

Coaching psychology: an approach to practice for educational psychologists

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ABSTRACT

Coaching psychology is a distinct sub-discipline of academic and applied psychology that focuses on the enhancement of performance, development and well-being in the broader population. Applied in educational contexts, the practice of coaching psychology has the potential to have a positive impact by supporting children and adults to achieve enhanced standards of functioning and well-being. It therefore represents a way in which educational psychologists (EPs) might elect to diversify their practice. However, EPs are disproportionately under-represented in the development of this emerging field. This article charts the birth and evolution of contemporary coaching psychology, and presents a case study illustrating the application of this methodology in a school context. Suggestions are given regarding professional development activities that might be undertaken by EPs seeking to develop coaching psychology as a strand of their practice.

KEYWORDS

Coaching psychology;
coaching; coaching in
schools; performance;
development; well-being

Introduction

Psychology has a long history of being associated with what Murphy and Duncan (2007) refer to as the “Killer Ds”: dysfunction, disorder, deficit, difficulty, and diagnosis, to name a few. However, it has been felt for some time that psychology has more to offer to society than the amelioration of distress and dysfunction (Miller, 1969; Grant, 2006). Indeed, it was this motivation that led Martin Seligman to attempt to redress this balance during his tenure as the president of the American Psychological Association in the late 1990s (Seligman 2003). The result of Seligman and his colleagues’ efforts was the genesis of what became known as *positive psychology*: a science of optimal human functioning that focused on the enhancement of life satisfaction and the study of positive traits and qualities such as strengths, confidence, hope, resilience, and happiness (see for example Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). Closely aligned to this developing new field was the emerging discipline of *coaching psychology*: an applied positive psychology that focuses on the facilitation of goal attainment, well-being, and positive change in the broader population (Grant, 2006; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a).

Coaching is defined by the Association for Coaching (AC) 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" (AC, 2015). In the practice of coaching *psychology*, established psychological principles and models are applied in the context of coaching in order to support the performance, development and well-being of individuals and teams (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b).

Coaching psychology emerged as a distinct sub-discipline of academic and applied psychology at the turn of the twenty-first century, and continues to be shaped by psychologists from across the applied psychology professions. Indeed, the relevance of coaching to the role of the educational psychologist (EP) has long been recognised (Cameron & Monsen, 1998). However, EPs are currently one of the least-represented groups in the British Psychological Society's Special Group in Coaching Psychology, prompting Law (2009) to describe the engagement of EPs in coaching as that of "an invisible minority" (p. 20). This is somewhat surprising in view of the value that coaching psychology can add to the practising EP's repertoire, and given the potential of EPs to contribute to the development of this emerging field. This article seeks to begin the process of addressing this disproportionate underrepresentation by raising awareness about the practice of coaching psychology, demonstrating its applicability in school contexts, and inviting more EPs to consider the relevance of coaching psychology to their professional practice.

A brief history of coaching psychology

The last 16 years have witnessed the emergence and growth of coaching psychology as "a rapidly expanding area of applied psychology in both research and professional domains" (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a, p. 3). Coaching psychology is a distinct branch of academic and applied psychology that focuses on enhancement of performance, development, and well-being through the application of coaching models that are grounded in established psychological and learning theories, methods and approaches (Grant, 2006; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a; Palmer & Whybrow, 2005). While applications of psychology to coaching can be traced back to as early as the 1920s and 1950s (Griffith, 1926; Lawther, 1951), the contemporary field of coaching psychology as a distinct area of psychology practice and research is a relatively recent phenomenon that formally emerged in Australia and the UK at the turn of the twenty-first century.

It was in 2000 that Dr Anthony Grant, considered by many to be the "father of modern coaching psychology" (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007a, p. 13), suggested that coaching psychology had "come of age" with the launch of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney, Australia. This was the world's first university-based Coaching Psychology Unit, and the first establishment worldwide to offer a post-graduate degree in coaching psychology (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007b). Two years later, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) created the Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (IGCP) at its Annual Meeting in August 2002, its aim being to facilitate "... the theoretical, applied, and professional development of coaching psychology as an emerging theoretical and applied sub-discipline of psychology" (APS IGCP, 2015). These two events marked the formal emergence of coaching psychology as a discipline.

At the same time as these events were unfolding in Australia, a similar development was occurring in the UK within the British Psychological Society (BPS). In May 2002, Stephen Palmer

convened a meeting for BPS members interested in forming a Coaching Psychology Special Interest Group within the Division of Counselling Psychology (see Palmer & Whybrow, 2005). This led to the formation of an Internet discussion group called the Coaching Psychology Forum (CPF), which attracted members from across the BPS divisions. Thereafter, the CPF submitted a proposal for the formation of a Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) within the BPS, culminating in the formal launch of the SGCP in the autumn of 2004 (see Palmer & Whybrow, 2005, for full details). With the formation of the SGCP and the development of a Coaching Psychology Unit at City University in 2005, coaching psychology was officially international.

Since its origins in Australia and the UK, coaching psychology has continued to develop into an international discipline, with societies in 13 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Australasia, and South Africa (see <http://www.coachingpsychologycongress.com>). There is also a growing literature and research base, in the form of, for example, the *Handbook of Coaching Psychology* (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b), *Coaching Psychology: A Practitioner's Guide* (Law, 2013), and peer-reviewed journals such as *The Coaching Psychologist* (since July 2005), and *International Coaching Psychology Review* (since April 2006). The International Society for Coaching Psychology (ISCP – formerly the Society for Coaching Psychology) now provides a route for coaching psychologists to seek accreditation of their competence to practice as such, and has published its own journal, *Coaching Psychology International*, since January 2009.

Several universities worldwide now offer courses specifically in coaching psychology, including the University of Sydney, City University London, the University of East London, University College Cork, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Law, 2013). With international congresses taking place around the world each year, coaching psychology is increasingly developing a global presence and profile. How the discipline will evolve over the next 10 years remains to be seen, and its future may well be shaped by those only just beginning to discover coaching psychology as a practice.

What is a coaching psychologist?

A coaching psychologist is a psychologist who works with others to support enhancement of performance, development and well-being using psychology-informed coaching approaches (ISCP, 2015). Coaching psychologists are typically practitioners who have qualified in another domain of applied psychology (for example, Clinical, Educational, Occupational, Counselling, Health, Forensic, Sport & Exercise), and who have then gone on to train in coaching and to develop specialist skills in that area. As such, coaching psychology is practised and developed by psychologists from across the range of the applied psychology professions, with applications in each of the aforementioned domains. This allows for sharing of practice, dissemination of research, and cross-fertilisation of ideas in a way that transcends the usual divisional boundaries.

As stated by the ISCP, qualified coaching psychologists are those who "... have a graduate degree in psychology, relevant post-graduate qualifications, and have undertaken suitable continuing professional development and supervised practice" (ISCP, 2015). Some psychologists may elect to practice coaching without formally using the title of "Coaching Psychologist"; in contrast, others may value the opportunity the title affords the user to define

the scope of their work without the confounding effect of prior client role expectations (for example, traditional expectations about the role and function of EPs).

However, it should be noted that unlike, for example, “Educational Psychologist”, the term “Coaching Psychologist” is not a restricted or legally protected title, and so it may be used, applied, or interpreted differently by different people or practitioners. Indeed, this lack of formal regulation leaves the title open to abuse by those who do not have qualifications or experience in coaching or, moreover, those who may not have any recognised qualifications in applied psychology. Nonetheless, while the title is not currently *legally* regulated, mechanisms do exist for psychologists to demonstrate their credentials to practice coaching, either through accredited membership of a professional body, such as the ISCP, or by meeting the requirements to register on the BPS’s Register of Coaching Psychologists (BPS, 2015). Furthermore, psychologists using the title or laying claim to specialist expertise in coaching psychology should have regard to the BPS’s general guidelines on competence and ethical practice (BPS, 2009).

It is important to draw a distinction at this stage between a coaching psychologist and the broader discipline of coaching psychology. Readers should note that the SGCP has adopted an inclusive approach to its development, with membership being open to practitioners and coaches from other professional backgrounds. As stated by the SGCP, “... the focus is not just on coaching psychologists, but also on coaches who are interested in using psychology in their coaching” (BPS SGCP, 2015). Therefore, the reality is that coaching psychology will be applied in different contexts by professionals with a diverse range of backgrounds, qualifications and experience.

What can psychology bring to coaching?

Coaching is an unregulated two-billion-dollar industry (ICF & PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012); anyone can call themselves a coach, and in doing so they may draw upon a seemingly limitless array of techniques and principles. Such diversity, as concisely summarised by Grant (2007, p. 25), is “both a strength and a liability”. Indeed, it was observations such as these that led Seligman to describe coaching as “a practice in search of a backbone” (Seligman, 2011, p. 70), indicating the need for coaches to pursue the development of practices that are both rigorous and evidence-informed. It is psychology that can provide this backbone in the form of its hundred-year legacy of theory and research into human behaviour and the processes by which change is achieved through helping relationships. Psychology offers perspectives on questions such as the following:

- What factors influence the degree to which helping relationships lead to positive outcomes? (Bordin, 1979; Murphy & Duncan, 2007).
- What conditions need to be created in order for people to optimally grow and develop? (Rogers, 1961; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- What influences the extent to which people will persevere towards their goals? (Bandura, 1977; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- How can coaches work with people so as to support them to move towards the futures they want to create? (de Shazer, 1985, 1988; Berg & De Jong, 2002).

- How can coaches help people to recognise and overcome self-limiting ways of thinking that may be interfering with their functioning and/or well-being? (Beck, 1967, 1976; Ellis, 1962, 1988).
- How can coaches work with people so as to elicit an intrinsic motivation to change and develop? (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

In addressing such questions, psychology offers a wealth of models and approaches that can underpin and bring depth to the coaching relationship. These include: Person-Centred approaches (Rogers, 1961); Cognitive-Behavioural and Rational-Emotive approaches (Beck, 1967, 1976; Ellis, 1962, 1988); Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (de Shazer, 1985, 1988; Berg & De Jong, 2002); Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002); Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977); Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000); and others (see Palmer & Whybrow, 2007b). These methods, many of which originated in the therapeutic domain, contain valuable principles and practices that can be adapted and applied to support the enhancement of performance and well-being in everyday contexts. As such, this extends the reach of applied psychology to a much larger population of client groups.

Coaching psychology in practice

Building on the work of both Palmer and Whybrow (2006) and Grant (2011), examples of coaching psychology in practice include:

- Coaching individuals or teams to achieve work or personal goals.
- Coaching individuals or teams in order to support enhancement of performance, development and/or well-being.
- Coaching individuals or teams to address concerns about specific areas of performance.
- Supporting the development of effective coaching programmes in organisations.
- Providing training and supervision in coaching and coaching psychology.
- Undertaking research into the effectiveness of coaching to further develop the available knowledge base that informs coaching and coaching psychology practice.

The earlier activities can take place in a diverse range of contexts and arenas, including (but not limited to): business coaching; career coaching; leadership coaching; performance coaching; stress management coaching; life coaching; sports coaching; and health coaching (Palmer & Whybrow, 2006). For example, research has indicated the impact of coaching on variables such as: need-satisfaction and well-being (Linley, Nielsen, Wood, Gillett, & Biswar-Diener, 2010); self-efficacy and resilience (Franklin & Doran, 2009; Lawton Smith, 2015); leadership skills (Feggetter, 2007); and performance (Libri & Kemp, 2006).

Similarly, in the educational sector, there is evidence emerging regarding the impact of coaching on, for example: student engagement and hope (Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Madden, Green, & Grant, 2011); teachers' well-being, resilience and leadership style (Grant, Green, & Rynsaardt, 2010); and on teachers' well-being, daily practice, and collaboration across the school (Lee, 2013). At the time of writing, however, there is only a small number of studies examining the specific impact of coaching psychology in educational establishments, reflecting the emergent nature of this professional activity.

A case study will now be presented to illustrate the application of coaching psychology in a school setting, and to enable readers to further interrogate the details of the practice.

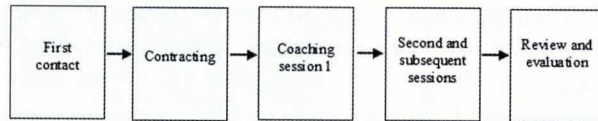


Figure 1. A coaching engagement (adapted from Adams, 2015).

Coaching psychology in schools: a case study

An overarching structure for a coaching engagement is described in Adams (2015) – see Figure 1. The following case study illustrates how this methodology was applied to support a secondary school senior leader who was experiencing some difficulties with leadership and management aspects of her role. Within this framework, the application of the principles and practices of Solution-Focused Coaching (SFC – Iveson, George, & Ratner, 2012; O’Connell & Palmer, 2007; O’Connell, Palmer, & Williams, 2012) and Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 2005) is illustrated.

In the following case study, “Rosanna” is an arbitrary pseudonym adopted to protect the identity of the coachee, and should not be considered to be an indication of the gender of the real-life participant. The principles applied and conclusions drawn are applicable irrespective of gender.

First contact

The coach was contacted by a secondary school head teacher who wished to provide coaching support for a member of her leadership team. Rosanna was a senior leader on the team who had been in the post for just over a year. It emerged that Rosanna was relatively new to the role and was experiencing some difficulties developing an effective style of management and leadership. The head teacher hoped that coaching might further support Rosanna’s transition from practitioner to leader, providing her with a confidential space to problem-solve some of the issues she was encountering and develop her own leadership style. It was agreed that coaching was a suitable intervention for this purpose, and so a contracting meeting was arranged.

Contracting

Contracting is a crucial stage of a coaching engagement in terms of developing a shared agreement about the focus of coaching, confidentiality parameters, and the goals that are to be worked towards (McMahon, 2005; O’Broin & Palmer, 2010). It is also a vehicle for setting and clarifying expectations, and for beginning the formation of the *collaborative alliance* that is so crucial for determining positive outcomes (Bordin, 1979; Murphy & Duncan, 2007). An effective collaborative alliance is characterised by: a quality relational *bond* between coach and coachee; agreement about the *goals* that are being worked on; and agreement about the *tasks* that will be undertaken in order to achieve change (Murphy & Duncan, 2007; see also de Haan & Page, 2013).

The formation of a quality relational bond between coach and coachee is not something it is possible to be overly mechanistic about. However, throughout the engagement the

coach can support this process by, for example, listening carefully to the coachee, demonstrating empathy, and communicating understanding of the coachee's position or situation (Gordon, 1970/2000; Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Rogers, 1961; Rosenberg, 2003). Other qualities such as being authentic and sincere, holding an attitude of non-judgmental acceptance, and demonstrating positive regard for the coachee are all supportive of an interpersonal climate that is conducive to change (Rogers, 1961).

The contracting meeting in this engagement took place with both the head teacher of the setting and Rosanna herself. This was important for ensuring alignment regarding the focus and goals of the engagement, since there were the hopes and aspirations of two client roles to consider: Rosanna, as the *coachee*, and the head teacher as the *sponsor* (that is, commissioner) of the engagement (McMahon, 2005). Having transparently discussed the rationale for seeking coaching and the hopes of both parties, it was agreed that coaching would focus on supporting Rosanna to find her own effective style of leadership and management that would enhance her feelings of confidence about securing the engagement and cooperation of her team members.

To begin the process of determining goals for the coaching engagement, the coach drew upon the principles and practices of SFC and asked Rosanna to describe her *preferred future* (Iveson et al., 2012). This involved Rosanna mentally projecting forward, imagining that the engagement had concluded successfully, and describing the observable benefits encountered in that future reality. With support from the coach to shape this description, Rosanna arrived at a scenario in which she would feel confident about approaching members of staff with requests, and in which the members of her team would be responsive to her attempts to secure their cooperation. The head teacher agreed that, from her perspective, this would address the need that had prompted her to consider the provision of coaching as an intervention. With a clear focus and an agreed outcome to work towards, the engagement could continue.

Since Rosanna's confidence had been identified as a central issue, the coach suggested that they use a 0–10 scale to explore Rosanna's confidence in relation to the identified practice area (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Iveson et al., 2012). Rosanna consented to this line of exploration, and said that her confidence varied depending on the team member she was interacting with. With some of her team members she indicated a very low confidence rating (Team Member A = 0/10; Team Member B = 1/10); while with others her ratings were higher (Team Member C = 6/10; Team Member D = 7/10; Team Member E = 9/10; Team Member F = 10/10). The variation in ratings was interesting, and suggested a possible avenue of exploration for the first coaching session. Again drawing on the principles of SFC, the coach suggested that in the next session they first examine the areas in which Rosanna had reported a higher degree of confidence since this could be helpful in uncovering existing strengths and resources. Rosanna accepted this rationale, and consented to explore her higher ratings in the next session.

Coaching session 1

When exploring her higher confidence ratings, Rosanna noted that she felt more confident in her management of people when she had a good existing interpersonal relationship with them. However, in her perception, she had few skills to draw upon when such a relationship was not present. Rosanna was therefore demonstrating a low level of *self-efficacy* in relation

to this specific aspect of her practice (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 2005). The coach hypothesised that Rosanna may in fact have untapped resources that might be outside her awareness, and invoked the solution-focused practice of *exception-seeking* to explore this (de Shazer, 1985, 1988; O'Connell, 2002). It was suggested to Rosanna that it may be helpful to consider other domains of her life in which she had proven successful at securing the cooperation of others, a suggestion that Rosanna agreed to experiment with. Since Rosanna was an experienced and competent classroom practitioner, the conversation focused on the strategies she used to secure the cooperation of students in her classes. The result of this collaborative exploration was a long list of strategies encompassing relationship-building strategies, attunement and empathy, motivational strategies, supportive strategies (for example, removing barriers to work completion), and assertiveness. The relevance of such strategies to Rosanna's goal could now be considered.

To provide further focus to Rosanna's experimentation, the coach asked her to imagine what a sign of progress would look like with one of the members of her team. Rosanna identified that it would be a satisfying achievement if she could get Team Member B to meet the deadline for submitting children's examination papers to the exam board, something that Team Member B had not managed previously. This had a negative impact on Rosanna, since she would then spend time speaking to the exam board and paying for late submissions to be couriered: this provided a very clear focus for action.

Bridging is a strategy in which the coach supports the coachee to apply existing strengths, strategies or learning to new challenges or domains (cf. Ashman & Conway, 1997; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman, & Miller, 1980). In this case, this meant examining the list of Rosanna's identified strategies and considering the extent to which they could be applied to the new challenge she was facing. As the session was coming to a close, Rosanna agreed to continue with this line of exploration outside the session.

Coaching session 2

At the beginning of the second session, Rosanna reported that she had applied some of her identified strategies with Team Member B, and had in fact secured a positive outcome. Team Member B had now submitted 20 students' work before the deadline, a significant step forward from the previous situation. That Rosanna had achieved this by calling on her existing strengths and resources was very pleasing to her, and she estimated that her confidence in dealing with Team Member B had moved from 1/10 to 7/10 on the confidence scale. To support Rosanna in further processing this successful experience in a way that might enhance her future sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 2005; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), the coach asked her to reflect on what she had learned about herself from the situation. Rosanna replied:

I've realised that I *am* good at leading people in my life, and that the only barrier was in me – a lack of confidence. I've realised that I *do* have strategies that I can call on to lead others, and it was stupid of me to think I couldn't do it.

Review and evaluation

Rosanna completed a structured questionnaire which asked her to evaluate the impact of coaching from her perspective. Rosanna indicated that the coaching had had a positive

impact on her performance, development, well-being, and her ability to help herself in future. She concluded:

I feel confident in my ability to use my skills in new situations. I feel happier and more effective in my role as a leader. I feel that I can meet new challenges and come up with strategies to help in my personal and professional life.

Similarly, the commissioning head teacher reported a noticeable impact on Rosanna's performance, development and well-being, observing that:

[The] work with Rosanna has substantially increased her confidence as a leader. It has also given her the tools she needs to become an outstanding one. [It] enabled her to see the resources and strength she had inside herself and the strategies to use them effectively.

Discussion

This case study has illustrated how coaching psychology was applied in a school context to support the performance, development and well-being of an education practitioner. In this case the principles of SFC and Self-Efficacy Theory were applied within the structure of a coaching engagement to support a senior leader in a secondary school. This resulted in:

- Enhanced practitioner confidence and well-being, as reported by the coachee.
- Enhanced practitioner confidence, as reported by the third-party sponsor of coaching (the head teacher).
- Self-reported behavioural change in the coachee's identified practice area (motivating and engaging another member of her team).
- Self-reported change in the coachee's sense of self-efficacy.
- Reported changes in the team member's behaviour (meeting the deadline for examination submissions).
- The coachee having greater capacity to focus on other aspects of her role (since she was not spending time dealing with the team member's failure to meet the examination submission deadline).

Rather than adopting a deficit model and treating the senior leader as being in need of skills training or advice from someone more expert in this area of practice, the application of a coaching methodology enabled the practitioner to harness her own existing resources in order to achieve change. This, understandably, had a discernible impact on her confidence and perception of herself as a leader. Had this approach not resulted in the desired outcomes, then skills training or behavioural rehearsal may have represented alternative approaches to support the coachee in the pursuit of her goal (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003).

An encouraging feature of the case study is that the coachee's self-report of progress was also corroborated by the commissioning head teacher, which strengthens confidence in the findings and underlines the importance of seeking feedback about the effectiveness of the engagement from more than one stakeholder. However, the study has not provided any evidence as to whether the gains made in the coaching engagement were sustained over time or generalised to new situations. Additional follow-up interviews or questionnaires may be a helpful feature of future engagements if such questions are to be investigated. Furthermore, given that this is a single case study, the conclusions that can be drawn about the impact of coaching psychology in schools are obviously limited. To further support the development of this discipline, additional research is required which investigates the impact

of coaching in larger sample sizes, and in comparison to groups who have not received coaching as an intervention, for example.

In this case the principles of SFC and Self-Efficacy Theory proved valuable in supporting the coachee to move towards her desired outcomes. However, there may be times when the application of other psychological approaches would be more suitable to a given engagement. For example, coachees who are experiencing significant emotional issues, or who are prone to self-limiting thoughts and behaviours, may benefit from a Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching approach (Neenan & Palmer, 2012; Palmer & Szymanska, 2007). Alternatively, a coachee who is struggling to find the commitment to change may benefit from an approach informed by the principles of Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The coaching psychologist therefore requires an eclectic repertoire in order to be maximally responsive to the individual needs of clients.

A word of caution is required at this point: while the application of evidence-informed psychological approaches can lend rigour to the coaching process, there is a danger of implying that attention to such techniques is all that is required to coach effectively. This is far from the reality, and is a misconception that needs to be avoided. Research into the factors that influence the success of helping relationships has shown that the specific models and techniques used only account for a relatively small percentage (15%) of the variance in outcomes, and that there are other *common factors* that seem to take centre stage in accounting for the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the engagement. As summarised in Murphy and Duncan (2007), the relative influence of those factors on the variance in outcomes is as follows:

- *Client factors* (the resources the client brings to the engagement): 40%
- *Relationship factors* (the perceived quality of the collaborative alliance): 30%
- *Placebo/expectancy effects*: 15%
- *Models and techniques*: 15%

Thus, the resources the client brings to the engagement and the client's experience of a positive collaborative alliance have been shown to be far more significant variables, accounting for an estimated 40% and 30%, respectively, of the variance in outcomes. Indeed, recent research suggests that the same finding also seems to apply to coaching relationships (see for example de Haan & Page, 2013). In this case, the collaborative alliance was formed and maintained by ensuring agreement and alignment regarding the *goals* of coaching, involving the coachee in determining the *tasks* undertaken, and developing a sound interpersonal *bond* with the coachee. As regards this latter point, it is the coach's relationship-focused skills that will either enhance or undermine their ability to coach effectively, irrespective of their theoretical or technical proficiency. As summarised by O'Connell (2002):

It needs to be reiterated that how we relate to clients as human beings is more significant than any techniques or theories. Technique is no substitute for a relationship built on respectful and attentive listening, reflective silences, empathy, genuineness, immediacy and acceptance. (p. 41)

Psychologists seeking to develop proficiency in coaching will need to ensure that their attention is not diverted from the development or maintenance of these qualities, especially if such skills are somewhat different from their natural repertoire: the evidence suggests that theoretical acumen and technical expertise can only get one so far.

Finally, it is important to note that, while in this case coaching was successfully applied to supporting leadership and management performance and well-being, there are many other domains in which coaching might be applied in schools. These include: supporting

the development of classroom practice; improving teacher performance; enhancing practitioner confidence and well-being; supporting student performance and well-being; building mental toughness in adults and young people; improving team performance; supporting organisational change; developing individual and collective resilience; training school staff in the use of coaching skills; and developing peer coaching (see Adams, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Campbell, 2015; Grant et al., 2010; Green et al., 2007; Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Robson-Kelly & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Tolhurst, 2010; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh, Campbell, & Knight, 2015; van Nieuwerburgh & Green, 2014). Furthermore, Leach and Green (2015) note that coaching psychology can also serve as a vehicle for the application of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs), which have been demonstrated to significantly impact on young people's well-being, relationships, and engagement with learning (Waters, 2011). Coaching therefore represents a versatile, psychology-informed intervention methodology that can be applied by EPs in order to make an additional positive contribution to schools.

Developing proficiency as a coaching psychologist

Readers who are interested in developing coaching psychology as an aspect of their practice may wish to consider some of the following professional development activities:

- Reading some of the coaching-relevant literature referred to in this article.
- Joining a professional coaching psychology society (for example the BPS's SGCP – <http://www.sgcp.org.uk>, or the ISCP – <http://www.isfcp.net>). At the time of writing, membership of the SGCP costs £12 per year in return for two journal subscriptions and the opportunity to participate in peer practice groups (subject to local availability).
- Attending a short course in coaching psychology (see for example <http://www.centre-forcoaching.com>).
- Attending a relevant conference, such as the SGCP annual conference.
- Practising with volunteer coachees.
- Getting going: there is no substitute for real-life practice and (supervised) reflection.
- Maintaining a reflective learning log about coaching activities undertaken, the strategies used, and their impact.
- Accessing regular supervision or mentoring in relation to the development of coaching skills.

Conclusions

Coaching psychology is a distinct sub-discipline of academic and applied psychology with a growing international profile. In coaching psychology, established psychological theories and approaches are applied to support enhancement of performance, development and well-being in the broader population, thereby enabling the benefits of applied psychology to be experienced on a larger scale. In schools, the practice of coaching can be applied with the aim of enhancing the performance, development and well-being of children, education practitioners and teams, while psychological principles and methods can lend evidence-informed rigour to this process. A body of evidence is beginning to emerge about the impact of coaching in schools, with studies indicating a positive impact on the functioning and

well-being of both adults and children. The practice of coaching psychology may therefore be of interest to EPs who wish to apply their skills to this domain.

Disclosure statement

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