

An Integrated Coaching Model in the Context of E-Coaching

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ABSTRACT

This paper's key focus is to explore the theoretically prospect to apply an Integrated Coaching Model (ICM) to improve performance of a coachee in an e-coaching environment. Challenges faced when applying this model are analysed and recommendations for further research with the aim to overcome these challenges are made. Further the main benefits and challenges of e-coaching will be voiced. The ICM with respect to e-coaching will be extracted and analysed. The overall research design for this study was an exploration of existing coaching literature within numerous research fields in order to be able to assimilate the context of the research question.

Key words: Integrated Coaching Model; e-coaching; e-coaching challenges; e-coaching model; improved performance; e-coaching benefits.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching styles evolve with each new generation mainly due to technological advances [17]. For example the virtual generation (V-Gen) engage with online gaming, forming relationships online [13]. Further, empirical evidence exists that it is possible to deliver behavioural change programmes using the Internet and electronic media [8]. Further with the ever increasing technological advances, and connectivity between people using technology, developing theory on applying Business Coaching 'online' is not only necessary, but will contribute to a research domain which is relatively new to academic research. Even though the Internet and technology provides several new opportunities in the coaching profession, it also presents several challenges [4]. This article aims to identify these challenges and to make some recommendations on possible research initiatives for further study.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Against the background provided, the main research question can be formulated as: Is it possible to use the Integrated Coaching Model during e-coaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exploring the literature using the keywords e-coaching, web based coaching, virtual coaching and online coaching, all within the business coaching context, revealed few results. However extensive research is present when searching for research on web based education and online education in general as well as in the business context. This review will attempt to explore the research in the educational realm and discuss its suitability within the e-coaching realm. Next coaching as a generic field of study will be briefly introduced.

In order to understand the outcomes of a coaching programme, the concept of coaching are clarified. The definition of coaching is defined as talking and acting in a purposeful way, with the goal of improvement [16]. In

order to accomplish this, it is deduced that a coach needs to be a critical listener and observer, who asks questions, makes observations, and offers suggestions that helps a person to grow and reflect and produce different decisions. With the definition and goal of coaching in mind, the nature of e-coaching are explored next.

Essentially e-coaching would be performing the coaching activities using any electronic media, such as the Internet, telephone, Skype, chat rooms, forums, learning management systems and websites [4]. Although E-coaching can go further in that artificial intelligence can be employed. For example: Allison experimented with a chat bot that would function as a librarian to provide advice on common questions, and which can learn to some degree by itself [1]. However, due to the infancy of the research in artificial intelligence, this article will not consider any further literature on artificial intelligence.

A number of criticisms of e-coaching in particular are made by Driscoll and Carliner [4]. The main three criticisms can be summarized as follows:

- That e-coaching programs can be impersonal in nature as there are less visual clues present.
- The interrupted flow of communication, such as response times between emails, causes a delay in the learning experience.
- E-coaching makes it easy for coaches to delay replies and to procrastinate during the coaching sessions, since there is no physical contact.

A number of benefits of e-coaching can also be highlighted [4]. The main benefits are as follows:

- World-wide talent can be made available locally since the Internet reduces physical barriers.
- E-coaching can optimize the learning process for people with busy schedules, since the coach and coachee can talk to each other asynchronously.
- E-coaching makes it possible to keep record of most if not all communications.

The benefits of e-coaching can make it worthwhile to explore e-coaching as a viable coaching medium. In order not to further evaluate the effectiveness of e-coaching, a model of coaching needs to be evaluated in the context of e-coaching and its effectiveness compared. This causes a new problem, since there is no one single model that coaches use [6]. The reason for this is that individual coaches are entitled to define their role and services as they wish, however this had led the coaching profession with a lack of standardization on the definition of coaching, as well as coaching methodologies [19]. However, the common attributes on which successful coaching is based can be defined and expressed at a higher level in the form of a theoretical model. The Integrative Coaching Model (ICM)

developed by Passmore[14], can be used as basis for this model. In the next section, the ICM will be unpacked and briefly discussed, before it is further developed:

Improved Performance

Improved performance of the coachee can be achieved by the coach through moving between different streams of change [14]. These streams can be identified as *being the relationship*, *behavioural focus*, *conscious cognition*, *unconscious cognition* and the *systemic*. These streams will be discussed next.

Relationship Stream

The coach needs to build and maintain a relationship with his coachee in order to create and maintain trust and respect [14]. Without trust and respect, the coaching programme will not be successful.

Behavioural Focus Stream

This stream is perhaps the most popular stream in the coaching process [14]. For any coaching programme to be effective to achieve improved performance, a behavioural change on the part of the coachee needs to be established [19]. Coaches are entitled to develop their own models as they wish [19], and this is also what set one coach apart from another. More experienced coaches can also implement the conscious cognition stream in their coaching, which will be discussed next.

Conscious Cognition Stream

The way the organisation, or individual sees the world and frames their experiences can be referred to as conscious cognition [18]. In this stream the coach can typically utilize cognitive-behavioral techniques [3][5]. However very few counseling models have been translated for use by coaches [11][12][15]. The central concept in this stream is that the coach needs to encourage the coachee to identify irrational beliefs and then to help the coachee to challenge these beliefs [14].

Unconscious Cognition Stream

Emotional ground and motivational roots forms part of the unconscious of mankind, and is deeply hidden and likely outside of conscious awareness [18]. The emotional ground is the pattern of feelings that shape an individual's meaning, and the individual's behavior is shaped by their motivational roots [14]. However coachees may be reluctant to discuss these highly personal experiences with coaches. As an alternative, Miller and Rollnick [10] indicated that a coach may look for patterns of experiences or to explore unconscious aspects of motivation, which may provide information to work with.

Systemic Stream

The systemic stream includes the environment and cultural context within which the coach as well as the coachee finds themselves [14]. Passmore argued that within this stream the task of the coach is to help the coachee understand the environment and cultural context and its impact on his or her behaviour, as well as those who the coachee works with.

The above ICM encapsulate the variability in the coaching field [14], and is an attempt to standardize the approach to

coaching which will assist with comparisons between the effectiveness of coaching through different mediums. Next e-coaching and the potential issues with applying the ICM will be discussed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research study which utilized secondary data as a data source. Peer reviewed research publications were mainly used to explore the e-coaching and business coaching fields. The problems with secondary sources are that validity and reliability of the sources can vary greatly. Further personal bias can also be a problem depending on the nature of the secondary data used as well as the interpretation thereof by the researcher [7].

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several practical issues can be anticipated when applying the ICM on e-coaching. Since e-coaching is mainly differentiated from coaching, because of the coach using mainly electronic media. When analysing the streams of the ICM, it is concluded here that the coach would need to be able to perform the streams equally well using electronic media. However, should this be feasible, then coaching a larger number of coachees will be possible. The aim of this discussion is to identify any possible problems and then to provide possible recommendations as solutions to be further researched.

The first stream in the ICS, identified the importance of building a relationship between the coach and coachee. The aim is to build trust and respect. When looking at the other streams, trust and respect appears to be a prerequisite for the other streams. For example, the coachee will not share his unconscious experiences with the coach if there is no trust or respect in the relationship. In an online world, where there is no physical contact between the coach and coachee, it may be more difficult to establish this relationship. It however is possible to build relationships purely online based on trust [2]. Ba proposed requirements in how to build and establish trust in the context of online communities [2]. In the case of the relationship between the coach and the coachee, trust would normally need to be established between two individuals. However online relationships play a reduced and probably more specialized role than face-to-face relationships [9]. In the context of this discussion it can therefore be recommended that future research need to be conducted on how an effective professional relationship between a coach and coachee be established.

The focus of the behavioural stream is to affect behavioural change. Since each coach differentiates themselves [19], each coaching programme will have different approaches in this stream. This may even result in that some or parts of coaching programmes are not compatible with e-coaching. It is therefore recommended that research be conducted on specific coaching programmes that can also be conducted in a purely online environment, with the aim to compare the results achieved by both programmes.

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Since the conscious and unconscious cognitive streams mainly considers the root causes of behaviour through the core belief systems and motivation of the person. Changing the conscious and unconscious can therefore result in behavioural change. However this is more difficult and requires in most cases clinical psychological training [14]. It is therefore recommended that research be conducted to find possible alternative techniques that can be used in an online environment to address the conscious and unconscious cognitive streams.

The last stream, called the systemic stream is mainly an activity to assist the coachee to understand the environmental and cultural context in which he or she requires performance improvement. The coach should therefore be able to relatively easily include such training within the behavioural stream, together with his coaching model or programme. However research to support this suggestion should be conducted, since this will affect the streams of the ICM.

It is further recommended to perform further empirical research to determine whether the ICM can be utilized in e-coaching. Finally it should be validated whether the streams of the ICM is sufficient in an e-coaching environment.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this study is based on mainly a literature review, no empirical quantitative testing was conducted. The ICM model also remains untested, and therefore will need to be tested in follow-up research.

SUMMARY

This article mainly expressed the issues and concerns that may be experienced in an e-coaching environment using the conceptual ICM model. However, the main concerns and benefits of e-coaching overall were also discussed. Although it seems possible to conduct e-coaching with similar performance outcomes using the ICM model provided that the concerns and issues are addressed through the problems that is recommended for further research.

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