"This is the virtual world and you can only see via this camera" - Experiences of receiving career coaching via Skype: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Project Information

Research on video-mediated in particular in coaching is sparse, with literature on video-mediated communication in general and different aspects of technology-assisted coaching existing. Therefore the qualitative study researches the question "What is the impact of the camera in Skype coaching on coachees’ experience of being coached?", taking a constructivist epistemological stance and employing the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as developed by Jonathan Smith from the late 1990s. It aims to provide a better understanding of the coachee’s lived experience of being coached in a camera mediated encounter.

The research project was completed in September 2017 as part of the MSc Career Management and Coaching programme at Birkbeck University, London

With organisations becoming more and more geographically dispersed, video-mediated (career) coaching is on the rise due to considerations of availability, cost and choice of provider. The research projects gives insights into what differentiates video-coaching from face-to-face coaching and what coaches need to consider when working virtually.

Description of content of contribution

Findings show the existence of a camera in the coaching encounter to have an impact on the self-image of the coachee as well as the perception of the coach and the coaching space. Coachees experience a strong awareness of their own appearance, which influences their comfort level during sessions. The perception of the coach is influenced by the limitation of visual information imposed by the position and angle of the camera. These restrictions can lead to feelings both of discomfort and uncertainty as well as greater disinhibition. The location-independence of Skype coaching is deemed a key advantage and participants report feelings of ease and comfort in surroundings of their own choosing. Coaches' locations are generally reported as having little influence, with a sense of communal space only rarely felt. Overall, coachees tend to narrate their experience of Skype coaching in terms of choice and control, indicating a strong sense of agency, attributing the coach a smaller presence compared to a face-to-face encounter.
Bibliography


Personal Information

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With a background in Change Management, Leadership & Development and Executive Coaching, I worked as a freelance career and executive coach while living in the UK from 2012 to 2017, both with individual clients, in higher education and with corporate clients. With a lot of my work being delivered virtually, I decided to focus my research project for the MSc in Career Management and Coaching on coaching via Skype.