

The Grand Challenge for Research on the Future of Coaching

Richard E. Boyatzis, Alicia Hullinger,
Sharon F. Ehasz, Janet Harvey, Silvia Tassarotti,
Anna Gallotti, & Frances Penafort

Published in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral
Science*, (2022), 58(2), 202-222. Open Access:
DOI: 10.1177/00218863221079937

Why research?

- Research provides an intellectual foundation and our integrity in trying to help others.
- Intention is not the same as outcome or consequences.
- Remember:
 - Blood letting, phrenology,
 - Self-esteem educational programs
 - Right versus left brain

What Can You Do?

- Read the full article (free access)

DOI: 10.1177/00218863221079937

and watch videos from the convening:

[The Future of Coaching — Global Digital Library — Thought Leadership Institute](#)

- Conduct research directly or by collaborating with a scholar, faculty, and publish AND/OR
- Help those of us doing research by volunteering and periodically completing surveys and participating in studies AND/OR
- Donate funds to research centers!

The Convening

- Thought Leadership Institute of the International Coaching Federation invited 35 of the most recognized coaching scholars and 12 coaching leaders to three two-hour discussions in September 2021.
- Each session began with three presenters briefly sharing observations about what we know and need to find out.

Four Major Themes

- The desired outcomes of coaching
- The process and mechanism of coaching
- The competencies of effective coaches
- Coaching for people from distinctive cultures, genders, and context

Grand Challenge 1:

The desired outcomes of coaching

- Does coaching work? What are the indicators of effective coaching?
- The outcomes assessed reflect a narrow part of the spectrum of possible desired outcomes (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Theeboom et al., 2014) with relatively few outcome studies for such a high investment of activity.
- There have been a number of randomized, control group studies, and now several meta-analyses.
- Client (coachee) satisfaction with their relationship with the coach and the process (de Haan et al., 2019, de Haan et al., 2020).

- The client's intention to act on and expect specific goals results from coaching (Grant, 2012; Spence et al., 2008).
- An improved sense of well-being results from coaching (Spence & Grant, 2007).
- A more substantial and coherent personal vision of one's ideal future results from coaching (Mosteo et al., 2016).
- A wide variety of health outcomes also result from coaching, such as increased quality of life measures, decreased pain, health care utilization (Hackshaw et al., 2016), and potential behavior change (Frates et al., 2011) (Sforzo et al., 2019; Wolever et al., 2013).

Research Needed on the Desired Outcomes of Coaching

1. *We need studies assessing multiple outcomes to evaluate interaction effects and possible mediation or moderation effects.*
2. *We need effectiveness studies with at least one or two behavioral measures of desired outcomes, not just self-assessment or self-report measures.*
3. We need more research to determine coaching effectiveness on a wide variety of outcomes or dependent variables.
4. Specifically, we need studies with each of the nine desired coaching outcomes conceptualized as a dependent variable and measured with a method that has the sensitivity to document change. That is, DVs of client satisfaction, client intention or attainment of goals, sense of well-being, vision (i.e., purpose or one's dream), health outcomes, behavior or competency change, improvement in quality of relationships, performance improvement, and cost-effectiveness, and self-awareness and self-insight.
5. Then, we need replications.
6. We need the research conducted with a wide variety of clients (or coaches) worldwide.
7. We need research on the many coaching approaches and the more effective coaches. The last two research needs were discussed in sessions of the Future of Coaching conference in September 2021 and addressed in detail in sections of this paper to come.

Grand Challenge 2:

The process and mechanism of coaching

- Although practitioners will often promote one approach or style of coaching as superior to another, there is often little or no research supporting such claims. The question underlying the need for such efforts at program evaluation is the question of which processes of coaching work best with whom, when, and in what manner.
- Coaching with compassion versus coaching for compliance
- Dosage, duration and frequency
- The coach-client relationship
- Critical moments of discovery during coaching
- Neurobiological processes and mechanisms
- Artificial intelligence

Research Needed on

The Process and Mechanism of Coaching

- 1. We need research on critical moments (or micro-moments) during the coaching process and how they affect outcomes.*
- 2. We need research on coaching process and outcomes, including psychophysiological and neurobiological variables, such as Sympathetic versus Parasympathetic Nervous System activation (i.e., stress vs. renewal), Analytic vs. Empathic Neural Network activation, and the toggling between these antagonistic systems.*
- 3. We need research on the role of various approaches to artificial intelligence and coaching bots' in effective coaching processes and outcomes.*
- 4. We need research examining the mediating or moderating role of the relationship quality between the coach and client and coach and their supervisor.*
- 5. We need research on the moderating or mediating effects of other physiological variables such as sleep, nutrition, and exercise.*
- 6. Studies with variables mentioned in the two items above require special equipment, training in their use, and increased researchers' sensitivity to holistic images of humans and our interactions.*
- 7. We need research on acute experiences like trauma, post-traumatic growth, and burnout.*

Grand Challenge 3:

The competencies of effective coaches

- There are currently NO empirical studies validating the competencies of effective coaches.
- Current certification models and those used for designing training are based on values and opinion.
- In the context of research on competencies of effective managers, value and opinion models were shown to be 50% correct as compared to performance validated models.
- Competencies (i.e., capabilities) not proficiencies

Research Needed on The competencies of effective coaches

- 1. We need research studies on coach competencies that predict client change and desired outcomes. When designing such studies, attention needs to clarify which desired outcomes are the dependent variables. It would require longitudinal studies.*
- 2. We need research distinguishing competencies of effective coaches (i.e., those that predict superior or outstanding performance) as distinct from competencies that all coaches must have to practice (i.e., threshold competencies) to differentially guide training, certification, and life-long development of coaches.*
3. We need research on which competencies may be more effective with different desired outcomes, different coaching processes or approaches, different cultures in which the coaching occurs, or other clients. These studies must be conducted with diverse coaches and clients to ensure generalizability.
4. We need such competency research to focus on behavioral-level competencies as observed by others to complement self-assessed and self-reported values, traits, and abilities. Particular methods used to assess the competencies must also address both theory and rigorous methods. Behavioral measures of competencies would include 360s, and reliably coded critical incidents from coaching and videotapes.

Grand Challenge 4:

Coaching for people from distinctive cultures, genders, and context

- Context matters in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, culture, gender identification, etc.
- The false promise of the matching hypothesis
- The interactions with institutional or organizational development

Research Needed on Coaching for people from distinctive cultures, genders, and context

- 1. We need research to determine processes, approaches, and desired outcomes of specific types of clients, including women, gender diversity, people of various races, ethnicities, faiths, and gender orientations.*
- 2. We need research to understand the components of context that are key to coaching all people's effectiveness and sensitivity to differences.*
3. We need research to understand differential participation in coaching and coaching researchers of people from various groups.
Then, to do more research to increase coaching and coaching research participation.
4. We need research to show how coaching can help people, organizations, and communities improve social justice, inclusiveness, and equity.

What Can You Do?

- Read the full article (free access)

DOI: 10.1177/00218863221079937

and watch videos from the convening:

[The Future of Coaching — Global Digital Library — Thought Leadership Institute](#)

- Conduct research directly or by collaborating with a scholar, faculty, and publish AND/OR
- Help those of us doing research by volunteering and periodically completing surveys and participating in studies AND/OR
- Donate funds to research centers!