

The warmness seed: long-term fruits of coaching (Paulo Lopes Henriques, Carla Curado & Pedro Verga Matos, ISEG - Lisbon School of Economics & Management - University of Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal)

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Aim of study (from Abstract)

This study addresses three coach behaviours' effects (**warmness behaviour (WB)**; **stimulating action (SA)** and **planning and structuring activities (PSA)**) in two dimensions of coaching outcomes (**coachee's performance (CP)** and the **quality of the coach-coachee relationship (QCCR)**). The paper argues that coaching is a helpful tool to achieve greater performances in the long run when considering coaches who present higher levels of maturity. Results reveal the positive impact of SA and PSA over CP and QCCR. The adoption of WB has a negative impact on CP and a positive impact on the QCCR. Evidence also supports the relevancy of coaching experience over coaching training. Such results pose a paradox worth exploring in subsequent studies, for it challenges the usefulness of coaches' training. Contributions are related to introducing the concept of WB within the organisational context and addressing two different time horizons regarding the coach behaviour.

Background

A number of studies have underlined the importance of the quality of a coach-coachee relationship in the coaching outcome. Effective coaches cannot only rely on coaching methodology, but also have to establish a relationship of trust (Kampa-Kokesh and Anderson, 2001; Smither and Reilly, 2001), be concerned with the coachee personal growth (Bluckert, 2005) and establish a positive working alliance with the coachee as a critical condition of coaching success (Lowman, 2005). Indeed, more researches have emphasized the importance of this relation in achieving the desired outcome (Downey 1999; Moe & Kvalsund, 2008, Zeus & Skiffington, 2002) up to the point to consider it even more important than coaching professional attitude and working methods (Bluckert, 2005; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Hypothesis

A parallelism is drawn between organisational and sport coaching based on the observation that the organisations culture has increasingly become more challenging and competitive. Therefore such an environment can be viewed from a combination of two perspectives: the **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**; Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008, 2012), which focuses on the intrinsic motives and needs of the human nature, and its sport-related **Autonomy-Supportive Coaching (ASC)** as a tool that encourages autonomy, competence and relatedness as self-determined motivations.

Further developing in this direction, this study suggests three coaching behaviours:

1. **WB**, as the coach attitude of having a positive and empathic feeling towards the coachee;
2. **SA**, as the coach attitude to motivate the coachee towards high accomplishments and maintain desired behaviour;
3. **PSA**, as the coach attitude to frame and organize the coaching procedure in accordance with the coachee.

The following hypothesis are related to each one of the three coaching behaviours:

- positive effect on **CP**
- positive effect on **QCCR**

Data collection and sampling

A questionnaire intended for coaches only, surveying in anonymity their perceptions on both coaches and coachees performances, was elaborated by a group of four coaching experts and refined by a pool of twenty coaches from different firms. It included 17 statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = it doesn't apply; 4 = it completely applies). The questionnaire was mailed to female (59.9%) and male mostly experienced coaches active in 33 different national and multinational randomly selected

organisations based in Portugal. It was returned totaling 319 valid responses over 521 questionnaires sent.

Key Findings

The results supported the majority of the hypothesis. They also show that the coaching outcome measured by CP and QCCR is superior when considering male and more experienced coaches.

They also revealed that:

- **having specific training in coaching has no effect on the outcome of either CP or QCCR**

- WB has no positive effect on the CP, while it has a positive effect on QCCR

Moreover:

- age plays a negative effect on CP while has no significant effect on QCCR

- **holding higher academic degrees (MSc or Ph.D.) has no significant effect on CP, but has a negative deteriorating effect on QCCR**

Conclusions

- WB does not focus on short-term results and does not lead coachees to competitive behaviour , but nourishing warmth seeds can motivate long-run results

- QCCR results show the WB is neither particularly associated with feminine or masculine gender

- Having experience in coaching is far more effective than having had training in coaching, but, paradoxically, an older age appears to negatively affect CP

Limitations

- Data were only collected in one country and its peculiar cultural context might have affected results
- By authors' admission, not all data reliability were within the Cronbach scale recommended values
- Coaches were not directly questioned and responses on the questionnaires were based on their personal perceptions
- Coachees personal characteristics or data were not collected or considered by the study

Why was this article chosen for the review?

In our previous reviews we read about the positive effects of *empathy* in coaching and how coaching is increasingly oriented towards individual and collective *well-being*. *Warmness*, in the title of this original study, appealed to us as a further investigation in this direction. Hopefully nobody will be disappointed in finding that it appears to produce a more positive impact than having specific coaching training and academic degrees.

Reviewer: Costantino Gonnella