What is 'Coaching'? An Exploration of Conflicting Paradigms

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Abstract

This paper sets out the argument that quite fundamental issues, both theoretical and practical, divide the various approaches to coaching. It does not suggest that any one approach is better or right; each approach would be more appropriate in particular situations. However, by understanding more clearly the nature of the difference between approaches, it will also be easier to fit a coaching model to specific situations. It is argued here that goal-oriented approaches to coaching generally have a different perspective than therapeutic or personal-development approaches on the role of the coach and on the objective of coaching.

Introduction

Like many other emerging disciplines, coaching has struggled with problems of definition. Parsloe and Wray (2000) argue that part of the reason for a lack of clarity about the definition of coaching is because, "we are in the middle of an intellectual revolution." The term 'coaching' can refer to a form of mentoring (e.g. sports coaching), and this conception of the term has also been applied in areas such as education and the workplace, leading to confusion about what coaching is. While a consensus emerged that distinguished mentoring (instructional) from coaching (non-directive), the boundaries are not firmly set (Parsloe & Wray, 2000). Thus, while some approaches to coaching strenuously discourage the coach from advice-giving, others still regard the coach as a guide (e.g. Cavanagh, 2006).

Additionally, even as the coaching/mentoring dichotomy became more widely accepted, coaching increasingly came under the influence of a range of therapeutic or personal-development approaches. Whereas goal-oriented approaches to coaching are typically brief and aim for relatively immediate results, therapeutic and personal-development approaches tend to go deeper and are more prolonged. While coaching has been immeasurably enriched by the injection new ideas and techniques, it has led to increased confusion about the precise nature of coaching and what it is designed to achieve. Consequently, coaching has become increasingly difficult to define (Stober & Grant, 2006).

This study is intended to clarify the particular characteristics of goal-oriented coaching, which it is feared has become obscured amongst the burgeoning of new ideas in the coaching orbit. While these approaches have enormously enriched the coaching landscape, they have also made it a much more confusing place. Goal-oriented coaching has its own unique philosophy, based amongst others on goal and self-regulatory theories, which is worthy of serious exploration. Goal oriented approaches have much to commend them, but sometimes seem overshadowed by what appear to be more complete approaches to coaching, based on therapeutic or personal-development models. This paper argues that the field of coaching would benefit by more overtly recognising that it incorporates quite diverse paradigms.

The paper proposes three dimensions across which to define coaching approaches: 1] Directive or non-directive, 2] Personal-developmental or goal-focused and 3] therapeutic or performance-driven. It is argued that goal-oriented coaching should be recognised a distinctive coaching paradigm, distinguished by three key features: 1) non-directive, 2) goal-focused and 3] performance-driven. Goal-oriented approaches to coaching have quite distinct features and theoretical foundations, and diverge from more therapeutic of personal development approaches on the issue of what coaching is primarily intended to accomplish.

However, while these models of coaching are based on differing coaching philosophies and methodologies, they are not mutually exclusive. While each of the various approaches to coaching has unique strengths and is best suited for particular situations, this paper highlights the important and distinctive role of goal-oriented approaches.

This study is based on an analysis of a selection of books and articles on coaching. The typology set out below was formulated using a clustering technique and textual analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The emergence of diverse approaches

In recent years we have seen the discipline of coaching benefit from an infusion of ideas from diverse fields. Many of these approaches were brought together by Stober and Grant (2006). For the purpose of the forthcoming discussion, a summary of a selection of approaches to coaching is presented:

Coaching from a humanist perspective – Based upon Rogerian (Rogers, 1951; 1959) person-centred principles, it views positive change and self actualisation as a driving force in the human psyche (Stober, 2006). Coaching, from this point of view, capitalises on a person's inherent tendency to self-actualise and looks to stimulate a person's inherent growth potential. This approach draws from psychotherapy a strong emphasis on the Practitioner-client relationship, suggesting that the relationship itself (its warmth and positive regard) is a main ingredient for growth. It also promotes a holistic approach, requiring the coach to address all aspects of the person.

Behaviour based approach - Peterson (2006) advocates a behavioural approach that acknowledges the complexity of both the human being and her environment, but which nevertheless focuses on facilitating practical change over psychological adjustments. This approach is action focused insofar as it looks to the future and seeks to create change and imbed it in real life contexts, but it still leans heavily towards personal development, emphasising the need for client learning, and to a lesser degree adopts a therapeutic emphasis on the coaching relationship.

Adult-development approach – This approach is based on constructive-developmental theories: that as people develop they become more aware of and open to a mature understanding of authority and responsibility, and display greater tolerance of ambiguity. Coaching from this perspective is predicated upon the idea of four main stages of development and it suggests that coaching at each stage needs to focus on stage-of-development related issues (Berger, 2006).

Cognitive coaching – Auerbach (2006) claims that although coaching must address the multiple facets of the individual, it is primarily a cognitive method. A fundament of cognitive coaching is the view that one's feelings and emotions are the product of one's thoughts: a person's perceptions, interpretations, mental attitudes and beliefs. Cognitive therapy helps clients replace maladaptive and inaccurate cognitions (Ellis, 1979; Burns, 1980). Auerbach argues that a primary function of the coach is to assist the client in challenging and overcoming their maladaptive and distorted perceptions.

Adult learning approach – This approach seeks to use coaching to stimulate deep learning. It draws from a range of adult-learning theories, such as andragogy (Knowles, 1980), reflective practice (Boud et al., 1994) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), which collectively argue that adults learn by reflecting on experiences. Cox (2006) argues that, similarly, coaching can be seen as a learning approach designed to nurture goal-focused, self-directed learners who draw on their reservoir of previous experience with a view to solving real-life dilemmas. Gray (2005) advocates a transformative learning coaching model that seeks to raise the coachee's critical reflection to question assumptions. He suggests that coaching has become a tool in the increasing shift towards informal, self-directed learning in organisations.

A positive psychology model – Kauffman (2006) argues that coaching should work to identify and build on the client's strengths and should seek to engender hope and happiness. Positive psychology seeks to encourage people to look to what is good and going well in their lives to reinforce a positive disposition. Positive emotions, it is argued, widens a person's focus of attention and broadens access to

the person's intellectual and psychological resources, resulting in improved performance. While certain aspects of the positive coaching model can be utilised to better achieve specific goals, it would seem it is primarily designed to effect general enhancement and life balance. Neenan and Dryden's (2002) *Life Coaching* is entirely based on positive psychology and focuses on changing perceptions and attitudes.

An adventure-based model – According to Kemp (2006) adventure education is an appropriate conception of coaching, as both seek to press the boundaries and explore new frontiers and horizons. Both, he argues, begin with an analysis of the present state, set out a desired destination and develop the means of reaching it. Both involve a willingness to accept a measure of risk and uncertainty (with coaching: psychological injury), to move to the edge of their physical or psychological comfort zone – and that it is out of this risk that personal growth occurs. Kemp argues that adventure-based coaching asks the participant to test his cognitive, behavioural and emotional competence, and to effect change by formulating new behavioural responses to situations. Adventure is a process rather than an activity (Priest 1999). The learning attained during the adventure is captured or anchored and the lessons are later applied in real life settings.

Systemic approach – Coaching using a systemic framework is about helping the client to recognise hitherto unrecognised patterns of behaviour and forms of feedback, and in so doing to see their experiences in new ways. It also encourages a holistic view, in which various other parts of the system may have relevance to the issue at hand. Humans are complex adaptive systems insofar as they consist of a combination of interacting systems that are affected by change and can respond to changed circumstances (See Carver & Scheier, 1998 chap 14). A systemic coaching model seeks to foreground complexity, unpredictability and contextual factors, and highlights the importance of small changes; it encourages openness, growth and creativity. This approach views the balance between stability and instability as optimal for performance (Cavanagh, 2006).

Goal-oriented approach – The foregoing approaches may be contrasted with a strict goal-focused or solution-driven approach which sees the primary function of coaching fostering the client's self-regulation. According to Grant (2006 p. 153), "Coaching is essentially about helping individuals regulate and direct their interpersonal and intrapersonal resources to better attain their goals." The primary method is assisting the client to identify and form well crafted goals and develop an effective action plan. The role of the coach is to stimulate ideas and action and to ensure that the goals are consistent with the client's main life values an interests, rather than working on helping the client to adjust her values and beliefs. In this conception, coaching is essentially about raising performance and supporting effective action, rather than addressing feelings and thoughts, which it is thought will be indirectly addressed through actual positive results (Grant, 2003). This type of approach is sometimes called 'brief coaching' (Berg & Szabo, 2005) as it aims to achieve its goals in a comparatively short space of time and normally focusing on a relatively defined issue or goal.

Approaches to coaching chart – Chart 0.1

Type of coaching	Objective of coaching
Humanist	"Coaching is above all about human growth and change" (Stober, 2006 p. 17)
Behaviourist	"The purpose of coaching is to change behaviour" (Peterson, 2006 p.51)
Adult development	Coaching is about helping clients develop and grow in maturity
Cognitive coaching	Coaching is foremost about developing adaptive thoughts
Goal-focused	"Coaching is a goal-oriented, solution-focused process" (Grant, 2006 p. 156)."
Positive psychology approach	"Shift attention away from what causes and drives pain to what energises and pulls people forward" (Kauffman, 2006 p. 220)
Adventure coaching	Stretching the client through entering into challenging situations and the learning that arises.
Adult learning	A learning approach that helps self-directed learners to reflect on and grow from their experiences
Systemic coaching	"Coaching is a journey in search of patterns" (Cavanagh, 2006 p. 313)

Quotes selected from Stober & Grant (2006).

While each of these approaches is distinct and offers a unique possibility for the coach, what is of concern here is the often fundamental differences that emerge as to the definition and purpose of coaching. What elements or qualities are indispensable to the core meaning of coaching, and what are merely compatible accessories? Do these methodologies expand or dilute the coaching discipline?

In the chronology of the emergence of the coaching discipline, coaching was directive, conceived as guidance, teaching or instruction. As coaching emerged as a distinct discipline, it was regarded as a form of facilitation or a people-management style, and strictly non-directive. Increasingly, however, coaching has adopted therapeutic and personal development elements. With there being such differences between these varying approaches, one needs to consider whether aspects of these approaches are incommensurable and incompatible; are there basic features which form the core definition of coaching?

Core and disputed criteria of coaching

Whitmore (2002 p. 97) portrays coaching as "optimising people's potential and performance." According to Evered and Selman (1989), "To coach means to convey a valued colleague from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be." Parsloe and Wray (2000 p. 183) summarise: "to focus, motivate and support others in achieving their goal", whilst Grant (2003 p. 254) defines life coaching as a "collaborative solution-focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, non-clinical clients." According to these definitions, coaching is an intervention aimed at helping the coachee to focus on and achieve their clearly defined goals. The coach uses open-ended questions to provoke thought, raise awareness, and to inspire motivation and commitment.

However, other conceptions of coaching include a focus on developing the coachee's abilities. Costa and Garston (2002 p. 21) identify as its aim the desire to enhance another's self-directedness: the other's ability to self-manage, monitor and modify. Coaches, they argue, "apply specific strategies to enhance another person's perceptions, decisions, and intellectual functions." Carter (2001 p. 15) refers to coaching as "work-related *development* for senior and professional managers" (emphasis added). Many definitions of coaching incorporate both elements of performance and development. According to Gray (2005), "The coached client is someone who wants to reach a higher level of performance, personal satisfaction or learning," or to Downey (2003 p. 15) "the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another." Linder-Pelz and Hall (2008 p. 43) state that "Coaching is about facilitating a client's performance, experience, learning and growth and about actualising goals."

While there are many prefixes to coaching (e.g. life, executive, cognitive), this paper suggests that most approaches could be broadly grouped into personal-development and performance coaching. This distinction is akin to Summerfield's (2006 p. 24) division between 'acquisitional' (acquires a new ability) versus 'transformational' (undergoes personal change) coaching. It also shares some similarity with Peltier's (2001) bifurcation of coaching into two main categories: a day-to-day management activity and executive coaching.

With very few exceptions, it may be said that the following features are common to the full range of coaching approaches:

- ❑ A systematic process designed to facilitate development (change), whether cognitive, emotional or behavioural
- ❑ Intended for a non-clinical population
- ❑ An individualised, tailor-made approach
- ❑ Aims to encourage coachees to assume charge of their life
- ❑ Based on the twin growth areas of awareness and responsibility

- ❑ Reliant of the twin skills of listening and questioning
- ❑ Involve a collaborative and egalitarian relationship, rather that one based on authority
- ❑ Creates a relationship within which the client agrees to be held accountable for the choices she makes
- ❑ Designed to access the inner resourcefulness of the client, and built on her wealth of knowledge, experience and intuition

One final feature is core to the overwhelming majority of approaches:

- ❑ Focused on the achievement of a clear stated goal, rather than problem analysis

However, while the foregoing list gives the impression of a broad base of agreement across the coaching literature, in fact there are issues of sharp divergence, relating to the nature of the coaching relationship, the function of coaching and the scope of the coaching intervention. These issues are of paramount importance to some approaches and have the capacity provoke intense disagreement and polarise opinion. For example:

- ❑ Does the coach need domain-specific expertise or knowledge?
- ❑ Does the coach only 'ask' or may s/he also 'tell'?
- ❑ Is coaching primarily designed to foster personal growth or to raise performance?
- ❑ How central is the relationship to the coaching process?
- ❑ Is it essential for coaching to adopt a holistic view?
- ❑ Is coaching primarily designed to address feelings or actions?
- ❑ Should coaching aim to alter the client's values?

While the multifaceted nature of many coaching approaches precludes easy categorisation, this paper suggests that there are three main clusters of issues against which it is possible to categorise coaching approaches: 1] Directive or non-directive, 2] Personal-developmental or goal-focused and 3] therapeutic or performance-driven. While these three areas are independent of each other, they are here viewed as closely related both conceptually and practically; goal-focused approaches to coaching are generally non-directive, solution-focused and performance-drive.

In reality, no actual approach to coaching stereotypically fits the exact categorisations set out below, nor does any of them conform consistently to this trichotomy, but by thinking in terms of 'ideal types' we can see how some approaches are much closer to one side than the other. The three issues set out below are comparative. For example, all coaching models would regard a totally directive approach as incompatible with coaching. Similarly, all approaches to coaching would consider themselves solution-focused compared with psychoanalysis. However, when these coaching methodologies are compared, meaningful distinctions emerge, which this study sets out to explore.

Directive versus non-directive

Cox (2003) argues that the benefit of the coach's wisdom and experience underpins both the understanding of the situation and the adoption of suitable methods for dealing with it. Peterson and Hicks (1996 p. 14) advocate a more directive role when they suggest that "Coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves," which Peterson (2006) indicates is to be achieved by enabling people to become better learners. However, as Grant and Stober (2006 p. 363) note, the issue of "'coach as advice giver' is somewhat more controversial." Stober and Grant (2006 p. 2) cite Parsloe's (1995) early definition of coaching in which coaching is "directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills by a form of tutoring or instructing." Druckman and Bjork (1991 p. 61) portray coaching as guidance from an expert with a view to align the student's performance with that of the teacher. In Hudson (1999 p. 6), a coach is described as a facilitator but also a guide.

These early (often partially) directive conceptions generally gave way to a clear non-directive understanding of coaching, articulated by the likes of John Whitmore (2003). Parsloe's (Parsloe and Wray, 2000 p. 47) later definition follows a non-directive understanding of coaching, what he calls a 'hands-off' approach based on self-instruction. Whitmore (2003) suggests the hands-off approach should be applied whenever possible. Parsloe and Wray (2000) state that, "the more rapidly a coach can move from a hands-on to hands-off style, the faster improvement in performance will be achieved." This is because performance is enhanced when "control and responsibility is transferred from the coach to the learner." Stober (2006) draws from the humanist therapeutic tradition the need to facilitate another's growth rather than direct it. Accordingly, the coach manages the process rather than the content of the client's development.

However, with the growth in therapeutic coaching I would argue that we are witnessing a partial return towards guidance. Cavanagh (2006 p. 342) insists that expert knowledge is critical to coaching, without which the coach is no more than a "well meaning amateur". Some coaches advocate sharing one's theoretical model with the client (Chapman, Best & Van Casteren, 2003). This is particularly common within adult development or adult learning approaches. However, this may be generally inappropriate within a solution-focused or more client-centric approach to coaching. Grant and Stober (2006 p. 363) maintain that these two approaches are not "categorically different" but lie on a continuum, and the issue should be guided by what's best for the client. As has been suggested, this issue relates to the defined role of the coach and on the purpose of coaching. Certainly, those who forcefully advocate the 'ask not tell' approach would insist that their approach is 'categorically different'. Grant and Stober are correct to assert, however, that a skilled coach would know when it is appropriate to act as authoritative expert and when to act as facilitator.

Cavanagh (2006 p. 337) derides 'overly client-centric approaches,' which insist that the solution is within the client, as simplistic. He argues that "sometimes no matter how long we ask the solution does not emerge, because it is not 'in' the client, nor are the raw materials available for it to emerge via a process of questioning." Why it is deemed any more likely that the coach has the answer within 'him' is not explained! In fact, those coaching approaches that insist on a non-directive stance are generally targeted at relatively defined issues and goals, with which it is entirely reasonable to consider that the coachee could work out the solution.

Stober and Grant (2006 p. 3) state that coaching is "*more about* asking the right questions than telling people what to do" (emphasis added). A strict non-directive approach would insist that coaching is almost *entirely* about questioning and is not about directing. While solution-focused approaches recognise the occasional need for the coach to suggest a solution, they take the view that for most problems the solutions are relatively obvious but that the coachee needs to refocus from dwelling on the problem towards seeking a solution. In this respect, the role of the coach is to conduct the process not to direct the outcome, and in this view one of the most valuable skills of the coach is to know how not to interfere! Grant and Stober (2006 p. 363) conclude: "A coach with highly developed applied coaching skills can deliver excellent outcomes purely through facilitating a process that operationalises the principles of coaching, rather than through an instructor mode that emphasises the delivery of expert knowledge."

<u>Directive versus non-directive – How client-centric? – Chart 0.2</u>

❑   Is the coach essentially a facilitator or also a guide?
❑   Should the coach be advising or sticking to an 'ask-not-tell' approach?
❑   Does the coach need domain specific expertise or knowledge?
❑   Should the coach be encouraged to share their theoretical ideas?

Development-focused or solution-focused

While there is a general consensus that coaching is forward-focused, coaching styles diverge significantly in the extent to which they advocate delving into the subterranean aspects. Snyder (1995) highlights how some coaches adopt a pragmatic approach towards their client's problems, while others adopt an exploratory style that seeks to uncover the underlying issues. Personal-development and learning models of coaching, in particular, seek to address deeper dimensions of personality. Parsloe and Wray (2000) state that "Coaching is a process that enables *learning and development* to occur and thus performance to improve (emphasis added)." Writing from a behavioural perspective, however, Peterson (2006) argues that insight-oriented questions are not at the heart of coaching. Grant (2006) similarly suggests that coaching supports "solution construction in preference to problem analysis," the latter being a more therapeutic mode. Proponents of a strictly goal- or solution-focused coaching view coaching as a method of helping clients to reframe their challenges as practical problems, and help them discover the required internal and external resources. Snyder (1995) similarly views the coachee as a primary contributor to discovering the solution, rather than a recipient of therapy. Many coaches are steeped in a therapeutic model (Williams & Davis, 2002; Hart et al., 2001), and carry a deficit-conflict perspective (Kauffman & Scoulder, 2004), which Kauffman (2006) argues leads them to look to identify pathology and problems. Based upon positive psychology, Kauffman argues that coaches "shift attention away from pathology and pain and direct it toward a clear-eyed concentration on strength, vision, and dreams… from what causes and drives pain to what energises and pulls people forward" (Kauffman, 2006 p. 220).

All approaches to coaching include consideration of the wider context as part of the coaching format, and recognise that coaching needs to be adjusted in accordance with the specific environment. However, various coaching models approach this dimension quite differently. Numerous writers on coaching (e.g. Stober, 2006; Peterson, 2006; Williams et al., 2002) advocate addressing all aspects of the person, as lasting change cannot be achieved without a fundamental and holistic reorientation. In particular, the positive psychology approach as well as the systemic approach described earlier advocate looking at the wider context: the client's happiness (positive psychology) or the complex layers of subsystems (systems approach). In contrast, goal-focused approaches generally focus on specific aims. They seek to integrate an ongoing self-regulatory process into daily modes of behaviour, rather than aiming for a clear end result or breakthrough.

These conflicting tendencies support varying time remits for the coaching process. Personal-development and in particular therapeutic approaches typically require an extended time period to effect change. Conversely, Judge and Cowell (1997) and Sperry (1993) argue that coaching is designed to act in a far shorter time-frame that traditional for therapy. For while there are short-term therapy models (e.g. possibility therapy (O'Hanlon, 1998) and solution-focused therapy (de Shazer, 1985, 1988)) comparatively speaking, coaching tends to focus "as rapidly as possible on potential solutions that the person can recognise and take personal responsibility for implementing (Parsloe & Wray, 2000 p. 65)."
Another element is that adult-development approaches to coaching (Berger, 2006; Cox, 2006) don't seek to pre-state specific aims. In fact, Brookfield (1986 p. 213) argues that personal learning "cannot be specified in advance in terms of objectives to be obtained." West and Milan (2001) suggest that the role of coaching is to create the psychological space for reflective learning. This is in contrast to the

overwhelming emphasis in much of the coaching literature on the need for a clear goal (e.g. the GROW model in Whitmore, 2003; Greene & Grant, 2003; Berg & Szabo, 2005). To some extent, these two basic perspectives on coaching differ as to the description or definition of a goal. Goals exist at varying levels of abstraction (Locke & Latham, 1990), forming a hierarchal goal structure (Carver & Scheier, 1998). For example, Little's (1989) 'personal project' or Emmons' (1986) 'personal strivings' are more general constructs compared with the term 'goal' in the coaching literature.

Development-focused or solution-focused– How outcome-centric? – Chart 0.3

❑ How holistic a strategy must the coach adopt (breadth)?
❑ To what extent must the coach delve beneath the surface (depth)?
❑ Is coaching problem- or solution-focused? Is the focus on what's holding the person back or what can help to pull him forward?
❑ Is coaching primarily designed to achieve specific aims, or more general development?
❑ Is coaching short-term or longer-term?
❑ What is the primary role of feedback: to guide future actions or a learning tool?

Therapeutic versus performance-driven

All coaching models recognise that effective management of the relationship is vital (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007). If the client feels forced into the relationship, or if he is not convinced it is designed to help him, the coaching is unlikely to be successful (Latham, Almost, Mann & Moore, 2005). However, coaching models vary as to both the degree of importance and the extent of the requisite relationship skills. As a minimum, the coach must display a genuine interest in the client, apply effective communication skills such as listening and verbal skills, and needs to provide an encouraging and supportive space within which an exploration of the coachee's strengths and weakness and hopes as well as her aspirations can occur (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003).

However, the more therapeutic approaches to coaching display an increased emphasis on the practitioner-client relationship (e.g. Stober, Wildflower & Drake, 2006), extending the range and depth of issues that are perceived to be crucial to its success, bringing coaching more in line with the therapeutic relationship. Stober (2006) advocates a high degree of empathy and unconditional positive regard and acceptance of the client. This, it is suggested, may be related to a broader remit of coaching such as personal development and affective issues. Stober's emphasis on the relationship reflects a conceptualisation of coaching as designed to achieve a more therapeutic aim: to nurture personal growth[1]. In contrast, Peterson (2006) argues that in coaching the nature of the relationship is less important, although an effective relationship is a prerequisite.

Coaching researchers (e.g. Stober, 2006) recognise that there are fundamental differences between theories and practices of therapy and coaching. While coaching shares with psychotherapy the purpose of developing individuals, enhancing their potential and creating a supportive relationship, the differences are as important as the similarities. Psychological disciplines are ultimately designed to ameliorate dysfunction, whereas coaching is intended to stimulate future development (Grant, 2003). While therapy primarily addresses feelings, coaching is focused on changing actions (changes in feelings are a consequence). Cavanagh (2006 p. 320) makes an important distinction between coaching and therapy based upon complex adaptive systems theory. The purpose of coaching, he argues, is to push the coachee

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[1] Even with regard to therapy, the client and client's resources (rather than the client-therapist relationship) are the most critical factor to a successful outcome (Hubble & Miller, 2004; Linley, 2006). The relationship is likely to be even less salient with most coaching interventions, where the sensitivity of the subject matter is normally far less than in a typical therapy situation.

towards the edge of chaos, towards a controlled and managed instability, a condition in which human growth and change is most likely. The role of the coach is to ensure that the coachee does not slip into a state of chaos, in which there is a systems breakdown. This Cavanagh points out is the exact opposite of therapy, which is designed to deal with those who have passed into a state of chaos, and the role of the therapist is to retrieve the client into a state of stability and order. He argues that "therapy seeks to comfort the afflicted. In coaching, however, the coach is often called upon to afflict the comfortable!" In other words, whereas therapy is about restoring stability, coaching is about encouraging a measure of instability.

While both humanist therapies and coaching seek to raise awareness, they refer to very different types of awareness and to quite divergent ends. In therapeutic terms, awareness is getting in touch with one's feelings and is perceived as a therapeutic end in itself (e.g. Yontef, 2005). By contrast, in goal-oriented coaching, awareness refers to attaining a clearer understanding of one's circumstances and is a means towards taking appropriate action (Whitmore, 2003), comparing the way things are with the way they could be (Parsloe & Wray, 2000).

Therapeutic versus performance-driven – How relationship-centric? – Chart 0.4

❑ Is coaching intended to stimulate inner (affective, psychological) or outer (cognitive-behavioural) change? Is coaching primarily designed to change feelings or actions, personal growth or improved performance?
❑ How central is the relationship to the coaching process?
❑ Is awareness raising a means or the end?
❑ What kind of awareness is raised: getting in touch with feeling or attaining a clearer understanding of one's circumstances?
❑ Builds on existing motivations, or seeks to create new ones? Is coaching supposed to attempt to change the client's values?
❑ Is the coach trying to achieve stability or create instability?

Comparative analysis

As noted earlier, no approach is exclusively in one category (e.g. 'directive' or 'non-directive'), but is in reality somewhere in the middle. Furthermore, the terms used to describe the coaching approaches (such as 'therapeutic') are relative; even among the coaching approaches clustered together by this study there is likely to be considerable variation. There is an inherent danger of clustering approaches, and the temptation not to do so is great. However, for the sake of the argument presented here, it is useful to identify broad tendencies – with the clear understanding that such categorisations are likely to be contentious, fraught and imperfect. The chart highlights that it is only goal-oriented approaches to coaching that are strictly non-directive, goal-focused and performance-driven. It also draws attention to the common pairing of personal development aims and a therapeutic approach in non goal-oriented approaches.

Comparative chart – chart 0.5

Type of coaching	Directive vs. non-Directive	Solution vs. development focus	Therapeutic vs. performance
Humanist	Non-directive	Development	Therapeutic
Behaviourist	Directive	Solution	Performance
Adult development	Directive	Development	Therapeutic
Cognitive coaching	Directive	Development	Therapeutic
Systemic coaching	Non-directive	Development	Therapeutic

Positive psychology	Directive	Development	Therapeutic
Adventure coaching	Directive	Development	Performance
Adult learning	Non-directive	Development	Therapeutic
Goal-oriented	**Non-directive**	**Solution**	**Performance**

Conclusion

This paper sets out the argument that quite fundamental issues, both theoretical and practical, divide the various approaches to coaching. It does not suggest that any one approach is better or right; each approach would be more appropriate in particular situations. However, by understanding more clearly the nature of the difference between approaches, it will also be easier to fit a coaching model to specific situations. It is argued here that goal-oriented approaches to coaching generally have a different perspective than therapeutic or personal-development approaches on the role of the coach and on the objective of coaching.

Increasingly, coaching approaches are therapeutic in nature (Judge & Cowell, 1997)[2] and attempt to identify the profound psychological causes of the coachee's problems. Coaches often draw up a psychological profile of their client before proceeding with coaching (Gray, 2005). In contrast, goal-oriented coaching is designed to directly stimulate effective action. Given that coaching is designed to address the healthy population, as Gray (2005) argues "it is far from clear why coaching should necessarily so often adopt a psychotherapeutic approach" and is actively discouraged by some coaching training organisations as it blurs the line between coaching and therapy. Goodman (2002) likewise insists that coaches who "overemphasise personal enlightenment will ultimately undermine a coaching program" (2002 p. 197). Hodgetts (2002) and Saporito (1996) argue that while psychotherapy focuses on the individual's personal issues and the holistic person, coaching needs to focus on achieving work-related improvements. Similarly, Grant (2003 p. 253) claims:

> *In working with individuals to improve the quality of their lives, psychology has traditionally focused on alleviating dysfunctionality or treating psychopathology in clinical or counselling populations rather than enhancing the life experience of normal adult populations.*

It is important that the gap between these two trends in coaching does not widen, to retain the distinctive goal-focused character of coaching.

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[2] Linley (2006 p. 4) advocates adopting lessons from the therapy literature based on the "common factors" between the two disciplines, or if nothing else "as a basis form which to construct critical coaching research questions." What the areas of commonality are needs careful consideration. Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006 p. 3) are therefore correct that "evidence based coaches would do well to first evaluate the evidence's applicability" to coaching before extrapolating from other disciplines.

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