Abstract

For the purpose of management and employee development, the use of coaching has been increasing over the last decade. This article investigates the theoretical background of manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. Based on the extant literature, it also examines the definitions, purposes, practices and research of those three interpersonal relationships. Then, the similarities and differences among these issues are compared. Finally, implications and recommendations for future research are discussed. Overall, whereas manager-as-coach and executive coaching are different practices in terms of their purpose and process, executive coaching and formal mentoring are more similar. It is hoped that the conceptual distinction among these interchangeably used practices should enhance the understanding and appropriate application of such developmental practices.

Practices for employee and managerial development (e.g., coaching, mentoring, and 360-degree feedback) have been increasing for the last decade (Joo, 2005; Noe, 2001). Traditionally, development has focused on management level employees, while line employees received training designed to improve a specific set of skills needed for their current job. However, with the greater use of work teams and employees’ increased involvement in all aspects of business, development is becoming more important for all employees. Whereas training is focused on helping improve employees’ performance in their current jobs, development helps prepare them for other positions in the organization and increases their abili-
Employee development has become a necessary component of an organization’s efforts to improve quality, to retain key employees, to meet the challenges of global competition and social change, and to incorporate technological advances and changes in work design (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2007). Approaches for employee development include formal education, assessment, job experience, and interpersonal relationships (Noe, 2001). McCauley and Douglas (2004) categorized formal developmental relationships into five types: one-on-one mentoring, peer mentoring, formal coaching, mentoring in groups, and action learning teams (Gilson, 2005). Among others, interpersonal relationship practices, such as coaching, mentoring, and counseling have been increasing over the last decade.

While some coaching services are provided by external consultants or coaches, many large organizations also provide coaching practices by internal HRD professionals, supervisors and managers, by internal mentors and coaches as well as by external HRD and management development consultants (Hamline, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2008). Describing four variant of coaching (i.e., coaching, executive coaching, business coaching, and life coaching), Hamline et al. (2008) concluded that each variant of coaching embraced features with other variants. In this study, we focus on contrasting three practices: manager-as-coach (also known as managerial coaching), executive coaching, and formal mentoring.
Problem Statement

According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), its global membership has soared from about 1,500 in 1999 to almost 7,000 by the end of 2003 (Joo, 2005). According to their website, the membership is now well over 11,000 in 82 countries. Research into the efficacy of coaching has lagged behind and it has only started to develop seriously over the last five years (Jarvis, Lane, & Fillery-Travis, 2006). The membership of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), the leading coaching associations in EU, is approximately 2,700 and rising rapidly (Hamlin et al., 2008). As identified by Grant (2003), the literature is at a point of expansion in response to practice development.

Coaching has rapidly become a significant part of many organizations’ learning and development strategy. Lack of transfer in learning and lack of sustained behavioral change pointed toward the need for more individualized, more engaged, more context-specific learning (Bacon & Spear, 2003). Learning, development, behavioral change, performance, leadership, career success, and organizational commitment are all concepts related to coaching. While practice on coaching is increasing, more attention needs to be paid to coaching by researchers. In their recent article, Hamline et al. (2008) urge that HRD researchers should pay more attention on coaching, as there is an increasing entry into coaching of individuals from various professional fields, including psychology, psychiatry, adult education, management, and organizational development.

One of the key issues for research and practice of these interpersonal relationships is the appropriateness of the use of the term coaching. In reviewing books and articles, we found many labels for coaching and related practices, including manager-as-coach, managerial coaching, executive coaching, business coaching, life coaching, career counseling, (formal) mentoring, and so on. Diversity in terminology can be a source of practical and conceptual confusion that makes it difficult for practitioners to identify research relevant to their particular concerns. As the distinction among these practices is not clear, sometimes they are used interchangeably in practice. In spite of the popularity of coaching, therefore, it may not be practiced as effectively as it might be because of the lack of understanding of its purpose and benefits among managers and organizations (Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari, 1987).

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the theoretical background of, and to compare manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring among others. The significance of this article lies in the distinction of the three developmental interpersonal relationships, based on the extant literature on coaching and mentoring. The conceptual distinction among similar practices that is interchangeably used would enhance the understanding and appropriate application of such developmental practices.

Thus, the research questions are three-fold: (1) what are the theoretical backgrounds of the emergence of multiple faces of coaching? (2) what is the rationale for the use (i.e., definitions and purposes) of manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring? and (3) what are the similarities and differences among these practices?
Methods

This article focuses on published research on interpersonal relationship in the workplace. Articles for this review were identified through searches of Business Source Premier, Science Direct, and Interscience databases (through December, 2010), using key words, coaching, executive coaching, managerial coaching, manager-as-coach, and formal mentoring. We reviewed the reference list of each article to identify additional citations that were not revealed by other search means. The majority of the research on manager-as-coach and executive coaching in the workplace has been published within the last 10 years. Research on formal mentoring has longer history. Since the focus of this paper is on coaching, however, the literature review on formal mentoring relied on the major papers such as Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett (2003). It should be noted that most articles are from practice journals such as Harvard Business Review and Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research. Books and book chapters on the general topic of coaching in the workplace and on executive coaching have been reviewed as well (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Fitzgerald & Berger, 2002; Kilburg, 2000).

This paper is divided into six parts: the background of the emergence of coaching; the practice and research of manager-as-coach; the practice and research of executive coaching; the practice and research of formal mentoring; a comparison of the three developmental interpersonal relationships; discussion including implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

Background

In a knowledge-based economy, attraction, motivation, and retention of talented employees have been critical concerns in many organizations. Fierce global competition and rapid technological advancement have made jobs more complex and challenging (Joo, 2007). In addition, as teams have become a basic form of organizational structure, the role of leader has transformed from a traditional director to a supportive coach. In order to support its employees, organizations should not only introduce new development practices, but also build organizational learning culture and positive social relationships between managers and employees. Thus, coaching and mentoring have emerged as important approaches for employee development.

Use of Teams in Organizations

As the organizational structure has been transformed into teams, several problems typically have been encountered in moving toward the use of self-managed teams (Kulisch & Banner, 1993). The first problem is what to do with first-line supervisors who are no longer needed as supervisors. One option is to have them assume new responsibilities as coordinators or coaches (Kulisch & Banner, 1993). Another problem is that managers who are one level above the teams will likely oversee the activities of several teams, and their roles will change to emphasizing planning, expediting, and coordinating (Kulisch & Banner, 1993). These managers need considerable training to acquire skills in group leadership and the ability to delegate (McLean, 2006). Therefore, more supportive leadership has become the preferred style of leadership and coaching is being emphasized in a number of organizations.
Complex and Challenging Jobs

As Drucker (1988) concluded, organizations are shifting to an information-based organization, or self-governing units of knowledge specialists. Knowledge work is characterized by “unpredictable, multidisciplinary, and non-repetitive tasks with evolving, long term goals which, due to their inherent ambiguity and complexity, require collaborative effort in order to take advantage of multiple viewpoints” (Janz, Colquitt, & Noe, 1997, pp. 882-883). When jobs are complex and demanding (i.e., high on challenge, autonomy, and complexity), individuals are more likely to focus all of their attention and efforts on their jobs, making them more persistent and more likely to consider alternatives that should result in creative outcomes (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). However, one of the characteristics of complex and challenging jobs is that it is difficult to monitor them (Joo, 2007). In addition, employees who feel micromanaged easily lose interest in their jobs (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). For many reasons, the role of leader has changed from traditional hierarchical director to being a supportive and non-controlling leader. As the preferred style of leadership has changed from directive to supportive, therefore, manager-as-coach has become a new role of every supervisor and manager, especially in knowledge-intensive industries. Finally, employees’ commitment and retention are directly related to how they are treated by their managers.

Talent Management

According to the resource-based view of the firm, the firm is a bundle of resources—including tangible and intangible assets (Evans, Pucik, & Barsoux, 2002). Competencies, capabilities, and knowledge, including technological expertise and invisible assets, are the source of competitive advantage. In order to effectively attract, motivate, and retain talented people, therefore, many firms try to become an employer of choice, which refers to a firm that is always the first choice of world-class candidates due to its status and reputation in terms of corporate culture and HR practices (Sutherland, Torricelli, & Karg, 2002). Thus, to be employers of choice, organizations try to outperform their competition in attracting, developing, and retaining people with business-required talent. They achieve this reputation through innovative and compelling HR practices that benefit both employees and their organizations alike (Joo & McLean, 2006). According to best employer studies (e.g., Fortune magazine’s annual list of “100 Best Companies to Work for in America”), the best companies on the list provided employees with more learning and development opportunities, which eventually lead to talent attraction and retention (Joo & McLean, 2006). Thus, the best employers invest more time and money in developing their leaders and high-potential employees such as coaching and mentoring (Bennett & Bell, 2003).

In summary, the use of team organization, complex and challenging jobs, and talent management strategy provide the rationale for coaching. The definitions, purposes, practices and research of three interpersonal relationships are described in detail in the following sections.

Manager-as-Coach

The increasing popularity of manager-as-coach has been evidenced by numerous books on the topic (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2003) and a number of programs teaching the coaching con-
cept and techniques offered by many consulting firms (McLean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005). Manager-as-coach has been identified as a way of motivating, developing, and retaining employees in organizations (Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth et al., 1987).

**Definition of Manager-as-Coach**

Manager-as-coach is defined as a managerial practice that helps employees learn and improve problem work performance by providing guidance, encouragement and support (Ellinger, Ellinger, Hamlin, & Beattie, 2010). More specifically, it is an ongoing process for improving problematic work performance (Fournies, 1987), helping employees recognize opportunities to improve their performance and capabilities (Orth et al., 1987; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992), empowering employees to exceed prior levels of performance (Burde, 1998; Evered & Selman, 1989; Hargrove 1995), and giving guidance, encouragement and support to the learner (Redshaw, 2000). Manager-as-coach can also be defined as a leadership approach based on the condition of constructive feedback that is designed to bring the most out of people by showing that they are respected and valued (Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Hargrove, 1995; Hudson, 1999). The majority of manager-as-coach definitions revolve around the idea of empowering people to make their own decisions, unleashing their potential, enabling learning, and improving performance (Rogers, 2000).

**Purpose of Manager-as-Coach**

The benefits of manager-as-coach have been addressed by many researchers. Manager-as-coach occurs in the workplace so that on-the-job activities and experience become the means for learning. Manager-as-coach occurs as part of the everyday relationship between employee and supervisor/manager and serves as a strong retention tool. Regular, constructive, and significant feedback from managers and supervisors can add to overall performance success (King & Eaton, 1999). Without specific feedback, effective performance is not reinforced, ineffective performance is not identified, and employees do not know if their performance is meeting the expectations of their managers, supervisors, or the company’s customers.

Performance improvement is almost always identified as the primary potential outcome of coaching (Evered & Selman, 1989; Fournies, 1987; Hargrove, 2000; Orth et al., 1987). It also has been linked to increased job satisfaction, personal capability, motivation, and organizational commitment, and to decreased turnover (Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth et al., 1987; Yarnall, 1996). However, there have been few studies that have described how manager-as-coach brings about these outcomes.

**Practice of Manager-as-Coach**

A broader idea of manager-as-coach program grew out of the success of external coaching and mentoring practices (McCaul & Hezlett, 2001). This has led to increased attention on developing managers who can coach all of their subordinates (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). As supervisors tend to communicate more frequently with typical subordinates than with their protégés, support for development can be reinforced more regularly through coaching than through mentoring (McCaul & Hezlett, 2001). Moreover, manager-as-coach suggests that development is important for all employees, not just those who find or are
assigned a mentor (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001).

Many researchers have focused on essential elements of coaching, effective coaching skills, and coaching behaviors. There seems to be general agreement that coaching means creating a climate of communication, support, trust, acceptance, and commitment for improving performance and developing employees’ capabilities (Darraugh, 1990; Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth et al., 1987). Ellinger et al. (2003) identified general agreement about coaching skills in the existing literature, such as listening skills, analytical skills, interviewing skills, effective questioning techniques, observation, giving and receiving performance feedback, communicating and setting clear expectations, and creating a supportive environment conducive to coaching.

**Research on Manager-as-Coach**

In spite of its popularity, there has been a lack of theoretical or empirical research on manager-as-coach (Ellinger et al., 2003; Kilburg, 1996, 2001; McLean & Kuo, 2000). Even though many studies have suggested potential outcomes of manager-as-coach (Evered & Selman, 1989; Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari, 1987), not much work has provided a framework on the outcomes of manager-as-coach (Ellinger et al., 2003). The manager-as-coach studies reviewed in this article (i.e., Bowles & Picano, 2006; Deviney, 1994; Graham, Wedman, & Garvin-Kester, 1993; McGibben, 1995; Wageman, 2001) addressed the effectiveness of coaching skills and behaviors such that training program positively impacted on managers’ coaching behaviors (Graham et al., 1993; McGibben, 1995). Bowles and Picano (2006) found that managers who more frequently applied coaching advice reported more work satisfaction and a tendency toward more life satisfaction.

Some research has examined coaching behaviors to identify “overt managerial practices that demonstrate effective coaching characteristics” (McLean et al., 2005). Ellinger et al. (2003) created coaching behavior measures based on previous research results of behavioral taxonomies (Ellinger, 2003; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Ellinger, Watkins, & Bostrom, 1999). The eight themes they identified include: (1) personalizing learning situations, (2) broadening employees’ perspectives—getting them to see things differently, (3) question framing to encourage employees to think through issues, (4) stepping into other’s shoes to shift perspectives, (5) providing feedback to employees, (6) soliciting feedback from employees, (7) setting and communicating expectations, and (8) being a resource. McLean et al. (2005) also developed measures for coaching behaviors based on content analysis of the related literature and factor analysis of empirical data. As a result, they identified four aspects of managerial behavior: (1) open communication, (2) team approach, (3) valuing people over task, and (4) ambiguous nature of the working environment. In summary, common behaviors can be identified as learning through various approaches, providing feedback or questioning, supporting and valuing employees, being a resource, and communicating openly.

**Executive Coaching**

The growing popularity of executive coaching is a response to workplace demands. Executive coaching emerged as an outgrowth of leadership development programs in the early 1980s and was being offered by many traditional HR consulting firms by 1990 (Hellervick, Hazucha, &
Schneider, 1992; Judge & Cowell, 1997; McCauley & Hezlett, 2001). Today, executives may expect emotional intelligence and social skills from managers and colleagues. According to Sherman and Freas (2004), executives of flatter, leaner, faster-moving organizations are recognizing a subtler set of competencies: the communication and interpersonal skills necessary for influencing employees, adaptability to rapid change, and respect for people of diverse backgrounds. As its label indicates, non-management employees rarely receive executive coaching, either within or outside the U.S. (Conference Board, 1999).

Definition of Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is defined as a process of a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (the person coached) for the purpose of enhancing behavioral change through self-awareness and learning, and thus ultimately for the success of the individual and the organization (Joo, 2005; McCauley & Hezlett, 2001). Before going into detail, it is helpful to define basic terms: coach, coachee, and client. Coach refers to the one who provides one-on-one coaching. The person coached refers to the one who receives the professional service; namely, it is the executive. Finally, in this article, client refers to stakeholders, including more senior executives and/or HR representatives.

Purpose of Executive Coaching

The use of executive coaching has grown dramatically as organizations have discovered the benefits of providing high potential executives and managers with individual coaching to address specific skill deficits, enhance performance, or help them grow into expanded leadership roles (Hodgetts, 2002). Witherspoon and White (1998) identified the four coaching areas in executive coaching as learning, development, performance, and leadership agenda. Some practitioners might focus more on self-awareness (counseling), while others concentrate on learning (consulting), depending on the coaching approach taken. However, the destination is the same—behavioral change of executives in terms of immediate or proximal outcomes (Joo, 2005).

Sherman and Freas (2004) demonstrated the importance of self-awareness, explaining why executive coaching has received the spotlight in the business arena for the last 10 years or so. Those who use the counseling approach tend to emphasize self-awareness and self-reflection in executive coaching (Kilburg, 1997; Orenstein, 2002, 2006), using the metaphor of a window and a mirror (Sherman & Freas, 2004). The purpose of executive coaching then is to provide executives with more time to look into the mirror instead of looking through the window.

Executive coaching does not end with self-awareness. It can be a strategic learning tool of organization. Wanberg et al. (2003) suggested three of the areas of protégé change (cognitive, skill-base, and affective learning) that were derived from Kraiger, Ford, and Salas’s (1993) classification of learning outcomes that stem from training intervention. Among these, learning in executive coaching would be focused on cognitive and affective learning. It is active learning that transfers essential leadership and managerial skills such as visioning, communication, interpersonal relationship, and action planning skills (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Executive coaching, especially in consulting approach, aims to help leaders adapt at new responsibilities, reduce destructive behav-
iors, enhance teamwork, align individuals to collective goals, and support organizational changes (Joo, 2005). For those with a consulting approach, therefore, learning could be an immediate outcome of executive coaching.

Practice of Executive Coaching

Executive coaching usually provides systematic approaches, including a personality inventory, interviews, 360-degree feedback, and action planning. Most executive coaching is intellectually indebted to a small number of disciplines, including consulting, management, organization development, and psychology (Sherman & Freas, 2004). It seems that counseling and consulting occupy opposite ends of a continuum of approaches to coaching. Some (Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001; Hodgetts, 2002; Kets de Vries, 2005) have divided the coaching approach into two: therapy and coaching, and others (Bacon & Spear, 2003) have preferred the term, the coach as director and the coach as psych-therapist. Thus, although there are slight differences in nuance, in most articles, the terms, therapy, counseling, and remedial are used interchangeably, while the words, coaching, consulting, and developmental, have the same connotations. In this vein, Joo (2005) used the terms: counseling approach and consulting approach.

The counseling approach and the consulting approach share certain features. Both aim at behavioral change, both help individuals enhance self-awareness and learning, and both are conducted by professionals who establish strong alliances of trust with their clients (Hodgetts, 2002). Hart et al. (2000) compared consulting with counseling through the review of the thoughts and concerns expressed by 30 professionals who practice consulting (coaching), counseling (therapy), or both. However, there is a controversial debate between counseling and consulting, based on their academic and professional background. As Wasylyshin (2003) stated, however, talented executive coaches need to be grounded in both business and psychology. Regarding business, psychologists who have no experience in business roles must accumulate their business knowledge over time and through experiences in different companies and industries, and by immersing themselves in the business literature, as well as pertinent training experiences. With regard to psychology, there are certain general psychological skills essential for effective coaches, including interpersonal effectiveness, listening, empathy for widely differing groups, patience, adaptability, analytical problem solving, creativity, and humor (Wasylyshin, 2003), as well as recognizing when referral to professional therapists is needed.

Research on Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is one of the areas in which practice is way ahead of theory (Joo, 2005). There are surprisingly few studies (i.e., Collins & Holton, 2004; Douglas & Morley, 2000; Kilburg, 2000) that document the effectiveness of executive coaching as measured by changed leadership behavior using accepted empirical methods. That is, although executive coaching has been proposed as an intervention to help executives improve their performance and ultimately the performance of the overall organization, whether it does what it proposes remains unknown because of the lack of empirical evidence for what happens, why it happens, and what makes it effective or ineffective (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Kilburg, 1996).
Joo (2005) reviewed 13 research articles on executive coaching, including qualitative (38%) and quantitative (62%) studies. Most were authored by practitioners rather than researchers. With regard to quantitative studies, five of eight studies were analyzed using only descriptive statistics based on only one party, either coachees or coaches. Except for one study (i.e., Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003), most of these have potential limitation in research quality, due to the lack of generalizability in sample size, and statistical methods being used. None of the students were based on the dyadic analysis.

Formal Mentoring

Mentoring is a key developmental practice for individuals in organizations (Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002). Generally, mentoring has been described as “the most intense and powerful one-on-one developmental relationship, entailing the most influence, identification, and emotional involvement” (Wanberg et al., 2003, p. 40). Both individuals and organizations use mentoring relationships to enhance learning along with professional and personal development in the workplace (Wanberg et al., 2003).

Definition of Formal Mentoring

Mullen (1994) defined mentoring as a one-on-one relationship between a less experienced (i.e., protégé or mentee) and a more experienced person (i.e., mentor), and is intended to advance the personal and professional growth of the less experienced individual. To distinguish formal and informal mentoring, formal mentoring occurs in a structured environment where a third party pairs the mentor and protégé together. While informal mentoring develops spontaneously and voluntarily, most formal mentoring relationships are structured with certain requirements and time frames. Mentoring can also be defined as a goal-focused process that is aimed toward increased knowledge and competency development (Godshalk & Sosik, 2003). Thus, formal mentoring can be a strategic learning tool in the organization.

Many researchers argued that formal and informal mentoring relationships differ in terms of the surrounding structure (e.g., having guidelines for how often to meet and topics to discuss), the motivation and skills of the mentors, and the willingness of mentors to visibly support their protégés (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). If protégés in both programs are satisfied with their mentoring relationships, however, they do not differ in terms of important satisfaction, procedural justice, organizational commitment, promotion satisfaction, and intentions to quit (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Therefore, it suggests that formal mentoring relationships have the potential to be as beneficial as informal relationships in terms of outcomes, but they may not always deliver (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005).

Purpose of Formal Mentoring

Although the purpose of mentoring ranges from socialization of newly hired employees to management development, mentoring typically involves a committed, long-term relationship between a more seasoned higher-level employee and a less experienced employee. Mentors give their protégés career-related assistance (e.g., sponsorship, coaching, challenging assignments, and high visibility) and psychosocial support (e.g., advice, encouragement) (Kram, 1983; Noe, 1988). Role-modeling may be a third distinct function mentors provide (Burke, 1984; Johnson &
Receiving support from a mentor is associated with higher performance ratings, more recognition, greater compensation, more career opportunities, and more promotions (Burke & McKeen, 1997; Chao, 1997; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; McCauley & Hezlett, 2001; Scandura, 1992; Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). According to the dynamic process model of formal mentoring developed by Wanberg et al. (2003), mentoring affects proximal outcomes (e.g., satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, protégé change, learning outcomes) and distal outcomes for both mentors (e.g., recognition, job satisfaction) and protégés (e.g., career satisfaction, promotions, performance) (Egan, 2005). Wanberg et al. (2003) also suggested three areas of protégé change (cognitive, skill base, and affective learning) that were derived from Kraiger, Ford, and Salas’s (1993) classification of learning outcomes that stem from a training intervention. Among these, learning in formal mentoring would be focused on cognitive and affective learning.

**Practice of Formal Mentoring**

Developing and implementing a formal mentoring program involves making decisions about program objectives, policies, guidelines, and activities (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Formal mentoring relationships are arranged or facilitated by third parties (i.e., HR department) other than the mentor and protégé. It is known that about one third of large companies in the United States are estimated to have formal mentoring programs (Axel, 1999).

According to McCauley and Hezlett (2001), characteristics for successful mentoring programs are categorized around five themes: (a) organizational support for the program, (b) clarity of purpose, expectations and roles, (c) participant choice and involvement, (d) careful selection and matching procedures, and (e) continuous monitoring and evaluation. In formal mentoring, mentors perform five specific career development functions—exposure protection, coaching, sponsorship, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). The general goal of this career function of mentoring is to help protégés progress in their careers. The four psychosocial functions of a mentor are counseling, friendship, role modeling, and acceptance/confirmation (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985).

**Research on Formal Mentoring**

Successful mentor-protégé relationships can lead to increases in career mobility, job and career satisfaction, compensation, and performance (Egan, 2005; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997). While a number of authors have offered advice or shared their experiences about running formal mentoring programs, very little research has evaluated how different program characteristics affect program effectiveness (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005; Wanberg et al., 2003). Although evaluations of formal mentoring programs have demonstrated positive results (Gaskill, 1993; Noe, 1988; Portwood & Granrose, 1986), there is some evidence that protégés participating in formal mentoring programs benefit less than those who have informal mentoring relationships (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). For further information on formal mentoring research, consult Wanberg et al.’s (2003) integrated work on the extant research.
Comparison of the Interpersonal Relationship Practices

Coaching has traditionally been viewed as a way to correct poor performance and to link individual effectiveness with organizational performance (Ellinger et al., 2003). As mentioned earlier, the distinction among the three interpersonal relationships has not been clear and some organizations even interchangeably use them in practice. More specifically, whereas manager-as-coach and executive coaching are similar in name but different in nature, formal mentoring and executive coaching are similar in nature but different in name. Table 1 indicates the similarities and differences among the three developmental practices.

Therefore, managers can play a pivotal role either in manager-as-coach (as a coach) or in executive coaching (as a person being coached). Overall, manager-as-coach and executive coaching are different practices, whereas formal mentoring and executive coaching are more similar in terms of their purpose and process.

The manager-as-coach is someone who has an ongoing, committed partnership with an employee and who empowers that person or team to exceed prior levels of performance (Evered & Selman, 1989). For the purpose of learning and development, performance improvement, and retention, the manager plays the role of coach. While mutual communication and partnership are

Table 1. A Comparison among Manager-as-coach, Executive Coaching, and Formal Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Manager-as-coach</th>
<th>Executive Coaching</th>
<th>Formal Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and development</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance improvement</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Management development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Behavioral change</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance improvement</td>
<td>organizational politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach/Mentor</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager/Supervisor</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Senior manager, usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of coach experience</td>
<td>Unregulated, so credentials not obvious</td>
<td>two layers higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coachee/Protégé</td>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Mostly executives and higher level managers</td>
<td>Lack of mentor expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower level employees to high potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Less structured</td>
<td>Systematic and structured</td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Partnership Communication</td>
<td>Issue/Problem centered</td>
<td>People/Process centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
emphasized, effectiveness usually relies on coaching experience.

Executive coaches are mostly external professionals. It is believed that external coaches are most appropriate under conditions requiring extreme confidentiality, when the varied business experience of the coach is beneficial, or when speaking the unspeakable is necessary (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). The primary purpose of executive coaching is self-awareness and learning to improve performance of the coaches who are mostly executives and high potential managers. Executive coaching usually provides systematic approaches, using a personality inventory, interviews, 360-degree feedback, and action planning. Executive coaching is usually issue-focused, short-term and focused on specific areas or problems.

Some argue that coaching has been proposed as one particular mentoring role, along with sponsorship, protection, challenging assignments, and exposure to senior management thinking (Day, 2001). Formal mentoring takes a longer-term and broader view of the person. However, as most mentors are internal senior managers, the program tends to be less structured. Formal mentoring programs have potential problems on lack of mentor expertise (i.e., lack of interpersonal or technical competence) and general dysfunctionality (i.e., mentor has a negative attitude and/or personal problems) (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). In a sense, the benefits of formal mentoring are similar to those of executive coaching. Thus, it is not surprising that not a few organizations use these terms interchangeably.

**Discussion**

The rationale for the interpersonal relationships was reviewed. Then, the practice and research of manager-as-coach and executive coaching were examined in more detail. Implications for research and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions follow.

**Implications for HRD Practices**

With regard to the implications for HRD practices, one of the goals of this article was to make a distinction among these interpersonal relationships. Formal mentoring came from informal mentoring relationship for the purpose of providing career and psychological support to protégé. It is believed that executive coaching emerged from the outgrowth of leadership development programs. Manager-as-coach grew out of the success of mentoring and executive coaching. As these practices share the theoretical foundation and basic approaches, these are interchangeably used by many practitioners. It is hoped that this study would help practitioners and researchers to understand the distinction among these practices and to get rid of practical and conceptual confusion.

As Joo and McLean (2006) found in their research for best employer studies, the key differentiators to be employers of choice for knowledge workers were reduced to three: (1) training and development opportunities, (2) career growth opportunities, and (3) culture and work environment (Bennett & Bell, 2004; Herman & Gioia, 2000; Joyce, 2003; Sutherland et al., 2002). All of these factors are in the scope of HRD, which includes not only training (i.e., individual learning), but
also individual (employee/leadership) development, career development, organizational learning and development (McLagan, 1989; Swanson, 1995). Coaching practice has to do with career development and organization development portion as well as traditional training. In a similar vein, Joo and McLean (2006) argued as follows:

HRD provides learning and development in two different dimensions: individual and organization. Traditionally, HRD has mainly focused on individual training. However, HRD needs to enlarge its territory to individual development and organizational learning and development. In addition to training for basic skills of individuals, HRD practitioners need to pay more attention to employee development programs, such as on-the-job experience, coaching, mentoring, management development, and career development. (p. 253)

HRD professionals can support managers by providing relevant practices and services. Effective HRD managers need to support their organizations to be an employer of choice, providing relevant developmental practices such as coaching and mentoring. This can be a key retention strategy for the high potential employees and ultimately the source of competitive advantage of their organization.

Managers play a pivotal role in manager-as-coach. As McLean (2006) noted, however, managers may fear the loss of their ability to influence or control employees and thus, hesitate to make the shift from traditional order-and-control managers to manager-as-coach. Therefore, leadership development is essential in preparing leaders to become coaches. HRD should play a key role in leadership development in the workplace to support the new roles of managers.

At the organizational level, organizational learning culture is one of the key contextual components to encourage coaching and mentoring in organization. The most effective way for HRD professionals to assist an organization that strives to become a learning organization is “to coach managers to become learning facilitators in the broadest sense” (McLean, 2006, p. 256).

Finally, sometimes HRD professionals need to play a role as an executive coach. The two major approaches on executive coaching are counseling and consulting approaches (Joo, 2005). As Wasylyshin (2003) states, talented executive coaches must be grounded in both business and psychology. We recommend that HRD professionals take more consultant approach than counseling approach. While HRD professionals have experience in business roles, however, they need to develop certain general psychological skills essential for effective coaches, including interpersonal effectiveness, listening, empathy for widely differing groups, patience, adaptability, analytical problem solving, creativity, and humor (Wasylyshin, 2003). Thus, it is critically important to know what the purpose of the coaching relationship is in the first place. Then, when hiring an external coach, it is important to examine their academic and professional backgrounds to see if one is fit for the purpose of the coaching relationship.

Recommendations for Future Research

While research on mentoring is increasing, more rigorous research on coaching relationships and coaching outcomes is needed. Here are some suggestions for future research on coaching.
First, future research on coaching needs to be clear about the types, purposes and approaches of coaching, accordingly to the distinctions this study has provided. Second, the question about how to evaluate the effectiveness and outcome of coaching should be addressed in future research. That is, coaching effectiveness, or the outcomes of coaching, needs to be defined. To do so, more studies for developing valid and reliable instruments are needed. The measures developed by McLean et al. (2005) and Ellinger et al. (2003) also need to be validated in different cultural settings. Third, coach-coachee dyad analysis should be examined in future research. Most research has collected data from only one member of the coach-coachee dyad. Analysis of dyads would allow researchers to delve into a deeper understanding of coach-coachee relationships and would help to decrease mono-method bias concerns (Wanberg et al., 2003). Lastly, future research should examine the impact of coaching relationships through longitudinal studies, as coaching is a cause rather than a consequence. In other words, the time lag between Time 1 (when the coaching happens) and Time 2 (when the outcomes are produced) exists. Thus, longitudinal studies with at least 6 months’ interval would help to evaluate the distal outcomes of coaching.

Conclusions

Coaching has become increasingly popular despite limited empirical evidence about its impact. The use of team organization and complex challenging jobs were the rationale for the development and growth of development practices (i.e., manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring). Today, many organizations use these interpersonal relationships as a way of talent management strategies. The purpose of this paper was to explore the theoretical background of coaching and mentoring for management and employee development and to compare manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring, examining the practice and research of each practice based on the extant literature. The significance of this article lies in its integration of the extant literature on mentoring and coaching and the distinction of the three developmental interpersonal relationships. The conceptual distinction among similar practices that is interchangeably used should enhance the understanding and appropriate application of such developmental practices.

References

Behavior, 51, 43-57.

*Group & Organization Studies*, 9, 353-372.


