Contemporary Issues in Business, Management and Education 2013

Peculiarities of manifestation of coaching in organisations

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Abstract

Drawing on the established theories, the paper examines manifestations of coaching in organisations. Peer reviewed articles were analysed to determine the theories that provide the framework for the study of coaching in organisations. A questionnaire was developed specifically for coaches to find out their opinion about the manifestation of coaching in organisations. Skype interviews were conducted with coaches who willingly agreed to participate. The data obtained by means of literature review and the opinions of the interviewed coaches were analysed and compared. Having established the agreement of results of the review and the survey, practical implications were discussed.

Keywords: coaching; organisation development; leadership developmen; management developmen; change management.

1. Introduction

Organisations operate in a rapidly changing business and technological environment; therefore, they should constantly develop in order to achieve sustainability. Organisations need to find new ways to help employees become aware of the need for change and encourage them to take more responsibility for their development and growth. Coaching focusing on the development of self-awareness and potential inspires desirable and sustainable change of both individuals and organisations. Although it is generally understood today that coaching is a valuable tool, there is no accepted unified view on how to effectively implement coaching in organisations. According to Cox, one of the problems with coaching, which is underpinned in the research, is that it is 'notably sparse' (Cox, 2013).

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This paper aims to investigate the peculiarities of manifestation of coaching in organisations based on the comparison of the results of the analysis of current research topics in coaching reported in peer-reviewed journal articles with the results of the questionnaire and interview.

The implementation of coaching in organisations and the current state of affairs in the field of coaching in Latvia are briefly outlined. The paper focuses on the analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles and comparison of the findings with the results of the questionnaire and interview. A 24-item questionnaire was developed specifically for coaches to find out their opinion about the implementation of coaching in organisations. Skype interviews were conducted with coaches who willingly agreed to participate. 15 coaches from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany took part in the online survey, 10 of them agreed to participate in Skype interviews. The results and practical implications are discussed in the present paper.

This paper is the first author's attempt to examine the topic from an evidence-based perspective to understand the unique power and effectiveness of coaching. Investigation of the manifestations of coaching at organisational level provides the basis for further research on the implementation of coaching procedures aimed at the improvement of performance efficiency of organisations in Latvia.

1.1. Implementation of coaching in organisations

Most countries are undergoing a transition towards a knowledge economy based largely on the efficient management of human resources (Baron & Morin, 2010). However, the impact of social and economic changes has made many organisations increasingly unstable (Stokes & Jolly, 2011). Organisations experience frequent changes such as mergers and acquisitions, changes in management philosophies, introduction of new forms of work organization as well as methods used in managing the performance of employees. These changes have allowed employees to work in a more self-directed manner, providing greater autonomy and, in many cases employees have to develop new leadership and management skills. Moreover, executives and managers today have to work under conditions of unprecedented organizational change and complexity. Whether their focus is on bottom-line results, cost reductions, globalization, IT or environmental issues, the pressures are enormous (Berg & Karlsen, 2011).

Coaching promotes desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of both individuals and organisations (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2011). Apart from individual and team development, coaching can add value by facilitating organisational development (Rosinski, 2011). Coaching can help organisations identify the mechanisms to achieve growth that is best suited to their unique circumstances.

Coaching has become essential for leadership development. Leaders constantly need to develop new skills to reflect on the increasing pressure of rapidly changing and highly competitive environment (Stokes & Jolly, 2011).

Coaching is an increasingly popular tool of management development. In response to the unstable factors of business environment, organisations place a greater emphasis on development activities for employees. Development is not only seen as a remedial attention, but it also started to be seen as a way of retaining the best staff (Stokes & Jolly, 2011). Coaching is generally associated with increase in performance, it also influences employee's job commitment by reinforcing self-esteem and personal performance, by helping to identify and value opportunities for learning and by clarifying and strengthening their career opportunities (Clutterbuck, 2009).

Coaching is also very beneficial for individuals. Changes make employees become more responsible for their personal and professional development. They need to develop certain skills to better manage themselves by improving their own performance through their own efforts and will (Stokes & Jolly, 2011). Coaching provides a greater clarity about individual's personal development, about how they are actually performing and what prevents them from achieving more (Clutterbuck, 2009). Managers can also benefit from acting as a coach. They can get better understanding about what really happens in the work process, at the same time, they can receive a more honest feedback about their own management style and behaviour (Clutterbuck, 2009). This helps managers strengthen the relationships with their subordinates. However, there is a real challenge in combining these two roles, 'a manager' and 'a coach'. Ellinger *et al.* mention that lack of time and the need to apply specific skills and capabilities to coach discourage managers from coaching (Ellinger, Beattie, & Halmin, 2011).

Although coaching has become incredibly popular, there is still a lot of uncertainty and vagueness regarding what coaching is really about. There is certainly no consensus on the definition of coaching (Ladyshewsky, 2010) and no agreed approach to the definition (Passmorea & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

A special research has been conducted by the author to examine the working definitions of coaching accepted by the leading coaching institutions and researchers to identify the characteristics of coaching, which are frequently used in the definitions and, based on the results of this research, to evaluate the possibility to identify the distinctive features of coaching in order to distinguish coaching from similar interventions such as mentoring, consulting, mediation, counselling, therapy, training, and teaching. The research reveals that among other targeted interventions coaching is positioned as:

- beneficial (it is seen as a benefit for high achievers, key people and those with great potential);
- self-development (it allows employees to develop certain skills themselves);
- intervention that deals with the client's mental growth;
- work-related intervention (coaching is typically applied to specific present-moment work-related issues);
- intervention, where the individual, not the coach, is an expert and has the answer to the questions that are raised during coaching session (Rosha, 2012).

1.2. Coaching in Latvia

Coaching is still a relatively new professional field in Latvia. The online study has been conducted by the author to investigate the current state of affairs in the field of coaching in Latvia with special emphasis on the use of coaching for organisational purposes. Coaching in Latvia is delivered by professional organisations as well as other organisations focused on learning and development. The results of the analysis are presented in the consolidated table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Implementation of coaching in Latvia

Means of implementation	Organisations and Activities
Coaching organisations	International Coach Federation Latvia Chapter
	Baltic Coaching Centre
	Riga Coaching School
Other organisations that provide coaching	Eiro Personāls Ltd
	Mind Storm
	Success LAB
	Organization Development Academy
Projects	Pilot project Career Mentoring and Coaching, 2010
	JOSEFIN – Joint SME Finance for Innovation, 2010–2012
Programs	International accredited professional business coaching training program "Leader as a Coach"
Events	Coaching Week
	Master classes
	Seminars

The analysis reveals that coaching in organisations is mostly focused on the development of a new style of leadership as well as on the support provided to entrepreneurs to implement their new ideas. International accredited professional business coaching training program "Leader as a Coach" is created for leaders, managers and HRM specialists. The aim of the program is to facilitate development of basic skills of people management in the coaching style. A special annual event Coaching Week has been running for the last few years. Different events such as lectures, workshops, master classes, coaching sessions and activities of the Coach Club take place in Riga and other regions of Latvia. Coaching is viewed from different perspectives – as means of achieving one's individual goals, business targets, implementing change management, etc. The interest in coaching among organisations is growing. This is proved by the increasing number of leaders and managers participating in different coaching events. However, in spite of this growing interest, information on coaching is not widely spread and the concept of coaching is not fully understood. At times coaching is confused with other targeted interventions such as mentoring or consulting. In most cases people expect coaching to provide concrete advice or recommendations.

As a result, the author concluded that in spite of its increasing popularity, implementation of coaching in Latvia is still in its infancy. Successful development of this field of knowledge may be provided by alignment of the vision of coaching accepted in Latvia with a comprehensive evidence-based concept of coaching.

2. Methodology

For the needs of the present research, it was decided to adopt a qualitative dominated mixed method approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

Peer-reviewed journal articles were analysed to find out the current theories of coaching and the scope of their application. The results gained were compared with the coaches' responses obtained in the course of questionnaire and interview.

The Electronic Management Research Library Database (EMERALD) has been chosen for analysis considering the following criteria: content: journals; period: 2010–2013; the term *coaching* in Keywords.

An online questionnaire was developed specifically for coaches to get their opinion about the manifestation of coaching in organisations. A list of potential participants was compiled through direct contacts in the coaching community. As a result, 15 coaches from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany have participated in the survey, 10 of them willingly agreed to take part in the interview.

The questionnaire comprises 24 questions distributed in seven parts. The following types of questions were used: Likert scale type, ranking, open ended questions.

Section 1. Professional Background and Experience. The aim of this section is to collect data about experts' background and their opinion about the support of their practice by professional associations.

Section 2. Client Profile. The aim of this part is to determine the profile of the organisations that use coaching services. The following factors: industry, company, and size, which determine an organization's use of coaching, were taken into consideration.

Section 3. Professional Practice. The aim of this section is to collect data about the purpose of coaching engagement and the effect that coaching has had on the business skills and processes.

Section 4. Coaching Process. This section aims to determine the distinctive features of coaching and key elements of coaching process. The section contains Likert 5 point agree/disagree scale, Likert 7 point importance scale and an open ended text follow up question.

Section 5. Measuring Coaching Results. The aim of this section is to find out the experts' opinion about the importance of measuring the results in coaching as well as the methods that they use in their practice.

Section 6. Benefits and Challenges of Coaching. This section focuses on coaching benefits and challenges for organisations.

The questionnaire finishes with an open ended final text question.

The aim of the structured interview was to ensure the consistency of the responses to confirm the reliability of the questionnaire results.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

126 journal articles with the keyword *coaching* were found from 2010 till September 2013. Among them about 50% of the articles are case studies and research papers. Only these articles were selected for further analysis. Then the keywords of 61 articles presenting case studies and research papers were analysed to pick out the articles, which discuss the business areas where coaching is implemented. As a result, 41 articles were selected for the deeper analysis (Abington, 2013; Ali, Lewis, & Currier McAdams, 2010; Audet, & Couteret, 2012; Averweg, 2010; Bandura, & Lyons, 2012; Baron, & Morin, 2010; Baron, Morin & Morin, 2011; Berg, & Karlsen, 2012; Bond & Seneque, 2013; Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2013; Brewerton, 2011; Chidiac, 2013; Coaching drives, 2011; Conroy, 2011; Constable, 2012; Day, 2010; Denning, 2011; Dolores, Vidal-Salazar, Vera Ferrón-Vílchez, & Eulogio Cordón-Pozo, 2012; Duff, 2013; Gaskell, Logan, & Nicholls, 2012; Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011; Hamlin, & Stewart, 2011; Hoe, 2011; Ladyshewsky, 2010; Longenecker, 2010; Mavor, Sadler-Smith,

& Gray, 2010; Nevalainen, & Maijala, 2012; Offstein, Kniphuisen, Bichy, & Childers Jr., 2013; Robinson, 2010; Rousseau, Aubé, & Tremblay, 2013; Ryan & Sagas, 2011; Snoeck & Struyf, 2012; Stephens, 2013; Toit & Reissner, 2012; Walker-Fraser, 2011; Warhurst, 2013; Wright, 2012).

The analysis of 41 articles reveals that coaching is discussed together with different areas of business. Management development and coaching (26% of articles) are at the top position. 20% of articles discuss coaching in the context of organisational development and organisational change. Leadership development and coaching are discussed in almost 15% of articles. Other areas of business that are discussed along with coaching are the following: organisational performance, human resource development, team innovation, non-formal work place learning.

Therefore, it was concluded that coaching is mostly manifested in management development, organisational development and change as well as leadership development.

The second stage of research was the survey of coaches. 15 coaches took part in the survey and completed the questionnaire. In the first section, the coaches were asked to mark all relevant answers that characterise their background best. The following professional areas were indicated in the questionnaire: internal organisational coach, executive coach (external), life coach, organisation leader, manager, HR or training professional, consultant, mentor, mediator, other professional. Vast majority of coaches (87%) defined their professional background as an executive coach. 11 out of 15 coaches marked more the one profession she/he is engaged in. Among them, 1 respondent noted the engagement in 5 areas: executive coach, life coach, manager, HR and training specialist, consultant, 5 respondents marked their engagement in 4 professions. The position of an executive coach was combined with the role of a consultant in 7 cases, the role of an HR and training professional in 5 cases, the post of a manager and organisation leader in 4 and 3 cases respectively. 80% of coaches graduated from an accredited coach training program, 1 respondent is a second-year student of the Master Program in Coaching. The average experience in coaching is 3-5 years.

The coaches were asked to define the industry sectors that used their coaching services and the size of the companies. The analysis of responses shows that all respondents work in different industries and with the companies of different size. The coaches are engaged in Retail and Wholesale (22%), Banking and Finance Services (17%), Information Technology (17%), Manufacturing and Production (15%), Education (11%), Health Care (7%). The coaches identified the company size from 51 to 250 employees in 12 cases, under 50 employees in 10 cases, from 251 to 500 employees in 6 cases, 1,000 or more employees in 5 cases and from 500 to 1,000 employees in 4 cases.

Using the scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being "the least frequently used" and 5 being "the most frequently used", the coaches were asked to rate how frequently they think coaching is used for different purposes in an organisation. The following purposes were listed based on the average number:

- To develop and improve performance (4.20);
- To address leadership development (4.00);
- To improve the skills of an individual worker (3.67);
- To facilitate transition to senior roles (3.62);
- To enhance interactions within a team (3.38);
- As a part of performance management to support staff development (3.23);
- To address specific workplace problems (2.77);
- To address issues in a coachee's non-work life (2.55);
- To support new employees (2.33);
- To boost employee engagement (2.33).

Using the scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not effective at all" and 5 being "Very effective", coaches were asked to rate the effect that coaching has had on the following business skills and processes:

- Leadership development;
- Performance management;
- Conflict management;

- Change management;
- Learning and development;
- Teams management.

Analysing the results, it has been discovered that in coaches' opinion coaching is used more effectively for learning and development, leadership development and change management (See Fig. 1).
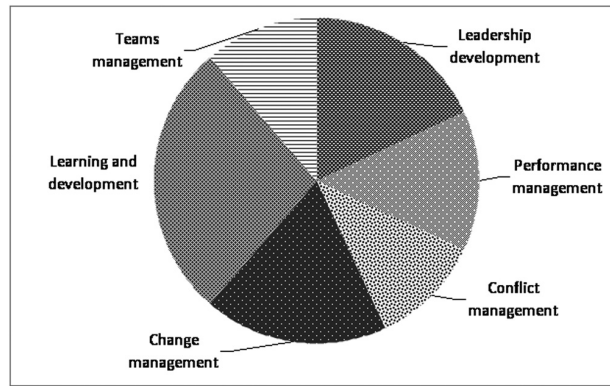

Fig. 1. The level of effectiveness of coaching

Based on their experience, coaches ranked the frequency the people receive coaching in organisation on a scale from 1 (the most frequently) to 6 (the least frequently). At the same time, they were asked to give their opinion about the parties that need coaching most using the same scale. There was a difference in coaches' responses with regard to the parties that receive coaching and those who need coaching in an organisation. (See Table 2).

Table 2. Target groups for coaching in organisations

Who receives coaching	Who needs coaching
1. Executives	1. Executives
2. High potential employees	2. Middle level management
3. Middle level management	3. High potential employees
	4. Teams

The coaches agreed that the executives receive coaching most frequently and that they should be at the top of the list of those who need coaching. The majority of coaches indicate high potential employees and middle management as the next two target groups that receive coaching. However, they consider that middle level managers should take the next two positions in the list of parties who need coaching. High potential employees and teams are in the third position.

Almost all coaches consider that coaching often solves problems in organisations. Using the scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 being "not effective" and 7 being "extremely effective", coaches were asked to rate the impact of coaching in an organisation. In coaches' opinion, coaching has the greatest impact on the relationships and teamwork among staff at different levels. The respondents put two indicators, namely, the use of people, skills and resources, and business performance, in the second position. The respondents indicated that coaching has lesser impact on job satisfaction and staff retention.

Therefore, the results of the questionnaire reveal that, in coaches' opinion, 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.

To comprehensively analyse and verify the results of the questionnaire, the coaches were asked about the key benefits of coaching for individuals and organisations, the purposes for which coaching can be used most effectively as well as the manifestations of coaching in organisations.

The interview data are currently under analysis, however, the initial findings show that talking about the purposes of coaching implementation in organisations the coaches mention that leadership development is a productive area for coaching. Performance coaching, when it is based on high potential coaching, is the most enjoyable type of coaching. There are ample possibilities for the use of coaching, it can be used for improving communication style, for changing directive leadership style and improving the processes in the company.

The coaches mostly emphasize the impact of coaching on the individual level. Coaching gives individuals new possibilities for development, when people try to do new things, they become more open and more responsible for their future.

Therefore, the effect of coaching first appears on the individual level, at the same time, individual results accumulate to form the company results. Implementing coaching provides opportunity to get a big picture of the business to achieve goals, to work more effectively in the real situations. Time limit is important in coaching. Coaching provides opportunity to achieve the results more effectively in the limited time.

3.2. Discussion

The comparison of the research results presented in the articles analysed and the analysis of coaches' opinions shows the agreement of the findings.

Coaching plays a key role in the field of leadership and management development (Baron, Morin, & Morin, 2010). The researchers explain the reasons of the growing popularity of coaching by two factors: the numerous and frequent changes experienced within organizations have created a need to develop management skills, however, traditional training methods do not appear to meet these organizational needs. The questionnaire and interview findings also prove that leadership and management development are at the top of the list of the purposes for which coaching is implemented more frequently.

The researchers found that managers who work with an executive coach are significantly more likely than other managers to set specific goals, solicit ideas for improvements from their superiors, and to obtain higher ratings from direct reports and superiors (Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2009). Answering the interview questions, the coaches mentioned that coaching provides opportunity to achieve the results more effectively in the limited time.

Coaching is considered to be a training process that can develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and contribute to actions that create results (Berg & Karlsen, 2011). The researchers argue that coaching can help managers increase their action repertoires and become more action focused through dialogue and behaviour change. They study coaching as a methodology for management training and workplace learning. In their study, Berg and Karlsen (Berg & Karlsen, 2011) showed that with the help of coaching managers will create new insight, develop new knowledge and skills, gain new insight into the key capabilities necessary to achieve the desired results. The questionnaire results show that learning and development is considered a key area where coaching is implemented more effectively. The coaches highlighted that coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance, it increases individuals' awareness and helps develop new knowledge and skills.

Both literature review and responses of the interviewed coaches indicate that manifestation of coaching in organisations is more obvious on the level of individuals. However, coaching, in spite of its focus on a single client, is essentially an organisational intervention (Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2009). The coaches' opinion coincides with the researches' point of view. Coaches consider that individual achievements will contribute to the success of the organisation as a whole.

The present research on the manifestations of coaching at organisational level constitutes the basis for further authors' research on implementation of coaching to improve the efficiency of organisations in Latvia.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the present paper was to address some of the issues identified in the literature concerning the implementation of coaching in organisations. This study provided a conceptual framework to understand what areas of business are discussed within the framework of the study of coaching as well as what theories of coaching are most frequently addressed in the literature and are implemented in practice in the real world. The manifestations of

coaching in organisations were revealed based on the analysis of EMERALD peer-reviewed journal articles as well as the analysis of the data gained from the questionnaire and interview specifically designed for coaches.

The results suggest 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 organisational intervention.

The results of this research have considerable implications for the practice of coaching within organisations in Latvia. This is one of the first attempts to compare the theories that underpin coaching implementation in organisations discussed in literature with the real experience of the coaches in the areas of business, where coaching services are mainly used. Most of the coaches who completed the questionnaire and took part in the interview are practicing in Latvia, this gave the unique chance to the author to analyse the manifestations of coaching with the emphasis on the regional peculiarities of its implementation in the organisations in Latvia. No previous research has been conducted in Latvia, in which coaches' practice was studied in terms of their implications for different aspects of business.

Research limitations and future research: the study has some limitations. First, the analysis of the articles was limited to the scope of only one database. In future, journal articles published by EBSCO and ELSEVIER will be analysed as well. Second, the analysis of business areas and main theories was limited by the set aim to identify core areas where coaching is used more effectively. In future, the author will use these findings in her further research on implementation of coaching to improve the efficiency of organisations in Latvia.

Acknowledgements

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