

# Mentoring and coaching provided in workplace



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Within this research, one of the concepts I will focus is the on-the-job training especially mentoring and coaching provided in working place in small and middle size Chinese companies. The reason I choose this topic is because mentoring and coaching is popular training methods in China especially in small and middle size company. Mentoring and coaching provided by experienced colleagues will help employees to gain new skill and knowledge as well as integrate into the culture quickly since they start their career (Decenzo & Robbins, 1999). A good mentor can guide employees achieve better performance as well as find their future development in their career path.

The psychological contract is the other concept I'll study in the research. It is one concept arouse experts interests since the 1990s (Foot & Hook, 2005).

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There are many factors influence the psychological contract, one of them are the training provided to employees. Mentoring and coaching, as the most popular training method provide to employees currently, is an area worth to study. Although it was suggested that training and development as an HRD intervention has contribution to the psychological contract (Rousseau & Greller, 1994), there is few research links the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching with the strength of the psychological contract between employee and the organisation. The aim of research in this area is trying to find out the link between these two concepts and reveal to what extent effective mentoring and coaching contribute to the psychological contract between employee and the organisation. The paper will describe the scope and the objective of the research in detail and provide literature base followed by the appropriate research methodologies. A provisional work schedule will be formed in the paper. Resources requirements will introduced in the proposal.

## **Scope**

The research is planed to be finished during three month from May to August in 2010. Main issues will be the mentoring and coaching provides to employees and their satisfaction towards such training methods. The target organisation will be one or two small or middle size company in Shanghai, China. Research will be done among the mentors and mentees choosing from these companies. These companies could be small or middle size joint venture enterprises or local Chinese companies. The requirement is that they have formal or informal mentoring system to provide training. Samples will be those mentors and mentees randomly chosen from these companies. Data will be collected from these participates. The first unit of analysis is aim

at figure out whether or not there is a relationship between the effectiveness of mentoring and coaching and the strength of the psychological contract between employees and the organisation. The second part will reveal the relationship between these two variables.

## **Aims**

The aim of this research is to find out to what extent do effective mentoring and coaching can contribute to the psychological contract between employee and the organisation. If the link between effective mentoring and the psychological contract are defined through the research, we may discover the importance of effective mentoring and coaching in organisational development in the aspect of maintaining talents and strengthen the psychological contract between employee and the organisation. Companies may find better ways to deliver the mentoring and coaching in order to better integrate individual career development with the organisational strategy. More training and development projects can be derived from the outcome of the research to help mentors improve their skills in mentoring and coaching. Surveys and interview can be taken as methodologies during the research.

## **Objectives**

Within my research, there are two main objectives I expect to achieve.

To confirm that there is a relationship between effectiveness of mentoring and coaching in organisation and the strength of psychological contract between employee and the organisation.

To explore to what extent do effective mentoring and coaching contribute to the psychological contract between employees and the organisation.

Through the data collected from mentors and mentees in different organisations we expect to reach the conclusion that effective HRD intervention in the area of mentoring and coaching may help the company strengthen the psychological contract between employee and the organisation.

Different variables will be set in the research to ensure more specific factors exist in the mentoring and coaching programme be analysed, therefore the research will reveal which aspect of mentoring programme have the strongest affect to the construction of psychological contracts.

## **Justification**

The reason I'm going to do the research about the relationship between mentoring and coaching and the psychological contract is because both of these concepts are important in human resource management area.

From the theoretical perspective, although many authors mention the relationship between training and the psychological contract, few of them did the research on the specific area of mentoring and coaching. My research in this area may fix the gap in this area and provide a more clear vision on how HRD can make effort to strength the psychological contract.

From the practical aspect, psychological contract is an important concept every company desired in people management. The importance of psychological contract will be introduced in the following literature review

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part. So far many companies just use the performance management to help build the psychological contract. My research will provide them a new vision of this area and help them achieve stronger psychological contracts through the effort of HRD activities.

## **Literature Review**

Human resource development is an important part in organisational development. HRD professionals are seeking the ways to develop employees' skill, knowledge and attitude through different methods.

Employee training has become increasingly important as job have become more sophisticated and influenced by technological and corporate change. When a senior employee takes an active role in guiding another individual, we refer to this activity as mentoring or coaching (Decenzo & Robbins, 1999).

Many authors (Kram, 1985; Megginson, 1988; Bennetts, 1995; Brockbank & Beech, 1999; Whittaker & Cartwright, 1999) noticed that in the recent two decades many organisations started to use mentoring to help individuals to learn. Experiences in these organisations suggested that mentoring can facilitate the learning-to-learn of their employees and contributes to its responsiveness to its environment, while meeting the developmental needs of employees (Collin, 2001).

Mentors guide and suggest suitable learning experiences for their protégé and sometimes provide opportunities for the individual to demonstrate what he or she has learnt by. While their main aim is to encourage individuals to

learn, mentors are also likely to learn a great deal themselves by their involvement in this learning experience (Foot & Hook, 2005).

Coaching is another approach to learning and development that has been gaining in popularity. It gives guidance through advice, criticism, direction and suggestion (Wilson & Elman, 1990) in aim to help individuals or groups to perform better (Foot & Hook, 2005).

On study showed that where a significant mentoring relationship existed, those protégés had more favorable and frequent promotions, were paid significantly more than those who were not mentored (Whitely et al, 1991), had a greater level of commitment to the organisation, and had greater career success (Turban & Dougherty, 1992).

For achieving effective mentoring, Collin (2001) defined several aspects which ensure the satisfied outcome of mentoring. (1) The status and the characteristics of the mentor. (2) The qualification of the protégé. (3) The relationship between mentor and mentee. (4) The activities.

The concept of the psychological contract aroused much interests amongst observers of HRM in the late 1990s. Attributed initially to Argyris (1960), the concept was further developed by Schein (1978). It concerns the expectations that each party holds with reared to the other, and it recognized as having an impact on the way people behave in the workplace. The psychological includes factors that result in feeling such as loyalty and perceptions of fair treatment, and many intrinsic factors that affect motivation.

Much of the debate in the 1990s was about feelings of job security as an element of the psychological contract and the extent to which organisations could or could not continue to offer reassurance with regard to job security (Foot & Hook, 2005). Guest and Conway (1977) refer to the new psychological contract where the focus has shifted to employment security or employability rather than job security. This means that if employees can no longer expect their employer to guarantee them a job for life, they might instead expect their employer to support their development to make them more employable.

It was generally accepted that HR profession will have a significant role to play in the management and balancing of the generation of the general of specific psychological contracts of employees. They must make sure that different facets of HRM interventions shape and support the psychological contracts in a consistent, integrated and balanced manner (Rousseau & Greller, 1994). These interventions can discretely and accumulatively affect employees' psychological contracts over time, while a discretely or significant intervention or event may break or significantly disrupt the psychological contract in one go (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Herriot & Pemberton, 1996, as cited by Robers, 2001).

The theoretical background reveals us a clue that HR professionals can contribute to the psychological contract through HRD interventions. Employees' inner secure can be increased through improving their skills, knowledge and attitude by training and development activities thus the psychological contract will be strengthen to help the company maintain employee and achieve better organisational performance. However there is



few research study tried to link mentoring and coaching, the most frequent training methods in many organisations, with the psychological contract between employees and organisations. Here we put forward a hypothesis that as one of the most important training method in HRD interventions, mentoring and coaching plays an important role in contributing to the psychological contract between employees and the organisation.

## **Methodology**

I decide to use the quantitative approaches in my research project. Because my research is trying to figure out the extent to which the effective mentoring and coaching can contribute to the psychological contract between employees and the organisation. Fixed designs are theory-driven research approaches. They require a clear theoretical base and the substantial amount of conceptual understanding about the phenomenon before carrying out the research (Robson, 2002).

Within my research, the variables are clear. The purpose of the research is to test the relation between the two concepts: 1. effective mentoring and coaching. 2. Psychological contract between employee and the organisation. To success in the fixed designed research, I need to have a clear idea about the mechanism likely to be in the operation and the specific contexts in which they will or will not, operate. If the study does deliver the expected relationship, it provides support for the existence of these mechanisms, and their actual operation in this study.

With in this research, the basic methodology I choose to collect data will be survey with questionnaires. Survey is a common method of research.

According to Bryman (1989), survey research entails the collection of data on a number of units and usually at a single juncture in time, with a view to collecting systematically a body of quantifiable data in respect of a number of variables which are then examined to discern patterns of association' (P. 104)

According to Robson (2002) the advantage of using survey and questionnaire includes the following aspects:

It is a relatively straightforward and simple approach to the study of values, attitudes, motives and believes.

It is suitable for almost all human population for collecting generalizable information

It has a high level of data standardization.

For the approaches to collecting data of survey, I'm going to use the self-completion questionnaire for the majority of participants and using the telephone interview to those participants who are not clear about the questions and need some clarifications. Because my target respondents are located in China and it's impossible to do the face-to-face interview.

Telephone interview is time consuming and will face the problem of time difference. Self-completion questionnaire can be delivered via e-mail and the technology may ensure a high rate of responds. In addition, in the case of not getting enough data to support my research, using self-completion questionnaire is easier for to access more respondents in a short time.

However Robson (2002) also pointed out the disadvantages of using questionnaire to research. Because these data may be affected by the respondents' characteristics in some extent and it is possible that the respondents do not report their real beliefs and attitudes. What's more, researchers may face a low response rate when they choose to send questionnaires via post or internet. Sometimes the questionnaire may not be treated seriously and it is the risk researchers cannot control or detect. If the questionnaire were not designed well enough, it will arouse ambiguities thus will lead to misunderstanding which is not easy to detect as well.

To avoid and reduce the rate of these disadvantages, I need to design the questionnaire carefully, pre-test and revise the draft questionnaire before we carry out the main data collection interviews.

When creating a data set, I will input the data into computer with the help of excel sheets after collection thus will provide a clear data source for further analysis.

For the step of data analysis, the type I choose will be exploratory data analysis (EDA). It is used to find out what the data tell. Some simple graphical displays may help to illustrate the outcome such as charts, graphs, pie-charts, etc. To a large extent, EDA is simply regularizing the common process whereby researchers make inferences about relationships between variables (Tukey, 1977).

When analyse the data, a cross-tabulation can be used to show whether or not there is a relationship between two variables, which are the effectiveness

of mentoring and coaching and the strength of psychological contract between employee and the organisation (Robson, 2002).

In addition, correlation coefficients can give an indication of both the strength and the direction of the relationship between the variables. It will answer the question of to what extent do effective mentoring and coaching contribute to the psychological contract between employees and the organisation.

## **Provisional Work Schedule**

A rough schedule for the research is designed as follow:

Date (year 2010)

Objective

1st May

Start literature review and finding corporations

15th May

Get the target organisations and participations prepared

31st May

Complete literature Review

5th June

Complete the methodology parte

10th June

Design the questionnaire draft for survey

15th June

Pre-test the questionnaire within small population

20th June

Revise the questionnaire and start the main data collection

30th June

Complete collecting data

15th July

Analyse data and clarify the information

30th July

Complete the report

31st July

Complete the dissertation

17th August

Submission

## **Resource Requirements**

This research need a period of 3 month including the literature review, research methodology designing, collecting and analyzing data, writing the report and reaching a conclusion.

Telephone interview requires the fee for international call.

The people resource includes the organisation which provides the access for me to carry out the research and participates on the position of mentor and mentees.

No travel budget is required because all I will base in Edinburgh and carry out the research via e-mail and telephone.

## **Books for further reading**

Following are some key books introduce the basic concept involved in my research and point out the link between mentoring and coaching with psychological contract. I will read them as references during my research and take them as the basic guideline through the project.

Beaumont, P. B. (1993) Human Resource Management Key Concepts and Skills London: SAGE Publications

Beardwell, I. & Holden, I (2001) Human Resource Management A contemporary Approach 3rd Ed. London: Prentice Hall

Kram, K. E. (1985) Mentoring At Work: Developmental Relationships in Organisational Life. Glenview, ILL: Scott, Foresman

Rousseau, D. (1995) Psychological Contracts in Organisations. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE

Whittaker, M. & Cartwright, A. (1999) The Mentoring Manual. London: Gower

Marchington, M. & Wilkinson, A. (2005) Human resource management at work: people management and development 3rd Ed. London: CIPD

Conway, N. & Briner, R. B. (2005) Understanding psychological contracts at work: a critical evaluation of Theory and Research. New York: Oxford

Makin, P. J., Cooper, C. L. & Cox, C. (2002) Organizations and the psychological contract: managing people at work. Oxford: Blackwell