

*Questioning Practices in Executive Coaching:  
A Discussion of How to Integrate Practical and Scholarly Perspectives*

Questions are omnipresent in human interactions. They allow us to express curiosity and expand our knowledge; they also initiate reflection and let us consider other viewpoints. Accordingly, for helping professionals such as therapists, asking questions is understood as an essential strategy to enable change in and for help seekers (Graf et al. 2020). This is also the case in the helping format executive coaching: coaching practitioners consider questions the silver bullet of clients' introspection (Loebbert & Wilmes 2013), a crucial intervention which guides the coaching process (Fischer-Epe 2012) and, more generally, coaches' most important tool (Schreyögg 2012) to enable change for clients. This perspective, anchored in long engagement in professional practice, has prompted the publication of a considerable amount of practice literature on the topic (e.g. Wehrle 2012).

Unlike such pronounced interest in questions from coaching practice, coaching research has so far not engaged in much research. The interdisciplinary research project *Questioning Sequences in Coaching* seeks to remedy this situation by documenting and analyzing forms, functions and the interaction-specific change potential of questioning practices in coaching. This involves exploring both the local and global levels of effectiveness, meaning that the project needs to combine linguistic micro-level sequential analysis of questioning sequences and psychological insights into the contribution of questioning practices to goal attainment. In so doing, we clarify how and why questioning practices are considered essential tools for coaches (Graf & Dionne in press). Nonetheless, although the relevance of the project is justified by coaching practitioners' perspective on questions, the current interdisciplinary endeavour still represents a dialogue among scholars.

Beyond presenting the potential of such an approach, the focus of this talk is to address its limitations and concurrently discuss what a truly emancipated discussion on questioning practices by academia and practice must entail. It will thematize the requirements of such a transdisciplinary orientation, i.e. considering and integrating both coaching practitioners' and scholars' perspectives in all steps of the research process (Sarangi 2005), as well as the benefits and challenges of such a close cooperation among experts from various fields.

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