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**Title:** A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come*.*

# A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come

## Abstract

This paper aims to summarise the current state of coaching research as a basis for future studies. It seeks to provide a frame of reference for researchers and reflective practitioners interested in research to ensure that future studies build on previous work and add to our knowledge and understanding of coaching as a unique domain of practice. The paper is divided into three sections. The first two sections review the state of coaching research over the past hundred years, with a greater focus on the past decade when the number of studies published has accelerated. The paper divides the recent research into categories; the nature of coaching, coach behaviour studies, client behaviour studies, relationship studies and executive coaching impact studies and discusses research methods including IPA, Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis, randomized control trails (RCT), meta-analysis and mixed methods research. The third section considers the future direction research may take. It identifies key themes and sample research questions which the authors believe could be the focus of future research. The paper concludes by noting that coaching research is likely to continue to grow over the coming decade and this growth offers an opportunity for the research –practitioner partnership to be strengthened and maintained.

## Introduction

It has been ten years since Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson's (2001) seminal review of coaching research. This paper highlighted the scarcity of coaching research and noted seven impact studies of coaching research had been published in the psychological literature. However, it is fair to say that coaching research can be traced back much further. In 1937 Gorby published a study of coaching's impact on manufacturing (Gorby, 1937). The study, while limited in its methods, was a marker signalling the potential of coaching as a force for good within organisations. However, after a short paper building on Gorby's study (Bigelow, 1938), the trail went cold. It did not begin again until the 1990's and the work of writers such as Kilburg (1996, 2001, 2004a & 2004b), Diedrich (1996 & 2004) and Lowman (2005) who returned to this theme of coaching as a force for organisational change.

A closer look at many of the early studies noted by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson revealed weaknesses with methodology. These weaknesses included limitations in the descriptions of the research methods, inadequate sample sizes for statistical significance and studies where the claims made were not fully supported by the data. Such research problems however are not uncommon for new domains, of which coaching in 2001 was certainly one (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

If we consider the evolution of other disciplines, such as counselling, we can draw lessons from how knowledge evolves.  As a new area evolves it passes through several phases prior to maturation. Initially it tends to focus on defining the focus of study. This involves a process of exploration of the phenomena and a sharing of practice between practitioners. This phase helps to shape and identify what is understood of the field from experience.  It also helps to explore what is within the field of enquiry and what is outside. An example of this is a focus of debate around definitions and boundaries. For example, where is the boundary between coaching and counselling? Or what is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

After the exploration phase, attention shifts to theory building methods and measures. During this phase researchers often seek to develop and test new interventions, products or protocols. The initial part of this phase is often marked with case studies and small qualitative research, with attention paid to unique models offered by writers and also adaptations of existing models draw from parallel domains. In the second part of this phase the focus gradually shifts from theory building to randomized control trials (RCT) with large sample sizes and finally to meta-analysis which review the results from multiple RCT papers to offer an insight on the efficacy of the intervention across populations, organisations and methods.

Once theories are established and recognised the third phase is characterised with concern for exceptions and variance to the established theories. One area covered is the question: Which groups or issues benefit most from which approach?

Each phase requires different methodologies and instruments. In the first phase the approach is experiential and theoretical, as individuals share examples of practice and debate boundaries. In the second phase the case study and survey are popular tools for helping explore the phenomena. Later in the phase quantitative techniques emerge including the use of effect size to demonstrate impact, alongside theory building techniques such as Grounded Theory, used to help research build the theoretical framework for the domain. In the final phase exploring difference quantitative techniques continue alongside such techniques as IPA to explore individual experiences.

While no research development pathway fits the model perfectly, we would suggest that while many organisational interventions such as training are in phase three, coaching is in the later stages of phase two. There are a growing number of randomized control trials (see Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, and Parker, 2010), the first meta-study (De Meuse, Dai & Lee, 2009) and some initial attempts to use theory building tools (for example see; Duff & Passmore, 2010; Passmore, 2010a; Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009). At this stage we would suggest that much of the research claims are unsubstantiated by other studies and in this sense may reflect local conditions or populations. This situation changes as multiple studies are published reviewing the same or similar question and with similar results.

In this article we aim to review in detail the state of coaching research and ask "Where next for the research agenda?" as coaching moves forward from phase 2 towards phase 3.

## Purpose of coaching research

As researchers we have both been challenged in the past by practitioners; 'So why is research important? I know it works and that is enough'. For many practitioners, that is enough. However, when decisions need to be made about the impact of coaching, then both companies and psychologists need to ensure that they can demonstrate that coaching can produce positive outcomes and make is worth the investment. Like many other interventions, tangible costs are not the whole story, or at least we would argue they should not be. A price cannot be placed on the saving of a life from a road traffic death or the improvements in hope, resilience and emotional intelligence of school children (Passmore & Brown, 2009).

We would argue that research can provide valuable benefits for us as practitioners. Research aims to identify and define the knowledge base upon which practitioners work – what is coaching's combination of knowledge and skills which differentiate what coaches do from other helping and learning interventions? Such a differentiation is essential for any consideration of coaching as a profession (Passmore, 2011).

With the idea of an evolving and developing knowledge base, supplied by appropriate research, there comes the potential of enhancing coaching performance of current coaches. Training and development therefore becomes a process of continuous professional development for coaching practitioners.

Further, with increased demand for coaching, new coaches also need to be trained. Formal training too should be based on evidence from research about what works and how. Those involved in coaching training need to understand what works, and why. This knowledge needs to be grounded in research, as well as theory. For example, do open questions make a difference in coaching? If so how? Or is listening and empathy enough to help provide a space for reflection, learning and change? Does it matter if the coach moves from one approach to another within a coaching session, or is consistency in approach important to producing effective outcomes? What approaches work best with different presenting issues, for example is Transpersonal the most effective model for careers coaching and Cognitive behavioural coaching most effective for coaching on stress issues? When should we coach and when should we refer to other medical or counselling colleagues? These are important questions and we still do not know adequate answers to all of these questions, although the past ten years have given us a much better insight to the process and the experience of coaching.

In the next section we review the research which took place during the 20th century and move onto consider the research published in the past decade since Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson initial review of the coaching literature in 2001.

## Review of research

The period from 1937(the date of the first identified coaching study) to 1999, was a period of slow progress, which saw more published papers in the final ten years than in the preceding fifty. Much of this was due to the leading work of *Consulting Psychology* which identified the growing trend in organisations. More recently the journal has been joined by the British Psychological Society Journal, the *International Coaching Psychology Review* and by journals such as *Coaching: An International Journal of theory, research and practice*. All of these, plus papers in *Personnel Psychology*, *Applied Positive Psychology* and other journals have contributed towards the increase in published coaching papers, although the number of papers in main stream organisational psychology journals remains small.

In the 62 years between 1937 and 1999 there were a total of 93 articles, PhDs and empirical studies published. The 1937 and 1938 papers were followed by a slow trickle of papers. One research paper was published in the 1940's (Lewis, 1947) and this was followed by nine studies in the 1950's, the majority concentred in the later half of the decade. This was followed by three studies in the 1960's and three in the 1970's. It was not until the 1980's that the first signs of growth were seen. Several of these early papers hinted at the potential that coaching may have either as a separate organisational intervention, or as a complimentary intervention to help in skills transfer after training. For example, Holoviak's study (1982) examined training programs in relationship to variations in company productivity levels in the coal industry. The study used a semi structured interview method and identified that companies which provided greater amounts of management and supervisory training, including coaching, achieved higher productivity.

It was not until the 1990's that coaching research papers became a common occurrence in the literature with 41 papers cited by the search engines PsycINFO and Dissertation Abstracts International for the period. The focus of the papers started to widen, with a recognition of the role of coaching in enhancing feedback (Hillman, Schwandt & Bartz, 1990), the contribution that coaching can make to both leadership (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992) and management (Graham, Wedman & Garvin-Kester, 1993 & 1994). One of the most interesting and rigorous studies during this period was a triangulation and psychometric based study of coaching efficacy (Peterson, 1993b). This research found that participants improved by about 0.85 standard deviations in overall effectiveness as a result of coaching programs.

The majority of research, however, reviewed coaching as a management skill and employed case study led methodology to describe the process and effect on individuals. Where qualitative methods were used, the favoured methodology was content analysis. However, there was wide inconsistency in the quality of case study papers which made it difficult to identify which factors contributed to the positive outcomes described and as a result some have offered frameworks for case study reporting (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). During this period tentative quantitative studies were also used, one example was Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1996). This

study reported the influence of coaching on learning. Thirty-one managers underwent a conventional managerial training program followed by eight weeks of one-to-one coaching by internal coaches. The study found a 22.4% increase in productivity after training and 88 % increase after coaching. Looking back, this study contained considerable weaknesses in the methodology however the paper was an important milestone in coaching research. Also evident were papers which explored the boundaries of coaching, its borders with counselling.

## The nature of coaching

By 2000 the initial exploration of the field had provided various definitions of coaching and attempted to understand what constituted coaching (Judge & Cowell 1997; Thach & Heinselman, 1999). Tobias (1996) suggested that executive coaching was really a repackaging of activities and techniques borrowed from other disciplines such as counselling, psychology, learning and consulting.

Several papers have reviewed and debated the nature of coaching and its boundaries with counselling (Bachkirova & Cox, 2004; Passmore, 2007a), as well as the emerging domain of coaching psychology (Stewart, O'Riordan & Palmer, 2008; Sperry, 2008).

That being said there is as yet no agreed definition of coaching, but examples include:

> "*a collaborative and egalitarian relationship between a coach, who is not necessarily a domain-specific specialist, and Client, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and employ goal attainment process with the aim of fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the Client*" (Grant & Stober, 2006, p2)

To the more organisational perspective offered by Kilburg:

> "*a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement*" (Kilburg, 2000, p 142).

In reflecting on the research and publications over the past decade we would offer the following broad definition of coaching:

> " a *Socratic based future focused dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (coachee/ client), where the facilitator uses  open questions,*

*summarises and reflections which are aimed at stimulating the self awareness and personal responsibility of the participant"*.

In this definition we are suggesting that the term Socratic dialogue refers to the belief held by the coach that the coachee already has within them the answer to the question, and thus the role of the coach is not socio-educational as it might be within approaches such as CBT.

Alongside this there has been a debate about the nature of coaching psychology. This asks whether coaching psychology is different from coaching and if so how. Grant and Palmer (2002) defined coaching psychology as:

*Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches.*

This definition implies that coaching psychology is distinctive from coaching. Further the definition of coaching makes clear that the intervention is one targeted at 'normal' and non-clinical populations. However, more recently coaching is being extended into new areas and this is likely to continue as coaching skills continue to be adopted by clinically trained staff for use in medical settings. Secondly, Grant and Palmer's original definition suggests that coaching psychology must draw on models grounded in therapeutic approaches. This potentially limits coaching and restricts the development of approaches which are grounded in organisational practice or are specifically developed for coaching. In response to these and other points Palmer and Grant have updated their definition:

*"Coaching Psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches," (adapted Grant & Palmer, 2002).*

An alternative approach to coaching psychology is to consider it as the study of coaching practice as opposed to coaching practice itself. Passmore (2010b) has offered the following definition:

*"Coaching psychology is the scientific study of behaviour, cognitive and emotion within coaching practice to deepen our understanding and enhance our practice within coaching.*

This approach to coaching psychology mirrors the definitions used for health, occupational and other psychology disciplines and reflects a view that psychology is the scientific study of practice as opposed the practice itself. He has argued that all practice should be evidenced based and that while this is not the case at present, coaches should be asserting their voice to protect their domain from spurious

practices which in the long term will have a detrimental impact on the reputation of coaching.

As with all definitions there is the potential for debate. This debate helps us to more fully understand the nature of coaching and its limits and boundaries.

One challenge for such definitions is the lack of recognition around group and team coaching. The research on team coaching is at a lower level of maturity but there is a developing literature within the realm of team effectiveness (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp & Gilson, 2008). Specifically Wageman (1997, 2001) has made a substantial contribution culminating in the publication of a theory of team coaching with Hackman (Hackman & Wageman, 2005) The model focused on the functions that coaching serves for a team, rather than on either specific leader behaviours or leadership styles. It identified the specific times in the performance process when coaching interventions are most likely to have their intended effects and explicated the conditions under which team-focused coaching is or is not likely to facilitate performance.

It may be argued that group or team coaching is too close to Action Learning Sets and group facilitation to usefully distinguish between them. Indeed the use of such methodology has been actively explored and described in the team coaching context (Vaartjes, 2005) and research studies such as these may illuminate that question. For the present the question is still unresolved and hence we do not address this mode of coaching explicitly in this paper.

Whilst considering 'what coaching is?' the community has also explored the concept of process i.e. what would be seen to be happening. At first the studies were relatively naïve and tended to err towards marketing literature on a particular model or tool. A more critical engagement with the process was Dingman's study (Dingman, 2004) where the literature review compared a series of different coaching processes and identified six generic stages which were part of all published models:

1. Formal Contracting
2. Relationship building
3. Assessment
4. Getting feedback and reflecting
5. Goal setting
6. Implementation and Evaluation

The five major approaches to executive coaching interventions that have been summarised by Peltier (2001) as psychodynamic, behaviorist, person-centered, cognitive therapeutic and system-oriented. They were subsequently explored in a review (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Each approach has been further discussed in separate papers, as writers have consider how these models, often borrowed from counseling may be applied in coaching (Cocivera & Cronshaw, 2004; Ducharme, 2004; Hrop, 2004; Kilburg, 2004; Sherin & Caiger, 2004). As befits the explorative nature of the enquiry these papers they have tended to use case study and surveys

as the methodology and instruments of choice. Other writers (Passmore 2006; Palmer & Whybrow 2007; Cox et al., 2009) have also reviewed a range of models and broadened this base to include narrative approaches, existential, gestalt, NLP, solution focused transpersonal, integrative and motivational interviewing.

In the following sections we look at the research on coach behaviours, client behaviours and the interaction between the two characters.


## Coach behaviour studies

Numerous authors have tried to identify the critical attributes of the effective coach (Hall, et al., 1999; Kilburg, 1996, 2001). These papers have suggest that coaching should draw from the well of counselling knowledge, as well as seeking the views of coach and clients engaged in the process about what they believe works. Hall et al., (1999) based on coaches' and client's views, identified a set of key behaviours these included; challenge, listening, reflecting back and checking back on understanding.

Jarvis, Lane and Fillery-Travis (2006) identified three areas as being critical – self awareness, core coaching competences and an understanding of the ethics and management of coaching relationships. Other studies (Dingman, 2004) have shown similar competencies but perhaps with more clear delineation i.e. interpersonal skills, communication skills and instrumental support which include effects such as creativity, dealing with paradox etc.

De Haan (2008a; 2008b) has focused on critical moments in coaching in a series of papers and has identified common themes and how coaches work to overcome these struggles to emerge as more reflective and informed practitioners.

The wealth of studies and the similarity between the results, plus the cross over with counselling research has now provided a good understanding of what is important and what behaviours coach training should focus upon for new coaches.

There is a continual debate about the academic requirements of coach training. Specifically, should coaches hold a degree in psychology? Opinions vary. Some (Berglas, 2002; Dean & Meyer, 2002) see this as critical. However, the obvious question is what type of psychology training is critical. More clinically trained psychologists may be adept at identifying and working with mental health issues, while industrial or occupational psychologists may be trained and licensed to give feedback using psychometrics. An alternative view is that clients want a mixture of training in psychology; experience in, or understanding of, business; established reputation as a coach; listening skills; and professionalism as expressed by intelligence, integrity, confidentiality and objectivity (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Bono, et al., (2009) suggested some differences in the key competencies identified by psychologist and non-psychologist coaches. Their paper was based on a survey of 428 coaches, around 60%-40% non-psychologists - psychologists. One specific example was the focus of psychologists towards assessment competences, which

contrasted with non-psychologists focusing more on questioning competences. Of course, differences between the US, and other countries, will reflect national differences in the training and regulation of psychologists, so the results are culturally and time frame specific. Further work is being undertaken on this topic to explore the differences between UK and US coaching practices (Passmore, Palmer & Short, 2012).

## Client behaviour studies

It is perhaps not surprising that there have been a range of studies looking into how the client's behaviour impacts upon the effectiveness of coaching. It is clear that a willing and informed client will get more from the encounter when coaching is seen as important, relevant and beneficial. This has been explored within the CIPD research (Reynolds et al., 2002) where the motivation to learn was identified as one of the most critical factors influencing learning effectiveness. Readiness for change is therefore a prime factor in predicting outcomes. Several authors have tried to extend this analysis to consider if any specific sector of society delineated by gender (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2005), learning style or personality type (Dawdy, 2004) benefits more from coaching than another. However, to date none have been able to provide evidence of any enhanced efficacy.

A further factor identified within the counselling literature which authors (McKenna & Davis, 2009) have argued has relevance for coaching is the wider support network. In coaching this will include managers, peers, and the culture within the organisation, as well as significant other relationships, such as close friends and partners. As yet litter research has focused on this wider network, but this is an obvious area for future study, and is likely to be an important factor influencing outcomes, based on the results from earlier counselling research.

## Coach- Client Relationship studies

It is now recognised that the most consistently identified factor seen as contributing to the success of a coaching engagement, of those within the influence of the coach, is the quality of the relationship between the coach and client. (De Haan, 2008a & 2008b; Passmore, 2008). This view is shared by studies from psychotherapy where the

> 'Common factors such as empathy, warmth, and the therapeutic relationship have been shown to correlate more highly with client outcome than specialized treatment interventions.' (Lambert & Barley, 2002).

Initial investigations of coaching interventions began with Wasylyshyn (2003) who undertook a survey of clients and found the highest-scoring characteristic of an effective coach was the ability to form a strong connection with the client. The study itself had its weaknesses, in that it was based on the clients of a single coach and therefore cannot be viewed as reflecting this experience. However, this issue has subsequently been the subject of a variety of studies (Thach, 2002 & Dingman, 2004) most of which looked at efficacy more generally . The most recent empirical study

was undertaken to investigate the links between the coach-client relationship and the success of the intervention. In this study 73 managers and 24 coaches were involved in the work and 31 coach-client dyads were analysed. The results indicated that the relationship plays a role between the coaching received and the development of self-efficacy (Baron & Morin, 2009).

More recently work by Boyce et al., (2010) has explored the coach – coachee relationship in the context of the US Military. Their study found that relationship processes of rapport, trust, and commitment positively predicted coaching program outcomes, including client and coach reactions, behavioural change, and coaching program results. These results echo similar findings in mentoring (Ragins & Kram, 2007)

The future research agenda need to build on this work to help coaches and clients in the matching process, so future matches increase the prospects of positive outcomes.

**Coaching impact studies: Organisational**

As the process that underpins coaching has become clearer, the focus of research has shifted to the second phase of theory development to consider the factors which contribute to effective coaching and the overall impact upon the individual and organisations. These have been categorised in terms of coach attributes, client attributes, the organisational context for coaching and coaching process (Jarvis et al., 2006).

The differentiation of factors and their weighting requires more sophisticated methodologies. As a result research involving controlled trials is beginning to move to universities, who have the resources and skills to manage large scale trails. There has also been an increase in doctorate level research in coaching. This shift offers the opportunity for longer timescales which are more appropriate to pre and post intervention data collection and multiple interventions and control groups. One such study used a quasi-experimental pre-post control group design to examine the impact of coaching on individual leadership development beyond what might be expected from attending a leadership development program (Hernez-Broome, 2004) . It was found that even a single phone conversation once a month for three months with an experienced coach provided significant benefits in producing behaviour change within the workplace.

Most studies discussed above have tried to identify the impact within a single study. The impact has varied from study to study, but a recent published paper (De Meuse, Dai & Lee, 2009) undertook the first meta-analysis of executive coaching impact studies. The paper drew on a very limited range of studies, (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006; Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Peterson, 1993b; Smither et al., 2003; Togel and Nicholson, 2005; and Wofred, 2003) in total four of which were subsequently used in the analysis. In reality this is too few for a meta-analysis, which was confirmed by the range in Effect size in the individual studies. The paper however

concluded that previous claims of Return on Investment (ROI) were over-stated, but that coaching does yield a relative good ROI based on the six studies, four of which were used (Table 1). Further meta-analysis studies need to be undertaken, however this may be several years off until a substantial set of detailed peer reviewed published papers are available.

**Table 1: Statistics Reported in the Coaching Studies**

| Study | Self-Ratings Effect Size (corrected for unreliability) Skill/Performance Improvement |
|---|---|
| Peterson (1993b) | 1.98 ($N$ = 100) |
| Luthans & Peterson (2003) | 0.02 ($N$ = 20) |
| Evers et al., (2006) | 0.34 ($N$ = 30) |
| Wofred (2003) | 0.46 ($N$ = 23) |

| Study | Others' Ratings Effect Size (corrected for unreliability) Skill/Performance Improvement |
|---|---|
| Peterson (1993b) | 1.83 ($N$ = 100) |
| Luthans & Peterson (2003) | 1.41 ($N$ = 100) |
| Smither et al., (2003) | 0.06 ($N$ = 382) |
| Togel & Nicholson (2005) | 0.65 ($N$ = 89) |

(De Meuse, Dai & Lee, 2009)

As noted above the ROI varied between the estimates of clients and those of their managers. The true effect size on ROI corrected for sampling error in the four studies was 1.27 compared with 0.6 for the effect size in 'Other raters'. However, a closer examination of the data in Table 1 shows wide variation between 1.98 and 0.02 for 'Self rated' improvement and for 'Other raters' from 1.83 to 0.06. These variations are wide and given the sample of six studies questions need to be asked whether definitive conclusions can be reached from the results.

We suggest that coaching's effect may be situational, with stronger effects demonstrated with specific individuals and within specific organisational contexts. This would accord with Lambert and Barley earlier work (2002) who noted from a meta-analysis of counselling that client readiness was the most significant factor in bringing about change (accounting for 40% of the variation in outcomes).

## The Future decade for coaching research

### Research Methodology
As we emerge from the exploration and definition phase within the research field we are at the point where theory development and testing come to the fore. There is a

shift from case study and uncontrolled trials to designs appropriate to the type of research questions prompted by theory generation (what coaching for what client?).

By 2021 (ten years from now) we hope that researchers across the globe will have completed fifty to a hundred large sample size studies (100 participants plus in each intervention group), using two or more interventions, a control group and a placebo interventions with random allocation of participants. These studies may be undertaken at the doctoral level, allowing greater sophistication and longer time frames for pre, post and 6 or 12 months post intervention measures. Such studies may allow the impact of coaching to be revealed over the course of the intervention as well as to track its impact beyond current time frames of around one month after the coaching to a year after the coaching has finished.

In this coming decade coaching research is likely to reach a peak of activity, reflecting a coming together of researcher interest and new areas to explore. As these studies are published, we would hope to see by 2015 a detailed meta-analysis on coaching as an intervention drawing on 40-100 RCT peer reviewed published studies.

Just as case study as a methodology can only provide a limited perspective in our exploration of coaching so randomised controlled trials are not appropriate for issues requiring depth and theory generation. As research moves forward the richness of our questions will develop and in addressing these questions the coaching researcher will need to bring to bear the full armoury of research paradigms, approaches and methodologies.  We believe that all research paradigms have a place within coaching and that the only criteria should be one of research excellence - the congruence of paradigm, question, approach, methodology, instrument, analysis and conclusion. Qualitative studies using recognised techniques such as IPA, Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis have a valuable role to play in helping us understanding the richness of human interactions in coaching. We also would argue the case in favour of mixed methods studies which call upon both traditions and through triangulation between qualitative, quantitative and existing research literature, offer new understandings.

This inclusive stance must also extend to who contributes to the research. We believe that both academics and practitioners have a role to play and that a divide between the two results in lost opportunities. Where such divides have happened this has lead to a substantial reduction in research sponsorship from major stakeholders on the grounds that research is not relevant to their practitioners and of practitioners turning away from engagement in the evidenced based practice.

**Research Themes**
Given the review of the literature published to date and our analysis, what are the key research themes for the coming decade? We have suggested six broad themes in the following section, along with possible questions researchers might seek to answer. This not a definitive list nor is it the only way to slice the future research cake. We recognise other writers may focus on different themes and that in reality

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new themes may emerge as science develops, one of these is likely to be the emergence of neuroscience and its contribution to coaching and the wider talking professions.

## The selection of coaching as an intervention

We need to have clarity concerning the distinctiveness of coaching and what delineates it from other development or learning interventions.  Specifically, when is coaching a useful contribution and when should an individual be referred for a leadership development programme, an Action Learning Set or referred to a mentor or to a counsellor?

## Coaching cultures and organisational change?

The issue of ROI has been discussed. Reference has also been made to organisational culture and coaching's contribution. The complexity of the issue and the need for a coherent organisational approach from initial design intervention through to outputs has been previously identified (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006), but how can organisations build cultures which support coaching as a management style as well as a development intervention? What features make an organisational culture a 'coaching culture'?

## Critical features of the coaching relationship

For some, understanding whether coaching is the right organisational intervention is not enough. We also need to better understand what aspects of coaching are the critical features. There is good evidence that the relationship is central (Passmore, 2008; De Haan, 2008a; De Haan 2008b). However, there is less evidence about other aspects of the process, for instance the contribution of goals and particularly the impact of goals being set by others in contrast with the client. What is the balance between challenge and support? Do both need to be present for effect outcomes in coaching?

## Client – readiness for change and presenting issues

The readiness of the client for change has been identified as a major predictor of coaching effectiveness and already certain research effort has been invested in assessing it. This needs to continue and be extended to include factors which may influence 'matching' of client and coach as well as preparation of the client for coaching. The development of a short-validated questionnaire would be useful.

We also need to understand the range of areas which coaching is a suitable intervention to address. The research is beginning to identify these areas, and they include; developing new behaviours (and learning), enhancing self regard, building hope and resilience, deepening awareness and emotional intelligence, and enhancing motivation, and associated goal attainment. Over the coming decade we should aim to develop a deeper understanding of these aspects, the relationship between these aspects and whether new areas can also be impacted by coaching.

Linked to this is an aim to understand how different coaching approaches / methodologies (for example behavioural, cognitive behavioural, solution focused and psychodynamic, motivational interviewing) impact on clients and client issues. We need to understand which methodology is the right one to use in different situations. We may speculate that Cognitive behavioural coaching (Neenan & Dryden, 2002; Neenan, 2006; Palmer & Szymanska, 2007; Williams et al., 2009) may be most effective for working on stress or confidence, while behavioural methods (Skiffington, & Zeus, 2003; Passmore, 2007b) may be best suited to enhancing goal attainment, and psychodynamic (Rotenberg, 2000; Lee 2009), and transpersonal (Whitmore & Einzig, 2006; Rowan, 2009) for exploring values or purpose. However, at present these are hypotheses. We agree with Spence (Spence 2007) that research into the psychological mechanisms underpinning successful behaviour change and goal-directed self-regulation, such as emotional intelligence, resilience, hope, and mindfulness is also required and will inform such hypotheses. We partly reject Kilburg's (2004) assertion that the 'dodo effect' means all methods are equal. We would accept this argument when looking at all methods and all presenting problems simultaneously. However, when the data is broken down and specific populations and presenting problems are considered individually, the evidence from counselling suggests that differences emerge – the Project MATCH research is one example of this from Motivational Interviewing trials, which evidenced that MI was more effective for drug and alcohol clients than other forms of intervention including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Project MATCH, 1997). In the UK NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) has evidenced that CBT itself is a more effective intervention for depression and mental illness than other forms of therapy. As a result, we might reframe the Dodo effect as 'the Animal Farm Effect'. We might expect to see similar results in coaching; all methods are equal, but when taking account of presenting issues, some methods are more equal than others.

Coach development through the coaching process
There is a wealth of interest in the validation of competency frameworks for coaching and clearly this will have an impact on training and continuing professional development as we have identified before. A further theme worthy of research is the impact of coaching on the coach themselves. A number of writers (Cashman, 2009) have speculated on the impact of coaching on the coach. Some research into this has started but more needs to be encouraged to understand whether coaching affects leadership competence, resilience and emotional intelligence as we suspect.

Coaching as a agent for social results

As we noted earlier in this paper coaching is spreading from its initial growth area of business to new areas. The evidence suggests this spread is gaining momentum in the UK and US, with the aspiration of impacting on wider social results. These diverse areas include driver training, where coaching is being seen as a potentially useful tool for reducing novice driver accident rates and thus road traffic deaths particularly among the 17-25 year olds, as well as improving the efficiency of driver training. It is also spreading to education, where research work has started to show tentative results on coaching as a tool to address under attainment in examination

performance for school leavers (Passmore & Brown, 2009). Increasingly work is being undertaken in health (Anstiss & Passmore, In Press) and this reveals that coaching can be a positive agent for managing health conditions and supporting wider health change.  These are exciting areas and witness the potential of coaching as a force for social good.  But how much more potential has coaching? Research can help us push the boundaries.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have noted the seminal work of Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001), which focused attention on the lack of coaching research. Ten years of coaching research have provided significant insights in coaching practice. Over this period there has been a growing shift to formal qualitative methods such as IPA and Grounded Theory and a growth in Randomized Control Trial studies. In the coming decade of 2011-2020 we hope researcher and practitioners will further increase the number of studies, deepen our standing of coaching as a force for good in organisational and individual well being, as well as in strengthening the partnership between researchers and practitioners.

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