



Reflecting pathways to
learning and change



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Currents in Coaching Research

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Our corporate clients work in an environment which, like an unfamiliar country, has its own cultural norms and values. This organizational culture can have a significant impact not only on our clients but on the content and potential success of our coaching intervention. In this issue, we look at an article from the research literature which explores the interplay of culture and coaching, taking both a researcher perspective and a practitioner perspective on the material: *An Analysis of the Impact of SME Organizational Culture on Coaching and Mentoring* by David Peel (downloaded from The International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, vol. 4 #1, Spring 2006.

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/education/ijebcm/home.html>

Currents in Coaching Research: Coaching and Corporate Culture

The Study in a Nutshell

In his study, David Peel tests the existence of a distinct organizational culture in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and how individuals within such organizations identify and articulate the impact of such culture, especially as it affects coaching and mentoring within the organization. The author uses multiple points of data from the literature on organizational culture and semi-structured interviews to make his case. The article also provides extensive support for Peels chosen methodology- case study- and a grounded rationale for several decisions made throughout the research process. Based on the findings of his case study, Peel observes that his respondents could competently articulate the elements and signifiers of their organizations culture as well as the tangible impacts of such culture on the organizations way of doing business. This includes decision-making, buying and selling strategies and overall performance within the SME. Peel found that the owner/founder of an organization is at the center of the organizations culture and that influence is amplified by the interpersonal proximity found in such organizations. Peel further observed that coaching and mentoring activities in such organizations tend to be informal and peer-based. The success of coaching and mentoring is closely linked to the degree to which the organizations culture is supportive of such activity.

The Researchers Eye

Peel provides a thorough explanation of the method used to formulate and implement the study and the rationale for methodological choices. He argues that the use of a case study method is an appropriate strategy in an area with a limited pool of extant literature. His case study drew on data from a purposive sampling of cases which were selected to provide a rich source of data and used a

comparative cross-case analysis. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview and a second interviewer was involved and archival documents were reviewed in order to further triangulate the data collection process.

The Practitioners Eye

Peels study reminds practitioners of the implications and potential impact of the organizational context of executive and leadership coaching. While he noted that the organizations within his study tended toward internal and informal coaching, the literature he cites included several pointers to the signifiers of organizational culture of which coaches might want to be aware. These include patterns of beliefs within an organization, shared symbols and rituals, organizational myths or stories and standard practices. Peel also notes a close correlation between organizational culture and organizational change processes. Coaches working with leaders seeking to make change must understand the relevant factors and include this context in their work with their clients. In particular, Peel cites work which argues that all of the issues which need to be addressed within a coaching and mentoring strategy emanate from the prevalence of the culture of the company (p.11). Further studies note that if a coaching strategy is to succeed it must be consistent with the existing organizational culture.

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