

A brief research note on coaching and mentoring practice guidelines and principles for the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual learning

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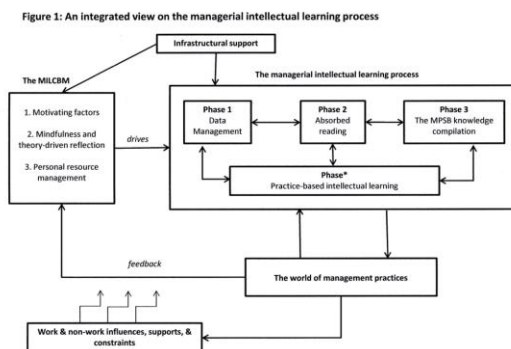
Abstract:

The topic of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual learning was proposed by this writer in 2013. It makes up an important topic in the subject of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research of this writer. The managerial intellectual learning topic has since been further developed. In this research note, the writer formulates a set of coaching and mentoring practice guidelines and principles for the practices of MPSB managerial intellectual learning. The guidelines and principles mainly draw on some relevant ideas from the coaching and mentoring literature. These principles cover: (i) basic coaching and mentoring skills, (ii) supporting MPSB Research learning, (iii) coaching and mentoring with compassion and an MPSB perspective, (iv) coaching and mentoring with critical awareness, and (v) pursuit of a favourable learning environment and stronger learning capability. As these practice guidelines and principles enhance the MPSB managerial intellectual learning model, they add not only practical but also academic values to the topic.

Key words: The Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual learning, Coaching and mentoring, The Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research, Practice guidelines and principles

Introduction

The research topic of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual learning was launched in 2013 by Ho (2013). According to Ho (2014a), managerial intellectual learning is “directed at learning the various notions, theories and approaches from the academic and professional communities in various management disciplines, which are then employed to comprehend the appreciated management practices in the real world”. This learning topic makes up a major one in the more encompassing research project of the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) Research (Ho, 1996; 2015a) and offers a vital development approach for those who aspire to become a Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) scholar-practitioner in business management (Ho, 2014b; 2015b). The defining characteristic of the MPSB Research is that it is grounded on critical systems thinking (Jackson, 2003), which embraces three commitments: (i) critical awareness, (ii) improvement and (iii) pluralism. By now, the MPSB managerial intellectual learning topic has been further developed and presented in a number of papers (Ho, 2014a; 2014c; 2015a). A conceptual model of the MPSB managerial intellectual learning was proposed by Ho (2014a). This is again shown as Figure 1 to facilitate the discussion here.



Referring to Figure 1, the managerial intellectual learning conceptual model comprises a set of inter-related learning activities labeled as “The managerial intellectual learning process”, a number of personal learning enabling means (i.e., the managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM)¹) and, finally, the external supportive infrastructure and environmental constraints (i.e., “Infrastructural support” and “Work & non-work influences, supports, & constraints”). The conceptual model endorses a coaching approach to address learning problems by facilitating learners to find out their own solutions rather than imposing an outsider’s “ideal” solutions on them (Ho, 2014a). This research note, dealing with coaching and mentoring, mainly examines four elements in Figure 1, namely, “Infrastructural support”, “Work & non-work influences, supports & constraints”, “Phase*: Practice-based intellectual learning” and “The MILCBM”. In particular, it takes a closer look at how coaching and mentoring can and should offer appropriate support on the MPSB managerial intellectual learning process, especially on “the managerial intellectual learning process - Phase*: Practice-based intellectual Learning” (re: Figure 1). So far, this coaching and mentoring topic has not been seriously studied in the MPSB managerial intellectual learning works, thus worth doing so as to contribute to its theoretical development.

MPSB coaching and mentoring practice guidelines and principles for the MPSB managerial intellectual learning

To formulate MPSB coaching and mentoring practice guidelines for the MPSB managerial intellectual learning, the writer taps

¹ The *managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism* (MILCBM) comprises the components that propel the managerial intellectual learning. These components are: (i) the motivating factors, (ii) mindfulness and theory-driven reflection, and (iii) personal resource management (Ho, 2014a).

into the insights from the coaching and mentoring literature. In this section, a brief clarification on coaching and mentoring is presented before specific MPSB coaching and mentoring practice guidelines are proposed based on the coaching and mentoring literature. To begin with, coaching and mentoring can be perceived as a “facilitative or helping relationship with the purpose of achieving some type of change, learning, or new level of individual or organizational performance.”, with coaching having a much “shorter term duration” and a “more specific focus” than mentoring (Boyatzis *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, very often, a mentor is expected to provide career-related and psychosocial support to a protégé (Baranki *et al.*, 2010). In the workplace, traditionally, the mentor is an experienced colleague while the protégé is less experienced (Ramalho, 2014). However, the traditional master-apprentice form of mentoring has given way to a more multiple developmental mentoring relationships that “extend functional, organizational and geographical boundaries” (Whiting and Janasz, 2014). As to coaching, Boyatzis *et al.* (2012) remind us that the coaching’s general orientation is more important than its techniques to achieve desired outcomes, e.g., increased learning and performance. Nevertheless, the purpose of coaching is often not totally clear: is it primarily to serve the coachee, his/her employing organization, or both? (Hunt and Weinbraub, 2004). In addition, coaching and mentoring have been employed for a diversity of business reasons, e.g., to improve an employee’s performance, to develop a work team, and to develop senior executive candidates (Barlett II, 2007). In this regard, the existing MPSB managerial intellectual learning work has a tendency to focus above all on the learner’s personal developmental need, but other purposes, same as in the coaching and mentoring case, can also be served. All in all, coaching and mentoring, as human activity systems, possess a strong human resource development orientation; their

conceived “system boundaries” in specific instances are very often decided on in an idiosyncratic and inter-subjective way, thus fluid. The next task is to draw on the existing coaching and mentoring literature to come up with some practice guidelines for MPSB coaching practice to support the MPSB managerial intellectual learning. Table 1 is the outcome from such an intellectual task.

Table 1: Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) coaching and mentoring practice guidelines with explicit referencing to the coaching and mentoring literature

<i>MPSB coaching and mentoring practice guidelines</i>	<i>Supportive ideas from the coaching and mentoring literature</i>
<p>1. On basic required coaching and mentoring skills 1: A coaching manager who provides MPSB coaching and mentoring needs observational, analytical, interviewing and feedback skills.</p>	<p>1.1. “...the coaching manager required four critical skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observational skills for monitoring the employee • analytical skills for assessing opportunities to improve • interviewing skills for managing the coaching interaction • feedback skills for sharing observations and suggestions” <p>(Orth, Wikinson and Benfari (1987), as cited by Hunt and Weinbraub (2004).)</p>
<p>2. On basic required coaching and mentoring skills 2: MPSB coaching and mentoring involves introduction of the MPSB Research subject and its language to the coachee who is encouraged to apply it in his/her work- and life-settings for practice-based intellectual learning.</p>	<p>2.1. “... as a coach, it is important to provide new language for the client to better be able to understand and learn..... the client needs opportunities to put into practices what they have learned...” (Flaherty (2005)’s foundation of coaching as cited by Barlett II, 2007).</p>
<p>3. On basic required coaching and mentoring skills 3: An MPSB mentor supports a protégé to build up his/ her managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanism (MILCBM) for</p>	<p>3.1. “...a mentor may be a lens through which the protégé develops belief about his or her organization....” (Baranik <i>et al.</i>, 2010).</p>

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<p>managerial intellectual learning; as a result, the protégé's MPSB cognitive filter (lens)² for examining his or her organization is enhanced.</p>	
<p>4. On basic required coaching and mentoring skills 4: An MPSB mentor needs to reflect on his/her mentor motive from time to time as it affects fundamentally: (i) the feasibility to provide MPSB mentoring to the protégé as well as (ii) the scope of mentoring/ nature of relationship with the protégé.</p>	<p>4.1. "...we show five broad categories of mentor motives: self-focused motives ..., protégé-focused motives ..., organization-focused motives ..., and unfocused motives" (Janssen <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p>
<p>5. On advanced coaching and mentoring approach 1: MPSB coaching and mentoring, being multi-perspective and holistic, is highly receptive to the coaching with compassion approach to treat the coachee with a comprehensive, ethical and creative outlook. This implies heeding not only the managerial intellectual learning itself, but also the influencing and constraining factors, e.g., the MILCBM, faced by the coachee and protégé.</p>	<p>5.1. "Compassion involves noticing another's need, emphasizing and enhance their well-being..." (Boyatzis <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p> <p>5.2. "...coaching with compassion... to further the coachee's development by focusing on their Ideal Self³ and on their strengths..." (Boyatzis <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p> <p>5.3. "...helping the coachee develop a compelling personal vision..... articulation of the Ideal Shelf... make a realistic and exciting plan to implement...changes...." (Boyatzis <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p> <p>5.4. "...coaching with compassion will lead to desired change, enhanced health, and well-being..." (Boyatzis <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p>
<p>6. On advanced coaching and mentoring approach 2: MPSB coaching and</p>	<p>6.1. ".....HRD professionals rely on integrating mentoring with other organizational initiatives to ensure "strategic alignment of</p>

² Readers are referred to Ho (2014c) for an elaboration on the concept of *the MPSB cognitive filter for management*.

³ An *Ideal Shelf* is an individual's "vision of who he or she wants to be and includes his or her goals, values, and deepest aspirations for the individual future" (Boyatzis *et al.*, 2012).

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<p>mentoring activities need to be aligned with the Human Resource Development policy of the coachee/ protégé's organization in order to be endorsed by this organization.</p>	<p>programs and practice”....” (Thurston Jr <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p>
<p>7. On favourable conditions for coaching and mentoring practices: MPSB coaching and mentoring need to be sensitive to (i) the mindsets and profiles of the coachee/ protégé as well as (ii) the immediate and corporate-wide environment for the coaching and mentoring activities; all these considerations affect the feasibility and effectiveness of the MPSB coaching and mentoring activities.</p>	<p>7.1. “...the coachee brings feedback receptivity, developmental self-efficacy, learning goal orientation and pre-training motivation to the relationship...” (Bozer <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p> <p>7.2. “...The coach offers an academic credential and credibility that foster and facilitate the executive coaching process and its effectiveness....” (Bozer <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p> <p>7.3. “...The match between coach and coachee including gender and perceived similarity is associated with executive coaching effectiveness....” (Bozer <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p> <p>7.4. “...the organization provides a rich environment for executive coaching effectiveness to flourish....” (Bozer <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p> <p>7.5. “... A supportive proximal workgroup climate for coaching transfer plays a key role in influencing coachee pre-training motivation and receptivity to feedback” (Bozer <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</p>

Referring to Table 1, the practice guidelines are of four types: (i) On basic required coaching and mentoring skills [points 1 to 4 of Table 1], (ii) On advanced coaching and mentoring approach [points 5 and 6 of Table 1], and (iii) On favourable conditions for coaching and mentoring practices [point 7 of Table 1]. The MPSB coaching and mentoring practice guidelines, as informed by some of the ideas from the coaching and mentoring literature that the writer finds useful, are intended to enhance the MPSB managerial intellectual learning model and practices. It is not the intention of this research note to provide

a comprehensive literature review on coaching and mentoring, which is quite substantial, see, for example, Cox *et al.* (2010). Thus, it is not able to consider all the relevant insights from the coaching and mentoring literature in the formulation of guidelines in this research note. The practice guidelines in Table 1 can now be condensed into the following 5 coaching and mentoring practice principles:

Principle 1 on basic coaching and mentoring skills: Coaches and mentors need to possess professional competence in basic skills, including observational, analytical, interviewing and feedback skills. [re: point 1 of Table 1]

Principle 2 on supporting MPSB Research learning: Coaches and mentors need to introduce and support the practice-based learning of the analytical concepts from the MPSB Research by the coachees and protégés. [re: point 2 of Table 1]

Principle 3 on coaching and mentoring with compassion and an MPSB perspective: Coaches and mentors need to offer tutorial, career-related and psychosocial support to coachees and protégés with compassion⁴ and an MPSB perspective. [re: point 5 of Table 1]

Principle 4 on coaching and mentoring with critical awareness: Coaches and mentors need to offer suitable coaching and mentoring support to coachees and protégés with critical awareness of: (i) their own motives, (ii) the human resource development policies of the coachees and proteges' employing organizations, (iii) the internal and external environments facing the coachees and protégés in their workplaces and

⁴ According to Boyatzis *et al.* (2012), *compassion* is about noticing a person's need as well as trying to enhance a person's well-being.

beyond, and (iv) the Ideal Selves of the coachees and protégés. [re: points 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Table 1]

Principle 5 on pursuit of a favourable learning environment and stronger learning capability: Coaches and mentors need to help coachees and protégés to proactively: (i) create a favourable environment, both physical and virtual, and (ii) strengthen their managerial intellectual learning capability-building mechanisms (MILCBMs). [re: points 3, 5 and 7 of Table 1]

These practice guidelines (re: Table 1) and the five principles primarily cover the elements of “Infrastructural support”, “Work & non-work influences, support, & constraints”, “Phase*: Practice-based intellectual learning” and “The MILCBM) (re: Figure 1). The practice-based learning of critical systems thinking and the MPSB Research is intellectually demanding, engaging and encompassing, which is reflected in the equally trying practice guidelines and principles proposed here. From the discussion, the practical and academic values on the subject of the MPSB managerial intellectual learning of these guidelines and principles are also underlined. Table 1 also explicitly indicates the references of the coaching and mentoring ideas considered, thus enabling interested readers to study them in further depth. A possible scenario on the application of these guidelines and principles is an experienced MPSB scholar-practitioner providing coaching and mentoring support to an aspiring MPSB scholar-practitioner. Exactly how they can be employed in various coaching and mentoring approaches, e.g., the psychodynamic approach, the manager as coach approach, the Gestalt approach, the person-centred approach and the cognitive-developmental approach, etc. (Cox *et al.*, 2010), is not further examined in this note. Finally, it is clear that not everybody is interested in practicing MPSB

coaching and mentoring or being coached and mentored to become an MPSB scholar-practitioner.

Concluding remarks

By drawing on the insights from the coaching and mentoring literature, this research note offers a set of practice guidelines and principles for Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) coaching and mentoring. These guidelines and principles are not only of use to the Multi-perspective, Systems-based (MPSB) managerial intellectual learners, but also to the coaches and mentors involved as well as the employing organizations of the learners, especially their Human Resource Development Unit. They also enrich the managerial intellectual learning process model of Ho (2014a). Nevertheless, the validity of them needs to be established via empirical research. Equally, further enhancement of this set of guidelines and principles has to be made via additional empirical investigation. After all, there is quite a variety of coaching and mentoring approaches in the coaching and mentoring field (Cox *et al.*, 2010), which logically craves for some kind of contingent system on practice guidelines. Finally, readers interested in the topic dealt with here are referred to the *appendix* for some Facebook pages with additional study references.

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Appendix – Relevant Facebook pages:

1. Career and personal development page: <https://www.facebook.com/personal.development.literature>

2. Managerial intellectual learning page: <https://www.facebook.com/managerial.intellectual.learning>
3. The Multi-perspective, Systems-based Research page: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Multi-perspective-Systems-based-Research-1630606813892045/timeline/>
4. Training and coaching (J.K.K. Ho) page: <https://www.facebook.com/Joseph.KK.HO>