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Coaching as a talent management practice in a global bank: specificities and impact at individual and organisational level

Career Coaching and Mentoring SIG, EMCC UK

13 January 2023

About me…

Agenda

- Presentation of PhD findings

- Breakout discussion

- Q&A

To continue the discussion:

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Relevance, background and context

- TM and LD : a perennial issue and a priority for organisations in post covid-19 era (Caligiuri et al. 2020; Collings et al. 2021)

- TM in the banking sector: talent shortages and leadership crisis (Quinlan and Associates, 2017; PWC, 2017)

- Wide use of coaching in organisations in UK and world and one of the most effective TM practice (CIPD, 2015; ICF, 2020)

BUT

- Effectiveness of TM practices often questioned (McKinsey, 2018)

- The views of talented employees is often missing in empirical studies (Gallardo-Gallardo-Thunnissen, 2016; Sparrow, 2019)

- Coaching often studied as part of a bundle of TM practices, not examined specifically (Blackman, Moscardo and Gray, 2016)

Research questions

Objectives:

- Defining the role played by talent coaching for talented employees
- Understanding coaching as a specific TM practice

Research questions:

- RQ1: How do multiple stakeholders (talented employees, HR managers, and coaches) perceive the contribution of coaching in the context of TM in a global bank?
- RQ2: What is the role of talent coaching ?
- RQ3: How is coaching characterised in the context of TM?

Talent management

- An inevitable topic and a growing field of study (McDonnell et al., 2017; Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo, 2019; Sparrow, 2019)

- Manifold understandings of the term 'talent' and TM (Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2013; Farndale et al. 2019)

The management and development of high-performing and high-potential incumbents in critical organizational roles (Collings, 2014:111)

- TM and LD schemes typically include coaching, mentoring, training, international assignments, rotation programmes, etc.

BUT

Lack of empirical research on the talented employees' views, experience and their expectations

Little is known on the impact of TM practices on career progression and leadership development (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Cascio and Boudreau, 2016)

Coaching in organisations

- Similarly to TM, generating a growing interest from scholars (De Haan, 2019; Bozer and Jones, 2018; Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018)

- Many definitions and hybrid practice (Western, 2012; Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2018)

"A human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee, and potentially for other stakeholders"
(Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2018:1)

- Prevalence of the positive impacts of coaching : Leadership development, performance enhancement, well-being and employee engagement (Birckerich, Michael & Shea, 2017; Theeboom et al., 2014)

- **'Talent coaching':** one-to-one developmental interventions received by talented employees taking part in a TM programme

Theoretical Framework

- Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a theoretical lens to make sense of the data, emerged in the analysis phase
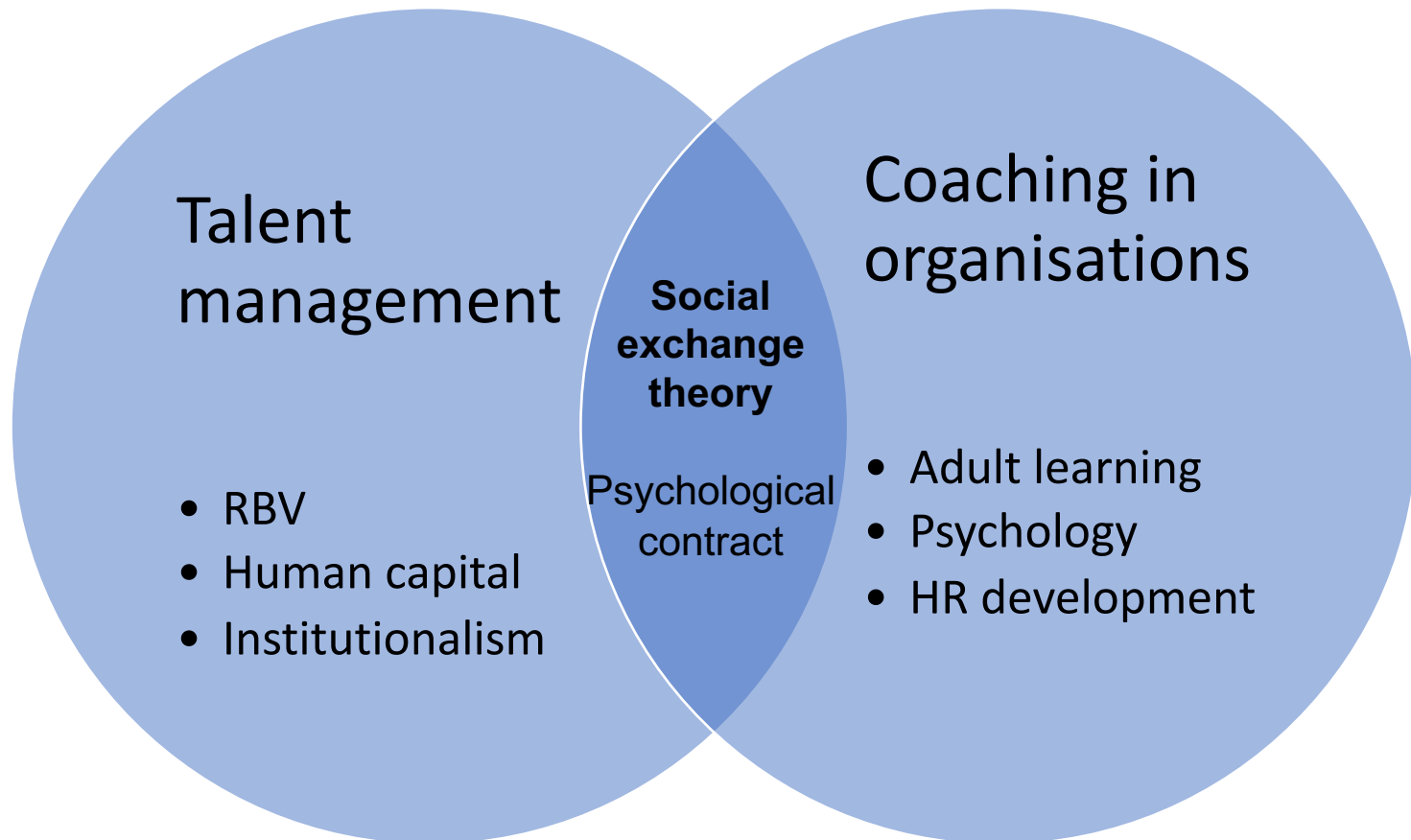
  Social behaviours are the result of an exchange process between two parties based on a cost-benefit analysis (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1986)

- SET is a used as theoretical framework in:
  - TM studies: to understand the reactions of talented employees to the talent status (King, 2016; De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018)
  - Coaching studies: to understand the positive and negative impact of coaching (Nyfoudi & Tasoulis, 2018; Schermuly & Graßmann, 2019)

Theoretical framework

(Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2015; Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Shutte and Sheyn, 2015; Schermuly and Graßmann, 2019)

Talent management

- RBV
- Human capital
- Institutionalism

Social exchange theory

Psychological contract

Coaching in organisations

- Adult learning
- Psychology
- HR development

Methodology

- Social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology

- Qualitative, abductive

- Single case study research design: real-life and in-depth understanding of talent coaching as a phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009; Ellinger, McWhorter, 2020):

  - One multinational bank, 4 TM programmes including coaching element

  - 30 semi-structured interviews

  - Participants: talented employees, HR managers, internal and external coaches

- Purposive sampling designed from preliminary meetings with EMEA Head of OD and TM managers.

Data collection

TM Programmes in EMEA	1st interview	2nd interview	
Programme A - Junior	3	1	
Programme B- Senior	2	1	
Programme C- Middle managers - Consumer division	4	1	
Programme D- Senior women	3	1	
External coaches	3	2	
Internal coaches	2	1	
HR managers	3	0	
Programme managers	3	0	
	23	7	**30**

Overview of the 4 TM programmes

Programme	Target participants	Length	Coach	Structure	Format
A	Junior leaders: Vice Presidents	6 months	Internal (HR managers and MDs)	3 sessions	Group and individual Internal
B	Senior leaders: Directors, Managing Directors	3 months	Internal (HR managers and MDs)	2 sessions	Individual, 360° Assessment and Hogan Development Survey
C – Business specific (Consumer division)	Middle management leaders: Vice Presidents, Directors	6 months	Internal (HR managers)	3 sessions	Individual, 360° Assessment
D – Gender specific (Women)	Women senior leaders: Directors, Managing Directors	3 months	Internal (HR managers and MDs) and external	4 to 5 sessions	Individual, 360° Assessment and Hogan Development Survey

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Finding 1: Talent coaching as social reward

- A **rite of passage**, especially for leaders transitioning to MD level (Oliver, T, B, 2)

- A **gratifying career event**, although not systematically conducive of career progression

  A hard-landing. (Nathalie, multiple, 2)

  It is not a panacea. (Adam, HR, 1)

- A **relational reward**

So you feel a little bit of love, that they want to spend time and money on you; and that you are not completely unnoticed. (…)We are being recognized and rewarded. (Emma, T, A, 1)

- A **symbol of high status** and enactment of the talent status

Finding 2: Talent coaching as catalyst for leadership change

- Coaching **capacity and capability building**

Broadening the leadership repertoire of managers and moving away from a command-and-control approach.

Better quality conversation, (Head of OD, Int C.,1)

- An **unspoken mechanism for the selection of a talent elite**

There'll be the smaller group [of employees] that think, yes, I can do that [coaching] to make me sort of a better person, whether it's here or outside work or whatever. And they're the people that I think eventually go into the really big leadership roles.

(Georges, Int. C, 1)

- An **alternative to employee relations management** and mediation at senior level

# Finding 3: Talent coaching characteristics

- **Not a remedial** intervention to address performance issues
- An individualised platform for the development of leadership capabilities based on **mutual exchange gains and long-term relationships**
- Develop the **political skills and network** to climb the career ladder
- Talent coach as **" advocate, ambassador, sponsor, mentor"**

I am quite sure that coaching helps in the positive politics that you need to evolve in any firm. (Emma, T, A, 1)

You realise that the organisation doesn't necessarily have a structure for people who want to peddle faster, because it's a very case-by-case basis how people get to the next point. (Carry, T, A, 1)

If you are positively impacted by a coach, you are the brand ambassador for him as well. Trust me, I know my coach. (Emma, T, A, 1)

The talent coaching matrix
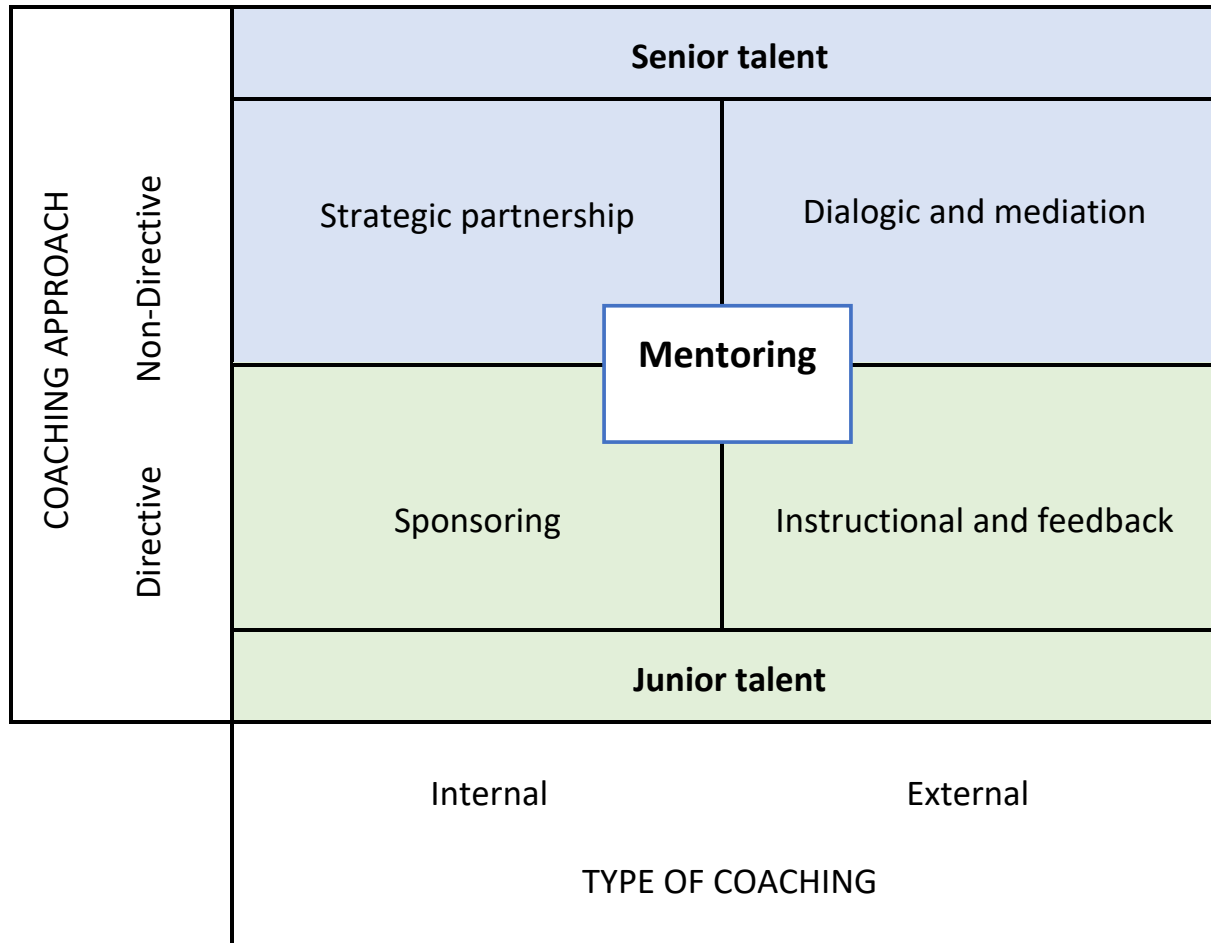
Case study- breakout discussion (10 min)

- Emma is a newly promoted CEO in a Middle-East country. She participated in numerous TM during her career at GlobalFinCorp.

- She is taking part in a Senior Women TM programme, and is allocated an external coach to support her transition as CEO.

- After a couple of sessions, she feels that coaching has a positive impact at an individual level, specifically: giving her time to think, reflect, plan ahead; and on her wellbeing.

- Despite the many benefits that she is experiencing, she feels that she actually needs to tackle complex staff challenges: acute shortage of talent at global level, lack of attractiveness and retention of talented employees in the country.

- In addition, very few employees are currently identified as talent and being offered the opportunity to join an existing TM programme.

What approach would you use to support her?

Case study- debrief

What was the focus of your discussion?

What is the main insight that emerged from your conversation?

Implications of the study

- Prolongs the work of King (2016) on the talent deal:
  - how talented employees **make sense of the talent status** through coaching
  - how coaching is experienced as an **anchored career event** in the employee life cycle
    - Induce talented employees to become coaches
    - Is seen as a springboard to a fast-track career in the organisation
    - experienced as **social reward, social exchange and long-term relationship**

- Workplace coaching has been described as a hybrid practice, blending coaching and mentoring approaches (Stoke, Fatien-Diochon,Otter, 2020; Garvey, Stokes, Megginson, 2018; Western, 2012):
  - Confirms the **developmental purpose** of coaching (Cox et al. 2018)
  - Questions the **nature and purpose** of coaching as a short-term intervention for performance improvement
  - Emphasises **mentoring** as a core approach for talent development
  - Reveals coaches may play the role of **mediator** at senior level

Theoretical implications

- SET sheds additional light on the nature and function of talent coaching at micro and meso levels:

  - is experienced as a **social interaction providing mutual benefits** to the coach and coachee
  - has an **instrumental role** in supporting the talent eco-system and the talented employee segmentation in the leadership pipeline
  - Is a **strategic intervention** for organisational development to develop a coaching culture
  - Shifts the focus on coaching skills and techniques, to the **political and relational dimensions** of coaching in organisation

Practical implications

- Talent coaching relies on internal coaching capacities and capabilities, which may vary across EMEA and globally
  - Deploying digital talent coaching (Passmore *et al.*, 2023)
  - Formal recognition and reward for internal coaches
  - Awareness of expectations about talent coaching : a mutual and reciprocal relationship

- Ethical challenges due to imbalance of power and unspoken role of talent coaching for talent elite selection:
  - Systematic coaching training and supervision for internal coaches
  - Transparent communication on talent status and the role of coaching (Dries and Gieter, 2014, Sumelius et al. 2020)

Q&A

Thank you

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