

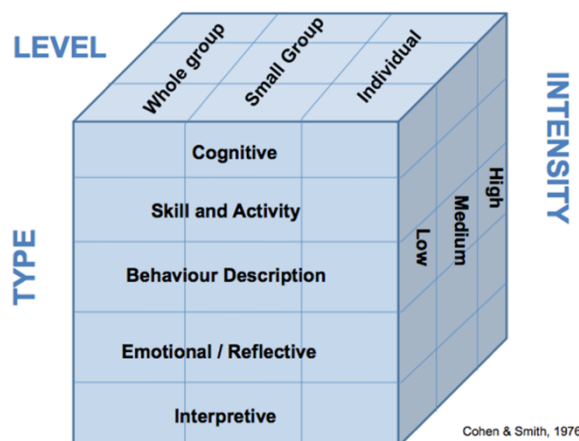
Extra Material

What is the difference between OD and coaching? If any?

OD and HRD practitioners view coaching as a part of their respective fields rather than a distinct skillset. [Research](#) (Hamlin, Ellinger, Beattie, 2009) suggests that all three fields of practice are very similar in intent and process. From their examination of 29 definitions, a composite perspective of OD was derived: *Organisation Development is any systematic process or activity which increases organisational functioning, effectiveness and performance through the development of an organisation's capability to solve problems and bring about beneficial change and renewal in its structures, systems and culture, and which helps and assists people in organisations to improve their day to day organisational lives and well-being, and enhances both individual, group and organisational learning and development*

From my perspective it is the coaching mindset that differentiates the application of OD, HRD and coaching that is distinct. All practitioners may focus on similar themes; however, their intervention style and approach make a difference.

OD practitioners intervene at different levels of a system and in different ways to unlock organisation effectiveness. They flex between intra and inter personal, group and unit, thinking holistically to unlock potential. Coaching practitioners are more focused on individuals and teams for a variety of purposes and while they may work with individuals and groups simultaneously, they frequently own the intervention for the whole system. My experience is different coaches, working with different client for different purposes. The thread connecting them is the coaching mindset and philosophy with which they approach the work. A mindset which believes the individual is resourceful and has the answers within them and a mindset which helps the person not just to problem solve the issue in front of them but to learn about themselves and build their capacity as a learner(s) so they can adapt and address future challenges with greater ease.



Reference - Arthur Martin Cohen, R. Douglas Smith (1976) *The Critical Incident in Growth Groups: Theory and Technique*; University Associates; ISBN 0883901021, 9780883901021

While some may see coaching as an individual process working towards behavioural change, from my perspective, unless the individual or group is addressed as part of the system in which they belong (family, organisation, community) then the change is unlikely to sustain and may cause more harm than good. As the systemic perspective is central to OD, OD practitioners bring this systemic lens to their coaching work.

Another concept that overlaps between coaching and OD is the use of self. In my mind the best coaches are those that have done a lot of work on themselves. They understand that they, as coach, are the primary instrument in the effectiveness of their coaching intervention and that while coaches can all use the same tools, each coach is different. It is therefore similar to therapy training and OD training amongst others. Effective coach development focuses significantly on self-awareness and personal development and not exclusively on skills, tools and techniques.

The competency maps will prompt your own views on what is same and different. From my experience the key differences are:

- OD practitioners need more technical understanding of organisations and systems than coaches and a broader toolkit of interventions to take ownership of the whole system
- OD practitioners need to be skilled at interventions for all levels of the system and have the capacity to hold the whole while coaches can focus on the individual or the group/team. While I value a systemic lens to coaching this is not universal and so OD practitioners may well have a more systemic approach than some coaches. This applies to levels of listening too, for as coaches will be skilled listeners of the said and unsaid, their ability to listen to the system and elicit insight about the context may be less of a focus for some coaches
- Boundaries and ethics are crucial to both roles and there are different perspectives on what is “ethical” practice across a number of dimensions linked to the philosophy of OD vs. coaching. One example is the value of expert knowledge and how best to integrate use this with clients in contrast to unlocking their own wisdom and ideas; or who the client is – whether it is an organisation or individual. Also Coaches typically do not have long-term, open-ended contracts with clients. Their ‘goal’ is to make themselves redundant over time and build capacity in the client – individual or team
- OD practitioners have to be chameleons that adjust to the needs to the system to provoke it and when required bring high levels of challenge which demand unique levels of personal resilience. Coaches can choose to focus their practice on areas which require less direct confrontation. It is important for coaches not to worry about what others think to maintain neutrality and avoid collusion with clients. For OD practitioners, however, it is essential
- The level of personal work, self-awareness training and insight to become a competent practitioner alert to triggers and with the confidence and skill to self-manage and stay grounded is a crucial skill across both roles
- OD practitioners and coaches are likely to be curious and learners at heart. Coaches, however, are encouraged to constantly invest in their professional development. They are required to receive supervision for their work in a similar way to therapists and counsellors. While many OD professionals invest in reflective practices - learning groups and shadow consulting - these practices are less established with fewer formal expectations than in the field of coaching. Given the ‘duty of care’ both of these roles hold the opportunity to pause, reflect and sense check is part of the ethical framework core to both roles
- The learning mindset and the focus on enabling the client to learn as the primary goal is more embedded in the role of coach than OD practitioner where frequently the task can be more the focus than the learning or development outcome. Coaches are attuned to supporting cognitive, emotional and somatic development wherever possible.