Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcoa20

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To cite this article: Nick Kapoutzis, Lilith A. Whiley, Jo Yarker & Rachel Lewis (29 Aug 2023): Coaching culture: an evidence review and framework for future research and practice, Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, DOI: 10.1080/17521882.2023.2250458

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2023.2250458

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Published online: 29 Aug 2023.

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COACHING: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE
https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2023.2250458

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Coaching culture: an evidence review and framework for future research and practice

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ABSTRACT
Given the colossal interest in creating 'coaching cultures', we update the 2014 literature review by Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh and extend this work by applying a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. In doing so, we detangle definitions and the conditions under which 'coaching cultures' can be developed. We also explore contemporary interventions, report on organisational level outcomes, and comment on how progress is measured and evaluated. In total, 1453 papers were identified using a systematic search, of which 42 met our initial screening criteria and nine were eligible for inclusion in our final review. Findings show that we remain with an unclear understanding of 'coaching culture'; there is still no agreed definition and the building blocks (i.e., the foundational elements, interventions, outcomes, and measures) remain ambiguous. We recommend a framework for future research and practice and highlight a gap in our understanding of stakeholders' behavioural and cultural patterns vis-à-vis the design and development of coaching culture programmes.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 22 June 2023
Accepted 12 August 2023

KEYWORDS
Coaching culture; systematic literature review; organisational culture

Practice points

In this SLR, we synthesise the evidence base on coaching culture since the 2014 literature review by Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh and we:

- Provide a framework on the building blocks of coaching cultures that can guide practitioners when developing coaching culture programmes in organisations.
- Offer a nuanced understanding of coaching cultures by reviewing the definitions used in recent research.
- Highlight gaps in our understanding of coaching culture and point to future areas for research and practice.

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Introduction

'Coaching culture' has been a widespread construct in both practitioner and academic literature for several years (e.g., Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005; Hawkins, 2012; Passmore & Crabbe, 2020). Yet, the extant literature is inundated with various definitions, models, and frameworks with opaque antecedents and organisational outcomes. Practitioners tend to be interested in applicable frameworks whereas academics have veered towards managers' perceptions of coaching cultures (Milner et al., 2020). The former tends to have little testing or evaluation whereas the latter entails limited perspectives, both of which beg the question – what exactly is this 'coaching culture' that practitioners and academics aspire to create? We seek to explore this question and contribute by pointing out the lack of clarity in the extant literature vis-à-vis the building blocks of said 'coaching culture' and urge for multi-stakeholder research to extend holistic understanding of the principles, values, and behaviours that facilitate a 'coaching culture'.

Towards a definition of 'coaching culture'

The extant literature is prolific with various definitions, all based on different theoretical frameworks (or no theoretical foundations at all). In what seems to be the only literature review of 'coaching cultures' to date, Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh (2014) propose the following definition:

> A coaching culture exists within an organisation when it has embedded a coaching approach as part of its strategic plans in a transparent way. Coaching cultures should motivate individuals and facilitate cooperation, collaboration and connection within the organisation and with its external stakeholders. (p. 99)

This definition highlights the potential of coaching cultures to generate connectedness and collaboration in organisations. Hawkins's (2012) alternative definition takes a systemic view of 'coaching culture' in that:

> it exists in an organisation when a coaching approach is a key aspect of how the leaders, managers, and staff engage and develop all their people and engage their stakeholders, in ways that create increased individual, team and organisational performance and shared value for all stakeholders. (p. 21)

Despite increasing academic and practitioner work on 'coaching cultures', little empirical research has been done to explore the nature of coaching cultures (Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Milner et al., 2020). The lack of an agreed definition makes synthesising research findings challenging. Moreover, the definitions proposed so far fail to highlight the interconnectedness of organisational stakeholders in manifesting a 'coaching culture' and how these influence the organisation and create patterns, as seen from a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) lens (e.g., Clutterbuck et al., 2016; O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013). This brings us to our first argumentation regarding the necessary building blocks of 'coaching cultures', that is, that coaching cultures are mainly understood through the manager's perspective and fail to consider the rich interactions of all stakeholders.

Coaching cultures understood mainly through manager-as-coach perspective

The dominant coaching intervention in academic research is the development of managers/leaders as coaches. Some focus exclusively on the coaching style of management as the main vehicle to developing a coaching culture (McCarthy & Milner, 2013, 2020; Milner et al., 2018, 2022). While we appreciate the benefits that arise from training managers to develop coaching skills, we contend that this view focuses only on managerial relationships and does not take into account other stakeholders and their interrelationships (e.g., peers, coaches, teams, and formal and informal networks) that are crucial to the development of coaching cultures. Moreover, the manager-turned-coach premise takes a far too transactional lens to the development of organisational cultures, which we argue is problematic because it ignores the role of informal social networks (Huning et al., 2015) that play an important role in developing organisational culture.

Some early research has also focused on the development of internal coaches within organisations as a sustainable model to offer a coaching service and at the same time effect cultural change. The evidence on the effectiveness of this strategy is not conclusive (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014) but there are some benefits observed, such as containing cost but more importantly the fact that internal coaches who have internalised the organisational values and behaviours can embed them into their coaching interactions (McKee et al., 2009).

Limited understanding of (evaluated) organisational outcomes and interventions

A considerable body of knowledge has now been developed on the effectiveness of coaching. However, there is little evidence on organisational outcomes. Research has mainly focused on the effectiveness of coaching on individuals. There is now good evidence that coaching works in the areas of goal attainment, resilience, and wellbeing (Grant et al., 2009). Meta-analyses have also showed that psychologically informed coaching interventions facilitate effective work-related outcomes, such as learning, performance, psychological wellbeing, and goal directed self-regulation (Theeboom et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021) including a recent meta-analysis based on randomised control trials (de Haan & Nilsson, 2023). Different types of coaching (e.g., executive, leadership, managerial, team, group, and peer coaching) and their effectiveness have also been explored, but research on outcomes, especially organisational outcomes that have been evaluated is, however, rare. It is mainly observed in organisational case studies and practitioner research, and links coaching cultures to increased innovation and collaboration for example (e.g., Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; Leonard-Cross, 2010). Moreover, there is even less evidence on the impact of coaching interventions on the development of cultural norms at the organisational level. This seems to be an area within coaching effectiveness research that is severely overlooked (Grover & Furnham, 2016).

The underlying assumption is that change from coaching at the individual level translates seamlessly to positive organisational changes, which is of course, simply not an accurate reflection of the messiness inherent in organisational realities. There is also an assumption that coaches support leaders to inspire cultural change within their organisations (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014), but we have little understanding how and if

that actually translates into organisation-wide cultural outcomes. In other words, research studies in the effectiveness of coaching have adopted a linear model of 'flow-on effects' or ripple effect (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013), which we argue is too simplistic an interpretation of organisational life.

Current models and frameworks require further testing

Given the popularity of coaching, the extant literature is inundated with models and frameworks that promise to create effective coaching cultures. Prominent theoretical development models describe the stages of development (Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Hawkins, 2012; Knowles, 2022; Passmore & Crabbe, 2020). For example, Clutterbuck et al. (2016) and Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005) proposed four stages of development: nascent, tactical, strategic, and embedded, and they developed a questionnaire to help practitioners assess progress towards the development of a coaching culture. Hawkins (2012) presents four stages of development: ad hoc coaching driven by individuals, managed coaching driven by a champion or sponsor, proactive coaching aligned to business need and strategic coaching driven by the talent strategy of the organisation. He suggests three foundational pillars to the development process: 1. Development of a coaching strategy, 2. Alignment with the wider organisational culture change and 3. Creation of a coaching infrastructure with external and internal coaching provision. Passmore and Crabbe (2020) have developed their comprehensive LEAD coaching framework that integrates four zones for development from leadership coaching to coaching for all through internal coaches, management coaching and finally a distributed coaching approach across boundaries that includes stakeholders and partners. They offer a practical implementation and evaluation tool for organisations. These models, supported by cases studies, are helpful in elucidating some of the processes that might be inherent in developing a coaching culture, yet further research is required to test and validate these propositions empirically.

The present study

We extend the literature review by Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh (2014) in two ways: first, by conducting a Systematic Literature Review (Briner & Denyer, 2012) and testing it against the attributes for critical literature reviews (Saunders & Rojon, 2011); and second, we focus on the evidence linked to the conditions required for the development of coaching cultures, the interventions being used to develop coaching cultures, the organisation level outcomes, and how progress is measured. An up-to-date literature review is a timely inquiry because of the continued and extended use of coaching in organisations (Crowley & Overton, 2021). This work will be of benefit to organisational development and human resources practitioners, coaches, coaching psychologists, and leaders across organisations interested in maximising the benefits of their investment in coaching interventions to impact on organisational-level behavioural and cultural outcomes.

The primary research question guiding this study is, what is known about coaching cultures in organisations? The sub-questions are:

(1) How are coaching cultures defined?
(2) What are the antecedents?

(3) What are the interventions that are being used to develop coaching cultures?
(4) What are the organisational level outcomes?
(5) How do we measure change or progress towards the development of coaching cultures?

Method

The review was guided by the systematic review principles as outlined in Briner and Denyer (2012) and followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). It is also informed by the attributes of critical literature reviews developed by Saunders and Rojon (2011).

Search strategy

The search strategy was developed following a review of the literature and consultation with the research team and a subject librarian. To identify the relevant articles, a computerised search was conducted of the following databases: Psycinfo, Scopus, EBSCOhost Business Source Premier and ProQuest using the following search parameters: (work OR organi* OR employ*) AND (coach*) AND (culture OR organi* culture OR corporate culture OR culture change OR organi* change OR organi* development). These search terms were used in the four separate database searches that were conducted on 28 May 2022. The search was restricted to peer reviewed research articles published from 2014 to May 2022.

Inclusion / exclusion criteria

The SPIO (study design, participant population, interventions, outcomes) framework (Robertson et al., 2015), has been used to determine the criteria for considering studies. Research on coaching cultures is in a developing stage, therefore any empirical type of study set in an organisational context was of interest. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were reviewed. Studies that adopt any definition of coaching culture and workplace populations from any sector were included in the review. All interventions designed and delivered for individuals, teams or groups in organisations were of interest. These may include individual, executive or leadership coaching, team and group coaching, leader as coach, internal and external coaching, and other organisational development programmes. The purpose needed to be to develop or change culture. Similarly, the outcomes needed to relate to impact on organisational or culture change. Searches were also limited to English language, peer reviewed only, and since Gromley and van Nieuwerbugh's (2014) review.

See Table 1 for a full overview of inclusion and exclusion criteria that were used to select papers at all stages.

Selection of papers for inclusion

The papers that were retrieved from the database searches were subjected to a sifting process using the inclusion/ exclusion criteria in Table 1. Duplicates were removed and the remaining titles were reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure all relevant and valid articles were included and excluded within the review. An independent review of a random 10% selection was undertaken by the second author. An inter-rater reliability check using Cohen's Kappa coefficient was conducted on this selection to

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Study design	• All empirical research both quantitative and qualitative • Explores intervention/s in organisations • Case studies	• Non empirical studies (purely theoretical or descriptive / no thought or opinion pieces) • Non-intervention studies • Dissertation (PhD) theses that study Coaching Cultures • Books or conference proceedings on Coaching / Organisational Psychology
Participant population	• Adult population (age 18+) • Any sector or country	• <18 years of age • Student populations
Intervention	• Coaching designed for/delivered to individual / teams / groups in organisations • Purpose is to develop or change culture / organisational culture outcomes	• Counselling / Health / Sports coaching interventions
Outcomes	• Includes outcome measures/target variables in which the intervention aims to achieve organisational or culture change	• Individual level outcomes

- Time period: Publication from 2014 onwards (previous literature review was published in 2014 – see rationale below)
- Publication: English language, peer reviewed

ensure consistency of application of the selection criteria. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was 0.62 which indicates substantial agreement between the two authors. The selected abstracts were then reviewed by the first author and the ones that met the inclusion criteria (or require review of full paper to determine) were selected. A sample of 10% of abstracts were reviewed by the second author and an inter-rater reliability assessment was conducted. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was 0.7 indicating substantial agreement.

The selected papers were read in full by the first author and subjected to a screening process using the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). Those retained for inclusion were reviewed by the second author and disagreements discussed. The third and fourth authors were consulted to resolve disagreements. A 'pearl growing' exercise was conducted where citations and reference lists of the retained papers were mined to identify any other relevant papers that might have been omitted by the searches. The same review process was applied.

Data extraction and analysis

Data from the retained papers were extracted using the fields from the matrix method (Judith, 2004). The data extraction tool was also informed and adapted from other systematic review papers (e.g., Robertson et al., 2015). Fields included study purpose, study design, method, population or participant details, intervention used, findings and outcome measures as well as contextual information, such as sector and country. The extraction was undertaken by the first author and reviewed by the second author for consistency. The third and fourth authors adjudicated any discrepancies.

A narrative systematic extraction (Doyle & McDowall, 2019) was then used against the research questions by extracting narrative study findings on the definitions of coaching

culture used or proposed, antecedents, interventions, outcomes, and measures used. This involved identifying and transferring study findings using an approach agreed by the authors to minimise error and by keeping a record of the decisions made about the data.

Data synthesis

Findings are presented in a narrative format (Robertson et al., 2015) using the Narrative Synthesis method (Popay et al., 2006). This involved the first author conducting a preliminary synthesis by developing and tabulating themes and then using an iterative method of review and revision to explore further relationships. The second researcher then reviewed the synthesis for consistency of interpretation. Discrepancies were discussed and the third and fourth authors conducted a final review of the developing narrative themes and how they were synthesised to assess the robustness of the synthesis.

Quality assessment

Studies were critically appraised in relation to the dimensions identified in the Systematic Mixed Studies Reviews framework (Hong & Pluye, 2019). This framework was selected because it has been developed to address the challenges inherent in reviews that combine quantitative and qualitative evidence. Hong and Pluye (2019) provide a framework for assessing quality for both quantitative and qualitative evidence against three dimensions: methodological, conceptual, and reporting quality. Each paper's evidence was assessed by the first and second author independently against these dimensions using yes/no/can't tell. The evaluations of the overall quality of each paper (quality rating) were based on the following scoring system of 'yes' responses: high (scores 6–7), medium (4–5), low (scores 2–3) very low (scores 0–1). The first and second authors discussed discrepancies and the third and fourth authors resolved disagreements. The research team then developed quality evaluation tables using the agreed quality scores against evidence statements.

Findings

The database searches retrieved 1453 papers. Duplicates were removed (333 papers) leaving 1120 papers for review. The number of papers selected for the next stage was 441. Abstracts of all these papers were reviewed against the criteria leaving 42 papers for the third sifting stage, the full paper review. All 42 selected papers were reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to decide which would be included in the SLR. The 'pearl growing' exercise did not yield any further papers leaving nine papers for inclusion in the review – see Figure 1.

Nine papers (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020; Rosha & Lace, 2018; Sarsur & Parente, 2019; Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) were selected to be included in this review. The primary focus of seven of these nine papers (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020; Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) was 'coaching cultures' in organisations. Two of the nine papers (Rosha & Lace, 2018; Sarsur & Parente, 2019) focused on the coaching process and were included

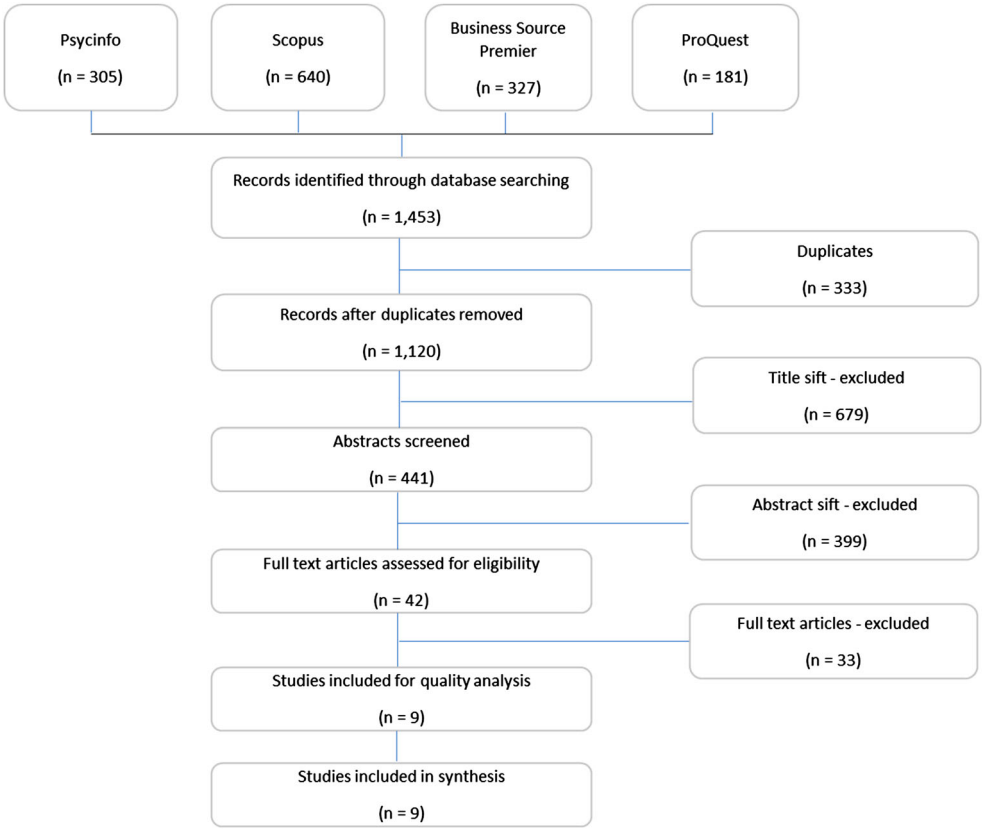

Figure 1. Flow diagram showing search and retrieval process according to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA).

because they provided extended and explicit insights on the development of coaching cultures.

Study characteristics

Study

Six of the nine papers (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020; Sarsur & Parente, 2019), utilised a qualitative design, three of which (Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015) were case studies. The remaining three papers (Rosha & Lace, 2018; Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) conducted quantitative studies.

Four papers (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Sarsur & Parente, 2019) used qualitative design and employed interviews as their methodology; two (Boysen et al., 2021; Milner et al., 2020) employed surveys with open ended questions. The three papers that utilised quantitative design, used scaled and multiple-choice questionnaires.

Thematic analysis was used by five of the six qualitative papers (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020),

content analysis by one (Sarsur & Parente, 2019), whereas the quantitative studies used ANOVA and t-tests (Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) and correspondence analysis (biplots) (Rosha & Lace, 2018)

Participants

Sample sizes for the qualitative studies ranged from 20 participants to 794. Studies that have used interviews as their methodology ranged from 20 to 30 participants, whereas those who used a survey qualitative methodology ranged from 108 to 794. The studies that employed quantitative survey questionnaires had population sizes from 75 to 399. The total number of participants examined by all studies is 2,234.

The majority of the participants, $n = 1384$, (62%) were managers, followed by employees at all levels, $n = 374$, (17%), leaders, $n = 332$, (15%), and finally coaches or coaching experts, $n = 95$ (4%). Exploring in detail the populations that were included in these studies is key to our understanding of the perspectives of the stakeholders that informed the findings from the included papers and highlight gaps.

Contextual information

Geographically, there is considerable heterogeneity in these studies in terms of the country in which they were conducted. Two studies were conducted in Australia (Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020), U.S.A. (Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019) and Estonia (Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) respectively and one study in Latvia/ Lithuania (Rosha & Lace, 2018), Portugal (Sarsur & Parente, 2019) and the U.K. (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018). One case study (Lawrence, 2015) draws from a multinational organisation with presence in Australia, U.S.A. and Asia, however, the participants are from the Australian head office.

There is a variety of organisations represented in the studies from both the private and public sector. Sectors include education, third sector (charities), financial services, and they are of various sizes, from small and medium-sized businesses to large enterprises. One organisation is international with presence in Australia, U.S.A. and Asia. The key characteristics of the papers reviewed can be found in Table 2.

Definitions of coaching culture

All papers, except one (Lawrence, 2015) provide, reference or produced definitions of coaching culture. Synthesis revealed the following common themes and descriptors:

Theme	Descriptors
Intent	• implement and sustain organisational change • people and performance management; organisational management • paradigm for organisational culture; organisational development model
Implementation	• use of multiple types of coaching • coaching becomes preeminent way of leading and managing • development conversations at all levels; coaching becomes ingrained in organisational life
Outcomes	• Individual or team performance; realising potential • organisational performance

Table 2. Study characteristics.

No.	Paper	Study			Population		Contextual information		
	Author and year	Study design	Methodology	Analysis	Sample (*n*)	Participants details	Country	Location	Sector
1	Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018)	Qualitative	semi-structured interviews – responsive interviewing	Thematic analysis	*n* = 20	Leaders: Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers	U.K.	Open – same sector	Education – schools
2	Boysen et al. (2021)	Qualitative (case study)	survey work culture (scaled questions and open-ended questions)	Thematic analysis	*n* = 108	Employees: all levels	U.S.A.	In-house research	Charity
3	Hamilton (2019)	Qualitative (case study 1) Qualitative (case study 2)	Interviews Intervention / training programme	Thematic analysis (post intervention metrics)	*n* = 794 *n* = 30	Managers Leaders: Commercial Market Executives	U.S.A.	In-house	financial services holding company
4	Lawrence (2015)	Qualitative (case study)	Interviews (3 times at six-month post intervention intervals)	Thematic Analysis (Systemic evaluation)	*n* = 25	CEO, senior exec team × 5, exec direct reports × 10, other staff × 9	Australia	In-house	Multinational org (Australia, U.S.A. and Asia)
5	Milner et al. (2020)	Qualitative	Online survey – open-ended questions/ free text comments	Thematic analysis	*n* = 580	Managers and HR Managers	Australia	Open	Australian private and public organisations of 200 + employees
6	Rosha and Lace (2018)	Quantitative	Questionnaire survey – closed multiple choice and closed-ended importance questions	Correspondence analysis (biplots)	*n* = 75	Coaches and coaching clients (70% executive coaches)	Latvia and Lithuania	Open	Various (unspecified)
7	Sarsur and Parente (2019)	Qualitative	Bibliographic research and semi structured interviews	Content analysis	*n* = 20	Coaching experts and experienced coaches	Portugal	Open	Various (unspecified)
8	Vesso (2014)	Quantitative	Questionnaire survey using 'Coaching Culture Characteristics' (3C model) Vesso, 2014	ANOVA – T-tests.	*n* = 399	Leaders = 196 Team members = 154	Estonia	Open	Various sectors: • large enterprises = 59 • small businesses = 176 • state-owned = 59 • medium-sized = 61
9	Vesso and Alas (2016)	Quantitative	Questionnaire surveys using 'Coaching culture characteristics in leadership style' (3C model) (Vesso, 2014) and the 'Leaders' impact on culture' (LIC model) (Vesso, 2014)	ANOVA and T-tests. Linear regression and correlation analyses	*n* = 183	Leaders = 80 Team members = 103	Estonia	Open	Various sectors: • large enterprises = 42 • medium-sized = 41 • small businesses = 33 • state-owned = 67

Table 3 outlines the coaching culture definitions used or referenced by each paper against these themes.

Antecedents

Six papers reported on antecedents or foundational elements to the development of a coaching culture. Thematic analysis revealed nine key factors (See Table 4). Four of these factors, top leadership buy-in and involvement; formalised processes; coaching-style management capability and dialogic processes, were identified by more than one paper. The following five factors have been identified by one paper each: consistent use of multiple types of coaching across and at all levels; clear communication of the benefits of coaching; alignment with organisational values (Milner et al., 2020); the purpose of the coaching programme needs to be aligned to strategy (Lawrence, 2015) and a culture of trust and openness and a learning culture need to exist before a coaching culture can be realised (Rosha & Lace, 2018).

Interventions

Thematic analysis revealed five main interventions that organisations use to develop coaching cultures as summarised in Table 5. Executive coaching and leaders/ manager as coach development have been used or referenced by four of the six studies (Boysen et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015; Milner et al., 2020) that used interventions whereas coaching skills training is referenced by two (Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016), team coaching is referenced by one study (Vesso & Alas, 2016) and the development of internal coaching capability by one study (Milner et al., 2020).

Intervention characteristics

Only two studies described the characteristics of the interventions employed to develop a coaching culture (Hamilton, 2019; Lawrence, 2015), both using a case study qualitative design. The first case study (Hamilton, 2019) describes two interventions. First, a foundational coaching skills programme for all managers in one organisation based on a solutions-focused coaching model developed by the researcher. The programme was designed to teach the coaching model to increase the frequency and quality of coaching conversations in the organisation and embed coaching behaviours into the organisational culture. The programme encompassed several learning modalities (pre-work, one-and-a-half-day workshop that included role playing and feedback, an action plan for each participant, a post-programme assignment and reinforcement, facilitated by access to a leader's toolbox). Second, a leadership development programme with a series of one-day leadership workshops spread over an 18-month timeline. The workshops utilised several learning modalities and tools, e.g., psychometric testing (Hogan Leadership Survey and Leadership Versatility Index® (LVI) 360 Survey), coaching practice and peer coaching groups, change models and reflective exercises.

The second case study (Lawrence, 2015) also used two interventions as part of a two-year programme:

(1) executive coaching programme to 15 members of a senior leadership team with the aim to 'cultivate the constructive behaviours required to deliver long term sustained

Table 3. Definitions of coaching culture.

		Intent			Implementation			Outcome	
Paper	Definition of Coaching Culture	organisational change	people and performance management	organisational culture; OD model	use of multiple types of coaching	preeminent way of leading and managing	development conversations at all levels	individual or team performance	organisational performance
Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018)	'A coaching culture exists in an organization when a coaching approach is a key aspect of how the leaders, managers, and staff engage and develop all their people and engage their stakeholders, in ways that create increased individual, team, and organizational performance and shared value for all stakeholders' (Hawkins, 2012, p. 21)		Y			Y		Y	Y
Boysen et al. (2021)	'A coaching culture is achieved when developmental conversation is taking place at all levels of an organization and when an organization prioritizes active listening and supporting individuals to realize their full potential …. … It requires specific behaviour and a focused mindset throughout an organization' (Author's definition)		Y	Y			Y		
	'A coaching culture within an organization also is exemplified through Behaviours, Mindsets, emotional grounding and			Y					

	motivational roots' (Hawkins, 2012)										
Hamilton (2019)	'… coaching would become the preeminent way of leading and managing throughout the organization' (Author's definition)						Y				
Milner et al. (2020)	'A coaching culture can be defined as the consistent use of multiple types of coaching across and at all levels of an organization, using a formalized process that includes provision of appropriate training and resources, involvement of top management, clear communication of the benefits of coaching, and alignment with organizational values such as ownership, empowerment, collaboration, respect, innovation, and learning' (Author's definition)			Y	Y			Y			
Rosha and Lace 2018)	'Behavioural change within the organisational change opens a number of opportunities for coaching as a tool in implementing and sustaining change' (Stober, 2008).	Y									
	'… coaching can add value to organizational change facilitating management development beyond individual and team levels' (Rosinski, 2011)	Y					Y			Y	Y

(*Continued*)

Table 3. Continued.

		Intent			Implementation			Outcome	
Paper	Definition of Coaching Culture	organisational change	people and performance management	organisational culture; OD model	use of multiple types of coaching	preeminent way of leading and managing	development conversations at all levels	individual or team performance	organisational performance
Sarsur and Parente (2019)	'… an organizational management concept based on "coaching culture," that is, with the perspective of policies and practices for people management that involve greater openness to feedback, participation in decision-making and analysis of employees' potential, instead of the traditional performance evaluations. Coaching would be, in this sense, a practice inspired by collaboration, by openness to listen to people and treat them in a more humanized way'. (Author's definition)		Y	Y					
Vesso (2014)	Coaching Culture Characteristics (3C model) (Author's model) a. The strength of the involvement, consistency, responsibility, collaboration in the team created by the leader; b. Coaching oriented behaviours and goal orientation; c. Relationship orientation and teamwork norms; d. Trust and distribution of decision-making		Y	Y			Y		

Vesso and Alas (2016)	Coaching Culture Characteristics (3C model) (Author's model above)	Y	Y	Y
	'A coaching culture is a paradigm for organizational cultures in which coaching takes place on a formal and informal basis, and has been ingrained in the fabric of organizational life' (Hart, 2005).		Y	Y
	'A coaching culture is an organizational development model that provides the structure that defines how the organization's members can best interact with their working environment, and how the best results are obtained and measured. A coaching culture needs the discipline of building a shared vision, learning and a desire for personal mastery to realize its potential' (Bawany,).	Y	Y	Y

Table 4. Antecedents or foundational elements.

	Antecedent/ Foundational Element								
Paper	Top leadership buy-in and involvement	Formalised and planned process that includes provision of training and resources	Coaching-style management/ mindset is an important capability of leaders and people managers	Employment of dialogic processes to shift organisational identity and culture	Consistent use of multiple types of coaching across and at all levels	Clear communication of the benefits of coaching	Alignment with organisational values	Purpose of the coaching programme needs to be aligned to strategy	A culture of trust, openness and a learning culture need to exist
Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018)	Y		Y						
Hamilton (2019)	Y	Y	Y						
Lawrence (2015)				Y				Y	
Milner et al. (2020)	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		
Rosha and Lace (2018)	Y								Y
Sarsur and Parente (2019)				Y					

performance': the programme comprised seven sessions: one initial two-hour coaching session and debrief followed by six 60mins sessions. Nine coaches were selected using the following criteria: senior management experience, formal coaching and behavioural science qualifications.

(2) managers coaching skills workshops: they comprised four modules delivered as two one-day workshops and scheduled 4–6 weeks apart. Each workshop was delivered to 6–10 participants The modules covered the GROW coaching model (Leach, 2020), listening, asking questions, giving feedback, managing emotions and resistance. Fifty people attended a workshop delivered by the author and the OD manager of the organisation.

Organisational outcomes

Seven outcomes were found to have been explored by the studies included in the systematic literature review, presented in Table 6. Each of these outcomes has been identified by one study only, apart from engagement, positive communication and consultation, which has been identified by two.

Measures

Four measures were used in five of the papers to measure coaching culture: Coaching Culture Characteristics in Leadership Style model (3C model) was used in two papers (Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016); Leader's Impact on Culture (LIC model) (Vesso, 2014), a work culture survey (Boysen et al., 2021) and an engagement survey (Hamilton, 2019) as presented in Table 7.

Quality assessment

The results of the quality assessment for each paper against the quality criteria / dimensions identified in the Systematic Mixed Studies Reviews framework (Hong & Pluye, 2019) showed that six out of the nine papers received a 'medium/high' quality rating and two studies had a 'medium' rating and one a 'low' rating.

The average quality scores were considered against the evidence statements in order to inform conclusions. All evidence identified in this review presents initial evidence, apart from: the employment of dialogic processes as an antecedent and culture change as an outcome that both present unclear evidence.

Discussion

What is known about coaching cultures?

The rising popularity of the term 'coaching culture' is evident through the increase in peer reviewed papers since the Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh review in 2014. For example, the papers that were returned from PsycINFO on the search terms 'coaching culture' increased from 29 papers in 2014 to 305 papers in May 2022 and from 37 papers in 2014 to 327 papers in 2022 from Business Source Premier. This is in keeping with the increase in popularity of the term coaching culture in academic and practitioner literature

Table 5. Interventions.

Paper	Interventions Executive / 1:1 coaching/ leadership development (external)	Leader/ manager as coach development	Coaching skills training	Team and group coaching	Developing internal coaching capability
Boysen et al. (2021)	Y	Y			
Hamilton (2019)	Y	Y			
Lawrence (2015)	Y	Y			
Milner et al. (2020)	Y	Y			Y
Vesso (2014)			Y		
Vesso and Alas (2016)			Y	Y	

(e.g., Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005; Hawkins, 2012; Passmore & Crabbe, 2020) and practitioner conferences, podcasts or publications.

Yet, whilst the term coaching culture is readily used in peer reviewed papers and popular press, it lacks an empirical foundation. In some cases (e.g., Boysen et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2016; Grant, 2017; Woods, 2016), papers explored coaching and its effectiveness for individual-level change with an expressed assumption that these changes bring changes in organisational culture, therefore contributing to the development of a coaching culture, a finding that was also discussed in the Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh (2014) review. However, the position that 'just as coaching changes people, it similarly changes organisations' (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014), is loosely based on secondary evidence to explain this relationship, for example through engagement survey and employee feedback (Woods, 2016) or measures of job satisfaction (Edwards et al., 2016).

The studies that emerged through the systematic review are from a variety of journals on coaching, management, behavioural science, etc reflecting the multi-disciplinary and theoretical grounding of coaching as a profession and the growing interest from the academic community to examine coaching in all its forms and expand its usage. This also indicates the multidisciplinary approach that is needed to explain the nature of coaching cultures bringing together the professional foundations of coaching, organisational culture, leadership and management, and organisational development. Understanding the perspectives of the various practitioner stakeholders, their theoretical positions, their role, and how they interact in the development of coaching cultures will potentially offer richer insights.

The need for a clear and shared definition of coaching culture

This review, similar to the 2014 review, has highlighted that we still have *no clear and shared definition* (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014) of the term coaching culture. There are many definitions and understandings of the construct resulting in lack of conceptual clarity, making research challenging. In terms of this review, it was challenging to synthesise findings emerging from heterogenous methods, which led to the employment of a narrative synthesis methodology (Popay et al., 2006).

Table 6. Outcomes of coaching culture.

	Outcomes						
Paper	Attraction and retention of high potential individuals	Engagement / Positive communication and consultation	Positive and supportive environment	Performance	Problem solving	Growth / empowerment	Culture change
Anthony and van Nieuwerburgh (2018)			Y				
Boysen et al. (2021)		Y					
Hamilton (2019)		Y		Y	Y	Y	
Lawrence (2015)							Y
Milner et al. (2020)	Y						

Table 7. Measures of coaching culture.

Paper	Measures			
	Coaching Culture Characteristics in Leadership Style model (3C model)	Leader's Impact on Culture' (LIC model)	Work Culture Survey	Engagement Survey
Boysen et al. (2021)			Y	
Hamilton (2019)				Y
Vesso (2014)	Y	Y		
Vesso and Alas (2016)	Y			

The coaching culture definitions used in the included papers, start developing a systemic viewpoint seeing coaching culture as part of a wider system of organisational development strategies (Boysen et al., 2021; Milner et al., 2020; Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016) that involve coaching conversations at all levels (Boysen et al., 2021; Milner et al., 2020) and have an impact on organisational performance (Anthony & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Rosha & Lace, 2018).

A comparison of the common themes that emerged from the 2014 and this review is showing that there is good congruence in how definitions describe the strategic intent of coaching cultures. The themes that are the same in both reviews are that the development of coaching culture forms part of a wider and holistic people and organisational management or development strategy or plan. Comparing the themes on implementation shows that this area has expanded to describe how a coaching approach can become ingrained in conversations at all levels and not confined to the line management relationship. This is in line with earlier definitions (Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Hawkins, 2012; Passmore & Crabbe, 2020). Finally, the themes around benefits or outcomes point to improved performance at all levels, individual, team and organisational.

Initial evidence on the building blocks of coaching cultures needs further research

Foundational elements

This systematic review demonstrated that there is some initial evidence on three antecedents of coaching cultures: leadership buy-in, coaching style management, and formalised process but there remains unclear evidence for the fourth antecedent (i.e., use of dialogic processes). These seem to be foundational elements and necessary conditions for the development of coaching cultures. The role of leadership as sponsorship or promoter appears as a necessary condition in organisational change or development frameworks (e.g., Kotter, 2012) and has been widely explored in a recent literature review by Mansaray (2019). Comparing these to the themes identified in the 2014 review, there seems to be congruence in these main foundational elements adding to our confidence in these findings.

Interventions

The review identified the five main interventions that organisations use to develop coaching cultures (i.e., executive, leadership, 1:1; team, group coaching; developing internal

coaches; leader/ manager as coach development) but did not wield evidence that supports their role, contribution, or effectiveness in changing organisational culture.

The focus on the leader/manager perspective is not surprising and reflects the dominant view linking leadership and organisational culture (Giberson et al., 2009) including that coaching cultures have been explored mainly as a management style (McCarthy & Milner, 2013, 2020; Milner et al., 2018, 2022). It, therefore, corresponds to the prominent view of coaching culture as a leadership/management style and the role that managers play in establishing and reinforcing cultural elements and ways of working (Kane-Urrabazo, 2006).

The second intervention, the development of internal coaches, is only explored by one study (Milner et al., 2020) in this review. The 2014 review explored this as a main vehicle for developing coaching cultures and provided evidence that this intervention has clear benefits. This discrepancy might indicate a potential gap between practice and empirical research in this area.

Both interventions, leader-as-coach development, and development of internal coaches, are seen as organisational development strategies where coaching behaviours are employed by those who have received the training or development in coaching in their interactions. These behaviours then get embedded in everyday interactions and processes making these interventions a sustainable model for organisational culture change and performance improvement (Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Hawkins, 2012).

Team and group coaching are being explored by one of the papers (Vesso & Alas, 2016) signifying potentially a new area of development. Team and group coaching have seen increasing popularity and recent literature and research has focused on the effectiveness of the intervention on team or group development objectives and their individual members (Hastings & Pennington, 2019; Hawkins, 2022; Jones, 2022). Further research on how these interventions impact on the development of coaching cultures would be provide richer insights into the way coaching behaviours become embedded in team, group and organisational cultures.

To conclude, there is still a gap in our understanding of how different types of coaching or coaching approaches contribute to the development of a coaching culture, and how effective they are individually, or which combinations of interventions work more effectively together to impact organisational culture. Organisational development approaches underpinned by coaching principles are not mentioned or examined in the included papers. These could include dialogic organisational development (Bushe, 2013) approaches and interventions that focus on the group or organisation as the 'unit' of change and are rooted in coaching principles. Finally, the review highlighted a gap in research that explores the perspective of the 'enacting' (Knowles, 2022) stakeholders (i.e., organisational developers and coaches). Their perspectives would provide a richer understanding because they have first-hand experience of designing and developing coaching programmes and would have employed a number of these interventions in their careers. Including their experience and 'voice' will add a different and nuanced perspective to these interventions and their contribution in developing coaching cultures.

Outcomes

The organisational outcomes that have been identified by this review provide interesting insights into the outcomes of coaching culture programmes. There is little evidence on

the impact of coaching interventions on organisational level outcomes, such as performance or engagement, and less so on the development of cultural norms. A dearth of research on the effectiveness of coaching on organisational outcomes was identified by Grover and Furnham in 2016 and still remains so today. Addressing this overlooked issue of importance could unlock some of the questions that remain unanswered in relation to organisational outcomes.

Measures

The popular models or measures of progress towards the development of coaching culture (e.g., Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005; Hawkins, 2012) were referenced but not used in the papers included in this review. One author has developed two models (Vesso, 2014; Vesso & Alas, 2016). The Coaching Culture Characteristics in Leadership Style (3C model) helps organisations plot their progress against the models' stages of development. The second, Leader's Impact on Culture (LIC model), looks at the leaders' impact on culture. The 3C model seems to provide a potentially useful frame to explore coaching cultures through, however, it has not been used and/ or tested since by further independent research. Other measures explored are work culture or engagement surveys. Whilst these do not offer a specific measure for coaching cultures, individual items in these surveys have been grouped together to offer a measure for the purposes of specific organisational case studies.

The absence of an agreed or widely used measure is not surprising due to the absence of agreed definitions or agreement on any of the building blocks of coaching cultures. The current models or measures have some obvious points of convergence especially in viewing the development of coaching culture through maturity stages. Whilst they need further validation, as the authors themselves suggest (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2006), they provide useful frameworks for practitioners and researchers and offer a holistic

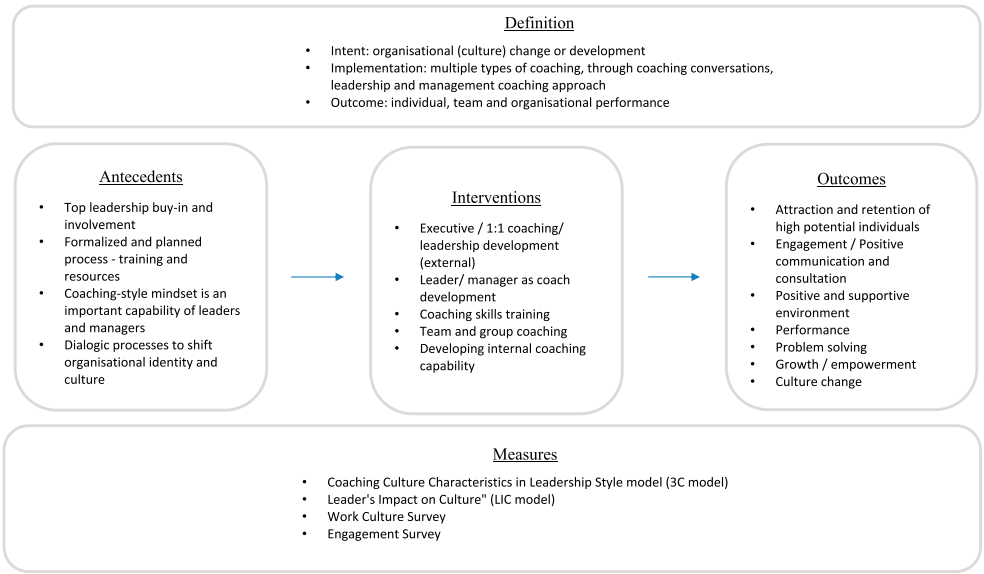

Figure 2. What is known about coaching cultures: summary of findings.

and systemic view of coaching culture, and the interventions and mechanisms by which it develops over time.

Figure 2 presents the evidence produced by this review.

Limitations and implications for practice and future research

We chose to only include peer reviewed articles to specifically understand the scientific evidence regarding coaching cultures and future research would benefit from including practitioner and/or commercially developed research. We recommend a systematic 'grey' literature review that would include practitioner research, conference papers, and case studies, as well as research on the perspectives and experiences of practitioners working in coaching culture programmes to enrich and further our understanding of coaching culture.

The development of an agreed definition, possibly through Delphi studies with experts in the field of coaching culture would facilitate further research and practice. Finally, further research on the practical application of existing models, would help us understand the nature of developmental stages of coaching cultures.

Further research is also required to strengthen the evidence for the building blocks of coaching cultures identified in this review. To this end, we contribute by producing the first 'blueprint' of what is known about coaching cultures through academic, peer-reviewed, research. Recognising that this is still initial evidence, practitioners can utilise this blueprint framework as a checklist or prompt to use with other stakeholders to co-create coaching culture programmes for their organisations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this review demonstrated that there is still little empirical research into the phenomenon of coaching cultures. We are therefore not much more advanced in our understanding of coaching culture since the last review in 2014. However, this review provided a first 'blueprint' framework on the building blocks of coaching culture based on academic, peer reviewed research.

This review also highlighted some fundamental gaps that exist in our understanding of coaching cultures through empirical research:

- There is no agreed definition. Similar to the 2014 review, we have found that the term 'coaching culture' has been understood in different ways. The topic is multi-disciplinary in its nature, and it requires collaborative exploration that brings together perspectives from coaching psychology, organisational psychology, coaching, business, human resources and organisational development.
- Empirical studies have explored singular perspectives and mainly that of the manager as coach.
- Whilst there has been some initial evidence on the role of the leader /manager, there is a gap in our understanding of other stakeholders more specifically, professionals involved in the design and development of coaching culture programmes. This gap for further research was also identified by Milner et al. (2020).

- There is no explicit evidence of the behavioural or cultural patterns underpinning coaching cultures that are grounded in the experience of these stakeholders. Further multi-stakeholder / practitioner research to explore these patterns is required to advance our understanding of the complex and still ambiguous phenomenon of coaching cultures.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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