Copenhagen University IFI

Contrasting traditions in mentoring and coaching research

David Megginson
Visiting Professor, Sheffield Hallam University & MCRG Ltd
0114 289 1367
d.f.megginson@shu.ac.uk

Exploring the Mentoring Research Agenda

• An archetypal mentoring article
  – Phyllis Tharenou 2005
  – 'Does mentor support increase women's career advancement more than men's? The differential effects of career and psychosocial support'
  – Australian Journal of Management
  – 30(1), pp 77-109
• What can you say about this article already?
Based on past research on mentoring, this study examined whether mentor career support helped women’s career advancement more than it did men’s, and more than psychosocial (emotional) support did. The sample of 3220 Australians, chiefly from the public sector and finance and business service industry, was surveyed twice, a year apart. Mentor career support increased women protégés’ advancement more than it did men’s, whereas psychosocial support generally reduced women’s advancement more than it did men’s. Unexpectedly, female mentors, not males, had the strongest effects, both helping and hindering their protégé’s advancement. Mentor support was not related to men’s advancement. Why mentoring was differently related to men’s and women’s advancement was discussed.

See copy of the article
Exploring the Coaching Research Agenda

• ...and an archetypal coaching article
  – Parker-Wilkins, V. 2006
  – 'Business impact of executive coaching: demonstrating monetary value.'
  – Industrial and Commercial Training

• ...and what can you say about this article already?

Archetypal abstract for coaching

• Purpose Increase understanding of the impact of executive coaching and enhance the use of coaching throughout the firm

• Methodology The RoI study had 3 processes: understand business value expected by firm's senior leadership; document what staff learned from coaching; explore what staff did to create tangible and monetary value for the business

• Findings Effects isolated; monetary benefits discounted by isolation and error percentages; 2 extreme values eliminated; monetary value reduced by 50%; RoI $3,268,325 (689%)

• Practical implications Attaining business benefits takes a more proactive stance in how coaching is managed: ongoing measurement of the value of coaching should be linked to the achievement of specific business objectives and value propositions

• Originality Provides leaders of executive development programmes with approach to assess monetary value of executive coaching

• Paper type Case study
Archetypal content: coaching

- See copy of the article

Features of mentoring literature

- Relation to strongly overlapping cannon
- Positivist, hypothesis testing, methodology
  - with relatively complex statistical analysis
- Intervening variables examined
- Passive language for mentee
  - emphasises sponsorship form of mentoring
- Distance from the participants of the study
  - academic outsiders using surveys
Features of coaching literature

- Insider account
  - author involved in the project
- Business relevance
  - addresses a business audience
- Aiming to enhance the practice of coaching
- Scheme evaluation citing outputs/outcomes
- Small samples
- Data from coachees
- Benefits of coaching identified and specified

Theoretical position of research traditions

**Mentoring**
- positivist 'normal science'
- widely referenced
- based on mentoring functions
- using hypothesis testing
- large samples of mentees
- controlling or testing the effect of intervening variables
- inferential statistics
- by academics for academics

**Coaching**
- phenomenological case studies
- insider accounts
- insights into the dynamics
- no attention to alternative explanations for phenomena
- emphasise the positive and effective
- evaluation research
- written for practitioners and purchasers of coaching
Agenda for improvement of mentoring research

• More longitudinal studies/quasi-experiments
• Examine effects on other stakeholders (mentors and sponsors)
• Break out from Kram’s functions
• Look inside the black box
• Attend to development of good practice and elegant theory

Agenda for improvement of coaching research

• Follow dictates of case study research
• Studies across coaching approaches
• Build typology of coaching inputs and outcomes
• Conduct positivist research
• Conduct longitudinal studies and quasi-experiments
• Continue to attend to the black box
• Explore experience of coaches and others involved