

# MENTORING A BEHAVIOURAL COACH IN THINKING DEVELOPMENTALLY: A DIALOGUE

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Otto Laske  
CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
USA

**Abstract:** *In this paper, largely in the form of a dialog, I outline the mental processes required for engaging with CDF, the Constructive Developmental Framework (Laske, 1999 f.). From among the varieties of process consultation potentially benefiting from using CDF, I focus on coaching. I speak from experience with CDF, rather than primarily in terms of its theoretical foundations. Basing myself on an example, I convey a 'feel' of how developmental coaching works in practice once CDF has been learned and internalised by its user. (The learning process itself takes about one year.)*

*The paper is divided into:*

- 1. Introduction*
- 2. Dialogue I: Three aspects of human capability Dialogue II: The nature of developmental scores*
- 3. Dialogue III: The nature of behavioural ("need/press") scores*
- 4. Dialogue IV: Synthesis of CDF data for feedback and coaching practice Conclusion.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Developmental coaching* is often treated as a specialty that can simply be added to traditional, behavioural coaching. As I will show in this article, this view is methodologically not cogent since it misconstrues the *foundational* nature of developmental data. Developmental listening is the foundation not only of all coaching, but equally of other kinds of working with adults. I refer to this broader activity as *Process Consultation*, or consulting to adults' mental process.

The reason for the grounding relevance of developmental listening and thinking in coaching is that not only the coachee (client), but the coach as well, is naturally engaged in a journey across the life span that determines his or her **Frame of Reference** (FoR). FoR, in turn, determines people's behaviour. Behaviour is shaped by how a person makes meaning and sense of the world, and this defines their FoR. For this reason, the equation

*Professional coaching = behavioural & developmental coaching*

should rather read:

*Professional coaching = developmental > behavioural coaching*

that is, "all behavioural coaching, of whatever persuasion, has developmental foundations both in the coach and the client." To this should be added that all

adults have developmental intuitions; they only lack a methodology and notation for using them professionally.

Once this is accepted, it remains to be understood in detail how a professional developmental coach integrates developmental information into his or her feedback to the client and formulation of a coaching plan, as well as how the coaching itself is influenced by developmental knowledge. A demonstration of this will show, among other things that behavioural information serves a different function in developmental coaching than it does when the coaching is exclusively behavioural.

As an example, I choose the case of Sarah, a behavioural coach herself. Sarah has decided she needs developmental coaching, feeling that she has an insufficient understanding of her work. She has therefore asked you, her coach, to have her assessed developmentally, and pursue your work with her based on being mentored (or supervised) by the developmental coach who has done the assessment. Below, we will follow the conversation of mentor and mentee (Sarah's coach) interacting for the sake of assisting Sarah further.

### **Dialogue I**

*Coach: You made a distinction between behavioural data – whether from a 360, Enneagram, or whatever -- and developmental data. You also mentioned that behavioural data is typically much more extensive (in terms of quantity) than the developmental data your assessments produce. Does that mean that the behavioural data is more 'deep'?*

*Mentor: To the contrary. The best way to view behavioural data is as reflecting SYMPTOMS of the client's basic, developmental, profile that need an explanation.*

*Coach: Can you explain that further?*

*Mentor: A simple answer to that is that in developmental data, you are looking at your client's developmental SIZE OF PERSON (maturity), while the behavioural data have more to do with how your client is presently doing, -- not what s(he) could do or will be able to do in the future. Put differently, behavioural data is more about what your client HAS rather than what kind of person s(he) IS, seen in terms of his/her potential.*

*Coach: So I infer you think of 'doing' and 'having' as following from 'being'. Is that correct? Mentor: That's a good way of putting it. The developmental data spells out the client's potential capability, while the behavioural data pertains to the client's currently applied capability. The two are very different aspects of human capability.*

*Coach: Do you imply that the capability the client is presently applying is an outflow of her potential capability?*

*Mentor: Yes, that's correct. What's called performance is ultimately a manifestation of who the client is, that is, her potential capability.*

*Coach: Doesn't that amount to standing the conventional HR assumption about competences and performance on its head?*

*Mentor: Yes indeed! Competences and performance are here seen as what a person HAS, not what a person IS which is what primarily matters. Therefore, let's distinguish between competences, capacities, and capabilities. We can picture their relationship as shown in Fig. 1, below.*

*Coach: What I see is that competences represent the shallowest level, the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, of an individual...*

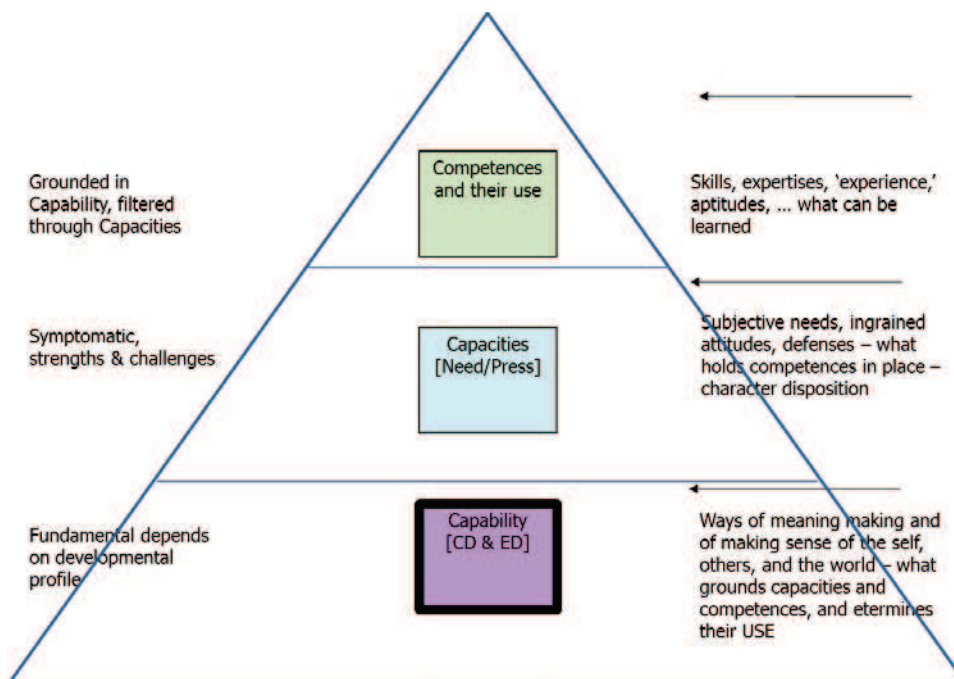
*Mentor: Right. Competences are held in place by a person's capacities (to which in this methodology I refer as 'Need/Press profile'), and these, in turn, are an expression of potential capability.*

*Coach: So then, when as a coach I am working on instilling new competences in a client, or improving existing skills, I am wasting my time?*

*Mentor: That will depend on the developmental profile of the client. A coach can always bring about behavioural changes, but whether these are lasting or largely cosmetic is a function of the client's long-term potential for mental growth.*

*Coach: I assume that all three levels of the personality depicted in the diagram can be precisely assessed.*

*Mentor: That is what evidence based coaching is based on! The constructive-developmental framework (CDF), in particular, consists of three sets of tools able to determine a client's competence-performance dimension, the psychological capacities that hold it in place, and her underlying capability.*



**Fig. 1 Layers of Personality**

*Coach: I see that you make further distinctions on the level of potential capability.*

*Mentor: Yes. With Elliott Jaques I distinguish between applied and potential capability, and further between two kinds of the latter, namely, current and emergent. In CDF, these are defined as follows:*

*(1) Current potential capability (CPC) =  $f_{CD}$*

*(2) Emergent potential capability (EPC) =  $f(CD * ED * NP)$*

*Coach: Kindly explain the shorthand.*

*Mentor: CD stands for cognitive development, while ED stands for social-emotional development. NP stands for "need/press" which is a specific behavioural questionnaire whose interpretation I will demonstrate below. Together, these three dimensions define all you – or the HR department -- ever wanted to know about a client's capability.*

*Coach: So what does the first formula say exactly?*

*Mentor: (1) states that your client's current potential is defined by her cognitive profile, or ability to think systemically. Thinking systemically helps your client answer the question "What can I do, and what are my options?" This means that you and your client have a certain current potential to do work even if you presently do not have the skills and knowledge to do the work. However, you can acquire them. Your cognitive profile will determine how much and how easily you can learn, and acquire new competences.*

*Coach: Okay. The second formula is more complex. Is that because there are several factors contributing to emergent potential capability?*

*Mentor: Exactly. In brief, formula (2) says "your client's long-term potential – which ultimately will determine her performance – is a function not only of her cognitive profile but also her social-emotional level of maturity, taking into account the client's current behavioural strengths and challenges as well."*

*Coach: Does this mean that bizarre, unusual, or dysfunctional behaviour can derail the manifestation of a client's potential?*

*Mentor: Absolutely! A client's behavioural (or NP) profile comprises both positive and negative (dysfunctional) symptoms. We will discuss examples below.*

*Coach: So then, how would one define a client's present performance, or the work capability the client currently applies?*

*Mentor: That's a timely question. It is with this definition that we really enter into developmental coaching, because we now make a clear distinction between applied and potential capability, which is the crux of it all.*

*Coach: So by 'applied' capability you mean the performance the client is presently delivering? Mentor: Yes, with the important addition that this performance is a manifestation of the client's current and emergent potential capability, that is, something that can't be derived from the client's current capability alone (as is done in HR).*

*Coach: So then the habit of determining "high potentials" based on performance and behaviour alone will misfire?*

*Mentor: Yes, and badly so!*

*Coach: If you used a formula, as you did above, what would the definition of current applied capability look like?*

*Mentor: The shorthand for current applied capability, adapted from Jaques (1994, 25), looks like this:*

*(3) Current applied capability (CAP) = f (CD \* V \* K/S \* (-NP))*

Here, 'V' stands for values and motivation, while 'K/S' stands for knowledge and skills. NP refers to positive and negative personality characteristics that promote or hinder performance, as well as ultimately mental growth overall as well.

*Coach: Does this mean that for current performance, social-emotional maturity (ED) is of no importance?*

*Mentor: I am pleased you asked. The answer is no. Current applied capability is always a manifestation of developmental profile, thus of ED as well as CD. However, in and by itself, performance can occur at many different developmental (ED) levels, and therefore cannot be made the basis of defining potential.*

*Coach: You are being radical.*

*Mentor: Yes, that means I am going to the root – radix – of potential here. You can perform your coaching work at ED-level 3 or 4 or 5 (see Laske, 2006), and in each case, you'll be a very different coach. So, performance per se cannot serve as a standard of defining current or emergent potential. (We can call doing so the HR fallacy.) What you ARE as a coach will determine how you use what you HAVE, namely, your competences.*

*Coach: Do you mean that two people who have the same competences but are at different social-emotional and cognitive levels will use their competences differently?*

*Mentor: Yes, starkly so!*

*Coach: It would help me a lot if we could work through a particular example. Since you have assessed my client developmentally, could we now discuss your findings about her, you mentoring me in understanding what they say about her?*

*Mentor: That's an excellent suggestion.*

## **Dialogue II**

*Mentor: Let's first remind ourselves of what your client's situation is and why she came to you.*

**Presenting Problem:** Sarah is a business coach with a thriving practice in which she focuses on higher-level executives of the banking industry. She has a strong background in Organisational Development as well as strong spiritual interests. Sarah asked to be coached in order to become more effective with two particularly 'difficult' clients. One of them had conveyed to her that he felt she was, at times, 'pretty opinionated,' while Sarah perceived herself only as having strong personal convictions. The second client commented about her to peers that because of her idiosyncratic interpretations of what he brought to sessions he often did not feel 'understood' by her. Since Sarah had high opinions of her coaching expertise, and high standards of professional excellence, she was scandalised, even shaken, by her clients' reactions. She wondered whether there was something about herself that she did not entirely understand, some bottlenecks that it would be important for her to find out about.

*Mentor: So this is the overall picture. Your client needs your help because she feels there are places in herself that she doesn't really trust or understand, and she is hoping that with some developmental input she might gain a better understanding of herself.*

*Coach: Right. She is somewhat at a loss about herself right now, and she doesn't know which voices in herself to trust.*

*Mentor: Okay. Below you see her developmental data which, I think, goes a long way toward explaining the developmental pickle she is in.*

*Coach: You are making me very curious.*

*Mentor: Yes, developmental data arouses one's curiosity about people.*

| <b>Social-emotional Score</b>     | <b>Cognitive Score</b>   | <b>Behavioural Findings</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 4 {9:7:4}<br>and/or 4(3) {3;6:11} | Fluidity = 27(%); epistemic position 5<br>Systems Thinking [37, 33, 33; 26 (%)]<br>STI = 26%<br>Discrepancy = 3.5 : 3.0 in favour of critical over constructive thinking | See Table 1b                |

**Table 1a. The client's developmental findings**

*Coach: I need a rough translation of the first column to follow you.*

*Mentor: Okay. Here is how I would put interpret it:*

*Your client is working hard to adopt the Frame of Reference of a self-authoring person. She presently fails, being equally grounded in a FoR of stage 4 and of a stage below (stage 4(3)). In fact, putting her at stage 4 makes no sense because at that stage, she is labouring with a huge risk factor of relapsing into stage 4(3) and even below (stage 4/3 [=9]). In this situation, no modelling of new behaviours or skills training etc. will do much good. However, the client does have a strong potential to proceed to stage 4 [=11] -- if only she is given the necessary time (1-2 years). In the meantime, you can do cognitive coaching with her to boost her thinking which will ultimately propel her toward stage 4. (You can't push her upwards social-emotionally anyway.)*

*Coach: Please remind me of the distinction between stages 4(3) and 4.*

*Mentor: The difference between them is a slight but important one. The notation S-4(3) means that your client is not quite at the self-authoring stage, but close to it, still clinging to a "stage 3" or other-dependent, view of herself, where she defines herself by others' expectations (physical and/or internalised others, to be precise). At this stage just below S-4, the client has a great need 'to talk herself into,' or espouse, self-authoring, which she wouldn't need to do if she were actually at stage 4. I call this the espousal stage. In concrete terms this means that the client's actions and decisions are not predictably stage 4, so she is difficult to figure out for others because of pretence.*

*Coach: Now why is it that the client lives with almost equal strength at the lower S-4(3) and the higher S-4 stage?*

*Mentor: We don't know, but this is exactly her predicament at the moment. She is oscillating between one level and the other, and this makes for a very difficult time to be with oneself since you don't know which voice in yourself to trust. Sarah is presently not so much conflicted as living in a muddle. We are going to see how that shows up in the behavioural data as well.*

*Coach: Let's go over the precise scores for a moment. We have two Risk-Clarity-Potential Indexes (RCPs) that show the relative distribution of developmental risk (to act from a lower level) and potential (to act from a higher social-emotional level).*

*Mentor: Yes. The first expression in the RCP – '4' or 4(3) – indicates the centre of gravity, or comfort zone, in which Sarah is presently rooted social-emotionally. Writing down two RCPs, we state the same findings in alternative forms.*

*Coach: So, the two RCP's express the same quantitative findings?*

1. 4 {9:7:4} and
2. 4(3) {3:6:11}.

*Mentor: Yes, they are based on identical data.*

*Coach: Are these RCP's qualitatively equivalent as well?*

*Mentor: Yes, they are. You can rewrite one into the other. Here is why. In both cases, the total sum of interview passages scored in the RCP equals 20, which means that the two RCP versions are equivalent. **But each version of the RCP shows us a different facet of the client's predicament.** Looking at the first number in curly brackets, it is 9 for stage 4, and 3 for stage 4(3). That means, the client's risk to act from a lower stage is lower at S-4(3) than from S-4, which is natural if you consider that S-4(3) lies below S-4.*

*Coach: So the developmental risk shifts depending on what stage you consider the client to make meaning on?*

*Mentor: You got it.*

*Coach: How then is this reflected in the potential score which I believe is the last number in curly brackets?*

*Mentor: Given that the RCP sum is 20, the potential score also shifts, so that the potential at the lower stage is much higher (=11) than at the higher stage (=4). We are simply shifting the numbers in curly brackets, just in order to look at the client from different social- emotional perspectives.*

*Coach: Okay. Now, doesn't the crux of a developmental profile lie in the middle number in curly brackets, which indicates how solidly a person is presently ensconced in the centre of gravity which precedes the curly brackets?*

*Mentor: That is correct. And here we see that our client is rooted in both comfort zones – 4(3) and 4 – with almost equal weight (= 6 or 7). And that is the main social-emotional issue here because it shows that she is presently oscillating between two different centres of gravity, and these gyrations drive her (and I suppose, you as well) crazy.*

*Coach: Yes, I have noticed that I am internally in the same uncertainty she is in, in that I don't know how much to trust her assertions of "I know myself."*

*Mentor: So this social-emotional position she is in is also behaviourally uncomfortable, not only for her but also for others.*

*Coach: Absolutely, and without your notation I would never have grasped the pickle she is in. Mentor: So we can just say that our client is in a social-emotional muddle, and it is this muddle the coaching should clear up for her, and assessments help a lot in this regard since we are not guessing. We have data.*

*Coach: Right, that's exactly what attracts me to developmental coaching.*

*Mentor: So now let's look at the second aspect of her developmental position which is cognitive.*

*Coach: I see a lot of different data.*



*Mentor: True, cognitive data is more complex. However, its different facets hang closely together. Let's take them one by one.*

1. F - Fluidity = 27(%)
2. Cognitive-developmental [CD] Score [37, 33, 33; 26 (%)]
3. STI (Systems Thinking Index) = 26% (part of b.)
4. D- Discrepancy = 3.5 : 3.0 in favour of critical (over constructive) thinking

*There are four parts to the cognitive score, F, CD, STI, and D. All of them derive from, and explicate, the generic Fluidity Index of 27%. The F-score shows that our client attains 27% of the fluidity of thinking one can optimally attain, regardless of social-emotional level. Importantly, this score refers to fluidity of thinking beyond strictly formal logical thought (which is presupposed here), and it attests to Sarah's ability to think holistically and systemically to a moderate extent.*

*Coach: So there are two different kinds of logical thinking involved here?*

*Mentor: Yes, but only the second one is in focus here. The first is formal logic, which in CDF we don't measure by itself. The second is dialectical logic which, starting in early adulthood, grows out of purely logical thinking (Laske, 2007). Another term for dialectical logic is "systemic thinking," and that is, as you know, a very important ingredient of doing excellent work, as well as of leadership.*

*Coach: Is the client's F-score aligned with her social-emotional level?*

*Mentor: That's a great question! Let's look at the table below.*

| <b>Fluidity Score (CD)*</b> | <b>Epistemic Position &amp; [Phase of Dialectical Thinking]</b> | <b>Social-Emotional Score [ED; including intermediate stages]</b> | <b>Level of work Complexity</b> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| >50                         | 7[4]  | 5   | VIII                            |
|                             |   | 5/4-5(4)  | VII                             |
| >30                         | 6[3]  | 4(5)-4/5  | VI                              |
|                             |   | 4   | V                               |
| >10<30                      | 5[2]  | 4/3-4(3)  | IV                              |
|                             |   | 3(4)-3/4  | III                             |
| <10                         | 4[1]  | 3   | II                              |
|                             |   | 2/3-3(2)  | I                               |

\* The client's F score is 27%.

**Table 2. Alignment of cognitive fluidity with epistemic position, social-emotional score, and level of work complexity**

*Coach: That's a fascinating table.*

*Mentor: It's a working hypothesis for developmental research, and is a good yard stick in consultation as well.*

*Coach: I see that the table doesn't claim simple one-to-one alignment of CD and ED, thus leaving room for discrepancies between them?*

*Mentor: That's correct. We are matching ranges, not levels. In the table, we are also matching CD and ED to levels of work complexity – organisational or not - - on which the respective individual can function. As the table spells out, the client holds epistemic position 5 which, developmentally, equates to the second phase of dialectical thinking (5[2]).*

*Coach: Wow! That's quite a mouthful!*

*Mentor: Yes, sorry, it really is. As I said, the table states a working hypothesis, and such a hypothesis is always in need of verification **it's really an entire research program that you see in the table.***

*Coach: Can you say a little more about the alignments noted in the table?*

*Mentor: Sure. When we look at clients from a cognitive perspective, there are several aspects we need to take into account. First, as adults they have achieved various degrees of systems thinking, and how they think is either in sync with, or out of sync with, their social- emotional level. The way they think also relates to the particular notion of truth and knowledge they hold, which is what I call epistemic position.*

*Coach: So that means something like "perspective on the nature of truth?"*

*Mentor: Exactly. My hypothesis is that this position is aligned with the phase of post-formal (dialectical) thinking that clients are presently in. In other words, "tell me how you conceive of truth, and I'll tell you how dialectical your thinking is." So, there are two things the table tries to convey, first, the different aspects of the cognitive score [focusing on Fluidity], and second, the linkage between cognitive and social-emotional scores relative to level of work complexity a client can presently function on.*

*Coach: Wow! I hear the HR manager jubilating!*

*Mentor: I wish that were so! Most HR managers run when they see this. Coach: It's too much to take on.*

*Mentor: Yes, it requires a revolution of thinking about human capital, and HR managers are typically not the best educated folks.*

*Coach: I think I am now ready to go more deeply into Sarah's cognitive score. The table seems to show that a client with an F-score of 27(%) can be assumed to live in the social- emotional range of stages 4/3 to 4(3).*

*Mentor: Correct. That means that there is no blatant gap between our client's CD and ED scores, at least not in terms of overall fluidity of thinking.*

*Coach: Okay.*

*Mentor: We should add now that the F-score positions your client at epistemic position 5 or, equivalently, phase of dialectical thinking 2, and suggests she is social-emotionally at a centre of gravity S-4(3) at most, which in fact she is. This needs some further explanation.*

| <b>Fluidity Score (CD)*</b> | <b>Epistemic Position &amp; [Phase of Dialectical Thinking]</b> | <b>Social-Emotional Score [ED; including intermediate stages]</b> | <b>Level of work Complexity</b> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| >30                         | 6[3]  | 4(5)-4/5  | VI                              |
|                             |   | 4   | V                               |
| >10<30                      | 5[2]  | 4/3-4(3)  | IV                              |
|                             |   | 3(4)-3/4  | III                             |

**Table 2. Excerpt**

*Coach: Indeed. Could you talk more about epistemic position in its relationship with phase of dialectical thinking?*

*Mentor: According to King & Kitchener, individuals at epistemic position 5 consider knowledge as context-dependent, without the ability to relate abstractions into a system for comparisons across different contexts (1994, 62-65). For them, "what is known is always limited by the perspective of the knower", that is, relative to a specific context. And although they cannot offer an integrated point of view on issues (but rather end up justifying their own beliefs and shifting perspective), they can offer broader, more interconnected views of issues they deal with, but without committing themselves, so to speak.*

*Coach: Wow! That sounds very much like what I am hearing from my client most of the time! But how does this link to being in phase 2 of dialectical thinking?*

*Mentor: When we speak of phases of dialectical thinking, we are focusing on two abilities. First, the ability to use a variety of thought forms by which to experience and construct reality, not only from a static systems perspective, but by thinking critically, in terms of process and relationships between things. Second, we are focusing on the degree to which people can coordinate different classes of thought forms – foci of attention – for the sake of giving a balanced picture of things as forms in unceasing transformation. And while our client has a reasonable number of thought forms at her disposal, she cannot yet coordinate them sufficiently to see reality as transformational.*

*Coach: Concretely speaking, does that mean that my client's knowledge about herself and her own clients is strongly context-bound, and that this context comes off as somewhat static? Mentor: That's approximately correct, except that, as shown above, your client is able to balance different perspectives on reality, with a lesser ability to draw them together. As we can infer from:*

*CD - Systems Thinking [P= 37, C=33, R=33; T=26 (%)],*

*Above, your client can conceive of reality equally in terms of process (P), context (C), and relationship (R), with a slightly lesser ability to synthesise these different foci of attention, enough to think about reality as a transformational system.*

*Coach: So, when she speaks about her relationship to her clients in coaching sessions, she is able to go through the motions by discussing details of each relationship and see it as changing over time and as anchored in a particular context?*

*Mentor: That would be my prediction. But she would find it difficult to compare relationships across contexts (e.g., work situations or client situations), thereby displaying systemic mapping skills. She therefore would find it hard to detach from the different relationships and understand their common ground within herself. Consequently, she prefers to shift focus (from one client to another), rather than confront her own limitations as they apply in all cases.*

*Coach: But aren't the four parts of her cognitive score pretty evenly distributed?*

*Mentor: Yes, indeed, except that her Systems Thinking Index (STI) is lower than the rest. But I agree with you that it shouldn't be too hard to bring her up a notch in her systemic thinking ability.*

*Coach: So what do you think would be needed to help her think more systemically, considered from a strictly cognitive perspective?*

*Mentor: I would say let's not isolate the cognitive aspect of her profile, but rather give feedback and design a coaching plan in systemic fashion, such that we include both her social-emotional and behavioural scores in answering that question.*

*Coach: Okay. Let's wait with that then.*

*Mentor: We can now wrap up the cognitive score by just adding that, according to the findings, she is an "even-handed" thinker in that her ability to think critically – in terms of process and relationship – and to think constructively – in terms of context and transformational system – are remarkably even, although there is a slight tendency to be more critical than constructive:*

d. D- Discrepancy = 3.5 : 3.0

*Coach: Is that a good thing in the context of coaching?*

*Mentor: Absolutely! A client who shows no, or only a small, discrepancy between critical (P, R) and constructive thinking (C, T) has a much better chance to move toward a fully developed systemic thinking ability.*

### Dialogue III

*Coach: I think I am beginning to see the light regarding the two developmental scores, ED and CD. Admittedly, they seem daunting at first.*

*Mentor: Congratulations! Above, we referred to both of these scores as defining an individual's potential capability. We said that in developmental coaching, we are looking at behavioural data that describes performance – applied capability – in terms of symptoms and indicators of how much of an individual's potential capability is manifest. So, let's now look more closely at our client's behavioural data per se.*

*Coach: Okay.*

*Mentor: As shown in Fig. 1, above, that entails we are moving into a discussion of Capacity (as distinct from Capability). As I proposed, let's simplify the discussion by looking only at that subset of Need/Press data which points to Sarah's barriers to success (rather than the strengths as well which, of course, might partly compensate for the barriers). Is that okay with you?*

*Coach: That's fine. I have enough to cope with right now. My thought is that, clearly, the social-emotional and cognitive profile we have discussed will put specific constraints on any behavioural intervention I might come up with for my client.*

*Mentor: That's a good way of putting it. In order to see how exactly this pans out, let's have a closer look at the table below. The table lists the behavioural data in terms of a Likert scale from 0 to 9, both of which indicate extreme (dysfunctional) behaviours, with meanings depending on the variable concerned:*

**Table 1b. The client's behavioural barriers to success (Capacity Profile)**

| NP /variables   | Meaning of Behavioural Score (Barriers to Success only)              | Scores    |
|---|--|-----------|
| <b>Self-conduct [SC]</b>                                      |  |           |
| Flexibility   | Ruthless change agent  | 9[-2,1]   |
| Need for power  | Blurring of leadership skills and ego-needs                          | 7[-6,0]   |
| <b>Task Focus (Approach to Tasks)[TF]</b>                     |  |           |
| Resourcefulness/counter-action                                | Need to win every battle; avoids negative experiences, impulsivity   | 9 [-2,0]  |
| Endurance   | Weak engagement with assigned tasks                                  | 3 [0, 1]  |
| Quality of Planning   | Poor use of cognitive skills, priorities emerging from own interests | 4 [-2, 0] |
| Need to self-protect  | Strong need to justify, be right                                     | 7 [0, 1]  |
| <b>Emotional Intelligence (Interpersonal Perspective)[IP]</b> |  |           |
| Empathy   | Limited ability to emphasise   | 5 [+3, 1] |
| Helpfulness   | Exaggerated need to 'help'   | 8 [+1, 0] |

| Summary of Scores       |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Energy Sink = 30        | Energy loss surrounding work: moderate                      |
| Frustration = 15        | Level of frustration: low                                   |
| Overall Efficiency = 38 | Approaching low overall efficiency                          |
| Attunement = 29         | Reasonably good understanding of organisational functioning |
| Distortion = 25         | Moderate distortion of corporate climate based on need      |

\* 9[-2, 1], for example, means that 'flexibility' of behaviour is extreme, and that the client's need to act as a 'ruthless change agent' is more intense than what she aspires to in the organisational

Environment (energy sink = 2), and also that her aspiration is closely matched by how she experiences the environment she is in [1], that is, not quite as ruthless as her needs dictate.

*Coach: What initially strikes me is the amount of data here.*

*Mentor: That does not astonish me. But don't forget, what we see in this table are just symptoms, multifarious manifestations of the person's one and only Frame of Reference as determined by her potential capability.*

*Coach: Is that because there are so many – here 18 – variables into which the behaviour has been broken down conceptually?*

*Mentor: Yes, but also because developmental and behavioural data are of different degrees of generality.*

*Coach: How do you mean that?*

*Mentor: While ED scores are very general (you might say, ideal-typical) and the CD scores slightly more individuated, there is not one Need/Press profile exactly like any other. A client's behavioural profile is unique to the client, and none of the famous typologies will suffice here; they are all too crude.*

*Coach: Yes, thinking in types is not very illuminating, especially since typologies are 'horizontal,' as Wilber says, and thus disregard levels. Consequently, a type means different things at different 'vertical,' or developmental, levels.*

*Mentor: Right. So here, we are merging different kinds of data having different generality. And it is this merger in CDF that accounts for the power of this methodology. Not only do we pursue different perspectives; we are also pulling them together into a holistic picture. Coach: That shows the systemic intent.*

*Mentor: Yes, indeed.*

*Coach: Now, where in the table should we begin in discussing the client's Capacity?*

*Mentor: You see in the table that there are three clusters of data (SC, TF, IP) which are followed by a summary of individual indexes. Except for the Energy Sink, the indexes are primarily focused on the "Press[ure]" side of the questionnaire, not its basic "Need" side which we are going to focus on here.*

*Coach: What would you say is the idea behind this distinction between Need and Press? Mentor: The idea is that people's capacity for work is determined by their unconscious needs, represented in the questionnaire by 18 (6x3) variables, and that in the fulfilment of these needs they encounter pressures, either imposed by themselves (ideal Press), or by the environment (actual Press). When Need and (ideal) Press differ [numerically], energy that would ordinarily flow into work gets lost, is dissipated internally. There might also be a difference between what somebody aspires to (ideal Press) and what s (he) experiences in the environment (actual Press), and that would lead to frustration. And both energy sink and frustration – both ideally zero -- diminish the efficiency of the work somebody is doing. Coach: You said earlier that while this plays a role in applied capability it does matter for potential capability only to the extent that the (behavioural) indexes point to dysfunctional behaviour as you put it:*

(2) Emergent potential capability (EPC) = f (CD \* ED \* NP).

(3) Current applied capability (CAP) = f (CD \* V \* K/S \* (-NP)).

*Is that what we are talking about here?*

*Mentor: Yes. The notion here is that somebody's applied capability, as spelled out in the Need/Press profile, cannot account for an individual's potential capability, and that it is rather the latter (CD \* ED) which determines how a behavioural disposition actually plays out and is experienced by an individual in life and at work. As you saw, while dysfunctional traits of the Capacity Profile are central in determining somebody's applied capability (-NP), when it comes to potential capability, we are focusing on the question: how do both client strengths and challenges work together in helping the individual realise his/her developmental potential?*

*Coach: Awesome! This distinction between applied and potential capability really takes care of a lot of fuss about "personality," both in the literature and in practice.*

*Mentor: I think so, too, but I am, of course, biased, so I am glad you are saying so.*

*Coach: Having now a reasonable first notion of the relationship between Need and Press in CDF, I'd like to go into more detail about the actual Capacity Profile as it emerges from the questionnaire.*

*Mentor: Fair enough. Do you have some guiding questions?*

*Coach: Let's start with the distinction between the three clusters, referred to as SC, TF, and IP.*

*Mentor: Okay. Here are the dimensions of the Need/Press Profile:*

| <b>Behavioural Aspects</b>     | <b>Domain I Subjective Need</b>                        | <b>Domain II Organisational Aspirations</b>                           | <b>Domain III Actual Experience of the Organisation</b>                   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Self-Conduct (SC)              | The subjective needs that underlie yourself conduct    | Your vision of how the organisation should conduct itself             | Your actual experience of how the organisation conducts itself            |
| Task Focus (TF)                | Your way of approaching tasks                          | The way you think the organisation should approach its tasks          | Your actual experience of how the organisation approaches its tasks       |
| Interpersonal Perspective (IP) | Your way of relating to others within the organisation | What you see as the organisation's optimal human resource perspective | How you actually experience the organisation's way of dealing with people |
| Derived Indexes                |  | Energy sink   | Frustration index   |

**Table 3. Dimensions of the Need/Press Capacity Profile**

*Coach: Very helpful. So we are restricting ourselves here to Domain I, and within it further to what the challenges are for my client.*

*Mentor: Exactly.*

*Coach: What I see in Table 1b is that the client's barriers to success mostly concern her approach to tasks (4 entries), while self-conduct and interpersonal perspective are flagged just twice (2 entries).*

*Mentor: Yes. That focuses our attention on how our client approaches her tasks, or her Task Focus. However, we also need to look at how her challenges in regard to self-conduct and interpersonal perspective may exacerbate the findings regarding Task Focus. After all, the Need/Press variables together form a system.*

*Coach: Understood.*

*Mentor: So here are some obvious coaching issues.*



| <b>Task Focus (Approach to Tasks) [TF]</b> |  |           |
|--|--|-----------|
| Resourcefulness/counter-action             | Need to win every battle; avoids negative experiences, impulsivity   | 9 [-2, 0] |
| Endurance                                  | Weak engagement with assigned tasks                                  | 3 [0, 1]  |
| Quality of Planning                        | Poor use of cognitive skills, priorities emerging from own interests | 4 [-2, 0] |
| Need to self –protect                      | Strong need to justify, be right                                     | 7 [0, 1]  |

**Table 1b. Excerpt.**

*Coach: Can we leave out the numbers in the third column for now?*

*Mentor: No problem. They are referring to the underlying Likert scale and show how these variables contribute to the overall Energy Sink and Frustration Index. We can put them in brackets for now.*

*Coach: So the finding regarding Task Focus is that my client (1) has an extreme need to win and succeed, and therefore avoids engagement with negative experiences altogether. This is exacerbated by the fact (2) that she has a strong need to rationalise and justify herself. Is that correct?*

*Mentor: That's right on.*

*Coach: So how does this fit together with the other two barriers to success, of endurance and quality of planning?*

*Mentor: If you are impulsive in the sense of "counter-acting" whatever obstructs your goals, you are likely to make poor use of your cognitive abilities. That's what "being impulsive" means, don't you think?*

*Coach: Agreed. But quality of planning further entails here that the client's priorities emerge not so much from her tasks, and thus the environment in which she works, but mostly from her own interests.*

*Mentor: Yes, and that's why her engagement with tasks is weak wherever they don't support her needs and interests.*

*Coach: Would you describe that as being fairly self-centred in one's work?*

*Mentor: Yes, but we can be more precise than that, although it is true that all barriers to success are symptoms of ego-centricity which is what ties them to the developmental scores. Coach: Okay, so degrees of ego-centricity is the overriding theme here?*

*Mentor: Yes, that is always the main theme we are listening for in a client's speech performance!*

*Coach: So now we've had a look at Task Focus. What about the other two variable clusters? Mentor: For now, let's continue to look at the behavioural variables themselves, without yet tying them to the developmental scores.*

| <b>NP /variables</b>   | <b>Meaning of Behavioural Score (Barriers to Success only)</b> | <b>Scores</b> |
|--|--|---------------|
| <b>Self-conduct [SC]</b>                                       |  |               |
| Flexibility  | Ruthless change agent  | 9[-2,1]       |
| Need for power   | Blurring of leadership skills and ego-needs                    | 7[-6,0]       |
| <b>Emotional Intelligence (Interpersonal Perspective) [IP]</b> |  |               |
| Empathy  | Limited ability to empathise                                   | 5 [+3,1]      |
| Helpfulness  | Exaggerated need to 'help'                                     | 8 [+1,0]      |

**Table 1b. Excerpt**

*Coach: There are some oddities in the findings above. I can see the first two, under Self Conduct, go together, but the simultaneity of the two emotional intelligence challenges – empathy and helpfulness -- leaves me puzzled.*

*Mentor: I never promised you that human needs are consistent. They are often in conflict with each other and, on the surface, make no sense. That's exactly why we need to dig deeper, into the 'boiler room' (Id-level) of the client's behavioural ship.*

*Coach: So why would my client have this exaggerated need to 'help' and simultaneously be limited in her ability to empathise with others?*

*Mentor: Strictly behaviourally, one might surmise that an exaggerated need to help is really a cry for help on the part of the helper, as least Freud would so conjecture. And where the need to be helpful is so strong, it is also a good mask for covering up one's lack of empathy for others, or even oneself.*

*Coach: Wow! Are we turning to psychoanalysis here?*

*Mentor: Not at all. We have plenty of good developmental data to explain these behavioural paradoxes. Looking back at Task Focus, yearning to be helpful constitutes an excellent way to be right and win every battle, and in this way negative experiences can be avoided, especially if one is as developmentally confused as is our client.*

*Coach: So this links us back to the client's capability profile.*

*Mentor: Yes, indeed. If you simultaneously act from two neighbouring centres of gravity – stage 4 and 4(3) – how can you possibly have any clear notion of who you really are? Given the frustration you are settled with, how can you have compassion for yourself, not to speak of others?*

*Coach: So, developmentally, this behavioural tangle doesn't surprise you?*

*Mentor: Not a bit. I would rather have predicted it.*

*Coach: So here, having recourse to developmental data is a powerfully predictive tool? Mentor: Yes, and the more you can predict, the more effective you can be with a client. Coach: How so?*

*Mentor: Well, if I know that my client's social-emotional range lies between 4/3 and 4(5), with a centre of gravity equally strong at 4(3) and 4, in my mind there emerges a pretty clear notion of what I am dealing with. And I can work from this notion of the client, always open to the possibility that my predictions may not hold. I have to test them.*

*Coach: (Somewhat puzzled) Aha.*

*Mentor: If in addition I consider that, cognitively, I have before me a rather "even-handed" thinker who has a fairly good systemic grasp of things, although without being able to coordinate abstractions across different contexts, I have at least a strong hope that I can, by way of cognitive coaching, bring some transparency into the social-emotional muddle the client is presently in.*

*Coach: I have a faint notion of what you mean, but faint it is.*

*Mentor: Your understanding of what we are dealing with in your client has already substantially grown, and will doubtlessly grow further.*

*Coach: Thank you for the encouragement. So, have we exhausted what there is to be said about the client's capacity profile?*

*Mentor: We might want to look at the NP summary scores, and then work out a short diagnosis we can use in giving feedback to the client.*

*Coach: That sounds good.*

| <b>Summary of NP Scores</b> |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Energy Sink = 30            | Energy loss surrounding work: moderate                      |
| Frustration = 15            | Level of frustration: low                                   |
| Overall Efficiency = 38     | Approaching low overall efficiency                          |
| Attunement = 29             | Reasonably good understanding of organisational functioning |
| Distortion = 25             | Moderate distortion of corporate climate based on need      |

**Table 1b. Excerpt**

*Mentor: Although we have skipped discussing the Press side of the questionnaire (which accounts for all scores outside of Energy Sink), it's still a good idea to look at the summary scores. These indexes lie in a range from 0 to about 60, although I have encountered a single case with a Frustration Index of 65, which indicates strong physical pain. So I think of a behavioural index < 20 as low, <40 as moderate, and > 40 as high. Essentially, the lower an index, the better.*

*Coach: So let's briefly go through these indexes one by one.*

*Mentor: Here is the gist.*

- The client loses a fair amount of energy through internal conflicts between need and internal press [aspirations], and this energy does not flow into her work, but dissipates, diminishing her overall work efficiency.
- The client's frustration –discrepancy between her professional aspirations and her experiences of the corporate environment -- is lower than her energy sink, which could be a main reason why she is unaware of how much energy she is actually losing.
- The client's overall efficiency approaches a low reading.
- On the Press side, there is a fair amount of discrepancy between the clients aspirations (ideal press) and the *managerial norms* of what a manager typically aspires to; however, her lack of attunement is not excessive (=29). She can thus be credited with a fairly good understanding of organisational functioning.
- On the Press side, we also find that the client has a moderate tendency to distort her experience of corporate culture (=25) due to her behavioural needs.

*Coach: Okay. This is better data than any 360 would give me, especially since the latter only reflects how others -- who have their own cross to bear -- look at my client from their own vantage point.*

*Mentor: Yeah. 360's have limited usefulness. They are for moving up the façade of a house (i.e., the client) without ever looking inside the house, -- what Heidegger called "Fassenkletterei."*

*Coach: 360's are an easy tool to use, and correspondingly shallow. Their real usefulness lies in imprinting it on people's mind that having data is better than having no data, -- however poor the data in question may be.*

*Mentor: Yes, this way one can remain under the illusion that one is working in an "evidence based" way without getting one's hands too dirty.*

## **Dialogue IV**

*Coach: A non-evidence based cynic would now ask: "So what?" you have all this beautiful data, but what do you do with it?*

*Mentor: He is asking a good question. Without tying this data together in a simultaneously systemic and pragmatic way we have invested time and effort for nothing!*

*Coach: And I imagine this really has to be learned, pulling the data together?*

*Mentor: Very true. I would say being able to do so is the real proof of the developmental pudding. And it's not so easy to do initially, since it requires precisely what we measure in clients: systemic thinking! In CDF, we are dealing with three systems of variables, and we have to learn to coordinate them in a sensible and convincing way, not only for the sake of feedback, but for working with the data in coaching proper. In other words: what do we tell the client?*

*Coach: So where do we begin this synthesis task?*

*Mentor: In IDM Program One, I call this stage of learning "Prep-D," preparation for writing a case study, which we do in module D. In Prep-D, we prepare the study by using "canned data," like the data I have given you here. In D, you would have to elicit the developmental data yourself through interviews, and that would be another ball game.*

*Coach: So, again, where do we start now?*

*Mentor: Let's first remind ourselves of the Capability data, and then move into an interpretation of the behavioural findings. I will tell you how I size them up, and we'll go from there.*

*Coach: That sounds good.*

| Social-emotional Score (ED)  | Cognitive Score (CD)  | Behavioural Findings (NP)*   |
|--|---|--|
| 4 {9:7:4}<br>=<br>4(3) {3:6:11}  | Fluidity = 27(%); epistemic position 5 [phase 2 of dialectical thinking] Systems Thinking [37, 33, 33; 26 (%)]; STI = 26%<br>Discrepancy = 7:6 in favour of critical over constructive thinking | SC: Ruthless change agent; blurring leadership skills with ego-needs.<br>TF : need to win every battle; avoids negative experiences; impulsivity, weak engagement with assigned tasks; poor use of cognitive skills; priorities emerging from own interests; strong need to justify and be right.<br>IP: Limited ability to empathise; exaggerated need to 'help'. |
| Equally ensconced in two neighbouring centres of gravity, with concomitant confusion as to "who am I?" | Respectable fluidity score; good balancing of four foci of attention with only moderate ability of systemic thinking; and lack of coordination of dialectical thought forms.                    | Approaching low overall efficiency; energy sink twice as high as frustration index. Fairly good understanding of org. functioning.   |

\* SC = Self Conduct; TF: Task Focus; IP = Interpersonal Perspective (= emotional intelligence).

**Table 1. Overview of findings about Sarah.**

*Mentor: Here is what happens in my mind when I see a comprehensive client profile like this one. In harmony with the different degrees of generality of the three sets of scores, I use the social-emotional score to situate the client in a range of potential capability, here 4/3 to 4(5). In fact, I am trying "to live" this profile, embodying it myself. "How would I feel if I were this client?"*

*Coach: So you try to understand the profile in your gut?*

*Mentor: Yes, I am trying to impersonate it. I develop compassion this way, in this case seeing that two centres of gravity clash, unbeknownst to the client. How befuddling that must be! Then, secondly, I look at the potential indicated by the RCP, <4> at stage 4, and <11> at the stage below that. That shows me that there is a mighty push in the client to get to stage 4 which I have to develop respect for. I know that, right now, her risk to slip from stage 4 (not only one step but two steps down) is huge (=9), and that therefore it's best to treat her as residing at stage 4(3), just below stage 4. So, I can calmly receive her espousals of self-authoring without accusing her of having pretensions because I know she needs to talk the way she does.*

*Coach: Wow! I begin to see that these integers really "do a number on you," no pun intended. Mentor: I think that's right. Numbers tells their own story, especially in this case where they are shorthand for highly compact developmental data. These integers are symbols standing in for the model of the client that I am developing in my mind.*

*Coach: How about the cognitive score?*

*Mentor: Well, clearly, at one and the same social-emotional score individuals can have very, very different cognitive profiles, which is the main reason for not equating these two lines of development. In this case, I am impressed by the relative level of the 4 CD percentage scores, and then also by the good balance between them. I know, of course, that the percentages are not stellar, but at least they are not in the very low range, so I have some assurance that cognitive coaching, or working with thought forms, will be helpful to the client.*

*Coach: Can you briefly say what you mean by working with thought forms?*

*Mentor: Sorry, that must be cryptic for you, since I haven't explained thought forms in any depth. Essentially, thought forms are not concepts but can be expressed through many different concepts. They define foci of attention in attending to what is real. For example, "limits of separation" is one such thought form. I credit a client with using that form when she indicates in the cognitive interview that two (or more) things she has so far mentioned really cannot be separated from each other, but are rather distinct but inseparable. This is a relationship thought form (TF), and I would score that TF with a weight of 1, 2, or 3 depending on the degree of elaboration the client has brought to a basic concept she is using. I speak of this as illumination of the base concept. That's probably more than you wanted to know.*

*Coach: That's alright. I am grasping for air, but I know that is how I learn.*

*Mentor: Yes, that's how I learned dialectical thinking myself when I was younger. I have been grasping for air a fair amount over the course of my life time.*

*Coach: So now I have a picture of how you begin to interpret behavioural data based on developmental findings. You situate the client in her developmental range, and you ask yourself: what can I cognitively accomplish with this client? And since all coaching is essentially cognitive coaching anyway, that's an important question.*

*Mentor: You are on your way to becoming a brilliant student of this stuff! So now that I have a developmental caricature of the client in my mind, however imperfect it is, I can begin to inspect the behavioural data more closely. For one thing, singling out the challenges (or barriers to success) has given me a plate full of potential coaching issues. In most cases, I am going to wait for the client to come forward presenting them to me, although my feedback will, of course, have initiated a mental process in my client that leads to self-reflection.*

*Coach: Do you typically give feedback on every behavioural finding collected?*

*Mentor: Great question! The answer is no. I can calmly sit back and wait for the client to come up with most of my findings. (Some of the findings my client will disagree with, which only means the client needs more time to find out about them herself.) I only make a cautious foray into the world of the client's challenges, at this point knowing her unconscious needs better than she does, so I have to be humble.*

*Coach: Yes, a coaching psychologist without humility is a kind of monster. In the present case, what exactly do you do?*

*Mentor: I am basing my feedback on my intuition of what the client can be expected to understand readily, given her developmental scores. I may be taking some risks here, but so far, this strategy has worked quite well in most cases.*

*Coach: So, again, how would that pan out in this particular case?*

*Mentor: Okay. Let's go back to the initial descriptions of the client's reasons for seeking mentoring because that gives us the key to what outcome she is hoping for in the coaching.*

*Profile and Presenting Problem: Sarah is a business coach with a thriving practice in which she focuses on higher-level executives of the banking industry. She has a strong background in Organisational Development as well as strong spiritual interests. Sarah asked to be coached in order to become more effective with two particularly 'difficult' clients. One of them had conveyed to her that he felt she was, at times, 'pretty opinionated,' while Sarah perceived herself only as having strong personal convictions. The second client commented about her to peers that because of her idiosyncratic interpretations of what he brought to sessions he often did not feel 'understood' by her. Since Sarah had high opinions of her coaching expertise, and high standards of professional excellence, she was scandalised and shaken by her clients' reactions. She wondered whether there was something about herself that she did not entirely understand, some bottlenecks that it would be important for her to find out about.*

*Coach: The simple fact is that my client presently feels overwhelmed. She thinks she doesn't understand herself anymore and needs to receive "deeper" coaching. So I thought to seek you out as a developmental coach.*

*Mentor: Well, developmental coaching is "deeper" in the sense that it goes to the root of behavioural issues (capacity), by pointing to the client's capability (Frame of Reference). Coach: Yes, that is the central message I am taking home from this conversation!*

*Mentor: Now we need to talk about two issues, first, feedback to your client, and second, designing a coaching plan for and with her.*

*Coach: Yes indeed.*



*Mentor: Let's just remind ourselves that we now have more explicit information about the client than she herself, and there is a dangerous temptation to make that evident. We absolutely don't want to do that. Therefore, I counsel you not to give your client exhaustive feedback, and certainly not in terms of the numeric notations I have explained to you. What matters is that she herself comes forward with the issues we have gained insight into. And it is your mandate to make that possible for her.*

*Coach: Of course she cannot be expected to know her unconscious needs in the way we do, from the outside. She can only intuit them, and that is the hook we need in order to work with her.*

*Mentor: Right. So looking at the total findings about her, listed in Table 1a, above, what do you think would be wise to give her feedback on?*

*Coach: Well, as you know, as a behavioural coach I haven't been able to use anything but my own little personality and my so-called expertise to give feedback to her, which now seems to me a little bit like "the blind leading the blind." But as I am beginning to understand the developmental foundations of coaching (both regarding myself and my clients), I can surely do better. So, in a first attempt to use my new knowledge, what I'd like to give her feedback on are two things:*

- That she is presently in a developmental pickle, oscillating between centres of gravity 4(3) and 4, and that that is okay.
- That she has good enough cognitive capacity for realising her potential to move to a self-authoring position (STI=26%), which from the vantage point of S-4(3) is much higher than her developmental risk (=11).

*Mentor: I wonder, then, how you would describe this pickle to her.*

*Coach: I think I would reflect with her on her take on her coaching clients' reactions to her from a developmental point of view. I would want to assist her in understanding why she is so upset about some of her major clients, or perhaps better said, is upset about herself in relationship to what these clients say either to her or about her.*

*Mentor: What you want to convey, I think, is that there is nothing wrong with her, and that anybody in the developmental position she is in would experience life as similarly confusing. That that is simply built into the position she is presently in, for which she has to take responsibility.*

*Coach: Yes, she does. How about her behavioural characteristics in this context?*

**Behavioural Findings (NP)\***

SC: Ruthless change agent; blurring leadership skills with ego-needs.

TF: need to win every battle; avoids negative experiences; impulsivity; weak engagement with assigned tasks; poor use of cognitive skills; priorities emerging from own interests; strong need to justify and be right.

IP: Limited ability to empathise; exaggerated need to 'help'.

**Table 1c. The client's behavioural bottlenecks.**

*Mentor: I would look at these as a manifestation of her underlying developmental profile, that is, the way her ED and CD scores – making up her FoR -- presently play out in her life and work.*

*Coach: Do you mean to say that her capacity profile would substantially change if she were moving on to a different capability profile?*

*Mentor: Not so much that her "character" would change – since it is what it is -- but that she would be better able to live with it (given that we are not accepting the notion of a total make-over in order to keep Freud and Piaget from rotating in their respective graves).*

*Coach: So, although she might always be tempted, in her self-conduct, to blur leadership skills with ego needs, and in her task focus would always have the propensity to want to win every battle, she would ultimately be able to modulate these unconscious needs more wisely, would be better able to reflect on them, and have a more systemic notion of how she can position her principles and values, without being seen as being out of touch with her clients?*

*Mentor: Something like that. In moving on developmentally, say, to stage 4(5), she would become able to have more compassion with her clients because she will have developed more compassion for herself, and thus could let go of the exaggerated need to be of help to her clients, realising they can ultimately only help themselves.*

*Coach: So she would stop taking responsibility for them?*

*Mentor: She should have done that when she moved to S-4.*

*Coach: Since I can't simply move her up the social-emotional ladder, and can't change her character or capacity either, I can only work with her cognitively, by exercising a greater number of dialectical thought forms with her, thereby enlarging her conceptual field? Mentor: Precisely. You can trigger an evolution in her which, based on her developmental potential, will lead her to leave behind the espousal stage she is presently in (S-4(3)) and firmly adopt a self-authoring position (S-4).*

*Coach: This sounds pretty abstract.*

*Mentor: It does -- until you are able to translate the developmental issues she is struggling with into the very concrete behavioural issues that come up for her, and help her understand why she is experiencing her professional environment the way she is right now.*

*Coach: So that is the real task here: my being able to "translate" the developmental findings into the language of the concrete issues she is having?*

*Mentor: That's what I would say.*

*Coach: Is that a matter of her taking new perspectives on herself?*

*Mentor: Mainly.*

*Coach: As to the coaching plan, where would you begin?*

*Mentor: I would begin with her understanding of, and reaction to, your feedback on the assessment. Because how she takes the feedback will show you the openings that exist for interventions you might want to make.*

*Coach: Would you be willing to mentor me further after I have given her feedback?*

*Mentor: Certainly. You might even consider having us give her feedback together. After all, through the assessments, she has gotten to know me, and so I would not be a complete stranger to her. She might more easily absorb the feedback if we developed a strategy to come back to her together.*

*Coach: Thank you. I will ask her what her preference would be. Doing what you propose would certainly make it much easier for me to strike out on a developmental path in my coaching!*

*Mentor: It has been a pleasure to talk with you!*

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have presented the Constructive-Developmental Framework (CDF) *in action*, by explaining to a learner what it involves and what its outputs mean. Most of all, I have focused on the mental processes needed to work with this methodology successfully and responsibly. As has become clear from the questions of the coach, the tools CDF pioneers require new ways of thinking about a client's goals, personality, and situation rooted in her Frame of Reference.

The tools also require a self-transformation, since CDF tools do not exist outside of oneself. As a consequence, one can't use these tools before having situated oneself developmentally. Whether a person can do so will depend on her developmental potential.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Otto Laske is a clinical-developmental psychologist with a background in philosophy and management consulting including coaching. He is the author of the Constructive-Developmental Framework (CDF), explained in detail in three volumes of Measuring Hidden Dimensions (IDM Press). Otto is the Founder and CEO of the Interdevelopmental Institute (IDM), Medford, MA, where he teaches students from many countries to think developmentally in their work with adults.



# WHAT COACHES SHOULD WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR CLIENTS

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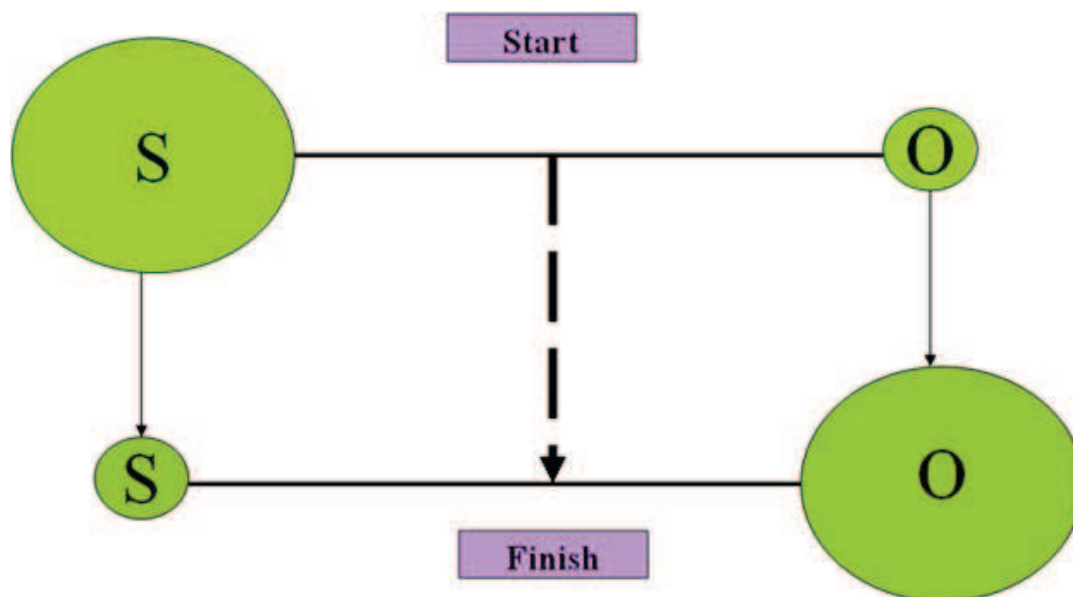
Otto Laske  
CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
USA

**Abstract:** *In this text, I briefly highlight the main benefits of integrating research in adult development into executive coaching practice.*

## INTRODUCTION

Coaching is a young discipline that is still growing, attempting to deepen and professionalise its approach to clients. Of the many kinds of research hospitable to coaching, the one theory that may be crucial for the future of professional coaching is, in my view, research in adult development over the life span (Basseches 1984; Kegan 1994, 1982; Lahey 1988; Jacques 1998). This discipline, an extension of J. Piaget's research on children, deals with how adults emotionally and cognitively develop between 25 and 100 years of age. It is a discipline wholly independent of child development research. In its present state, it is beginning to merge with theories of adult learning. However, learning and development are not the same: learning is "horizontal" (in time), while development is "vertical" (across time or longitudinal). As such, development determines a person's learning potential at a particular time.

*Fig. 1. Adult development originates in loss of ego-centrism (Piaget)*



We can translate adult development summarily as "loss of ego-centrism", both in adults' emotional and cognitive life. When considered in terms of subject and

object, the infant begins life as a huge subject without much of an object, while in late adulthood the person the infant has become experiences herself as a tiny speck in a huge universe (object) that will outlast her. This dramatic movement over each human being's lifespan is referred to as adult development.

The transformation indicated here is best seen as "vertical", across time; spanning many years. It is not simply a snapshot "change" but fundamentally affects a person's feelings, thinking, and doing. In contrast to adult development, learning and behaviour are located along a horizontal axis, "in time". As individuals, we live at the intersection of both axes, as shown in Fig. 2.

### Ego versus Self

When we approach coaching, whether life or executive, from this perspective, what we see is indicated in Fig. 2.

*Fig. 2 Coachees' (and coaches') egoic self, embedded in a ("vertical") social-emotional and cognitive self*

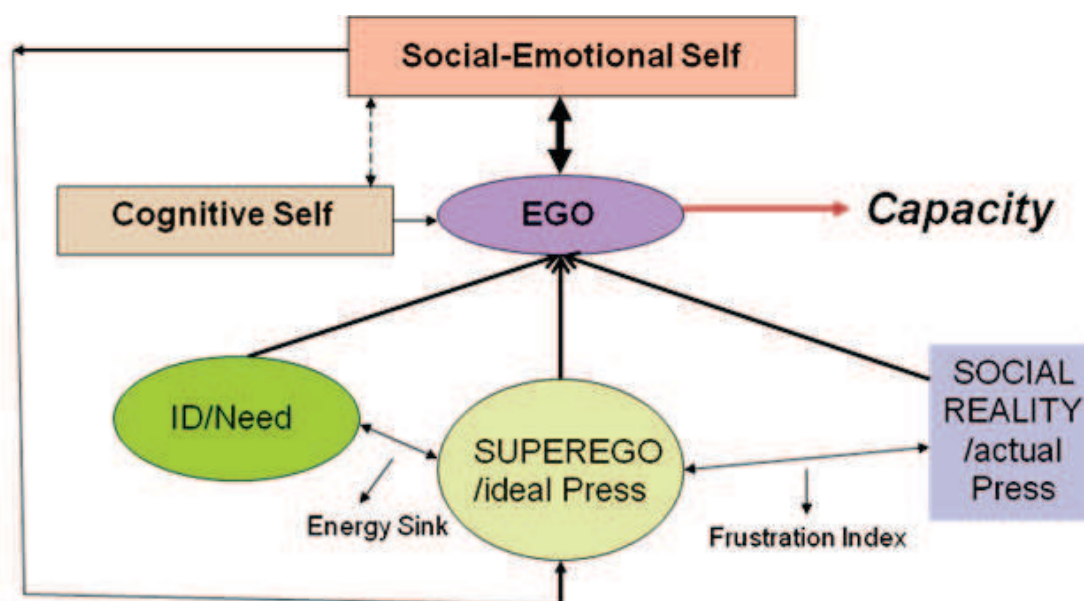


Fig. 2 shows what in my keynote I referred to as "what coaches should want to know about their clients". Because if they knew it, they would eagerly want to extend their work beyond the Ego, seat of behaviour, to coachees' self, seat of what in the *Constructive Developmental Framework* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/constructive\\_developmental\\_framework](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/constructive_developmental_framework)) is called a person's *Frame of Reference*.

As Fig. 2 shows, Frame of Reference – "world view" -- guides how the Ego "behaves", in that it puts egoic strivings into the context of a transformational system, here called self. This Self has two dimensions: social-emotional and cognitive.



## Consequences for coaching

What are the consequences of this perspective for coaching as a profession, both for coach and coachee (who, developmentally, "sit in the same boat").

*Fig. 3. Executive coaching happens at the intersection of horizontal learning and vertical development*

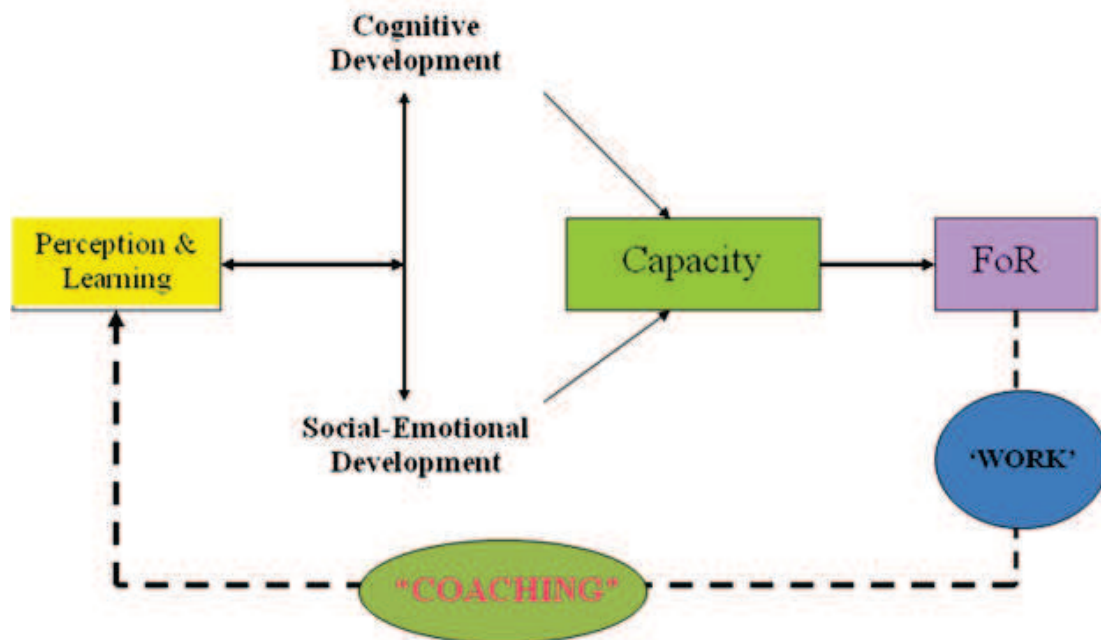


Fig. 3 shows how the vertical axis intersects with the horizontal one to create *Capacity*, the capability to deliver work. This is where executive coaching sets in. In a developmental perspective, coaching is not primarily focused on "changing behaviour" (horizontal axis), but on "changing Frame of Reference" (vertical axis), because it is the latter that determines the former. Clearly then, coaching along the horizontal – behavioural – axis alone is insufficient for most coachees, especially at high levels of organisational accountability (where we find executive teams and boards of directors).

## Social-Emotional Adult Development

To clarify social-emotional development, consider Fig. 4, below. As seen, adults position themselves emotionally according to 5 "stages" indicating an increasingly more mature view of themselves (FoR). The developmental trajectory is characterised by the alternative focus on self and others; it reaches from the "instrumentalist" adult who uses others as her instrument to the "self-aware" adult who no longer defines herself by origin, education, profession, social rank but simply as "being human" (and thus mortal). Between each main "stage", there exist 4 intermediate stages (Lahey et al., 1988; Kegan 1982) which for a coach to be able to assess is of priceless advantage for coaching effectiveness.

Since according to empirical research most coachees (and coaches) reside in the range from S-3 (other-dependent) to S-4 (self-authoring), it becomes important to make sure that the coach be more highly developed than the coachee. Why? If not, harm may be done to the coachee, an important element of developmental coaching ethics.

*Fig. 4. Kegan stages of social-emotional development*



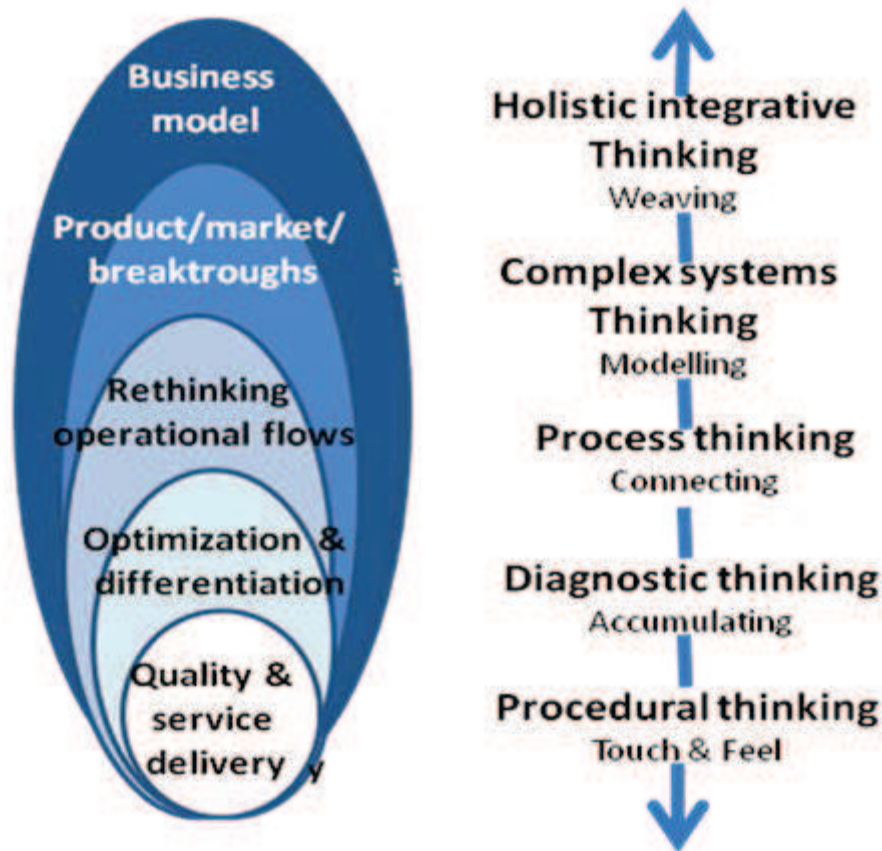
For purposes of social-emotional coaching, we can thus distinguish three very different types of coachee:

1. The Other-Dependent individual who defines herself by the expectations of physical and/or internalised others who are needed to safeguard her own self-image (65% of people).
2. The Self-Authoring individual who is secure in her own value system, respecting others but not subordinating herself to them when making decisions, even if risking rejection or death (25% of people). (M. Luther: "Here I stand, I can do no other".)
3. The Self-Transforming individual who is no longer defining herself by her origin, education, social rank, etc., but is aware of her own limitations and common humanity, and thus capable of ceding own advantages to the realisation of the common good (<10% of people).

### **COGNITIVE ADULT DEVELOPMENT RELATIVE TO ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

But there is not just one, there are two developmental-coaching approaches.

*Fig. 5. Five levels of role accountability in organisations, requiring different coaching approaches (Courtesy Jan De Visch)*



In the *Constructive Developmental Framework* (Laske 2008, 2005), social-emotional development is seen as only one side of the coin. The other side, cognitive development, is a second, intrinsically related, dimension. This cognitive aspect of developmental coaching is today vastly neglected, despite the fact that it may well be the most important dimension of executive coaching in particular. The reason for this is that coaches don't practice dialectical thinking, having -- without realising it -- remained strictly logical thinkers. But logical thinking cannot fathom the complexity of organisations and their teams.

Organisations are composed of different levels of role accountability. Each of these constitutes a different universe of discourse with its own idiosyncratic ways of thinking, as shown in Fig. 5 above. There are vast developmental differences between coachees concerned with quality and service delivery (at the lowest level of the organisation), and those who envision the future by creating breakthroughs and designing new business models. One cannot anticipate the future using logical thinking; holistic thinking is needed. Therefore, coaching is likely to fail if the coach is not knowledgeable about organisational structure and cannot conceive of it dialectically.