ABSTRACT

Education in the area of coaching is meaningful from the perspective of possibilities of applying individual coaching approaches in the future practice of Management students, who represent the sample of this research. This report presents the research results gained by analyzing differences between the target group and the control group in coaching. Assumed significant differences were in favor of students who had formerly passed the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management. A questionnaire for assessment of coaching, which detects factors of Cognition, Competence and Social context, by Birknerová and Filipová (2013) was used for these purposes. Results of the analysis proved the existence of significant statistical differences between the groups of Management students from the social and contextual viewpoint on coaching at the cognition level. Although acquiring coaching skills is possible after years of managerial practice, it may prove essential to acquire at least their basics during university studies.

Keywords: coaching, social context, cognitions, competences

Introduction

Education of Management students in the area of coaching has its meaningfulness regarding the acquisition of cognition about this method and the necessary competences which they may implement into the management process in their future profession. By defining the individual competences, companies try to hire the right people for the right positions, use as objective and as just performance remuneration systems as possible, but also assess the preparedness of employees for fulfillment of the strategic goals of the company. Fleming and Taylor (2005) consider coaching to be an important element for creation of an open and approachable organization which can appreciate the abilities and ideas of its people as well as honestly tries to support its individuals. The objective of coaching in a managerial setting is often to increase the performance of employees by means of learning, but this objective may also be multilateral. Among employees, it may be represented by better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses (Cox, Bachkir and Clutterbuck, 2010). Emerson and Loehr (2008) claim that coaching is an adequate tool of management for employee development as it is aimed at awareness and action, which are two basic building blocks of emotional intelligence. These authors add that emotional intelligence represents awareness of own thoughts and feelings as well as of the thoughts and feelings of others, which leads to an adequate and effective action. Emerson and Loehr (2008) accentuate that it is the emotional intelligence which is the most important indicator of how successful an individual may become in work and life. The significance of emotional intelligence as an important managerial competence is also highlighted by Frankovský and Birknerová (2014).

The following study therefore focuses on the importance and meaningfulness of education in the area of coaching, which has been labeled in literature as one of the essential prerequisites in the future practice of Management students, who represent the participants of the presented research.
Coaching education

Due to the fact that the task of the human resource management is nowadays often transferred to the line management, the expectations of employees increase. Also as the importance of the management's talent increases, managers must undertake the role of a coach and employee developer (Cox, Bachkir and Clutterbuck, 2010). Greene and Grant (2003) claim that organizations begin to understand how beneficial it may be for the managers to become coaches. The benefits are better communication, less conflicts, better cooperation, overall performance increase, and employee fluctuation decrease. The authors further state that there are two possibilities of utilizing coaching by a manager. Firstly, during the day, a manager-coach may in many occasions use coaching informally, for example when overtaking the perspective on a certain situation from the employees or asking for their ideas or proposals. Secondly, although this "corridor coaching" represents a strong contribution to the leadership styles, coaching during the structured meetings brings about the most significant changes. It may thus be concluded that coaching nowadays represents a crucial part of management of people. It attracts more and more attention and brings positive results, which is supported by several research findings. Mosca, Fazzari and Buzza (2010) highlight the significance of employee coaching. They recommend managers (primarily business managers) to choose coaching as one of the forms of management. The aim is a manager able to manage all parts of his or her work perfectly and having a unique ability to develop his or her knowledge by means of coaching.

Results of the research by Krazmien and Berger (1997) suggest that it is necessary to focus not only on raising the awareness of coaching and teaching how to coach managers and future managers, but also on the subsequent control of the effectiveness of coaching. Coaching education in the social context by means of acquiring cognitions and competences is the subject of this research (as in Birknerová and Birkner, 2014; Birknerová, Frankovský and Lačín, 2014; Birknerová, Frankovský and Zbiblejová, 2015), whereas the main focus is on the comparison of students before passing the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management and afterwards.

Methodology

At the beginning of the semester we provided the participants with a questionnaire aimed at detection of cognitions, competences and social context related to coaching. Subsequently, the participants attended the classes of Basics of Coaching in Business Management. This subject consisted of 24 hours of lectures and practical seminars. At the end of the semester, after the participants passed this subject, they filled out the same questionnaire they had filled out before passing Basics of Coaching in Business Management.

Research hypotheses

Concerning the aforementioned, the research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

• H1: There are statistically significant differences between the target and the control group in coaching in favor of the students, who passed the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management.

• H2: There are statistically significant differences between the target and the control group in cognitions, competences and social context in favor of the students, who passed the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management.

Data collection method

Opinions on coaching questionnaire by Birknerová and Filipová (2013), which is an original methodology for evaluation of coaching as an education method was applied in the research. The individual questionnaire items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – absolutely no, 5 – absolutely yes). Item examples:

• “Knowledge about coaching enables understanding of human behavior.”
• “Coaching belongs to the basic methods of development of managerial competences.”
• “Thanks to acquisition of knowledge in the area of coaching, managers are better at motivating people.”

The questionnaire consists of 20 items, whereas 12 items saturate the subscale Cognitions, 4 items saturate the subscale Competences, and 4 items saturate the subscale Social context (with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.742). The individual subscales may be describes as follows:

• Cognitions – findings and knowledge about coaching, education process, information about coaching.
- Competences – effectiveness and performance of managerial work, support of other managerial competences.
- Social context – invasion of privacy of people, special preparation of coaches, motivation of employees.

**Research sample**

The research sample consisted of 267 participants aged from 19 to 24 years (average age was 20.253 with a standard deviation of 0.921), who were selected by means of the quota sampling. The proportionality of genders was uneven – the sample contained 212 women and 55 men. All participants are Human Resource Management students of the Faculty of Management, University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovakia.

The target group consisted of 168 participants who had passed the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management in the range of 24 hours. The control group contained 99 participants before attending the classes of Basics of Coaching in Business Management.

**Results and Discussion**

The results were processed by means of the SPSS 18 (software for statistical calculations), whereas t-tests and two independent selections were used. Before using a t-test for the two independent selections, a few conditions had to be met, namely the linear character of the interval variables and detection of zero occurrence of extreme values. Table 1 illustrates the statistically processed results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>71.879</td>
<td>6.821</td>
<td>-5.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>76.506</td>
<td>7.236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitions</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>44.788</td>
<td>4.547</td>
<td>-4.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>47.292</td>
<td>5.084</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competences</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>14.798</td>
<td>1.932</td>
<td>1.417</td>
<td>0.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>14.399</td>
<td>2.378</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social context</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>12.293</td>
<td>2.130</td>
<td>-8.99</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>14.816</td>
<td>2.263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. p = statistical significance.
Source: Based on own research.

The results of this research confirm that for the majority of the participants, cognitions and social context are the best tools provided by the education of coaching. Their knowledge and mental skills are thus strengthened, which is nowadays a great competitive advantage. Several authors (e.g. Grant, 2010; Whitmore, 2004; Krazmien and Berger, 1997) accentuate implementation of coaching in managerial practice, highlighting the period of the last 5 to 10 years, when coaching has started occurring more frequently in the work environment of managers. Importance of education in the area of coaching was proved as significant regarding the achieved results of the Management students in the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management. In the course of studying this subject, statistically significant differences were detected in the levels of Cognitions and Social context, and before and after passing the subject itself. A higher level of Cognitions of the students who had passed Basics of Coaching in Business Management is connected to their ability to learn and accept new knowledge in the process of education. Grant (2010) claims that it is important to provide managers who study coaching with realistic expectations about the time needed for mastering the coaching behavior. Passing the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management means that students mastered the individual skills gradually during the period of 12 weeks.

Students, who had passed the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management, showed a higher degree of social context (as part of coaching) thanks to the impact of education. Inevitability of
the social context in the process of coaching is accentuated also by Ellinger and Bostron (1999), who claim that the manager himself/herself has to switch between the role of manager and coach, and that this transition appears to occur on a continuum. However, it is time-intensive and requires straining and development. Education of the future managers in the social and contextual process of coaching is effective thanks to its potential use in practice.

In the course of teaching the aforementioned subject, certain statistically significant results at the level of Competences were detected before and after passing this subject. McLean et al. (2005) state that managers who also coach have a more fulfilling workplace experience. This experience may be perceived as a competence acquired from the work process and for this reason even the Management students, who passed Basics of Coaching in Business Management, did not show a significantly higher degree of competences in the area of management. In managerial professions it is important to work with people and manage employees effectively. Coaching is, therefore, an adequate form of education, better understanding of employees, and effective management of interpersonal relations.

**Conclusions**

Applying the research findings into education of coaching is connected primarily to the work of first line managers, who are in closest contact with their subordinates as well as managers-beginners. However, some claim that these parts of education of coaching are appropriate for all types of managers as they could help cope with the demands placed upon them. The participants of this research see a contribution of education both from the viewpoint of their profession as well as personal life.

As it was already mentioned, everybody has a right to develop their own social context, cognitions and competences. According to the responses of the participants, the top management of companies is often interested only in the results and lacks interest in how the managers reached them. Nevertheless, we believe that in contemporary era, the greatest leaders require their lower management to progress and develop constantly, both personality-wise and socially. This claim may be supported by, for example, increase in the significance of managerial ethics, development of managers, creation of standards of managerial competences, and other tendencies in the area of management development. The research project results highlight the ongoing changes in the area of education, particularly as a result of ever-changing attitudes of schools towards the whole area of education. These changes contribute to the development of new methods and approaches. Significance of interactive forms of education, e.g. e-learning and coaching, as well as education in the area of social context and cognitions keeps increasing.

Theoretical knowledge and results gained by the research project presented in this report represent possible viewpoints on the area of education in coaching related to the development of cognitions, social context and competences, as well as possibilities of applying the concept of personality and social development in this area. In order for students to acquire, maintain and further develop their knowledge of education of coaching, a whole range of tools is required. Nowadays, students have at their disposal a number of methods and techniques which they may use for education and development. One of the possible approaches which could help students to cope with the demands arising from their future occupation is the concept of social context and cognitions. To put it simply, social context may contribute to identification and a subsequent effective use of own potential and competences, which future employees acquire over time. Social context, therefore, enables students as future employees development of their abilities in the area of interpersonal contact.

To conclude, the contemporary situation in education in coaching is influenced by the ongoing transformation of the whole process of education. When comparing the students before and after passing the subject Basics of Coaching in Business Management, there were certain small differences detected in the level of education of coaching, significant differences in the level of social context and cognitions, and no significant differences in the level of competences. The personality context and development during education of coaching enables Management students to become aware of their own potential, which should be constantly developed, and thus become better managers and role models for others. Simultaneously, this context may help students as future managers to develop relations and manage situations which they encounter in their surrounding environment.

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