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Organizational Coaching as Instructional Communication

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Abstract

This study developed and validated the Perceived Coaching Scale (PCS). The PCS was created for current study as a measure of the extent to which someone perceives her or his supervisor as engaging in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor oriented coaching, which were designed to measure Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl's (1956) three domains of learning. The study examined the criterion validity of the PCS and found that all three factors of organizational coaching positively related to both employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Introduction

Fournies (1999) collected responses from 25,000 supervisors and managers from around the world about one question, "Why don't employees do what they are supposed to do?" The results of this simple study were quite intriguing. The top four responses to Fournies' question were: (1) They don't know what they are supposed to do; (2) They don't know how to do it; (3) They don't know why they should do it; and (4) They think they are doing it (lack of feedback). In fact, the first two answers occurred 99 percent of the time (Fournies, 2000). Each of these reasons for why employees are not doing what they are supposed to be doing clearly relates to a problem of learning within the organization. Based on the analysis of the Fournies (1999) study, he realized that clearly there is a disconnect between supervisors and subordinates in the modern organization. Organizations often expect employees to function correctly within the organization without any kind of proper instruction on how to function (Fournies, 2000). Fournies (2000) suggestion for correcting this problem is the current organizational practice known as coaching. For his model of coaching, Fournies turned primarily to research in behavioral psychology and educational psychology. In essence, Fournies realizes that for behavioral change to occur in the workplace it needs to be treated like behavioral change in the classroom.

Brounstein (2000), while taking a more management perspective on coaching by stressing leadership, writes that to be a good coach one "challenges and develops your employees' skills and abilities" (p. 12), which clearly is learning centered in its orientation. In fact, Brounstein's "tools for coaching" are very reminiscent of instructional communication: setting goals and performance plans, giving performance feedback, conducting periodic performance reviews, guiding development through mentoring and tutoring, tutoring with questions, taking employees under your wing, motivating employee performance, delegating to empower and increase productivity, training for skill development, stimulating and supporting career development, intervening to build improvement in performance. In essence, organizational coaching is instructional communication.

The goal of the current study is to create a research tool that measures the extent to which an individual feels that he or she is being coached within the organizational environment. However, it is the contention of the study's authors that this process should be completed in the realm of educational psychology and instructional communication and not through organizational communication research because organizational communication scholars often confuse learning that occurs within the organization with organizational culture (Weick & Ashford, 2001). If organizational coaching is instructional communication, then measuring coaching in each of the three domains of learning (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) discussed by Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) would be important. Before discussing the scale designed in the current study, a discussion of the three domains of learning will occur.

Three Domains of Learning

In 1956, Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl published their first volume examining how to assess learning in the college classroom with their book *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. In this book, Bloom et al. discussed that there were three domains of learning important for educational researchers to understand: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Cognitive Learning. According to Bloom et al. (1956), the cognitive domain “includes those objectives which deal with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills” (p. 7). The researchers noted that most of the research in educational psychology and curriculum development has centered around this domain of learning. For this reason, the focus of the first handbook published by the Bloom research team focused on the cognitive domain completely. Bloom et al. believed that cognitive learning could be organized into six major classes with the first exhibiting the lowest levels of learning and the sixth exhibiting the highest level of learning: 1) knowledge, 2) comprehension, 3) application, 4) analysis, 5) synthesis, and 6) evaluation. The entire content of *Handbook 1* devotes itself to explaining how learning occurs at each of these levels, how teachers can teach for learning at the six levels, and how teachers can assess learning at the six levels.

While measuring cognitive learning seems simple, creating a general scale to determine whether a person is cognitively learning is difficult because learning in each educational situation is different, so there is no way to create a generalized scale to measure actual cognitive learning. In educational research, cognitive learning has been measured using standardized test scores, grades at the end of a course, and subjective perceptions of learning (Richmond, Lane, & McCroskey, 2006). Research in the field of instructional communication has consistently shown that measuring a student’s belief of her or his own cognitive learning is important for ascertaining the impact of instructional communication (Richmond, Lane, & McCroskey, 2006). Richmond, Lane, and McCroskey (2006) argue for the use of subjective learning, “this method provides useful information concerning learning, that if compared with other data on cognitive learning from laboratory experiments, will give us insights into teacher behaviors that can contribute to increased cognitive learning of students” (p. 176). While this is clearly not the ideal way of measuring cognitive learning, it has proven to be fairly useful in instructional communication research.

Affective Learning. The second handbook examining the taxonomy of educational objectives was written by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Basia (1964) to examine the affective domain of learning. Krathwohl et al. defined the affective domain of learning as one where “objectives which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection. Affective objectives vary from simple acceptance to selected phenomena to complex but inherently consistent qualities of character and conscience” (p. 7). Overall, affective learning is learning about “interests, attitudes, appreciations, values, emotional sets or biases” (p. 7). Just like cognitive learning, Krathwohl et al. created a taxonomy of educational objectives for the affective domain: 1) receiving (willing to attend to certain phenomena or stimuli), 2) responding (willing to actively seek out and gain satisfaction from a certain phenomena or stimuli), 3) valuing (belief that a phenomena, stimuli, or behavior has worth), 4) organization (placing values into systems and ranking them in order of importance), and 5) characterization (the individual acts consistently with the values he or she has internalized).

For communication scholars, affective learning has provided a considerable amount of research examining classroom communication. Mottet and Beebe (2006) note that affective learning occurs when learners “take ownership of their learning and is manifested when students enact behaviors that demonstrate that they respect, appreciate, and value the knowledge and skills they are acquiring” (p. 8). Mottet and Beebe also note that affective learners ultimately become internally motivated instead of externally motivated. Research has shown that affective learning can substantially predict cognitive learning in the classroom (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994), which has caused some educational theorists to believe that affective learning is

probably the most important domain of learning for actual cognitive and behavioral change (McCroskey, 1998; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006; Richmond, Wrench, & Gorham, 2001).

Psychomotor Learning. The final domain of learning originally discussed by Bloom et al. (1956) was psychomotor learning, or the manipulative or motor-skill aspect of learning. Krathwohl et al. (1964) defined psychomotor learning as learning that emphasizes "some muscular or motor skill, some manipulation of material objects, or some act which requires neuromuscular co-ordination" (p. 7). Specifically, psychomotor or behavioral learning focuses on an individual's ability to enact the physical parts of specific behaviors. While both Bloom et al. (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964) list psychomotor learning as a domain of learning, they do not focus much attention on psychomotor learning because as Bloom et al. (1956) explained "we find so little about it in secondary schools or colleges, that we do not believe the development of a classification of these objectives would be very useful" (p. 7-8).

While there is not a specific taxonomy of psychomotor learning, McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey (2006) wrote that there is a range of psychomotor learning. At the low levels of psychomotor learning, are simple hand-eye coordination skills, and at the more advanced levels we have people playing pianos. While not as clearly important in traditional educational settings, acquiring skill sets is extremely important in the organizational world (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). In fact, the field of corporate training and development is largely built on actually enhancing skill sets (Beebe, Roach, & Mottet, 2004; Mitchell, 1998). Overall, while psychomotor learning may not have been very important for Bloom et al. (1956) or Krathwohl et al. (1964), it is an extremely important domain of learning within the organizational environment.

Rationale

The goal of the current study is to create and test a measure of organizational coaching based on Bloom et al.'s (1956) three domains of learning. Once the new scale's psychometric properties have been tested, the new scale's criterion validity will be tested by examining the Perceived Coaching Scale's relationship with employee motivation and job satisfaction. Christophel (1990) found a positive relationship between learning and student motivation in the traditional classroom context. If motivation functions in a similar fashion in the current study, we would expect to find a positive relationship between perceived coaching and employee motivation. Furthermore, research has also shown a positive relationship between employee motivation and job satisfaction (L. McCroskey, J. McCroskey, & Richmond, 2005; Porter, Wrench, & Hoskinson, 2006), so predicting a positive relationship between perceived coaching and job satisfaction can also be made.

- H1: There will be a positive relationship between perceived coaching (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) and employee motivation.
- H2: There will be a positive relationship between perceived coaching (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) and job satisfaction.

Method

Participants and Procedures

The participants in this study represent two different groups of people. The first set of participants were gathered utilizing students in a corporate communication masters program at a large mid-Atlantic university and students from a small regional campus of a large university in the mid-West taking upper division communication courses and were currently employed. These students were approached in their classes and asked to fill out a survey containing the Perceived Coaching Scale and an employee motivation and job satisfaction scales. These participants were then asked to have two people from their workplace above them in the hierarchy fill out the scale and then two people below them fill out the scale, which led to the recruitment of 188 participants. This sample consisted of 60 males (31.9 %), 117 females (62.2 %), and 11 people who did not respond to the biological sex question. The mean age of the participants in this sample was 38.13 ($SD = 13.64$) with a range from 18-69.

The second sample recruited for this study consisted of university students who worked in service type industries on a regional campus of a large mid-Western university. Students were approached in a variety of classrooms and asked to participate in the study. Students then handed the questionnaire back to the professor who disseminated the questionnaire who then returned it to the researchers, which led to the recruitment of 198 participants. This sample consisted of 100 males (50.5 %), 96 females (48.5 %), and 2 people who did not respond to the biological sex question. The mean age of the participants in this sample was 26.86 ($SD = 10.26$) with a range from 18-67.

Overall, the study consisted of 386 participants: 160 males, 213 females, and 13 who did not answer the biological sex question. The mean age for the participants in this sample was 32.26 ($SD = 13.25$) with a range from 18-69. Utilizing a one-way ANOVA, a significant difference was noted between the ages of the two samples used in this study, $F(1, 376) = 83.16$, $p < .0005$, $\eta^2 = .18$.

Instrumentation

Employee Motivation Scale. The Employee Motivation Scale is a re-tooling of Richmond's (1990) student motivation scale. The original scale asks students to respond to a series of five pairs of adjectives (unmotivated/motivated; excited/bored; interested/uninterested; involved/uninvolved; & dreading it/looking forward to it) with a seven point continuum between adjectives. Means, standard deviations, and alpha reliabilities for both samples can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 - Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Reliabilities

| | Sample 1 | | | Sample 2 | | | Total Sample | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | α | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | α | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | α |
| Employee Motivation | 26.22 | 6.69 | .91 | 21.59 | 6.55 | .81 | 23.82 | 7.00 | .87 |
| Job Satisfaction | 26.98 | 7.96 | .96 | 21.82 | 8.73 | .93 | 24.30 | 8.37 | .95 |
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| Cognitive | 35.96 | 9.79 | .95 | 32.48 | 9.43 | .92 | 34.17 | 9.75 | .94 |
| Affective | 33.08 | 9.52 | .94 | 29.88 | 9.08 | .89 | 31.43 | 9.42 | .92 |
| Psychomotor | 34.70 | 9.60 | .93 | 31.58 | 8.76 | .89 | 33.10 | 9.29 | .91 |

Job Satisfaction Scale. Job Satisfaction is measured through a retooling of McCroskey's (1966) Generalized Belief Measure. The Generalized Belief Model was created by McCroskey (1966) as a way to measure beliefs about specific concepts. By attaining an individual's general belief about a given topic, the researcher can measure the degree to which an individual believes in a given statement. For the purposes of this study, the belief that is measured is, "I am satisfied with my current job." This is similar to the method used by L. McCroskey et al. (2005) to measure job satisfaction. Means, standard deviations, and alpha reliabilities for both samples can be found in Table 1.

Perceived Coaching Scale. The Perceived Coaching Scale (PCS) was created for the current study as a measure of the extent to which someone perceives her or his supervisor as engaging in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor oriented coaching. The PCS is a series of thirty Likert-type questions that ask individuals to recall the degree to which they perceive their supervisor exhibiting various coaching behaviors using a scale ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*. The items on the PCS should be coded so that higher scores are given to those participants who believe they have been coached to a greater degree than those with lower scores. The scale is an even mixture of both positively and negatively worded items to prevent random answering. The thirty questions generated for this measure can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 - Factor Analysis of the Perceived Coaching Scale

| Scale Items | Factor Analysis Sample 1 | Factor Analysis Sample 2 | Factor Analysis Total Sample |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. My supervisor makes sure I have all necessary information to complete my job. | .85 | .75 | .80 |
| 2. My supervisor withholds information that could help me function better as an employee. | -.66 | -.53 | -.60 |
| 3. My supervisor makes sure my information needs are fulfilled. | .84 | .76 | .80 |
| 4. My supervisor makes sure I understand what I'm doing at work. | .87 | .73 | .80 |
| 5. My supervisor provides me with all the information I need to be a competent worker. | .85 | .77 | .81 |
| 6. My supervisor prevents me from getting necessary information to complete my job. | -.65 | -.54 | -.59 |
| 7. My supervisor gives me all the information I need to help me function better as an employee. | .83 | .75 | .79 |
| 8. My supervisor does not make sure that I understand what's going on at work. | -.79 | -.72 | -.75 |
| 9. My supervisor does not make sure my information needs are fulfilled. | -.82 | -.75 | -.79 |
| 10. My supervisor does not make any attempt to see if I understand what is going on at work, or not. | -.86 | -.70 | -.79 |
| 11. My supervisor is concerned with whether, or not, I enjoy what I'm doing while at work. | .69 | .64 | .68 |
| 12. My supervisor does not care if I think my job is dull. | -.74 | -.49 | -.63 |

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|-----|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 13. | My supervisor clearly is involved with trying to motivate me to be a better employee. | .84 | .68 | .76 |
| 14. | My supervisor wants to make sure that I'm not bored on the job. | .71 | .55 | .64 |
| 15. | My supervisor is only concerned with whether, or not, I get my work done. | -.70 | -.46 | -.57 |
| 16. | My supervisor does not try to motivate me on the job. | -.78 | -.64 | -.70 |
| 17. | My supervisor does not care if I am interested in the work at all. | -.78 | -.60 | -.70 |
| 18. | My supervisor tries to make sure I'm excited to be at work. | .69 | .54 | .62 |
| 19. | My supervisor doesn't care about how I feel about my job. | -.71 | -.60 | -.66 |
| 20. | My supervisor creates a positive working atmosphere. | .76 | .71 | .74 |
| 21. | My supervisor works with me to improve my on-the-job skills. | .83 | .71 | .78 |
| 22. | My job skills have gotten better as a result of my supervisor's training. | .84 | .66 | .76 |
| 23. | My supervisor has not helped me with any job skills necessary to complete my work. | -.76 | -.64 | -.69 |
| 24. | My supervisor has not attempted to correct any of my job related behaviors. | -.58 | -.62 | -.60 |
| 25. | My supervisor trains new employees on any necessary skills to completely function in our workplace. | .75 | .69 | .72 |
| 26. | My supervisor does not work with me to improve my on the job skills. | -.72 | -.67 | -.70 |
| 27. | My job skills are not improving because of a lack of training from my supervisor. | -.55 | -.50 | -.53 |
| 28. | My supervisor has helped me improve my job skills. | .86 | .76 | .81 |
| 29. | My supervisor corrects job-related behavior problems when he or she sees them. | .62 | .54 | .59 |
| 30. | My supervisor makes sure all new-hires are completely trained on skills that are necessary to function in our workplace. | .79 | .65 | .72 |
| | | $\alpha = .98$ | $\alpha = .95$ | $\alpha = .97$ |

Items 1-10 represent cognitive based coaching
 Items 11-20 represent affective based coaching

Items 21-30 represent psychomotor based coaching
 The dimensionality of the 30 items for the PCS in the current study was analyzed using an unrotated principal component factor analysis with both samples separately and then the total sample together. To examine sampling adequacy in the first sample (workplace sample), Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy was used. The MSA obtained was .96, which is considered "marvelous" for conducting a factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The principal component factor analysis indicated that only one eigenvalue was above 1 accounting for 58.14% of the variance (factor loadings can be seen in

Table 2). The Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy in the second sample (undergraduate sample) was .90, which is also considered "marvelous." The principal component factor analysis indicated that a possibility of two eigenvalue were above 1, however the screeplot clearly indicated that only one factor should be extracted, which accounted for 42.33% of the variance (factor loadings can be seen in Table 2). When the two samples were pooled together Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .96, and the principal component factor analysis indicated that there were four eigenvalues above 1 but the scree plot clearly indicated that only one factor, which accounted for 50.16% of the variance, should be extracted.

While the dimensionality of the coaching construct was clearly unidimensional, this was not unsurprising since the three domains of learning are very intricately intertwined. As Krathwohl et al. (1964) noted "the question posed by modern behavioral science research is whether a human being ever does thinking without feeling, acting without thinking, etc. It seems very clear that each person responds as a 'total organism' or 'whole being' whenever he does respond" (p. 7). In essence, when perceiving learning, the perceptions of all three factors should be fairly related constructs. For this reason, we believe that the scale can be used either as a unified construct of coaching based on the clear factoring, or one can look at the three factors separately to examine cognitive, affective, and psychomotor coaching independently. The alpha reliabilities, means, and standard deviations for the three coaching factors are listed in Table 1.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between perceived coaching (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) and employee motivation. To analyze the hypotheses, the pooled data for this study was utilized. First, Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated between the three domains of learning and employee motivation: cognitive, $r(373) = .44, p < .0005$; affective, $r(373) = .51, p < .0005$; and psychomotor, $r(374) = .41, p < .0005$. Second, a multiple linear regression was utilized using the three domains of organizational coaching as the independent variables and employee motivation as the dependent variable. The linear combination of the independent variables was significantly related to the degree to which a participant was motivated at work, $F(3, 369) = 46.15, p < .0005$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient, R , was .52, which indicates that approximately 27 percent of the variance of an individual's motivation at work could be accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables. However, only affective coaching ($t = 6.06, p < .0005, \beta = .42$) accounted for any of the unique variance.

The second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between perceived coaching (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) and job satisfaction. First, Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated between the three domains of learning and job satisfaction: cognitive, $r(373) = .54, p < .0005$; affective, $r(373) = .54, p < .0005$; and psychomotor, $r(374) = .50, p < .0005$. Second, a multiple linear regression was utilized using the three domains of organizational coaching as the independent variables and job satisfaction as the dependent variable. The linear combination of the independent variables was significantly related to the degree to which a participant was satisfied with her or his job, $F(3, 369) = 61.51, p < .0005$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient, R , was .58, which indicates that approximately 33 percent of the variance of an individual's motivation at work could be accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables. However, only cognitive coaching ($t = 3.33, p < .005,$

$\beta = .27$) and affective coaching ($t = 4.39, p < .0005, \beta = .29$) accounted for any of the unique variance.

Discussion

This discussion section will start off with a general discussion of the overall results followed by a number of possible applications for the Perceived Coaching Scale. The predicted relationships between the three domains of learning as represented in the Perceived Coaching Scale (cognitive, affective, & psychomotor) were all positively related to both employee motivation and job satisfaction. Since the goal of this study was to ascertain the criterion validity of the Perceived Coaching Scale, this study examined the criterion validity using a concurrent approach. The concurrent approach to validating the Perceived Coaching Scale has supported the instrument's use as both a reliable and valid tool for measuring an individual's perception of his or his supervisor's degree of coaching in the organizational context (Bryant, 2000). While the correlations were clearly indicative of the proposed nature of the relationships among the variables as predicted, the linear regression results are very interesting.

When one looks at both employee motivation and job satisfaction, the primary form of coaching that clearly accounted for unique variance was affective coaching. This finding is actually similar to the findings of Christophel (1990), who also noted that affective learning was strongly related to motivation in the classroom. Since only affective learning could account for any of the unique variance in employee motivation, we could be seeing the importance of affective learning as stressed by various instructional communication researchers (McCroskey, 1998; McCroskey, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006; Richmond, Wrench, & Gorham, 2001). As for the unique variance accounted for by cognitive learning of the dependent variable job satisfaction, we could be seeing a pattern based on the notion that people who feel competent in what they are supposed to be doing are more satisfied. Fournies' (1999) finding that many people in organizations simply do not know what they are supposed to be doing or how to do what they are supposed to be doing, could be being illustrated in the relationship between cognitive coaching and job satisfaction. In essence, people who do not know what they are doing at work are less satisfied than those who know what they are doing at work. One reason the study participants may be less satisfied at work when they do not receive cognitive coaching could be related to Fournies' (1999) finding that many supervisors blame the worker for not knowing how to perform her or his job. If a subordinate is getting blamed for not performing a job correctly, even though he or she has not been taught how to perform the job, this could easily lead to a highly ambiguous working environment which would cause people to become unsatisfied in their work (Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2005).

Now that we have examined the basic results of the study, we can discuss some possible applications for the Perceived Coaching Scale. The first major application for the Perceived Coaching Scale is in organizational communication research. While organizational learning has been a common topic of discussion by organizational communication scholars (Weick & Ashford, 2001), no research has been conducted on organizational coaching. In fact, most of the research on organizational coaching has been conducted by the business publishing industry (Brounstein, 2000; Fournies, 2000). And while there is a large amount of business writings on the subject that come in the form of psychotherapeutic interventions, executive coaching, or life coaching (Flaherty, 2005; Luecke, 2004; Miedaner, 2000), very little research on coaching

within the organization between supervisors and subordinates has been conducted. Hopefully, the Perceived Coaching Scale will initiate a line of research that examines how instructional communication can be integrated into organizations to increase employee learning.

Secondly, we hope that the Perceived Coaching Scale will also open a new look at the world of instructional communication outside the traditional college classroom. With the publication of the *Handbook of Instructional Communication* in 2006 by Mottet, Richmond, and McCroskey, it has become very clear that most of our research in instructional communication has examined the traditional college or grade school classrooms. While traditional instructional communication research is very useful and continues to direct teacher education and training, it is necessary for instructional communication researchers to branch out and see how information in instructional communication can help make instruction in other contexts more effective. Examining organizational coaching is just one step in this direction.

Conclusion

Organizational Coaching is clearly not a new concept, but packaging the concept in terms of the three domains of learning is new. Hopefully, the research initiated in this study will broaden other researchers' perspectives of both instructional communication and organizational communication, so the intersections of instruction and organization can be explored together. In 1999, Fournies (1999) asked the question "Why don't employees do what they are supposed to do?" The responses Fournies received from 25,000 supervisors and managers clearly indicated that subordinate learning was not happening in the modern organization. Sadly, many supervisors and managers have no idea how to go about coaching subordinates, hopefully researchers in instructional communication can pioneer the field of organizational coaching and help determine what does and does not work.

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