

## Coaching Supervision from an Emerging Perspective

### About the Author:

Hudson Maila is working towards accreditation as a Coach Supervisor at the Coaching Supervision Academy, Switzerland. He is also a graduate at the Wits Business School, with a Master of Management Degree, specialising in Business and Executive Coaching. He is based in South Africa and has drawn inspiration from his supervision journey in collating this article, with the hope of advancing the discourse on coaching supervision. Any correspondence can be addressed to Hudson at this email address: [HUDSON.IBEXECOACH1@GMAIL.COM](mailto:HUDSON.IBEXECOACH1@GMAIL.COM) or skype: hudson.coachme2. You can also log onto the Association of Coaching Supervision for further details.

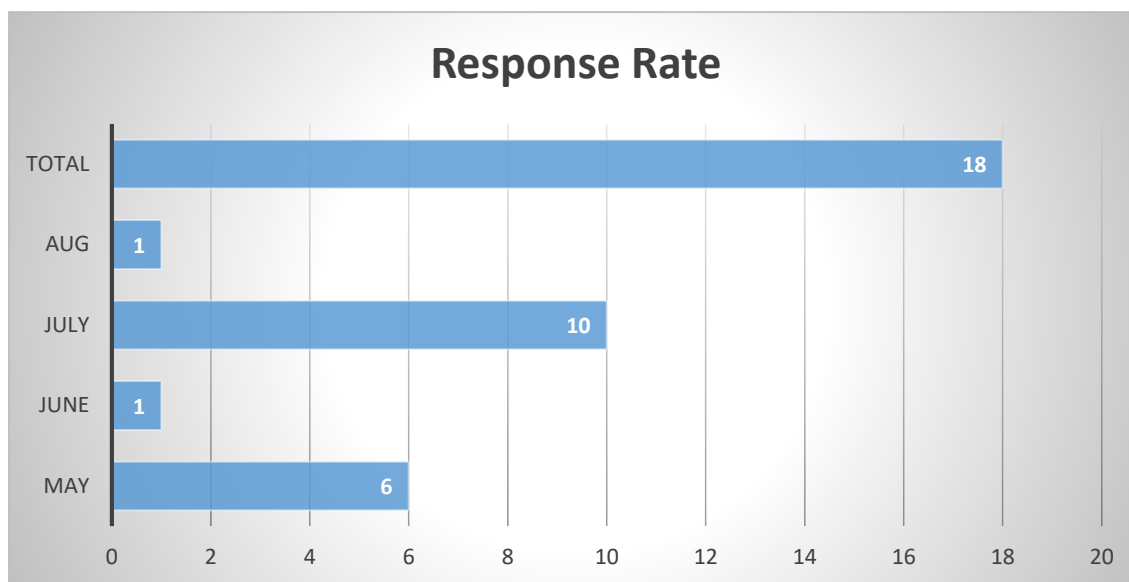
### Background

The emergence of coaching supervision in major parts of the world has seen an increase in the marketing and training of professionals in this area. As the trajectory unfolds, the demand for coaching supervision by end-users is yet to match what the market can provide and is able to support the professional development of coaches. Similarly, the coaches should be able to create space and momentum to invest in themselves as they support their client's needs.

In essence, the low uptake in coaching supervision propelled the culmination of this research article, based on the survey which was conducted for a period of approximately three months. The results were too inviting and necessitated a trickle down on some of the key findings to further stimulate the market reaction and broaden the discourse on coaching supervision. Ultimately, the drive should be on making coaching supervision more accessible and capable to transcend multiple boundaries as we navigate the complex environments in which the coaching practitioners and their clients have to deal with.

### Introduction

The survey was open to the global community of coaching practitioners using a combination of social media platforms, namely: Facebook posts on three Global Coaching Groups, a South African Coaching Newsletter Publication, WhatsApp posts on one Global Group and one South African Group, as well as follow-up on interests from face-to-face conversations. In each case, a web-based questionnaire with a standard link on SurveyMonkey was used and a total of 18 responses were received. The response rate is summarised and illustrated as Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Summary – Response Rate**

The release of the survey coincided with the international coaching supervision month in May 2019 and was conducted over a period of three months and one week, with the last response received on the 8th of August 2019.

In the first month of the survey, there was a high uptake of responses from America and Europe. This can be seen as an indication of the maturity and susceptibility of coaching supervision in these parts of the world. However, it is possible that other factors could be at play, such as the timing of the survey under review, the target market and the impact of the recent Global Survey of Coaching Supervision released in April 2019 at the EMCC International Symposium in Dublin. Therefore, survey fatigue cannot be ruled out.

Overall, it is evident that the South African market gained momentum during the period of July 2019 onwards to make it an emerging blog on coaching supervision.

### **Objectives**

The survey was not commissioned by any entity nor was it mandatory. Its intended objectives were as follows:

- To raise awareness and provide insights on the utilisation of coaching supervision.

- To understand the market needs by exploring what the coaching practitioners are thinking and want as part of the market reaction to coaching supervision.

- To draw comparisons and views on coaching supervision globally.

- To advance the coaching supervision discourse.

## **Significance of Research**

This research is important to test the market reaction with regard to coaching supervision. In Birch and Welch (2019), Hobbs (2019) had this to say “our reluctance to admit or explore what lies in the dark can cause us to shy away from the light”. In this way, we may not realize what life and other things around us has to offer. Now, to what extent can coaching supervision be positioned along the trajectory of market needs for coaching practitioners?

The researcher believes raising awareness and sharing insights amongst the community of coaching practitioners is one way around this. In Downing (2019), McLean (2012, p.15) indicates that to know ourselves is a life-long journey and feedback is a central part of triggering self-awareness. The underlying factor is the need for a dialogue to position coaching supervision at the right level amongst the coaching practitioners.

## **Important Coaching Supervision Survey and Related Information**

For a long time, it has been an undisputable fact that 88% of coaching organisers and 86% of coaches believed in regular coaching supervision for coaches (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006). However, only 23% of organisations provided regular coaching supervision whilst 44% of coaches were undertaking coaching supervision at the time.

Fast forward to 2014, Moral and Turner (2014) revealed that 83.2% of coaches were receiving supervision globally. Accordingly, more and more supervisors are being trained, particularly in Europe and increasingly in Australia, North America, the Far East and virtually worldwide. In retrospect, the progress is generally visible from how coaching supervision has been quickly embraced in these parts of the world. It is also evident that South Africa remains part of the emerging market within the African continent.

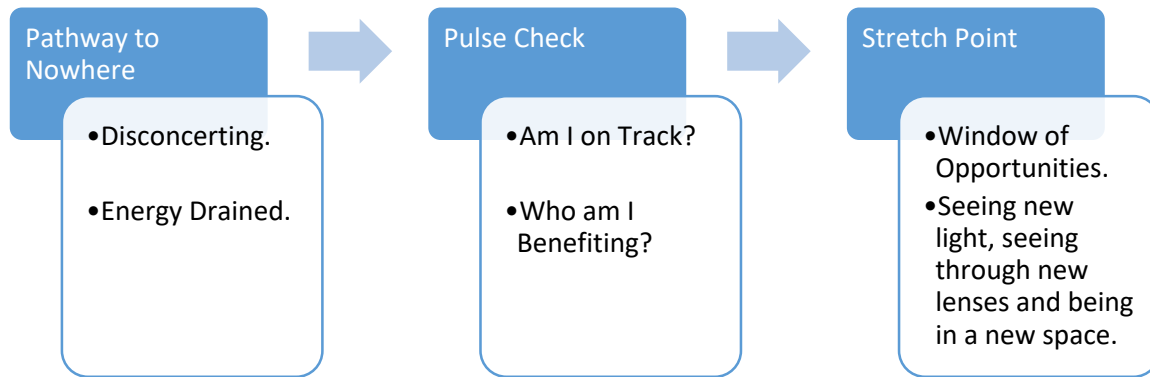
Dr Sunny Stout-Rostron, the founding President of the largest professional coaching body in South Africa, known as Coaching and Mentoring South Africa (COMENSA) has profiled the history and professionalisation of coaching in South Africa (South African Coaching News, 2019). COMENSA was formally launched in 2006. This coincides with the research conducted by Hawkins and Schwenk (2006), as highlighted above.

Today, COMENSA has 12 listed supervisors which may not necessarily be an indication of a database of all practicing and trained supervisors. Similarly, it is estimated that there are about 2500 active coaches in South Africa (Hudson, 2019). Without discounting other practicing coaching supervisors registered with COMENSA, the average ratio allocation per coaching supervisor then becomes 1:208 for every active coach. According to Birch and Gardiner (2019), coaching supervision was relatively young in 2018, and still had few practitioners across the world.

## **Coaching Supervision Perspective**

Carroll (2006) relates to coaching supervision as a time and space for reflection, as well as positioning experiential learning at the heart of supervision to enable supervisees to do their work differently. The perspective by Hawkins and Schwenk (2006) is that coaching supervision supports coaches to better understand themselves and their client system.

Now, having insights into the world of coaching supervision and what interest it arouses to some coaching practitioners, what picture can we draw to advance this narrative? This will give us a better perspective of what coaching supervision represents in the simplest way possible. The following Figure 2 illustrates the building blocks which can be used to articulate a rational coaching supervision perspective to the market and coaching practitioners. In essence, we can move from a place where our path is disconcerting to a more sensible, fulfilling space. Through coaching supervision, we are able to deal with feelings of inadequacy, replenish sagging energy and also reach out when our internal capacity has been shaken.



**Figure 2: Coaching Supervision Perspective**

With the picture in Figure 2 in mind, then what makes coaching supervision more compelling for coaching practitioners in this modern world? We cannot dissociate coaching supervision with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexities and Ambiguities (VUCA) of this world. Somehow, the coaching practitioners and their clients are directly or indirectly impacted by market forces and conditions. Therefore, together we should be well positioned to explore and support the coaching profession in making the space less murky. Our understanding of the wider system in which the coaching domain revolves and the ability to deepen our level of awareness can be greatly enhanced.

### **Methodology**

This is an exploratory research in order to determine the nature of the market needs and to have a better understanding of the utilisation of coaching supervision (Brown, 2006). A purposive sampling approach was chosen to solicit the experiences of the subject matter of interest (Devers & Frankel, 2000). This made it possible to use their insights for a specific research purpose. However, few research projects gather data from an entire population of interest (Blair & Blair, 2015). Therefore, the entire population was not expected to respond and instead, every coach within the community of practitioners had a fair chance of responding. The geographic location based on the continental spread amongst the cluster of the population members was used in its entirety for comparison purposes only.

Self-completion survey questionnaires were made available on-line through SurveyMonkey which could not be linked back to the identity of the participants and thereby guaranteed confidentiality. Participation to the survey was voluntary and anybody could choose to participate or not participate. Participants were

directed to the SurveyMonkey link, with invitations sent through WhatsApp messages, Emails and Face-to-Face conversations.

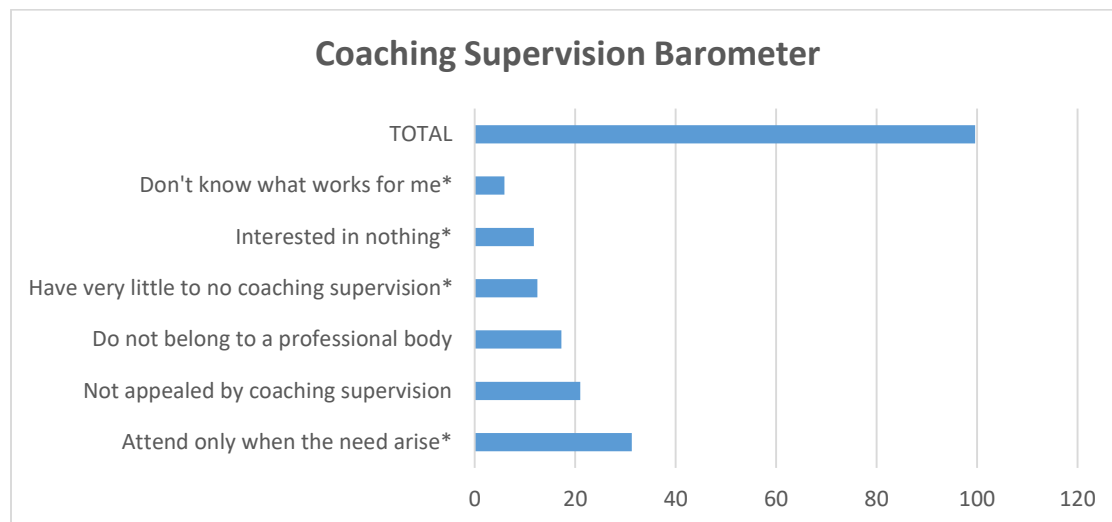
Data collection was done using a web-based questionnaire prepared on SurveyMonkey as a tool which is capable of analysing the information from the respondents.

### Key Findings

This section is based on the online survey results based on 10 questions designed online on SurveyMonkey, which would take no more than three to five minutes for participants to complete. The results were analysed automatically to eliminate bias using the online SurveyMonkey tool and synchronised to be presented in line with the objectives outlined herein.

- **What Coaching Practitioners think?**

Based on some of the responses indicated in Figure 3, the following barometer illustrates what is the thinking of the respondents.

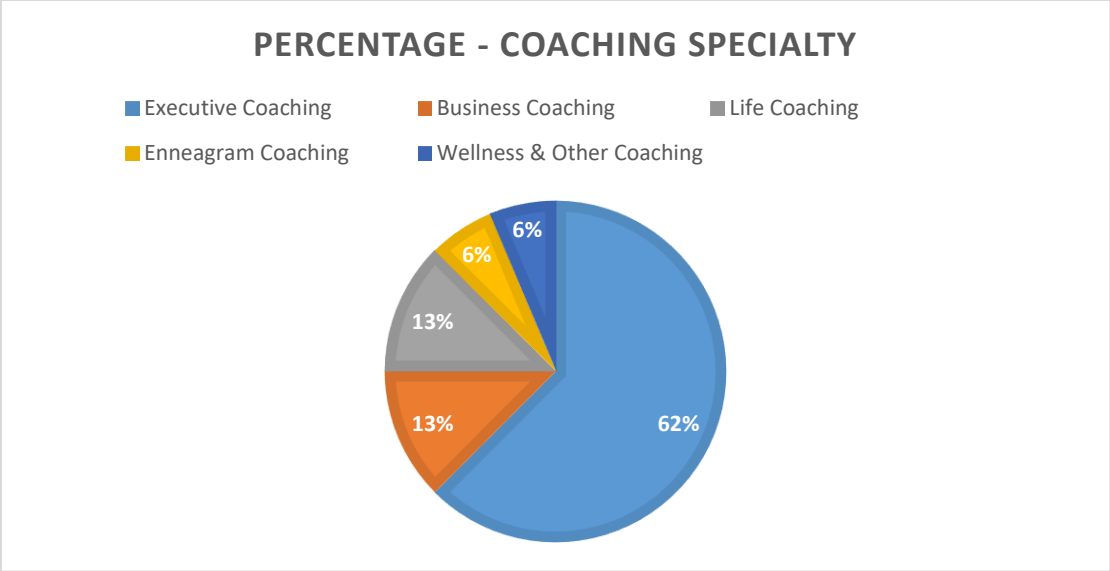


**Figure 3: Coaching Supervision Barometer (\*Denotes data which is also represented elsewhere in the article).**

It is evident that, based on the responses, a portion of the market segment is yet to buy-in completely into coaching supervision.

- **Type of coaching specialisation.**

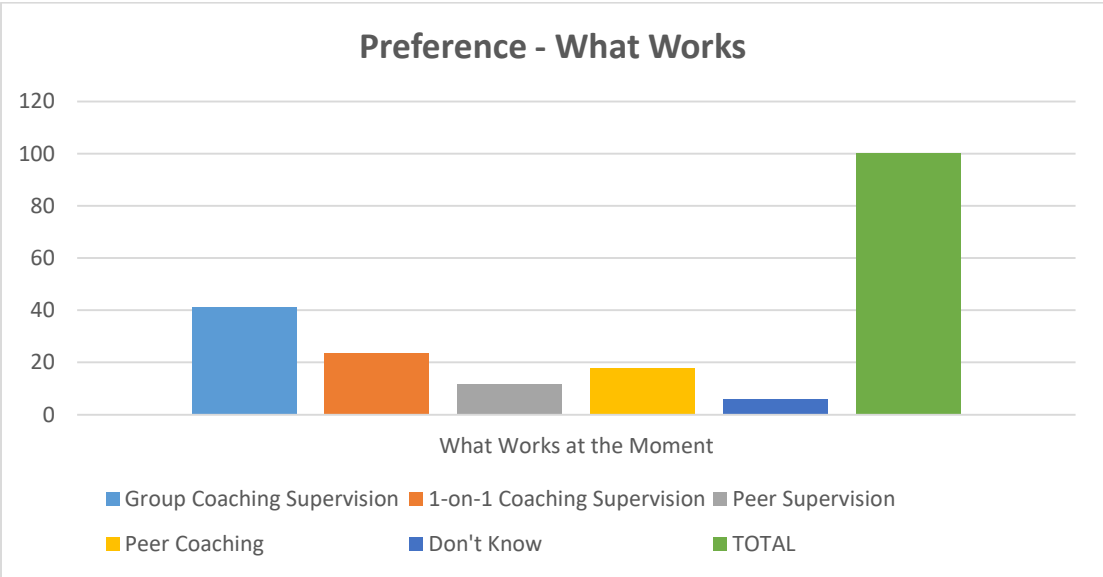
Whereas it is useful to know that the majority of coaches specialise in executive coaching, followed by both business and life coaching, those in the minority remain a useful target market. The minority pool of coaching specialisation from the responses along the enneagram and wellness coaching, include other categories ranging from career, team and mentor coaching, as well as coaching supervision, amongst others. The percentage spread thereof is illustrated as Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Type of Coaching Specialty by Percentage**

- What works at the moment?**

The majority indicated the type of supervision preferred as group supervision (41.18%), followed by one-on-one supervision (23.53%) and the minority preference was for peer supervision (11.76%). This represents a combined percentage of 76.47% interest level. The rest of the participants either engage in peer coaching (17.65%) or do not know what works for them (5.88%). Figure 5 illustrates participants' views on what works for them at the moment.



**Figure 5: What works at the moment for the participants**

The majority of respondents believe in group coaching supervision (41%), followed by one-on-one coaching supervision. Whereas the preference indication by the respondents is based on what works for

them, here is some insights on the advantages and disadvantages for each type or option for professional supervision (St John-Brooks, 2019) as quoted in Birch and Welch 2019:

- One-on-one Coaching Supervision (expensive unless telephonic. The advantage is the space afforded to clients to address issues at a deeper level, which could be uncomfortable to be shared in a group session).
- Group Coaching Supervision (cheaper per person. The coaches participating in a group session receives less individual attention).
- Peer Supervision (cost effective. However, participants risk colluding together. This is made possible as it involves a group of experienced coaches working at a reciprocal level (The British Psychological Society, 2007).

A combination of all three is also possible to derive optimal benefits.

• **Frequency Rate.**

The frequency rate indicates how often do coaching practitioners utilise coaching supervision. The majority engage in coaching supervision after every eight sessions and when the need arises, at a combined response rate of 62.50%, followed by those who engage in coaching supervision after every twelve sessions at 18.75%. The rest of the participants either do very little to no supervision at 12.5% or have coaching supervision after every client (6.25%). The survey findings have been represented on a distribution curve in order to understand the market segment in relation to benchmarks and how coaches have been spread along the continuum, see Figure 6.

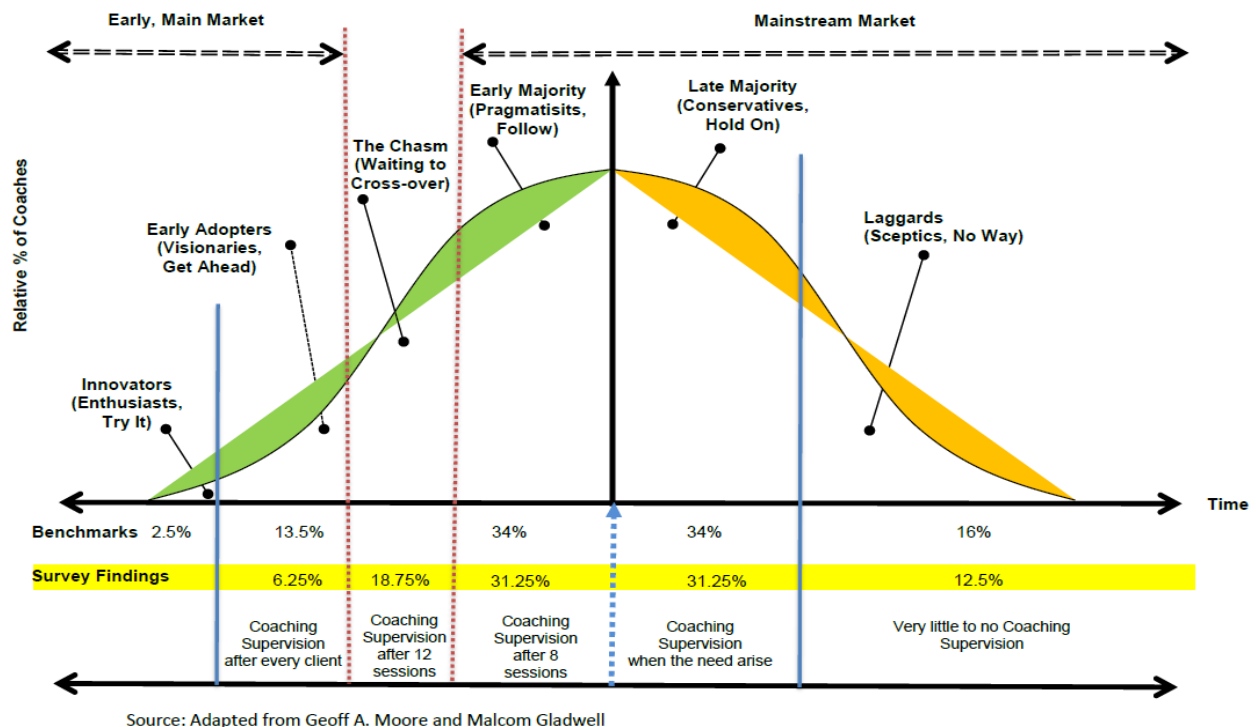


Figure 6: Market Segmentation and Frequency of Coaching Supervision

The evolution of coaching supervision elsewhere has generated the shift from “being ‘must do’ requirement to wanting supervision not because I have been told to” (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006). The patterns observed wherein some respondents were quick to respond to the survey compared to others can be seen as a typical demonstration of where they are relative to the market. The distribution curve was used to sum up and demonstrate the survey findings indicating how frequent the respondents undertake coaching supervision.

The push for the market pool to be capitalised and also raising awareness on the possibilities associated with coaching supervision can be done by targeting the late majority (31.25%) and the laggards (12.5%), as well as pulling the chasm (18.75%) group into the mainstream market. In line with the principles advocated by Moore (2013) and Gladwell (2013), we can diagnose and adapt how far we push as the market evolves.

COMENSA policy positions coaching supervision as a space where coaching competencies can be explored and developed (COMENSA, 2014). The policy document also indicates that coaching supervision depends on the needs of the coach. For credentialed coaches, COMENSA recommends a minimum of supervision to be undertaken once every month, which will, in future, be a requirement and form part of the Continuous Professional Development. Hawkins and Schwenk (2006) share an example of good practice by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC). Both companies provide monthly supervision sessions to their coaches, using a combination of one-on-one and group coaching supervision. The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring requires trainee coaches to have one hour of supervision for every 20 hours of coaching and fully trained coaches to have one hour of supervision for every 35 hours of coaching.

The British Psychological Society (2007) emphasises that it is the responsibility of each individual member to have access to an appropriately qualified supervisor. The amount of coaching carried out and the experience of the coach becomes a big consideration (The British Psychological Society, 2007). Furthermore, the Society provides one hour of supervision per month as a baseline but this is not a mandatory requirement.

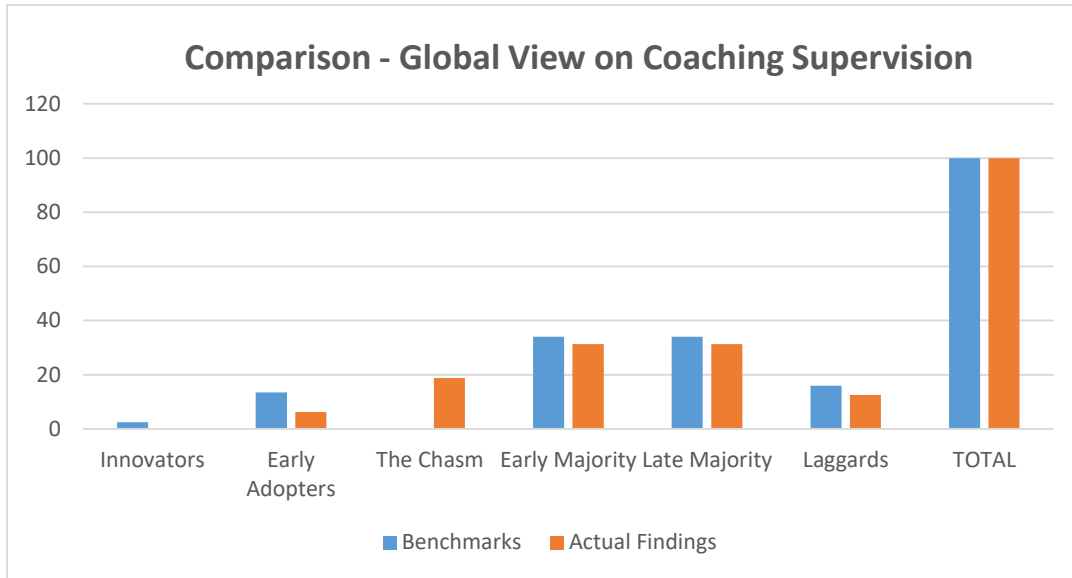
It is necessary to allow time for impact and to effect the changes from lessons learnt. Hawkins and Schwenk (2006) emphasise the need to adequately attend to the breadth and depth of our coaching work. Carroll (2006) uses the metaphor of “getting off the treadmill” and thereby touching ground by pushing aside our busyness to take care of ourselves.

- **Comparison and global view on coaching supervision**

The findings depicted in Figure 5 indicate that there is no market saturation based on the benchmarks and actual survey findings, see Figure 6. In the absence of market saturation and conversely, the higher appeal rate (79%) on coaching supervision, what are the factors discouraging practitioners from undertaking coaching supervision. The research findings by Hawkins and Schwenk (2006) serve as the body of work available to be used as a baseline, namely: coaching supervision is not compulsory, it is too expensive, and some coaches cannot find a supervisor.



However, the current findings demonstrate clearly the market to be capitalised to improve the uptake on coaching supervision. The model of crossing the chasm by Moore (2013) and Gladwell (2013) was used as a journey map, considering how the principles can be applied practically in this regard. The point of departure is the comparisons drawn in Figure 7.



**Figure 7: Comparison and views on coaching supervision globally**

The principles by Moore (2013) and Gladwell (2013) factor four key areas to address in order to take new products to the mainstream consumer and broader markets:

- **Pragmatists in Pain** – buyers are “pragmatists in pain,” stuck with a challenge and willing to take a chance on something new, provided it is directly focused on solving their specific case. It is therefore important to consider what will make clients choose coaching supervision to be the best suited solution for their needs.
- **The Law of the Few** – Trusted opinions by professionals, as well as key people that can endorse and advocate the concept.
- **The Stickiness Factor** – Delivering specific message with content that is consistent, provides assurance and renders its impact memorable. The two key factors considered significant are “*engagement* (fosters emotional involvement), *association* (generates positive associations)”. Reach out to clients who need awareness and make an effort to “appeal to the right side of their brains”.
- **Power of Context** – the implications of small variations in social groups and minor changes in a neighborhood or community environment.

Considering the margins for improvement noticeable from the survey findings compared against the benchmarks utilised in Figure 7, it is possible to use the energy from the groups in the early adopters and the early majority to sway the other groups (the chasm, the late majority and the laggards).

- **Affiliation and Appeal**

The majority of respondents belong to professional bodies (82.35%) and also have the highest appeal on coaching supervision at 79%. Therefore, there is a correlation between appeal rate and affiliation by respondents, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between Affiliation to Professional Bodies and Appeal to Coaching Supervision

Affiliation & Appeal	Percentage
Affiliation to Professional Bodies	82.35%
Appeal to Coaching Supervision	79%

The trend from the survey findings indicated in Table 2 is not far off the mark, compared to the findings by Moral and Turner (2014), which revealed that 83.2% of coaches were receiving supervision globally.

- **Future Interest**

Similarly, there is consistency between what works for the participants and the type of supervision preferred, with group supervision at the majority (47.06%), one-on-one supervision (35.29%) and peer supervision (5.88%). This represents a combined percentage of 88.23% interest level. The rest of the participants do not engage in anything (11.76%). Figure 8 demonstrates the type and future interest on coaching supervision.

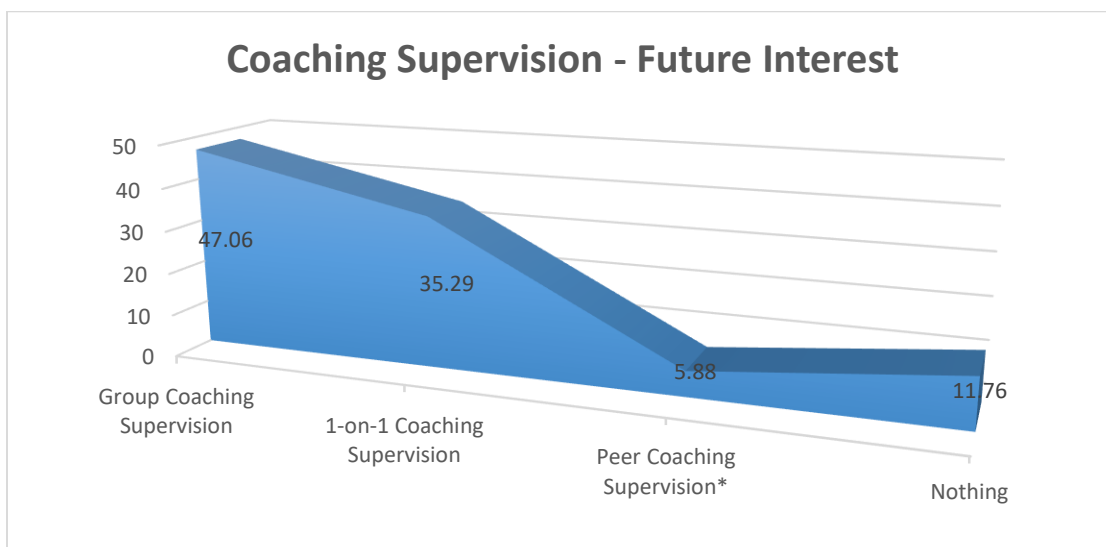
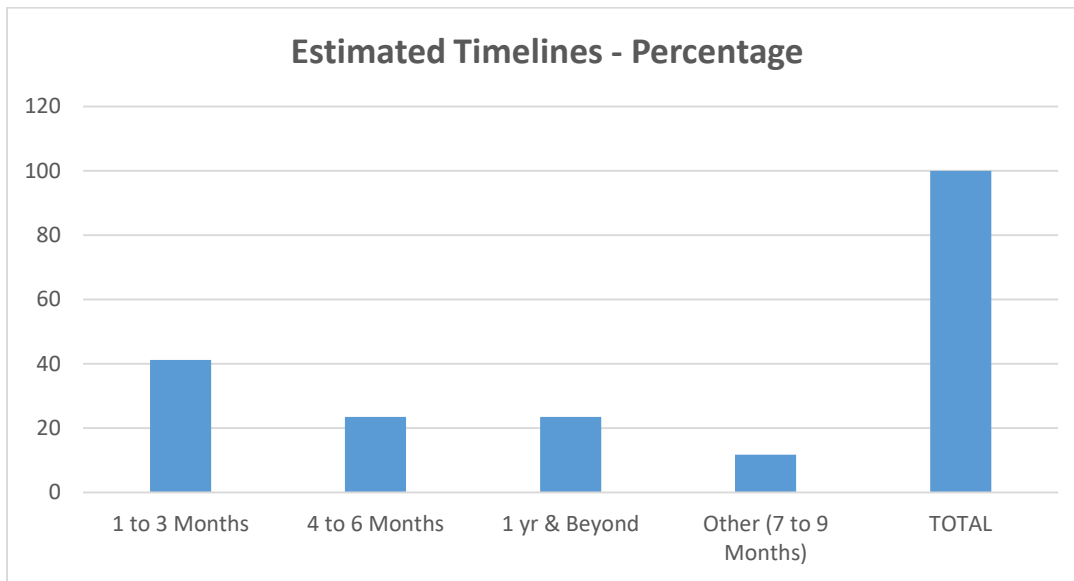


Figure 8: Type of Coaching Supervision and Future Interest (\*Denotes data which is also represented elsewhere in the article).

- **Estimated Timelines**

Ideally, having drawn a good understanding of what interests our respondents in relation to their market needs, the question is - what next? The illustration in Figure 9 indicates when the respondents are likely to engage in coaching supervision, with the majority of respondents likely to undertake coaching supervision within the next three months at 41.18%.

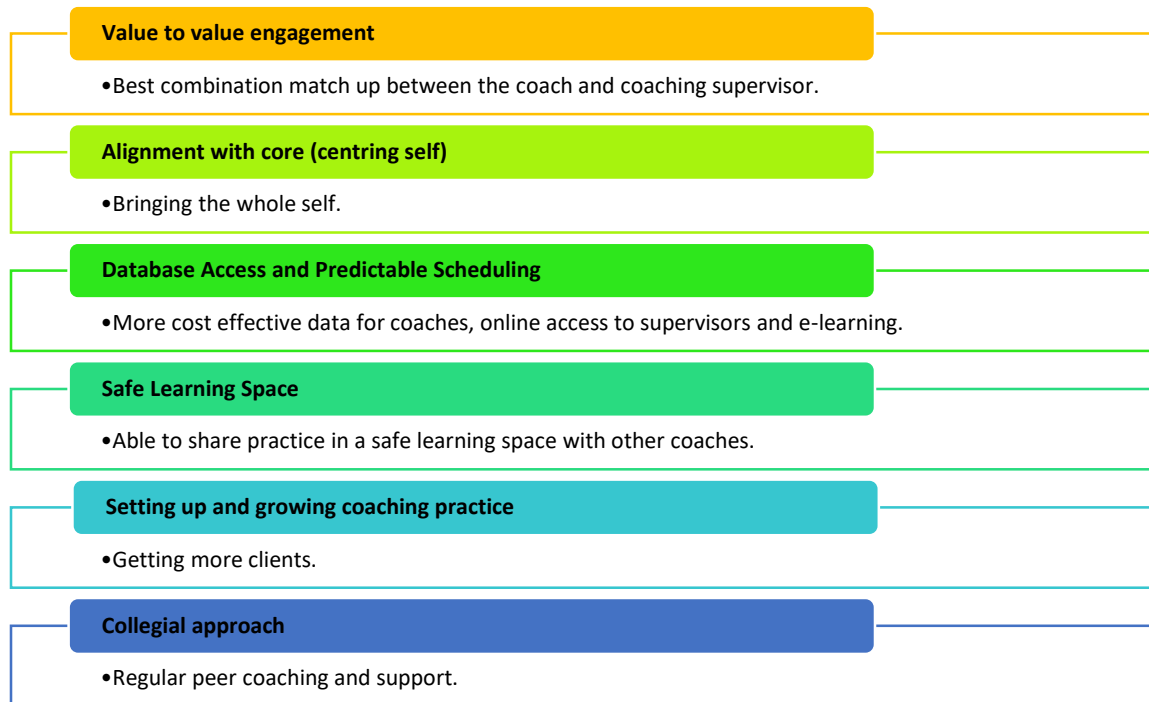


**Figure 9: Estimated Future Timelines on Coaching Supervision**

The estimated timelines provide a good basis to understand the market reaction and pace the coaching supervision needs of coaches accordingly.

- **Areas of interest shared by coaching practitioners**

The coaches were asked an open question on what interests them. The thoughts shared by the respondents are illustrated in Figure 10, which have been presented in the form of themes and areas of interest. What becomes so obvious is that the areas of interest are so varied and also represent 'what is important and meaningful' to the respondents (Downing, 2019). This is meaningful data which presents an opportunity to engage and reflect on what the respondents may want to achieve and believe could make the most difference in their respective coaching practices.



**Figure 10: Themes identified, and areas of interest shared by the respondents.**

The position derived from Figure 10 is that coaching supervision provides a safety net and platform for professional support, learning and sharing expertise. However, the themes and areas of interest identified in Figure 10 do not represent comprehensive content which can be brought to supervision, but a frame of reference on what has emerged from the pool of respondents. Hodge and Clutterbuck (2019) have put together a complementary list sharing their own survey findings from a team coaching perspective. Therefore, any theme considered to be appropriate for coaching supervision needs to be considered in a specific context. According to Birch and Gardiner (2019), we should explore what is calling for our attention by attending to what was spoken and unspoken in our coaching supervision sessions.

### **Conclusions and Way forward**

What is obvious about coaching supervision is that it is an emerging profession at different stages across the globe.

The overall conclusion from the survey confirms that there is a high rate of appeal for supervision by coaches who need and want coaching supervision to support them in this complex work environment.

Coaching supervision outputs will continue to impact our profession and therefore remains a necessity.

It is clear that specific requirements for coaching supervision are set out by each professional or regulating body. Therefore, professional bodies are encouraged to explore entry barriers to

coaching supervision in order to build flexibilities for their members, for example, a combination set approach and exploring other innovative ways to attract coaches into coaching supervision.

The current approach is mainly invitational. Therefore, what is needed to make a shift towards making coaching supervision a full mainstream profession?

- Deeper inquiry into the motivations and drive, as well as factors discouraging coaches to undertake coaching supervision is required.
- The preferences indicated by coaches on the frequency of coaching supervision suggest a balance to be drawn against the requirements of professional bodies. However, the common thread identified is as follows:
  - The BBC makes it compulsory for coaches to undergo supervision in order to remain on the coach register; so does COMENSA with regard to credentialed coaches and for Continuous Professional Development purposes.
  - However, it is important to consider the implications for stringent versus scaled down requirements on coaching supervision. A good measure centres on coaches' willingness and wish to improve themselves, being open minded, having an open heart and being open to exploring.

Carrol (2006) indicates that making supervision a requirement can result in involvement without commitment or belief. Coaching practitioners are therefore encouraged to invest time, money and effort into their profession growth and development. Another option is to set a threshold on the number of compulsory coaching supervisory hours.

There is an opportunity for organisational buyers of coaching to allocate a percentage spend on coaching supervision from contracts awarded to coaching practitioners. The other option is to top up membership fees to include a portion of supervision fees to subsidise members willing to undergo coaching supervision in order to support those who are interested but believe supervision is too expensive.

Strong partnerships with training institutions to enable trainees to experience what the benefits of coaching supervision are at the foundation stage. The pacing thereof is important to create a balance to understand whether it is too early or late to undertake coaching supervision.

Pooling of groups herein to increase opportunities for the market segment by establishing what are the real needs of groups that are not interested in anything (11.76%), or do not know what interests them (5.88%), as well as those not belonging to professional bodies (17.65%). This can be extended to the group with very little to no coaching supervision (12.5%) and those who attend supervision when the need arises (31.25%), broadening the potential target of respondents in this pool.

For any future research, the recommendation is to explore the current state of coaching supervision on a continental and country specific basis to establish what could work for coaching practitioners. A more in-depth analysis of research work from focus groups and longitudinal studies can be undertaken to provide a broader context.

## Acknowledgements

- The respondents to the online survey.
- The Coaching Supervision Academy Team and the Switzerland Cohort of 2019 for the immense contribution towards my learning journey.
- Information from other articles, surveys and available literature.
- Jennifer Croll for the editing and proofreading work.

## References

Birch and Gardiner. (2019). Seven Simple Rules: An Alternative Lens. In *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

Birch, J and Welch, P. (2019). *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

Blair, E. and Blair, J. (2015). *Applied Survey Sampling*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications

Brown, R.B. (2006). *Doing Your Dissertation in Business and Management: The Reality of Research and Writing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Carrol, M. (2006). Key issues in coaching psychology supervision. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 2(1), 4-8.

Coaching and Mentoring South Africa (COMENSA). (2014). *Coach Supervision Comprehensive Policy Document*, October 2014.

Devers, K.J and Frankel, R.M. (2000). Study Design in Qualitative Research-2: Sampling and Data Collection Strategies. *Education for Health*, 12(2), 263-271.

Downing, K. (2019). A new dimension? Using observational data creatively in supervision. In *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

Gladwell, M. (2013). Making Cloth Diapers Mainstream: An industry in Change. From <https://www.thinking-about-cloth-diapers.com/making-cloth-mainstream.html>.

Hawkins, P and Schwenk, G. (2006). *Coaching Supervision, Maximising the Potential of Coaching*. Bath:Bath Consultancy Group.

Hobbs, P. (2019). Working in the shadows: pain and suffering in coaching and supervision. In *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

Hodge, A and Clutterbuck, D. (2019). Guidelines for team coach supervision. In *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

Hudson, M. (2019). Crashproof, Presentproof, Futureproof your Coaching Practice. Presentation by Megan Hudson, 21 February 2019. Event Hosted by the ICF South African Charter Chapter.

McAnally, K., Abrams, L., Asmus, M.J., and Hildenbandt, T. (2019). Global Survey of Coaching Supervision released in April 2019 at the EMCC International Symposium in Dublin.

Moore, A.G. (2013). Crossing the Chasm. Marketing and Selling Disruptive Products to Mainstream Customers. Harper Collins.

Moral, M. and Turner, E. (2014). Supervision of supervision. In Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

SA Coaching News, 2019. Coaching 2020 and what to do to prepare for it: An Interview with Dr Sunny Stout-Rostron. The South African Coaching News, 1(1), 8-14.

St John-Brooks, K. (2019). Supervision for internal coaches. In Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes. Edited by Jo Birch and Peter Welch. Routledge: London.

The British Psychological Society. 2007. Special Group in Coaching Psychology. Guidelines on Supervision for Coaching Psychology. June 2007.