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International Coaching Psychology Review



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Utilising evidence-based leadership theories in coaching for leadership development: Towards a comprehensive integrating conceptual framework

Ray Elliott^{1, 2, 3}

Purpose: Examination of the coaching psychology literature shows that discussion about leadership coaching is disconnected from the scientific literature about leadership. Similarly, the latter has only recently begun to consider how leadership is developed. This lack of cross-engagement between two relevant evidence-based literatures is brought into sharp focus through leadership development coaching practice. This review from the perspective of external professional practice seeks to close the relevant knowledge gap through utilisation of a conceptual framework.

Methods: Lane and Corrie (2009) proposed three criteria which needed to be satisfied for effective coachee formation through coaching. Elliott (2007a) developed a framework from client case studies and naturalistic participant-observer reflections on coaching practice for leadership development intentionally informed by a range of evidence-based leadership theories. This framework satisfies the criteria proposed by Lane and Corrie. It is here applied and extended to provide an evaluation of current limiting assumptions in both the evidence-based coaching psychology and scholarly leadership literatures.

Results: The extended framework prompts systematic utilisation of salient knowledge domains, information inputs and processes for intentional coaching for leadership development. It demonstrates the necessary relevance of evidence-based leadership theories to coachee goal definition. It describes and contextualises coach-managed processes to establish, maintain and bound the coaching reflective space and demonstrates the relevance of other related literatures to inform coaching in organisations.

Conclusions: The required parameters in coaching for leadership development proposed by Elliott (2005) are further refined by proposing a more comprehensive model for leadership coaching to guide responsible professional practice and future research.

THE ANNOUNCED PURPOSE of much coaching in organisations is about leadership development, whether this also be presented as executive, management, business or performance coaching. While considerable progress has been made in the exploration of the nature and dynamics of the coach – coachee relationship for the

achievement of coachee goals, surprisingly little attention has been given in the evidence-based coaching psychology literature to the considerable empirical research about leadership in organisations. It is proposed that the time is now ripe, and indeed overdue, for some of the founding assumptions of coaching psychology to be

¹ Disclosure of interests and roles: the author is a practicing organisational psychologist and executive coach in his role as a Director of OEC: Organisation Enhancement Consultancy (www.oecy.com.au). He is also a Director of MLQ International (www.mlq.com.au) and a Visiting Fellow of the International Centre for Corporate Governance Research, Victoria University, Australia.

² The antecedent of this paper was a presentation in a symposium entitled 'Best practices in testing and feedback training for development in a diverse global world' at the International Congress of Applied Psychology, Melbourne, July, 2010.

³ The author was founding National Convener of the Interest Group in Coaching Psychology of the Australian Psychological Society (2002-2003) and again served as Co-National Convener in 2007.

revisited so that this rich literature about leadership can be accessed and appropriately applied in coaching.

As a contribution to advance this project, this paper utilises a conceptual framework about professional coaching for leadership development (Elliott, 2007a) to identify the relevance to the coaching relationship of two bodies of evidence-based literature – scholarly *leadership research* and *coaching psychology*. It is argued that both these areas of knowledge, skill and practice are essential for competent leadership coaching practice.

The vantage point from which to undertake this necessary integration is that of external professional coaching practice. Lane and Corrie (2009) highlighted the necessity for conceptual frameworks to guide practice for formative coaching and advanced three criteria which such frameworks need to satisfy. Elliott (2007a) described a conceptual framework for leadership coaching which satisfies those criteria. This paper applies and extends that leadership coaching conceptual framework through a discussion of empirical leadership theories which, it is asserted, should form part of the repertoire of professional coaches engaged in *any* form of leadership development for their coachees. It explores how such leadership theories or ‘lenses’ can and should be used to validly interpret coachee experiences in their organisational settings as necessary applications of relevant knowledge for developmental coaching. These theories are of similar importance for coaching psychology as are other areas of applied knowledge from the broad field of psychology. Finally, the framework for leadership coaching is extended through seven areas of discussion to highlight its nature and functioning as a guide not only for professional practice but for future research about the development of leadership in organisations.

Leadership in organisations and the emergence of coaching psychology

External professional coaching for development is a relatively new area of practice in

and alongside organisations. In Australia, the UK and Europe, universities now offer courses and postgraduate certifications in coaching which foster increasingly rigorous evidence-based research about the nature of coaching and its outcomes. Since 2002, professional bodies such as the British and Australian Psychological Societies have established robust interest groups in coaching psychology which, in turn, have fostered this important publication – the *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)*. Noting the special positioning of this emerging body of knowledge about evidence-based coaching, this paper seeks to respectfully address this professional constituency by inviting it to revisit some founding assumptions in coaching psychology which may impede its evolution to a more comprehensive and inclusive knowledge-base and practice in organisational contexts.

Grant and Cavanagh (2007) provide an introduction to *coaching psychology* in the following terms:

‘Coaching psychologists use a wide range of theoretical frameworks, including psychodynamic, systemic, cognitive behavioural, solution-focused and positive psychology in their work. It is this focus on the systematic application of evidence-based behavioural science that distinguishes coaching psychology from the atheoretical proprietary approaches to coaching commonly seen in the market. In general terms, contemporary coaching psychology can be seen to sit at the intersection of clinical, counselling, sport, organisational and health psychology.’
(p.6)

In the emergent evidence-based literature of coaching psychology (for example, Palmer & Whybrow, 2006; Passmore, 2008; Grant, 2001, 2006; Whybrow & Palmer, 2006) coaching is differentiated from counselling, training, education, and consulting. *Coaching* is typically understood as a systematic engagement between two individuals (referred to as coach and coachee) for the

purpose of improving the realisation of the coachee's personal goals and enhanced performance outcomes (for example, Grant & Cavanagh, 2002; Grant, Cavanagh & Kemp (Eds.), 2005; Green & Grant, 2003; Whitmore, 1992; Zeus & Skiffington, 2000). It is concerned with current realities and present personal functioning with a view to achieving a future preferred state of acts and being by the coachee.

Coaching and coaching psychologists are now extensively used for management and executive development in organisations. However, while 'leadership' is an important aspect of what executives, managers and team leaders are expected to provide, interpretations of what *leadership* means vary. Until recently little attention has been given to the overall *organisational context* of the coachee in coaching psychology journal literature, even though the purpose of coaching may be about coachee performance as leaders and managers in organisations. On the other hand considerable attention has been given to enabling coachees achieve their higher personal potentials through the character, skills and methods of the coaching relationship (for example, Joseph, 2006; Nelson & Hogan, 2009; Linley & Harrington, 2006; Linley, Woolston & Biswas-Diener, 2009; Linley et al., 2010; Palmer & McDowell, 2010; Maxwell & Bachkirova, 2010).

Coaching for *leadership development* is commonly defined within coaching psychology research and actual practice as merely *the coaching of already identified leaders or potential leaders and managers in organisations*. No attempt is made to first theoretically, and then operationally, define exactly what *leadership* and *effective leadership* is in measurable terms, along with their antecedents and then assessing their impacts on individual, group and organisational outcomes.

It is striking that the extensive independent tradition of empirical literature concerning *leaders* and *leadership* (for a review, Bass & Bass, 2008) has not yet been

engaged and appropriately utilised by coaching psychology and coaching generally. While one might expect the broad, atheoretical and often opportunistic *coaching industry* to disregard accumulated research knowledge about leadership it is surprising that to this point very little use has been made of this research literature by *coaching psychology* given its strong commitment to multi-disciplinary enquiry and to evidence-based methodologies. When one reviews the coaching literature – including coaching psychology journals as represented by the *ICPR* – one cannot find *systematic* attempts to define leadership or effective leadership, or measures of these that are empirically operationalisable.

The development of leaders and leadership training

At the same time, leadership researchers have not yet engaged with the emergent coaching psychology literature. Rather, leadership and organisational researchers have been concerned with the antecedents of individual leaders and leadership – such as personality, locus of control, hardiness, multiple intelligences – cognitive, social and emotional, situations and leadership, organisational analysis, follower expectations, role theory and power, inter-relationships between recognised empirical leadership theories, and the recent interest in authentic leadership. (For some reviews: Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004; Avolio, 2007; Avolio & Chan, 2008; Avolio et al., 2010; Bass & Bass, 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Conger & Pearce, 2003.) Recent *authentic leadership* (see Table 1) reviews have, however, refocused attention on the development of genuine leadership.

A reported meta-analysis drew attention to interventions which changed leadership and concluded that 'the context one grows up in and later works in is more important than heritability to leadership emergence' (Avolio et al., 2010, p.40). Research concerning the Pygmalion effect of self-fulfilling prophecy regarding leader self-expectations,

or the Galatea effect of heightened expectations of others, found the latter made no difference to outcome performance whilst the former did. This line of empirical research is interesting in that simultaneously, but apparently independently, much coaching psychology research has focused on developing heightened leader self efficacy, personal strengths optimisation and extension, increased confidence through improved personal belief self-regulation. While as yet there are few studies in coaching psychology which link such development interventions with improved outcome performance, empirical leadership research has found that leaders who are high in such core positive psychological resources promote higher satisfaction and commitment in followers (Luthans et al., 2006; Luthans et al., 2005).

The emergent authentic leadership theory, which augments and seeks to extend transformational leadership theory, regards psychological resource theory as a foundation for developmental interventions through identifying developmental readiness and positive psychological resources such as confidence, optimism, hope, resilience, positive emotions and motivation as malleable state-like qualities (as distinct from more enduring trait-like characteristics) which result in higher follower satisfaction and commitment (Avolio et al., 2010, pp.43–44).

Notwithstanding these parallel developments in research, coaching psychology and leadership research approach the issue of leadership development from different perspectives: the former from the professional practice of dyadic coaching relationships usually external to the organisational context, and the latter from consideration of internal relationships and processes within organisations – which relationships are commonly hierarchical in nature. As has been observed, coaching psychology is concerned with systematic processes in the reflective space of an enduring coaching relationship, while leadership research has

been concerned to detect important but random trigger points which provide opportunities for leadership development. Both are avenues to heightened self-awareness which each research tradition regards as fundamental to leadership development.

Apart from these recent developments in emergent authentic leadership theory, leadership researchers have given little theoretical attention to the actual development of leadership (Day, 2001; Murphy & Riggio, 2003; Avolio & Chan, 2008; Avolio et al. 2010). Moreover, when leadership researchers have been concerned with the development of leaders, the focus of attention has been the leader – follower relationship dyad (for example, Dvir & Shamir, 2003). More generally in the actual organisational context, Avolio and Chan (2008) comment:

‘...when we put (the) core elements of leader, influence, and impact of situation together, the development of leadership as a process reflects the endeavour of leadership research on the whole’ (p.210).

Given these research assumptions, leadership research consequently has given little attention to the actual development of leaders and leadership beyond the leader-follower dyad and situational foci (Avolio & Chan, 2008); Bass & Riggio, 2008). Moreover, Day (2001) in particular drew attention to the significant gap between *research* about leadership development and the *practice* of leadership development, and that ‘the practice of leadership development was far ahead of its scientific understanding’ (p.206).

Reviewing the concept of *leadership* itself, the extensive evidence-based leadership literature contains a number of salient theories about leadership which have frequent citations and references in high impact leadership, organisation and management journals. For the benefit of this audience, a number of these are briefly summarised in Table 1.

No doubt there may be differences of opinion concerning such lists, the core summary interpretations of such theories

Table 1: Salient empirical leadership theories of relevance for coaching for leadership development. ^{3, 4}

Leadership theories/ Authors and key references	Brief summary
Full Range Leadership Model/Theory (FRLM) Antonakis, et al. (2003); Avolio (1999); Bass (1985, 1997, 1998); Bass & Bass (2008); Bass & Riggio (2006); Judge & Piccolo (2004); Sosik & Jung (2010).	Leadership is a process optimally spanning, over time, a full range of nine cross-culturally and multi-contextually validated behavioural influencing styles from transformational, transactional to passive-avoidant. The transformational – transactional – passive-avoidant dimensions are associated with differential outcomes at individual, group and organisational levels of analysis, with transformational influencing being change oriented and augmenting transactional influencing. The FRLM is concerned with optimising leadership profiles over time and not merely with the level of transformational influencing displayed. The theory is 'outcomes driven', meaning optimal FRLM profiles maximise leader impacts on followers and associates over time.
Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995).	Leadership comprises the dyadic exchanges between leaders and their individual followers associated with an inner and an outer group. The inner group is trusted with more information and experience higher levels of consultation with the leader than the outer group. This leadership pattern results in strong differentials in motivation, conflict and performance outcomes by members of the group.
Autocratic–Democratic Theory Tannenbaum & Schmidt (1958).	Leadership decision-making is on a continuum from being highly directive through to highly participative. Participation levels can derive from delegation or abdication of responsibility by a designated leader. The decision to enable participation can depend on the situation, task or mission, and the opportunity for consultation in decision-making; it can also be determined by personality characteristics such as narcissism or intolerance of anxiety or ambiguity.
Path–Goal Theory House & Mitchell (1974).	This is an exchange theory of leadership. Followers perceive high productivity to be an easy path to attain personal goals: when they regard their immediate leader and organisational situation as a pathway to their own personal future are powerfully motivated to perform at higher levels of motivation and deeper levels of commitment. According to this theory, leaders only need to complement what is missing in a situation to enhance performance, motivation and task completion by followers.
Charismatic Leadership Theory Conger & Kanungo (1988).	Charismatic leadership taps into deep psychological identification and attachment processes of 'the self' in followers resulting in extraordinary levels of engagement and followership beyond personal self-interest. Such leaders are visionary, take significant risks, and can be unconventional.
Normative Contingency – Task Complexity Model Vroom & Yetton (1973); Vroom & Jago (1988).	Leadership style depends on the demands of the situation and the quality of outcomes required. Leader-managers become both more directive and more participative depending whether followers were affected by the mission outcome or not. The theory proposes a hierarchical decision-tree approach depending on task complexity and the need for follower-alignment.

³ Short list as proposed by Elliott (2007a, 2007b).

⁴ For a comprehensive review and discussion of these and other leadership theories, see Bass and Bass (2008).

Leadership theories/ Authors and key references	Brief summary
<p>Power-Distance theory Hollander (1992); Hollander & Offerman (1990); Hofstede & Hofstede (2005).</p>	<p>The impact of leadership is related to perceptions of power which are motivational for followers and associates and can exhibit either dependency or counter-dependency response patterns. How power is perceived to be distributed varies depending on the size of the group or organisation. However, the power – distance ratio varies significantly in a normative fashion from culture to culture, and this shapes expectations about effective leadership</p>
<p>Strategic Leadership Theory For example, Avolio (2007); Schein (1992); Senge (1990).</p>	<p>Strategic leadership provides meaning and purpose for an organisation. It differs from operational and managerial leadership in the degree to which systems thinking is required to produce value greater than the sum of individual parts and to determine organisational direction and its responses to contextual and environmental issues, challenges and opportunities: strategic changes involve rethinking current values and re-orienting an organisation. A variety in executive roles and different forms of corporate governance exist. The strategic leadership required by chief executive officers (CEOs) varies depending on an organisation's life cycle stage (founding, maintenance and either rejuvenation or decline).</p>
<p>Follower Impacts on Leadership Dvir & Shamir (2003).</p>	<p>The developmental readiness and capacity of followers can enable and also limit or disable the exercise of transformational leadership by leaders.</p>
<p>Authentic Leadership Avolio & Luthans (2006); Avolio, Griffith, Wernsing & Walumbwa (2010); Avolio & Wernsing (2008); Garner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumba (2005); Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson (2008).</p>	<p>Authentic Leadership (AL) is an emergent theory comprising four components of leadership conceptualised as a leader's self awareness, their transparency, their ethical/moral conduct and their balanced processing. At this early stage of scale validation of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) it is thought that AL may be distinguished from ethical and transformational leadership. The basic factor structure of the ALQ has been reported to hold up across several cultures (America, Kenyan and Chinese); however it does not account for contextual influences on leadership (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson (2008, p.118).</p>
<p>Situational Leadership Theory Hersey & Blanchard (1976); Hersey, Blanchard & Natemeyer (1979).</p>	<p>This contingency theory regards leadership as differentially taking into account the developmental stages and needs of followers in projects and organisational units. The leader responds according to four typically differentiated styles.</p>
<p>Least Preferred Co-worker Theory Fiedler (1967).</p>	<p>This contingency theory regards leadership as prioritising between task-focus and people-focus. Relationships, power and task structure are the three key factors that drive effective styles.</p>

which are necessary for coaching practice, and their worthiness and indeed relevance to the identification and development of leadership. If so, let the discussion begin! It may be that in time theories about effective *leadership* generated by coaching psychology research may supplement this list.

For instance, the research by Cerni, Curtis and Colmar (2008, 2010a, 2010b) provides an important bridge between the established transformational – transactional model and the intra-psyche *analytic-rational* and *intuitive-experiential* coachee domain which can be the object of coaching processes. However, it is suggested that, given the evident tendencies in the coaching psychology literature about *leadership*, caution needs to be exercised about the premature elevation of non-systematic implicit assumptions about what constitutes *effective leadership* derived from the coaching relationship *per se*.

From the perspective of observed organisational behaviour, enhancing leadership in organisations is commonly reduced in practice to finding a person with the ‘right’ characteristics. However, from the extensive scholarly leadership research undertaken, and despite popular beliefs and expectations to the contrary, no such personal universal *traits* have been found which can predict effective leadership in *all* situations.

Interestingly, Barrick and Mount (1996) reported that *traits* tend to do a better job of predicting *the appearance* of leadership rather than distinguishing between effective and ineffective leaders. One wonders then how many Human Resource Managers allow their judgements to be shaped by such surface level phenomena. For an excellent review and summary discussion of traits and leadership refer to Bass and Bass (2008; chapters 4 and 5).

For the purposes of this paper, and by way of illustration, attention to the development of leaders and leadership viewed from

the scholarly leadership literature will be confined to a discussion of the transformational-transactional empirical research base. This limitation seems to be justified given the prominence in leadership research of the Full Range Leadership Theory⁵, the extensive training in *leadership development* which has been reported (Barling, Webber & Kelloway, 1996; Bass & Bass, 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Howell & Avolio, 1989; Parry & Sinha, 2005; Sosik & Jung, 2010) including controlled pre-/post-field studies, and a significant body of research linking the reliable measures of leadership with elevated performance outcomes at individual, group and organisational levels (see Table 2).

Bass and Riggio (2006) describe Full Range Leadership (FRL) training in some detail (chapter 10) and cite studies demonstrating the efficaciousness of such training in relation both to improved transformational – transactional profiles (for example, the quasi-experimental pre- and post-evaluation of community leaders, pp.159–160). They also cite independent studies concerning a range of outcome measures which are related to performance improvement. Even so, they conclude:

‘although significant work has been done in transformational leadership *training* much more is needed.’ (p.234)

It is noteworthy that coaching psychology from its earliest days (Grant, 2001) distinguished *coaching* from *training*, and Bass in his account of coaching refers only to early forms of internal line management coaching and mentoring (Bass & Bass, 2008, pp.1091–1092). However, the time has come for this boundary of differentiation between coaching and training to be re-examined (Elliott, 2010a, 2010b; Elliott & Palermo, 2008). As recently observed (Franklin & Doran, 2009; Gyllensten et al., 2010; Leonard-Cross, 2010) the number of coaching psychology objective outcome studies is small: it pales into insignificance

⁵ For instance, Judge and Piccolo (2004) in their meta-analytic study reported that more studies had been published on the transformational-transactional theory than on any other leadership theory.

when compared to the voluminous transformational leadership out-comes literature.

There is a tendency among coaching practitioners and possibly coaching research circles to assume that what is ‘most recent’ is better or best. Some of the leadership theories cited may, therefore, be dismissed as passé. However these postmodern philosophical assumptions in contemporary culture need to be resisted. Responsible research builds on what has been demonstrated to be true: yet how much research is actually the quest for the ‘novel’ or ‘new’ without any regard for significant research traditions which establish domains and fields of knowledge. To establish a universally valid theory of leadership may take upwards of 30 years or more of replication, challenge, modification, situational and cultural refinements, leading to seminal break-through studies which establish the new territory. Such is the history of FRL research: yet it is not uncommon for new theories to be proclaimed in coaching after only a few preliminary studies.

Coaching for leadership development is clearly interested in outcomes: about that

coaching psychology and leadership research share a common concern. Scholarly high impact journal articles which measure the impact of transformational leadership on a range of individual, group and organisational outcomes are presented in Table 2.

FRL training has frequently taken place in organisation-wide interventions involving three-day workshop group processes – often starting at or near the top of organisations. Sometimes such training has been abridged to two-day workshops in combination with various booster sessions (for example, Parry & Sinha, 2005). Moreover, FRL training was that – training in knowledge about the Full Range Leadership Model combined with facilitative group processes about how to incorporate this research in both personal behavioural and personal reflection processes. The MLQ360 assessment has been typically used for assessment and developmental feedback purposes in these interventions. Additionally, use was made of peer learning circles where various disclosures were made by participants and indeed encouraged.

Sosik and Jung (2010) elaborated this FLR training by examining in detail and

Table 2: A selection of empirical research findings about the outcome impacts of transformational leadership.

Research on outcomes of transformational leadership.	Selected references
Transformational leaders make a difference to outcomes.	Keller (1995).
Transformational leadership is positively related to business unit performance and financial outcomes.	Barling, Weber, & Kelloway (1996); Howell & Avolio (1993).
Positive relationships exist between safety-specific transformational leadership and occupational safety.	Barling, Loughlin & Kelloway (2002).
Top manager (CEO) high transformational leaders are associated with organisational innovation in the IT industry in Taiwan.	Jung, Wu & Chow (2008).
Transformational and Transactional correlates of effectiveness and satisfaction.	Dumdum, Lowe & Avolio, 2003; Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramanian (1996).
The MLQ assessment of the transformational – transactional theory validly predicted individual and group performance of a large longitudinal field experiment within a military context.	Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson (2003).

explicating the components of Full Range Leadership Development Theory. They write ‘our experience in teaching and researching leadership has taught us that the best way to become skilled in FRLD (Full Range Leadership Development), or any leadership topic for that matter, is *‘learning by deeply understanding and then doing’*” (p.32). Critical questioning is an important feature of this training – questioning often led or facilitated by the trainer.

Such FRL approaches to leadership development are naturally suited to workshop or classroom-type situations...indeed one might also conjecture that they reflect or are indeed driven by paradigms of an academic enterprise model as befits its origins. Day (2001) commented that such classroom programmes were still widely used by organisations as one type of developmental practice, citing a 1995 American Society for Training and Development survey finding that 85 per cent of companies that engaged in leadership development used formal classroom programmes. However, even in 2001, Day observed that ‘many organisations are realising that such programmes are not enough’ (p.586).

Coaching and/or Training: Drivers for leadership development?

Now in the foundations of the coaching psychology movement as has been mentioned, coaching was clearly delineated from training. *Coaching* is starting from a different place, namely the coach-coachee dyadic relationship and the individual’s perspectives, their experiences, their issues, their personality, and what assists them to unlock their potentials, for example, the editorial themes of Kemp (2009a) in the special edition of the *ICPR* ‘Coaching and Leadership’. This perspective perpetuates the early definitions and theoretical formulations of what ‘coaching is’ in so far as coaching is carved out explicitly in contradistinction from training (Grant, 2001, 2006): training and advising have been evaluated as the extraneous importation of

‘expert knowledge’ (so ‘not coaching’). So whereas FRL training as often practiced in the US and elsewhere starts from engagement with whole organisations – and uses group as well as individual interventions – coaching starts from a pair of individuals who can be in organisational contexts.

Thomas Kuhn (1970) maintained that advances in science necessarily involve a ‘Gestalt switch’ which draws upon psychological and sociological (and one might add economic and business) dimensions (for a discussion see Chalmers, 2007, pp.116–117, 122–128). What is the Gestalt switch which will enable coaching and training for leadership development to re-engage?

Considering the possible sociological dimensions in leadership development research, three orientations are apparent. Firstly, academic university-driven research into individual, group and organisational behaviour driven by transparent and succinct publication in journals subject to critical blind peer review. Secondly, coaching practice ultimately driven by economic advantage which, for proprietary reasons and commercial confidentiality limit the appetite for practitioners to publish results and methods of ‘what works’ in leadership development and which necessarily results in the selective reporting only of positive results to avoid commercial disadvantage. Thirdly, professional practice presentations and peer review through high quality professional association-sponsored seminars and conferences, such as those hosted according to the professional codes of practice of established psychological societies. While there are overlaps between these three orientations in leadership research, it is nevertheless imperative for the advancement of science, as Kuhn has proposed, that the particular sociological and economic constraints relevant to each orientation are recognised and properly evaluated. The emergent field of coaching psychology has an important part in strengthening the third orientation and in facilitating exchange between the first two orientations. It is suggested that the first may

well often undervalue the third as a source of innovation and new knowledge about what works in coaching for leadership development.

Extending such Kuhnian analysis to include possible cross-cultural/country patterns in research and practice about leadership development, one may observe that in the US – where most FRL training has occurred – it has often been in association with the university orientation and positioning. By contrast, the evidence-based coaching psychology movement – now strongly developed in the UK and Australia – has been relatively poorly developed in the US where the proprietary coaching theories and models of the second orientation abound and are strongly marketed and exported: but any transparently reported research base underpinning them has often been slight or indeed absent. One might, therefore, conjecture that the social, economic, cultural and institutional differences in positioning in these countries may be one reason why the gap between evidence-based coaching (strongly driven in the UK and Australia) and leadership research (strongly driven within the US) has not started to be addressed until recently. Whatever the reasons, there continues to be little engagement by coaching psychology literature of the empirical leadership literature, as evidenced by issues 1 to 5 of the *ICPR* (2006–2010).

Coaching for Leadership Development Practice

As has been observed, on the one hand, university-based research can sometimes drive practice; on the other hand professional practice can sometimes drive university research. Serious self-critical and reflective practitioners who engage in coaching for leadership development try to take account of scholarly research and emergent theory from coaching psychology. At the same time they also seek to utilise the systematic evidence-based research and theory about leadership in organisations.

Pathways and methods are required to ‘get the balance right’ between the insights from both coaching psychology about the development of human potentials, and leadership research – particularly which shed light diagnostically on what constitutes *effective* and *ineffective leadership* and how this might be assessed and indeed reliably measured. Such pathways need to be not naive about the economic imperatives which drive any particular research or practice orientation; this includes university research which can uncritically be held *ipso facto* to be more objective, valid, reliable, authoritative, and the source of most true advances in coaching skills and knowledge.

An important issue for coaching and its founding assumptions, is whether coach and coachee contain within themselves the necessary knowledge and skills to project what effective leadership is or could be in an organisational situation? If a body of knowledge exists external to the coach-coachee relationship, then how might the latter be re-defined to utilise such knowledge without losing the gains and insights made by coaching psychology? It would seem that this quest is not too dissimilar to the application to coaching of diagnostics about human pathology from, say, mental health psychological perspectives. If such areas of clinical and counselling psychological knowledge and practice from the broad field of psychology be admitted, then why not also foster research and practice engagement between coaching psychology with the knowledge and practice of industrial and organisational psychology?

The urgency of the quest for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to coaching for leadership development is highlighted by the comparative absence of engagement with the empirical leadership literature as reviewed here in the recent special edition of *ICPR* ‘Coaching and Leadership’ (Vol. 5(1), 2009). ‘Coachee strengths-based coaching’, ‘solution-focused coaching’, and ‘coachee directed goal attainment coaching’ has dominated the current

paradigms for evidence-based coaching, including excursions into coaching for leadership development. Moreover, it has been recently proposed in that the coaching relationship itself, and indeed the coach themselves, should constitute ‘the future direction’ for research and practice about leadership in coaching psychology practice (Kemp, 2009b). Such a programme would seem to lead coaching research and practice about leadership development to the logical endpoint of the current limiting tendencies in coaching psychology to which this paper has drawn attention. Now the time is really right to explore scientific leadership theories and their necessary use in coaching. One might ask, therefore, for a later discussion, ‘What might be relevant Kuhnian perspectives on this evident bias?’

The utility of conceptual frameworks for leadership coaching practice and research

To advance some answers to questions about fundamental perspectives regarding coaching for leadership development it is here proposed that this journey will be assisted by the articulation of more inclusive and appropriate conceptual frameworks for coaching, following the suggestions of Lane and Corrie (2009). They pursued the need for clear frameworks in formative coaching psychology practice, and advance three criteria if such conceptual frameworks for coaching are to be ‘fit for purpose’ – namely a model or framework:

1. that is consistent with a client partnership framework in which it is possible to incorporate a variety of stakeholder positions;
2. that can take account of a broader range of factors than the individual and internal’ (by the ‘zeitgeist of internal causation’);
3. of formulation that has relevance to all contexts, regardless of the goals chosen, theoretical position adopted or techniques for change used (that is... it must be replicable across time, place and contract.’ (p.199)

Lane and Corrie (2009) add, ‘in general terms, *formulation* can be understood as an explanatory account of the issues with which a client is presenting (including predisposing, precipitating and maintaining factors) that can form the basis of a shared framework of understanding and which has implications for change’ (p.199).

This author agrees that such frameworks are crucial in working with clients at the levels of performance and developmental coaching, as well as work involving any degree of complexity; and that formulation can serve many functions ranging from the identification of relevant issues and goals, to enhancing coach empathy and collaboration.

In 2006, Fillery-Travis and Lane also drew attention to the need for clear frameworks for the various modalities of coaching – internal and external provider contexts, and manager provided – if any empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of coaching was to be demonstrated. An example of the *external coaching modality* was presented by Elliott, (2007a, 2007b). Later Franklin and Doran (2009) advanced considerations of the effectiveness of different coaching frameworks and models in a double blind random control study of alternative coaching frameworks related to effective academic performance.

Specifically concerning coaching for leadership development, Leonard (2003) highlighted the need for coaching to take leadership research seriously and provided a review of some relevant leadership theories; and Elliott (2003) presented at Sydney University on the need for a comprehensive approach, and drew attention to the question of the absence of such evidence-based interpretative theories and knowledge about effective and ineffective leadership in the coaching literature and coaching psychology presentations. He advanced seven propositions for professional coaching about leadership development, which included the need for a proper utilisation of scientifically established leadership theories (Elliott, 2005).

Through a methodological process of case studies, professional presentations and critical peer review, naturalistic methods with attention to accurate phenomenological description and objective analysis of actual professional practice, Elliott then developed and presented two comprehensive posters at the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference in Sydney entitled: 'Coaching for leadership development: The zone of professional practice' (2007a) and a companion 'Critique of coaching and leadership research literature from the zone of professional practice' (2007b). The synergies between the conceptual analysis, purpose, role and function of Elliott's proposal and the formative framework conceptuality as proposed by Lane and Corrie are striking. Extracts of this framework are presented in Figures 1 to 7.

So in the practice of 'being in the reflective space in the zone of coaching', partially represented in Figure 1, it is necessary to bring to the fore and represent necessary engagement with the fruits of empirical leadership research in the reflective space on the one hand, and engagement with the core aspects of coaching and coaching processes on the other. The total framework Elliott (2007a, summarised in Figure 4), identifies and maps key contributing realities and processes considered to contribute to establishing and maintaining a comprehensive and integrated reflective space in leadership coaching. Although schematic it highlights the opportunity of 'getting the balance right' in the reflective space of coaching for leadership development. It invites enquiry and challenges common assumptions about what knowledge, skill and processes are necessary and relevant. Moreover, it provides a

Figure 1: Implicit theories and the coach and coachee. Extract from Elliott (2007a).



manageable number of salient and highly relevant reference points for active systematic monitoring in coaching conversations and by researchers of leadership coaching.

Leadership theory in the reflective space of coaching for leadership development

Such conceptual frameworks focus attention about salient matters for leadership development. They imply the question: *From whence come the authorities upon which any theories about leadership may be based?* In search for answers the reader is invited into the coaching relationship – into the safe ‘private room’ of the coaching encounter between two people. This situation is not about classroom or workshop training as traditionally understood.

What does this reflective space in time look like from both the perspectives of the coach and coachee, and what is its

relationship to: (a) the organisational context; and (b) realms of expert knowledge about leadership (which is predictive of individual and organisational outcomes)?

Considering Figures 1 and 2, key reference points include the complexities of the organisational context and ‘lenses’ from leadership theory. It is the coach’s responsibility to ensure that the overall balance the framework system suggests is achieved over time. The framework prompts the strategic systematic scanning or monitoring of the relevant content and processes involved.

The framework representation of lenses from leadership theory requires the identification of such theories deemed suitable for utilisation in the reflective space of coaching for leadership development. Appropriate examples from the extensive scientific literature about effective leadership models are

Figure 2: Interpretative lenses from theory: scientific leadership research. Extract from Elliott (2007a).



Figure 3: The reflective space in the coaching relationship.
Extract from Elliott (2007a).



considered to be those listed in Table 1. These theories become potential lenses for interpretation in the reflective space of the content presented by organisational context and coachee. These theories expand and ‘tune up’ the implicit theories about leadership which the coach and coachee bring to the purposeful relationship. They inform ‘what counts’ (what is authoritative) regarding effective outcomes for leadership styles given related situational and contextual organisational realities relevant to leadership, and theories which sharpen awareness and operational performance of the coachee in the organisation.

The zone of professional practice in *leadership coaching* (Elliott, 2007a) seems to satisfy the three criteria advanced by Lane and Corrie (2009) to be ‘fit for purpose’.

Elaboration of a Balanced Conceptual Framework for Leadership Development

In view of the preceding analysis of leadership development from the zone of professional practice seven extension areas are now briefly proposed and discussed as contributing towards best practice.

1: The need for conceptual frameworks to guide professional leadership coaching.

The conceptual framework for leadership coaching at the individual level (Figure 2) gives salience to the utilisation of specialist ‘interpretative lenses from leadership’ and relevant ‘group and organisational theories’ in the coaching reflective space. Extending on the necessary processes required, it is proposed that the coach needs to systemati-

cally monitor the range of possible interpretative lenses and, as appropriate introduce them as part of the meaning-making processes in the reflective space. This requires the coach to bracket or hold in check his/her own *implicit* beliefs and theories about leadership and organisations and indeed moderate these through their own engagement with the interpretative lenses as part of their own on-going professional development.

An additional implication for coaching psychology from the scholarly leadership literature is the recognition that *leadership* takes place at the group and organisational levels in addition to the individual level (Avolio et al., 1996; Avolio et al., 2003; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Schein, 1992; Tosi, 1991; Sivasubramaniam et al., 2002). Additionally, the leadership literature emphasises that the *organisational context* of the coachee is crucial for interpreting the interactions between leaders and organisations (for example, Avolio, 2007; Elliott, 2005, 2007) and as many of the leadership theories in Table 1 hold. Consequently, to treat the leadership development coachee in isolation from these phenomena is a serious deficiency in coaching following an individualist paradigm. The interpretative lens proposed in the framework (Figure 2), therefore, opens up a necessary corrective to much coaching for leadership development.

2: Lessons from curriculum theory for coaching in leadership development.

The conceptual framework proposed by Elliott (2007a) enables an overall system perspective of what may otherwise be seen as competing system elements. This is similar to curriculum theory in education which also seeks to orchestrate a number of diverse components of the educative process: for example, persons as learners, knowledge and skill domains, the purposes of the curriculum, the role of the teacher/facilitator, resources available and the mediums for information presentation, learning activities and theories, developmental theories

and their appropriate application, assessment practices (whether formative or summative, for example), system evaluation assumptions and the total set of assumptions about the contexts in which the embedded learning occurs. Coaching psychology could profit from more engagement with curriculum theory from the field of education which is also dedicated to human development. The total conceptual framework proposed by Elliott (2007a, Figure 4) illustrates how the various elements are orchestrated to form and frame the reflective space.

3: The psychodynamics of the coaching reflective space: boundary maintenance and process drivers.

The conceptual framework (Elliott, 2007a) proposes process micro-drivers which establish and drive the coaching reflective space: (i) the appropriate utilisation by the coach of a range of both facilitative skill and expert knowledge modalities; (ii) the facilitation by the coach of the coachee exploration of 'self-other beliefs' within a developmental perspective (for example, as envisaged by Kegan, 1982); and (iii) the application of ethical principles to achieve and maintain coachee informed consent. The total relational context is established through both formal and informal contracting agreements which define its purpose and scope of coaching, and which involve all the stakeholders (see Figure 5): the coach and/or coach organisation, the sponsoring organisation for the coachee client(s) and each coachee.

The interpersonal nature of each coach-coachee relationship is of great importance (Gyllensten, & Palmer, 2007; O'Broin & Palmer, 2010; Palmer & McDowall, 2010). The relationship is essentially characterised by *mutuality*. In a related analysis, Welman and Bachkirova (2010) have helpfully explored the use and meaning of 'power' in coaching relationships. However, the conceptual framework (Elliott, 2007a) invites considerations relating to power to be viewed from the perspective of an analysis of

Figure 4: Coaching for leadership development: The zone of professional practice. Full conceptual framework. Extract from Elliott (2007a).



Figure 5: Purpose and the reflective space: Contracting and evaluation in organisations. Extract from Elliott (2007a).



assumptions and attributions concerning authority – whether about persons, organisational context, knowledge, belief systems or scientific theory (Elliott, 2010c). So understood, relationship, power, context, and authority are all important aspects of the reflective space in the creation of meaning for personal development.

4: Selection criteria for 360 feedback psychometric assessments and their implementation in practice.

While anybody can ask a question which they believe to be useful and important concerning leadership, some questions are better than others. 360 assessment platforms today readily enable custom designer content which may be generated by survey purveyors, client organisations, coaches and clients. While these may be high on face validity through tapping into shared implicit theories about leadership for instance, they may in fact be of little or no value in promoting effective leadership development and its associated outcomes. As has been discussed, the widespread utilisation of individuals' and organisations' *implicit leadership theories* does not confer on such beliefs usefulness in providing feedback for coachee development, other than possibly increasing awareness between self- and other- perception differences.

Some questions are better than others in reliably measuring *leadership* as this may differentially relate to a range of outcomes effects...some desirable and others undesirable. Good questions capture content which has relatively sharp boundaries, resulting in considerable agreement among any rater audience about what information is being captured on the leadership stage and by that 'spotlight'. Poor questions appear to be fuzzy and lack consensus with regard to their meaning. Well-designed psychometric surveys have a structure which can be likened to clusters of illuminating spot lights which overlap each other on the leadership stage.

The MLQ360 is an example of a good psychometrically valid survey which has been shown to function validly in many contexts (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Data collected which is predictive of a range of desired outcomes is preferable to mere norm comparisons which simply require the coachee to consider where they are in relation to others and may indeed have no relation with desired leadership performance outcomes.

5: External and internal goal definition: Getting the balance right through relevant resource selection and process.

On the one hand valid 360 psychometric feedback can propose goals for leadership development which are informed and shaped by scientific theory and knowledge about effective leadership (McDowall & Millward, 2010). On the other hand coaching focuses on assisting the coachee towards their own identification of goals, motivations and desired future states which are attractors for them (and may be their sponsoring organisation). Integrating the inner goal aspirations of the coachee with objectives for behavioural change as proposed by leadership research is a critical new area for research and practice in coaching psychology for leadership development. Strategies and methods exist which aim to accomplish this⁶: however, an account of these is beyond the scope of this paper.

What is vitally important in terms of balancing the internal – external generation of goals for development is the coach facilitating the coachee taking personal ownership of the scientifically informed 360 objectives for leadership development through a selection and visualisation process involving their relationships and organisational context. Such processes assist the translation of 'external/scientifically objective' research-based assessment data which proposes goals for leadership development into an

⁶ For example, the MILDERS 360 roll-out system of MLQ International.

internal 'owned personal development plan' with follow-through support relationships and mechanisms to enable coachee transition from 'application and practice' to 'personal adoption'.

6: Coaching processes which enhance transformational leadership

The ground-breaking research by Cerni, Curtis and Colmar (2008, 2010a, 2010b) provides amongst the first empirical evidence that behavioural demonstrations of coachee *transformational leadership* itself can be increased by coaching methods focusing on changes to the coachee's *analytical-rational* system and constructive thinking of the *intuitive constructive* system. The *intuitive-experiential* system can be both constructive and destructive. This field study was with adult leaders in educational organisations and used a pre-test, post-test control-group research design which spanned a 10-week coaching programme. All staff in each organisation independently rated their leader and there was no difference in the control group.

The study utilised aspects of the plan roll-out system referred to in 'Extension Area 5'. FRL was assessed using multi-rater data with the MLQ5x scale.

7: Necessary ethical principles and skills in coaching processes

These principles and core values for professional conduct can be applied to provide general guidance for the utilisation of scientific knowledge about leadership in coaching. When these ethical principles are practiced in the conceptual framework processes maintaining the reflective space for leadership development, the coachee is drawn into key process decision-making concerning their own journey in coaching and is required to take responsibility for them. This extension commentary will be limited to only several key points.

The professional ethical principles of *competence and propriety* require attention to scientific knowledge about leadership in coaching for leadership development. If coaches promote themselves and indeed act as 'leadership coaches' it is ethically incumbent on them to be acquainted with core research about leadership and how this can be utilised in practice.

With regard to the introduction and use of leadership theories, the *principles of disclosure and informed consent* require that the coach explain to the coachee, usually in advance, the shifts in methodology from

Table 3: Common Ethical Principles in Codes of Professional Practice.

Appropriate disclosure:	The need for appropriate disclosure of purpose and any related interests.
Informed consent:	Securing the voluntary informed consent of the client for any programme or procedure.
Competence:	Accurately representing claimed competence and the limits to competence.
Avoidance of conflicts of interest:	The responsibility to resolve conflicts of interest arising from competing values and commitments.
Confidentiality:	Maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality regarding the sharing of any classes of information with other persons or institutions.
Propriety:	Acceptance of the need for personal responsibility for decisions and their consequences along with the maintenance of personal autonomy and accountability.

Elliott & Tuohy, Melbourne, 2006.

facilitative to expert modes and vice-versa (disclosure) and then seek agreement (informed consent) to these moves by checking with the coachee. Such procedures are educative and empowering for the coachee. They also enable avoidance of coachee dependence on the coach as in counselling.

These ethical practices are part of the necessary *facilitative* and *expert modality* repertoire required of the coach (Elliott, 2005). This ethical repertoire is necessary for the transitions to be made in the reflective space which utilise expert knowledge if the essential developmental purposes of coaching are not to be violated. It is proposed that the capacity of the coach to know and be able to apply all these ethical principles in their practice is required by the principles of competence and propriety for professional conduct.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has reviewed current emphases and limitations of the current coaching industry and literature. To achieve comprehensiveness and required professional practice relevance, it is proposed that approaches such as the *conceptual framework for leadership coaching* (Elliott, 2007a) should be utilised which systematically monitor and prompt for a number of salient but necessarily relevant inputs. This framework includes the use of lenses from leadership theory which, in distinction from much writing in the coaching and coaching psychology literature approaches, have been established *independently* from the coach – coachee or organisational *implicit theories* held and assumed about what is considered to be effective leadership.

Ethical principles commonly found in professional practice codes have been applied to provide guidance for the handling

Figure 6a: Key coaching processes within the coaching reflective space. Extracts from Elliott (2007a).



Figure 6b: Key coaching processes within the coaching reflective space.
Extracts from Elliott (2007a).



Figure 6b: Key coaching processes within the coaching reflective space.
Extracts from Elliott (2007a).



Figure 7: Overview: Coaching processes within the coaching reflective space.
Extract from Elliott (2007a).



of such scientific leadership theories in the reflective space, contracting, and boundary management for the coaching reflective space itself. This guidance, together with a comprehensive understanding of the coaching relationship, enables responsible transitions in coaching for leadership development through coaching (coach and coachee) being appropriately informed by scientific and scholarly leadership research using interpretative 'lenses' from theory to illuminate the leadership stage of a particular coachee and their organisational context.

The scientific leadership literature has only recently commenced serious enquiry about how leaders and leadership are developed from a psychological perspective. In this regard it needs to pay attention to the strengths of coaching psychology and its growing research evidence-base.

Some reasons for the continuing disconnect between the evidence-based leadership and coaching literatures have been canvassed. It is proposed that the conceptual

framework for leadership development entails a necessary correction to much coaching psychology practice and writing about leadership development if truly evidence-based scientific attributions are to be used to describe these activities.

Suggestions for further research and practice review

Given the extensive reported activity in coaching for leadership development as a frequent purpose of coaching on the one hand, and the recent interest in the development of leaders and leadership by leadership scholars on the other hand, there is need for further critical analysis of the assumptions being entertained. Additionally, given agreed systematic definitions and measures of leadership, there is an urgent need for field research which investigates the effectiveness of different kinds of coaching frameworks and models for leadership development.

In particular, as reviewed here there have been a number of studies of the effectiveness

of Full Range Leadership training for the development of people to elevated individual, group and organisational performance outcomes. How do these outcome effects compare with the individual dyadic coaching effects of leadership development approaches through coaching psychology methods? How can coaching psychology utilise the findings concerning the antecedents and processes of leadership development found in the leadership literature? How can further progress be made about the role and importance of the cognitive 'inner side' of developing effective

leadership in terms of outcome effects. These and many other questions seem both urgent and important if the *new field of coaching for leadership development* is to be sought out and claimed.

Correspondence

Ray Elliott, MAPS, FAHRI, AIMM

Organisational Psychologist and
Executive Coach,

Victoria University, Australia.

Email: rayelliott@oecy.com.au

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St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK
Tel 0116 254 9568 Fax 0116 227 1314 E-mail mail@bps.org.uk www.bps.org.uk

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