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Exploring teaching strategies for training programmes in business coaching

Coaching and business coaching, in particular, is an academically immature, yet emerging discipline. While there appears to be general consensus about the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes of business coaches, there is currently little agreement on facilitating these competencies in the higher educational setting in order to develop the core competencies of business coaches. This qualitative study explores and describes teaching strategies to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes. The findings indicate that the nature of business coaching practice demands a critical disposition to thinking and acting. The nature of the business coach learner as a mature adult emphasises the importance of an experiential learning environment that promotes learner reflexivity. Possible teaching strategies depend on and promote interactive discourse and real-time learning.

Verkenning van onderrigstrategieë vir besigheids-afrigtingsprogramme

Afrigting, en meer spesifiek besigheidsafrigting, is 'n akademies onderontginde, maar tog ontwikkelende dissipline. Hoewel daar algemene konsensus met betrekking tot die vereiste kundigheid, vaardighede en ingesteldheid van besigheidsafrigters bestaan, is daar egter weinig eenstemmigheid oor hoe hierdie bevoegdhede op die mees toepaslike manier in die hoër opvoedkundige milieu gefasiliteer kan word ten einde die doelstellings van besigheidsafrigtingsprogramme te bereik. Die doel van hierdie kwalitatiewe studie is om moontlike onderrigstrategieë vir besigheidsafrigtingsprogramme te ondersoek en te beskryf ten einde die kernvaardighede van besigheidsafrigters te bevorder. Die bevindings dui aan dat die aard van besigheidsafrigting in die praktyk 'n kritiese benadering ten opsigte van denke en optrede verg. Omdat die leerder van besigheidsafrigting volwasse is, is dit belangrik dat die leeromgewing op ervaring geskoei word sodat dit selfondersoek kan bevorder. Die vertrekpunt van moontlike onderrigbenaderings behoort werklikheidsgebonde en deelnemende beredenering te wees.

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Coaching is simple but not easy.

Coach educator

Business coaching has exploded into a global billion dollar business (Sherman & Freas 2004: 84). According to the Global Coaching Survey 2008/9 (Bresser 2009), there are approximately 44 000 business coaches operating in the world. South Africa ranks seventh in the top 10 countries with the highest number of coaches. Although the top seven countries (the US, Britain, Germany, Australia, Japan, Canada and South Africa) comprise only 10% of the world population, 73% of business coaches operate in these countries, making South Africa one of the largest operators in the business coaching environment.

Coaching and business coaching, in particular, is an academically immature, yet emerging discipline (Hodgekinson & Ford 2010: 158, Laff 2007: 39). It is equally applicable to the wider business coaching industry and to business coaching training. Many emerging disciplines illustrate that practice precedes the establishment of sound and theoretical foundations. An essential foundation for any emerging industry is a training process that meets unanimous standards (Auerbach 2005: 9). The past ten years have experienced a rapid growth in business coaching training programmes both internationally and nationally (Auerbach 2005: 5, Maritz 2010: 3).

Although there are no comprehensive degree programmes dedicated to coaching or business coaching, increasing numbers of higher education institutions are now offering coaching components in courses ranging from undergraduate psychology and business courses to MBAs (Auerbach 2005: 18 Butler & Forbes 2008: 227, Laff 2007: 39). According to Schreiber (2007: 60), coaching is an "inconsistent and unregulated business led by practitioners from a wide variety of professional backgrounds". Some people in the coaching field are professionals, such as psychologists and nurses, while other practitioners have had no formal education or training in behavioural change or teaching (Maritz 2010: 6, Schreiber 2007: 60).

While there appears to be general consensus about the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes of business coaches, there is currently little agreement on how these competencies are facilitated effectively in the coaching educational setting in order to achieve the objectives of business coaching training programmes. Although teaching strategies may be well known and understood in general educational contexts, Crittenden & Woodside (2007: 38) argue that business school academics generally have not translated the research into classroom experiences sufficiently thoroughly in order to engage students in understanding the link between metathinking and business success. Teaching strategies refer to a broad plan of action for teaching activities with a view to achieving the aims of programmes (Van der Horst & McDonald 1997: 124). The act of facilitation is implied in the teaching role (Mellish *et al* 1998: 75), and through facilitation the coach educator enables coach learners to move to the next stage of their training and to grow personally and professionally.

Successful alignment to the business, coaching and educational demands in the twenty-first century requires higher education and corporate learning programmes that purposefully pursue teaching strategies that enhance the critical competencies of their business coaches. In addition, teaching strategies must be transformed into concrete realities (what forms they assume, how and when they will be applied, and how they might be measured) rather than leaving them to remain vague abstractions.

This article is significant since it provides an empirical account of coach educators' views about possible teaching strategies to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches, and therefore has direct application for business coaching practice and coaching education. The findings may stimulate further discussion within the emerging coaching pedagogical literature.

1. Trends in literature

While there appears to be common agreement on the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes of business coaches, such as

knowledge of coaching, business, people and diversity, critical thinking skills and ethical practices, the necessary teaching strategies to facilitate these core competencies have received limited attention.[1] Computerised searches of EBSCO Host, ERIC, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, Teacher Reference Center, Google Scholar, Google and Yahoo used the following keywords: coaching, programme, training, teaching, educational and teaching strategies. The literature search provided limited results, suggesting an important empirical void concerning business coaching education, in particular. Only two studies refer to how the learning objectives (skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, time management and moral reasoning) were achieved.

An evaluation study by Butler & Forbes (2008) involved a skills-based MBA course in leadership coaching taught at a large US south-eastern university. Butler & Forbes' (2008: 229) teaching strategies support adult learning principles, and include lectures, reading, class discussions, case studies, exercises, practice sessions, coaching and logs. Butler & Forbes (2008: 231) attribute the success of their course in coaching leadership to the "intense, practical, skills-orientated experience focusing primarily on one-on-one coaching".

Ladyshewsky (2006: 68) examined the use of peer coaching as a teaching strategy for the creation of deeper learning in a peer coaching programme at a postgraduate business school. A qualitative design was followed and included 43 participants. Data included peer coaching reports, learning objectives, and excerpts from a learning journal (a document that recorded the progress of learning). The results provide strong support for the use of peer coaching as a teaching strategy in management and leadership programmes in order to support learning in real-life situations, specifically the enhancement of critical thinking and metacognition.

1   *Cf* COMENSA 2010, ICRF 2008, Maritz 2010: 62, 82, 94, Stout Rostron 2009: 206, Zues & Skiffington 2002: 86.

In a paper entitled "Do we really understand coaching? How can we make it work better?" Bernard Redshaw (2000: 107) comments critically on the state of coaching training. The author indicates that books, education and training providers all set out to "teach" coaching and that material is provided in a didactic manner. Redshaw argues that coaching is not a didactic process. Therefore, in order to transfer the necessary skills, the following principle ought to be applied: one does not teach coaching; one coaches it. This author suggests that workshops or developmental activities for coaches be designed in such a way that they follow and demonstrate coaching principles, allowing participants to learn from their own experiences by being exposed to realistic practical sessions, preferably by means of role playing.

Research from the establishment of sport coaching programmes was examined for relevance within the business coaching context. Armon & Venables (2008: 2) emphasise the importance of strategies for coaching programmes to support adult learning and development. Although not explicitly stated, one could, from the research report, infer the use of lectures and learning journals as teaching strategies in the study. Their findings confirm the hypothesis that coaches, who participate actively in the (coaching training) workshops, are more effective coaches. The experimental group of coaches had learned and were using some of the teaching strategies taught in the (coaching) workshops.

The limited body of literature highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of adult learning in higher education and corporate learning programmes. Few, if any, competencies or thinking skills are mastered as a result of a single instructional strategy or experience. Researchers seem to advocate the use of various teaching strategies and experiences within a constructivist educational approach. Some attention is paid to teaching strategies based within the cognitive domain of knowledge recall (for example, lecturing and reading), with the greatest at-tention paid to the practical application of coaching skills and experiential exercises (coaching, role playing, case studies, logs

and discussions). Only one example with an analytical focus in the form of journals was found.

Based on the limited empirical data of teaching strategies in business coaching training programmes, the following research question emerged: Which possible teaching strategies would most effectively facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes?

This qualitative study explores and describes possible teaching strategies to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes. Following a description of the research design and method, the article provides a synopsis of the themes with *verbatim* quotations. The discussion describes possible teaching strategies for a business coaching programme to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes.

2.   Research design

This explorative and descriptive study uses a qualitative design with a basic thematic approach (Clark & Creswell 2010: 233) in order to understand coach educators' views and needs concerning possible teaching strategies in order to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes. The article does not aim to measure and observe variables but to build a complex and holistic picture by analysing words and reporting the specific views of the coach educators (Corbin & Strauss 2008). A qualitative design, therefore, enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon. A qualitative design is also appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon (Brink & Wood 1998: 308).

Due to the emerging nature of business coaching training in South Africa, the population of business coach educators is relatively small (possibly less than 50). As the industry is unregulated, there is no formal database to establish the exact size. There are currently 25 training institutions registered with COMENSA (Coaches and Mentors of South Africa 2011), 19 of

which are located in the Gauteng region. The contextual research (Johns 2001: 32) was conducted in the Gauteng region of South Africa where the majority of the coaching training institutions are based. It was also the most accessible area for the researcher. The group of participants in this research consisted of business coach educators who were experienced in business coaching and business coach training. As the size of the population of educators was small, the researcher used multiple methods of data collection and strategies (auto-ethnography, focus groups, individual interviews and naïve sketches) to obtain in-depth data from as many educators as possible. The individual participants were the primary unit of analysis for this research.

The researcher included participants from social and pro-fessional networks. An Internet search provided additional organi-sations which were contacted and formed part of the research. Purposive sampling (De Vos *et al* 2005: 202) was used in order to ensure that specific elements were included in the sample. Such an approach employed a considerable degree of selectivity. Purposive sampling proved useful as sampling for proportionality was not the primary concern in this research. A limitation of this sampling strategy may be the overweight of subgroups in the population that are more readily accessible. Snowball sampling was also used (De Vos *et al* 2005: 203), where one member of a group referred the researcher to another member/coach who met the inclusion criteria for this study.

Although twenty-two coach educators were approached to participate in this research, only thirteen participants agreed to take part. Some educators were of the opinion that they did not have adequate knowledge of the topic. Twelve of the thirteen participants were South African and one was American. Their ages varied between 27 and 60 years. Nine coach educators were qualified advanced business coaches, three with international recognition. Two held PhD degrees, four held Master's degrees, one an Honours degree, and three held a three-year Bachelor's degree, respectively. Participants held degrees in the field of Humanities, Health Sciences and Business. Four coaches had experience within

the higher education arena. The sample was diverse in terms of race and gender: eleven participants were white, and two black, while five participants were men and eight were women. The relatively small sample size could be accounted for based on saturation of information (Corbin & Strauss 2008), meaning that the researcher continued collecting data until no new data were emerging. Plano Clark & Creswell (2010: 255) acknowledged that it was typical of qualitative studies to study a few individuals since the ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminished exponentially with the addition of each individual.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants by means of a letter communicating the necessary information pertaining to the research. The informed consent was also discussed prior to the focus groups and individual interviews. Confidentiality was explained verbally and in the letters of consent, and participants were informed of the rationale, recording and safekeeping of digitally recorded interviews and transcriptions. Participation was voluntary, and ethical clearance was granted by the University of Johannesburg.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell 2003: 200). The researcher is a qualified business and life coach with a doctoral degree in a health sciences discipline. The researcher personally collected the data during two focus group interviews (lasting between 45 and 90 minutes and the number of participants ranged between four and seven members), eight in-depth (De Vos *et al* 2005: 269), individual interviews (lasting between 35 and 60 minutes), and 13 naïve sketches (ranging from one to five pages). The researcher's own auto-ethnographic naïve sketch was included. This personal memoir provided an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on personal beliefs and experiences, attitude, educational preferences and potential biases that may influence the data collection, analysis and interpretation. A limitation of the focus groups was that the group dynamics did not allow all participants an equal opportunity to voice their opinions. Some members in the focus groups were leaders in the field and, although the co-facilitator

and the researcher attempted to manage the more outspoken members, the group dynamics persisted. This limitation was addressed by arranging individual interviews to afford participants the opportunity to voice their opinions during a private one-on-one setting. A second round of interviews were arranged to explore additional questions that arose during data analysis, also known as theoretical sampling (Corbin & Straus 2008: 145). The naïve sketches proved helpful in affording the participants the opportunity to brainstorm ideas and views. A limitation of this method was that the majority of the participants only wrote bulleted notes which compromised the richness of the data. These notes could, however, be explored during the in-depth interviews.

Data were collected in English, the second language of eleven of the twelve participants. Focus group and individual interviews were held in the boardroom and offices of the organisations involved. An assistant facilitator was present during the focus group discussions as an observer, note-taker and consultant. She played a key role as external verifier in the post-meeting analysis of the sessions and co-coder of data in order to limit potential researcher bias. To assist in the data collection, the researcher used a field log for field and observational notes (De Vos *et al* 2005: 298). Field and observational notes were jotted down and in some cases recorded directly after each focus group or interview.

The open-ended question in this research allowed the participants to create their own options for responding (Plano Clark & Creswell 2010: 257). The central question posed to the participants was: Which teaching strategies would best facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes? After the central question had been asked, the researcher encouraged the participants to continue talking by using facilitative communication techniques such as probing, paraphrasing, minimal verbal response, silence, reflection, clarification and summarising (Okun & Kantrowitz 2007: 64-79).

Data saturation was reached when no new information was forthcoming during focus groups, individual interviews and naïve

sketches, and themes were explored in-depth, respectively (Corbin & Strauss 2008: 148).

Focus group and individual interviews were recorded by means of a digital voice recorder. Naïve sketches were written on a pre-prepared document stating the central question at the top, leaving the remaining pages unlined and empty. Participants were requested to complete the naïve sketch in a narrative style. The document was also electronically mailed to those participants who were not available for interviews. All voice-recorded data were transcribed *verbatim* by the researcher.

Data were analysed using NVivo 8 software. The computerised program proved useful for storing and organising interviews, sketches, notes and memorandums as well as quantifying the number of sources, references and coverage of codes. The software also served as an audit trail. As computers do not think on one's behalf, the researcher did a thematic analysis as follows:

- The most interesting interview was selected and examined to determine the extent of the data and to establish the underlying meaning.
- Thoughts that came to mind were recorded by creating memorandums.
- The ideas were converted into topics that reflected their meaning.
- Similar topics were clustered together and recorded into columns that were arranged into major topics, unique topics and leftovers.
- The most descriptive labels for the topics were selected.
- The topics were defined and grouped into main themes and categories.
- A set of clean data was provided to an independent coder, as an external verifier, who had experience in qualitative data analysis and business coaching education.
- A consensus discussion was held between the researcher and the independent coder to verify the findings.

The principle of fairness ensured authenticity, implying that all the participants' views, perspectives, claims, concerns and voices were heard and accepted (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 191).

3.   Findings

A synopsis of the themes with *verbatim* quotations is set out below. The most descriptive quotations were chosen to highlight the themes. It was interesting to note that, although the interview question explored possible teaching strategies in business coaching training programmes, the majority of the participants started by supplying their answers within the context of critical thinking competency. The first category, therefore, refers to the "critical nature of coaching thinking" as a vital competency of a business coach. The majority of the participants also found it necessary to explain the "business coach learner as a mature adult" and "an experiential and reflexive coaching learning environment" before addressing possible teaching strategies to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches. The final category refers to "possible teaching strategies for business coaching training".

Table 1: Main theme, categories and codes

3.1 Main theme	
The nature of business coaching practice demanded a critical disposition towards thinking and action. The nature of the business coach learner as a mature adult emphasised the importance of an experiential learning environment that promoted learner reflexivity. Possible teaching strategies depended on and promoted interactive discourse and real time learning.	
Category	Code
3.1.1 The critical nature of coaching thinking	
3.1.2 The business coach learner as a mature adult	
3.1.3 An experiential and reflexive coaching learning environment	
3.1.4 Possible teaching strategies	• Supervision • One-on-one coaching • Dialogue • Reading • Case studies • Role playing

3.1 Main theme

3.1.1 The critical nature of coaching thinking

There was a high level of consensus among the participants that a business coach must be able to apply complexity of "thinking" within a global and South African business environment. The critical nature of coaching thinking needs to be borne in mind when developing possible teaching strategies:

> What is essential is not so much what they have learned but that they have learned to think, in complex environments and […] when they work with executives who are trying to chip their way through complex environments, particularly the matrix environment. If you have a multinational headquarters here in South Africa and they have direct reporting lines locally and dotted lines to Europe, the US, that starts to get really interesting in terms of complexity. So it is helpful in that uhm […] the coach is not staggered by and/or confused by, not that the coach is going to give the solution, but […] they can develop a dialogue around what they know, about their experience and what the client is putting on the table as his/her experience. Then they can build decision options so that the client can take his/her issue, with a couple of decision options and make the best decision for themselves. Uhm […] and then it is helpful to have uhm … frankly a mind that has been trained in complexity in thought processes.

During a focus group discussion, participants brainstormed the different types and ways of critical thinking. They listed eight key thinking abilities.

The first ability mentioned was to "be a thinker on his/her feet, you need to follow strategy, and you need to change direction at a flick of a torch". Secondly, the coach must practise "big picture thinking"; "He/she must be a map thinker, in other words see the big picture, and think five or 10 years out into the horizon where I can't see". Thirdly, the coach must have "the ability to integrate thinking while one of the people you are coaching is talking, to integrate it [what is being said] with the strategy, to integrate it with the outcomes, to integrate the whole time with what if". Fourthly, "the capacity to be able to benchmark" was emphasised. "Where are the teams in comparison [to other teams/organisations]?". Fifthly, "they need an interpretive capacity".

Interpretive capacity is followed by the ability to have "decision-making skills". Lastly, there ought to be "a high level of creativity, innovative and critical thinking". It would also be important to "look at global thinking and world class thinking but […] to contextualise thinking within a South African market, because we work within the reality of the South African context".

Reference was not only made to the coach's thinking processes but also to the ability to assist the coach's thinking processes: "I can assist them with the thinking processes that they may need in order to frame priorities and directions".

3.1.2   The business coach learner as a mature adult

Participants explained that coach learners are in most instances mature adults who enter the business coaching arena with extensive knowledge and experience. These self-directed learners are able to communicate their learning needs and priorities. As such, the principles of adult learning should be applied to all teaching, training and development strategies:

> Our coaches are mature, they have been in business, they have been in government, they know a lot about that stuff.

> It is a highly intelligent group [people with doctorates and post graduate degrees], these people know a lot.

> We align what we do to the principle of adult learning. We tell them […] 'you have a wealth of knowledge, the answers are within you', we just need to elicit it within a certain framework for instance eliciting certain concepts, we don't even give them stuff to read on that [concepts of coaching, mentoring, therapy]. We would just say, deconstruct what you think you know, then we would take the [text] book and say, let us just see what the definition of these concepts are. So they actually self-discover.

> The principles of adult education are essential in a programme for coaches, they must appreciate that adult learning has a different approach and [has] different assumptions.

3.1.3 An experiential and reflexive coaching learning environment

The majority of the participants indicated that experiential learning is a core philosophy and approach to their programme implementation and facilitation of coaching competencies within real-life business and coaching contexts. They also commented on the size of classes to facilitate small group and experiential learning as well as being sensitive to different learning styles:

> Our philosophy is that the coach must 'go there first' so actually coaching and learning from their experience is invaluable.

> For us it is an experiential learning process. Everything we do, they experience [...] from explaining and deconstructing concepts [...] they need to analyse their understanding of the concepts, discuss it in groups and then we connect it to theory. We first elicit what they know, what their understanding is and then connect it to theory.

> We want to keep the learning experiential; the real life stuff has impact. When you coach coaching, you don't work 'outside'; you work on the 'inside.

> We firmly believe in small classes, but if you have to have a large group we would divide the class in smaller groups and have more than one coach to facilitate the process so that they have that same experiential learning experience.

> Within experiential learning you also need to be sensitive to different learning needs and learning styles.

Reflection also formed an important part of experiential learning and might take on many forms, for example, individual or in groups, written or verbal, structured or unstructured. The importance of reflection is the ability to act and make relevant adjustments based on the awareness created in reflexive practices. Reflexivity leads to both personal and professional growth:

> During the class we have reflective conversations. We ask questions, they do self-reflection while they experience the process. During the course they go through coaching themselves.

> We ask questions, we ask them 'tell us about your reflections, your moments of truth.' In the beginning this is very strange [to the

> learner coaches] and we as coaches turn to them and have a reflec-
> tive conversations between the two of us. So it is a continuous
> process of reflection. We also have reflective letters after the day's
> classes. It is very important for us to let them reflect.

> The reflexive competencies of the business coach are critical. They
> must be self-reflective, to change practice. You reflect, you may
> have guidelines or a format to write the report. You do introspection
> about yourself, what worked? Or what didn't work? It is like a plat-
> form to plan […] internal dialogue translates into what you write.
> Reflexivity leads to personal and professional development.

3.1.4 Possible teaching strategies for business coaching training

Participants shared possible teaching strategies to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches in business coaching training programmes. It appears that there is a preference for interactive teaching strategies that promote discourse and engagement. The six most important teaching strategies will now be discussed according to the number of sources, references and coverage of the textual data.

4. Supervision

It is surprising that supervision emerged as the most important teaching strategy in facilitating core business coaching competencies. Nine sources mentioned the strategy and there were 14 references in text. One training institution only utilises supervision and one-on-one coaching as teaching strategies. Supervision focuses on the personal development and self-awareness of the coach as well as coaching competence development. Supervision also provides a support system and a way of ensuring ethical conduct. It would appear that this strategy promotes deep and holistic learning and critical thinking. Supervision also allows for reflective thinking and value clarification:

> We know people who know the theory of coaching but know noth-
> ing about coaching. This is where supervision comes in. You need
> intensive supervision.

You supervise on the coaching process, the dynamics. It becomes a recognised thing. How to work with the here-and-now? What is happening in the room? What can you see in terms of non-verbal behaviour? How can you use it? There are a lot of aspects that you can address through the process of supervision. You learn within yourself through being supervised. Questions come up in supervision that doesn't come up in class, like 'why I am not getting results? Am I a failure as a coach? Is this person coachable?' In class you can demonstrate and role play and you think you are getting it right but during supervision you can start focusing the person in terms of the finer aspects of coaching. Supervision contributes to a deeper level of learning. In class the learning is more superficial, you just touch the surface but supervision attends to deeper learning, self-understanding and reflection. The more they reflect the more critical their thinking becomes. You develop their critical thinking skills by the questions you ask them. In class they connect with the head, in supervision they connect with the heart. During supervision they begin to understand where values fit in. You have to unpack values in supervision; they don't understand how values work only in class. You need to elicit your own values and know your own values and this happened during coaching supervision. Some learners can do this, some can't, and some need guidance. It is a very sensitive and enlightening process.

When I work with a coachee, that coachee is being coached by me, on **their** stuff, their growth. To become a coach is a challenge. Before you walk in there you have got to give them a 'clean whiteboard', because it is their territory, it is their map that you are helping them with. If you bring your 'crap' [*sic*] in there it just all clutters it up.

Also linking to supervision, the coach should have a support system. I think that is very important. I think if you have no support as a coach, then you have nothing, or I believe that if you are a therapist, you should have therapy, as a coach you need someone […] to highlight your blind spots, because you are only self-aware to a point.

Supervision and ethical conduct in coaching is crucial. This should be part of any business coach's competency set and framework. Supervision could be part of the coach's personal development. It is on-going learning and development.

One participant noted that "supervision is for integration, internalisation and self-learning".

One participant explained the need for supervision in its relation to psychotherapy and counselling:

> We are not a psychotherapy practice, we are a coaching practice […] and coaches get that there is a degree of involvement in what a coaching issue is and what a psychotherapy issue is and there is a fine line. When the coaches get to that point there sensitivity is raised […] So we will sit down and talk about this in a coaching context. It does not put the coach in the position to be Dr. Phil. It goes to the supervision. Coaches get that over time. Often the coach develops just as quickly as or even more quickly than the client.

3.1 One-on-one coaching

One-on-one coaching emerged as the second most preferred teaching strategy with seven sources and eight references in text. The strategy highlights the importance of the practical application of coaching skills as well as a personal experience of being coached and coaching another person. It appears that one-on-one coaching provides an intimate environment which is conducive to exploring personal and coaching issues by means of dialogue and discourse. One-on-one coaching might also be used as an evaluation tool to provide feedback. The coach educator, external coach experts or peers may provide the coaching.

For the time they are here they commit two hours a month to being coached:

> One-on-one coaching is important so that they can grow in terms of the active facilitation of coaching conversations and coaching sessions.

> Learning about coaching and feel what it is like to be coached. How to be sensitive to the coaching process, and other people's experience? It is like in psychology, you can't be a psycho-analysis if you have not been part of psychoanalysis. You can't be a good coach if you haven't experienced being coached. You see how people do it. It may be video recorded, observed and analysed.

> Witnessing coaching real life in the classroom setting. Peer coaching, to get exposed to coaching, learn the interaction process.

To practice coaching, this can also be used as an assessment meth-
od. It could provide an opportunity for feedback. Fostering ethical
principles and practice.

We coach coaching. The setting is much more informal; they are
relaxed and connected with each other, they learn easier as well
because it is not this internal anxiety. The flow is easier.

3.2 Dialogue

Dialogue followed one-one-one coaching as the next most
important teaching strategy. Six sources mentioned the strategy
and there were seven references in text. Coaching essentially
involves conversation. It appears that dialogue provides the
impetus for robust conversations and interaction about a range of
coaching topics, behaviour and practices. The strategy provides an
opportunity for modelling coaching conversations. Dialogue might
be actualised in a number of ways in coaching programmes:

I mean you have conversations […] I think it will be very
beneficial.

There is an immersion in not only the dialogue around coaching
but in the behaviour of coaching …

Dialogue is a critical strategy. It is in the dialogue that we get
exposed to the language of coaching. That we are asked critical
questions. I think one of the core competencies of a business coach
is that we should have the competency to ask critical questions.
It will be important to build a relationship of trust. It we say that
coaching is about building a relationship, but also facilitating ac-
tion, meeting objectives […] you facilitate that in dialogue.

To engage in discourse, to become aware of debates. In a teach-
ing context, when you train coaches, you also model the coaching
language.

Dialogue was not only personal but the need was also identified for dialogue to take place within the larger coaching and research community:

> It would be important to have dialogue on a broader scale […] so as to foster it in terms of a broader community of practice such as COMENSA, presenting on conferences, publishing in journals so that we may raise awareness.

3.3 Reading

Reading as a teaching strategy emerged as the most controversial in its importance and application with four sources mentioning the strategy and seven in-text references. To some participants reading was a critical strategy:

> Is important, to engage in the wider body of knowledge of coaching, to stay on course with the latest discourses and developments. They will be stimulated to ask questions. It is valuable to provide learners with reading and use it to stimulate dialogue about the reading. The reading should be focused on critical learning outcomes that you want to achieve. It is not a random endeavour.

Another participant stated the importance of reading in order to remain in contact with real world business concerns and practices:

> We provide reading on general management stuff to stay on the edge, especially the Harvard Business Review. We do this to be aware of the latest trends in business. They should read up on the latest coaching trends, publications, research […] and translate these into practice.

One participant had a different opinion:

> I can regurgitate […] I can teach the theory of coaching, and to some degree, that does translate [but …] our coaches are mature, they have been in business, they have been in government, they know a lot about that stuff. To get them and say go away and read all these psychology and coaching totals and come back in a year's time and regurgitate **stuff** that by then is old news anyway […] it doesn't make any sense.

3.4 Case studies

The case study method seemed to prove valuable in its relation
to real-time coach and business learning. Four sources mentioned
the strategy and there were five references in text. Case studies
might provide the opportunity for in-depth analysis followed by
judging, decision-making and taking of action. Individuals or
small groups might use the strategy to stimulate discussion:

> Case studies are valuable in that it provides practice real life exam-
> ples. It assist with critical thinking and application, analysing the
> case, what can I do in this setting? How will I coach the person?

> It may be sed in individual or group settings as an assignments, or
> discuss in groups to generate different perspectives. I may take it
> to the learning context divide in smaller groups. Again stimulat-
> ing the dialogue.

> If a person does not stay ahead, especially [in the case of] case stud-
> ies, of companies that are successful […] you lose the edge on what
> is happening in companies.

One participant, however, warned that "case studies should be
relevant to the context in which they coach and the learning
outcomes that you want to achieve, like the Harvard Business
Review".

3.5 Role-playing

Role playing emerged as the final research strategy. Role playing
is based on simulation techniques and seemed to be important
both for demonstrating and practising coaching techniques and
processes. Again, it might be useful for assessment purposes to
evaluate coaching competence. Two participants referred to de-
monstrations as a strategy. Demonstrations were grouped with
role-playing:

> What I also think is important is role play. Whenever we talk
> about a technique, we demonstrate the technique and then allow
> them to practice the technique during role play.

> We evaluate the role play and give them feedback. So again, they experience it [the coaching technique] and then give us feedback. They really start coaching each other in the class already.

> They learn by watching a coaching session be role-played or modelled by other coaches through demonstrations.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore and describe possible teaching strategies for business coaching training programmes in order to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches. The findings indicated that the nature of business coaching practice demands a critical disposition to thinking and taking action. The nature of the business coach learner as a mature adult emphasises the importance of an experiential learning environment that promotes learner reflexivity. Possible teaching strategies depend on and promote interactive discourse and real time learning.

Data clearly indicated a need for the development of higher order, critical thinking skills of the business coach and this need aligned with the arguments put forth by Crittenden & Woodside (2007: 37), Page & Mukherjee (2007: 251) and Clayton (2006: 197) that meta-cognition and critical thinking skills need to be developed in business [coaching] programmes. A critical business coach would be able to set the scene for business coachees to have the capacity and opportunity to think critically. In doing so, the coach would become a "thinking partner" (Hargrove 2003: 38) and a "sounding board".

The literature confirms that the coaching task is a highly complex process in which a vast array of skills, information, knowledge and even wisdom are brought to bear on a range of challenges in a coachee's life (Woodman 1993: 5). Douge & Hastie (1993: 14) claim that effective coaching is not only a set of established coaching behaviours but also the coach's ability to analyse, synthesise and modify his/her coaching to suit the situation and the needs of those involved.

The importance of adult learning principles, as put forth by participants, echoes the emphasis on adult learning by Butler & Forbes (2008: 229) and Armon & Venables (2008: 2). Business coaching programmes should therefore enable the learner coach to realise the relevance of coaching learning material, to respect what coach learners bring to the course, to allow coach learners to control their own learning path by means of meaningful exercises and activities, and to emphasise clearly and continually the connection between what was being learned and the business and coaching world in which it would be applied. The coach educator should create a climate in which the adult learner experiences safety, trust, caring, understanding, acceptance, respect, support, pleasure and satisfaction. Not only is it important for the coach educator to be aware of the principles of adult learning but it is also a critical competence for the coach to learn. Holliday (2001: 133, 134) states that one of the guidelines for an effective coach is to "learn to teach". The author elaborates by saying that a coach needs to figure out how people think and how they process information; in other words, they should know the adult methods for educating and understand the basic ways in which people think.

Business coach education resides in the development of a predisposition towards critical thinking by creating a climate conducive to learning. The ideal learning climate facilitates experiential, deep, holistic, meaningful and life-long learning (Beekman 2000: 17, Gravett 1997: 28). Holistic learning includes the physical and affective-social climate.

The business coaching educator's selection and construction of teaching strategies should be closely linked to the general thrust of the learning outcome of the business coaching programme, bearing in mind the assessment procedure. A variety of both teaching strategies and assessment strategies is therefore recommended. The teaching strategies should promote critical reflective thinking, interactive dialogue, and opportunities to experience coaching and practise coaching applications. The six most important strategies include supervision, one-on-one coaching, dialogue, reading, case studies and role playing.

Coaching supervision emerged as a unique theme in comparison with the studies by Butler & Forbes (2008), Ladyshewsky (2006) and Redshaw (2000). According to COMENSA (2010), coaching supervision is essential for coaching practice as it "offers a context in which practitioners can develop personally – to reconstruct their experience, to reflect, to understand, to design their professional reality, to develop new responses for future practice". Although the need for supervision in the coaching context is supported by most coaching bodies such as the International Coach Federation (ICF), European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), and Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA), coaching supervision is in its infancy worldwide (Stout Rostron 2009: 261). Therefore, the application as a teaching strategy would need to be explored in more depth.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the learner coach has personal experience of being coached as an integral part of business coaching programmes. This experience may offer many types of learning not available by applying other teaching strategies. One is able to learn at an emotional level what previously has been only known intellectually (Yalom 1995). On another level, it facilitates the building of relationships, increases dialogue and discourse, and coach reflexivity. Ladyshewsky (2006: 70) suggests that constructivist learning is enhanced by using experiential learning methods such as peer coaching. Coach learners also construct their own experiences, being influenced by both affective and cognitive features and the social and cultural contexts.

Dialogue or discourse is the teaching strategy most favoured by adult learners due to the interactive nature that encourages active, participatory learning (ION 2010: 1). Butler & Forbes (2008: 229) used group discussion in their leadership coaching programme. According to Graesser *et al* (2002: 42), discourse played an important role in helping learners shift from "the shallow waters to the deep, from being a fact collector to becoming an inquisitive explainer, from being a repository of inert knowledge to becoming a vital agent who puts knowledge into action". Central to coaching is a focused, often fierce, conversation that leads to transformation

and change. Coaching discussions summarise the heart and soul of coaching (Hall & Duval 2003: 5).

Although the participants debated the value of reading, Verhoeven & Greasser (2008: 290) suggest that one way of grounding reading in meaningful [coaching] contexts is to anchor the learning experience in an information-rich, coherent, realistic problem scenario. Environments with anchored problem-based learning provide an authentic context for learners to identify and define coaching/business challenges or cases, to execute coaching strategies, to specify reasons for attempted solutions, and to observe results in practice. Reading encourages learner coaches to ask questions, analyse information, describe issues, challenge assumptions, reflect on background knowledge, discuss new information and conduct research in order to generate links between new information and existing coaching, business knowledge or challenges.

Case studies in business and management training are probably one of the most common teaching strategies in addition to lecturing and reading (Butler & Forbes 2008: 229). The topics available for case studies are limitless and could include current coaching/managerial problems, dilemmas and ethical coaching questions or areas that concern the coaching practice. Learner coaches and coachees will also acquire skills in problem-solving, learn to organise ideas logically in written form, practise higher levels of cognitive learning as they draw inferences, apply theory, analyse and synthesise knowledge relevant to a specific hypothetical situation, and evaluate the outcome. Finally, case studies enhance the retention and transfer of learning.

Role playing is based on simulation techniques and is encouraged in business coaching programmes by Redshaw (2000: 107) and Page & Mukherjee (2007: 252). This method of instruction requires the spontaneous acting out of a real-life situation by two or more participants under the direction of the coaching educator (Mellish *et al* 1998: 130). Role playing provides the structure for learner coaches to experience the emotional and intellectual responses of an assumed identity or imaginary

coaching situations. Roles may be reversed, so that members can feel what it is like in both situations. Scenarios may be impromptu or scripted.

Another form of role playing is a rehearsed carrying-out of a simulated coaching intervention which includes some deliberate errors that are discussed afterwards. Debriefing may be necessary. Actors should be encouraged to de-role so as to establish contact with reality again.

5. Conclusion

This study was undertaken to explore and describe possible teaching strategies for business coaching training programmes in order to facilitate the core competencies of business coaches. The findings indicated a need for business coaches to be critical thinkers. This article offered a pragmatic collection of teaching strategies that facilitate the critical thinking skills of business coaches. Teaching strategies that promote critical thinking may offer an approach to prepare business coaches to cope with the tension of an ever-changing and demanding business environment. Offering clear explanations or definitions of the teaching strategies used in business coaching programmes may assist in translating teaching strategies into concrete realities that may be evaluated for effectiveness.

This study was qualitative and contextual in nature and, as such, the findings cannot be generalised. However, the findings could form the basis for transferability. Another limitation was the small sample size. As the population of coach educators increases, the phenomenon under study may be explored quantitatively by means of an online questionnaire or surveys, using the findings of this study as a point of departure.

It is recommended that the effectiveness of these teaching strategies be evaluated from a learner perspective both qualitatively and quantitatively. One should appreciate that learning is never only cognitive, and research into other taxonomies of learning

such as the affective and moral development domain could enhance the educational approach to business coaching training.

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