COACHING EFFECTIVENESS STUDY

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Abstract. Coaching has great opportunities to make positive impact on the development of organizational human resources and organizational capacity as a whole. In Latvia, coaching is not sufficiently developed, partly due to the lack of understanding of its effectiveness. The aim of the research is to perform an analysis of the effectiveness of coaching in human resources management. The theoretical research on the effectiveness of coaching was carried out by using findings of various researchers. An empirical study was carried out at the State Employment Agency of Latvia. The proposals for the development of coaching in Latvia are developed. The following research methods are used: content analysis, comparative analysis, synthesis, and the abstract and logical construction methods. Coaching implementation proposals could be used to develop organizational training strategies.

Keywords: coaching, effectiveness, human resources management.
JELI code: M53, M54, J24

Introduction

The origins of coaching lay in the field of sports. One of the coaching founders, John Whitmor, initially developed this direction as a special form of psychological training for high-level athletes to achieve outstanding results. This approach quickly gained recognition not only among the athletes but also among businesses, politicians, and other groups. In the 1990s, coaching had already become a solid value for world-leading companies as an integral part of growth and training (Untāls, 2011).

There are several definitions of coaching. Michael Carroll (Carroll, 2015) emphasized that professional coaching is an ongoing partnership that helps clients to produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance and enhance their quality of life. Coaching concentrates on where clients are today and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be tomorrow. The Neuro Linguistic Programming Centre (NLP) established in Latvia in 2002, defines coaching as the process that promotes and confirms that it positively impacts human development, growth and achievement. It is a kind of human individual “workout” along with a coach to achieve meaningful goals. Coaching is a series of conversations that help people to get closer to their infinite potential, help them to understand their role or task, and take responsibility for their future activities. Special
attention is paid to the client’s responsibility in the coaching process. Coaching helps people to find the best ways to succeed and achieve satisfaction during the goal implementation process (Rusina, 2018). The main task of the coach is to ask questions by correctly guiding the conversation with the client, achieving results and positive changes. The only one who can judge coach competence is his/her client. The first coach question in the coaching session would be: “What do you want to talk about today?” The topic of the conversation is always determined by the client. The coach does not teach, but helps to activate the client’s internal potential, helps to discover new ways of solving various issues. A good coach helps the client to learn from her/his own experience, not teaching and giving advice (Kas ir koučings, 2018). The coach’s profession popularity nowadays is very fast growing, there are various professional coach associations and federations operating in the world, coaching is widely used in business and organizational management, education, medicine, and other fields.

The coaching culture is becoming more and more popular. The coaching organizational culture includes elements of corporate culture that help an organization’s employees to raise their awareness, responsibility, engagement, and to get support. The modern leader/coach has the choice: to use coaching methods to achieve the goals set, to solve problems, or to implement and develop the coaching culture in the organization. Coaching is not sufficiently developed and implemented in Latvia. There is a lack of information about good coaching practice, about its positive impact on human resources management in organizations. There is not enough awareness of coaching effectiveness. Coaching in Latvia has not gained widespread popularity due to the high cost of coach services as well (Smirnova, 2018). There is also lack of methodical materials about coaching management in Latvian. The number of studies in this field is insufficient.

The aim of the research is to analyse the effectiveness of coaching in human resources management. The hypothesis of the research: implementation of coaching in human resource management is a powerful mechanism in the development of national prosperity.

To achieve the aim, several tasks are defined:
• to provide insight into some theoretical findings about the effectiveness of coaching;
• to analyse the results of an empirical study at the State Employment Agency of Latvia;
• to develop recommendations for coaching implementation in organizations.

The research object: coaching.
The research subject: factors influencing coaching effectiveness.
Novelty: proposals for implementation of coaching could be used to develop organizational training strategies.

To accomplish the objectives, the following research methods were used: content analysis, comparative analysis, synthesis, abstract and logical construction methods.

**Coaching effectiveness in the view of various researchers**

The term ‘coaching’ includes four functions: consulting, training, therapy, and mentoring (see Figure 1). Training means the process whereby the expert instructs and teaches the trainee to develop new skills. Consulting means providing an expertise in the specific field to advise and inform the client how to solve the problem in the best way. Therapy means the process of healing past hurts and resolving personal pain. The focus is ‘to fix’ what is broken. Mentoring means an unequal relationship where the more experienced person imparts his/her knowledge, skills, and experience to the less experienced person (What is coaching, 2013).

![Fig. 1 What is coaching (Source: What is coaching, 2013)](image)

Despite the obvious advantages of coaching, there are a lot of coaching opponents. In recent years, many scientific studies have been carried out about coaching efficiency and effectiveness. This research analyses several scientific studies related to the effectiveness of coaching.

The effectiveness of coaching at the workplace is analysed in several studies. The coaching effectiveness of internal and external coaches at the
workplaces is studied by Jones R. J., Woods S. A., Guillaume Y. R. F. (Jones et al., 2016). Analysis of this research has confirmed the positive coaching impact at the workplaces. The study confirms that coaching is more effective if it is carried out by the organization’s internal coaches or mixed team coaches (both external and internal coaches). The work of the internal coaches contribute to a greater effect than the work of the external coaches. The authors of the research have explained that the internal coaches have a better understanding of the organizational culture and climate, and thus can better promote the work so that employees would be more productive in their specific workplace (e.g. specific target setting and achievement). The authors admit that the study findings are informative, they can be used to make decisions about specific coaching tools and techniques, however, even though the results show that, in general, coaching seems to be effective regardless of the coaching format and duration (including sessions), practitioners and organizations should carefully consider whether external coach services should be used. One of their research question concerns effectiveness of the coaching in providing individual training and development, and improvement the organization's performance and results. This analysis has made important steps forward to prevent systematic lack of scientific evidence. The study has provided extensive evidence of the potential benefits of coaching at work.

In 2016, the team of the researchers conducted an experiment at the University of Salzburg with the aim to investigate the comparative effectiveness of coaching compared to training courses and internship practices. The results were summarized and analysed in the scientific paper “Comparing the Effectiveness of Individual Coaching, Self-Coaching, and Group Training: How Leadership makes the Difference” (Losch, et al., 2016). The researchers have identified which coaching method is more effective and why. They have compared individual coaching, self-coaching, group coaching, and control group without intervention. The students from the University of Salzburg, who regularly hindered academic performance, were included in the experiment. The results of the experiment have demonstrated that individual coaching and group coaching are effective in promoting the achievement of goals and in reducing the hindered academic performance. Individual coaching was a great achievement and was superior in helping participants to achieve their goals, but group coaching positively contributed to the acquisition of relevant knowledge. The results of the self-coaching team demonstrated that the self-performed exercises, without coach support, were not enough to achieve high goals. According to the findings of the study, the results of this study can help to select appropriate human resources development methods: if there is a general need to systematically train the employees for performing specific tasks, the group
coaching seems to be more useful because of lower costs. However, if the specific work conditions or individual development goals are of the paramount importance, the individual coaching can be recommended. The individual coaching was the most effective intervention to promote the goals of the participants. In addition, the individual coaching and the group coaching members had reported a significantly lower number of absences than members of the control group. The self-coaching results showed that the self-performed exercises without coach support were not enough to improve the performance and ease the achievement of the goals. The analysis had showed that the behaviour of coaching transformation and conduct management had influenced the participants' intrinsic motivation, which also resulted in the favourable coaching results. The coaches provide intellectual stimulation, encouraging customers to explore the issues from new perspectives, and by doing so, the coaches inspire to highlight new solutions and ideas. Finally, the coaches provide inspirational motivation by helping colleagues to create an optimistic vision of their future. The individual coaching was the most effective intervention to stimulate the achievement of the goals of the participants. The individual coaching and group coaching members had reported significantly less delays compared to members of the control group.

Gurchek (Gurchek, 2016) carried out an analysis of the 2016 Global Executive Competition Board findings. The researcher has concluded that businesses were focusing on internal coaching to promote leadership development and train managers who can work as the coaches in their teams. In order to develop future leaders and teams, analysis of the internal coaching culture has been widely conducted. Coaching is integrated in the management of change and is used to develop the career prospects of employees. For example, the Texas University's Oncology Centre in Houston have used internal trainers to run the mid-year executives' annual coaching group programmes. One of the components in coaching is individual development plan. Gurchek had noted that the internal coaches were less common than recruiting the external coaches, that the prices for external training services had increased – the manager received up to USD 600 per coaching hour. Some examples of good coaching practice are mentioned in the research provided by Gurchek:

1. The website of the Industrial and Organizational Psychology Association indicates that there are both internal and external coaches in the organization.

2. Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) online. Personnel specialists develop coaching programmes, introduce front line trainers, or include coaching in the management training programmes.
3. In 2010, Google introduced the Google Career Guru coaching programme, which was later extended to Guru-plus with 350 internal coaches in 60 offices around the world. Coaching is done by practically using the Google Hangouts programme. Depending on the topic, coaching sessions can range from one to eight sessions. The coaches manage 12 topics, such as sales questions, career promotion, team development, presentation, e.t.c. For example, a salesperson in Australia who is going to make a big sale can get a coaching session from a “sales guru” who works in the industry but is located in another country. Support for workers who face labour or personal obstacles could be provided. To become an internal trainer, the applicant must work in Google for at least two years, take the top management training for the organization and work as an expert. The Google's leaders must support the guru. This programme is definitely revolutionary and meaningful.

The effectiveness of the executive coaching during organizational change is studied by Anthony M. Grant (Grant, 2013). The researcher has raised and confirmed the hypothesis that participation in the coaching programme during the organizational change could promote the achievement of goals, solution-oriented thinking, greater ability to overcome changes, moreover it increase the self-efficacy and flexibility of managers, reduce depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as raises satisfaction with the workplace. The executive power coaching is often used during the organizational change to help managers to develop the psychological and behavioural skills needed to focus on achieving work goals while addressing the organizational change issues. The study had used both quantitative and qualitative measures to explore the impact of coaching on 31 leading executives and managers of the international organizations during the organizational change. The participation in coaching was also linked to the achievement of more goals-improving solution-minded thinking, developing greater ability to cope with change, increasing efficiency and flexibility in management, and reducing depression. The positive impact of coaching is also evident in non-work-related areas, such as family life. The research suggestions were intended to evaluate and develop the executive coaching programmes. The main objectives of the coaching programme were to stimulate the participants' ability to manage change, as well as to promote productivity in the organization. In addition, the programme was used to support the participants in their career development, developing greater clarity and deeper understanding of their individual strengths, personal values, and developmental needs. The noticeable rise in solution-oriented thinking, which is a prime skill during organizational disturbances and
change, was considerable. This is an important point because many managers have a tendency to the problem-oriented thinking. The different effect of coach’s work also help to emphasize that training is not a 'comprehensive panacea'. The coaching has the greatest impact on the topics it focuses on. This study presents the original data that suggests that the managers’ training can be very positive during the organizational change. The executive coaching can increase the achievement of job-related goals, improve market-based thinking, develop greater readiness for change, increase manager self-efficiency gains and flexibility, and reduce depression. This study has showed that the positive effects of executive training can be generalized to such areas not related to work as family life. The findings of this study is also a reminder to the coaches and their clients that it is important to clearly define the main goals of the coaching (Grant, 2013).

In 2011, the experiment on coaching effectiveness was carried out in the project form in the bank of the Arab Emirates. (McDermott, et al., 2011). The research problem was identified: the indigenous people face difficulties entering the labour market, where the majority of the workforce is composed of the representatives of other cultures. The employment coaches were selected and trained, and they worked both with the target group and individually. The coaching was conducted online (coaching services were provided by the Canadian coaches via electronic means). These coaches worked with the following target group: 67 new employees participated in group coaching seminars and 29 trainees received individual coaching during the first 3 months of the project implementation. In the case of individual coaching, 12 questions were related to the performance issues, and 17 were related to the intention to withdraw from the bank. The performance issues were not available to the researchers. From the trainees who planned to resign only three terminated the employment contract, while the remaining trainees continued to work, at least in the short term. The coaches had considered confidentiality; the coaches met together once every two weeks to discuss all issues. The results of the research were positive – better adaptation at the workplace, as well as remaining at the workplace. The feedback of the project was positive. The coaches had tried out the simple and effective programme Let’s CHAT! The researchers of the experiment had noted that, in spite of the positive statistics concerning remaining at the workplace, the further research in this area would be very valuable. The findings of the study show that the career coaching has the potential to significantly change both employee engagement and retention by offering promising future career development opportunities. The scientists have emphasized it would be useful to collect data regarding the level of involvement and motivation of the new employees.
Linder-Pelz (Linder-Pelz, 2008) has emphasized in his research that the Meta-Coaching methodology is the evidence-based development of coaching that is collaborative, focused on solutions, systematic, and promotes the employees performance, life experience, self-sustaining learning, and targeted growth.

The effectiveness study of the internal or external coaching jobs has been carried out by Rebecca J. Jones, Stephen A. Woods, Yves R. F (Rebecca, et al., 2016). The researchers have conducted a meta-analysis summarising the results of the research on the effectiveness of coaching jobs. The main findings of the research are as follows: positive effects of workplace coaching are confirmed; different criteria are used in the approach to the training and development of employees in organisations; coaching is more effective when performed by internal coaches than by external coaches; coaching at the workplace is effective when face-to-face or mixed methods are used (the face-to-face method mixed by the e-coaching method).

Anthony M. Grant’s research (Grant, 2013) has confirmed the hypothesis that participation in the coaching programme during organisational changes would encourage achieving goals, solutions-oriented thinking, greater ability to overcome changes, and increase the self-effectiveness and flexibility of the manager, reduce depression, anxiety, and stress, and increase satisfaction with the workplace.

Van Oosten and Ellen Brooks (Van Oosten, et al., 2013) have studied the effects of the leaders’ emotional intelligence on the effectiveness of coaching. Two hypotheses have been tested in the empirical study: 1) Does the emotional intelligence of the leaders ensure their effectiveness? 2) What is the impact of the quality coaching on the leader’s effectiveness? The causation between emotional intelligence and work results of the leaders is also studied in the research. The main findings of the study are as follows: the coaching increases the leader’s empathy and confidence, the leader is encouraged to be more open, his/her self-awareness and ability to learn and dream are raised.

Robinson in his study “The Case of Coaching Cultures” has considered that the organizations implementing the coaching culture, must meet at least five of the six coaching criteria: 1) employees appreciate coaching; 2) leading staff evaluates coaching; 3) there are budget lines for coaching for the organization; 4) coaching is available to all employees; 5) managers or coaches go through accredited coach training; 6) all three types of coaching (internal coaches, practicing external coaches, and managers who use coaching skills) are working in the organization. The researcher points out that this kind of culture contributes to a better involvement in the work process, which also has positive effects on the development and financial performance of the organization (Robinson, 2018).
Since 2012, according to the UK annual survey of education and talent, the leader as a coach model is estimated as one of the best ways of teaching and talent development and is now widely used in this country (Filsinger, 2014).

According to O. Achsuk's findings, the introduction of the organization's coaching culture promotes the following changes: 1) the speed and quality of the management decisions change; 2) a single information field is created; 3) the level of communication increases reducing the number of dysfunctional conflicts and resistance to change; 4) involvement of the employees in the company’s business processes increases; 5) ongoing deliberate continuous professional development of employees, and all employees at all levels are responsible for this process and the result; 6) the speed of development and implementation of projects increases; 7) the flexibility of the company expands; 8) level of the employees' satisfaction increases; 9) the customers’ satisfaction increases (Achsuk, 2017).

**Empirical study on coaching effectiveness**

In Latvia, coaching is not sufficiently developed and implemented, partly due to lack of understanding of its effectiveness. The number of studies confirming its efficacy is insufficient. An important study with the aim to research the effect of coaching culture on the organization's capacity building was performed at the State Employment Agency (SEA) by the author Smirnova (Smirnova, 2018), within the frame of her master thesis. The survey at the SEA was carried out in 2018. A survey target group was identified to investigate the attitude of the employees towards the coaching culture. The target group included the YG (Youth Guarantee) project’s co-ordinating experts and career counselors whose duties are related to the servicing of the unemployed youth registered at the Agency: motivation, support, involvement in the activities, and integration into the labour market. This group participated in the training cycle “Coaching methods for co-ordinating experts and career counsellors in cooperation with young unemployed” in 2016. The purpose of the training was to provide participants with the opportunity to learn and teach the use of a structured coaching approach to work with young people – the unemployed (including young people with special needs) aged 15-29. Forty six percent of the staff involved in the training project participated in the survey, which comprised 57% of all the respondents (42 questionnaires were completed). The results of the survey showed that the respondents who had received coaching training, positively evaluated the usefulness of the coaching and its positive impact: 92% of the respondents highly appreciated the training, 92% - used the skills obtained in the training in daily work, 86% - expressed their wish
to implement the coaching culture in the organization. All the respondents confirmed high interest in the coaching training. 90% of all respondents who took part in coaching training expressed their wish in additional training.

The coaching has positive impact on the work environment. There were some questions in the survey related to the respondents’ work environment and how they feel in this environment. The respondents’ attitude to their work environment is shown in Figure 2. The following factors in the study were chosen as the working environment factors: ability to develop own potential, be heard from the managers side, get support from managers, good organizational structure, and be happy at work. Percentages of the respondents are displayed on the vertical axis of the figure. The analysis demonstrated that the respondents who felt valuable at work, and felt themselves belonging to their organization, deemed that:

- their job allowed them to develop their potential (51%);
- their opinion was always heard from their leaders (64%);
- their managers supported them (65%);
- the organization structure was logical and transparent (74%);
- they felt happy (56%).

The results of the survey showed also a negative correlation (Smirnova, 2015) between the following statements:

'I feel valuable and belonging to the organization' and 'I look for another job' (-0.53);
'I feel valuable and belonging to the organization' and 'My job is too much controlled' (-0.57).

The findings indicated an extremely high interest in coaching opportunities at the SEA, as well as a favourable environment for the introduction of the coaching culture at the SEA. The coaching culture has huge potential for influencing these above-mentioned factors by using team-
mediation methods as well as the model “Leader as a Coach”. The results of the survey have emphasized that the staff education in coaching is very important, because the positive attitude of the employees towards coaching and support from the top management are prerequisites for the efficient introduction of the coaching culture.

The SEA takes care of the training and development of employees, the European Social Fund funding is actively used for this purpose. There is a tendency to increase the professional competence of the employees with a view to improving the quality of the services. However, the focus is always on the recipient of the service, not on the manager/employee. By changing the focus, giving more support to the managers and the employees of the SEA, positive impact on the quality of services will take place. The coaching culture is offered for the maintenance of a good working environment, the development of human resources, and the creation of self-motivation of employees. It will reduce the staff turnover, as well as promote the motivation of managers and employees, professional growth, engagement in work, thus ensuring the development of the organization’s capacity.

Based on the practical research results, it is also possible to identify problem-solving opportunities, focusing more on the team unity, the employed sense of belonging, and the managers’ attitude and style of management. To solve these problems, it is useful to use coaching methods, coaching culture and the model “Leader as a Coach”.

Conclusions

Coaching is a powerful change management tool that helps to achieve organizational goals, has a positive impact on the development of human resources, and provides the improvement of organizations’ competitiveness and capacity development. The greatest efficiency in the achievement of the goals is promoted by the activities of the inner couch, the external couch activities are also viewed positively, but it is not so inspiring. Individual training and group training helps to achieve the best results in achieving goals. Self-coaching is also effective, but not enough to achieve high goals. The model 'Leader as a Coach' is one of the best management styles. Coaching allows focusing on the team unity, therefore coaching is recommended for identifying problem-solving opportunities.

Coaching in Latvia has not gained widespread popularity. The authors offer the following recommendations for promotion and accessibility of coaching in Latvia:

a) taking into account the coaching role in the achievement of organizational goals, in the improvement of organization
competitiveness and capacity, coaching could be implemented in the development of organization training strategies;

b) coaching should be integrated as a study course in the study programmes at the higher education institutions in Latvia;

c) cooperation among the higher education institutions, coaching practitioners and the SEA should be developed in order to facilitate the training of entrepreneurs, public authorities, and students. This would increase the ability of managers and would attract new industry professionals. This is necessary to support managers in managing change and increasing the professional competence of employees.

The SEA is a development-oriented institution that is conscious and highly appreciates the need for change and innovation, and its environment is ready for the introduction of the coaching culture. Some recommendations for SEA management in setting up the coaching culture in the organization:

1) to introduce the coaching culture as an outsourced service to the senior managers of the SEA;

2) to establish an internal coach position to provide coaching services for executive employees of the organization, as well as career counselors, project experts, and employment organizers who use the acquired knowledge to work with the unemployed and job seekers.

The internal coach should also organize workshops on employer coaching opportunities in human resources management at subsidized jobs and at other jobs for the promotion of coaching culture. Using the face-to-face method and the model 'Leader as a Coach' can achieve high results. Coaching advice is also valuable over the phone and electronically. The coaching culture is going to provide a positive impact on the culture of the SEA organization and contribute to the development of the SEA capacity.

References


