Coaching Relationship and Coaching Communication: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative descriptive study aimed to identify the influence of coaching relationship on the coaching communication by the perception of polytechnic lecturers. A total of 411 lecturers randomly selected from the five polytechnics which successfully obtained an overall excellent performance including academic standards and quality management through the recognition of the polytechnic ratings. Data for this survey were collected through a questionnaire which was adapted from an instrument used by Heslin, VandeWalle, and Latham (2006), and Gregory and Levy (2010). The results of multiple regression analysis showed that coaching relationship had positive and significant influence on coaching communication. In term of the implications, this study showed the role of the middle manager is extremely important in creating the coaching relationship in order to improve coaching communication performance.

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Introduction

In line with the government's efforts to achieve a high-income country, the country needs 1.5 million employees in the Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) by 2020. This is because the global labor market shows an increasing and high demand for semi-skilled technicians and those in technical and vocational fields. So, as one of the higher education institutions, polytechnics are not excluded from playing a key role in producing graduates who actually meet the needs of various industries that are being developed. In this case, polytechnics aim to supply more than 50 percent of the 680 thousand skilled workers with diploma by 2020. Therefore, polytechnics require lecturers to be highly self-efficacious in teaching to meet the demands of economic transformation in 2020. Self-efficacy is also emphasized in polytechnic lecturers quality criteria as individual groups is said to be more likely to choose a strategy to effectively address the tension and persistent in the tasks entrust (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005).

In facing the beginning of life paradigm in the 21st century, leaders from education organizations should play a role to take the initiative to undertake the development of potential followers, especially in the aspect of organizational psychology to study the follower's behavior. This argument is supported by a number of empirical evidence which found that leaders should focus on the followers' psychological aspect as an individual behavior measurement, specifically to identify how his influence on organizational effectiveness (Jex & Britt, 2008). Thus, educational organizations should play a role in a more comprehensive way rather than producing products to meet the needs of industrial markets. Organizations need to realize that they do not solely provide work to its employees. To ensure the quality of human capital generated, the leader must focus on the input (feedback) and process (environment responses) in the organization. Thus, in shaping the behavior of workers who are more committed and creative, setting up feedback environment in the workplace should not be ignored.

This is because the feedback at work is believed to have an impact on employee performance.

Consequently, many organizations perceive coaching as a development tool for their staff as well as a strategic initiative to improve both individual and organization performance (Bowen & Schofield, 2013; Sherman & Freas, 2004). Coaching involves collaborative and effective two-way communication between coach and coachee. In the context of polytechnics, the middle managers referred to the group of Program Coordinators or/and Course Coordinators. The middle managers are closest to the lecturers. Thus, the significant role of middle managers is essential to support personal development as well as improving job performance (Stewart & Palmer, 2009).

Coaching is not a "one-time, one-way" (London & Smither, 2002). Thus, it is important to know that, in a typical dyad, the coach-coachee relationship encompasses much more than just coaching. Similarly, Graham, Wedman, and Garvin-Kester (1993) suggested that one of the important elements of successful employee coaching is the manager/employee relationship. These same authors later deemed a "warm relationship" in good employee coaching (Graham, Wedman, & Garvin-Kester, 1994). Gregory and Levy (2009) also noted that the process of coaching is contingent on the relationship between the supervisors and their subordinates. Finally, Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) noted that the relationship between the coach and coachee is "one of the most essential aspects of coaching" and without a relationship the coaching would not be as effective as it could be.

There is a little work on coaching relationship has been done in researching coaching communication in higher education institutions especially in polytechnics context. For this reason, this paper aims to understand the dynamics of perceived coaching communication in further education, with a special focus on the influence of coaching relationship to coaching communication.

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Literature Review
Coaching Communication

Coaching is not a new thing and it exists everywhere. It has led us to make a difference. Therefore, every leader should have the ability and the means to develop his or her talents and entertain the followers to pay attention and increase their confidence. In addition, leaders need to realize the importance of effective coaching practice by establishing effective communication between coach and coachee. In this case, the coaching communication is seen as helping relationship known as a partnership coaching as described by Passmore (2006).

In order to effectively implement the partnership coaching, the leaders play an important role in allowing the transfer of supervision could be implemented successfully. Coaching transfer is seen as the application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other quality characteristics that have been acquired by an individual in the process of coaching into the workplace. In the context of this review, coaching communication refers to the behavior of the supervisors to improve performance through bilateral interaction with change goals from followers into reality through the use of several options available before performing an action. This is in accordance with the functions of the Polytechnic Education Department in Malaysia; to plan and execute staff training and career development programmes and to plan and develop quality assurance and a control system ((Polytechnic and Community College Education Department, 2014).

Based on the work of Heslin et al. (2006), three main functions of coaching are used to investigate the process of coaching communication in the context of Malaysian polytechnics, and these include: facilitating, inspiring others, and giving job guidance. According to Shannon, Twale, and Moore (1998), early career teaching staff often lack necessary experience to perform instruction roles. Job guidance from a more experienced academic staff could facilitate learning and inspiring self-efficacy towards teaching.
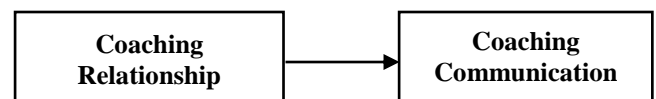
Coaching Relationship

Coaching is a helping relationship (Renner, 2007). A number of researchers have noted the value of the relationship between supervisors and subordinates in coaching, but yet little research has examined the role of the coaching relationship in influencing the effectiveness of coaching communication. This was clearly seen in the statement of Evered and Selman (1989) that employee coaching is an "action-oriented, result-oriented, and person-oriented relationship". Next, Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) found that the coaching relationship is the real "vehicle" for change and the research –based investigations of the coaching relationship on coaching communication are lacking.

The coaching relationship can be described as a directionally influential helping dynamic that is established between two unique psychological entities: the coach and the client (Kemp, 2008). Through the research of Gregory and Levy (2009), the important elements of the coaching relationship include genuine care and interest in other people and an orientation towards help, improvement, and continuous learning for the subordinate (Gegner, 1997). Additionally, they also include the important of comfort with the relationship as discussed by Graham et al. (1994), which they suggest stems from a supervisor who is genuine and has effective interpersonal skills. Several authors also discuss the critical role of effective communication for the employee relationship (Graham et al., 1994; Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari,

1987). Thus Gregory and Levy (2009) have identified four dimensions as critical elements of the coaching relationship. On top of these, genuineness of the relationship pertains to how genuine the subordinate perceives the supervisor and relationship to be. The next dimension, effective communication, pertains how well the supervisor communicates with the subordinate, as well as how available the subordinate perceives the supervisor to be. The third dimension is comfort with the relationship, which addresses the subordinate's level of comfort working with his/her supervisor and discussing the needs or goals with the supervisor. Finally, the last dimension, facilitating development, addresses the extent to which the coaching relationship facilitates learning and development for the subordinate.

Research Objectives

Coaching would be an effective performance improvement technique and the regular feedback from the coachee can facilitate continuous performance improvement. Since coaching is an ongoing collaborative process, the foci coaching relationships can vary based on the individuals involved (Garman, Whitson, & Zlatoper, 2000). Moreover, it is important to note that, in a typical dyad, the coaching relationship encompasses much more than just coaching. Thus, as a dependent variable, coaching relationship can be tested to measure the influence on the coaching communication. Coaching communication sees the behavior of leaders to enhance employee performance. At the same time, the success of the coaching is based on the setting of the development of productive relationship (Smither & Reily, 2001). This is in line with the views of Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) which state coaching relationship as the "basis upon which coaching is built to help individuals developing the talent which is lacking in the followers and thus form the support system to the shortcomings of the followers. Initially, this conceptual framework consists of two variables, namely coaching relationship and coaching communication. In this study, coaching relationship refers as an independent variable while coaching communication as dependent variable.

Coaching Relationship	→	Coaching Communication

Therefore, this study specifically aims to
(1) Identify the level of coaching relationship and coaching communication in polytechnic.
(2) Identify the influence of coaching relationship on coaching communication.

Research Methodologies

The study was conducted using a survey method. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed and 411 questionnaires only be collected with the questionnaire return rate as high as 68.5 percent. Sampling consisted of 411 lecturers who are serving in the five polytechnics which successfully obtained an overall excellent performance including academic standards and quality management through the recognition of the polytechnic rating. The instrument used was a questionnaire which was adapted from instruments used by the Gregory and Levy (2010) and Heslin et al. (2006). The questionnaire is divided into three parts namely Part A to obtain demographic information of respondents, Part B (12 items) also provide important information to talent management professionals on subordinate perceptions of the coaching relationships they share with their leaders, and Part

C (12 items) to measure the behavior of a leader in helping followers to improve performance and developing the potential of employees.

Research Findings

Respondent Profile

The respondents consist of 411 lecturers under Category 1 who taught at the polytechnic Malaysia. Descriptive statistical analysis of frequencies and percentages were used to describe the profile of the respondents that include gender, the highest academic qualifications, academic department category, teaching experience, and age on January 1, 2014.

According to Table 1, a number of 260 (63.3 percent) female lecturers are the majority of the respondents involved in this study. The finding also shows the majority of 244 (59.4 percent) respondents are first degree holders. Other than that, 205 (49.9 percent) respondents are from technical departments while 183 (44.5 percent) are from humanities and social sciences departments. The finding shows that 213 respondents (51.8 percent) have less than ten years teaching experience. Apart from that, 188 (45.7 percent) respondents are in the age range of 25 to 33 years old.

Table 1. Respondent profile (N=411)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	151	36.7
	Female	260	63.3
Highest Academic Qualification	Certificate/Diploma	16	3.9
	Bachelor degree	244	59.4
	Master degree	145	35.3
	Doctorate degree	6	1.5
Academic Department Category	Humanities and Social Sciences	183	44.5
	Technical	205	49.9
	Communication & Information Technology	23	5.6
Teaching Experience	1-9 years	213	51.8
	10-18 years	142	34.5
	19-27 years	45	10.9
	28-36 years	12	2.6
Age on 1 January 2014	25-33 years	188	45.7
	34-42 years	151	36.7
	43-51 years	56	13.6
	52 years and above	16	3.9

To determine the level of coaching communication practices, the three-dimensional coaching communication of facilitating, inspiration, and job guidance have shown moderate mean scores between 4.64 and 4.95. Coaching communication overall mean score as high as 4.83,

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation for coaching practice communication and coaching relationship

Variable	Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Coaching Communication		4.83	1.202
	Facilitating	4.89	1.206
	Inspiration	4.95	1.245
	Job Guidance	4.64	1.390
Coaching Relationship		5.25	.754
	Genuineness of the Relationship	5.16	.868
	Effective Communication	5.21	.967
	Comfort with the Relationship	5.49	.695
	Facilitating Development	5.15	.880

which is moderate. For coaching relationship variable, there is as high as overall mean score 5.25 of a scale of 1 to 7. The four-dimensional coaching relationship including genuineness of the relationship, effective communication, comfort with the relationship, and facilitating development those are beyond the mean score 5.15 which considered high level.

The findings in Table 2 show that facilitating activities and job guidance have the mean score as high as 4.89 and 4.64 respectively. The result also shows that providing inspiration shows the highest score of 4.95. Respondents feel comfortable with the coaching relationship which gains the highest mean score of 5.49. As for genuineness of the relationsip, effective communication dan facilitating development dimensions, the mean scores are 5.16. 5.21 and 5.15 respectively.

The influence of coaching relationship towards coaching communication

The results in Table 3 show the outcome of multiple regression analysis performed on coaching relationship and coaching communication variables. The decision found that the coaching relationship has significantly contributed 78 percent of the variance changes for coaching communication. The assessment of the value of the beta coefficient (β) indicates the coaching relationship has a positive and significant effect on the coaching communication (β=.885, p<.05). Thus, these findings shown that the coaching relationship affect coaching communication positively.

Table 3. Influence of coaching relationship on coaching communication

Variable	Coaching Communication
Coaching Relationship	.885
R^2	.783
Adjusted R^2	.782
F Value	1471.55
Durbin Watson	1.46

*Note: *p<.05*

Discussion, Research Implication, and Conclusion

The findings show that coaching relationship has a significant impact on coaching communication (β=.86, p<.05). Coaching relationship contributes 78 percent to the variance change of coaching communication. This is described by Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) where without a relationship the coaching would not be as effective as it could be. This statement is further supported by Feldman and Lankau (2005) where establishing the relationship is generally the first step in coaching engagement. Additionally, Ting and Riddle (2006) suggest that a "trusting relationship" is a precondition to effective coaching. The implications of these results are important as they suggest the effect of coaching relationship influences the coaching communication success. Thus, the process of interaction between middle managers and followers will be more effective with the establishment of effective and quality relationship at the workplace.

This study attempts to show the influence of coaching relationship on coaching communication. The results of this study show that coaching relationship is positively related to coaching communication. Therefore, according to the findings of the current study middle managers in polytechnics should demonstrate their commitment to create coaching relationship in order to improve the quality of coaching communication with their followers.

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