

Coaching and Mentoring: Theory and Practice

by Bob Garvey, Paul Stokes, & David Megginson
(Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009, 272 pages)

This authoritative text is the result of an extensive survey of the research and literature on coaching and mentoring. In each chapter, the authors highlight a different methodology, some of them involving an examination of the occurrence or importance of certain keywords on the Internet and others a detailed examination of case studies. A thorough analysis of a multitude of aspects related to coaching and mentoring is provided and, in this respect, the book is a must for anyone working in the field and particularly for those doing research or graduate studies in these areas.

The authors' writing style is purposefully interrogative, often highlighting issues and concerns to a greater extent than proposing definitive visions and answers. This is something they readily admit to in the Introduction: "We have sought to write it in the spirit of coaching and mentoring by writing it in what we call the 'coaching and mentoring way.' This is our philosophical position and includes qualities of: mutual respect and valuing differences of viewpoint, acknowledgement of our influences, and listening and sharing." Their examples are drawn from a broad variety of sectors, including private businesses, public and voluntary organizations, and schools. Most readers will likely appreciate some sections more than others.

The book has four parts, and the chapters within each of these parts emphasize the balance between theory and practice differently. Part 1 offers an introduction to coaching and mentoring. Although the authors try, at the outset, to clarify the main differences that may exist between coaching and mentoring, their coverage of both training methods is parallel throughout the book. In fact, the two terms are often used interchangeably. Starting with the historical development of coaching and mentoring, the chapters then move through current issues in coaching and mentoring research to an examination of the broad issue of organizational cultures that support coaching and mentoring. Insights into scheme design and evaluation for

practitioners are also offered, and various models and perspectives in coaching and mentoring are discussed. The last chapter in this part explores the influence of the social context on learning.

Part 2 examines a range of organizational and practice issues and takes a critical look at the various influences on the forms that coaching and mentoring take within an organizational setting. Power in coaching and mentoring is a key concept that permeates all units of analysis. And, since coaching and mentoring are often closely associated with transition, development, and growth, it is inevitable that, as people grow and develop, the power dynamics between them will change. The idea of multiple coaching and mentoring relationships in the context of the knowledge economy and the implications for organizational structures and practices are also discussed, as are the role of electronic media in developing social connections between people and the impact of modern information technologies on coaching and mentoring.

Part 3 highlights some contemporary debates and their effects on the development of coaching and mentoring. For example, the reasons for the explosion of interest in supervision, a relatively new term in coaching and mentoring, are explored, while the different approaches, functions, and roles that supervision can play in coaching and mentoring are described. A critical perspective on the issue of diversity and its relationship to coaching and mentoring is presented in the context of current philosophies and practices found in organizations. The debates around competencies, standards, and professionalization are assessed using a comprehensive list of arguments for and against competencies in those areas.

Part 4 looks at emerging issues for coaching and mentoring in the United States. The discussion begins with a brief review of the historical roots of coaching and mentoring as practices in the United States, which tends to focus more on mentoring than on coaching. American research, mostly on mentoring, is detailed with supporting references. A diverse typographic heuristic describing coaching and mentoring is then presented as both a challenge and a basis for debate and discussion. A concluding remark in this section acknowledges that coaching and mentoring are in need of a theory but notes that the challenges are considerable. One major challenge is the multidisciplinary nature of these disciplines, which draws from at least five bodies of knowledge: sport, developmental psychology, psychotherapy, sociology, and philosophy.

Canadian readers may ask: What is the Canadian perspective in this area? Although mentoring and coaching are indeed widespread activities in both the business and social landscapes of Canada, actual research in coaching and mentoring has not been forthcoming. In the absence of Canadian research in this area, practitioners will find this volume both informative and useful.

Pierre Roberge, Royal Military College