

## Study of International Mentoring and Coaching Practices and their Constructive Application in the Russian System of Corporate Education and Training

Alfiya R. Masalimova<sup>a</sup> and Almira R. Shaidullina<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, RUSSIA

### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the research stems from dissimilarities between domestic and foreign experiences of mentoring and coaching in corporate education and training related to the methods and techniques aimed not only at transmitting mentor's professional experience to young professionals but also at identifying and developing mentees' potential, and supporting their careers. In this regard, the researchers tried to identify adaptive educational and training potential of international mentoring experience under the current conditions. The most valid approach to study this issue is an integrative approach that involves integration of domestic and international techniques and their constructive implementation into the Russian corporate training system with regard to best traditions existing in this country, realities and requirements of modern industry. The paper considers the features and characteristics of the following techniques used in international mentoring and coaching: coaching (unlocking the person's potential), e-coaching (coaching online), tutoring (supporting the learning process, discussing the experience of knowledge transfer into practice), shadowing (observing the mentor in daily activities), supervision (supervising mentee's professional activities and assessing his competencies levels). The authors have determined conditions for their further implementation into the Russian national system of corporate education. The analysis of international mentoring and coaching techniques, presented in the paper, may be used as a guide when developing mechanisms and algorithms of constructive extrapolation of the elements in the national system of corporate education, preserving its best traditions.

### KEYWORDS

Mentoring, coaching, corporate education, international experience, constructive application.

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**CORRESPONDENCE** Alfiya R. Masalimova ✉ [alfkazan@mail.ru](mailto:alfkazan@mail.ru)

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## Introduction

International system of corporate education generally is an integral part of the internal labor market (hidden labor market within the enterprise). Corporate professional training serves as the mechanism that helps entrepreneurs to overcome social contradictions within the enterprise, i.e. avoid mass release of personnel to the external labour market, through retraining, permutation (rotation), and personnel development.

Being innovative under modern business conditions is imperative nowadays, and intensification of the innovative processes is accompanied with the shift of jobs to the levels that need better training. In this regard, it causes acceleration in the process of updating employees' knowledge and skills. Thus, according to Western experts, the majority of the working force needs to improve their skills and qualifications as much as 4 to 5 times to meet the requirements of the changing business environment (Employment Department, 1990). And this requires expanding occupational training (job-driven training) to achieve flexible employee mobility

International corporate training experience of professionals is characterized by frequency and regularity of the learning process, which does not require long time to cover the programs because it's customary for the employees of enterprises to attend short sessions 1 to 3 hours long. In Russia, however, a good training session is perceived to be at least two days long, and this view is strongly supported by training providers. In the international corporate training practice the share of classroom training has reduced to 20%, and during the time saved the trainees participate in various sorts of coaching, e-learning, self-study, so as the companies prefer to train employees in the their workplaces (Uzhakina, 2014, Masalimova and Sabiova, 2014; Masalimova and Nigmatov, 2015b).

The most successful foreign companies pay great attention to the tactics of acquiring new knowledge from their colleagues and peers. This tactics is a rather favourable one, so as it is not beneficial to acquire new knowledge outside the company and spend huge finances on professional coaches. Therefore, for the companies it's more preferable to contact and request their own employees to help with corporate training issues. For these purposes they organize their work on the principle of cross-training (Bakhvalova, 2005).

The rich experience of the employees is looked upon as a valuable experience that is necessary to be used properly in small and medium size enterprises which have limited personnel.

## Methodological Framework

### *North American Interpretation of Mentoring*

Doing our research, we could not but study various issues related to mentoring theory and practices in other countries. Having studied mentoring activities at the enterprises in different countries, however, we realized that there are some misconceptions about what exactly mentoring is. This is because the term is associated with two theoretical concepts, in Russia we call them the *North American* and *European*.

North American school of mentoring is characterized by the view that the mentor as a person who is older and more reputable person deserving loyalty

and devotion in response for his helpful advice, wise leadership, guidance and help. This personalization of mentoring relationships may suggest that a mentor may be the employee's immediate supervisor, or line manager. Such relationships are characterized by using the term 'protégé' when characterizing them, i.e. mentors make recommendations on their protégé's success. It's evident that the mentor, in this relationship, pays more attention to aid in the mentee's career development rather than manages his training (Kuznetsov, 2010).

### ***The European Interpretation of Mentoring***

In the European sense, mentoring is associated with broad, extensive, experience rather than person's desire to positively impact the trainee, and is interpreted as equal relationships. Moreover, the main characterizing feature of effective relationships in mentoring is rejecting any distinctions between mentor and his mentee. Therefore, the European mentors are distinguished by their independence, autonomy, as it's a common knowledge that it is not easy for any young employee to be open and frank with a person who may influence his promotion in the job and welfare, especially pertaining to wage related matters. Despite the fact that the training result may be expected as development of the trainee's capacities and career, the main goal still remains learning and development.

### ***Basic Functions of Mentors According to Studies in Different Countries***

On the basis of observations and interviews with mentor/protégé pairs having long-term relationships. K. Kram (1983) and a number of other researchers distinguished two main groups of functions performed by mentors: career/professional functions and psychosocial/personal functions (Kram, 1983; Olian et al, 1988a; Clutterbuck, 1991). They include sponsoring professional advancements and overseeing career preparation within an academic setting, coaching, protecting from opposing forces, and presenting challenging tasks. Psychosocial mentoring functions imply helping the protégé develop a sense of self through acceptance and affirmation, providing counseling, establishing friendliness, and serving as a role model (Olian et al., 1988b).

The experiment with managers engaged as mentors, conducted by J.D. Olian, S.J. Carroll, C.M. Giannantonio and D.B. Feren in 1986, allowed to define the mentees primary functions. Unlike K. Kram, who classified mentees' functions according to her observations, Judy D. Olian and her colleagues made conclusions on the basis of empirical studies. They found that mentors provided two roles similar to those identified by K. Kram (1983): an instrument role for mentor's behavior that influenced the protégé's visibility in the organization, and an intrinsic role for a mentor's psychological support to the protégé (Olian et al., 1988b). The first one helps the mentor to improve protégé's public image, and the second function, or role, contributes to the quality, depth and intensity of mentor-protégé relationship.

International experience of corporate education and training of young employees demonstrates that mentoring activities are closely associated with such techniques as: 'mentoring' (purposeful transfer of wisdom based on one's experiences), 'coaching' (unlocking the trainee's potential), e-coaching (online coaching sessions), 'tutoring' (accompanying and support of learning and training, discussing the experience of knowledge transfer into practice),

shadowing (observing the mentor in daily activities), supervision (supervising mentee's professional activities and assessing his competences levels). They all are focused on the process of transferring professional experience, improve professional competences of young employees as well as unlock their potential.

## Results

### *Tutoring as a Form of Mentoring*

Mentoring is an important part of developing performance, a powerful tool that employers may use for developing employees. In this framework it is one of the methods both in training and adaptation. The concept of 'mentoring' can be defined as manager's activities related to his daily work with peers, i.e. it is appropriate to refer to the history of coining the concept of 'mentoring' and its original purpose.

In Russia we understand that 'tutor' comes from English and its dictionary definitions include:

- a private teacher, typically one who teaches a single pupil or a very small group;
- a university or college teacher responsible for teaching and supervision;
- an assistant lecturer in a college or university;
- a book of instruction in a particular subject.

(Interestingly, the British encyclopedia gives two entries for the word, in Computer-Assisted Instruction and Special Education articles). The use of tutoring as a method of helping someone to learn has been around for a very long time and comes from the first British universities, Oxford and Cambridge, which were mainly clerical institutions concerned with educating clergy for the two national churches. Clergymen then were the only educated and literate estate in Europe and impacted formation of the national culture, as the universities were traditionally associated with humanities.

Tutoring in the corporate training of young personnel involves discussing the experience of using the knowledge obtained in practical activities. The meetings organized are based on discussing the issues that arise when transferring the model to generate new productive behaviors. Along with executives, experienced employees represent an essential source of acquiring and transferring knowledge and strong experience in the workplace. Practically all employees can serve as an audience for this type of training: young, experienced and new comers (including experienced), i.e. everyone joining the company (Logistics, 2004; Akhmetov, 2011; Korchagin, 2011; Kuznetsov, 2010; Safin, 2011).

### *The Essence and Content of Mentoring as a Form of Corporate Training for Young Employees*

Mentoring is a process that always involves communication and training by a more experienced mentor when he describes and discusses with his mentees the situations from his past experience, instructs how to select the approach and tackle business tasks logically, i.e. discusses activities and cases that can be used as patterns to follow by mentees (Shea, 1992; Radiyev, 2007).

One of the most prominent writers on mentoring relationships Kathy Kram distinguished four phases, or stages, in mentoring relationships: Initiation,

Cultivation, Separation and Redefinition. They all logically derive their meaning from one another.

During the first phase, lasting from 6 to 12 months, the participants introduce themselves, get acquainted with each other, and plan what they have to offer, or expect from each other. During the first, *initiation*, the mentor and the young specialist are in the beginning of their relationship, when the mentee, or protégé, receives attention and emotional support. The mentor, in his turn, evaluates his potential and starts to share his personal professional experience concerning the company valuables. It's the time when a young specialist gets special work tasks which are monitored, and demonstrates abilities which are assessed.

The second phase, cultivation, which is 2 to 5 years long, is the relationship when the sides expand to a maximum level and are tested against reality. It's the time when the mentor provides qualified help in the career development of his mentee, enables him to achieve his potential, and supports him in his attempts to get attention from senior managers and executives.

At this active stage of relationships the senior colleague's task is to provide a friendly emotional and advisory support in getting promoted at work as quick as possible. The mentor feels satisfied with protégé career success, so as in this case the mentor as a person is directly associated with a young employee's progress. Besides, the mentor can benefit from his technical assistance to a talented protégé.

The third phase, which is considered to be the most difficult one, long and close relationship of the previous phases terminate. It is the time of the trainee's promotion, the time when he achieves the same level of the hierarchy as his mentor, and the latter is promoted to a new position. It's the mentor who may be the initiator of the relationship termination if he considers it unnecessary to continue supporting and guiding the young colleague (Kram, 1983). K. Kram observed disappointment, frustration of both sides and the mentee's desire for more autonomy. The distance that occurs on the third phase makes the protégé reconsider his attitude and assessment of the mentor, and the two sides may even have feelings of depression and loneliness. The mentor may feel resentful over his mentee's growing independence, as well as the mentee's discontent after his release from custody. However, the process of the mentee's alienation is irreversible because a young employee strives for independence and autonomy, and wishes to demonstrate his professional skills and competences without being patronized by his mentor. As for the mentor, it is also a good opportunity to show that the tasks set have been solved, the goals achieved, and contributions justified (Kram, 1983). Yet there are sometimes negative reasons bringing to termination of mentor-mentee relationship, or the mentee may come to conclusion that the mentor hinders his development. Though, sometimes the protégé would like to continue the relationship that no longer is good for both sides. These factors emerging contribute significantly to the sides' alienation and breaking up.

The last fourth phase of relations, redefinition, is connected with restoring the relationships of former participants in terms of new equal conditions for both sides and based on the desire to continue friendly relations. This is expressed through helping the former mentee to improve his career, or giving wise pieces of advice, though interaction between them is less frequent. This phase may take an indefinite period of time (Greenberg and Baron, 2006).

### ***Attitudes of International and Russian Companies to Use E-Coaching and Coaching in Corporate Training***

Unlike mentoring, coaching is aimed at the trainee's independent attempts in solving problem guided by the coach, and using the GROW model with numerous questions, which the coach could use at any point, to direct and activate his mentee's thinking (Markovskaya and Piskunov, 2000; Brodsky, 2003; Zakomurnaya, 2001; Zevunov, 2009; Mashukova, 2000; Popov, 2003; Baghdasaryan, 2006).

Unfortunately, the peculiarities of using this method in Russia are essentially different from those abroad. For example, a research conducted by Blessing White, Inc. among the leading companies in 17 countries showed that, from their 2014 employees interviewed, 42% of respondents believe coaching takes too much time. 32% of managers in the UK and Ireland noted that coaching may be essential to individual success and it doesn't distract them from business, but they cannot afford spending time on it. 29% US and 38% of Asian respondents hold similar views. However, Blessing White experts consider coaching as one of the most effective ways of working with employees, undeniably an important management practice, and offer management companies to carry out systematic work to change the negative attitude to coaching, since this method is considered to be productive while boosting performance, during the crisis.

In Russia coaching is known as on-the-job training technique, and manager experience of different companies proves that its implementation can be reasonable. Furthermore, managers look upon the main ideas of the technique as acceptable for the future work involving mentoring.

The most common type of coaching used in foreign and domestic practice of mentoring is e-coaching (coaching online, network for mentoring). International Mentoring Network Organization (IMNO), founded in 2003, is a not-for-profit project aiming to solve the worldwide need for professional mentoring. It helps to organize the communication of young professionals with top manager mentors. They interview successful professionals within their own communities and make interviews available via text, audio streaming, audio download (podcasting), and RSS News Feeds. The site registered several thousands of 'apprentices' from more than 50 countries and dozens of coaches from different areas of the economy. Disadvantages of open source mentoring (web-based consulting) are evident, i.e. the number of coaches and their apprentices is disproportional. According to the study of Amplua-Broker agency, Russia (tenders and recommendations for the best personnel management provider), states that coaching market in Russia is growing very quickly. They define coaching as an instrument that helps a person, or a group, set and achieve clear goals that have to do with their profession. The popularity in application is proved by relatively low prices; average face-to-face coaching session fee in 2015 in Russia is about 15 per hour. They are convenient because the session length may vary depending on the presentation style, the problems, or challenges, emerging, or mentee's demands (Uzhakina, 2009).

It should be noted that in international practice of HR corporate training, coaching is more popular than mentoring in its unalloyed sense. Unlike mentoring, coaching involves the employee into the process of analyzing the

information and knowledge obtained from the provider. Coaching involves both managers and employees with strong experience, so it allows accelerating the time of adaptation. It's common for majority of the countries not to pay for participation in coaching but the participants are rewarded through a system of moral encouragement in the form of organizing special gatherings and training sessions, receptions, etc.

### ***Shadowing as Job and Career Guidance Technique of a Company***

Job shadowing is associated with those individuals from other divisions of the organization or those who could have the opportunity to work in the company. They gain experience, an insight into particular work areas needed in that company.

The technique is good for working with university and college undergraduates, and is used in the companies interacting with higher education institutions through their special programs, inviting the best and talented ones to work with them. This technique is focused on the student opportunity to spend one or two days next to the working personnel, when he, or she, is a 'shadow' with a business professional that has specific knowledge about an occupation or career in which he is interested in. It helps to understand how the departments works, learn from the experiences of colleagues, gives the opportunity to discuss the future role, needs and priorities with others, and understand why things work the way they do.

Thus, a student receives a full picture of the profession, information about necessary knowledge and skills and, therefore, his motivation to study better is increasing. Before launching a shadowing program the company gives a number of training courses for those who are going to be 'shadowed', so that they were the most truthful, effective and informative for 'shadows' (External training as part of HR consulting, 2012).

The following directions have been distinguished (New features, 2002):

1. Providing opportunities for graduates to choose a place to work. This means that an undergraduate views the processes, has the opportunity to ask questions about the knowledge, skills, talents and level of education required for the job, reflects and learns information, competences and corporate culture specific for the company and its certain department. All this is free of charge and contributes to conscious choice and motivation.

2. Shadowing performed by school students ensures consciousness and steady interest in choosing future profession and educational institution. In the first and the second case, the process of shadowing may be regarded as an extended informational interview in which a school student receives information about the company, its standards, requirements, work environment, etc.

3. Presenting information about enterprises, their requirements, standards, and regulations to teachers of higher professional education. Shadowing is mutually beneficial form of cooperation between students, business and educational institutions, because teachers can successfully adjust their training programs, and is it's simple, cheap and effective.

4. HR training means training of all levels of business organization hierarchy. The aim of shadowing is to gain clear understanding of the company philosophy, its goals and objectives (Uzhakina, 2005).

Thus, the efficiency of shadowing can be defined as the following: the training ground is a real working process in which the mentor and his 'shadow'

are involved as members of a single team to study each other's experiences. In addition, training is conducted in the form of practical activities with such effective elements as: gaining real-world experience, reflecting and feedback; ensuring ongoing mentor and mentee feedback; monitoring the process of managerial decision-making by mentees; planning and budgeting.

This sort of communication allows mentees to build partnerships, to develop the skills of team work, to improve professional skills. The latter is important both for mentors and mentees. In this regard, shadowing provides more opportunities for the enterprise than mentoring in general, and always is cost-effective (New features, 2002).

## Discussions

Compared to national, or domestic, experience, mentoring activities in corporate training practices of other countries are closely linked to techniques aimed at both professional experience sharing with young professionals, and to identification and development of their potential and competences, including: 'mentoring' (the deliberate transfer of experience, coaching (unlocking the person's potential), e-coaching (coaching online), tutoring (supporting the learning process, discussing the experience of knowledge transfer into practice), shadowing (observing the mentor in daily activities), supervision (supervising mentee's professional activities and assessing his competencies levels). Despite some similarities in the techniques discussed and used in the international practice, it should be noted each of them is very self-sufficient and has its own distinctive characteristics.

Regarding adaptive capacity, in our opinion, it's Japanese experience of implementing mentoring that may be helpful for the domestic system of corporate training. Their system contains all the international techniques, discussed in the paper, which have been successfully integrated and constructively implemented into their system taking into account Japanese traditions, realities and modern business requirements.

Mentoring in Japanese enterprises includes four stages. At the first stage of training the mentor offers its mentees some practical knowledge, which are trained and reinforced by repeating and revising. In the second stage, the mentor's task is to develop the potential of the mentees, to teach them how to see the ways and opportunities of improving processes and self-development, i.e. it transfers the young professionals from attitude 'do' to attitude 'think', so that they could focus not only on the specific process they are working for, or at, but realized that they are able to consider any process as a whole. At this stage, young professionals help the mentor introduce in practice what he has understood, i.e. they help the mentor to change his attitude 'think and get down to the heart of the matter' to 'understand well enough to explain the others'. At the third stage, 'from thoughts to self-training' the young personnel learns to ask questions to others and to themselves, and it is not so much the mentees knowledge assessment but the assessment of their skill, or ability, to ask the proper questions that matters. They won't learn a self-training skill and will wait for their mentor assistance unless they have the above mentioned ability to ask.

The fourth stage is associated with complete understanding of the process, the mechanisms to detect problems and solve them. Mentors at this stage assess knowledge of their young mentees asking them questions, checking their



understanding, thus making them teach the mentors. Such a technique involves the elements of all the above mentioned techniques used in mentoring practice of different countries outside Russia (Rosenthal, 2012).

However, success in using foreign achievements of mentoring in domestic mentoring practice, i.e. in Russia, is possible when the following conditions are observed: regulatory and legal support; the scientific and methodological approach; consolidation of interests of the sides dealing with the company mission and tasks; creation of a common educational and business space; Grants to assist and improve the quality of corporate training; expanding opportunities to 'import' foreign models of corporate training; managing the system of motivating in-house mentoring; enhancing e-mentoring (Masalimova and Sabirova, 2015a).

### Conclusion

The research analysis of corporate training practices developed in other countries has shown that the most characteristic feature of this process is that in all the countries studied one of the most effective and time-and-money saving ways of raising the level of HR skills is to implement in-job training, training in the workplace, when preference is given to forms associated with involving the most qualified colleagues with their strong and rich professional experience, and mentoring.

Effective adaptation, personality and professional development is promoted by such techniques integration as: shadowing, mentoring, tutoring, coaching, e-coaching and supervision. In the context of modern Russian enterprises, it is not enough to use only one form of mentoring. It is essential to integrate techniques popular throughout the world and constructively implement them into the domestic system of corporate training, certainly taking into account our business and industry traditions, realities and modern requirements.

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### Notes on contributors

**Alfiya Rafisovna Masalimova** is Ph.D, Professor, Head of Scientific and Educational Department in The Institute of Psychology and Education of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

**Almira R. Shaidullina** is a researcher of Master Degree at the Institute of Psychology and Education of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

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