



INTERNATIONALIZATION ORIENTED COACHING ACTIVITIES PROMOTING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES IN BALTIC COUNTRIES

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to investigate the role and application of coaching as an internationalization-oriented facilitative intervention for organizational change. The paper employs qualitative methods of research: literature review, interview, content analysis, comparative analysis. The paper integrates the conceptual consideration of organizational coaching with the results gained from the interviews with the experts in coaching in the Baltic countries. The role and application of coaching are identified and the results are compared. The findings suggest that coaching is effective when it suits the development needs of an organization. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: internationalization, coaching, facilitative activity, management development, organizational change.

JEL classification: M12, M16, O15.

1. Introduction

At present, organizations operate in the dynamic, competitive and challenging global economy. As the global business environment continues to be uncertain, complex and ambiguous, organizations should be ready for change. The new business environment also requires the development of new knowledge and skills as well as the introduction of more integrated ways of thinking in a very short period of time.

Nowadays, coaching is given special emphasis in the study of organizational change. However, in spite of a sufficient number of researches related to organizational coaching, the studies on coaching as an internationalization-oriented activity are still limited. It is vital to explore the impact of coaching on organizational change, as well as to investigate the factors and constraints that affect implementation of coaching.

Organizational change means different things to different organizations. Various approaches to change implementation depend on whether the organization is ready for change. Dynamics in both external and internal environments trigger the need for change. Organizations can respond to the trigger events in different ways: focusing on new behavioural patterns, financial or technological effectiveness. It is worth mentioning that effective change involves both the content – what is being changed and the process – how the changes are being implemented (Spector 2007). Spector sum-

marizes the theories with a critical insight into effective implementation of change, including Lewin's Field Theory in Social Science, Organizational Development, Task Alignment, and Change Resistance. The study is primarily based on Organizational Development as a background theory, since particular emphasis of Organizational Development is put on the process of changing people's behaviour and the alignment between the changed behaviour and organizational performance. Facilitated interventions play a significant role in organizational behaviour change.

Coaching as a facilitated, reflective learning process (Cox 2013) can add value to organizational change by facilitating management development beyond individual and team levels (Rosinski 2011). Executive coaching has become an advanced field of activity in the past decade (Visser 2010). In spite of a growing interest in coaching as an organizational development activity, the topic has not been researched in sufficient detail. The author of this paper is aware of the research on identification of the scope of coaching as a form of practice for management and organizational development conducted by Bond and Seneque (2013). The result of their research was the placement of coaching within a comparative conceptual framework of practices that promote management and organizational development, such as managing, consulting, mentoring and facilitating. Bond and Seneque draw a conclusion that within this broader framework coaching can be one in a range

of approaches that organizations and managers can consider when seeking to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency using a system-wide perspective. At the same time, the results of their research open the way for further investigation of the forms of coaching required to facilitate and support the change of the entire systems.

Considering the growing interest among researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders in organizational coaching, the implementation of coaching along with other facilitated approaches to supporting organizational change, it is crucial to contribute to the debate about the developmental function of coaching and explore the scope of coaching as a management development activity.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate the role and application of coaching as an internationalization-oriented facilitative intervention for organizational change, taking into consideration the specific features of organizational coaching in the Baltic countries, in Latvia and Lithuania in particular. The author employed well-established qualitative methods of research: review of scientific literature, semi-structured online interviews and analysis of the obtained results: content analysis, comparative analysis.

2. Coaching in organizational context

The scope and purpose of a 'typical' coaching intervention still remains difficult to define (Kempster, Iszatt-White 2013). Coaching is a relatively new field of study; therefore, there is a range of definitions in the literature with regard to coaching. Cox (2013) suggests that 'coaching is a facilitated, dialogic, reflective learning process'. For Garvey *et al.* (2009), coaching is increasingly linked to leadership development, transition and change. It has been suggested (Cox *et al.* 2011; Ellinger *et al.* 2011) that coaching as a structured development process 'promotes desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the client and other stakeholders'. Bond and Seneque (2013) have stated that early definitions of coaching in the management literature were focused on the improvement of individual and organizational performance. More recent definitions define coaching as a process and establish a stronger link with learning and development.

To identify its distinctive features, coaching is compared with other targeted interventions. Haan *et al.* (2011) state that the purpose of executive coaching is not so much to offer instant, ready-made solutions, but rather to foster learning and change. As it has been stated by Kempster and Iszatt-White (2013), a mentor acts as a trusted guide guiding a person based on the mentor's own

wisdom, experience and position. In contrast, in coaching the emphasis is made on providing space and resources to help people consider their own issues and arrive at their own solutions. Trenner (2013) argues that coaching is not about 'telling' or 'advising'. By contrast, a mentor will provide advice and guidance based on their own experience.

Counselling and psychotherapy are remedial interventions. The focus of counselling and psychotherapy is on talking and unravelling the past, whereas coaching is action-based, future-facing and result-orientated (Trenner 2013).

Cox *et al.* (2011) summarized the theoretical approaches and the genres and contexts of coaching; they identified 12 theoretical traditions of coaching and 10 genres and contexts of coaching and illustrated their relationships. Genres are defined as forms of coaching that identify the purpose of coaching in their title, while contexts refer to the settings or subject matter of coaching. Table 1 demonstrates the relationship between genres and contexts of coaching, which can be implemented in organizational contexts, and theoretical approaches that underpin coaching.

Table 1. Genres and contexts of coaching in organizational contexts (source: Cox *et al.* 2011)

Theoretical approaches	Genres and contexts of coaching			
	1	2	3	4
Cognitive-behavioural	**	**	**	**
Solution-focused	*	*	*	
Person-centred	*		*	**
Cognitive-developmental			**	
Transpersonal	**		**	*

1 – Executive & leadership coaching; 2 – Manager as coach; 3 – Team coaching; 4 – Career coaching.

Table 1 clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between the cognitive-behavioural approach and the genres and contexts of coaching mentioned above. Managers need to be efficient in controlling their own emotions, this is particularly important when organizational change is initiated. Coaching, having adopted the cognitive-behavioural approach, focuses on the replacement of dysfunctional thought patterns with more adaptive versions. As a result, leaders as well as managers learn to become efficient in controlling their emotions, maintaining an appropriate level of self-confidence and developing high level of interpersonal, influencing and communication skills (Cox *et al.* 2011).

Behavioural change within the organizational change opens a number of opportunities for coaching as a tool in implementing and sustaining

change (Stober 2008). Vidal-Salazar *et al.* (2012) offer empirical evidence of the positive effect of coaching on organizational change. Swart and Harcup (2012) argue that coaching provides a sustained new way of thinking that is important to support changes in organizations. The results of the study by Baron and Morin (2010) suggest that coaching can have a real practical impact on self-efficacy, since the manager with a strong self-efficacy related to a given skill would be more effective than the manager with a weak self-efficacy.

Berg and Karlsen (2011) argue that management training should be based on the specific work challenges that the participants experience at their workplace. Their research focused on how to practice management training and development of middle managers and project managers implementing a coaching process. The obtained results showed that through team coaching the participants learned how to use a variety of alternative solutions from the manager's toolbox, which included such tools as emotional intelligence, empowerment, self-management, signature-strengths, and positive emotions. They argue that coaching as a training process and the manager's toolbox as the learning content seem to be a promising area for the development of the skilled managers, effective teams and competitive organizations.

Ladyshewsky (2010) suggests that coaching in the workplace between a manager and a subordinate is part of an overall organizational development and performance management philosophy.

The author's previous research on the manifestations of coaching in organizations (Roshia 2014) suggests that most frequently coaching is used to develop and improve performance and to address leadership development. Coaching is used more effectively for learning and development, leadership development and change management. In spite of the fact that coaching is mostly manifested at the level of individuals, it is an essential organizational intervention.

Therefore, a number of empirical studies attest a favorable impact of coaching on organizational change.

3. Internationalization-oriented coaching

Globalization facilitates creating a kind of international business environment. The global challenges the organizations face as they prepare for an increasingly globalized and highly competitive future call for the change in organizational and management development and lead to an increased demand for a more integrated and 'global' approach to coaching practices (Wilson 2013).

Global coaching is considered an emerging form of executive coaching (Abbott, Rosinski 2007). The complexity and uncertainty of international business increase the stress and pressure for organizations and demand that leaders and managers possess such core competences as openness, self-awareness and ability to be patient to the views of other people. Abbott (2011) states that coaching requires engagement with uncertainty, change and complexity, particularly in organizational context, and argues that coaching can 'assist in embracing and managing core paradoxes that have the capacity to derail positive change and growth'.

Internationalization-oriented coaching is mainly implemented in the period of mergers and acquisitions, upon establishing joint ventures and alliances, within international projects, and in the course of organizational restructuring.

Internationalization is not a new topic for research; however the analysis of coaching activities in the context of internationalization is rather innovative. The author could not find any research on coaching that is applied to internationalization theories. However, based on the study of literature on coaching outcomes, it is possible to conclude that coaching can be applied within the Uppsala internationalization process model, i.e. within one of the major theories of internationalization.

Johanson and Vahlne (2009) argue that under the renewed Uppsala model, relationships that offer potential for learning and for building trust and commitment are considered as preconditions for successful internationalization. They consider working relationship as the result of considerable investment, and an important company asset. Baron *et al.* (2011) argue that coaching equip people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to develop themselves and become more effective, especially in the context of interpersonal relationships.

Ladyshewsky (2010) defines trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor. Coaching facilitates acquiring new strategies how to build trust in relationships by understanding its components and respecting the other's views without judgment.

The established relationships and built trust encourage commitment. Commitment reflects the dedication to perform the work and includes the mutual assurance to fulfill responsibilities in the relationship. Encouraging and sustaining individual commitment is considered essential in coaching. A strong personal commitment from the coach and client translates directly into client's behavioral performance (Boyce *et al.* 2010).

4. Research methodology

The present paper reports on the findings obtained having conducted the analysis of the part of the interviews dedicated to the scope of coaching in organizational context. Interview was an integral part of the research on coaching in organizations. The aim of this research was to explore the views of practitioners in coaching about the role of coaching in organizations based on their personal opinion and professional experience.

For the purposes of the present research, it was decided to focus on key informants, i.e. experienced practitioners in coaching, to generate the primary data for qualitative analysis. All practitioners were invited to participate in the survey using the author's personal contacts. The selection of practitioners was based on the following criteria: participation in the training programmes for coaches, work with organizations, and experience in the field of coaching for more than three years, as well as a genuine desire to contribute to the research.

The data were collected by means of a questionnaire and a semi-structured online interview. A 24-item questionnaire was developed specifically for coaches to find out their opinion about the implementation of coaching in organizations. Online interviews were conducted with coaches who willingly agreed to participate. 15 coaches from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany took part in the questionnaire survey, 9 of them agreed to participate in online interviews via Skype. The questionnaire results were reported at the international scientific conference "*Contemporary Issues in Business, Management and Education 2013*", Vilnius.

The interviews were conducted from September to December of 2013. Based on the established criteria for selection with regard to qualification, experience and position, and taking in account the willingness to participate, four coaches from Latvia, three coaches from Lithuania, one coach from Poland and one coach from Germany took part in the interview. The experts from Poland and Germany were invited with an aim to trace the tendency of development of the subject matter in the countries that might have an influence on the Baltic countries. A small number of experts is explained by the fact that this is the author's initial attempt to investigate the internationalization of coaching activities.

Almost all respondents have graduated from accredited coach training programmes; among them one interviewee has gained a Master's Degree in coaching and another one is pursuing this degree. All respondents specified that they work at

organizational level, having defined their professional background as an executive coach, organization leader, HR and training specialist, or consultant. The practitioners indicated that their average experience in coaching is 3–5 years.

The interview contained two meaningful parts and consisted of 12 basic questions. Supplementary questions were asked based in the individual experience of the practitioners. The duration of the interviews was one hour. The interview sought to answer two research questions:

- (1) what is the scope of organizational coaching;
- (2) what are the conditions to promote coaching in organizations.

The present paper reports on the findings with regard to the first research question: what is the scope of organizational coaching?

5. Results and discussion

It is obvious that in order to understand what type of coaching is used in the organizations of Latvia and Lithuania and to identify the role and application of coaching in organizational contexts, it is important to know how the practitioners of coaching perceive this field of study.

The interview questions were developed to capture the essence of coaching in organizational context, and were subdivided into five categories:

- key words to define coaching;
- key differences and similarities between coaching and other facilitated practices;
- key recipients of coaching;
- key benefits of coaching for individuals and organizations;
- challenges in the implementation of coaching in organizations.

5.1. The key feature of coaching

The first question concerned the key words that coaches use to define the essence of coaching. Content analysis identified 21 words that coaches mentioned as the key ones. The frequency of word usage was computed by means of SQL query into the table containing the key words from the definitions of coaching provided by experts. The results of content analysis are presented in Table 2. The word that was used most frequently was the word *development*. Figure 1 graphically illustrates the results.

The results of the study suggest that in the experts' opinion, the development characteristic is the key feature of coaching. Coaching was also defined as an art and science to support a person or a group of people in exploring and promoting self-

awareness that influences people potential and growth.

Table 2. Key words with frequency 4, 3, 2 (source: compiled by the author)

development	4	achievement	2	process	2
experience	3	general	2	promoting	2
performance	3	self-development	2	self-awareness	2
personal	3	level	2	goals	2
potential	3	order	2	skills	2
sharing	3	perspective	2	think	2
thinking	3	place	2	work	2

The results of this study were compared with the findings of the author's study on the analysis of the working definitions of coaching accepted by the leading coaching institutions and researchers (Rosha 2013). The comparison has established the agreement of the findings. *Development* was identified as a more frequently used word in the definitions provided by coaches. *Development* is an attribute that most frequently defines coaching process. Moreover, as it was stated in the research by Bond and Seneque (2013), more recent definitions of coaching tend to define coaching as a process and establish a stronger link with learning and development.

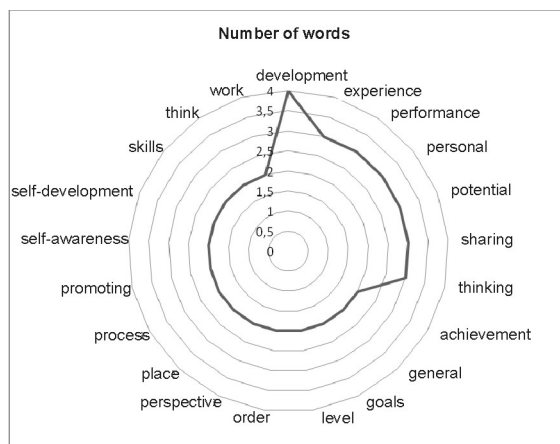


Fig. 1. Key words frequency (source: compiled by the author)

5.2. Coaching and other facilitated practices

The second question was devoted to the comparison of coaching with other facilitating activities to identify how the experts perceive the distinguishing features of coaching. The coaches were asked to compare coaching with mentoring, consulting, training, counselling, therapy, and mediation. It was the choice of each interviewed coach to either compare coaching with all above-mentioned activities or to choose any. As a result,

- mentoring was compared by all coaches;

- consultancy was compared by 2/3 of the coaches;
- therapy and counselling were compared by 1/3 of the coaches;
- mediation and training were compared only once each.

There is an opinion among the coaches that delineation of coaching and mentoring is artificial, a mentor and a coach can be the same person (C1), both coaching and mentoring use questioning (C2). Nevertheless, all coaches mostly focused on the differences between coaching and mentoring. The point of distinction is experience and knowledge. The coach does not share their own experience of the situation with the coachee (C5). The coachee finds one's own way to solve the problem (C5, C6). Coaching is more non-directive (C6) and is more about the clients' view of life (C3). While the mentor is senior (C1) and more experienced in some areas (C2, C3, C4, C8), they share their experience (C5, C7) and have more distinctly hierarchically structured relationships with the mentee (C8).

Comparing coaching with consultancy, the experts mentioned that exploring the problem and providing the solution is the distinction point. The coach usually does not provide solutions; the coach asks questions to discover the potential of the person, and people find solutions themselves (C2, C3). Consultants are experts (C2), they are professionals in their sphere (C4). The consultant explores the problem in the organization and provides the solution. (C2, C3, C4). However, the mixture of coaching and consultancy is possible under certain circumstances (C7). Acquiring the knowledge or reflection on the knowledge distinguishes consultancy from coaching (C7).

The mixture of the activities is possible in coaching, mentoring and consultancy (C7). However, there should be a clear delineation between coaching and counselling (C7). Counselling originates from psychotherapy (C2). Although listening is a common aspect of coaching and counselling, the aim of listening is different (C1). The psychotherapist or the counsellor is an expert in this field (C3). In coaching, the client is the specialist in his / her focus area or professional field, while the coach is the expert to explore, promote the process, he is responsible for the environment (C3).

Similarities of coaching and mediation lie in questioning, mediators usually ask a lot of questions to find out the reasons, and they also use a lot of coaching techniques. However, the mediator is not a developer (C2).

Therefore, coaching is a process of partnering someone in his / her thinking and learning without

giving advice. This statement may be considered as a distinctive point between coaching and other facilitating activities. Coaching is an alliance where the client is an expert in the matter, while the coach is responsible for the process. The coach does not share their own experience of the situation with the coachee; the coachee finds the way to achieve the goal by himself/herself.

5.3. Benefits and challenges of coaching

The question about the key recipients of coaching duplicated the question of the questionnaire: "In your opinion, who needs coaching most?" Answering this question, the coaches ranked the importance of coaching for different groups of people, such as executives, teams, high potential employees, middle level management, first level management or employees of all levels in an organization. In their opinion, executives or top management should be at the top of the list of the parties who need coaching. Middle level management and high potential employees are in the next position, respectively. The aim of the interview question: "Who needs coaching in an organization?" was to verify the questionnaire results and to explore the optimal target groups for coaching in more detail. The experts were not provided with a list of potential target groups, they mentioned the coaching recipients who need coaching based on their experience and assumptions. The answers confirm the results of the questionnaire, all experts indicated top level managers as the key target group for coaching interaction. Moreover, almost a half of the experts consider that coaching engagement in an organization should be started from the top management and then go down the hierarchy. If a senior executive does not know what coaching is, does not support it and is afraid that some manipulations are made or he adheres to a different kind of leadership, like pushing, then coaching most probably will not work at the lower level. Top managers should have an opportunity go to the coaching conversation, or "receive a pack of bonuses which includes coaching".

Answering the question "Can coaching be considered as an effective intervention for all people?", coaches mentioned that coaching is more beneficial for people who make decisions, first of all it concerns top and middle managers. These levels of management generate decisions, and coaching might be really useful in this case, because in order to make a good decision, managers have to be quite competent, they have to know themselves and have to recognize their behavioural patterns. At the same time, the experts highlighted that coaching will be effective if the recipi-

ents of coaching are ready for coaching. The experts explained that the clients have to be ready to be responsible for themselves and make decisions of their own.

Finally, the coaches were asked about the key benefits of coaching for individuals and organizations as well as the challenges in the implementation of coaching in organizations. The benefits and challenges were grouped and summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Benefits and challenges of coaching (source: compiled by the author)

Benefits	Threats
For individuals	
New development opportunities	Stereotype of coaching
People become more open	A lot of simplified interventions in coaching
Development of relationship based on trust and respect	A lot of misunderstanding with regard to coaching
Ability to organize thinking process autonomously	Dependence on the coach
Self-awareness and social awareness	Sometimes people need training or mentoring
For organizations	Challenges
Change in the style of management	Impossible to start coaching if the client is not engaged or interested in it
Greater goal clarity	Difficult to know exactly how and at what level coaching is effective
Better alignment with the role in the organization	The need to look at coaching in the systematic way
Impact on the motivation of employees and managers	It is difficult to measure the outcomes of coaching

There are a lot of advantages of the application of coaching for individual and organizational development. The main advantage is that people get new opportunities for development of their self-awareness. That is extremely important for managers, especially in the period of organizational change, when in many cases the managers have to rely on themselves in decision-making. As a result of coaching sessions, people become more open and more tolerant to different views, this helps establish and promote relationships within an organization based on trust and respect. This change in relationships very positively affects the willingness of employees and managers to support change. Coaching also stimulates the ability to

organize individual's thinking process in a clearer and better structured way.

With respect to organizations, coaching ensures greater goal clarity, facilitates change of the management style, provides better alignment with the role in organization, as well as improves motivation.

However, the experts focused on possible threats and challenges of coaching as well. As a result of the simplified approach to coaching adopted by some organizations, there is a lot of misunderstanding associated with coaching. Organizations misunderstand what coaching is and what coaching can do, what parties need coaching, and what is the purpose of coaching. There is also some misunderstanding on the part of those who deliver coaching. Sometimes coaching is an inadequate type of intervention, and people rather need training or mentoring that will be more effective than coaching. Dependence on the coach is also considered as a potential threat. The experts consider that the coach is responsible to recognize if the client is dependable.

There are also a lot of challenges in the coaching process. The experts argue that it is not possible to start a coaching process if the client is not engaged or interested in it. It is difficult to explain how effective coaching can be because coaching is not homogeneous and it is difficult to measure the results of coaching. Another challenge is how to look at coaching in a systematic way, when the coach gets in touch not only with a client but with the client's leader, manager or HR specialist to ensure that coaching engagements are in line with organizational change needs.

6. Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to investigate the scope of coaching as the internationalization-oriented facilitative intervention that promotes organizational change through management development taking into consideration the peculiarities of manifestations of organizational coaching in the Baltic countries. Coaching in organizational context was the object of investigation.

The analysis of literature revealed that in a more competitive global environment, organizations should constantly develop, improving the quality, increasing productivity and identifying new opportunities for growth. However, sometimes change causes some side effects, such as wasted resources, frustrated employees, etc. To anticipate, avoid or overcome the drawbacks of the process of change, organizations need to think about the development of all members of the or-

ganization, especially its management. Managers are responsible for making decisions, which have to be in line with strategic development of an organization, establishing and sustaining a successful organization largely depends on how competent its managers are. It is very important to support the habits that promote personal growth and facilitative interventions can play a significant role in this process. Coaching is becoming a widespread activity for management development, which facilitates sustainable organizational change. The findings suggest that coaching as a facilitative intervention is effective when it suits organization development needs.

Semi-structured online interviews were conducted with nine experts in coaching from Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and Poland. The obtained results were analyzed by means of content analysis and comparative analysis.

The findings of the interviews about the scope and application of coaching in the context of organizational change suggest that *development* is the key feature of coaching.

In organizational context, delineation between coaching and mentoring may be blurred. Mentor and coach can be the same person. Coaching can be introduced at the top of the organization and mentoring structure can be built at the lower levels of organizational hierarchy. At the same time, a clear delineation has to be made between coaching and counselling, which is considered as emotional service support originating from psychotherapy.

Coaching is perceived as a practice that is beneficial for both individuals and organizations. The results of the study confirm that managers, especially at the top level, benefit more from coaching. However, the findings of the interview analysis have highlighted that the coaching alliance will be successful only if managers are strongly goal-oriented and have internal control, they should be responsible for their decisions, their thoughts and their behaviour.

Coaching is seen as a learning facilitative intervention that is beneficial to organisational change, since it provides new opportunities for management development and improves self-awareness. Coaching motivates managers to acquire skills to build staff relationships, which are based on trust and respect.

However, it is difficult to explain how effective coaching can be; this is because coaching is not homogeneous in nature.

The paper has made a contribution to understanding of coaching as a form of management development based on the assumptions of coaching practitioners and comparison of the practition-

ers' views concerning the field of coaching with the findings of literature review.

The present paper provides a starting-point for further research in investigating coaching activities promoting organizational change in the context of the Baltic countries. The research was limited to the analysis of the scope and role of coaching in organizational context only in two Baltic countries, namely, Latvia and Lithuania.

The assumption that coaching can be applied within the Uppsala internationalization process model was based on the literature review, in-depth study of this field is the subject of the author's further research.

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