



UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

UTS:

School of Management

Working Paper Series

<http://www.business.uts.edu.au/management/index.htm>

**The New Discipline
of
Organizational Coaching**

Kjersti Bjorkeng, Stewart Clegg, Alexandra Pitsis and Carl Rhodes

2008

Working Paper No: 2008/5



A New Discipline of Organizational Coaching¹

^aKjersti Bjorkeng, ^bStewart Clegg, ^cAlexandra Pitsis and ^dCarl Rhodes

^aSINTEF Teknologi og Samfunn 7465 Trondheim, Norway.

^bSchool of Management, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

^cCentre of Management and Organization Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

^dSchool of Management, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

Abstract

The paper explores and explains the variety of activities that go under the name of ‘coaching’ in organizations so as to provide an explanatory grid through which those practice scan be understood and evaluated. Given the role that coaching has the potential to play in the knowledge economy, as well as the evident and increasing attention being paid to the professionalization of the coaching services, it is remiss that knowledge about its practice is very much incomplete. We present the inter-industrial positioning processes that the organizational coaching industry author and a model for intra-industrial differentiation of coaching practices, a framework the organizational coaching industry’s embryonic state has not articulated. The coaches’ explicit acts of authoring identity together with our observations of their practice provide the base for the framework. We maintain that central to coaching is the use of reflective questioning as a means to generate organizational change. Thus what differentiate coaching approaches from each other are the types of questions asked. The paper identifies and critically assesses four key types of coaching questioning and the coaching models of which they are a part.

Keywords: coaching; consulting; organizational knowledge, organizational learning

Correspondence To:

Stewart Clegg, School of Management, University of Technology, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Tel +61 2 9514 3934 Fax +61 2 9514 3312

Email Address: Stewart.Clegg@uts.edu.au

¹ We would like to acknowledge the assistance of John Vamos, Roger Klev and Arne Carlson in developing the ideas in this paper. Any errors, of course, are ours.

Introduction

Today we find coaches in a wide variety of contexts: in sports, in schools, in religions, not to mention in everyday work life. In the latter alone the variety of types of coaches is manifold: there are life coaches, executive coaches, team coaches, sports coaches, organizational coaches and business coaches, to mention just a few. Those who call themselves coaches engage in practices that range from the highly paid one-off inspirational session, to the long standing relationship between a senior manager and an executive coach, to the organizational coach who builds the capabilities of teams and individuals. Moreover, coaching practitioners similarly differentiate themselves in relation to, for example, executive coaching, (Kilburg and Diedrich, (eds), 2007) neurosemantic coaching, (Hall and Duval, 2004), behavioural coaching (Skiffington and Zeus, 2003), evidence-based coaching (Stober and Grant, 2006), adaptive coaching: (Bacon and Spears (2003), and relational coaching (de Haan, 2008) and so the list goes on.

The differences within any description of these types of coaching are as many as are the similarities between such types. In the end it seems hard to know what this term coaching is actually referring to when it is used in an organizational context. This is the case partially because coaching is a commercial enterprise and each practitioner seeks to present a unique and differentiated offer to the market. It is also the case because as a relatively recently developed field that is still somewhat embryonic, coaching presents a highly contested terrain (Clegg, Rhodes and Kornberger 2007).

Although there are advantages for both academics and practitioners in defining an embryonic field relatively early in its institutionalization, surprisingly, there has been little or no interest from the larger research community in investigating and exploring what coaching is, and what it does. It is to this task that we set out in this paper. The paper seeks to critically explore and explain the variety of activities that go under the name of 'coaching' in organizations so as to provide an explanatory grid through which those practice can be understood and evaluated.

In any contested terrain research results are afloat as signifiers that different forms of practice might attach themselves to; this research is no exception. Grounded in our empirical research this article suggests a framework to differentiate between types of coaching in organizations. While our framework builds on previous contributions, it also expands these to include the coaching of collectives, not just at a team, but at an organizational level. While much of the literature on coaching is written from the vantage point of defending one or other of the proponents of a specific approach, here we take a different tack. Concerned with issues of practice, we approach coaching from the perspective of identity.

There are two important processes of identity work which we discuss in this paper. First, we explore the explicit inter-industry positioning processes the organizational coaches engage in. Here we consider specifically consider the coaches' explicit authoring of a professional identity in a balancing act where they position themselves in a centre between management consultants, life coaches, and psychologists simultaneously borrowing and differentiating positions from these. Second, we examine the intra-industry differences that are exposed in practice. We present four types of coaching practice, and develop a framework for differentiating these. While the coaches' explicit acts of authoring identity provides the base for the framework and are common to all the coaches involved, the coaching practises are simultaneously clearly distinguishable by the type of question they ask, and the kind of answers, or solutions, they are co-creating with their clients. We develop an analytical model of types of coaching to frame a discussion of how coaching in organizations can be seen against the wider terrain of organizational development tools, techniques and services. Finally we hope that the framework will enable organizations to become critical and demanding customers of coaching services by being enabled to make qualified choices between a set of differentiated services.

Coaching: A Contested Terrain

Grant (2001) defines coaching in workplaces as solution-focused, result-orientated systematic process concerned with the personal growth of the learning self. Further differentiating, Clutterbuck (1998) establishes the major variants of coaching as being either directive or non-directive. Directive coaching focuses on influencing the person being coached, often by enabling them to overcome extrinsic restrictions, such as other people's perceptions and stereotypes, external rules and power relations. Non-directive coaching tries to exert influence over factors that are intrinsic to the person, such as emotion and capabilities. While such definitions are technique-focused, emphasizing what it is that coaches do when they do coaching; there are also more esoteric accounts of what constitutes coaching. Flaherty (1999), for example, suggests that coaching is an ontological stance shaped by principles rather than a series of techniques. This is a definition that comes with a fair amount of social scientific and philosophical infrastructure behind it, including the incorporation of Heidegger (1999), Searle (1969) and Merleau-Ponty (2002), as well as Maturana and Varela (1998). What is drawn from this infrastructure is that the ontological status of the structures that the subject (i.e the person being coached) gives to their reality and how they perceive and act in the world allows the coach to deal with their 'reality' and their sense of being in the world. Coaches work with the dominant constructs through which their clients – who they commonly collectively identify through self-reference as 'coachees' – structure their reality and existence. This is done by observing "key aspects of their being, or more precisely their Way of Being." (Sieler 2003:3). The coach and the coachee must bond, it is suggested, in a relation of mutual trust and respect; they must share an ethical commitment to explicit conceptions of being human, that focus on competence and fulfilment. From within this perspective, coaches aid people in achieving these conceptions in practice by guiding them towards self-correction and self-generation of motivation and goals. Connecting coaching in this way with notable intellectual traditions of phenomenology and existentialism is not merely an analytical outsider's accounts of the coaching industry but one introduced and recognized by people involved in that industry.

In the entry on coaching by Pitsis (2008) in *The International Encyclopaedia of Organization Studies* coaching has been defined as

a facilitation process that aims to instruct, inspire, develop, mentor and motivate individuals, teams and organizations to produce the best possible results they can within their specified context. At the helm of the coaching process is a coach who acts as a *facilitator* or catalyst using a range of techniques, abilities or skills in the coaching process (p. 177).

Defined in such a way, coaching's affinity with informal learning is as evident as is its lack of clearly defined processes and procedures (Garrick, 1998). Indeed, it is fair to suggest that the field is so frequently rendered as being in a fluid state because it has developed less from canonical knowledge traditions inscribed in academic or professional garb and more from a vital self-help tradition – despite the phenomenological and other resources that are sometimes enrolled.

While the process of coaching is defined in various ways, its name is increasingly employed as a buzzword in the arenas within which business services of organizational- and self-help circulate, in accord with the overall shift away from traditions of formal learning occurring outside the workplace to more informally focused methods of learning within the workplace (Garrick, 1998; Clegg Rhodes, Kornberger and Stilin, 2005). The shift to learning embedded in real-time practices is mirrored in the development of coaching both as a distinct set of organization-situated practices and as an industry. Coaching has achieved its current popularity in this specific conjuncture: organizational learning and learning organizations have been treated as synonyms for organizational success in the knowledge economy and informal learning and competency development are increasingly recognized as keystones in (organizational) value creation (OECD, 2001). Thus, in what is called the knowledge economy, where what we don't know we know is

represented as the most vital knowledge of all, coaching comes into its own. The ‘unstandardised’ and ‘untutored’ knowledge is the knowledge that is hard to imitate, that which makes – and will continue to make – organization exceptional (Carlsen, Klev and Von Krogh, 2004). Employees may not have “been with the professors and read all the great books” (Dylan, 1965) but it is precisely their ‘untutored knowledge’ that knowledge management claims makes – and will continue to make – organization’s succeed. Left to their own devices, however, the nuggets of knowledge that people may metaphorically ‘own but not know’ may never be polished to yield their true value. The function that the coach purports to be able to achieve is the realization of that value. It is on the basis of such a ‘value proposition’ that coaches ply their wares to organizations.

Given the role that coaching has the potential to play in the knowledge economy the evident and increasing attention being paid to the professionalization of the coaching service is hardly surprising, albeit very much incomplete. Parallel industries of business services tutoring, coaching and certifying coaches have emerged from the field being staked out by the institutional entrepreneurs of coaching. The largest claim has been staked out by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) which, by its own proclamation, is the largest global association of coaches, with 12000 certified coaches. Concurrently, the International Association of Coaches (IAC), claim to be the certifying body that provides credentials to the most advanced level that the ‘coaching profession’ offers. Recently the Institute of Organizational Coaching (IOC) has been developed to verify coaches that claim a distinct “organizational coaching” competency. While these peak bodies may have attempted to claim territory, they have not entirely captured the field. Behind these most visible associations there are many more that are less evident, such as the International Association of Career Coaches, the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision, the Australasian Institute of Professional Coaches, the Creativity Coaching Association, the European Coaching Institute, the Institute of Executive Coaching and so on, and on, and on. Clearly, the arena in which coaching operates conforms to the notion of a contested terrain that Maguire (2008: 674) identifies for emerging fields: “where actors are only beginning to recognize themselves as belonging to a common enterprise, relationships are fluid, meanings are heterogeneous, understandings are not widely shared, and multiple possible scripts for action exist.”

Investigating Organizational Coaching

The research reported in this paper investigated the coaching industry in Australia supplemented by case studies of national and international coaching organizations. Through our research it became evident that descriptions and prescriptions of coaching practices vary greatly – not only in terms of the literature (as described above) but also in terms of its practice and the self-reports of its practitioners. Even the name itself is disputed. The wide variance presented some problems for research. The first obstacle was the set of interpretations of what is meant by terms such as “business coaching” or, as we prefer, “organization coaching”². Broadly, these interpretations could be divided into two camps: on the one hand we could include all types of coaching (life coaching, executive coaching, leadership coaching, etc) as long as it is performed in an organization (rather than say, in the home or a non-work environment). On the other hand, in a more parsimonious definition, the concept of organizational coaching would be restricted only to cases where that coaching is undertaken in support of organizational rather than the personal goals of (some of) the people who might work in it, where the individual’s coaching needs are seen within an organizational context. As one organizational coach we interviewed explained it: “because from an organizational coaching perspective, you’ve got to determine what the organisation wants. Then you coach people to that resolution.”

The large majority of coaching organizations are micro-businesses comprising one or two

² We will use the term organizational coaching as a generic label, rather than the more commonly used term of “business coaching”. The reasoning for this decision is simple: many of the organizations coached are not, strictly speaking, businesses. They include public organizations, member-based associations, clubs and co-operatives as well; hence, the more generic term “organizational coaching” is preferred.

persons (Clegg, et. al. 2007). These have not been our concern on this occasion. In our research we have followed Starbuck (1993) and have specifically tried to avoid the typical coaching organization and aimed for the exceptional in the search for our case examples. Further, as introduced above, we have chosen a narrow definition of organizational coaching: organizational coaching is performed, we suggest, where first, the enabling and improving of organizational performance is the *raison d'être* of the practice, and second, the contractor, or initiator, of the coaching is representing an organization, rather than a specific individual, that both sources and pays for the coaching undertaken. In addition our research is related to coaching practices that are themselves organizational: that is, practices in which the coaching is performed by coaches claiming to use a set of processes and proprietary tools that ensure consistent and routine practice across the coaching practitioners it employs. In other words, we are searching for similarities and differences in coaching practices that are beyond the differences in individual coaches' personalities and capabilities.

Our research has proceeded through an abductive process (Peirce 1940; cf. duBois and Gadde, 2002; Alvesson and Kärreman 2007). Abduction is "a process of interpretation in order to develop explanations based on observation [...where...] the explanation arrived at is not deduced or induced but 'abduced' from the variety and complexity of experiences and observations" (Iedema, Rhodes and Scheeres, 2006: 1115). Broadly abduction consists of three steps. First there is the use and interpretation of an established theory. In our case this established theory is the coaches' 'espoused theory' of their own practice (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Second one pays attention to the observation (or construction) of empirical material that, in light of the chosen theory, is surprising. In this research we found a very strong, shared espoused theory across cases, while at the same time the practitioners insisted on their own practice being unique compared to what they believed other organizations did. The third step in the abductive process is the construction of a theoretical framework to resolve the surprise; on this occasion by distinguishing the practices of the coaches involved, using a framework that, while based on the initial theory, explicates it by introducing a new set of explanatory concepts.

The collection of empirical material for the research was done in several iterations. In order to get a grasp on the coaches' espoused theories, organizational identity in coaching as an embryonic industry was initially explored (Clegg et. al. 2007) in research entailing a telephone survey to identify the main structural characteristics of the coaching industry, followed by structured interviews with selected business coaches. Subsequently, and based on findings from the case studies as well as this initial research, a qualitative questionnaire on coaching in organizations was designed. This survey was distributed to 52 primarily NSW (New South Wales) state-based coaches performing coaching in organizations, and answered by the 24 of these that defined themselves as 'organizational coaches'. The primary goal of the survey was to investigate correspondence between the identified, rather abstract, espoused theory of practice, and examples of specific coaching practices, including tools, techniques and methodologies.

The next stage was to investigate coaching practices in more depth: we studied four different organizations' coaching practice as the unit of analysis. We deployed a range of different methods to construct empirical material. A set of coaching sessions led by each of the four case organizations were taped and verbatim transcriptions of these used as base material. In addition nine coaches and eleven clients were interviewed, some more than once. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended and these too were transcribed verbatim. Secondary documentation, such as learning manuals and descriptions of proprietary tools, were used as additional sources of information. The material was tagged and analysed, preliminary versions of the analysis were presented and discussed with the Linkage Partner organization members and the analysis was iterated and enhanced by presenting the material for discussion with a progressively larger public for feedback, verification, and validation of the findings.

Feedback workshops (Pettigrew 1990) were an integrated part of the research design. These workshops were designed to validate findings and enhance construct validity (Yin 2003). Practitioner discussions of the initial versions of the results that we arrived at were important in refining and validating our findings and confirming the ability of the framework to make sense of a contested terrain. Such discussions were initiated in the following: several collaborative

workshops with the partner organization; in an open conference in which a representative sample of state-based organizational coaches as well as a few inter-state and international attendees participated, and also in discussions with coaches working in the international arena, outside the Australian coaching industry. Feedback from these sessions were used in the iterative analysis of the material.

In our interpretations of the empirical material we have focused on specific middle-range categories that expose the particulars of the coaching organizations we have investigated. More than anything, doing the type of qualitative research reported here implies interpreting reality by theoretically framing and imaginatively constructing the empirical material one encounters (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007). At each step we have been conscious of satisfying Schutz's (1967) conception of "usage adequacy" by making sure that our sense also makes sense to the subjects whose practices we investigated. Constructing the new framework, we also aim at enabling the processes of becoming, identification and differentiation, which the coaching industry enacts.

Inter-industry positioning: differentiating an identity for coaching.

In their investigation of the coaching industry, Clegg, Rhodes and Kornberger (2007) explored how organizational identity is continuously constructed in the identifications and differentiations organizational members make between their own and other organizations. They found that business coaches construct their organizational identity through stories in which management consultants are positioned as their antagonists. While coaches position themselves as flexible to client needs consultants are seen, *a priori*, as prescriptively framed.

In our empirical material we found a remarkable consistency amongst the coaches' explicit processes of identification and differentiation. Organizational coaches not only use management consultants as stencils with which to differentiate themselves, but engage in multiple positioning processes in their authoring of a professional identity (Carlsen, Bjørkeng and Haugstad, 2005). The coaches simultaneously engage in a positioning with and against other industries. We label these positioning processes *borrowing* and *differentiating* positions respectively.

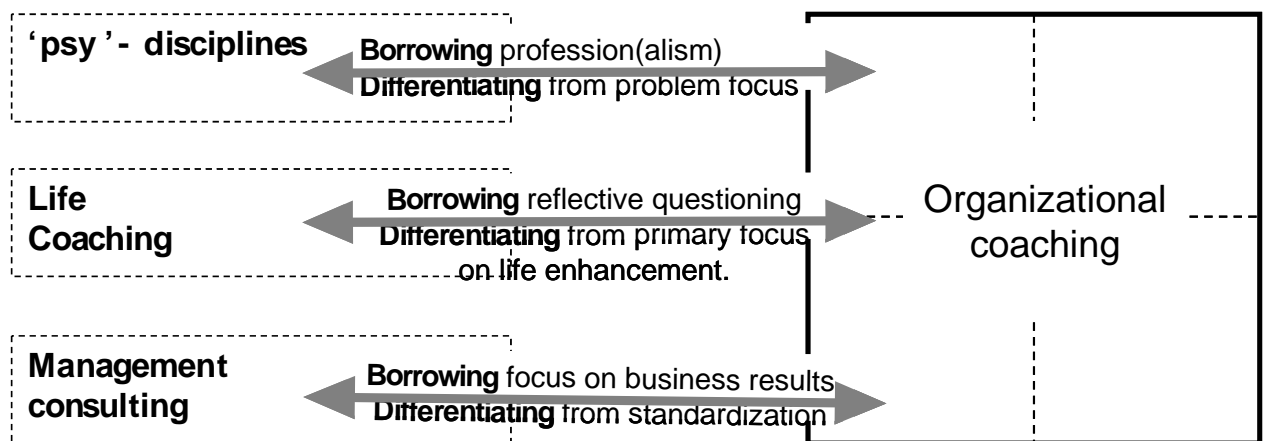


Figure 1: Inter industry authoring of identity: Positioning Process

The figure above illustrates the active positioning processes. In these processes the organizational coaches use three major sources: Management consultants, (life) coaches and professional psychological therapists. More specifically they borrow the goals of management consultants, the methodology of (life) coaches and the professionalism of psychologists. They seek to improve organizational performance, by helping people to define those things that they wish to achieve, and to do so by building a trusting, confidential client-coach relationship. At the same time they

differentiate their practices from the goals of life coaching, the methodology of management consultants and the problem focus of psychologists. The table below contains illustrative positioning quotes.

Positioning process:	Management consultants	Life Coaches	Psychologists
Borrowing	“we are in it to improve our clients’ businesses” <i>(interviewed coach)</i> .	“[we provide] empathy for executive, environment and context” “[we provide] personal, individual interaction, a strong use of intuition” <i>(Quotes from the survey responses)</i> .	“As a coach, I’m mentally bound by the same professional ethics as a psychologist: The information the coachee provides me is privileged information not to be made available to others”. <i>(Quotes from the survey responses)</i>
Differentiating	“...consultants provide finite solutions, demanding their clients to eat them, we don’t” <i>(interviewed coach)</i> .	“we are not all soft, not pottery makers, not life coaches “coaching has real business potential, [coaching is] not just the meaning of life, coaching for life, [executives] need it” <i>(interviewed coach)</i> .	“They [Psychologists] solve problems, start in problems, our focus is on possibilities, [on] potential” <i>(interviewed coach)</i> .

Table 1: Illustrative quotes from positioning processes

The positioning was particularly vivid when the coaches described the goals of their work practice. In interviews the coaches insisted on firmly positioning organizational coaching’s goals in improved business results, much more so than enhanced life quality of the client or their improved performance. Interestingly, and despite the explicit goal of improved business results, only three of twenty-four coaches found that having in-depth knowledge of the organization or the industry in which they were coaching a success factor for the coaching.

Contemporaneous with the references to business development and improved business performance, the organizational coaches position themselves through describing their coaching methodology; they make consistent reference to interpersonal practices they call “active listening” and “reflective dialogue”. Elaborating, they provide relational and empathic descriptors of their practices and unique selling points. Concepts of intuitive, individual and empathetic skills are actively used as a contrast with management consultants’ methodologies. The latter’s approach is framed as one of rigid prescriptive methodologies which, at times, almost parody consultancy as the kind of practice where the consultant ‘borrows your watch to tell you the time’ and then charges you for the service. In interviews and in the coaches’ general talk of their practices, each and every one of the informants, unprovoked, contrasted organizational coaching with management consultancy when asked to describe the practice. In their explicit positioning the coaches insist on a practice that is less prescriptive than what they posit as being “solutions-based” consultancy.

We suggest these coaches invest in authoring a position that situates them in the corporate world. In doing this they are describing their practice in terms that this corporate world recognizes, involving themselves in the language games in which they want to partake, especially those language games of business development. At the same time as a play is made for these well-established language games of business development and competitive success, we also see coaches needing to differentiate themselves from management consultants, through reference to a methodology that has a more relational and emotional character. Consequently, the overall language games of coaching are couched in a more ‘feminine’ register, one that stresses relational

and emotional issues. Demographically, given that about two-thirds of the members of the peak international body, the International Coaching Federation, are female and predominantly life-coaching oriented, that such a discourse should be characteristic is hardly surprising. One consequence is that those coaches most oriented to the rhetoric of business development and organization coaching may be expected to have the most ambiguous identity positions, and we might expect the rhetoric to be more intensive around developmental issues couched in terms of organizational performance.

A further feature of organizational coaches' positioning achieved through description of their practices is an insistence on the particular relation between the coach and the client. Again, the coaches borrow an established identity in relation to which they position themselves. Twenty-two of twenty-four coaches suggested that they are bound by the same professional ethics as a psychologist and that any information their clients provide is privileged information. The same attitude was reflected in the case organizations' formal descriptions of organizational coaching practices. There is an evident disjuncture between the ethical requirements of a professional contract with individual persons and the requirements of a contract with an organization that is oriented towards improving its performance. If much of what transpires when coaching occurs is ethically circumscribed in its circulation within the organization in question, then there may well be some performance issues that cannot, ethically, be addressed directly. Despite these ethical protestations, less than ten per cent of the respondents stated that they belong to a profession that would give them and their clients' legal protection on issues of privileged information and disclosure. While there is a great belief in the need for and the ability to provide a professional service for individuals, as well as an emphasis on reflective practice, reflection on the tight relation the coach enters into with the contractor of the services they provide seems still somewhat underdeveloped. The potential for ethical misdemeanour, at worst, or, at best, a degree of muddle and confusion, is evident.

Summarizing, we see that the organizational coaches in our research consistently position themselves in a triangular inter-industrial setting, simultaneously borrowing and differentiating positions from three industries; Management Consulting, (Life) Coaches and Psychologists. The goals they espouse are first, business oriented, stressing the positive development of the organization, while, second, their methods are described as emotional, relational and questioning. There is an evident tension here between the "hard" and "soft" polarities that we have identified. Third, and potentially contradictory to the insistence on a business or organizational outcome, is the ambiguous relationship that the coach, the person coached, and organization-as-client enter into, given the coach's insistence on being professional.

Intra-industry differentiation: Questioning in practice

Except for the fact that they are adamant that they are neither management consultants nor life coaches, there seems to be little to no agreement among those identifying themselves as organizational coaches concerning what constitutes organizational coaching practice. Is it coaching *of* organizations? Or coaching *in* organizations? Or coaching *by* organizations? Is it *questioning* or *listening*? And what constitutes methodologically appropriate questioning or listening?

While hosting a workshop with more than fifty coaches as participants in late 2006, we experienced several awkward episodes when the lack of agreement became evident. For instance, during discussion in one session one of the coaches rose and said "I suddenly realized that I am not an organizational coach at all, despite all my coaching being with a Telecom". Another coach insisted that "we are the only ones doing organizational coaching, the rest believe in fairytales." Others expressed views that positioned coaching as being more closely related to business planning and strategy processes. For example, one organizational coach described organizational coaching as a series of business planning processes, where business services are seen through the lens of coaching and proprietary products addressed to the resolution of common strategic and implementation issues:

So once we have gotten to the stage where they [the coaches] understand that our coaching is about business planning and documenting and helping implement that plan and the coaching is around whatever challenges might come up through that process, we then go through the business diagnostic and then the pitch or the selling part of the process.

As the coaching industry is still in its embryonic state, what we see can be interpreted as a simultaneous need for uniformity *and* differentiation. The challenge for organizational coaching is to be seen as something specific, as opposed to almost anything in the way of a business service that is *not* consulting.

While so far we have reported on the ways that coaches describe their own practice, we now move on to examining those practices as they were observed. Through our empirical material we have found that reflective questioning was continuously practiced by coaching. This questioning, however, was not uniform, with differing themes and meanings being embedded in different types of questions. Moreover, on account of these differences we surmised that the types of questions asked in coaching are essential characteristics that defined the different types of coaching practices investigated. Eliciting these questions provided an engaging research framework, one that succeeded in enrolling coaches in valuable discussions on the differences displayed in coaching practices.

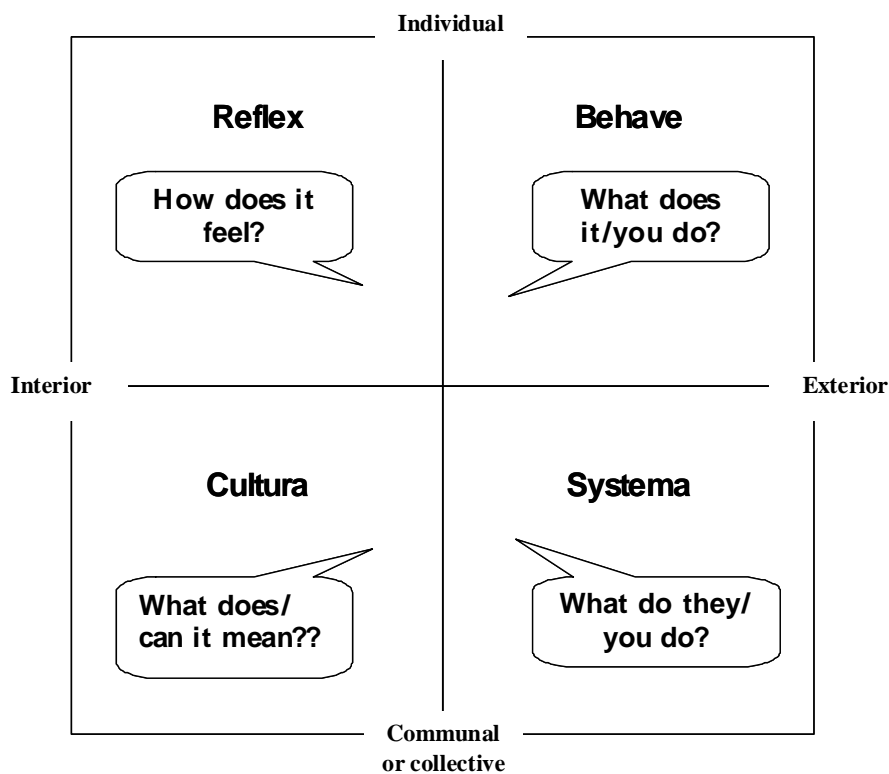


Figure 2: The Coaching Matrix: Intra industry differentiation in organizational coaching practices by main types of questioning.

The coaches' types of reflective questioning can be categorised in a two-by-two matrix; the dimensions are established by, on the one side, an individual perspective and a collective perspective, on the other an interior and an exterior perspective. The matrix provides four distinct ways of questioning:

- **Interior – Individual Questioning.** Here, questions focus on probing people's 'inner states'. Whether it is sensations, impulses, or concepts that are tentatively explained, the explanations are distinctly interior and individually directed. The question framing this approach is; *how does it feel?* The frame is essentially intuitively interpretative
- **Exterior – Individual Questioning.** Here, the singular is explored from outside, viewed as it is found as the object(s) of an empirical gaze. You find the behavioural by asking, *what does it do?* The frame is essentially individually behavioural
- **Interior – Collective Questioning.** This explanatory approach is distinctly collective, however it works from an internal perspective, focusing on the meanings and values embedded in organizational culture. The key questions here are about meaning; *what does it mean?* The frame is essentially semiotic.
- **Exterior – Collective Questioning.** In this case the collective is the object of an empirical gaze. Investigating organizations through the function it serves in the observable behaviour of a social system are found here. The key question is *what do they/it do?* The frame is essentially organizationally behavioural.

Wanting to highlight the differences in the coaching practices studied we have labelled the cases *Reflex, Behave, Systema* and *Cultura*. As an aid in reading the empirical material figure 2 presents the main mode of questioning and place the cases studied in relation to these. We have labelled the above model the Coaching Matrix as it enables us to distinguish between the types of organizational coaching we have studied. Supported by Wilber (1996) we suggest that these are the four main types of questioning recognised in human sense making processes, and suggest that they as such provide a valuable framework for understanding the major differences in coaching practices in general.

Presenting the cases, we have chosen to emphasise those aspects of their practices in which they most notably differ: as suggested these are first and foremost the themes and mode of their questioning. These themes are however also mirrored in the way they hold organizational development proceeds, the tools they use, and their underlying learning ideologies. Table 2 presents a summary of the empirical material.

Table 2: Summary of main differences in the practices of the case exemplars.

Categories	<i>Reflex</i>	<i>Behave</i>	<i>Cultura</i>	<i>Systema</i>
The coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the coachees' to reflect on behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the coachee's performance by evoking (re)action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables the creation of organizational meaning and motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the creation of organizational systems
Development cornerstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More reflective people create better businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New patterns of (individual) performance create better businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired, motivated collectives gives good business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational systems and all level accountability create better businesses.
Coaching process step by step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve (enquiry) • Develop • Commit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know yourself • Do not project your own assumptions on to the coachee • Enquire – be curious • Find a joint meaning • Create a tension; force the coachee to make a choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating space and inviting employees voices and work in development processes • Coupling engagement and responsibility • Creating accountability through collective awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulating future perfect statements • Identifying what do we need to do to get to the future perfect • Articulate how to measure one's progress in moving there • Assign responsibility • Follow up processes for activation and accountability
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One on one conversations • Personality charts • Dialogical inquiry • Scenarios, role plays, to enable discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical training/pretending in terms of voice and body language • Provocation, • Real life discussion, • Role plays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space Technology • Learning Histories • Value Maker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process modelling • Enrol and empower the workers • Creation of paper and computer based boundary objects for accountability
Learning Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is individual, needs reflection, • Focus on articulating patterns of action, belief and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is individual, • Learning by doing • Learning by facing up to issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by constructing meaning • Change is learning • Learning by doing, doing by opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is changed (collective) behaviour. • Push people to articulate goals methods, strengths and weaknesses, seek to systemize an approach, make the members accountable for activating the systems
Leading Metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception is reality • You've got to surface what's under the iceberg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fake it till you make it • War Metaphors (loose a battle, win the war) • There is no right or wrong, good or bad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those engaging are those deciding • Give space for engagement and motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't think as smart as you are • Make the rubber hit the road

Reflex

Reflex's coaching practice is first and foremost distinguished by the coach working to enable its clients to reflect on their behaviour. In their client organizations *Reflex* typically coach middle to upper level managers. The coaching is primarily performed in one-to-one conversations, either in formally set meetings or as “day-to-day coaching” (terminology taken from *Reflex's* Learning Manuals). Parallel to the coaching, managers are simultaneously trained to coach their own employees. The training consists of a predefined course where the learning goals and outcome are defined by the facilitators. In the formal coaching sessions, a succession of coaching

conversations is arranged in which learning goals are defined by the coachee. Day-to-day coaching is the label put on all situations in which the coach (and the manager) has an opportunity to enhance someone's performance by reflecting on the person's action.

In the coaching performed by coaches from *Reflex*, the underlying organizational developmental model that is applied is one of aggregation: the combined coached and improved performances of individuals are expected to enhance the overall business performance. The approach seems to be that if they work with enough individuals in the organization and improve each one, then the organization will improve. The final goal however is definitively improved business performance:

Coaching isn't about keeping people in the business, necessarily. It is about helping people make the right decision for them based on their values as well. The best decision for some people might be to leave the business. We at [Company Name] aren't going to be soft and fluffy about it. (*Coach, Reflex*)

Most often coaching consists of one-to-one conversations (sometimes with members of the client organization coaching each other), but also includes the use of personality assessments and role plays. While experienced coaches are expected to know the coaching procedures as 'second nature', they also have access to what they call 'cheating charts'. These are guidelines used to facilitate discussions of interpretations of past events and future possibilities. The questioning guiding *Reflex* coaching typically concerns emotions and personal interpretations of happenings and own and others' behaviour: "How does it feel? What makes you feel this way?" The cheating charts looks very much like the two column reflexive interpretations of dialogues that we know from Peter Senge's (1990) *The Fifth Discipline*, and Argyris and Schon' (1996) *Organizational Learning II*. A dialogue is written down on a piece of paper. The paper is divided into two columns, one for the dialogue, one used for writing down the emotions and interpretations experienced during the dialogue. The two-column chart is then used by the coach and the client to investigate and (re)interpret the incident, in which the coach insists on questioning the attitudes and presuppositions of the client.

We characterize *Reflex's* coaching practice as empathetic, recognized by the coach heavily engaging him or herself in the client's situation:

Here... there's one thing for me that's really crucial in this whole program, is you have to seek first to understand before you can hope to be understood³. If you don't do the first bit the second bit just becomes telling [...] Mutual ... has to be the first bit first. You earn the right to put your point across by understanding their point. You earn the right to coach. (*Reflex coach*).

The engagement phase, in which the coaches claim to become personally involved in the client's challenges and way of seeing the world, is followed by a developing phase, where the client's reflection on action and interpretation is emphasized. Finally, there is a process of committing the client to solutions found in the developing phase. In the formal coaching session, this phase is executed as a formal assignment termed "Learner's Record" in which the client is expected to write down his or her reflection on the coaching session, the subsequent practice, and the new assignments, or learning (reflection) tasks they are to undertake before the next coaching session. The learning ideology that is exposed in *Reflex's* work is individual, reflective and directive; it is through conscious exploring, articulating and reflecting on past emotions and event interpretations that the client is to learn. As articulated by one of the coaches:

That is a really important point. Great coaches don't give people they

³ The connection between coaching and popular management literature is evident in this statement. Although not made explicit by the coach, here they are echoing phrases found in Stephen Covey's best selling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, but using them as if they were their own.

coach the answer. They help them come to their own conclusion and their own answers themselves because that is the way that they ensure the person being coached has learnt. Also, the purpose of coaching is to achieve positive change in the level of skills or behaviour of the learner... Change can be effected only when the learner is discontent with their current level of performance of a skill or behaviour.

Reflex's leading metaphor, which is repeated continuously throughout the coaching, is that "perception is reality", a sentiment that displays a strong focus on inner states. Perception of past and future events is what the coach and the client work on changing, because, according to their mantra, changing perceptions will also change reality.

Behave

Behave works from the idea that behavioural patterns are habits and that such habits are hard to change. They see coaching in term of the habits of both the coach and the client – the former who must develop good habits both in themselves and other. As one of *Behave*'s coaches described it to us:

We are what we repeatedly do, excellence then is an, not an act but a habit ... If you're continually coaching, it becomes a habit and you probably don't even notice you're doing it half the time and then you're getting better at it. So I made coaching habitual for me, it becomes second nature and I become excellent at it, yeah? It's habit for me and as a coach I want to get into great habits, good habits, that's what I want to be, that's one of the outcomes I want to have as a great coach, it's also about building those great habits in the people you coach so it's a double edged sword here yeah? So not only, is it about me as a coach building my own habits and getting great habits in my own way of working but it's also about building great habits with my people so it's, it's a both ways there. (*Coach, Behave*)

The governing idea behind *Behave*'s coaching is that, although it is difficult to do, habits can be changed. While large-scale change may occur through jolts and shocks that disturb established patterns of behaviour (cf. Meyer, Brooks and Goes 1990), smaller changes that can be instigated by coaching may occur by consciously changing one act at a time. By repeatedly changing the physical appearance of a particular action, for example if the client changes his or her body language when making a presentation from appearing reluctant to joyous, the attitude towards that action will eventually change, and new habits will be established. The client will simply come to view presentations as more positive events, and possibly strive towards giving more. The coach's task is dual: first; to question the patterns of behaviour the client exhibits and to reveal where the client does not perform as wanted; second, to enable the client to practice new patterns of behaviour. The slogan "fake it till you make it" is continuously repeated as a guiding slogan by the coach – signifying that it is behaviour that is judged as making reality and so a change in behaviour can become a complete change in reality itself. As one coach described it:

So being able to fake curious, remember I said at the beginning, let's get real here you're not going to walk into work feeling empathetic, patient, kind, loving or excited. You're going to walk in feeling angry, impatient and frustrated not, you know, occasionally. So if that's the case, if you can't be it, fake it, your tone and your body will follow. (*Coach, Behave*)

As with *Reflex* the organizational development emphasis with respect to the client organization is on changing behaviour one individual at a time, anticipating that this will eventually enable better overall performance of the business.

In coaching [...] we're looking at building authentic relationships, meaning we want your heart to match your mouth, that's pretty well what I have to

say. Relationships are built one person at time. My personal point of view on change is that you don't change a culture, you change each individual one by one and that's why we've got the coaching, to make sure you get to change how you want to at your speed, at your whim (*Coach, Behave*)

The tools and methods *Behave* use, while initially seeming similar to *Reflex*, such as role plays and dialogues, in practice have a different character. In the role plays, the clients are experimenting with the expression of emotions, pretending to be angry, happy, and acting out roles, and exploring the effects of different uses of voice and body language. In Shotter's (2008: 512) terms, they are encouraged to try out different volitional tones. Also, the coach operates in a manner that, dramaturgically, is highly staged, in which provocation, or activation, of the client is used by the coach to place the client in situations of forced choices that client's have to make. As one of the coach explained to a group of clients in a session we observed:

[Lets take] "excited" okay. Yay. All righty. Now what I want you to do is break into pairs. And to actually read this [arbitrarily chosen sentence] to each other [...] So use your paralinguistics, your tone, your pitch, your speech, your inflection, your breathing and your articulation if you want. I mean that's words so we already know you're articulate. Just say, 'the roses are red it's time to plant yellow ones', sounding angry, frustrated, excited, empathetic, curious and patient. So run through all of those descriptors each. Now what you might find is that you can do half of them really easily and you can't even fake the other half which is my concern. So lets find where you fall down, which is what we normally do here look at limitation to find out where you want to do some work and actually go back to the you know consciously competent change your tone, your pitch or your speed in the area that you can't actually just do. (*Coach, Behave*)

Compared to the articulation processes of *Reflex*, we see that activation of new behaviour is considered a one-step process. Pinpointing behaviour is the key in their questioning. *Behave* coaches typically focus on what clients do and how this can be done (differently), not what the actions means, and how they can be interpreted differently. Neither do the coaches make any pretence of knowing what the right codes of conduct are, or what they should be:

It's not about good or bad or right or wrong or As I said before we're not here to make you betterer or worserer [sic] or taller or thinner or righter or wronger, we are here to have you be the best you can with what you've got where you are and if you want to be the bastard from hell you can do that with more finesse today.

The coaching process is solely concerned about changing behaviour; any change in emotions or attitudes will be a result of the changed behaviour but does not appear to be a goal in its own right.

Cultura

Cultura coaches to enhance the creation of organizational, or collective, meaning and motivation. The *Cultura* coaches' starting point is that organizational structures and systems often counteract the creative potential inherent in working collectives and in their coaching processes they search to break down barriers to collective sense making processes, creating places and spaces in which these can occur. Typically *Cultura* perform their coaching in larger organizations in which organizational structures have become too rigid, making intra-organizational collaboration difficult. *Cultura*'s guiding principle is that such organizations are not practising at their full potential because they are unable to 'open up' for their employees, at all levels of the organization, so that they become fully engaged with work processes. *Cultura* uses a set of tools and techniques, which share two common features. First, they engage groups of people in sense making processes (Weick 1995); second, these groups are performing and working together.

Consequently, one of the major premises of *Cultura's* work is that work practices should be seen as sense making processes and any change or improvement in organizational performance will come through people working together, practising together, and thus creating new meaning together by making new sense.

One of the tools coaches in *Cultura* use is 'open space technology'. Open space technology, in the form *Cultura* uses it, involves inviting people from all levels of a client organization to a workshop whose topic, most commonly, is strategic development. As the participants arrive they are collectively engaged in creating the agenda for the workshop. In other words, the coaches create an event which presents an opportunity for the participants to fill the open space on the agenda. The participants are collectively invited to suggest the work tasks and topics that they perceive as important for organizational success and improvement. An agenda is set through establishing work spaces for smaller work groups to meet and address the suggested areas. As the work shop proceeds participation in the different groups is voluntary; if the participants wish to do suggested tasks, they can; if they want to relax or take a break, they are free to do that also.

The overall idea is that by having the opportunity to create directions for the company in which they are themselves enrolled and engaged, the participants will have a collective commitment. Importantly, however, this commitment is one that is more social than formal and focuses on their continued inter-personal engagement with the tasks. By working together on the workshop agenda items, it is anticipated that participants will create a new sense of shared meaning and a new ability to (continue to) work together. According to *Cultura*, this kind of coaching is very challenging, especially for the management as it involves great deal of insecurity. The management does not have control over the agenda and, simultaneously, they commit to supporting the solutions and work-strategies that the collective suggests. In other words management have to open up and trust the solutions, or engagement, their employees are offering, prior to having them presented.

In terms of coaching, and asking reflexive questions, the *Cultura* coaches indirectly ask about meaning, sense making, and collective purpose. What they do is to create spaces in which meaning *has* to be created – thus inviting the participants to contribute by proposing what they find meaningful and interesting to work with. As such, the coachees are situated within events staged as a condensed and concentrated space for negotiations of meaning. In the words of one of the coaches:

The leaders – they got to be brave. And the others too. [People] are not used to, to be given that much room you know, I think there is – some kind of a social contract we draw upon – we ask them what they want to do, what they're burning for – and they are all silent – until it gets so painful someone offers their idea, and it's like a cue; one goes, they all get it. That's what we call frying them, leave them to burn there in their own fat, feeling the pain of silence, before they understand that we are actually asking them to do the job, its like... from there - you go with the flow, the energy of the people, that gives power to any development process.

The *Cultura* coaching process is directed towards creating collective energy (meaning, motivation) and this is achieved by asking clients what is meaningful for them to work with, then to start them working on tasks with these meanings in play. The process is intended to provide space for engagement and motivation, and there is no systemic push for accountability. Any accountability concerning the tasks the clients decide to undertake is created through an implicit social contract that consists of an awareness of these tasks as important because they are collectively initiated and acted upon.

Systema

Systema uses an approach quite different from the previous three case organizations. The express purpose of their coaching is to develop systems, norms and rules guiding a collective. In as far as

the individual is attended to they are regarded as a role, a functional part of a collective system. Here, the enabling of business performance is seen not primarily as an aggregation of individuals' skills, but a systemizing of collective behaviour. The coach works with groups of people and their ways of working together. While *Behave* focuses on the behaviour of individuals, *Cultura* on sense making, *Systema* quite specifically asks questions about the patterns of behaviour that exists in a collective. Through articulation of procedures, and systems for accountability *Systema* holds that new patterns of collective behaviour can be activated and old ones can be enhanced. *Systema* maintains to their clients that "You don't think as smart as you are" (Vamos 2002). Explicitly, their questioning is designed to push clients to think smarter, on the assumption that mastery over organizational cognition will yield improved movement and direction in the body of the organization.

In coaching sessions discussions are centred almost exclusively on business practice, and the coachees are often coached collectively. The objective is to interrogate the members in such a way that they surface tacit knowledge - i.e. that "which cannot be easily transferred because it has not been stated in an explicitly form" (Foray and Lundvall 1998:118). While it is commonly understood that such tacit knowledge is learned informally and indirectly (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) *Systema's* claim is that tacit knowledge can be transferred and developed purposefully through the application of their coaching techniques. These techniques involve the coach pushing the member to identify both what they perceive to be their organizational issues and then push further to make them articulate how they might deal with these issues.

Systema believe that that only they (the client) know their business – so the coach works tirelessly to demonstrate that this is the case through a constant and skilled use of interrogatively reflexive questioning. This involves a turning-back of questions raised by the client so that they are made into questions always addressed to the client, which, to be answered, requires deeper reflection than would ordinarily occur in the everyday course of organizational life. Often, for people who are unaccustomed to reflexive practice (Antonacopoulou 2004) this can be a revelatory experience as they are brought to an awareness of the answers to their problems: answers that they are capable of formulating but which, previously, they did not know that they could do because they had never been led to pose themselves the questions that the coach has guided them to.

Reflexive questioning sessions are not simply intended to be therapeutic, nor are they concerned merely to reveal elements of the character of the client previously hidden or repressed. In fact, they are hardly oriented to personal issues at all, except insofar as they intrude on questions of business performance – (often this is the case in small and medium sized family firms). The discussions revolve around issues of future perfect goals for the organization, what the client thinks that these might be, and how they might be achieved. From these discussions they seek to model the processes by which the organization should work to achieve a given performance result, and initiate systems to make different roles in the organizations accountable for achieving these. The organization is supposed to improve performance through the introduction of new systems that will engage and enrol relevant actors at different levels in the organization. The coach does this by getting the members to articulate their concept of organizational performance and to reflect on its achievement in terms of the results of the daily repetition of routine behaviour consolidated through the use of artefactual devices designed to aid more systematic management. These are designed as 'step' programs where the actual steps to be followed emerge out of the coaching encounters. *Systema* introduces these step tools as something that the coachees can implement in the setting. These are generic tools that the members of specific organizations tailor to their own circumstances.

The step tools are a part of a program in which the coach seeks to aid organization members' in building a self-conscious discourse that states what they will achieve and most importantly *how* they will achieve it. The coach seeks commitment by each organizational member to this discourse, recorded in objectives to be managed, as a tool to be used to improve performance. Much stress is made of the need for continued attention to the use of these tools as variable social constructions with uncertain effects. The onus is placed on the client being accountable to the definitions of performance that they have been aided to articulate for themselves. *Systema*

seeks to engage the coachee in this articulation through future perfect picturing (Pitsis, Clegg, Marosszeky, Rura-Polley, 2003). Following this future perfect picturing is a developing phase, where the coach and the coachee design processes to get to the future perfect, and then a committing phase is initiated in which the coachees are held accountable for reaching their future perfect⁴.

Comparing cases

Comparing *Reflex*, *Behave*, *Systema* and *Cultura*, we see that a typical *Reflex* question is “how does it feel, what makes you feel this way”. Their learning ideology is individual and reflective; through exploring and articulating interpretations and feelings, better ways of doing things can develop. Their leading line, which is repeated continuously throughout the coaching is that “perception is reality”, which also displays a strong focus on inner states. *Behave*, on the other hand, focus on learning by doing and changing behaviour. Questioning their clients and pinpointing behaviour is the key. When asked, *Behave* coaches typically focused on what coaches do and how this can be done (differently). As discussed earlier, the line most often repeated by the coach is “Fake it till you make it” – signifying that behaviour is judged to make reality, and a change in behaviour can lead to a complete change in reality itself. Compared to the articulation processes of *Reflex*, we see that the activation of new behaviour is considered a one-step process. In the practice of *Systema*, the coach works with groups of people, with organizational systems, and with their ways of working together. Where *Behave* focuses on the behaviour of individuals, *Systema* quite specifically asks questions about the patterns of behaviour that exists in a collective. Through articulation of procedures, and systems for accountability *Systema* holds that new patterns of collective behaviour can be activated and old ones can be enhanced. When *Systema* maintains to their clients that “you don’t think as smart as you are” the claim is made that their reflective questioning will push clients to think smarter; it will untap potential that lay dormant and which they did not know they had. *Cultura*, on the other hand, creates an opportunity for the coachees to meet and present their selves and invite each other into the tasks and opportunities that the coachees themselves find exciting. These meetings and the tasks collectively undertaken in them are thought to enhance the interactive practice of the organization; compared to *Systema*, the emphasis is not placed on systemising routines and patterns of behaviour, but on tacit social contracts created through collective engagement.

Typifying Coaching

In order to test our interpretations of differences in coaching practices we presented the Coaching Matrix (figure 2) to an audience of coaches who observed, keenly, that they could identify their own practice in terms of its representation, and were also able to correlate and distinguish their self-identification from that of their competitors. Of course, any typology is, by its very nature, a simplification. It makes (stereo) types of reality. The real value of such a typology is not primarily in distinguishing between the particular practices investigated but to see if the typology can enable a better understanding of a wider set of coaching practices. Attempting to lift the matrix from the particulars of our case exemplars, we sketched the different dimensions in its “pure” form, presenting a categorisation of four different types of coaching.

Upper left quadrant: organizational coaching with an interior-individual perspective. From the perspective of an organizational coach, this position implies that the development of organizational performance is achieved by enabling individuals’ performance; furthermore that individual

⁴ *Reflex* also has an engaging process but it is very different. First, in terms of who is being involved or engaged; in *Reflex* this is the coach; in *Systema* it is the coachee that is being engaged. Second, where the development stages in *Reflex* focus on intentional reflection, *Systema* works to articulate systemic behaviour for a collective. Also, where the commitment between the coach and the coachee in *Reflex* is recognized as a psychological contract, the accountability *Systema* works towards is represented in media as diverse as computerised systems, formal written role definitions, work books, and formal meeting notes. These artefacts provide for an accountability that is intended as a means of activating and monitoring systems at all levels of the organization.

performance is enabled by better understanding by the person of their *intentional* states. The proprietary tools would potentially be similar to those of a psychologist. Entering into such a domain, while being paid by the organization, the coach should make sure that they have systems in place to secure the privacy of the actual person being coached. From the perspective of an organization in search of coaching that chooses this quadrant, the enabling of individuals' performance will be seen to create the desired results. Typically, this position translates into a choice of leadership or executive coaching, because individual coaching of an entire workforce is potentially very expensive. In such circumstances special care should be paid to securing the privacy and minimizing the vulnerability of the individual client. The coach's attention to these ethical issues positions their integrity with respect to the people involved.

Upper Right Quadrant: Organizational Coaching with an exterior – individual perspective. Coaching from this position implies that organizational performance will be improved by improving the *behaviour* of individuals. A consistent emphasis on performance management would typically fit here. The processes and proprietary tools the coach uses will primarily be directed towards changing behavioural patterns on an individual level. In our research we have typically seen this performed in terms of role plays and physical exercises. Coaching based on these assumptions implies a very instrumentalist view of the role of the person being coached, and the coach and the coached organization should be aware of potential manipulation and lack of empowerment amongst those coached.

Lower Left Quadrant: Organizational Coaching with an Interior – collective perspective. The type of organizational development activities that would be found here would typically be cultural change programs, where improved organizational performance is thought to prevail through a collective “feeling”, often articulated in visions, missions, etc, and often lived through concrete practices. Processes and proprietary tools most commonly used to instantiate a collective “we” are team exercises, open-space meetings, and the production of learning histories (Carlsen et. al. 2004; Røyrvik and Bygdås 2004,). The coached organizations should qualify even where the coaching and the daily tasks are segregated. The less segregation, the more probability of lasting results (Bjørkeng, Skaret and Hydle 2004)

Lower Right Quadrant: Organizational Coaching with an exterior – collective perspective. Coaching an organization from this position implies improving organizational performance through improving behaviour on a collective level; more specifically this will implies improving the structures and systems by which the organization acts. The processes and proprietary tools of the coach could, in its most extreme variants, either include systems for the coached organization to implement (directive coaching), in a type of coaching most similar to management consulting, or the coaching tools could be used by the coached organization to enable it to construct systems and structures based on their own practice (non-directive coaching). From the perspective of the person being coached this type of coaching would typically be helpful in a growth phase, from an informally organized past to a more formalized future, where more systems are needed as the organization grows in scale or complexity. Here the frame is clearly critical, in the sense of articulating unasked questions, helping the organization raise what have hitherto been non-issues to issuable status. Important questions for working with such a coach would be the extent to which systems were predefined or qualified in terms of the extent of specialization required in the organization. Figure 3 presents the intra industry differences in the Coaching Matrix, including the theoretical and practical lineage of the particular coaching practices.

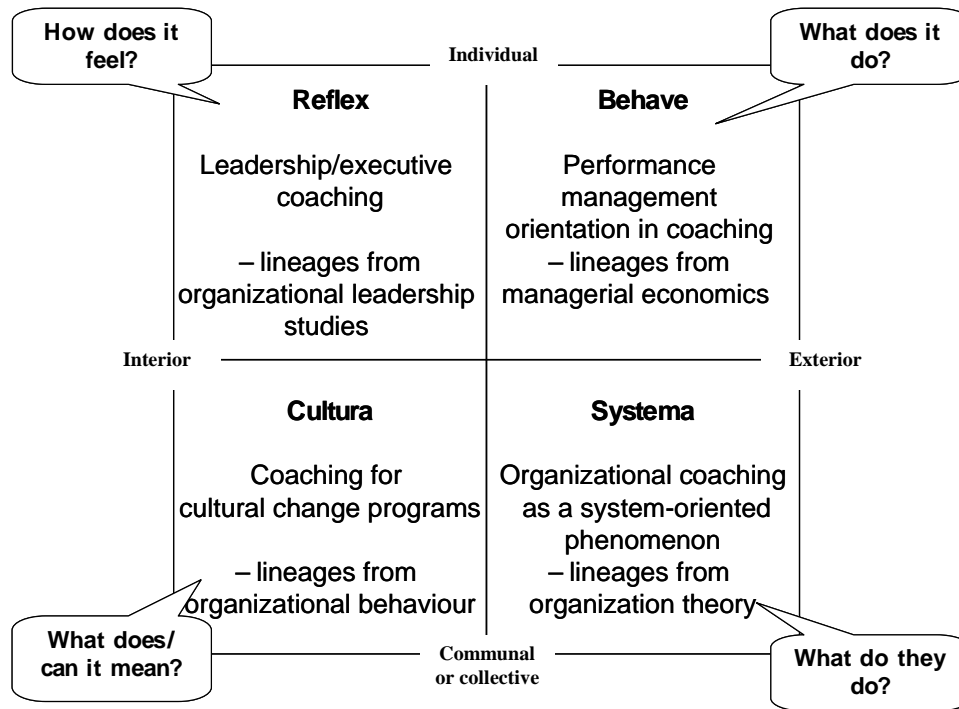


Figure 3: The Coaching Matrix: Intra industry differences including practical and theoretical lineage.

Concluding remarks

Our goal in this paper has been to interrogate and critically assessed the practice of organizational coaching. In particular we have identified the inter-industrial positioning processes of borrowing and differentiating that organizational coaches engage in, and we have categorised intra-industrial differences through typologizing coaching practices based on the different forms of questioning that form the basis of different types of practice. We have differentiated the practices through their mode of questioning, based on the argument that it is through the reflective questioning that coaches engage in that everyday organizational life can be influenced by the coaching process, and that their different modes of questioning provide different roads to development. Indeed, for coaching we can add that the style of interrogative questioning that characterizes coaching could be further developed in relation to the particulars of the technique that ethnomethodology has come to label as ‘garfinkeling’. Garfinkeling is the act of deliberately breaking rules to observe the reaction of others, a technique that Garfinkel (1967) honed through training his students persistently to question the assumptions of normal everyday sense beyond the point at which they ordinarily are tested. The coaches, at their best, do this with their client organization members, by never answering questions except with another reflected-back question and insisting that the organizational member be pushed to think through the answers to the questions being asked. From a research point of view it is that coaches make ‘obvious’ actions, settings, and events potentially remarkable that is significant. While some coaches tend to be reflexive in relating to psyches rather than practices, in Silverman’s (2007: 146) terms, it is perhaps those who are most reflexive in relation to practices that will best uncover the constitutive grounds of everyday organizational life and thus be able to improve its performance.

By combining the inter-organizational positioning process and the Coaching Matrix we are able to distinguish types of coaches. Life coaches, independent of variations, always enter coaching sessions though the perspective of the individual. Thus, organizational coaching practices drawn from the upper quadrants in Table 2 carry essential qualifiers linking them to life coaching. Elements drawn from management consulting on the other side will most frequently be found in the lower right quadrant, presenting systemic perspectives, sometimes, but less frequently taking

cultural aspects into consideration, depending on the quality of the reflective dialogue that the coaching organization is able to establish with its client organization members (see Figure 3). In the lower right quadrant we find elements entering into the coaching organization in its orientation to the collective level that link them more tightly to management consulting than life coaching.

The article has also shown that the coaching industry, in its embryonic state, is recognised by what can be described as a common espoused theory. The coaches consistently borrow three types of positions in describing their practice; those of (life) coaching, management consulting, and the borrowing of professionalism from medical/therapeutic professions. Through the paper we have differentiated four distinct approaches to coaching as a field of practices, or differing theories in use. Given that the field is emerging from an embryonic state and actors in the field are fighting to establish their quasi-professional credentials, this accounting of the field should serve to establish the types of claims and cognate disciplines to which reference should be made.

Our discussion has highlighted the process through which organizations in an embryonic industry craft their identity. This occurred through two modes of differentiation. The first mode of differentiation was characterised by the coaches comparing themselves with other more established professional categories – primarily management consultants, life coaches and psychologists. The identity process here is far from straightforward, however, with the coaches' identity emerging through the simultaneous identification and dis-identification with the 'others' with whom they compare themselves. This suggests that organizational identity, at a collective level, can be understood through the simultaneous interaction of what we have termed borrowing and differentiating. It is through this that, collectively, coaches are able to make a claim as to belonging to an industry category of their own that they portray as being meaningful both to themselves and others. This general categorization provides a legitimating function for coaching, and hence serves as a foundation on which the identities of individual firms can be built. The second process we identified, however is the one in which the 'building' occurs. The identity of individual organizations rests on them distinguishing themselves, through their practice, to the audience of the other coaches with whom they identify at an industry level. Together we can thus surmise that organizational identity is forged through a double nested set of comparisons – the individual firm makes a claim to identity in that it is both the same and different to other first in the same industry, and the same and different as other firms in other industries. In an embryonic industry such as business coaching it is in employing and staking out positions within these nested set of differences that identity emerges.

References

- Alvesson, M. and Kärreman, D. (2007) Constructing mystery, empirical matters in theory development, *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4): 1265–1281.
- Antonacopoulou, E. P. (2004) The dynamics of reflexive practice: The relationship between learning and changing, in M. Reynolds and R. Vince (Eds.) *Organizing Reflection*, pp. 47-64, London: Ashgate Publishing.
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1974) *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1996) *Organizational learning II: Theory, method and practice*, Reading, Mass: US: Addison Wesley.
- Bacon, T. R. and Spears, K. I. (2003) *Adaptive Coaching: The Art and Practice of a Client-Centred Approach to Performance Improvement* Davies, Black Publishing
- Bjorkeng, K., Skaret, M. and Hydle, K. (2004) Extending practices, from local to organizational knowledge flows, in *Living Knowledge: The dynamics of professional service work*, A. Carlsen, R. Klev and G. Von Krogh, (eds). pp 164 – 183, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Carlsen, A., Bjorkeng, K. and Haugstad, B (2005) Stories Lived and Stories Told, authoring identities in a communication agency, in A. Carlsen *Acts of Becoming*, pp128 – 165, NTNU: Trondheim.
- Carlsen, A., Klev, R. and Von Krogh, G. (2004) Living Knowledge: Foundations and Frameworks, in *Living Knowledge: The dynamics of professional service work*. A. Carlsen, R. Klev and G. Von Krogh, (eds). pp 1-19, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Clegg, S. R., Rhodes, C., and Kornberger, M. (2007) Desperately Seeking Legitimacy: Organizational Identity and Emerging Industries, *Organization Studies*, 28: 495-513.
- Clegg, S. R., Rhodes, C., Kornberger, M. and Stilin, R. (2005) Business coaching: challenges for an emerging industry, *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 37(5): 218-223.
- Clutterbuck, D. (1998) *Learning Alliances: tapping into talent*. London: Institute of Personnel & Development.
- de Haan, E. (2008) *Relational coaching: Journeys towards mastering one-to-one learning*. John Wiley & Son
- duBois, A. and Gadde, L-E. (2002) Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(7): 553-560.
- Dylan, B. (1965) It takes a lot to laugh, it takes a train to cry, from the album *Bringing it all Back Home*, New York: Columbia.
- Flaherty, J. (1999) *Coaching: evoking excellence in others*. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Foray, D. and Lundvall, B. (1998) The knowledge-based economy: from the economic of knowledge to the learning economy, in D. Neef, G.A. Siesfeld and J. Cefola (Eds.) *The economic impact of knowledge*, pp115 – 122, Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinman.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Garrick, J. (1998) *Informal learning in the workplace: unmasking human resource development* London: Routledge.
- Grant A. M. (2001) Towards a psychology of coaching and mentoring. *Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring Conference*, Heythrop Park, Oxford, UK
- Hall, L. M. and Duval, M. (2004) *Meta-Coaching, Volume 1: Coaching change*. Clifton, CO: Neuro-Semantics Publications.
- Heidegger, M. (1999) *Being and time*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Iedema, R., Rhodes, C and Scheeres, H. (2006) Surveillance, Resistance, Observance: Exploring the Teleo-affective Volatility of Workplace Interaction, *Organization Studies*, 27(8): 1111-1130.
- Kilburg, R. R. and Diedrich, R. C (eds) (2007) *The wisdom of coaching: Essential papers in consulting psychology for a world of change* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Maguire, S. (2008) Institutional entrepreneurship, in Clegg, S. R. and Bailey, J. R. (eds) pp. 674 – 678, *The International Encyclopaedia of Organization Studies*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maturana, H. R. and Varela, F. J. (1998) *The Tree of Knowledge*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Meyer, A. D., Brooks, G. R. and Goes, J. B. (1990) Environmental Jolts and Industry Revolutions: Organizational Responses to Discontinuous Change. *Strategic Management Journal*, 11: 93-100.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002) *Phenomenology of perception* trans. Smith, C., London: Routledge.
- Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995) *The knowledge creating company*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- OECD (2001) *Knowledge and Skills for Life: First Results form PISA 2000*. Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development.
- Peirce, C. S. (1940) *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected writings*. New York: Dover.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1990) Longitudinal field research on change: Theory and practice. *Organization Science* 1(3): 267-292.
- Pitsis, A. (2008) Coaching, in *The International Encyclopaedia of Organization Studies*, S. R. Clegg and J. R. Bailey (eds), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pitsis, T., Clegg, S., Marosszeky, M. and Rura-Polley, T. (2003) Constructing the Olympic dream: A future perfect strategy of project management. *Organization Science*, 14: 574 – 590.
- Røyrvik, E. and Bygdås, A. (2004) Knowledge hyperstories and context-sensitive knowledge enabling, in *Living Knowledge: The dynamics of professional service work*, A.Carlsen, R. Klev and G. Von Krogh, (eds). pp. 184 - 203 London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schutz, A. (1967) *The phenomenology of the social world*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.
- Searle, J. (1969) *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University
- Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline* NY: Currency/Doubleday.

- Sieler, A. (2003) *Ontology: A theoretical basis for professional coaching, Paper presented to the first Australian conference on evidence-based coaching*, University of Sydney, Australia.
- Silverman, D. (2007) *A very short, fairly interesting, reasonably cheap book about studying qualitative research*, London: Sage.
- Shotter, J. (2008) Dialogism and polyphony in organizing theorizing in organization studies: action guiding anticipations and the continuous creation of novelty, *Organization Studies*, 29(4): 501-524.
- Skiffington, S. and Zeus, P. (2003) *Behavioural coaching – building sustainable personal and organisational Strengths*, McGraw-Hill Professional.
- Starbuck, W. H. (1993) Keeping a butterfly and an elephant in a house of cards: The elements of exceptional success, *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(6): 885-921.
- Stober D. R. and Grant, A. M. (Eds) (2006) *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook: Putting Best Practices to Work for Your Clients*, New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Vamos, J. (2002) *You don't think as smart as you are* Sydney: BCS.
- Weick, K. (1995) *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Wilber, K. (1996) *A brief history of everything*, Boston, MA: Shambala.