**The Lived Experience of Consuming Coaching Credentials – a Survey**

This document includes the raw data on credentials collected from a survey process among CCRG and beyond over the past two years or so.  I would really appreciate if you could read and share with me whatever thoughts or reactions these findings prompt in you. This response could b in the form of additional quotes not included in the text or simply an adhoc reflection on the totality of these survey findings. I have not as yet processed this data much beyond the point of clustering and noticing categories.  There a number of ways in which it could go, and I would really appreciate your ideas and insights, as I am too close to the data. This remains an action- research work in progress among us all in CCRG and could be published as such. I would much appreciate any responses this evokes in you to d.doherty@mdx.ac.uk and / or at the next meeting of the CCRG on 15th March 2016, when this survey will be on the agenda.

**Introduction.**

In the course of occupying a variety of roles within the coaching field, whether ‘teaching’ coaching in Business Schools:  representing a professional body (EMCC) or when running the Critical Coaching Research Group (CCRG) in the UK,  I have frequently been asked for advice on the advisability of becoming credentialed. These questions have come not only from coaching ingénues but also from coaches experienced in the field asking for guidance with regard to whether it it would be advisable to become credentialed; and if so, then to ask which accreditation or qualification would be best suit their practice and background.

There is of course no simple answer to any of these questions.  It occurred to me back in 2012 / 13 that to enable me to respond to such inquiries with an empirical accuracy beyond my own biases, that I could build an evidence base of experiences of credentialing through surveying existing seasoned coaches within the CCRG, within professional bodies and across conferences that I attend to gain a sense of their ‘lived experience’ of credentialing. The purpose of this survey was to gain insights into the credentialing decision-making process; and to develop an idea of how coaches relationship with credentials might shift as their practice evolved. This survey should illumine the question as to what level of credentialing has worked for current practitioners, over time, at whatever level of maturity their practice resides.

This survey was conducted in 2012 / 13 of 60 CCRG members through open-ended questionnaire and interview, and then widened to include other interested parties at a later stage. Much of the survey feedback related to dissatisfaction with this fragmented state of affairs. The findings from this credentials survey speak to the profusion of available credentials and the inability to discriminate between them; together with a persistent sense that the credentials path they have chosen to follow does not live up to its many claims and promises made for it.  More `recently the task of challenging the validity and reliability of coaching credentials has since been credibly orchestrated by  Bachkirova and Lawton-Smith (2015). They describe a fractured landscape that is badly muddied, where the reliability of assessment through competency frameworks does not stand up to intellectual scrutiny, and where levels of competence between apprentice and ‘master’ are arbitrary.  When prospective candidates ask me as to the validity of claims made by competing awarding bodies, I now direct them towards the Bachkirova & Lawton-Smith paper as a definitive voice in this field.

The emergent focus of this survey therefore is not to replicate the findings of Bachkirova Lawton-Smith (2015), but to explore the various lived experiences of coaches who have elected to engage with the process of assessing then perhaps choosing to pursue a particular credentials pathway.  <http://ijebcm.brookes.ac.uk/view.asp?issue=vol13issue2>

The organizing principle as I surveyed the richness of the narrative data was to cluster these responses through the classical marketing formulation of the three stages of ‘Pre-purchase; Purchase; and Post- purchase.’  This clustering decision was made not only because the data fell into these buckets along a timeline; but also because the credentialing decision making process is an economic decision as much as it is a developmental one. You will notice that beyond the data for those that go through the credentialing process for the first time, there is a second order of data relating to those that go onto to a further credential, then perhaps another one again.

***Pre purchase experiences.***

The pre purchase experience in coaching is a complex field, full of questions, anticipations and tensions, and most certainly when compared to the experience of an engineer or a lawyer, who face relatively little ambiguity.  From my survey I identified seven principal types of economic and social actors at the pre-purchase stage, as described below.  These categories are of course not watertight, and there are shades of overlap between them. These categories held firm regardless of the broad type of credential the candidate was wishing to assess, whether they be professional accreditation or masters level degree.    Each category is detailed through typical quotes from actors occupying that category. This survey is by no means exhaustive, and may well be biased towards the remembered experience and current world- view of seasoned practitioners as much as it reflects the views of new entrants to the market for credentials.  The distribution across the categories was fairly even, though with bias towards ‘approach: avoiders.

**Seven Categories for pre- purchase phase**

1. Enthusiastic embracers
2. Regulation compliers / professionalisers
3. Minimising pragmatists
4. Marketing hype susceptible
5. Approach : avoiders – Procrastinators
6. Secure cynics
7. Ideological resistors

1. **Enthusiastic embracers**

This group typically says

‘ I love this profession and I want to be the best coach I can be within a profession that seeks to be the best that it can be.’

‘I was inspired to get credentialed through the example of a mentor and role model who is a luminary in the field. ‘

‘I have no wish to be fretting about credentials in the future.  I want them done now so I can get on with growing my practice.’

‘ I would like to find some spiritual home where I can extend skills safely – the practice not the philosophy.’

‘My past relationship with credentials in another profession influences me in my approach to coaching– to be as well qualified as I could possibly be before I claimed to be an executive coach.’

‘This is exciting – I just want to get on with it.

1. **Regulation compliers / Professionalisers**

This group typically says

‘I want to do the right thing by the bodies and the seniors in the profession.’

‘I worry that I will be found out as my academic background in coaching is not strong, and I came into the profession from an unusual place.  Credentials will help me feel I belong.’‘

‘I worry that I might be suffering from the “impostor syndrome.” I want to do all I can to resist challenges to my professional credibility.’

‘I want to set an example – I think we should all be striving to get qualified for the sake of the profession.’

‘I want that external label, that validation really badly. I did not come into coaching through business and I need to have something to prove to business people that I am a serious professional.’

‘I hate coaching as being described as a Wild West business.  I want to professional and respectable. I need the profession to be respectable, on a par with other professions.  Credentials is essential for our acceptability.’

1. **Minimising pragmatists**

This group typically says

‘Looks like having some credentials is going to be necessary in the future – so best to bite the bullet and get myself on those tender lists asap.’

‘I may as well as do this before standards get too stringent.’

‘Which is the path of least resistance?  What is the minimum time and financial investment I can get away with, while seeming credible?’

‘I will make a show of going along with all the idealist visionary stuff that professional bodies pump out, and all of the appeals for professional practice too, but frankly it will be lip-service. I will do whatever it takes to get past this entry stage and get on with the work with an umbrella of credibility held over me.’

‘I know I have to get on with it, improving my practice – don’t care what it is called – working from internalized experience / intuition , informed by study, and just hope it has not turned into unconscious competence when no one was looking.’

‘They all look much-of-a-muchness.  I think I will go with the least-worst choice.’

1. **Marketing hype susceptible**

This group typically says

‘I went on an free “introduction to coaching day / weekend,” it was pretty good. It persuaded me that I could make a lot of money out of this, and that my initial outlay would be recovered in no time.  It was free and I felt some obligation to reciprocate by signing up.’

‘I had just received my redundancy money and wanted to invest in something that would safely propel me onto another career in a field that was burgeoning.’

‘I went to a sales day and was so inspired by the speaker. Everyone around me seemed to be so enthusiastic too. I was swept along with the whole thing and before I knew it I was signed up – I was going to be like the guru in no time. Did you see his client list? The Royal family? Pop stars!’

1. **Approach: avoiders – Procrastinators**

This group are likely to say

‘These professional bodies are all over the place! I do not trust this talk of grand alliances unifying everything on a self –regulating basis. I will not make a move until I know my money is safely invested – or else at the point where the market or the government demands that I comply and get credentialed.’

‘God, how much choice is there? Which is the best? Which will endure? It is like VHS and Betamax – help! I am paralyzed by choice.’

‘it feels like buying a TV – as quick as you buy it is out of date but more complicated than ever. I think I will wait for the perfect product to come along, one that will not be obsolete in no time at all.’

‘Those that I speak to for advice on this who are well down the credential road do not seem to have too many good things to say about the path they have followed.  Some are downright discouraging, others are happy with their decision and happy and relieved to have their piece of paper.’

‘I rather like the supplier turf wars – it means I can credibly delaying enrollment for a long time yet.’

‘Funny thing this – I notice that many of those luminaries in the profession do not have a qualification from professional body – what sort of example is that? Do I really need this to get on, if they don’t ?’

‘Do I go for University Masters or a Professional body award? Cannot get beyond this choice though university looks more durable, more sustainable – but not very practical and not sure if I am up for all that reading.’

‘I kind of wish we were like Medicine or the Law.  Just have someone say here is what you have to do, no shilly – shallying around – just pay the money and do it – or not.’

‘I really do want to learn, I have so much to learn but where do I reliably go to.’

‘It is so hard to do the risk analysis on this.  I fear I will fall on the wrong side and will live with a deal of remorse as a result of this decision. ‘

1. **Business secure cynics**

This group typically say

‘At the risk of being called arrogant, I do not need any of this credentials bullshit. It is not aimed at me at all but at those those insecure folk who so need to legitimize their lack of real-life business experience.’

‘This whole credentials thing is a glorified Ponzi scheme. We all know that. The same people do the training as do the assessing. It is a closed circle. Good luck to them with that. Everyone has to make a buck.  But like old man Walton said when asked how Wal-Mart would respond to the 1990 depression, I would answer the same to credentials. I will choose not to participate.’

‘The major coaching companies make their money through training up gullible coaches, not through coaching itself. I even wonder if they would be any good at coaching.’

‘I have quite enough business to keep me going until I choose to stop. All my work is through referral and will continue to be so. MY clients never ask to see my certificates. They just know I am good. Not perfect but I am good. Damned good.’

‘ My business runs on trust and confidentiality. There is no way can I start to ask my client to come out and testify to my work. They would laugh in my face or go away.’

‘ I am not a joiner by nature but I am a good coach. I keep myself and my business and my client’s business to myself.  No one is going to come poking around in all of that privacy especially not some one less qualified than I to me making judgments.’

‘This number of coaching hours or worse still training hours (lord save us) is nonsense.  No amount of quantitative recording of badly done coaching is going to make a bad coach into a good one. Not even the mythical 10,000 hours.’

‘I would not even thinking of bidding for work that has some wonk in HR trying to justify their existence by demanding to see my credentials.’

‘ This was not designed for me. It might work for the youngsters but honestly when entry level coaches ask which provider to with, which university to align with yadda yadda I say “forget the lot of them .. go find your own clients and do this work in the best way you know how. It that way doesn’t stick then coaching is not for you.’

1. **Ideological and intellectual resistors**

This group typically say

‘None of this professionalizing of coaching makes any sense. It all springs from a functionalist paradigm that is the antithesis of  the origins of coaching, which springs from an emancipatory paradigm.’

‘Even the universities are not immune from collusion with the coaching bandwagon. Some have gone as far as surrendering their integrity to the extent that they subject themselves to inspection and validation from these dodgy cardboard cut out opportunist professional bodies  - when it should be the other way around. How could the universities be chasing the buck in this way, while pretending to be acting with critical integrity?’

‘Professionalization needs to be challenged. It always has been hegemonic and exclusive to new entrants.  We know that, They pull up the drawbridge and protect vested interest.  We cannot let this happen to coaching, which is essentially virtuous.’

‘Some of this marketing hype makes me want to throw up.’

‘Folk who have little idea what research is idolize at the altar of ‘evidence base’ and ‘tangible outcomes’ without the slightest idea of what might lie beneath coaching practice. Most of the research I see commissioned or conducted by professional bodies is beset by extreme “confirmation bias’’.’

‘Bandwagons, bandwagons everywhere! NLP, CBT and now the whole world of neurobollocks.  Team coaching as well, which I am told by one recent flyer is the ‘new kid on the (coaching) block.’ WTF! Fads, fashions and fetishes.  Neophilia is rife yet rarely subject to intellectual challenge.’

‘We have surrendered intellectual judgment to the marketers – how did this happen?’

‘However are we going to challenge such a degree of vested interest that exists among the providers?’

‘Even when a well–intentioned humanistic practitioner sets up to challenge the establishment – it is not long before they get sucked into launching their own courses and their own accreditations. That is a real shame but it happens. This circular process is endless and the cash-nexus irresistible.’

‘The drive for new universities to create doctorates to legitimate the credentials of their teaching staff in the eyes of the government has bred a swathe of people describing themselves as ‘scholar – practitioners’ ,while publishing  so called research which is highly confirmation biased, and reinforces the commercial imperative.’

‘These awards are not assessed in any real sense – once you have paid your dues then show up then the credential will follow – and of course you will say nice things about the body that has awarded you – as you wish them to endure and have credibility in the market place.’

What is the distribution of folk around these categories – go on make a guess across – and where are biggest overlaps?

These categories are not watertight and coaches can manifest a number of these concurrently; they can also progress between categories over time, as their practice progresses, or deteriorates.  The majority of those interviewed did not progress towards purchase.

**Second Phase: Point of purchase and immediately beyond, towards award.**

It is clear from this analysis that given the fractured landscape at pre- purchase stage, that a significant number of potential purchasers do not progress to the purchase stage.  Many of the procrastinators remain on the fence, demonstrating approach: avoid behavior. Some categories are never likely to progress, unless legislation or client requirement would force them to do so.  These resistors would include categories 5,6, 7. The categories 1 2 3 4 are the most likely to buy.

In the case of coaching credentials, the point of sale is not as simple as purchasing soap powder.  There is inevitably lapsed time between committing to the economic decision (many providers demand cash upfront) and the realization of the award.  All purchasers set out with initial enthusiasm, with belief or at least with the hope that they had made a good purchasing decision, tinged with some background doubts and mixed feeling regarding the efficacy of their decision given the variety of choice available.

***Quotes on immediately signing up.***

‘I am happy to have decided at last, and now want to get on with this.’

‘I have been sat on the fence too long.’

‘Ohh? Have I made the right decision?  Was this the best choice for me?’

‘Will this investment yield all the suppliers have promised ? Or will I end up feeling a fool?’

‘I find myself saying to those around me that is was of course the right decision – even though in fact I have no real idea whether these people are the best for me or not.’

‘I need assuring that this is the right decision.’

‘They really want me to read all of this?’

***Mid- qualification quotes***

*Feedback from those during purchase to qualification phase would include a variety of dissenting or questioning statements such as*

‘This whole competency framework thing is really complicated.  Does it really need to be so?’

‘The more we went into it, the less sure I was that competency girds work for coaching.’

‘I am not at all confident that the assessors know what they are doing.  They change rules and requirements in mid- course and are sluggish in delivering assessments on time.’

‘I set off really keen and enthusiastic but now I am feeling in “survival” mode.  How many more hours do I need to clock up? I just need to jump through these hoops and get out with the badge and without too much more angst.’

‘They do not seem interested in my comments or suggestions for improvement  on the process. They get quite bossy and parental, saying just get on with it and follow the instructions.’

‘They do not seem to recognize that many of us are experienced learning designers and facilitators.  They are not inclined to take our feedback.’

‘It seems clear that most of us will pass if we stick with it – but this course is really quite uninspiring.’

‘When we course members chat among ourselves there are high levels of grumpiness and worries about what we have bought into here.  We are not at all sure that those leading us are that much more skilled and experienced than we ourselves are. Those new to coaching are learning a lot and rarely challenge – some of us seasoned hands are much more likely to push back but it does not seem to make much difference.’

‘Some of the learning I have really enjoyed and gained from. However it also feels that we are constantly trying to shoehorn subtle learning processes into fairly crude boxes.’

‘The deeper we go into this the more disillusioned I become.   I am harboring feeling of remorse about the whole thing.  It is too late now though the investment is made and I must see this through.’

‘I was expecting periods of doubt, of questioning myself as well as questioning the wisdom of my providers. That is natural counter-dependency reaction during any adult learning process. But this feeling goes beyond that and has been growing for some time. I really am not at all sure that they know what they are doing.’

‘Reflecting on my practice was one of the strongest aspects of all of this.’

‘I am not at all sure that having the provider acting also as the assessor is a good thing. It gives them far to much to change things without challenge, to exert subjective bias, to hide their mistakes, to camouflage the profit motive. All of this is really messy and needs cleaning up, but I doubt if they will subject themselves to external regulation.’

‘Who assesses the assessors?’

‘My sensitivity to ethics questions has been heightened by this process – trouble is I have turned my ethics radar onto the providers and find them falling short!’

**Post – purchase  - immediate post qualification**

‘I am relieved this is over.’

‘I got there in the end, but it was a struggle.’

‘I will wear my badge with pride.’

‘I have changed my letter heads, business cards and email signature immediately to reflect my newly enhanced status.’

‘I now feel a fully fledged member of the coaching community and will make a good active contribution to my professional body.’

‘That is enough qualifying for now! I have the badge and I will do the CPD necessary for continued re-accreditation but I am done with studying, assessment and introspection.’

‘I am realizing now that I this initial qualification is a “false summit.”  It is just at the base level; there are so many other levels of qualification that others are competitively chasing. Must I be caught up in this perpetual accretitaton arms race?’

‘My sense of pride gained through the achievement of the preliminary award is  replaced with dismay when i discover that I on the awarding body nursery slopes and that untold new horizons of award loom ahead.’

‘How will I go about choosing a supervisor? How little investment in this can I get away with?’

‘I really enjoyed the learning process and do not want to give up that habit. External frameworks and processes will help motivate and structure my learning. I am ready for more. I am not going to give into collapsing in front of the telly.’

‘My family are enjoying having me returned to them.’

I am not at all sure that this credential will assist my marketing effort. It is showing no impact so far!’

‘I now feel that having made this investment then everyone else claiming to be practitioners should get a proper qualification too or else be excluded from practice.  I do not want our professional image to be contaminated by cowboys.’

‘I notice a fellow candidate who used to say that coaching should be open to all. Now she is qualified she is wanting to pull up the rope ladder and restrict the entry of others.’

‘I now realize how much we need to set and defend our standards. We need to set the bar high.’

‘This credentialing process has given me the appetite to gather more and more qualifications – to be just as good as I can ever be.’

‘I thought my insecurity would go away once I got this qualification – but in fact I feel more shaky than ever. There is so much more to know and the goal posts keep changing.’

**P*ost purchase reflections – months and years down the line***

Here we see quite a variation in response, from continued impetus to engage with the credentialing process both as awardee but also as credentialer; through quietly downplaying the qualification as part of their professional identity; to real anger that they been duped and want some form of redress, or regulation in place.

‘My qualification is like a purchased book – it is there on the shelf and available, but not always in use – but a useful reference when required.’

‘Having come from a professional background it is usual to want to defend and demonstrate credentials – this I do with my coaching credentials also.’

‘Having this credential and needing to renew it periodically keeps me on my toes in terms of practice, supervision and CPD and contribution.  I could let it slip – 4 months between supervisions – but then amount of coaching was low – no issues needing working. But then it encourages me to go seek out work too. ‘

‘When people – especially clients – ask then I do say favorable things about my awarding body. Of course I do, it would be reckless not to. On the other hand I do harbor doubts which I share only with those close to me.’

‘No one has ever asked to see my badge! When I display it no one shows any interest.’

‘When I first got this award I was showing it off all over the place. I cringe with embarrassment when I think of that now.  I no longer brag about it. I know longer show it.  I have quietly put it to one side; and put it down to experience.’

‘My relationship with credentials is not at the forefront of my mind – but when you force me to think about it – I am glad that I have it in my bag.’

‘It gives credibility with some coachees but is not enough on its own.  As an internal coach I have to be seen as trustworthy and reliable,.’

‘Beyond gaining foundation qualifications – even at so called “Masters” level – the requirements for continued CPD are in reality quite low. No one seems to provide development for those beyond the early qualification level.’

‘I am feeling really angry at what I have been put through. I a feeling betrayed and really disillusioned. I was sold a story of clients beating a path to my door . Nothing could be further from the truth. There needs to be external regulation of these suppliers and a degree of consumer protection also. I want to warn others not to make the foolish mistakes I have made.’

‘These awarding bodies are all marketing front and no substance. They are like a stage set. You could just push them and the whole edifice falls over.’

‘Some colleagues warned me not to go down this road, not to invest good money on this fool’s errand. They were right an I am sure they are now quietly sniggering behind my back. I feel a little ashamed, a little foolish.’

‘At one point I felt a need to be trained  in supervision – did the XXX course but did not complete accredited programme.’

‘I would hate to do a masters or PhD. ‘

‘I say ‘Beware the company you keep’ or perhaps more a case of ‘beware the company you advertise yourself as keeping.’  I know longer mention my credential unless I  can avoid it.

***A fresh cycle of economic decision-making, beyond initial credentialing.***

As evidenced in a number of the self- explanatory statements above, many of those coaches who have acquired their desired credential are content to go no further down the qualifications road, beyond doing the CPD and supervisor and practice hours necessary to  keep their licence to operate valid.  Others are prepared to countenance a further credential cycle, which involves them in once again entering the pre-purchase chase, and possibly following that through to further purchase and beyond.

**Second Generation Pre Purchase.**

‘There is surprisingly little out there for post – qualification seasoned professionals – certainly not much to attract me.’

‘Most of the provision seems to occur at the bottom end, at entry level, not for coaches with my level of experience.’

‘Not much out there follows any paradigm other than functionalist.’

‘I realize now that I have capability and confidence to go on and do a Masters or even professional doctorate in coaching.’

‘I want to remain in the company of those that stimulate me.’

‘I am firmly committed to my development and CPD, but it does not have to occur within a formal credentialing regime. In fact in many ways I would rather it did not.’

‘I cannot so self-development on my own! I need to doing it in the company or like- minded others.’

‘Coaching is a lonely business. We really need peer support.’

‘The bar for renewal seems to be set really low. Perhaps they just want our money. I know I far exceed all of the requirements for client hours, CPD, supervision. There seems to be very little quality checking, just number counting.’

**Second Generation Purchase and beyond**

‘Professional doctorate is really hard work but so glad I have committed to it.’

‘Supervisor training is instructive – but only after signing up do I get to learn that I never make a living out of supervision alone.’

‘I have become disillusioned with the process of becoming a supervisor. It is more and more regulation and being parental and far less developmental than I imagined.’

**Second Generation post purchase**

‘I have taken a really active role with my professional body and am now well on the road to becoming a regulator myself – hard to believe when I look back at me on the nursery slopes of qualification, overwhelmed by it all.’

‘I am conscious of myself as a role model and encourage others to follow my example.’

‘I would like to gain as many qualifications as possible.’

‘I want to teach in a university at some stage. ‘

**The emergence of the ‘scholar – practitioner.’**

At the far end of the second generation of credential seekers rests the self- styled ‘scholar practitioners.’ These would include those who have stepped out from coaching practice in either a part-time or full-time basis to research an aspect of their own practice, thereafter to return to practice not only with the satisfaction of having completed an extended piece of intellectual and social inquiry but also with their status enhanced by the addition of the honorific ‘Dr’ or ‘Master’ on their business card.

Many ‘scholar-practitioners’ express that they have invested heavily in their studies (often more than anticipated) and therefore wish to capitalize upon (and even monetise) their considerable investment of time and money in gaining their degree.  This sense of needing payoff often gives rise to a desire to birth a ‘book’ that tells the story of the research., especially when they have seen similar publications gain considerable favorable exposure. This publication once written serves not only as a record of their findings but also presents as an elaborate business card (or shelf-ware)  to leave behind on client pitches or at subsequent training sessions.  The book can also open doors to conference and seminar invitations from practitioner bodies and business schools alike.  This bookish urge is increasingly nurtured by publishers  pressing for such contributions,  particularly when the text brings a practical ‘how to’ message to potential practitioner readers.  The blurb on the cover will proclaim the book as a ‘must read.’

**Post- Professional CPD need not be credential related.**

The decision making process is complex at pre purchase due to fact that this accreditation is not compulsory and because of the sheer variety of choice. Some seasoned practitioners echo Bachkirova & Lawton Smith’s (2015) view that while so many credentials are based in modernist assumptions, much of existential landscape facing coaches is postmodernist, facing high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty. Given this then it is not surprising how many do not get beyond the pre- purchase stage.

What is interesting is the relationship between accreditation and CPD.  Because someone in latter categories choose not to participate in credentialing does not mean that they eschew development.  A recent survey of CCRG members revealed that seasoned coaching practitioners are wishing for more than conventional suppliers can typically provide.

When CCRG members were asked the question ***‘How does this group compare to other coaching based CPD activities?’*** they responded thus

‘It’s probably the best quite frankly.’

‘More personal than a conference, more animated than a book or writing individually, goes deeper than local coaching group’

‘It has more rigor, (I run a co-coaching forum, I go to the euro-coach list conference)’

‘I appreciate the longevity of the group, so I enjoy catching up with colleagues and three times a year is also more frequent than other CPD activities I usually get involved with.’

‘Unique –  a mix of structure and space and ongoing applied research in the widest sense.  Often stimulates follow up with related CPD actions. ‘

‘Prompts me to think more critically of my coaching – helps me avoid ‘coasting’ and becoming stale. The reflective nature of the group also prompts me to reflect on matters in my personal life – often there is an indirect cross-over from the professional learning to broader life learning.’

‘A crucial part of my CPD - no, it's better than that - keeps me alive and  lively.’

‘Provides some real quality of discussion rather than the latest fad being subscribed to’

‘It is a pleasure to belong and have accepted the ebb and flow of my activity, passivity – or active listening.  It is OK to be as well as to do in this group and there is a mix of give and gain over time I feel.  Encouragement of others to participate is also a contribution, and I know I can ask for the support and challenge I need from the group within its purpose on a day.  The mix of familiarity ie continuity of group relationship with new members and without cosiness I hope, and difference within it adds to the potential for creativity and I sense more in depth interaction as the years have progressed, or we are each continuing our journeys to maturity as practitioner-researchers whatever that is!’

‘Variety of format, pace and space is important for my learning and enjoyment.’

‘I can’t tell when, where or how they will manifest in my thinking, but I can’t unlearn them and they will therefore become in some way part of how I think in certain situations that I hope will be useful to someone.’

‘ I would say that being a poor reader and finding books a difficult source of learning, that is was incredibly helpful to have access to new content that comes from the author, all presented in an hour in a way that I could engage with and make sense of. This is my idea of accelerated learning!’

‘I can see that it makes a link between all forms of development and has an ethos of sharing that promotes many best practices from the leadership and learning worlds’

‘In my “home” profession, I have always been involved in someway or another in research. I am a closet geek, underneath my cloak “Jen”. I love exploring concepts and ideas. As I trained in coaching through a practical route and didn’t run off and do an MA or PhD, I hadn’t had access to the growing knowledge base of coaching and I needed to know that was present.’

What are CCRG coaches experimenting with? Bottom up competency assessment.

Social actors in consumption theatre – what roles are various categories of coach playing – symbolic interactionism – values expressive behavior etc

**Appendix One: the Survey**

This research inquires into how coaches 'do' credentialing differently and the role they believe that credentials may play in enhancing client and fellow professionals' perceptions of individual’s identities. The inquiry is motivated by a wish purely for understanding of this phenomenon at this stage; though clearly the findings may well be of interest to purchasers of coaching; to accreditation bodies and providers; and of course to coaches themselves when deciding how to position themselves on the market. No judgment is made at this stage on any ‘right way’ to do credentialing.

**It would be excellent if you could respond to the questions below. Do feel free to embellish wherever you feel so moved.  This survey encourages freestyle responses.  you may elaborate your responses or include additional questions**

1. **Which credentials do you hold that you believe have relevance to the Coaching and  Mentoring field?  Academic, Professional, honorifics, other.**
2. **Which of these credentials do you display on your business card, letterhead,  email signature, website / webpage / blog / etc.**
3. **What impact do you think this display has upon clients and prospective clients perceptions of your practice? Do you have direct feedback on these perceptions?**
4. **Which credentials do you hold that you now no longer put on public display, if any? Why might you have withdrawn these from the public gaze?**
5. **What uncertainties do you have on your mind concerning your credentialing approach?**
6. **Which credentials would you like to have (and possibly to display) that you do not currently hold?  Are you making steps to gain these credentials?**
7. **How might you have approached credentialing differently, knowing what you know now?**

1. **Other thoughts, feelings  and comments.**

**Please return your response by email to Dr Daniel Doherty Daniel.Doherty@dandoh123@gmail.com. Thank you!!**

**February 2013**