

## **Editorial: Interdisciplinary Research Agendas**

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We begin this third issue of the *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring* with an important paper from Tony Grant and Richard Zackon. Using a survey methodology, their research looks at the profiles of a representative sample of International Coaching Federation (ICF) coaches. The findings confirm the cross-disciplinary nature of professional coaching and highlight a number of crucial recommendations for future research that include: investigating the skills of coaches in recognising and referring client with mental health issues, exploring how coaches prior professions and training impacts on coaching practice, the effectiveness of telephone coaching over face to face coaching, the characteristics of successful coaches, evaluating the return on investment (ROI) of coaching interventions.

Coincidentally, the papers that follow Grant and Zackon's article in this issue begin to address some of these research questions, suggesting that the issues identified are of concern both internationally, and, since our authors represent different applied fields of coaching and mentoring, across disciplines.

Simon Walker's paper, for example, explores the growth of coaching from inductive, historical and conceptual perspectives and develops one interdisciplinary model of coaching that may well begin to address the 'diversity challenge' presented by Grant and Zackon (p.12).

Bachkirova's paper is also concerned with models and describes a method, based on earlier research, whereby coaches can explore self-concept with their clients. A series of five models are presented that provide the coach with a method of understanding and working on self-concept and personal development.

Laske's paper also addresses a vital issue. The measurement of Return on Investment (ROI) is something that continues to exercise the profession: coaching customers invariably want to see how their business might be tangibly improved by their investment in coaching. Grant and Zackon have stressed the need for research into ROI and suggest that "professional coaching associations may want to consider including explicit training in evaluation processes" (p.15). Laske's paper reports on a project that has started to tackle this problem of training through the development of an Evidence Based Capability Framework (ECF). The framework claims that the extent to which there is an equilibrium between programme resources (including coaches' developmental level) and the mental-emotional processes of clients, a return on investment can be expected.

Ferrar's 'Reflections from the Field' summarises some of the current concerns of practitioners and researchers in the UK by highlighting the problems inherent in a

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competence-based approach to defining coaching and mentoring. Ferrar identifies the difficulty encountered in developing competence statements at complex, higher levels of professional coaching and provides examples where this might be impossible.

The papers collected here, as well as illustrating the interdisciplinary make-up of the coaching profession, also underscore the need for targeted evidence-based research across a range of coaching and mentoring themes. It is a privilege to edit a journal where just such research is being presented and where the potential for high quality academic debate and discussion is so immense.

