

An International Perspective on Coaching Psychology: Education, Practice and Development as a Profession

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Funding

None declared

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest in respect to their authorship or the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgments

None declared

Abstract

This short article reports the findings of an online survey exploring the International context of coaching psychology. The aim of this paper is to provide a snapshot from that time, sharing findings that gathered views on key themes and highlighted both opportunities and challenges within an international coaching psychology setting.

Keywords: *Coaching Psychology, Coaching, Teaching, Education, Training, Positive Psychology*

Abstrait

Ce court article rapporte les résultats d'un sondage en ligne explorant le contexte international de la psychologie du coaching. Le but de cet article est de fournir un instantané à partir de cette époque, en partageant les résultats qui ont permis de recueillir des points de vue sur des thèmes clés et mis en évidence les opportunités et les défis dans un cadre de psychologie du coaching international.

Mots clés: *Coaching Psychologie, Coaching, Enseignement, Éducation, Formation, Psychologie positive*

Introduction

Since 2000, the field of coaching psychology as an applied positive psychology has been growing around the world. Unlike the coaching industry, as psychology is usually a licensed or state registered health profession in many countries, the development of coaching psychology has been within that context.

Each professional psychology body has its own definition or description of coaching psychology. The Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (IGCP) of the

Australian Psychological Society emphasise the link between positive psychology and coaching psychology. They assert that “Coaching Psychology as an applied positive psychology, draws on and develops established psychological approaches, and can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and wellbeing for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health (sic) issues

To provide us with an overview of the current status of the Teaching and Education of Coaching Psychology and Coaching, please indicate the types of units/modules/programmes that are offered in your country.... (n=20)

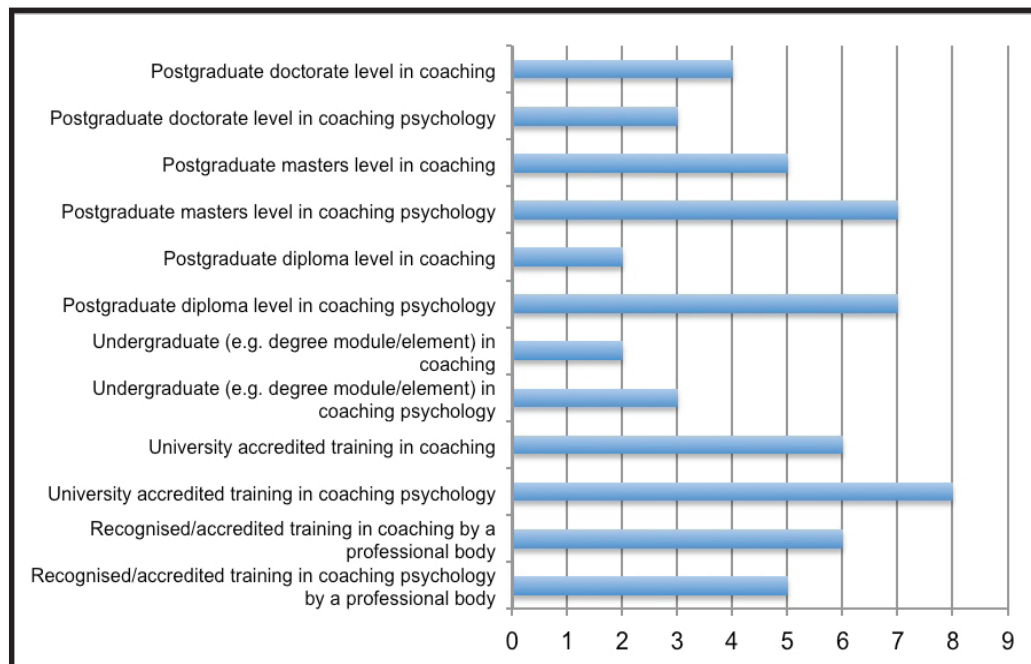


Figure 1: Status of the Teaching and Education of Coaching Psychology and Coaching

or abnormal levels of distress" (IGCP, 2016). It is relevant to establish the relationship between coaching psychology and positive psychology here, to place the findings reported within this paper within an appropriate context.

Methods

To further inform the field and provide a 'point in time' reflection of the current international coaching psychology context, an online survey based research study was conducted in 2014. E-invitations were sent to representatives known to the authors as active in the field of coaching psychology from South Africa, Poland, Israel, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, Scotland, Italy, Australia, USA, Ireland, Holland, Spain, Sweden, Japan and Brazil.

Four areas were examined in the on-line survey:

- *Educational and Training Programmes*
- *Status of the Practice of Coaching Psychology*

- *National Professional Psychology Bodies/Groups*
- *Challenge and Opportunity*

The results of the study were first reported in a paper presented at the 4th International Congress of Coaching Psychology (Palmer & O'Riordan, 2014).

Results

Educational and Training Programmes

As shown by Figure 1, the findings suggest that educational programmes in coaching psychology and coaching were offered in a number of the countries represented within the survey. This ranges from recognized/accredited training in coaching or coaching psychology by a professional body to postgraduate doctorate level programmes. It is interesting to note that whilst we might expect there to be a higher number of undergraduate degree level modules/elements reported, there does seem to be more offered within the UK than elsewhere in the world. It was

How would you rate the current general position of the Practice of Coaching Psychology in your country, in terms of ... ? (n=18)

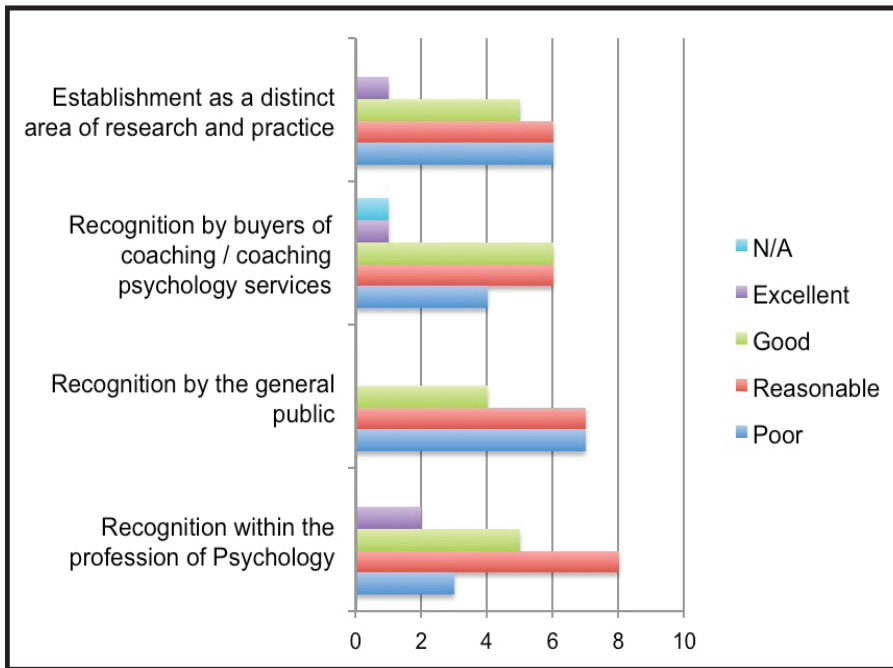


Figure 2: Current general position of the Practice of Coaching Psychology in your country

beyond the scope of the survey to ask about the actual content of these various programmes and training options, although to help inform the development of a coaching psychology educational framework[s] it would be of value to be able to identify commonalities and distinctions.

Status of the Practice of Coaching Psychology

Mixed reflections were shared by respondents in relation to their viewpoints on the current general status of the Practice of Coaching Psychology across the four key areas of: establishment as a distinct area of research and practice, recognition by buyers, recognition by the general public and recognition by the profession of psychology (see Figure 2).

In many ways the picture shown was not perhaps surprising given continuing debates and considerations in the field about how best to promote coaching psychology both externally (e.g. to buyers and the general public) and within the profession of psychology itself. Here we can see a range of potential

issues and ongoing challenge within the field with over half of responses rating the situation on these four areas as reasonable or poor.

National Professional Psychology Bodies/Groups

Importantly, to gauge the status of coaching psychology within National Professional Psychology Bodies, respondents were asked to share their knowledge on eleven key areas. As shown by Figure 3 (page 4), events and conferences appeared to be relatively well established. However themes such as accreditation/certification, qualifications and exams were less well represented.

Challenge and Opportunity

Exploration of the qualitative comments collected as part of the survey suggested that observations offered by respondents as being challenges within the field of coaching and coaching psychology included:

- Lack of regulation and standards on training courses

How is Coaching Psychology / Coaching represented within your National Professional Psychology Body? (n=16)

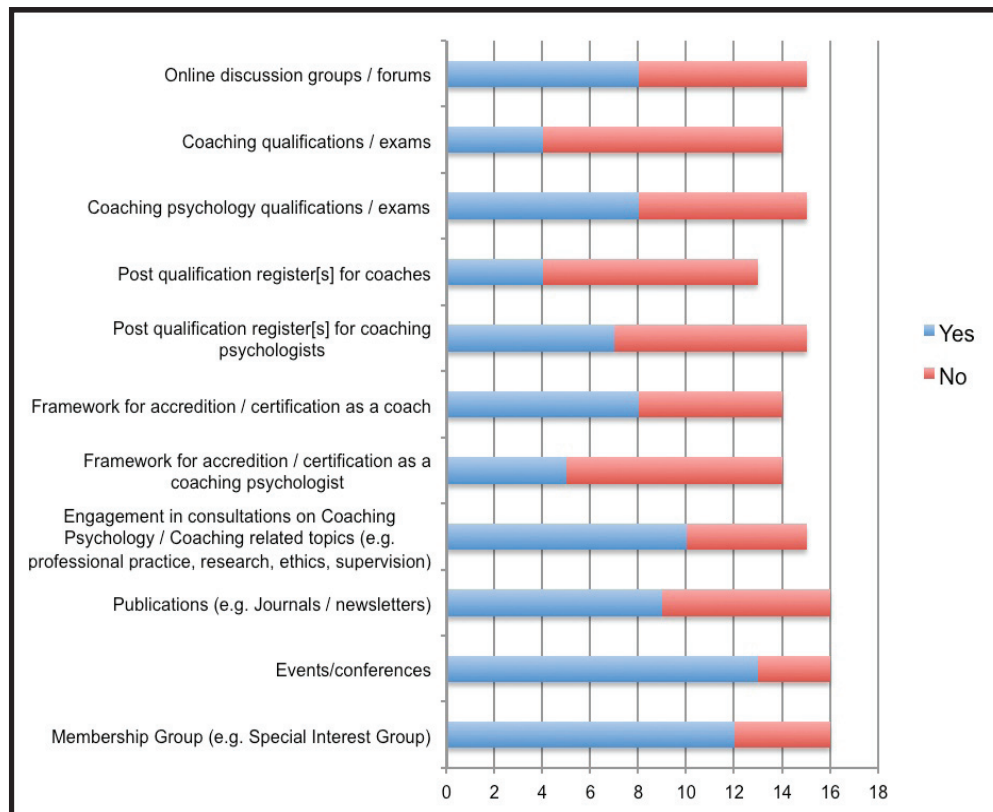


Figure 3: Representation of Coaching Psychology / Coaching within National Professional Psychology Bodies

- Lack of quality assurance
- Resistance within psychology
- Organised supervision
- Promoting research and publications
- Gaining wider acceptance of coaching psychology
- Building upon the evidence base (academic and practice)

Opportunities were noted as:

- Setting standards
- Further establishment of coaching psychology within a University context
- Increasing interest in the psychological aspects of coaching
- Supervision options
- Publication outlets

- Developing new programmes in coaching psychology
- E-coaching

The challenges and opportunities above are helpful key themes to keep in the forefront as we advance upon the progression of coaching psychology as an established profession.

Conclusion

This study was based on the responses of a small number of participants and the findings should be interpreted in this light. However, the results provide an interesting picture of the international coaching psychology context in 2014. It would be appropriate to revisit these areas in a follow up study in the next five years, particularly given the rapidly evolving global field of coaching psychology (Cavanagh & Palmer, 2006, 2012). ■

Citation

O’Riordan, S. & Palmer, S. (2017). ‘An International Perspective on Coaching Psychology: Education, Practice and Development as a Profession.’ *European Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 1, 4, 1-5. Retrieved from: <http://www.nationalwellbeingsservice.org/volumes/volume-1-2017/volume-1-article-4/>

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Biographies

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