

In Support of Coaching Models of Management and Leadership: A Comparative Study of Empirically Derived Managerial Coaching/Facilitating Learning Behaviors

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The concept of managers assuming developmental roles such as coaches and learning facilitators has gained considerable attention in recent years as organizations seek to leverage learning by creating infrastructures that foster employee learning and development. Despite the increased focus on coaching, the literature base remains atheoretical. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to compare the empirical findings from three separate studies to derive a comprehensive understanding of coaching models of management and leadership.

Keywords: Coaching Behavior, Facilitator of Learning, Managerial and Leadership Effectiveness

Increasingly organizations are beginning to embrace a new management paradigm based on empowerment rather than a traditional command, control, and compliance paradigm of management which “cannot bring about the conditions and competence necessary to successfully meet the challenges [of *endless innovation; relentless downsizing, re-engineering, and multicultural working*] holistically (Flaherty, 1999, p. 2-3). Therefore, this new paradigm of management calls for new facilitative behaviors that focus on empowerment and employee development (Beattie, 2002; Ellinger, 2003; McGill & Slocum, 1998). Accordingly, coaching has been conceived as the essence of the new management paradigm (Evered & Selman, 1989) and the notion of leaders and managers serving as coaches has gained tremendous currency in the literature (Ellinger, 2003). Several scholars believe coaching is an essential role that most managers and leaders need to develop (Antonioni, 2000; Bianco-Mathis, et. al., 2002; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002; Kraines, 2001; Piasecko, 2000; Ragsdale, 2000). However, not all managers adopt a facilitative coaching role. Some may find it challenging to switch from a prescriptive to an empowering style and may lack the requisite skills to coach effectively (deJong et. al, 1999; Keep & Rainbird, 2000). However, based upon the growing number of books and practitioner-focused articles, it is clear there is a significant body of expert opinion that believes coaching is an essential core activity of everyday management and leadership, and that managers and leaders need to become fully competent as proactive facilitators of learning and development if they are to be truly effective and successful in today’s and tomorrow’s world.

Current HRD practice has been criticized for lacking a sound and sufficient empirical base (see for example, Mumford, 1997; Hamlin & Stewart, 1998; Hamlin, 2002) and similar criticisms have been leveled at most current coaching practice within the context of HRD (Grant, 2003) and about the devolution of HRD responsibilities to line managers (deJong et. al., 1999). Whilst there is an extensive literature on developmental roles that managers may play, such as mentor and coach, much of this literature is prescriptive and there are relatively few examples of substantive research and empirical studies (Beattie, 2002; Ellinger, 2003; Graham, Wedman & Garvin-Kester, 1993, 1994; Marsh, 1992; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). According to Horowitz (1999), “the HRD literature is somewhat normative and rhetorical in exhorting line managers to take responsibility for training and development” (p. 187). This should not be surprising. Even in the field of management and leadership where there has been a plethora of empirical research, major concerns have been expressed recently about its practical relevance and utility for determining and distinguishing between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ management practice. Furthermore, there is still little agreement about what constitutes and what is meant by managerial and leadership effectiveness (See Cammock, Nikalant & Dakin, 1995; Conger, 1998; Kim & Yukl, 1995; Willcocks, 1997). In terms of coaching, “while there has been consensus amongst professional trainers and developers about what good coaching looks like, little published research exists that identifies specific coaching behaviors, shows that preferred models of coaching have any relationship to improved performance, or demonstrates what differentiates a ‘good’ coach from a ‘poor’ coach”

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(Ellinger, 2003, p. 6). Accordingly, the present study endeavors to address this lack of a sound and sufficient empirical base with regard to the “manager as coach” phenomenon in the management and leadership and coaching literature bases by presenting and comparing three distinct empirical studies that have examined this concept in the context of the UK and USA.

Research Method

The current study was designed to compare and contrast the findings that were empirically derived in three separate studies conducted within the UK and the US that examined effective manager/leader coaching and facilitating learning behaviors using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) as originated by Flanagan (1954). These previously conducted studies include, respectively, the UK based ‘managerial/leadership effectiveness’ studies of Hamlin (2003a, 2003b) and the ‘managerial facilitative behaviors’ study of Beattie (2002), and the US based ‘managerial coaching behaviors in learning organizations’ study of Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom (1999). The following research questions guided this comparative meta-level analysis:

1. How are effective coaching/facilitating behaviors of managers manifested within the featured studies of Hamlin, (2003a, 2003b; Beattie (2002), and Ellinger (1997; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999) respectively?
2. What behaviors are held in common and generalized to each other?
3. To what extent are the empirically derived effective coaching/facilitating learning behaviors resulting from questions 1 and 2 held in common with the prescribed behaviors associated with the notions of the ‘facilitative leader’ and ‘coaching manager/leader’ as reported recently in the management literature?

The Hamlin ‘generic model of managerial and leadership effectiveness. Hamlin’s (2003a, 2003b) model was derived from several meta level analyses of the respective sets of criteria of managerial/leadership effectiveness identified by three previous empirical studies carried out within three different types of UK public sector organizations: schools, customs and excise, hospitals. In each case a qualitative approach based on CIT using a grounded theory mind-set was adopted for the initial data collection, and a quantitative approach, namely factor analysis, was used for reducing and classifying the CIT data and identifying behavioral categories/criteria of effectiveness. In all three studies critical incidents were obtained from the perspectives of subordinates, peers and superiors. Managers were required to offer examples of critical incidents based on their personal observations of other managers, and not on their own management practice. Meta-level analyses were carried out on the various sets of managerial/leadership effectiveness criteria obtained from the three studies. These revealed very high degrees of sameness, similarity, coincidence and congruence of meaning. The findings led to the creation of an eleven (11) factor ‘Generic Model of Managerial and Leadership Effectiveness.’ This comprised six (6) positive criteria comprising 48 behavioral items indicative of effective management/leadership [*including coaching, mentoring and other facilitating learning behaviors*], plus five (5) negative criteria comprising 49 behavioral items indicative of ineffective management /leadership [*typical of traditional manager/leader behavior*] (See Hamlin, 2003a). The six positive behavioral categories are the focus of the current study.

<p>• Effective organization and planning/proactive management - <i>Is well organized and well prepared for situations; thinks ahead and makes sure things are done in good time; does the necessary groundwork research and gathers all the facts; produces detailed plans and procedures; is well prepared for meetings and runs them efficiently and effectively with good agendas; makes effective use of systems and resources; sets and maintains high standards for self and others; ensures people follow procedures and expects them to be well prepared; takes initiative to resolve problems and proactively confronts difficult /sensitive issues.</i></p>	<p>• Genuine concern for people/Looks after the interests and development needs of staff - <i>Responds quickly and appropriately to staff problems; deals with difficult or personal issues concerning staff and handles them with sensitivity; allocates work to staff and self fairly; argues a strong case for obtaining resources in support of staff wishing to develop new ideas; fights hard for the department; promotes the importance or needs of the department; brings to the attention of top management the achievements/contributions of staff; congratulates and praises staff/Recognizes, nurtures and develops the latent abilities and potential of staff; initiates, promotes and supports their personal and career development; identifies the training needs of team members; personally takes the time to train, coach and mentor team members.</i></p>
<p>• Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership - <i>Provides active support and guidance to staff; responds immediately to requests for help; provides backing and personal support to staff confronted with particularly difficult/stressful operational situations; takes time to get to know staff; creates a climate of trust; actively listens to their concerns, worries and anxieties; gives praise when due; defends staff from unfair criticism/attack and protects their interests; provides coaching and training; supports the team through its problems and helps team members learn from their mistakes.</i></p>	<p>• Open and personal management approach/inclusive decision making - <i>Actively listens to the views and opinions of staff; encourages staff to become involved in planning, decision making and problem solving, particularly in change situations; invites staff to recommend how to best spend the departmental budget; includes team members in meetings and/or projects which normally would have involved higher grades of staff; uses a personal approach to managing; takes the time to get to know staff and develops in them a sense of trust.</i></p>
<p>• Empowerment and delegation - <i>Encourages staff to take on new responsibilities; gives them the freedom to make own decisions without close supervision; allows staff to develop and experiment with own ideas; encourages and empowers them to run their own unit/project and to work through their own problems; proactively and effectively delegates.</i></p>	<p>• Communicates and consults widely/keeps people informed - <i>Consults and discusses change plans with staff; proactively canvasses and seeks their ideas; holds frequent meetings with staff; gathers all relevant facts and judges things on their merits; proactively disseminates within the team/unit major documents of importance; on major change initiatives conducts special events to communicate with staff and keep them informed</i></p>

The Beattie 'managerial facilitative behaviors framework'. The coaching behaviors comprising the Beattie (2002) 'Managerial Facilitative Behaviour Framework' were derived empirically by studying the behaviors used by voluntary sector senior and first line managers when facilitating employee learning in the workplace. Similarly using the CIT, Beattie (2002) obtained from 60 respondents, representing senior line managers, first line managers, employees and key informants, critical incidents offered by the respondents as examples of effective or ineffective managerial behavior in facilitating, or conversely inhibiting learning in the workplace respectively. The analytical strategy adopted was based on a grounded theory approach. The first stage of analysis involved developing profiles for each manager. This involved collating data collected on them from their own interview, the interviews with their staff, and where appropriate, the interview with their senior line manager. Each profile was then analyzed several times to identify actions within critical incidents which contained words and phrases that provided examples of behaviors that facilitated or inhibited learning. These clustered with similar examples from other managers. The examples were not reduced to data sets of single words or short phrases as this was viewed to be overly reductionist and may have resulted in the loss of significant data by removing them from their context. On completion of this process of analytical refinement, 22 facilitative behaviors were identified and were then allocated to one of nine

behavioral categories. Nine categories of inhibitory behaviors were identified, incorporating 13 descriptions of negative behaviors. The nine facilitative behavioral categories are the focus of the current study.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring – support, encouragement, approachable, reassurance, commitment/involvement, empathy- Supporting by giving aid or courage to; Encouraging by inspiring or instilling confidence; approachable by being easy to approach; giving reassurance to relieve anxiety; commitment and involvement by giving time (to staff); empathy by showing understanding of another's situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking – reflective or prospective thinking, clarification- Reflective or prospective thinking through the process of taking time to consider what has happened in the past or may happen in the future.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing – sharing knowledge - Sharing knowledge through the transmission of information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering – delegation, trust- Delegation by giving duties and responsibilities to others; trust and having confidence in someone.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being professional –role model, standard-setting, planning and preparation - Role model by behaving in a manner that people respect and wish to emulate; standard setting by outlining or encouraging an acceptable level of performance or quality; planning and preparation in terms of organizing and structuring learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Others – developing developers - Developing developers by stimulating the acquisition of skills & knowledge by employees to develop others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising – instruction, coaching, guidance, counseling - Instruction by directing an individual in a specific task; coaching through discussion and guided activity; guidance by providing advice; counseling by helping others take control of their own behavior and solve problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging – challenging- Challenging by stimulating people to stretch themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing – feedback and recognition, identifying developmental needs. 	

The Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger & Bostrom (1999) 'managerial coaching behaviors in learning organizations framework'. The Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) model comprising managerial coaching behaviors were empirically derived using CIT and semi-structured interviews as the primary methods of data collection. Content analysis and thematic open coding were subsequently used to cluster, classify, and categorize the behavioral critical incident data. Fifty six effective and ineffective critical incidents were obtained from twelve (12) managers employed within four organizations considered to be learning organizations. These managers, who were deemed through a process of expert nomination to be exemplary coaches/facilitators of learning within their respective organizations, were asked to describe an average of 4.6 critical incidents that reflected effective and ineffective behaviors associated with facilitating their employees' learning. This study also examined the catalysts for facilitating learning, the outcomes associated with such informal learning episodes, and the belief systems of exemplary managers who serve as coaches/learning facilitators. Thirteen (13) themes emerged from the rigorous open and thematic coding processes and were further categorized into two distinct clusters of behavior sets: empowering behavior sets and facilitating behavior sets.

Empowering Cluster	Facilitating Cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question framing to encourage employees to think through issues - Posing outcomes, results oriented questions, or context specific questions to encourage learners to think through issues themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing feedback to employees - Providing observational, reflective, and third party feedback to learners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a resource – removing obstacles - Providing resources, information, materials to learners, and removing roadblocks and obstacles they perceive to be in their way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soliciting feedback from employees - Seeking feedback from learners about their progress.

Empowering Cluster (Continued)	Facilitating Cluster (Continued)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferring ownership to employees - <i>Not taking over learners' responsibilities and shifting them back to the learners and holding them accountable.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working it out together – talking it through - <i>Talking through things together to come up with options, a gameplan, or an overall approach.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding back – not providing the answers - <i>Not taking over learners' responsibilities and shifting them back to the learners and holding them accountable.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and promoting a learning environment - <i>Organizing meetings and activities, using learning plans, and creating formal and informal opportunities to help employees grow and develop.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting and communicating expectations – fitting into the big picture - <i>Setting goals and expectations with learners and communicating their importance to learners.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepping into other to shift perspectives - <i>Stepping into another person's shoes to experience their perspective.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadening employees' perspectives – getting them to see things differently - <i>Encouraging learners to think out of the box by encouraging them to see other perspectives and by providing other perspectives and experiences.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using analogies, scenarios, and examples - <i>Role playing, personalizing learning situations with examples, and using analogies, and scenarios.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging others to facilitate learning - <i>Bringing in others, peers, or human resources to help facilitate learning, or sending learners to outside resources.</i>

The current study. The present study comprised a comparative meta-level analysis of the three respective empirical model/frameworks. This involved a detailed comparison of the respective behavioral categories and their specific underpinning behaviors. The purpose was to search for evidence of sameness, similarity, coincidence, and congruence of meaning, and thereby identify the existence or otherwise of a relationship between coaching/facilitating learning behaviors and the determinants of managerial/leadership effectiveness. To enhance the reliability and validity of the meta-level analysis, the authors compared and contrasted their respective model/frameworks independently of each other. Overall, there was general agreement regarding their respective judgments and perceptions of what was held in common and when minor discrepancies and inconsistencies occurred, these were resolved through discussion and critical examination to reach a consensus. This rigorous approach helped to establish reliability in the findings.

Findings

Due to the limitations of space, Table 1 presents the findings from this meta-level comparison. As can clearly be seen in Table 1, the vast majority of the Hamlin (2003a, 2003b), Beattie (2002) and Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) categories/behaviors align closely with each other. Most of the behaviors comprising Ellinger and Ellinger and Bostrom coaching/learning facilitation behavior categories appear to be very similar, or equivalent in type, to a majority of the managerial behaviors comprising one or more of all of the criteria of managerial/leadership effectiveness criteria comprising Hamlin's generic model, and were nearly identical or very similar or equivalent to the Beattie model. In the case of the Beattie framework, the behaviors associated with managerial facilitative behavior categories are near identical, or very similar to equivalent behaviors comprising the Hamlin and Ellinger and Bostrom behavioral constructs. Overall, the degree of alignment, overlap, similarity and congruence of meaning between the categories/criteria of the three model/frameworks is extremely high.

Hamlin (2003a, 2003b)	Ellinger (1997) Ellinger & Bostrom (1999)	Beattie (2002)
• Empowerment and delegation	• Question framing to encourage employees to think through issues	• Thinking
• Effective organization and planning/proactive management	• Being a resource – removing obstacles	• Informing
• Empowerment and delegation	• Transferring ownership to employees	• Empowering
• Empowerment and delegation	• Holding back – not providing the answers	• Thinking and/or Empowering
• Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership • Effective organization and planning/proactive management	• Providing feedback to employees	• Assessing
• Open and personal management approach/inclusive decision making	• Soliciting feedback from employees	• Assessing
• Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership	• Working it out together – talking it through	• Informing and/or Thinking
• Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership • Genuine concern for people/Looks after the interests and development needs of staff • Communicates and consults widely/keeps people informed	• Creating and promoting a learning environment	• Advising • Assessing • Develop developers
• Effective organization and planning/proactive management	• Setting and communicating expectations – fitting into the big picture	• Being professional
• Genuine concern for people/Looks after the interests and development needs of staff	• Stepping into other to shift perspectives	• Caring
• Empowerment and delegation	• Broadening employees' perspectives – getting them to see things differently	• Thinking
• Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership	• Using analogies, scenarios, and examples	• Advising • Developing developers
• Communicates and consults widely/keeps people informed • Participative and supportive leadership/proactive team leadership	• Engaging others to facilitate learning	• Developing developers

Discussion

It is quite evident from the results of the meta-level analysis that there is considerable overlap between the Hamlin (2003a, 2003b) Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) and Beattie (2002) models. All three models are comprised of the type of managerial behaviors that managers and leaders need to exhibit if they are to be perceived and judged by their superiors, peers, and subordinates to be effective (See Hamlin 2003a; 2003b). The findings from the present study provide further empirical support for the soundness, validity and generalizability of the Hamlin (2003a, 2003b), Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom (1999), and Beattie (2002) models and suggest

truly effective managers/leaders are those who embed effective coaching and learning facilitation into the heart of their management practice.

The findings also support the conceptual notions articulated by scholars who believe that coaching is an essential core activity of management and leadership (Burdett, 1998; Bianco-Mathis et. al., 2002; Evered & Selman, 1989; Flaherty, 1999; Hunt & Weintraub, 2002). The common managerial coaching/facilitating learning behaviors resulting from the present study are consistent with the range of coaching behaviors identified by these scholars.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be addressed with regard to methods and sampling. Although the CIT was used according to the procedures outlined by Flanagan (1954) in all three studies, it is possible that the richness and depth of the critical incident data collected may vary within each of the three studies. It is also possible that data from interviews, observations, and documents also aided in the analyses and informed each of the three respective models. Another limitation in performing this meta-level comparison is that the original samples of managers for each of the three studies also varied to some extent. The Hamlin (2003a, 2003b) model was generated based upon the collection of critical incident data from large and homogenous groups of middle and first line managers within six public sector organizations with the intent to examine manager and leader behavior in general. In slight contrast, Ellinger (1997) and Ellinger and Bostrom's (1999) sample was comprised of mid-level and senior level exemplars who were nominated as being excellent learning facilitators within four consumer goods and manufacturing organizations deemed to be learning organizations. Similarly, Beattie's (2002) sample was comprised of line managers, senior line managers and employees in social service organizations. Both the Ellinger (1997) and Beattie (2002) studies were designed to specifically examine coaching/facilitating learning behaviors. Despite these limitations, it appears that the findings across all three studies are robust and the meta-level comparisons provide a rich portrait of critical managerial coaching behaviors.

Conclusions and Implications for HRD

The results of the meta-level comparative analysis carried out on the three empirical studies referenced above have mutually validated the respective fundamental soundness of each of these behavioral constructs. Furthermore, the results of this study lend empirical support for the conceptual notions of the 'facilitative leader,' the 'coaching manager,' and the 'coaching leader' as advocated (Bianco-Mathis, et. al, 2002; Hunt & Weintraub, 2001). However, more empirical evidence is required before a generic model of coaching and learning facilitation can be offered. It is recommended that a range of studies should be carried out specifically to identify concrete examples of effective and ineffective coaching behaviors, as manifested in a wide range of private and public sector organizations within the UK, USA, and other countries. However, these should be replica studies using a common research design and method, including critical incident technique, with some form of central control to ensure consistency in the research process. Such research needs to be conducted if the coaching/facilitating components of everyday management/leadership practice are to be deemed research-informed/evidence-based as opposed currently to being 'guru' led. From a practical perspective, the behaviors that emerged within these three empirical studies may provide managers and leaders with diagnostic tools to examine their own coaching and facilitative behaviors. Although coaching has been deemed to be a powerful tool in organizations to develop employees, and has been linked with job satisfaction and performance improvement, Goleman (2000) contends that the coaching manager is still a rare species. Perhaps these findings will stimulate appropriate management and leadership development programs that seek to make coaching a managerial way of being.

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