurable outcomes.

"...it's always a conscious choice for me - actually that's going completely back on what I said earlier. I do use them consciously, but I think there are certain elements I'm using unconsciously. I'm thinking NLP might be one of them, and gestalt I use much more unconsciously. And I am quite intuitive, and I've almost downplayed my intuition through the years, because I've I felt I can't label it because in the in the corporate world, they want to be able to say, could you justify that? And I'm like sometimes, like, no, I can't. It's a gut feeling."

- Silvia

Some feel that having learnt the tools, the use of them does not become less conscious; they simply are used more naturally with practice. Over time, coaches develop a "toolkit" of

approaches that they instinctively use when the situation demands it. This familiarity with diverse tools allows them to apply insights fluidly.

“It's conscious. I mean imagine, I don't know, a plumber or something, and you turn up with your tools, wouldn't you? And you wouldn't be unconscious about those tools. You would be very conscious about them, you know. You'd look after them. You would know where they are. You might order them in such a way so that you don't wanna be searching for your screwdriver and you're in middle of the house being paid by the hour. It's about being professional. So, I suppose I started with all this stuff on bits of paper, but now I read the coaching books, I read the leadership and management development, organisational development books. I read with purpose. I then underline [relevant ideas] on Kindle. You know you're able then to download the key things that you've underlined. So, in other words you know the 300 pages you've read, it is now down to, I don't know maybe about 10 pages of notes of which you can extract one or two models which I will invariably laminate. Well, I used to when I was meeting people face to face and it's still good practice to do so. So those are my tools, and it's just about selecting the most appropriate, you know, looking at the new tools all the time, but about selecting the right tools for the right situation and then offering that up.” - Willow

Theories once applied can become ‘embedded’ in the coaches’ sense of self.

“One [model] was called mindset, and I found that quite transformational, which was around really understanding your own mindset. And your self-talk was part of that, and I had quite a lot of negative self-talk. So actually, you know, I learned through that program how to recognise that, how to turn it around, how to challenge it and also how to trust my strengths and be comfortable with who I was, and I don't think until that point I'd been truly comfortable with who I was as a person, but particularly as a leader in an organisation. So

that was quite pivotal again, where I felt I could be really authentic. I felt I could be myself without fear of judgement." - Jimmy

When processing information for the first times it takes 'slow', effortful thinking until it is ingrained in the mind, until later it becomes 'fast' and intuitive (Kahneman, 2011). Coaches who more recently completed training were more aware of the theories and models they could apply but even they talked more about the importance of learning how to be deeply aware of yourself, more than how to apply a theory.

"I understand some patterns through my life which have been hugely helpful and because you know then I can start to be more consciously aware of these and I can spot them in the moment and be purposeful about which direction I choose to go in you know around my behaviour." - Jimmy

From all the education about how to coach, it was more valuable learning how to *be* a coach, with self-awareness being central to this effort. Although, coaching is anything but focusing on oneself as the coach.

"It's not about you, you know, get yourself out of the way. You know, if you're thinking about yourself in that coaching conversation, then you're not thinking about the client." - Willow

Partly, because once a model springs to mind, coaches often include the client in the decision to use it or not. This reflects the 'Co-Active Coaching' model (Whitworth, et al., 2018) of collaborating with the coachee. Rather than using models prescriptively, they are tools to understand ideas and these ideas are combined and integrated by coaches the more that they, often subconsciously, apply these learnings to develop understanding with clients.

"My experience of coaching is that I'm not always aware of what techniques I'm using, like it's kind of a soup. It's been melded together." - Tiffany

It was described by multiple participants as like driving a car.

"It's like driving . You know, it's just like, I don't often go around my car and check all my signals and my horn and I just get in and go. And I don't even know that I'm driving." –

Canuck

This metaphor seems appropriate, having spoken to the participants. Coaches typically learn the theory and then slowly show that they can manoeuvre the vehicle (coaching session) safely, driving often enough that the process of changing gear etc. becomes unconscious. All the while, they remain aware of their behaviour in order to ensure the space is safe for the coachee to maneuver forward. Then both the coach and coachee can focus attention on the road ahead.

" If you have a model in the back of your mind, you sometimes very subconsciously might have an urge to fit the conversation into that model... Sometimes, you know, these frameworks can be limiting but it depends on how you interpret the usage of these frameworks in your conversation. And that is the eternal truth: Knowledge is not wisdom. Club knowledge with experience and then it becomes wisdom. So, once you start doing it, you know, and you do it over and over and over again, then you perhaps have the wisdom when to let go and when to hold on to it. Initially, when we learn something, you need to consciously apply it because it's not built in your muscle memory. But then as we start getting better with it, we can reflect on action. I definitely do consciously apply it until the time it becomes almost natural to me. It's like, you know, I'm in the groove now." – Abhi

The conscious attention in coaching must be on the client, so that anything communicated that may offer a means to move forward can be noticed and made use of. Not all coaches agree that the use of theoretical tools is unconscious. Of course, there's a dynamic mix of conscious and subconscious decision-making at play in coaching, as there is in life generally.

"I always keep telling myself I haven't got to that stage where I'm not recognising I'm changing gear as someone puts it to me, you know, some of these things are not quite as instinctive. Some of them are." – Sue

The coaches tended to talk about the importance of focusing on the client in the moment, while remaining cautious not to force the conversation, relying on a well-absorbed mix of approaches to unfurl naturally.

"You're not in your head thinking what exercise can I do here? What should I be doing there? Or what does this mean? But trusting that the client knows the direction they need to go in. And yes, you bring in things as and when you need them, but they're tend to come in intuitively and they're appropriate opposed to having prepared and decided this is what we're gonna do today and I'm gonna teach them this or something like that. So, it's sort of a long journey to get to a simple place." – Jane

In sum, the subconscious use of theory in coaching reflects a deeply embedded practice, where knowledge is internalised over time and becomes instinctual. Coaches draw on frameworks not as strict guides but as background tools that support responsive, in-the-moment engagement with clients. This flexible integration allows them to centre on client needs authentically, blending theory with intuition in a way that fosters real-world adaptability. This dynamic approach not only enhances coaching efficacy but also aligns with the broader aim of bridging theory and practice in a practical, client-focused manner.

People and practicalities are more central than abstractions and theories

This theme highlights that coaches tend to prioritise people-centred, practical aspects of coaching over abstract theories. While theoretical frameworks provide structure, many coaches view personal connection and adaptable, real-world application as the keys to successful coaching outcomes. Coaches value theories primarily when they can be immediately useful and relevant to their clients' unique needs.

"[I like] things that I can then go away immediately and use in practice." – Nancy

Nonetheless, academic rigour was still valued in conjunction with pragmatism. While practical insights are valued, many coaches also find that blending theory with practical application offers a balanced approach.

"I like the practical, I like the Henley combination, so it was very practical, but there was a bit more theory associated with it and in more of an academic context as well. And so I quite like the combination of the two." - Sue

Many coaches noted that coaching is less about applying theory and more about supporting clients as individuals with unique goals and personal growth needs. It is the people that matter most and while generalisations can be informative, clear parallels with the reality of a nuanced coaching session tend to be perceived as much more useful.

"Coaching: It's people really beginning to realise who they are. And that they can be who they are... there's a phrase in the NLP: coming home to yourself." – Lawrence

Far from a mechanical process, the emotional connection to the individual is a core landscape of the coaching relationship.

"I like the connection and the intimacy and the trust that's developed when it's a good relationship. I love getting underneath people beyond the veneer. Beyond the perceptions. I suppose I like people's vulnerability." – Jane

This focus on the interpersonal aspects of the relationship above the theoretical models emerged as a fundamental success factor in coaching.

"If there's no respect or chemistry. It's not going to work." - Silvia

Studies that reflect the importance of the personal were also more highly valued. Case studies were the most mentioned kind of study that would interest participants, with applicable insights about how approaches affect different clients. This reflects the preference of psychotherapists for clear outcome studies (Stuart & Chambless, 2007).

Another example of individuals attracting more attention than theories was in the regularity of participants talking of work by authors, as opposed to the ideas they are known for. They tended to think of theories or approaches as teachings from those individuals who espouse the ideas prominently, at events or in books, for example. The academic insights that inform these are communicated through prolific or charismatic people and make them easier to remember via the person practitioners heard it from. Utilising fame appears to disseminate theoretical approaches more effectively. Often the reputation and aura of an author or other public figure known to be effective in communicating theories are more of a pull to ideas than empirical evidence.

"I would look for some of those [well-known] names probably. Unless I want to go into something very niche, something very new, something that, you know, all of a sudden interests me." - Jasmine

Another preferred source of research is through networks and personal relationships. Like the sports coaches studied (Kilic & Ince, 2015), information seems to more often be shared socially rather than through individual desk research. Beyond formal training, many coaches turn to professional networks for advice and fresh ideas, preferring this social dimension over isolated study.

"There were a couple of really great coaches that I really respect and will bounce ideas off then that tends to be one way [to learn and develop ideas]." – Rachel

There are online networks that host events to share ideas, and the social aspect of learning is an appealing aspect for many. Opportunities to connect to others through learning about research insights are popular amongst coaches, especially in-person. Coaches want to learn in a practical way. This can mean practicing using the model when it is learnt, ideally under supervision and with feedback, in groups where its application can also be observed. There is also the practical element of coming away with a certification that can be used to demonstrate credibility. The fact of having a certificate makes courses be seen as more practically useful than if they don't. It's something to show, to demonstrate knowledge in order to attract paying clients in an increasingly saturated, competitive market. Rather than the theoretical value of evidence-based models, utility and practicality are more reliable predictors of coaches' attraction to sources of information about theories and research. However, some experienced coaches would say there is no need; if you have the ability, you don't need to pay more for a certificate.

'When thinking about continuous professional development relating to coaching, thinking 'is your learning just cognitive, you know, is it just about soaking up knowledge and stuff? Is it behavioural? Are you putting that knowledge into practice? And as a result of what you're

doing, your successes and failures, what are you feeling as a result of that? You know, what values and goals and ambitions and motivations are you putting alongside it?' - Abhi

Finally, too often courses that teach theories ignore the fundamental practicalities of coaching, such as how to run a coaching business, and this is holding back younger coaches.

'It would be really useful to be able to demonstrate what impact does [coaching] have for the client.' - Lawrence

Linked to the practicality of models is the ability to understand them in a pragmatic way.

Being able to incorporate the comprehension of a framework into existing knowledge adds value. Then, not only can they be used in coaching sessions with less friction, but clients could also even apply the same model to other contexts and benefit in other ways.

Theoretical models that are too complex or abstract are less likely to be useful and therefore less valued by practitioners.

Accessibility is of serious consideration

The theme of accessibility was prevalent across the interviews, especially when discussing the practical nature of finding useful information and relevant tools etc. While no coach feels there is a lack of research out there, the amount of information makes it difficult to get to the desired study or insight for many. It's not only important to be able to get access to information but also for the coachee to be able to access the concepts practically.

"I think in the world of statistics, of face validity, actually you don't need to persuade people that this is useful. You sort of say 'Here's a model'. 'Yeah, that makes sense.' Then you can give a bit more information about it for what they might not realise. Then you can get them to use it. So, for me it's the accessibility, but I never go into the coaching situation thinking right this is this is a model and a technique I'm going to use today." - Lawrence

It is hard to find time to scour through the reams of literature when running a coaching business, especially for genuinely novel ideas.

"There's an enormous amount of stuff out there that doesn't contain anything new." –

Lawrence

Theories that are easy to identify are more likely to be found and used by more coaches. There are clearly barriers to those who would benefit from it, as it does exist but it's not being found. Then there is the cost. Beyond time, financial barriers frequently prevent coaches from accessing desired research, as many relevant sources are locked behind costly paywalls.

"Some of these journals and some of this academic research is sometimes difficult to get your hands on and access and you know they also come at a certain price. So, you can't even read all of those even if you want to. So, if I choose this part I cannot choose the other part. So, I think it needs to be a little bit more accessible. I don't know what would be the forum but somewhere they don't charge you like \$15-20 for every research paper." – Abhi

While the participants certainly didn't appear to be impoverished, the economic cost of books, courses, and other resources where they can find information can reach such a level that it becomes untenable to continue. If these successful coaches sometimes struggle with the financial burden of learning, imagine the situation that individuals with less capital face. However, some found ways around this.

"You find that some articles might be sat behind the paywall. But where there's a will there's a way. So, you'll be able to find it and get it and Google Scholar's got access to a lot of decent papers as well." - Jimmy

There is also the issue of cognitive accessibility. If the information is too complicated or unrelatable to apply to your life, you won't be able to access the value it offers. Using more common language to share research findings more widely would undoubtedly improve the chances of research being incorporated into practice. As Williams and Kendall (2007) found, sports science research would also benefit coaches more if language was more accessible, so this issue affects the RPG more broadly than in workplace coaching. There were a number of sources that participants highlighted as useful places to find information, apart from their personal networks. Social media platforms and professional networks provide more accessible ways for coaches to learn about new theories and insights. LinkedIn was mentioned several times.

"Well, I think I'd like to see [academic research] on LinkedIn, because that's the that's probably my main social media. So that would be useful. I am a member of professional body so having it published through there is always handy." – Silvia

"I suppose in some of the platforms that are easier to get your attention, with a Quick headline attention grabbing hook so it could be a LinkedIn post." – Fiona

The other was professional bodies and associations like the ICF, The European Mentoring Coaching Council, etc. but these often share information proactively and are not as useful when it comes to coaches finding information they are looking for. A way to easily look for research that taps into various sources would be of great benefit to practitioners, but this would need to be supplemented with easier access to the information too.

'You'll know this from your studies as well. There are multiple places where information exists and multiple different journals that will have articles published and yeah, having one common search engine tool that could help you to access anything would be hugely useful

and I know that elements of that exist within institutions that can look across [studies] but you know, you wouldn't necessarily have access to all the topics'. – Jimmy

One way to access desired knowledge is via ResearchGate.

"ResearchGate will send you information when somebody's published a paper ... it's quite easy to access things on different topics. You can set up keywords and all that kind of stuff."

– Jimmy

Outside individual coaches looking for research they want, organisations are also looking to find ways for managers and other employees to be able to find the information they need to develop staff.

"Companies now obviously are looking at different ways where people within them can access learning or something, or development." – Sue

Most of the coaches talked about how they access information related to coaching through their interpersonal networks.

"I have a lot of friends who are alumni of business schools or who work in business schools. And, you know, I've been to one myself. So, it's just like that's yet another big source." –

Jasmine

There is clearly value in sharing approaches, in one sense because it implies credibility.

"Networking and finding out what other people are doing is valuable." - Sue

Although, there are many ways individuals can share knowledge between themselves.

"Yeah, it definitely can come up through my coaching supervision group, Research, books, programs, etcetera. So that's a great place to hear about what's new and what's

interesting." – Fiona

However, sometimes it seems it can be best to leave access to information up to fate.

"I trust the universe to bring information to me. an e-mail might come, you know, from the association of coaching or people I've done training with in the past." – Fiona

Accessibility is a crucial factor in coaches' engagement with research, as many struggle with limited time, high costs, and complex language. Coaches seek more accessible formats and affordable, practical resources, often turning to social media and professional networks for easier access to relevant insights. By making academic findings more accessible, the coaching field could bridge the research-practice gap, enabling practitioners to incorporate new, evidence-based strategies in ways that are both feasible and impactful.

Development and diversity of ideas are valued

"Coaching is something that pulls together tonnes of disciplines." - Silvia

The final broad theme I extracted from the analysis was how the coaches saw their relationship to theories and research insights as a drive towards establishing an evolving multiplicity of complex information that continually stimulated their curiosity and that could influence their approach to coaching in truly countless ways. Despite how overwhelming it can be, participants seemed to appreciate a wide variety of perspectives from different people.

"I'm genuinely interested in, you know, a huge diversity of people." – Jimmy

Not only was access to a wide range of coaching models broadly welcomed, but coaches also often talked about the benefit of learning from many different perspectives.

"We're limiting ourselves by the perspectives that we're holding. And so being able to see the perspective in which you're viewing something or situation or yourself and then taking on

another perspective... that's maybe more empowering that can help you to get toward closer toward where you want to go." – Lena

As was to be expected, there were a range of other disciplines that were cited when discussing the theories and approaches used by coaches. One clear example is psychotherapy.

'We did modules that were focused totally on the individual and what the journey does an individual go on looked at a team. We looked at an organisation. It's very in-depth approach, actually looking at all the psychological models, many of which get used in psychotherapy and having the chance to explore different ones as you went through the program' - Lydia

Another therapeutic approach, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was touched on several times.

'I've trained in something called Positive Intelligence, which is in itself, like very integral, it's borrowing theories and concepts from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, also, emotional intelligence, neuroscience, sports performance psychology...' – Lena

There were a broad mix of perspectives mixed into the coaches' view of how to best support their clients, from neuroscience, sporting, including adventure, emotional intelligence, Buddhism, and more. Many coaches noted that drawing from personal interests or external philosophies enhances their adaptability with clients.

'If I understand that they are interested in Buddhism or understand Buddhism, I can bring a part of those aspects in.' - Tiffany

In fact, one participant made the point that knowledge that can be useful in coaching can be gleaned from almost anywhere.

"For example, I do salsa dancing. I do sailing. I'm a day skipper. I learn so much about myself, teams, relationships, human dynamics in different hobbies, in different courses, in different things I do as a whole person." - Jasmine

Some of the tools and resources mentioned in the interviews can be found in the appendix. The variety of different sources and channels was also seen as positive, being able to access ideas in events or articles online/offline, videos, podcasts, books, etc. Overall, the group of participants also enjoyed a variety of theoretical tools. Some liked classics like the GROW model.

'I like the grow model it's tried, tested works it's you know it's a great basis.' - Lawrence

Whereas others felt it was too simple.

'I hate the grow model. I just think it's number one: Boring and, you know, designed as linear and life isn't linear.' - Nancy

The appreciation of diversity was reflected in the differing responses from the coaches themselves. Another participant was a strong advocate of using Internal Family Systems (IFS) in her coaching, others liked Transaction Analysis (TA), or mindfulness, combining them with coaching, which education bodies also promote.

'The modules were – grounded in cognitive behavioural therapy and the theories and the evidence that sit behind that. And it's been transferred across into the world of coaching. Both the theory and the practice, but more with, you know, current and forward-facing models and there's quite a lot of quite a lot of studies that show the efficacy and the effectiveness in some instances of the CBT approach, particularly when it's combined with a solution focused approach for example or positive psychology approaches'. – Jimmy

Some approaches resonate and are used by coaches, and some don't, but the opportunity to learn as many as possible gives better chances for growth.

'So, the more exposure we have to different kind of theories or different modalities and different approaches, different models, there are some that kind of resonate and stick and some that don't.' – Jimmy

This resonates with the findings of Wang et al. (2021) that combining different approaches leads to better workplace coaching results. The more diversity of thought that coaches have access to, the more they can combine theories and frameworks that will complement the foundations they establish in their practice.

Research about specific current contexts like remote working in covid and the worsening mental health epidemic are also ideas that develop in and around coaching that add to the range of resources that can be used to inform coaching.

'Mental health conversation is much more overt than it ever used to be.' - Jimmy

The coaches all shared that they like to learn from a lot of different sources. Some actively look for different perspectives. For example, working with neurodiverse clients is a topic that several have recently started exploring, and so is representation, for example the importance of experiencing disability when coaching people with disabilities.

'Neurodiversity is my one big thing and I'm talking to whoever I can, asking 'Have you thought about it? Do you know anything about it? What should we be thinking about at really early stages?'' - Rachel

Cross-cultural coaching was brought up several times and the differences between different groups is something coaches seem to be increasingly cognizant of too.

'Through doing a course... that was another string to my bow. Really, it brought me into contact with a younger cohort than the more senior executives that I work with now. And of course, it brought me again huge diversity of in terms of where these groups are from. So, all of the work is online. Uh, and it's, you know, ranging from China, spoke with someone from Russia the other day... to Africa, to Europe and so on. So that gave me a really good platform to spring off from'. - Willow

There is not one way to get to the right result. Coaches want to help clients find a way forward. The theories and frameworks that are sold are rarely 'better' or 'worse' than the alternative; it depends on how they are used. Having access to as many tools as possible allows coaches to see what they feel an affinity with, what they can use naturally, and then focus on the how and not the what. Almost all the coaches I interviewed had incorporated a mix of tools into their own fluid approach and continued to look for new ideas that they could integrate.

"It's just the level of depth and all of the intersectionalities and the challenge for me; the complexity." – Canuck

A key draw to learning about theories and research is the opportunity to continue developing professionally. I spoke with each coach about continuous professional development (CPD) and discovered a ubiquitous desire to keep learning.

"I am probably like hyper CPD focused. I think every dollar at least that I make in coaching gets reinvested into my CPD, I don't know if I'm actually making any money at coaching." –

Canuck

There was a definite passion for new knowledge.

"So coaching for me was just natural, I think I was coaching before I was a coach. My background is basically adult education, training and development, learning and development." – Canuck

One of the ways this showed itself was coaches opting for courses that have optional progression to more in-depth and broader learning.

"Subsequent to that I did the second year, which takes it through to postgraduate diploma in Executive Coaching and behavioural change." – Jimmy

Some saw research as specifically for that; discovery of new ideas.

"The role of research is to shed light on things that we don't know that we don't know so that we can improve; the way we approach things, and that that's not just researching coaching, but all research." - Lydia

The evolution of the coaches' development was unique to each.

"So, I suppose I started with all this stuff on bits of paper, but I now I read the coaching books, I read the leadership and management development, organizational development books." – Willow

And a coach's professional development is not linear, nor isolated from personal development. Advancing one's coaching practice is a holistic process of learning and applying novel ideas and understandings, across all areas of life.

"I've always since then been looking for this, this balance between cognitive, behavioural and emotional development." - Willow

When I asked one coach about coaching theories, the very presupposition inherent in the question that they could be categorised entirely separately was challenged.

"No, no, no, literally it's a conversation. Coaching is something that pulls together tonnes of disciplines." – Silvia

Despite some participants not liking the less personal coaching methods, others see the benefit of approaches that allow for more quantitative data collection. The online coaching platform, Better-up, for example, has access to large sets of quantitative data that can offer more concrete insights. Even AI has access to new types of data that could make practice more evidence based. Though we would need to be careful to maintain appreciation of the interpersonal value of face-to-face coaching.

Coaches' appreciation for diverse ideas reflects a commitment to continuous learning, with many drawing on insights from varied disciplines to enrich their practice. This holistic approach supports a flexible, client-focused style, allowing practitioners to adapt their methods to suit individual needs. By valuing diverse perspectives and actively seeking CPD, coaches not only refine their skills but also broaden their understanding, embodying a growth mindset that aligns with the dynamic, evolving nature of coaching.

Discussion

The themes described in the previous section will be reviewed in this chapter, considering the implicit knowledge and understandings that can be gained from the interviews.

The Research-Practice Gap (RPG): Aligning Insights

Overall, the findings generally speak to the heart more than the mind. While I spoke with the coaches about intellectually demanding theoretical constructs, the conversations unfailingly returned to how it felt to coach. We are not machines and so it seems silly to expect anything less, yet in academic literature so often the human aspect seems to prove

elusive. Also, from my professional career in executive search, working with people in many professions, I can say from my personal experience that there are a notable few vocations with such a high proportion of truly passionate advocates. When intending to narrow the RPG, this point needs to be heard loud and clear. Researchers must think about how it will feel to absorb the information we hope to share. Dry, obtuse language will only isolate our findings, no matter how insightful we may believe them to be. The desired experience of coaches and the demands of academic output may never reconcile, and so researchers must rely on channels to translate their findings into engaging content that bears in mind not only how the information will be perceived and received by coaching practitioners, but also their clients.

Coaching, as an applied field of practice, is rooted in various disciplines (Bachkirova, et al., 2018). If we agree that to develop the practice to where “coaches are to deliver coaching and coaching methodologies that are genuinely effective for [their] clients, then [they] need to be au fait with the coaching literature and the body of research that informs effective coaching practice...’ we must accept that “this can feel extremely challenging...” (Grant & O’Connor, 2019. p3). There is a lot of complex evidence, especially when considering literature from all the other related fields, and finding, absorbing, comprehending, and then applying it with clients cannot be called simple. Asking what can be done to help can expand our knowledge of what coaches look for from research and opens the conversation to narrow the RPG but there will always be more available knowledge that can help coaches help clients. It is interesting to note that few of the models cited in Figure 1. Were mentioned by interviewees. The improvement of academic output won’t help any more than the natural curiosity and enthusiasm coaches have to learn. Perhaps academia can learn something from this curiosity when considering how findings are shared.

It could be argued that a lot of academic literature is pointless with respect to actual coaching practice. Some of the coaches actively show disregard for research and theories. Practitioners' attitudes towards theories are important and these attitudes influence their engagement with coaching research (Linley, 2006). Others struggle to find or comprehend its meanings. Coaches will use evidence-based theories more if they are confident in their value (Grant & O'Connor, 2019). Could it be time for more honesty? I believe anyone spending time researching coaching has an interest in its practical evolution. With all the effort that goes into a published paper, not making the relatively minor additional effort to condense, distil and share through less formal channels seems absurd. 'Research for research sake' is a typical smear of academia, yet too often it seems no effort is made to demystify its significance for those who could most benefit, yet are not attuned to academic styles and professorial dialects. Go back to the paper about why there is an RPG in coaching and see if it contradicts it.

Looking across these findings, it should be asked in whose interest future research is done. As outlined earlier in this essay, not all research is intended to be applied practically to coaching practice. However, if theories and evidence from researchers is meant to inform coaches more directly, it is worth considering the implications of these findings on how coaches may better interact with emerging literature.

Coaches' Perceptions and Emotional Engagement with Theory

Firstly, it must be stated that the coaches all agreed in the existence of the RPG. Some also felt that this is something to try to overcome and narrow by aligning research and practice. Others felt less inclined to engage with it. "I found academic research just ridiculous. Waste of time. Not effective, not good for the world.", said Silvia during our conversation. There was a clear sense that academia rarely, if at all, reflects the reality of practicing coaching

sessions. Nonetheless, there was an evident desire to learn and become more effective as coaches, and the insights that studies offer were generally seen as potentially valuable, if not often easily applied. There is a real opportunity for researchers to transform coaching practitioners' perception of academic work in order to support their development.

The findings suggest that key motivators for coaching are typically not money, even though it can be well remunerated, nor status, but instead emotional. Transformative experiences were the common thread tying all the participants' reasons for starting to coach and remains the key stated driving force in their decision-making. These two phenomena may be closely interlinked. Due to the impact of personally significant moments, the coaches appear to be influenced, increasingly as they practice, by their intuition. They come to rely on their instinct more as they learn how to use theoretically embedded psychological tools. While early-career coaches may take more time to consciously consider the specific attributes of different academic resources, with time their choices are made naturally to coincide with the inner-frameworks they have constructed through their own learning. As I said earlier, we humans are not machines and trying to engineer us into a better version of ourselves is not a predictable process, consistent across different people. It takes a far more nuanced, adaptive approach that requires each moment to be reacted to appropriately.

Another key takeaway from these findings is just how much coaches care. They care about helping people, having a positive impact on the world, about not making mistakes or causing harm, about not looking foolish, about always growing and learning about new ideas, other people and themselves. This aligns with Whitmore's (2009) the claim that the purpose of coaching is fundamentally about helping individuals realise their potential. It seemed obvious to me that coaching attracts people with a strong sense of compassion for others; smart, sensitive individuals who feel they have something to offer others who want to

develop personally or professionally. Rather than aiming for robust philosophical arguments, if research ultimately offered stories that connect with readers through narrative, perhaps we would see more interest in and application of academic output. This is worthy of pursuit as without accessible, relevant evidence, the push for evidence-based coaching will not fully reach practitioners (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). Coaching being informed by research is crucial for legitimacy and improved practice (Passmore & Lai, 2020).

Coaches want different ideas that are not just repackaged old tropes! They want to be able to connect with more people and more effectively understand how people work given the latest scientific discoveries, communicated to them in a non-pretentious, understandable way. Empirical data tends to assume an economist-like rationality. It needs to. But trying to understand decisions and opinions in the real world through this lens paradigmatically struggles with how people working with other people on profound questions about their perceptions of themselves and their priorities. It is not very surprising, therefore, that of the theories mentioned in Figure 1, very few were mentioned by the coaches. It is worth noting however that the coaches talked regularly about integrating ideas from various sources. This reflects the work of Joo (2005) and Passmore (2007) mentioned in Figure 1 regarding integrative approaches to coaching that incorporate the lessons and tools offered by various academic sources. It also aligns with Wang et al.'s (2021) findings that showed the efficacy of integrative approaches to coaching. Creativity in coaching research should be encouraged, as many coaches wanted less conventional approaches, as recommended by Starbuck (2006). More research focused on what coaches would value practically could be an effective mode of reducing the RPG.

The primacy of subjective experience in coaching emerged strongly from the interviews. Most coaches described their practice as an art driven by intuition, informed by years of

accumulated experience rather than a strict adherence to formal models. This diverges significantly from the literature that advocates for evidence-based practice (e.g., Grant & Cavanagh, 2007), which stresses that coaching should be grounded in empirical research for greater legitimacy and effectiveness. The coaches' reliance on intuition and emotional awareness rather than systematically applying theoretical frameworks raises questions about the practical integration of research findings.

For instance, the coaches' narrative aligns with the critiques by Linley (2006), who noted that practitioners' attitudes towards theories heavily influence their engagement with research. The subjective experiences shared by the participants may suggest a tension between their intrinsic need for authentic, emotionally resonant interactions and the sometimes dry, prescriptive nature of academic models. This tension could account for the disparity in the uptake of evidence-based approaches, despite the proven efficacy outlined in meta-analyses such as Theeboom et al. (2014). If the attitudes of more coaching practitioners can be moved towards an expectation of pragmatism and convenience with regard to academia, we may well see the RPG be diminished.

[Accessibility of Research](#)

The theme of research accessibility was also prevalent in the findings, where coaches noted difficulties in obtaining relevant research due to paywalls and complex academic language. This aligns with Williams & Kendall (2007), who found similar issues in sports coaching literature. Interestingly, while the literature often suggests that access is an issue of mere availability (Linley, 2006), our findings highlight a more nuanced picture. It is not just physical access but also cognitive accessibility—how understandable and relatable the content is—that limits engagement.

This discrepancy may also be partly explained by the professional priorities of coaches versus researchers. Researchers are often incentivised by metrics such as publication prestige, while coaches seek practical, actionable insights that can immediately improve their practice. As one coach mentioned, "There's an enormous amount of stuff out there that doesn't contain anything new," suggesting a fundamental mismatch between the aims of academic research and practitioners' needs.

Bodies that many coaches rely on to publish research often do not make it easy to find particular kinds of studies. ICF for example is the industry standard and many of the interviewees regard it as a primary source of information, yet the website does not have a portal to a wide range of studies. Instead, it promotes its own research. The Institute of Coaching has an option to search by topic but comes up with nothing for most queries. It's a shame that in 2024 finding relevant research is still such a convoluted pursuit for many. Understanding the practical applications of coaching is key to improving its efficacy (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Not only should the content be easier to find, but it should also be easier to utilise. Tools like social media and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) were mentioned as potentially useful for coaches to find relevant studies. With greater communication between coaches, researchers, and coachees (Pandolfi, 2020), practical tools can be developed to support real-world application.

Contradictions and Discrepancies

A notable discrepancy that emerged in the discussion was the contradiction between the value coaches place on emotional engagement in their work and the emphasis on standardisation and predictability found in much of the literature. The findings here diverge significantly from Hodgkinson & Rousseau (2009), who argued that the RPG might be

overstated. The coaches in this study overwhelmingly reported that the gap was real and impacted their ability to connect academic insights to practical, everyday coaching.

The coaches' reluctance to apply standardised models in a prescriptive manner can also be interpreted as a resistance to what they perceive as an oversimplification of the human condition. These discrepancies between academic expectations and real-world application suggest the need for research that is not only evidence-based but also adaptable, recognising the importance of individual differences and the art of coaching.

The repeated emphasis on subjective experience, emotional connection, and intuition throughout the interviews may indicate a broader resistance to formalised, academic approaches. This resistance might stem from several underlying factors. For instance, coaches who described transformational personal journeys (such as Lawrence's story of breaking away from the corporate world after experiencing burnout) seem to place a higher value on the deeply personal, often spiritual elements of their work, which formal research cannot fully encapsulate.

These narratives suggest a potential distrust of academia, possibly due to its perceived inaccessibility or the notion that it cannot capture the "art" of coaching. Such views align with the observations of Latham (2007a), who pointed out that behaviour-related sciences often require simplification and contextualisation to be effectively applied in practice.

Coaches might resist formal theories because they view these frameworks as disconnected from the lived experiences that form the bedrock of their practice. Understanding these reasons can help researchers produce work that speaks directly to the values and beliefs held by practitioners, thus narrowing the RPG.

Future Progress

While ambiguities remain, this research contributes to the knowledge and practice base in coaching, by advancing the dialogue with coaching practitioners regarding the research that pertains to their profession. Now that the body of literature has reached a level of maturity, it is time to think critically about it, and who better to ask for critical insights than the coaches themselves? Future studies ought to be influenced by views of practitioners, and the findings of this study can inform future surveys and studies that can more thoroughly test any subsequent hypotheses. In the meantime, there could be practical applications from the finding of this study by sharing best practice between coaches. The ways that coaches tend to apply theory could influence others, and lessons learnt about effectively integrating research into practice may be uncovered that inspire other coaches to follow suit. This study will therefore benefit all stakeholders by informing how coaching can be understood and therefore improved. Examining the perceived utility of theory and identifying the potentially hybrid nature of the theories can also help theory better adapt to practice, again narrowing the RPG.

Limitations

As a theoretically embedded and socially positioned researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021), my subjective position inevitably shaped the study's design, data collection, and analysis. My academic background, personal identity, and prior experiences influenced the framing of research questions, interaction with participants, and interpretation of data. This positionality, while integral to the reflexive thematic analysis approach, may have introduced biases, particularly in theme selection and emphasis. For example, my interpretation of participants' responses likely reflected my own assumptions and values,

potentially limiting alternative readings of the data. While I actively engaged in reflexivity to mitigate these biases, the findings remain a co-constructed outcome of the research context. Future studies could benefit from employing multiple researchers with diverse perspectives to enhance analytical depth and reduce individual subjectivity.

Another critical limitation of this study lies in the restricted and relatively homogeneous nature of the sample, which consisted predominantly of Western, well-educated practitioners. This will doubtlessly cause the findings to be less diverse than if a wider sample were interviewed with even greater diversity of participants. The demographics of the participants, both in terms of socio-economic background and access to professional training, may potentially blind them to perspectives held by less fortunate coaches or clients from more distinct backgrounds. Such attributes can shape not only the tools and theories that these coaches find useful but also their perception of what makes a theory valid. Despite this, workplace coaching is more prevalent in the West (ICF, 2020) and so in this way may somewhat reflect global bias in the industry. For instance, the ease with which some participants dismissed the practical value of academic research could reflect an inherent bias: they have the freedom and financial security to rely on intuition and experience, while other coaches might require more structured, formalised tools to navigate their practice effectively. Those who did value established research had a notable Western-biased knowledge of relevant evidence too. This bias might also prevent them from recognising the needs of clients who come from different socio-economic backgrounds, who might benefit from more structured and predictable coaching models. It may also limit their view of the value in theories and research from further afield, perhaps in other languages, for example. Having said this, the coaches each came from a variety of backgrounds that were demonstrated in the variety of responses and perspectives that they shared. The

sheer breadth and depth of the experience and knowledge that they imparted was immense. Future studies exploring similar questions with a greater sample will no doubt have an astonishing level of granular detail and a more holistic view of the field.

Conclusion

To conclude, coaching is too human an activity for research to be able to fully study its intricacies, and theories will never be nuanced enough to incorporate all the complexities of its potential function. But this is not a bad thing. There will always be more that scientific minds can explore in relation to this “magical” practice, and these insights and ideas can continue informing practitioners in ways that they can better understand themselves and, in doing so, how they can best help their clients. The RPG is only as much of an issue as it relates to the potential that greater synergy between the study and practice of coaching could bring. From a researcher’s point of view, this means taking into account what the objective of their study is, and what are the ways we can distribute its value most appropriately.

If research is seen as more useful by coaches, it will likely get greater investment of attention as well as resources. This can be done by making it more accessible. For example, with tags like ROI and Business Case for those looking to promote the efficacy of coaching, or Coach Competencies for specific contexts, or clear findings relating to specific approaches and outcomes over time. By ensuring that the academic output can be found and understood more widely and effectively, the information flow can mutually support both researchers and practitioners.

The findings of this study support the more nuanced views of evidence-based coaching that highlight the importance of adaptability and contextual factors (Stober & Parry, 2005) as

well as the argument made by Rynes (2012) that the RPG is a persistent issue in organisational psychology, including coaching. Coaches often feel that the language used in research is too convoluted and that the benefits of theory are not clearly articulated for practitioners, aligning with the accessibility issues noted by Williams & Kendall (2007) and Hinn & Kotte (2021) that indicated a reluctance to engage deeply with academic literature.

The differing perceptions of the utility of theory between coaches and researchers reflect the need for greater dialogue between the two groups, potentially facilitated by intermediary bodies like the ICF. Grant & Cavanagh (2004) highlighted that coaching has been seen as mature as a practice for much longer than as a research field, indicating a need for more concerted efforts to develop a bridge between these areas. By involving more diverse cohorts of coaches from different socio-economic backgrounds, future studies could offer a more nuanced understanding of what influences coaching practices and theory utilisation—a perspective also discussed by Passmore & Lai (2020), who stressed the importance of inclusivity in coaching research.

In looking at the broader context, the prevalence of intuitive approaches amongst coaches shows a significant trend towards individualisation in coaching practices. This indicates that while coaches value theories and models, their application is highly personalised.

Consequently, generalising the findings of this study highlights the need for flexible, adaptable frameworks that can support a diverse range of coaching styles. Theories need to evolve in tandem with practice—Grant (2022), for instance, argued for adapting the GROW model to support modern views on behavioural change. Fillery-Travis & Lane (2006) also emphasized the importance of first understanding how coaching is being employed and utilised before assessing its effectiveness, which is consistent with the findings here on the highly personalised application of models.

To pull these threads together, it is clear that the theory and research available in coaching are being used in varied and often personal ways. Coaches tend to pick and choose from different models, using what resonates with their practice while discarding what feels irrelevant. This hybrid approach points to the need for a better synergy between theoretical frameworks and the real-world demands of coaching practice, which Schermuly (2019) also discussed in terms of needing more practical, applicable research insights. Through improved accessibility, clearer communication, and deeper consideration of individual and cultural differences, the research-practice gap can be narrowed, benefiting coaches, clients, and the coaching industry as a whole.

Ultimately, the findings of this study provide both a critique and an opportunity. They reveal the complexities involved in integrating academic insights into the dynamic practice of coaching, while also highlighting areas where improvements can be made. By rethinking how research is presented and how it can support coaches in a tangible, applicable manner, future studies could help bring theory and practice into closer alignment. Theeboom et al. (2014), for example, highlighted the positive effects of coaching on outcomes like goal attainment and well-being, underscoring the need for accessible, relevant findings that resonate with practitioners' experiences.

In conclusion, coaching will always contain elements that cannot be entirely captured by academic theory—there will always be nuances and intricacies that remain outside the scope of formal research. However, this does not diminish the value of striving for greater alignment between research and practice. Coaching research must aim to support practitioners not by dictating rigid frameworks but by providing insights that can be practically adapted and utilised. By focusing on collaboration, accessibility, and practical

application, this research contributes a step towards narrowing the RPG, offering insights that may inspire further developments in how coaching is understood and practised.

Recommendations

For researchers

To strengthen the value of research for coaching professionals, researchers should consider making findings more accessible through platforms like LinkedIn and free on ResearchGate, as highlighted in the interviews. Accessibility is not only about removing paywalls but also involves making research more digestible by using relatable language (Williams & Kendall, 2007). Research that uses more common language can encourage coaches to integrate findings, which can bridge the research-practice gap (RPG) by enhancing practitioners' understanding and uptake of theories (Linley, 2006). I would also encourage researchers to actively involve practitioners in the design phase of studies to address real-world concerns and produce findings directly applicable to daily coaching practices. This collaborative approach has been shown to increase the relevance of research outcomes (Edwards, 2008). In the coaching domain, where subjective experience and practical knowledge are paramount, engaging coaches in co-designing studies can yield insights that not only benefit practitioners but also enrich academic understanding of effective practices (Tasca et al., 2015). Studies that show the ROI of coaching were often desired, as were more in-depth case studies of the impact of specific interventions or models with clients in particular contexts. As Stuart & Chambless (2007) found, studies showing insightful, practical process and outcome connections are often preferable. Exploring the less tangible aspects of coaching, such as presence, were also suggested by the interviewees, as were broader contextual issues, such as political, social, environmental and organisational pressures.

Additionally, integrating findings from psychotherapy and similar fields could provide a solid foundation to further enhance coaching methodologies, as research indicates overlapping applications between the two disciplines (Hinn & Kotte, 2021). Rather than coaching research being self-sustaining and circular in its design and recommendations, opening up to new sources of influence from both practitioners and distinct disciplines could greatly expand its applicability and value. Finally, not all research will be relevant for practitioners directly. Many studies will offer insights more applicable to intermediaries, for example. Ensuring the practical takeaways from your study are being shared in the most relevant places will help reduce the RPG by better informing the other parties in the coaching relationship, such as professional networking or educational bodies.

For coaches

To build credibility and enhance practice, coaches are recommended to adopt an evidence-based framework, as research suggests it legitimises the coaching profession and improves client outcomes (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). By referencing well-established models, such as Whitmore's GROW model or adaptations like the GROWS model, coaches can structure their approach while tailoring it to individual client needs (Panchal & Riddell, 2020).

Evidence-based coaching is not only associated with improved goal attainment but also reinforces the coaching industry's professional standards (Theeboom et al., 2014).

Further, coaches can focus on diversifying their sources of knowledge by exploring resources beyond academic journals. Many coaches in the study mentioned turning to professional networks, such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF), for accessible, research-backed insights that can be integrated into their daily work. This aligns with findings that practitioners often benefit from knowledge exchange within professional communities, which helps in adapting frameworks effectively across varied contexts (Jones et al., 2016).

Ultimately, by continuing professional development through accessible, structured learning options like webinars and practical workshops, coaches can remain informed and apply the latest insights without needing to navigate complex research articles.

Most importantly, this study has indicated that coaches should look to deepen their sense of presence, as cultivating self-awareness can be more impactful than accumulating coaching tools alone. This echoes Stober & Parry's (2005) advice to consider the coach's experience, client's perspective, and other contextual factors. Mindfulness practices, such as those described by Van Dam and Galante (2020), allow coaches to attune more closely to clients' needs, enhancing their ability to foster genuine client-centred growth. Techniques like self-hypnosis (Austin, 2015) also help coaches address subconscious barriers, thus enhancing their adaptability and intuitive understanding. Prioritising these self-development practices empowers coaches to bring greater depth and responsiveness to their client interactions.

A final suggestion, or perhaps request, reflects Passmore & Lai's (2020) call for practitioners to collaborate with researchers. The involvement of coaches in this study has been paramount to its execution and their willingness to share openly their experiences is what made formulating the insights garnered from the interviews possible. I would recommend to coaches that they be open to participating in future studies in order for the field to evolve further and to help narrow the RPG, improving outcomes for clients, coaches, and researchers.

For intermediaries

Regulatory bodies and intermediaries play a pivotal role in bridging the RPG by facilitating easier access to research for coaches. For instance, platforms like the ICF and EMCC could create repositories with studies organised by practical themes—such as ROI, specific

coaching models, and behavioural change techniques—to enable coaches to locate studies relevant to their immediate needs. This approach would not only makes research accessible but also positions intermediaries as essential facilitators of evidence-based practice, ensuring that practitioners receive guidance directly relevant to their work.

Moreover, intermediaries can foster knowledge-sharing networks where coaches, researchers, and client organisations can engage collaboratively to discuss practical applications of research. Studies indicate that such forums encourage coaches to integrate theory into practice by providing real-life examples of effective implementation (De Haan, 2019). In line with these insights, intermediaries should aim to expand their outreach through both traditional and digital platforms, enabling more practitioners to access and apply research-backed methods effectively. I would also recommend considering how to make diverse insights from research available to a wider audience. I feel that what Sherman & Freas (2004) said twenty years ago still holds true, that “no one has yet demonstrated conclusively what makes an executive coach qualified or what makes one approach to executive coaching better than another”. If professional bodies supporting coaches can maximise the connectivity between research insights and practitioners, we will no doubt see coaches be able to find their own approach to more evidenced-based work.

"There's words, but there's a lot more to coaching than words." – Silvia

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Style: APA 7th

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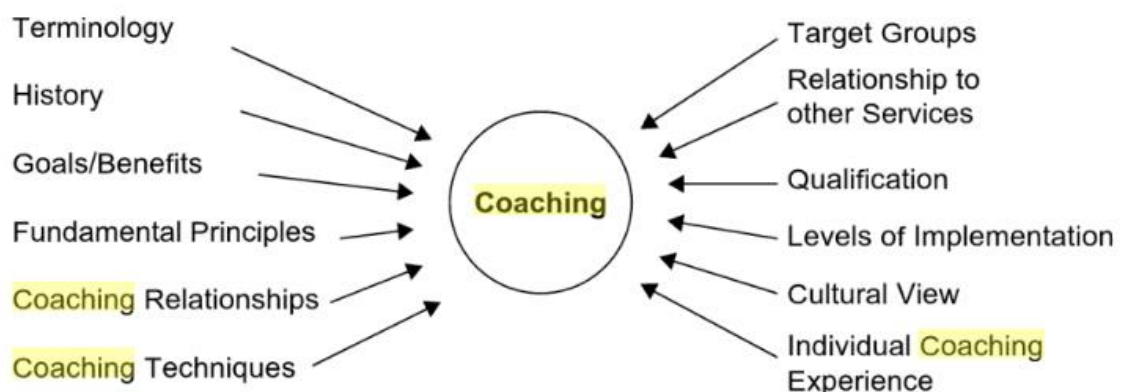
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Appendices

Appendix 1: The 12 Dimensions of Coaching (Passmore, 2015)



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

A qualitative analysis of workplace coaching practitioners' perception and use of theory and research.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, which is part of my MSc Organizational Psychology degree at Birkbeck, University of London. This project has received ethical approval. To make an informed decision on whether you want to take part in this study, please take a few minutes to read this information sheet.

Who is conducting this research?

The research is conducted by George Berry, an Organizational Psychology MSc Student, under the guidance of supervisor Professor Gail Kinman, both from Birkbeck, University of London.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to investigate workplace coaching practitioners' perception and use of theory and research in the field of coaching.

Why have I been invited to take part?

I am inviting executive coaches with multiple years' experience following a recognised accreditation to take part in this study.

What are the procedures of taking part?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview over MS Teams for approximately an hour to talk about the research and theories that underpin your coaching practice. Upon completion of your participation you will be provided with a debrief or offered the opportunity to have access to a summary of the findings, once analysed, by contacting the research team (details below).

Microsoft Privacy Statement: <https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/privacystatement>

What are my participation rights?

Participation in this research guarantees the right to withdraw, to ask questions about how your data will be handled and about the study itself, the right to confidentially and anonymity (unless otherwise agreed), the right to refuse to answer questions, to have tape recorders turned-off (in the case of recorded interviews) and to be given access to a summary of the findings.

What if I want to withdraw my information?

If you wish to withdraw responses or any personal data gathered during the study you may do this without any consequences. You can ask for your data to be removed up until the point of analysis, which will take place on approximately 27 September 2022. If you would like to withdraw your data please contact the researcher (details below).

What will happen to my responses to the study?

Data collected in this study will be analysed and used for the research student dissertation. Data may also be used for academic publications and no identifying information would be released.

Will my responses and information be kept confidential?

All information will be treated with the strictest confidence throughout the study. All information will be kept in secure folders on a password protected computer. Access to such information will only be allowed to the researcher and researcher supervisor. During the marking process, external examiners of my project may also have access.

What are the possible risks to taking part?

There are no risks involved in taking part in this research.

Any further questions?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study before or during your participation, please contact either of:

George Berry
Gberry02@student.ac.uk
Research Student

Gail Kinman
Gail.kinman@bbk.ac.uk
Research Supervisor,
Department of Organizational Psychology,
Birkbeck, University of London,
Clare Management Building,
Malet Street, Bloomsbury,
London.
WC1E 7HX

For information about Birkbeck's data protection policy please visit: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies/privacy#9>

If you have concerns about this study, please contact the School's Ethics Officer at: BEI-ethics@bbk.ac.uk.

School Ethics Officer
School of Business, Economics and Informatics
Birkbeck, University of London
London WC1E 7HX

You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office <https://ico.org.uk/>

Qualitative Interview Consent Form

This consent form consists of two parts. Please note you will need to sign both your own copy to keep and a 2nd copy for the researcher to keep.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A qualitative analysis of workplace coaching practitioners' perception and use of theory and research.

PARTICIPANT COPY

Please read the following items and tick the appropriate boxes to indicate whether you agree to take part in this study.

- I have read the information sheet in full. I understand the purpose of this research is to investigate executive coaches' thoughts about coaching research and related theories.
- Any questions I had have been answered, and I understand I may ask further questions at any time.
- I understand what is involved in participating, that it is voluntary, and that I may withdraw without consequences and penalty by 27 September 2022.
- I agree to the interview being video-taped by the researcher.
- I understand that I have the right to ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview taped.
- I understand the data will be transcribed word-by-word by MS Teams and the researcher.
- I understand the research results as themes without identifiable demographic information will be shared with Birkbeck, University of London.
- I understand the results may be used for academic publications, such as dissertation, thesis or journal articles.

Name _____

Signed _____

Dated: _____

----- PLEASE CUT HERE -----

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Please read the following items and tick the appropriate boxes to indicate whether you agree to take part in this study.

- I have read the information sheet in full. I understand the purpose of this research is to investigate executive coaches' thoughts about coaching research and related theories.
- Any questions I had have been answered, and I understand I may ask further questions at any time.
- I understand what is involved in participating, that it is voluntary, and that I may withdraw without consequences and penalty by 27 September 2022.
- I agree to the interview being video-taped by the researcher.
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- I understand the research results as themes without identifiable demographic information will be shared with Birkbeck, University of London.
- I understand the results may be used for academic publications, such as dissertation, thesis or journal articles.

Name _____

Signed _____

Dated: _____

MATERIALS USED

A qualitative analysis of workplace coaching practitioners' perception and use of theory and research.

List of key themes and questions to be asked (inc. clarification and probe questions) during the semi-structured interviews:

Your background

- Please give an overview of your career to date

Your views on coaching

- Why did you start coaching?
- What do you enjoy about coaching? Can you think of any examples of a situation that you found enjoyable? Why did you find it enjoyable?
- What do you find most challenging? Can you think of any examples of a situation you found difficult? Why was it challenging?

Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- What type of training have you had in coaching? What did your initial course involve? Why did you choose them/this training program or certification?
- What did you learn that was particularly interesting?
- To what extent were you satisfied with this training?
- What models and theories did you find interesting /useful, and why?
- To what extent do you ensure continuous professional development? What do you do to engage with CPD and what are the challenges?

Coaching frameworks

- Looking back, what ideas and frameworks that you were exposed to during your training or CPD do you find most useful in your practice?
- Where did you originally learn how to use them?
- What differentiates it/them from other options?
- Why do you find them more useful? Can you offer any examples of how you draw on them in your practice?
- Are there concepts and techniques you were taught that have proven less useful?
- What types of models and frameworks do you use in different contexts? To what extent do you adapt your approach to different client needs? Can you give any examples? How do you choose which approach is relevant?

Coaching research and practice developments

- When you wish to find out about new advances in coaching where do you look? (Sources)
- Could you give some examples of new ideas or ideas you have learnt about which you have found particularly useful in practice?
- To what extent do you consciously apply certain theories in your practice? Which ones and why?

Accessibility and practicality of research

- Can you think of any areas in coaching where more research is needed? Why would this be particularly helpful to you?

- Where would you like to see research published that might make it more accessible to you?
- What types of study interest you? E.g. longitudinal / randomised control studies, meta-analyses, systematic reviews, case studies.
- Can you think of an example of an ideal study that you would like to see done? How would it look? What issue(s) would it cover? Why would this be important to you?

Closing questions or remarks

- Are there any other issues that we have not covered that you would like to bring up?
- Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

Sources Mentioned During Interviews

Below is a list of sources of information the participant coaches mentioned. Far from exhaustive, this list offers a wealth of places to look for valuable tools, knowledge and approaches that can inform coaching practice. It is separated into Approaches, covering a wide array of theories, models and tools, then People, with a mix of individuals who have shared their expertise in coaching, and Organisations and Publications, which includes a variety of academic, professional and media companies and networks that have been highlighted as places to access theories, research, framework and other useful information relating to coaching.

Approaches / Tools

3 Brains co-Coaching - A coaching model focused on integrating head, heart, and gut intelligence to align decision-making processes for leaders.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) - A psychological approach encouraging leaders to embrace challenges, accept emotions, and commit to personal values for improved workplace resilience.

Accelerator model - A framework to rapidly boost leadership skills and performance through targeted development in executive coaching.

ADKAR Model - Change management tool helping leaders understand and lead organisational change by focusing on Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. Created by Proski.

Advantages/disadvantages of staying as you are - A reflective exercise to help executives evaluate whether maintaining the status quo or embracing change serves long-term success.

Agile - Coaching leaders on adopting agile methodologies for dynamic, responsive decision-making and process management in business environments.

Aikido Dojo - Applying principles of the martial art Aikido, such as balance and non-resistance, to leadership styles in high-stress situations.

Appreciative inquiry - Focuses on identifying and amplifying what works well in organisations to inspire positive leadership and change.

Applied neuroscience in coaching - Utilises brain science to help leaders understand and improve cognitive functions like decision-making, emotional regulation, and resilience.

Art of developmental coaching - A coaching framework designed to enhance leaders' self-awareness and developmental goals through practical exercises. (See: CoachesRising)

Art therapy - Uses creative processes to unlock emotional insights in leaders, aiding in stress relief and personal development.

Asymmetric stroke diagnostic tool - A method to assess and address unconscious biases and imbalances in leadership communication and relationships.

Attachment theory - Helps leaders understand how early relationships shape their interpersonal skills and influence workplace dynamics.

Autonomic nervous system (ANS) versus the activated nervous system - The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) (often referred to as the "activated" nervous system) prepares the body for a "fight or flight" response during times of stress, increasing cortisol. The Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) system is responsible for the "rest and digest" state, helping to calm the body, conserve energy, and promote recovery after a stressful event. Understanding how stress affects physiological responses in leaders and coaching them to manage their reactions can help maintain composure under pressure.

Bar-on - Refers to the Bar-On Emotional Intelligence (EQ) model, used to measure and develop emotional intelligence skills critical for leadership.

Bands of energy - A tool to help leaders recognise and manage different levels of energy to optimise performance and decision-making.

BEAR Feedback mode - A structure for giving clear, constructive feedback in leadership contexts, focusing on Behaviour, Effect, Ask, and Result.

Blanchard's situational leadership - A leadership model teaching flexibility in leadership styles, adapting to the needs of team members based on their development level.

Brainspotting training - A therapy technique used in coaching to help executives access and resolve deeply embedded traumas affecting workplace behaviour.

Bullying - Identifying and addressing bullying behaviours in the workplace can promote healthier, more effective leadership.

Chakras - Introduces the concept of energy centres in the body, helping leaders align mental, emotional, and physical states for balanced leadership.

Challenging coaching – A coaching method that pushes leaders beyond their comfort zones by challenging existing thinking and behaviours to achieve breakthrough results. (See: Dr John Blakey and Ian Day)

Circle way - A leadership approach that emphasises equality, dialogue, and shared decision-making, helping leaders create inclusive and collaborative team environments.

Choice point - A decision-making model that helps leaders identify key moments for making strategic choices aligned with organisational goals.

CLEAR Model – A coaching framework focusing on Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Action, and Review to develop leaders' skills in effective communication and strategy. Theorised by Peter Hawkins

Co-active coaching model - Emphasises the balance between action and reflection, enabling leaders to achieve personal and professional goals in a holistic way.

Co-creation - Engaging leaders in collaborative, creative processes to design innovative solutions with their coach, as well as with teams, promoting inclusivity and collective ownership.

Coaching Constellations – A systemic coaching approach that helps leaders see organisational relationships and dynamics, making hidden patterns visible for resolution. By John Whittington

Coaching Development - A leadership coaching program from 2003 focused on practical development of executive coaching skills in real-world contexts, by Colin Brett and Philip Brew.

Coaching from source - A method where leaders are coached to connect deeply with their own intuition and values to make authentic leadership decisions.

Coaching neurodiverse people - specialised coaching for leaders with neurodiverse conditions, focusing on leveraging their unique strengths in the workplace.

Cognitive-behavioural approaches (CBC) (CBT) - Uses cognitive-behavioural techniques to help leaders recognise and alter thought patterns and behaviours that may impede performance.

Collective assessment - A group coaching technique that allows leaders to gain insights from team feedback to develop collective leadership capabilities.

Compassionate coaching - Focuses on empathy and emotional intelligence to help build stronger, more supportive relationships with their teams.

Compassionate inquiry - A method used to help explore and understand their own vulnerabilities and emotional blocks, fostering authentic leadership.

Conversational intelligence - Enhances ability to foster trust, collaboration, and understanding through effective, open communication practices.

Conversational leadership - Focuses on the power of storytelling and dialogue in leadership, enabling leaders to inspire and engage teams effectively. See Christina Baldwin's Story Catcher.

Core transformation - A personal development tool guiding leaders to uncover core motivations and values to create meaningful change in their leadership style.

(The corporate world embracing) Workplace wellbeing - Focuses on how to integrate wellness and mental health initiatives to create a more productive and balanced workplace.

Courage as a somatic trigger - Explores how physical sensations in the body can be used to activate courage and confidence in leadership decision-making.

Drama triangle - A model explaining dysfunctional roles (Victim, Persecutor, Rescuer) in workplace dynamics, helping leaders recognize and shift negative patterns (From Transaction Analysis)

EDI in coaching - Refers to integrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion into coaching practices to foster fair and inclusive leadership.

Emergence during sessions - Encourages coachees to remain open to spontaneous insights and creative solutions that arise during coaching conversations.

Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI) - Assesses a leader's emotional intelligence and social skills, providing a roadmap for improving relationships and leadership effectiveness.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)- A technique combining talk therapy with acupressure to help leaders manage stress and improve emotional well-being.

Energy work - Refers to coaching practices that help leaders manage their energy levels, improving focus and emotional balance in the workplace, especially at a spiritual dimension with terms like aura used to connect ideas around mental, physical and emotional states.

Existentialism in coaching - Helps leaders explore their personal purpose, values, and existence to create meaning and alignment in their leadership roles. See Yannick Jacob.

Facilitator in accelerating transformation - A role where the coach helps leaders quickly adapt to change and accelerate their development during times of transformation.

Family therapy - Provides insights into how family dynamics can influence leadership style and relationships within the workplace.

Female leadership - Coaching aimed at addressing the unique challenges women face in leadership roles, focusing on empowerment, confidence, and breaking barriers.

Fields of Conversations - A model that helps leaders understand different levels of communication—from transactional to transformative—used to foster deeper engagement.

Force field analysis - A decision-making tool that helps leaders weigh driving and restraining forces (pros and cons) in situations of change, supporting strategic planning.

Four stages of conscious and competent - Describes the learning process from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence, guiding leaders through personal growth in a model by Noel Burch.

Fritz – creative/reactive - Robert Fritz's concept that helps leaders identify when they are operating creatively (proactively) or reactively in decision-making.

FUEL Coaching model - A framework for structured coaching conversations, focusing on Frame the conversation, Understand the current state, Explore options, and Lay out the next steps.

Generative coaching work - A coaching approach focused on generating new insights and creative breakthroughs for leaders in complex situations.

Gestalt - A holistic coaching method that helps leaders gain self-awareness and address unfinished business that may be hindering their leadership effectiveness.

2 Chairs (Gestalt Principle) - A technique where leaders explore opposing perspectives by switching chairs, fostering greater empathy and self-awareness in decision-making.

Goldman's leadership styles - Refers to Daniel Goleman's six leadership styles (coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, coaching), teaching leaders when to use each style for maximum impact.

Golden circle - Simon Sinek's model that helps leaders focus on "Why" they do things (purpose), driving motivation and alignment in leadership.

Gottman's relationship therapy - Applying principles from relationship therapy, such as removing barriers and disarming conflicting verbal communication to support a client's goals.

GROW - A popular coaching model focusing on Goals, Reality, Options, and Will, providing a clear structure for leadership development, by John Whitmore.

Group dynamics - Examines how individuals interact within teams, helping manage and optimise group behaviour for better team performance.

Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model – Model to help leaders adapt their style based on the readiness level of their team.

Hero's journey - A metaphorical framework used in coaching to guide clients through personal and professional growth, highlighting challenges, transformation, and success. Based on Joseph Campbell's theory of the Monomyth.

Hogan - A suite of leadership assessments that measure personality traits, strengths, and potential derailers to help executives improve their performance, including the Hogan personal direction

strength scope, helping leaders understand their core values and how they align with organisational goals.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory - Helps leaders understand how cultural differences impact workplace behaviour and communication, enhancing their ability to lead diverse teams.

Hot cross bun model - A cognitive-behavioural tool used to help leaders understand the interaction between thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

Hypnosis - Used in executive coaching to unlock subconscious beliefs that may be limiting performance and personal growth.

I'm not OK. You're not OK. - A phrase from Transactional Analysis highlighting dysfunctional communication patterns that leaders can address to improve workplace relationships.

IFS for business - Internal Family Systems model applied to business settings, helping leaders identify and integrate different aspects of their personality to improve decision-making.

Inclusive behaviours inventory - A tool for measuring and developing inclusive behaviours in leaders, promoting equity and diversity within teams and organisations.

Integrative Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching - Combines cognitive-behavioural techniques with coaching to help leaders change limiting beliefs and achieve their goals.

Integrative Gestalt coaching - A coaching style combining Gestalt principles and Perry Holloman's work to help leaders become more self-aware and emotionally grounded.

Intercultural development inventory (IDI) - A tool for assessing and improving a leader's intercultural competence, essential for leading in global or diverse organisations.

Internal coaching - Refers to leaders acting as internal coaches within their organisation, helping peers and subordinates grow through coaching conversations.

Intergenerational Trauma - Understanding how unresolved trauma passed down through generations can influence a leader's behaviour and approach to workplace relationships.

Intelligent career theory - A career development framework that encourages leaders to manage their career as an ongoing learning process, aligning personal and organisational goals.

Jung's archetypes - Used in coaching to help leaders understand and leverage different archetypal energies (e.g., the hero, the sage) in their leadership roles.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory - A model of learning through experience, applied to help leaders reflect on and learn from real-world challenges to improve their leadership skills.

Kotter's change Program - A change management model used to guide leaders through successfully leading organisational change, focusing on vision, communication, and urgency.

Languishing - A state of stagnation or low motivation that leaders may experience, coaching helps to address it by reconnecting with purpose and goals.

Law of attraction - A belief-based coaching approach, suggesting that leaders can manifest positive outcomes by focusing on what they want to achieve.

Leadership circle - A 360-degree feedback tool that integrates leadership competency with inner development, helping leaders evolve both skills and self-awareness.

Lencioni's The five dysfunctions of a team - A model addressing common team dysfunctions (absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results), helping leaders to strengthen team dynamics.

MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) - A mindfulness program that teaches leaders how to reduce stress and enhance focus through meditation and mindful practices.

Mental health in the zeitgeist - The growing awareness of mental health in public and corporate environments, helping leaders understand and support their well-being and that of others.

Meyer's Culture Map - A framework that helps leaders navigate cross-cultural differences by understanding communication, feedback, and decision-making styles across cultures.

Mindfulness - A practice that teaches leaders to be present, reduce stress, and improve emotional regulation, leading to clearer decision-making.

Mindfulness & Meditation in Coaching - Incorporates mindfulness and meditation techniques into coaching to help leaders manage stress, focus, and emotional resilience.

Model of 5 drivers - A model used in leadership coaching to identify key drivers that influence leader behaviour and motivation, by Taibi Kahler. The 5 Drivers are: Please Others; Be Strong; Hurry Up; Try Hard; Be Perfect.

Morning light and ophthalmology - Uses the science of natural light exposure to enhance a leader's mental health, focus, and energy levels through understanding circadian rhythms.

Morning routine - Coaching leaders on developing a productive morning routine to enhance performance, focus, and well-being throughout the day.

Motivational interviewing - A technique used to help clarify motivations and resolve ambivalence toward change, fostering greater commitment to goals.

NEO Personality Inventory - a psychometric assessment used to understand personality traits in leaders, guiding personal development.

Neuroscience - Provides insights into brain function and behaviour, enabling more effective strategies for personal growth, resilience, and leadership performance.

Natural defence mechanisms - Coaching leaders to identify and manage subconscious defence mechanisms that may hinder their decision-making and leadership effectiveness.

Neurological modelling for executive coaching - Uses neuroscience to help leaders understand how their brains work in leadership scenarios, promoting better decision-making and emotional regulation.

NLP - Neuro-Linguistic Programming techniques can be used in leadership coaching to improve communication, behaviour change, and personal performance through understanding how we think.

Nonverbal communication – Recognition of, and use of, nonverbal cues, such as body language, to improve coaching and workplace communication and influence.

OSKAR Coaching Model - A solution-focused coaching framework: Outcome, Scaling, Know-how, Affirm + Action, Review, guiding leaders in achieving measurable results.

Parallel Processing in Coaching – A concept where issues in the coaching relationship mirror challenges in the workplace, helping leaders gain deeper insights into their behaviours, by Harold Searle.

Peak moments - Identifies key moments of exceptional performance or insight in a leader's journey, used to inspire continued growth and success.

Person centred approach - A coaching method focused on empathy, understanding, and non-directive support, allowing leaders to find their own solutions.

Poetry in coaching - Uses poetic metaphors and language to help leaders express complex emotions and gain deeper insights into their leadership challenges.

Polarity mapping – A tool that helps leaders manage competing values or tensions (e.g., short-term vs. long-term) by recognising and balancing polarities, by Barry Johnson

Positive intelligence - A framework for developing mental fitness, helping leaders reduce negative thoughts and adopt a positive, resilient mindset in challenging situations.

Positive psychology - Focuses on leveraging strengths and cultivating positive emotions to enhance leadership performance and satisfaction.

Positive Psychology Coaching (PPC) and Positive Psychology Interventions (PPI's) - Coaching that focuses on building strengths, optimism, and well-being in leaders using interventions grounded in positive psychology.

Power tools - Coaching tools that provide leaders with strategies to overcome obstacles and enhance their influence and effectiveness. ICA Coaches study the 8 Core Power Tools as part of their certification, and then they create their own: Responsibility vs Blame, Action vs Delay, Commitment vs Trying, Respect vs Invalidation, Lightness vs Significance, Truth vs Fraud, Responding vs Reacting, Trust vs Doubt.

Psychological Safety – Creating an environment where the client feels secure to openly share thoughts, explore challenges, and experiment with new ideas without fear of judgment or criticism.

Psychosynthesis - A therapeutic approach that helps leaders integrate different aspects of their personality to achieve greater self-awareness and personal growth.

Radical availability - Encourages being fully present and accessible, promoting trust, openness, and effective communication.

Rapid transformation therapy - A hybrid coaching technique combining hypnotherapy and NLP to achieve fast breakthroughs in leadership development and personal growth.

Rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) - A cognitive-behavioural approach that helps challenge and change irrational beliefs, leading to more effective leadership behaviours.

Red Team Thinking Practitioner - A strategic framework that teaches leaders to challenge assumptions and think critically to anticipate and mitigate risks.

Reflective inquiry - A process that encourages deep reflection on experiences, fostering insight and learning for personal and professional development.

Reflective practice - Encourages regularly reflecting on actions and decisions to improve self-awareness and effectiveness.

Regret - Helping to explore and resolve feelings of regret, using such emotions as a catalyst for learning and forward-thinking decision-making.

Reiki - A form of energy healing sometimes incorporated into leadership coaching to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and increase mental clarity.

Rapport, Outcome Orientation, Sensory Acuity, Behavioural Flexibility - NLP techniques used to enhance performance.

Representation - Helps leaders understand the power of representation and inclusion, ensuring diverse voices and perspectives are considered in decision-making.

Robert Fritz's concept of structural tension - A model that helps leaders identify the gap between current reality and desired outcomes, using that tension to drive focused, strategic action.

Rivers of thought - A metaphorical tool used in coaching to help leaders map out and navigate complex thoughts and emotions in decision-making.

SCARF – A model used in leadership to manage the social drivers of behaviour: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness, guiding leaders to foster positive team dynamics, by David Rock.

Schein's Model of Organizational Culture - A framework for understanding and shaping workplace culture by focusing on underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide behaviour.

Simon Sinek - Start With Why - A leadership philosophy that helps leaders focus on the "why" behind their actions to inspire and motivate their teams more effectively.

Self-care as a trend - Emphasises the importance of self-care, helping coachees balance work with personal well-being to sustain performance.

Self-determination Theory and motivation - A theory that helps leaders foster intrinsic motivation by focusing on autonomy, competence, and relatedness, driving higher engagement and performance, by Ryan & Deci.

Social Identity Theory - Helps clients understand how group membership affects individual behaviour and identity.

Solution-Focused Therapy - A brief coaching method focused on identifying solutions rather than problems, guiding leaders to quickly resolve challenges and move forward.

Solutions focused approaches - A coaching methodology that centres on identifying and implementing solutions rather than dwelling on problems, helping coachees move forward effectively.

Somatic Coaching & Leadership Embodiment – A body-based coaching approach that helps leaders develop emotional intelligence, presence, and resilience by working through physical awareness.
See: Wendy Palmer

Strengths-based coaching - Focuses on identifying and leveraging a leader's strengths to improve performance, build confidence, and enhance team dynamics.

System psychodynamics - Examines the unconscious psychological and emotional dynamics in organisations, helping leaders understand hidden influences on behaviour and team functioning.

Systemic Coaching and Constellations - A systemic approach that explores organisational patterns, relationships, and dynamics.

Systemic coaching - Focuses on the interconnectedness of individuals and systems within organisations, helping leaders navigate complexity and improve overall system functioning.

The Chimp Paradox - A model that explains how leaders can manage their "inner chimp" (emotional reactions) to make more rational, effective decisions.

The Cultural Intelligence Model - A framework for developing cultural intelligence (CQ), enabling leaders to navigate diverse cultural environments and lead global teams more effectively, by Earley and Ang

The dance of power - A concept in leadership coaching where leaders learn to navigate the use of power and influence, ensuring it's balanced and productive in team dynamics.

The Full Spectrum Coaching Model (Holistic energy) - An integrative coaching model that helps leaders tap into their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energies to achieve peak performance.

The Johari Window - A tool that helps leaders understand their self-awareness and how they are perceived by others, improving communication and relationships.

The TIME coaching model - Target, Insights, Motivation, Execution—guides clients through goal-setting, self-reflection, building motivation, and action planning to achieve desired outcomes.

Time to Think – An approach that focuses on creating a reflective, non-judgmental space where individuals can think deeply and independently to unlock their full potential, by Nancy Klein.

The Vicious Flower Formulation - Explores harmful cognitive patterns that limit leadership growth and helps leaders develop strategies to break these cycles.

TheoryU - A framework for transformational change, guiding leaders through a process of deep reflection, co-sensing, and innovation.

Thomas and Kilmann's conflict management model - A model that teaches leaders how to navigate conflict by understanding different conflict-handling styles (e.g., competing, collaborating, avoiding).

Transactional Analysis - A psychological model that helps leaders understand their interactions with others by categorising them into Parent, Adult, and Child states, improving communication, theorised by Eric Berne.

Transformational Coaching Model TRANSFORM – Target, Reality, Awareness, New perspectives, Strategy, Focus, Ownership, Resilience, Motivation—guides clients through a structured process of achieving deep personal and professional transformation, helping leaders achieve lasting change by shifting mindsets and behaviours, by Gillian McMichael

Two possible futures - A coaching exercise where leaders explore two potential paths to clarify decision-making and strategic direction for themselves or their organisation.

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development - A model that helps leaders understand and manage team development through the stages of Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.

Vertical development model - A leadership model that focuses on developing leaders through stages of vertical growth, moving from operational to strategic thinking.

Vertical vs Horizontal leadership – A model that contrasts vertical development (complexity and depth of thinking) with horizontal development (gaining new skills), helping leaders grow holistically.

Voice print – communication tool with our 9 voices - A communication tool that identifies nine different "voices" or communication styles, helping leaders adapt their communication approach to various contexts.

Wheel of Life - A tool used in coaching to assess various aspects of a leader's life (work, health, relationships), guiding them to create balance and focus on areas that need improvement.

Whole system approach - A coaching approach that considers the entire organisational system, helping leaders understand how different parts of the organisation interact and affect performance.

World café - A collaborative leadership approach where leaders facilitate open, dialogue-driven conversations to co-create solutions with their teams.

People / Authors

Adam Kahane – Known for his work on scenario planning and collaboration across sectors, author of Power and Love.

Alan Henry – Expert in career strategy and productivity, known for helping leaders improve their work-life balance.

Amanda Gorman – Inspirational figure, known for empowering leaders through creativity and communication.

Amanda Ridings – Specialises in leadership presence and dialogue, author of Pause for Breath.

Amy Cuddy – Famous for her work on "power posing" and body language's impact on leadership.

Arawana Hayashi – Integrates mindfulness and embodiment in leadership coaching, co-founder of Social Presencing Theater.

Andrew Huberman – Neuroscientist focused on optimizing performance and resilience through brain science.

Barbara Somers – Known for blending psychology with leadership coaching, particularly Jungian approaches.

Bert Hellinger – Founder of Family Constellations therapy, widely used in leadership coaching to resolve systemic issues.

Bill George – Author of True North, focuses on authentic leadership and developing values-driven leaders.

Carl Rogers – Pioneer of person-centred coaching, emphasizing empathy and client-driven solutions.

Carolyn Taylor – Author of Walking the Talk, specialises in culture change in organizations.

Chris Morrison – Leadership coach focusing on innovation and change management.

Christina Baldwin – Expert in reflective leadership, co-creator of the Circle Process for dialogue.

Dacher Keltner – Focuses on emotional intelligence in leadership, author of The Power Paradox.

David Burns – Developer of cognitive behavioural techniques, applied in leadership to manage stress and performance.

Daniel Goleman – Author of Emotional Intelligence, his work emphasises the importance of EQ in leadership.

David Clutterbuck – Co-founder of the European Mentoring & Coaching Council, known for systemic coaching.

David White – Specialises in narrative leadership, helping leaders use storytelling to inspire.

Deepak Chopra – Integrates mindfulness and holistic approaches to leadership and personal mastery.

Dick Schwartz – Developer of Internal Family Systems (IFS), used for addressing inner conflicts in leadership.

Docker Keltner – Focuses on positive psychology and the role of compassion in leadership.

Eric Berne – Known for founding Transactional Analysis, which is applied to understand social interactions in leadership.

Eric Parslow – Leadership consultant focused on high-impact coaching for senior executives.

Fernando Flores – Pioneer in business ethics and leadership, known for his work on speech acts and communication.

Gabor Mate – Integrates trauma-informed approaches to leadership development and executive coaching.

Harold Searle – Expert in organisational dynamics and psychoanalysis in leadership contexts.

Jack Canfield – Author of The Success Principles and co-creator of Chicken Soup for the Soul, focuses on self-esteem and success.

John Leary Joyce – Leadership coach specialising in Gestalt approaches to leadership development.

John Mattone – Creator of the Intelligent Leadership model, focusing on executive and organisational development.

John Whittington – Focuses on systemic coaching and constellations in leadership, author of Systemic Coaching and Constellations.

Joe Vitale – Known for his work in self-help and success coaching, author of The Attractor Factor.

Jonathan Passmore – Director at Henley Business School, a key figure in evidence-based coaching research and leadership.

Joseph Campbell – Renowned for his work in mythological leadership, author of The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

Julie Starr – Author of The Coaching Manual, specialising in practical coaching for executives and leaders.

Karen Horney – Pioneer in psychoanalysis and its applications in leadership development, known for theories on inner conflicts.

Marshall Goldsmith – World-renowned executive coach, author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, specialising in leadership behaviour change.

Max Landsberg – Author of *The Tao of Coaching*, focusing on leadership coaching through simple, practical techniques.

Nancy Klein – Creator of the Time to Think methodology, which focuses on enhancing leadership thinking.

Otto Scharmer – Founder of Theory U, focusing on systems change and leadership development for the future.

Paul Brown – Expert in applied neuroscience in leadership coaching, co-author of *The Leader's Guide to Resilience*.

Penny Ferguson – Focuses on leadership development through personal empowerment, author of *The Living Leader*.

Peter Block – Author of *Flawless Consulting*, known for his work in organisational development and consulting.

Peter Hawkins – Developer of systemic team coaching, a methodology that works with both individuals and teams in organisations.

Peter Senge – Author of *The Fifth Discipline*, a pioneer in learning organizations and systems thinking in leadership.

Peter Sullivan – Specialises in executive coaching for leadership transitions and performance improvement.

Perry Holloman – Focuses on body-oriented leadership coaching, integrating somatic techniques into personal development.

Richard Boyatzis – Co-creator of the Intentional Change Theory and co-author of *Primal Leadership*, focuses on emotional intelligence in leadership.

Richie Davidson – Expert in mindfulness and emotional regulation, applying neuroscience to leadership development.

Robert Dilts – A leading figure in NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), known for his Logical Levels model in coaching.

Robert Fritz – Creator of the Structural Tension model, emphasising creativity and personal leadership in organizations.

Sally Helgesen – Co-author of *How Women Rise*, focuses on women's leadership and breaking career-limiting habits.

Steve Gilligan – Expert in generative coaching, combining Ericksonian hypnosis with leadership coaching for personal transformation.

Stephen Rollnick – Co-developer of Motivational Interviewing, applied to leadership for resolving ambivalence and fostering commitment.

Sue Knight – Focuses on the application of NLP in leadership coaching, author of *NLP at Work*.

Susan Goldsworthy – Co-author of Care to Dare, focuses on leadership development through high-trust environments.

Suzy Green – Clinical psychologist and positive psychology expert, applies well-being practices to leadership development.

Tim Ferris – Author of The 4-Hour Workweek, focuses on productivity and lifestyle optimisation for executives.

Thomas Leonard – Known as one of the founders of the modern coaching industry, creator of CoachVille and co-founder of ICF (International Coach Federation).

Tony Robbins – Renowned for his personal development seminars and best-selling books, including Awaken the Giant Within.

Wendy Palmer – Expert in leadership embodiment, using somatic practices to help leaders manage stress and presence.

Wilhelm Reich – Psychoanalyst known for integrating bodywork with psychological processes, applied in leadership coaching for emotional release.

William R. Miller – Co-creator of Motivational Interviewing, applying psychology to help leaders foster motivation and change.

Organisations / Publications

Academy of Executive Coaching: Offers accredited training for executive coaches.

American Coach Supervisors Network: A US-based network for coach supervisors.

Astridge: Provides leadership coaching and development.

Association for Coaching (AC): Global coaching body offering accreditation, training, and professional development.

BetterUp: Digital platform providing executive coaching and personal development solutions.

Bloomberg: Financial and business publication with leadership and coaching insights.

BPS (British Psychological Society): Governing body offering guidelines and resources for psychology professionals, including coaches.

Centre for Coaching: Offers training in coaching psychology.

Certified Coach Practitioner Program: Certification programme for aspiring coaches focusing on core competencies.

CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development): Provides professional development and resources for coaches and HR professionals.

Coaches Rising: Online platform offering advanced coaching courses for personal and leadership development.

Coaching at Work Magazine: Publishes articles and case studies on best practices in coaching.

Coach University: Provides coach training programmes focused on leadership and personal development.

Coach's Training Institute (CTI): Offers comprehensive coach training programmes and certifications.

CoachU: Offers leadership and coaching training for professional and personal development.

Columbia Framework: Executive coaching model developed by Columbia University.

Columbia University Coaching Network: Provides networking and resources for graduates of Columbia's coaching programmes.

Deloitte Leadership Academy: Offers leadership development and executive coaching programmes.

EMCC (European Mentoring and Coaching Council): Sets standards and ethics for mentoring and coaching professionals in Europe.

Erickson Coaching: Provides coach training rooted in neuroscience and solution-based methodologies.

Esalen Institute: Human potential centre offering leadership and personal development workshops.

European Mentoring Coaching Council: Accredits mentoring and coaching professionals in Europe.

Forbes: Business publication with articles and insights on leadership and executive coaching.

Functional Medicine Coaching Academy: Integrates coaching with functional medicine for holistic approaches to performance and well-being.

Gallup: Offers strengths-based leadership coaching and consulting services based on data-driven methodologies.

Global Supervisors Network: International network for professional coaching supervisors.

Global Team Coaching Alliance: Provides resources and training in team coaching practices for leadership development.

Greater Good Science Center, University of Berkeley: Offers research and insights on emotional well-being and psychology for coaches.

HBR (Harvard Business Review): Publishes leadership and business insights, including executive coaching content.

Henley Business School: Offers executive coaching qualifications and leadership development programmes.

Huffington Post: Online publication offering leadership and business insights relevant for executive coaches.

Hult Ashridge Center for Executive Coaching: Provides executive coaching research and qualifications.

ICF (International Coaching Federation): Global body offering accreditation, standards, and resources for coaches.

ILM (UK): Leadership and management training provider, offering coaching certifications.

IMD Business School: Global business school providing leadership and executive education.

Institute of Coaching (IoC): Research-based organisation offering coaching resources, certifications, and best practices.

Institute of Human Development: Provides human development and leadership coaching training.

International Coach Academy (ICA): Global provider of online coaching training and certification programmes.

KDVI: Leadership consultancy focused on transformation and executive development.

Korn Ferry: Global executive search and leadership development consultancy offering coaching services.

Landmark (org): Offers personal development and leadership programmes based on transformational coaching.

LinkedIn Learning: Online platform providing training in leadership and executive coaching.

Management Futures: Leadership consultancy offering executive coaching and development services.

Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching: Leadership development programme focused on engaging stakeholders in the coaching process.

McKinsey & Company: Global management consulting firm offering leadership consulting and executive coaching insights.

Mindful Leader Certification: Provides mindfulness-based leadership coaching certifications for professionals.

MindValley: Personal growth platform offering courses, including leadership and executive coaching programmes.

MSC in Change Agent Skills and Strategies (Surrey University): Postgraduate degree in change management and leadership coaching.

NeuroLeadership Institute: Applies neuroscience research to leadership and executive coaching practices.

New Relationship Institute: Focuses on relationship-centred coaching for leadership and personal development.

Newfield Coaching School: Provides ontological coaching training and certifications.

OEM: Organisational effectiveness consultancy offering leadership coaching and development programmes.

ORSC (Organisation and Relationship Systems Coaching): Specialises in team and relationship systems coaching for leaders.

Oxford Brookes University: Offers coaching and mentoring qualifications for professional development.

Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring: Provides accredited coaching qualifications, with a focus on executive coaching.

PCI (Psychosynthesis Coaching Institute): Offers coaching training that integrates psychological principles with coaching practices.

Positive Psychology Guild: Provides coaching certifications based on positive psychology principles.

Presencing Institute: Focuses on leadership coaching that integrates awareness-based methods.

Psychology Today: Publication offering psychological insights and research applicable to coaching.

PwC's Academy: Offers leadership development and coaching training through professional programmes.

Raffi Park in Sussex: Leadership retreat centre offering executive coaching and personal development programmes.

Red Team Thinking: Decision-making and leadership coaching consultancy, focusing on high-pressure environments.

Roche Martin: Leadership development consultancy specialising in emotional intelligence coaching.

Samaritans: Provides crisis coaching, resilience training, and support for leadership development.

Sandhurst Ex-Military Coaching Fundamentals: Offers leadership coaching programmes based on military principles.

Search Inside Yourself: Emotional intelligence and mindfulness-based leadership programme developed at Google.

Social Presencing Theatre: Leadership development programme that integrates embodiment and coaching practices.

Stanford Graduate School of Business Coaching Network: Provides resources and networking opportunities for executive coaches.

Strozzi Institute: Focuses on somatic leadership coaching for personal and professional transformation.

Tavistock as an Executive Coaching: Offers psychodynamic coaching training for executives.

Team Coaching Studio: Specialises in team coaching and leadership development for organisations.

The NeuroLeadership Journal: Publishes research on neuroscience applications in leadership and executive coaching.

The New Leadership Institute: Leadership development consultancy offering coaching programmes for executives.

The Samaritans: Crisis support organisation offering resilience and leadership coaching training.

Warwick Business School: Provides executive coaching and leadership development programmes.

WBECS (World Business & Executive Coach Summit): Global online conference offering insights and networking for executive coaches.

WeCoach!: Leadership coaching platform specifically focused on empowering women leaders.

Wisdom8: Leadership consultancy providing executive coaching services to global organisations.

World Café: Facilitates large-group dialogue and decision-making, often applied in leadership coaching.