

So here we glimpse the political intentions of my work, to pay homage to the 'unknown and unknowable' – the transpersonal as it were, and my desire to open up a wider dialogue about the usefulness of a gestalt approach to coaching, research, teaching and all else in life. Guess I'm a convert!

Q. Who is it aimed at?

A. Anyone who works with people or wishes to inquire into themselves and the reality they are co-creating with others – all the people facing professionals. For coaches, I believe it will be of special use to those coaches who wish to research their practice such as those in the i-coach academy learning community and to illuminate where they excel, as well as those one-to-one coaches who want to move into team-coaching and organisational development.

Q. What do you hope i-coach readers will get from your book?

A. The text's experiential approach is designed to encourage the reader, to:

- develop an appreciation of inquiry as integral to living;
- expand his interpersonal sensitivity, inquiry skills and personal awareness;
- identify facilitative strategies for illumination of the human condition;
- build upon their powers of critical reflection, imagination, courage and curiosity;
- foster a dialogue between himself and reflection upon his own practice;
- develop an holistic model of inquiry that addresses multiple levels of reality;

I hope readers will use this work to inquire into and to profile their own practice, will be alerted as to 'where' and 'upon what' to focus to enhance their facilitation style, and will come to appreciate authority of conscious and unconscious phenomena and acquire the mind-set of a practitioner-researcher.

References:

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And what Dr Peter Critten, i-coach academy graduate and principal lecturer at Middlesex University Business School said:

"I very much endorse Paul's observations in the interview above. Eighteen months ago I was looking for a text on research for my DProf students which took a more person-centred and reflective approach to research appropriate to the values of the DProf. As Paul's comments confirm, Paul comes from a therapist background and his views on 'practitioner research' very much resonated with me. At the same time I wanted a text to be used by all professionals reflecting on their practice – i.e. the kind of students we are now attracting to our programmes based around and accrediting work based learning. I therefore worked with Paul to ensure that the text spoke just as much to the reflecting professional practitioner as well as the therapist.

"From a coaching perspective I believe this book will be particularly useful to coaches who are reflecting on their practice and seeking academic accreditation, for example coaches pursuing the MA and Doctorate programmes run by i-coach academy. What I believe Paul's book will do is encourage coaches reflecting on their practice to, in Paul's words, 'pay attention to what is 'becoming' as much as to what is obvious'; this might allow them to be more open to the models and processes they espouse as part of their practice and, in what Paul calls 'an authentic dialogue', reflect on their appropriateness as their relationship with their clients deepens and changes. In my work with all professionals reflecting on their practice I will certainly recommend this text as a way of helping them position themselves within their own field and context as practitioner researchers.

"As Programme Leader of the newly launched Doctorate in Professional Practice at Middlesex University Business School, I am currently reviewing the way we run the programme drawing on insights from Paul Barber's book as well as from Jack Whitehead's concept of 'Living Theory'.*

"In my view, the DProf requires a fundamental shift in mindset which places the 'practitioner researcher' as both subject and object of their own inquiry. In my experience, students have difficulty grounding themselves sufficiently in the values that are at the heart of their professional practice. Paul Barber's book, I think, can help them position themselves at the centre of their own practice.

"But there is another dimension of Paul's book which is just as significant. The subtitle of the book is 'A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Inquiry' and a gestalt perspective as to what is the 'figure' and what is 'the ground' seems to be of special value particularly to coaching practitioners.

Figure refers to 'what momentarily peaks and currently holds attention in the short term' while Ground' refers to 'the background or cultural milieu and long term structure from whence a phenomenon emerges' (Barber 2006 p37). For me the 'ground' also relates to the 'context' within which operate key stakeholders with whom the practitioner researcher has to continually engage

while at same time keeping an eye on what Whitehead calls their 'living theory' which will be constantly informed in the dance between 'figure' and 'ground'.

"Finally, a humanistic and ethics theme runs throughout Paul Barber's work and this, I suggest, will have a particular meaning for students undertaking the i-coach academy programme in Professional Studies as they inquire into their own practice and its implications for others."

* Whitehead, J. and McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research Living Theory: Sage*

Case Study
Banking on Raising Standards



Standard Bank Group (SBG) is one of South Africa's leading financial services organisations and has a foothold in seventeen African countries and 21 countries outside of Africa

Despite a run of good years, the turn of the millennium raised a number of concerns within the organisation. When the bank successfully fended off a hostile take over bid, it discovered that the leadership profile of the bank was perceived to be 'old-style' rigid, and instructional. This prompted the bank to undertake 360 leadership development assessments of its senior leaders and this perception was confirmed.

In addition, in 2004 and 2005 the bank slipped down the ladder of South Africa's Best Company to Work for Survey™. The CEO, and his executive team, were clear that the people issues needed to be resolved if business results were going to be sustainable into the future. Preliminary stock taking revealed that leadership development activities were being undertaken on an ad hoc basis; coaches were being hired without reference to any framework and in an unregulated coaching market that has no professional barriers to entry and no quality control safety nets.

At the same time, the Bank wanted to fast track the careers of young black managers, to challenge the apartheid legacy and fulfill the pledges it had made in the 2003 Financial Sector Charter. By signing the Charter, Standard Bank is committed to black economic empowerment through employment, procurement, service delivery and share ownership within a time frame.

Action Plan

Since 2005, Helena Dolny, Director of Leadership Development, Coaching and Mentoring in Personal & Business Banking at Standard Bank and an i-coach MA graduate and Khatija Saley an i-coach certificate student have been focused on designing a solution to address the challenges the Bank has been facing.

Recognising the need to invest in its employees to resolve the problems it was facing, the Bank made two decisions. It would spend approximately twenty million pounds to revamp an old training college into a Global Leadership Centre with a world-class curriculum and staff, and it would develop and implement a comprehensive coaching and mentoring framework to meet the needs of its wholesale, retail and insurance units. For Standard Bank, leadership development and coaching and mentoring are seen to relate strongly to each other – the "everyday glue that will secure the return on investment on formal leadership development."** The Mentoring programme will be available at all levels. Designed on the basis of best practice research; it will be mentee-driven and the relationships will be off-line. One unique feature is that the training has a dual purpose, designed for a person to take on both roles, either as a mentee and/or as a mentor.

Designing the coaching intervention was challenging and Chris Lombard, Group Director for Learning and Development approved Helena's request to draw in Dr Caroline Horner of i-coach academy to assist in setting in place the best coaching framework. A three-tiered framework was proposed and accepted.

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1. On-the-job performance coaching to be available to all those who carry out performance appraisals. This type of coaching may be more skills orientated and may be more directional in style.
2. Coaching aimed at building cultural and organisational alignment. There are three components at this level: team coaching, training delivering coaching tools for managers and peer coaching training based on Nancy Kline's Thinking Partnership methodology.
3. Executive Coaching for leadership development. This is more complex, requiring a greater depth of coaching skills. The desired outcome is a shift in identified leadership competencies and the focus of the coaching is on behavioural change.

As Standard Bank had been hiring coaches on an ad hoc, word-of-mouth basis, i-coach academy also worked with Standard Bank to introduce a three part screening process to enable

the institution to identify which coaches had the desired non-directional style.

The screening was a three part process and more than 100 coaches took part.

The Process

Part I: coaches filled in a biographical/technical questionnaire which allowed for some filtering on criteria such as coach specific training, coaching experience, appropriate level of coaching experience, indicators of professionalism i.e. being coached, being supervised, evidence of continuous professional development.

Part II: coaches took part in a telephone interview which ascertained the process used by the coach and gave the first indication of their preferred style.

Part III: coaches attended an assessment day in which they presented themselves and their coaching framework and model (i.e.

the i-coach academy framework), undertook different roles in demonstrations as coach, coachee and observer, and had the opportunity to debrief the panel on their day's experience.

The experience was a first in the South African market. Most coaches offered positive feedback, and indicated what a useful exercise it had been.

There have been beneficial spin-offs from the process for the bank. Today, it is accepted that there is a "preferred-buyers" list of coaches and that they have all passed the screening process. Involving different business units in the assessment process has also helped to enhance the level of understanding of what coaching is and is not.

Launch

Mid-2006 Standard Bank is poised for take off. Its Global Leadership Centre will launch its new programmes in the last quarter. In August, the first 500

mentors and mentees will log their details into an electronic matching system. 21 coaches are already on the preferred buyers list and the process continues so that the bank creates a pool of coaches who are diverse, experienced and non-directional in their approach.

Helena Dolny is looking forward to the next few years and monitoring the impact that these changes will bring. Along with the CEO and other directors, she is particularly keen to track the changes in ratings of Leadership Competency, Investors in People and Best Company to Work For.TM

*Carole Gaskell. Full Potential Group. U.K.

Feature Focus

How Old Mutual Employee Benefits are using coaching to leverage high performance leadership



As one of the largest insurance companies in South Africa and one of the largest financial institutions in the world, Old Mutual is an organisation that recognises and values its employees and recognises the importance of investing in ongoing leadership development towards building a sustainable, growing business

In 2005, the Organisational Development team in Employee Benefits at Old Mutual had embarked on a culture change programme within the division, some 20 months before they turned to coaching. In March 2005, some 120 line managers had taken part in a leadership programme, Leading from the Peak, which underpinned the culture change programme. Like many organisations, Old Mutual strongly believed that any culture change that takes place within a company is driven by changing the way leaders lead. Whilst the leadership development programme had inspired many of the attendees, the business leader, Eric Le Roux at Old Mutual felt that there was an opportunity to enhance the leadership behaviour change and that the company had not seen a significant change from "old economy" to "new economy" leadership practice.

Le Roux turned to Barbara Ferreira, Strategy Implementation manager who is currently completing her MA in Coaching with i-coach academy to discuss how one-to-one coaching could help to shift leadership behaviour significantly and serve to enhance the culture change programme. Ferreira believed that the Leading from the Peak programme had inspired participants and positively encouraged executives to highlight their strengths and shadows. However, for some, it had not effectively supported them to translate this awareness into behavioural change or support the embedding of the new behaviours achieved. Coaching could be one way to address this.

With the mandate to experiment with 1:1 coaching to enable further shift of leadership behaviours and embed behaviours following the Leading from the Peak programme, Ferreira enlisted the support of Dr Caroline Horner, director of i-coach academy to work with her to test this assumption with a group of middle managers within Old Mutual's Employee Benefits division.

Together they identified some guiding principles for the initiative which were seen to be critical success factors:

1. Open to all - One on one coaching opportunity had to be offered to all delegates who had completed Leading from the Peak.
2. Self-selection into the process was essential. Pivotal to the success is the adult learner taking responsibility for their own learning and development. The high performance leadership framework underpinning high performance cultures also supports this principle.

3. The effective matching of client and coach is essential.
4. The need to establish and effectively communicate a purpose and context for the coaching initiative which was strongly linked to the culture change programme and the strategic goals of OMEB
5. The need to create a measurement system up front - i.e. create awareness for all parties concerned that the effectiveness of the coaching initiative would be measured

The coaching offer

All 120 leaders who had completed the Leading from the Peak programme across South Africa were offered the opportunity to participate in the coaching initiative. They would be given five 1:1 coaching sessions of approximately one hour over a six month period. To participate, they needed to self select into the process and attend a briefing workshop. They would also be actively involved in selecting the coach they worked with and required to provide feedback on the process and their coaching goals to support evaluation of the programme. 50 leaders selected themselves into the process.

The journey

Having pre-vetted and selected some 11 coaches, Ferreira and Horner ran two briefing workshops for the leaders preparing them to get the most from the coaching. These sessions aimed to ensure there was a common understanding of what to expect from coaching as opposed to mentoring, the organisational purpose for the work and how confidentiality would be managed. It also gave leaders the opportunity to meet coaches and hear some of their individual coaching philosophy and approach to support them in their decision about which coach to work with. Coaches were given a 10 minute opportunity to share their philosophy and approach with the whole group and over lunch clients were able to interact with coaches 1:1.

After the session, clients emailed Ferreira with their first, second and third preference of coach and she worked to match coach and client as much as possible, on client preference.

Clients were asked to share their goals for the coaching and to review progress of those goals over the six month period. How this data was to be collected and who would have access to that data was also shared during the briefing session. The rationale for collecting data was to demonstrate the

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