Coaching, HRD, and Relational Richness: Putting the Pieces Together

Toby Egan and Robert G. Hamlin

Advances in Developing Human Resources published online 10 February 2014
DOI: 10.1177/1523422313520475

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://adh.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/02/07/1523422313520475

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:
AHRD
Academy of Human Resource Development

Additional services and information for Advances in Developing Human Resources can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://adh.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts
Subscriptions: http://adh.sagepub.com/subscriptions
Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav
Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
Citations: http://adh.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/02/07/1523422313520475.refs.html

>> OnlineFirst Version of Record - Feb 10, 2014
Coaching, HRD, and Relational Richness: Putting the Pieces Together

Toby Egan¹ and Robert G. Hamlin²

Abstract
The Problem.
Coaching is becoming a ubiquitous form of human resource development (HRD) that experiences regular annual gains in both interest and participation. Yet it lacks theoretical framing and has not been conceptually well developed. There is a need for further framing of coaching as a dyadic, or group-based phenomenon, occurring in a set of diverse, but often commonly utilized contexts.

The Solution.
Contributors to this issue inform this growing HRD area by elaborating upon coaching in terms of conceptualization, theoretical foundations, and measurement tools. They provide perspectives on coaching in its many forms, including executive, managerial, and action learning coaching. These perspectives on coaching most often share a dyadic/one-on-one context, and elaborate on coaching practices in terms of interactional richness, learning, and development.

The Stakeholders.
Researchers and scholarly practitioners in the HRD field, internal and external coaches, and line managers who are committed to improving the practice of and expanding empirical research on coaching will benefit from this special issue on coaching.

Keywords
coaching, human resource development, coaching theory, dyadic communication, coaching genres, managerial coaching, executive coaching, relational richness, coaching measurement, coaching instrumentation

¹Purdue School of Engineering & Technology—IUPUI and Purdue University Graduate School, USA
²University of Wolverhampton, UK

Corresponding Author:
Toby Egan, Associate Professor, Purdue School of Engineering & Technology—IUPUI, Purdue University Graduate School, 799 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5150, USA.
Email: tobyegan@iupui.edu
Since the late 1980s, human resource development (HRD) professionals have increasingly adopted a consultancy approach by performing in the roles of “training consultant,” “learning consultant,” and/or “organization change consultant” (see Barnham, Fraser, & Heath, 1988; Hamlin, 2001; Phillips & Shaw, 1989). In carrying out these roles, whether as internal or external consultants, HRD professionals have seen “coaching” in a similar way as they have seen “mentoring,” “training,” “instructing,” “counseling,” and other dyadic approaches as available “tools” in the HRD learning facilitation “toolbox.” Consequently, as various authors have argued, coaching is a core/integral component of the HRD domain (see Davis, Naughton, & Rothwell, 2004; Egan, 2013; Jarvis, Lane, & Fillery-Travis, 2006; McLagan, 1999) and have further extended their framing of coaching as a particularly required area of expertise of HRD professionals operating as “organizational change and development” consultants and HRD-related organization development (OD) practitioners (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

However, in light of the increasing numbers of self-identified “professional coaches” operating within the ever-expanding and maturing “coaching industry,” some have argued that (a) coaching is distinctively different to and separate from other forms of professional learning facilitation and performance enhancement such as mentoring, training, and business/management consulting (Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2003) and (b) coaching needs to “move from a service industry to a genuine coaching profession” that has a clear identity, clear boundaries, and a unique body of empirically tested knowledge (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004, p. 3). These views have been contested by various coaching experts. For example, Bachkirova, Cox, and Clutterbuck (2010) note that most definitions of coaching “are not definitive enough to distinguish [it] from its close neighbours-mentoring, counselling and training” because “essentially their purposes are the same”; and “attempts to define coaching on the basis of a distinct process are similarly problematic” because they include characteristics that either “cannot distinguish coaching from other helping professions” or are “so specific or just desirable, that they cannot be attributed to all the various forms of coaching” (p. 3).

Furthermore, as Vaartjes (2005) notes, the coaching industry is far from meeting the basic requirements of a true profession because it lacks a holistic theoretical framework. Thus, as Bachkirova et al. (2010) claim, creating a unique identity of coaching is still an unresolved problem. For these writers, coaching is seen as

a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders. (p. 1)

We suggest that with, some minor amendment, this working definition of coaching could be used to define other “tools” in the HRD learning facilitation “toolbox,” including training and mentoring and to emphasize dyadic (coach–coachee) exchange as a fundamental component of most coaching (even when team coaching is involved, dyadic interchange is paramount).
Egan and Hamlin

Whether self-identified as an “HRD professional” or as a “professional coach,” if one examines any introduction to HRD or coaching, a description regarding the “levels” or “scope” at which learning and development can be focused is typically provided. These levels are commonly referred to as individual, group, organizational, community (large system), and national (Swanson & Holton, 2009; Werner & DeSimone, 2012). In part, this focus on learning facilitation levels relates to Rousseau’s (1985) assertions that organizational processes must explicitly address the level of analysis. Although teams and team learning have been a focus in HRD, the one-on-one coach–team member dimensions along with the dyadic developmental relationship common to other forms of coaching (i.e., executive coaching, managerial coaching, and peer coaching) have rarely been included in discussions regarding the levels at which HRD has been focused.

Individuals depend on a variety of formal and informal learning and HRD/HRD-related systems and structures throughout the course of their life spans. As evidenced by increases in HRD-related programming, the rapid growth of formal coaching education programs such as the burgeoning number of master’s degrees offered by many universities, and the boom in executive coach training programs (Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2008), the collective focus on the impact of dyadic (one-on-one) developmental interactions and team learning in HRD is increasing.

The scholarly emphasis on coaching has been largely neglected within the HRD literature. In reviewing Swanson and Holton’s (2009) well-regarded HRD textbook, one will find neither a chapter dedicated to career development nor an emphasis on current coaching or dyadic forms of HRD. Instead, these authors focus almost exclusively on strategic, training, and OD perspectives in HRD. Although those with HRD-related education and backgrounds have been major contributors to the dramatic expansion of coaching applications and professional practice, HRD scholars and educators have been largely in reactive positions—describing and examining what has developed rather than proactively adding new insights and creating new possibilities for coaching.

As noted by the scholars and practitioners in this Coaching and HRD issue, employees, managers, and executives benefit from coaching received by their managers, peers, action learning team members, professional coaches, and from other dyadic situations/relationships that offer a one-on-one focus on learning and development. It seems there are few other explanations for the explosion of the professional coaching field (as noted by Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014) than individual preferences for, and positive experiences with, the customized, context-specific manner in which coaching most often occurs. Collectively, the contributing authors to this issue bring forth key applications and themes associated with HRD and its core component—coaching. These include competencies, theories, insights, and frameworks related to the formation and maintenance of these developmentally oriented relationships.

It would seem that coaching, particularly in dyads, is viewed by those contributing to the growth of this HRD-related area, to offer a level of developmental richness that other forms of learning facilitation may not. At the same time, Cox et al. (2014) point to the need for more specific theories and exploration of current “theories-in-use” that
are more directly associated with coaching. Ellinger and Kim (2014) and Hagan and Peterson (2014) demonstrate that although general theories applied to other levels and modes of HRD may be applied to coaching, and that some researchers have developed measures of coaching effectiveness, there are few specific theories of coaching in existence.

**Interactional Richness in Coaching Relationships**

As noted by Ellinger and Kim (2014), there have been very few specific theories applied to coaching. Although it will take considerable time and effort to develop HRD theories expressly related to coaching, two central questions that could be informed by theory are as follows: Why is coaching growing so quickly? And, what is it about coaching that has generated so much individual interest? It would seem that answers to these questions will likely emphasize the value and quality of one-on-one or dyadic development for individual coachees, and their coaches. This customized, individualized level of attention resonates for each coachee because a dyadic developmentally focused relationship, in which a coach/manager is focused on supporting the coachee, can be uniquely tailored. The ongoing developmentally focused dyads (or individualized, one-on-one coaching within team relationships) featured in coaching-related settings provide a unique, focused level of interpersonal exchange, which Barry and Crant (2000) described as interactional richness:

The extent to which communication within an interacting dyad at a given point in time is efficient (high in symbolic content), coordinated (characterized by synchronous interaction), and accurate (symbolic meaning is shared and appropriately interpreted). Interactional richness is a characteristic of the relationship itself that is derived from the pattern of interpersonal experiences and communication characteristics that unfold over time. (p. 651)

What has been brought forward by those practicing and writing about coaching is an overlooked critical element in HRD—the social-cognitive dimensions featured in ongoing development-focused interpersonal relationships that are found within coaching dyadic relationships, and to a lesser extent, in coached teams. The interactional richness in work-related coaching relationships provides a specific opportunity for individual learning and development. The primary focus, is on the growth of the coachee within the relationship context. With regard to other levels (organizational, community, national, etc.) of HRD learning and performance interventions, it is coaching that has the highest potential for efficiency, coordination, and accuracy, not only in the coach–coachee relationship itself but also in achieving desired coachee outcomes.

Informed by the work of Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986), Barry and Crant (2000) explored interactional richness in the context of dyadic relationships. The original framing of Daft and Lengel’s (1984, 1986) information richness theory was situated between organizational context, the information-carrying capabilities of data, and
manager communication behavior. Although interactional richness theory was not originally intended for coaching, it appears it may have the appropriate parsimony and specificity to at least inform the coach–coachee relationship. In summarizing the contributions of the authors who have contributed to this journal issue, we further elaborate on the interactional richness theory and then relate it to coaching. This is followed by a summative discussion about each article in the issue, and the chapter concludes with an overview of potential connections between the frameworks and key concepts advanced by the issue authors, and potential to advance HRD practice, theory and research.

**Interactional Richness in Communication**

A communication event is considered to be rich when the interaction provides significantly novel understanding. In addition to the communication event, the channel or mode of communication may contribute also to interactional richness. According to Barry and Crant (2000), the most rich communication channels are one-on-one communication, with face-to-face being the strongest channel, followed by synchronous or telephone/voice communication, and then text-based communication. Ongoing research suggests that face-to-face communication is the richest medium because of its immediate feedback, combination of audio and visual channels, potential for personal messages, and variety of linguistic forms. Put a different way, the face-to-face medium has the highest level of “carrying capacity,” i.e., the best potential for transmitting information that is high in richness. (Barry & Crant, 2000, p. 650)

Barry and Crant also suggested that managers who take time to select communication modalities most appropriate for an employee, or a group of employees, may perform better than “media-insensitive” managers (p. 651). The equivocality and complexity of organizational issues may lead a manager to select different communication strategies and interpersonal approaches. Communication that involves changing circumstances or uncertainty is more often accompanied by rich communication. The more an issue is understood, the more appropriate it is for less rich communication (Trevino, Lengel, Bodensteiner, Gerloff, & Muir, 1990). This process of communication selection is central to richness theory—placing importance on communication matching strategies.

The notion of carrying capacity is a central element in richness theory. It is the belief that acts of communication, and the channels of communication selected, vary according to their ability to transfer information that enhances understanding or conveys meaning (Barry & Crant, 2000; Daft & Lengel, 1984). Barry and Crant noted that just as “information richness” describes the informational depth of transmitted data, and “media richness” describes the information and symbol-carrying capacity of a communication channel, a dyadic communication relationship may likewise be described
in terms of the “richness” of informational flow between individuals. As communication relationships develop and social distance decreases, it follows that individuals within the dyad communicate more expertly and efficiently—saying and meaning more, with more accurate reception and comprehension, using fewer words and symbols. This expertise and efficiency marks dyadic interaction as high in informational and symbolic content; hence the dyad itself is “interactionally rich.” (Barry & Crant, 2000, p. 651)

Along with efficiency, Barry and Crant suggest that coordination within the dyad is also an indicator of interactional richness. Coordination refers to rapport and alignment between dyadic partners. However, this is not relational closeness (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) but, rather, a shared system of meanings and socio-cognitive configurations that develop into shared or relevant norms, expectancies, attributions, and other relationally pertinent perceptions.

It would seem that interactional richness has the potential to inform coaching and to frame coach–coachee relationships. The manner in which coach/manager and coachee make sense of their relationship impacts the coachee’s understanding and framing of roles, goals, personal awareness, and work-related outcomes. Relationships between coaches/managers and coachees may not only be the most effective communication modality but also they may have greater carrying capacity for learning, development, and performance improvement. Given the action orientation of HRD practitioners, appreciating the relationship dynamics within dyadic coaching relationships is of major importance, and the dynamics of coach–coachee relationships must be treated as a fundamental feature within coaching.

Exploring the Interactional Richness of Coach–Coachee Relationships

The following sections provide an overview of each article in this journal issue, along with a brief commentary regarding potential connections between the central concepts shared by each author and the notion of interactional richness.

Key Dimensions of Coaching

Cox et al. (2014) provide us with three sets of three key foci for coaching relationships (structures–theories–approaches) that bring insight regarding the potential positionality, context, or situations for coach and coachee. Whether focusing on the cumulative effect of brief coaching exchanges with a developmentally oriented manager or on more in-depth engagements with a professional coach, learning, performance, and meaning of work are three common undergirding dispositions and outcomes within the coaching experience. While these three orientations are common areas for exploration across varied dimensions of HRD—individual, group, organizational, community (large system), and national level—Cox et al. (2014) remind us of key aspects of the dyadic level of developmentally focused relationships. And, in particular, how the coach can influence (and be influenced by) the coachee in a manner that influences
motivation (Barry & Crant, 2000) and the connection between the coachee and her or his desired goals for the coaching relationship.

In addition, Barry and Crant bring focus to the importance of the coaching context, the client and coach as individuals, and the coaching relationship and processes. Coaching is contextualized by theories also applicable to other HRD-related settings—andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning—inform our understanding regarding how learning can occur and the choices available to professional coaches or managers/peers interested in developing insights and furthering coaching competencies. What Cox et al. understate in their article is the potential for the insights they share to inform applied research and evaluation and theory-focused scholarship. In their conclusion, they refer to extant empirical support regarding the effectiveness of coaching. Although the anecdotal evidence appears to be strong, there is much, much more to be done to empirically demonstrate, elaborate, and expound upon effective coaching in its many forms. With the frameworks provided, these authors supply us with solid opportunities for growth in theory, research, action, and reflection—along with several vantage points from which to further examine the importance of relational richness in coaching.

Professional Coaches and Coaching

The details provided by Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh (2014) regarding the growth of professional coaching are quite remarkable. The exponential growth of the International Coaching Federation, over US$2 billion in annual investment and more than 48,000 professional coaches worldwide, is by itself an impressive testimony leading to Egan’s (2013) assertion that executive coaching is the “fastest growing HRD professional enterprise” (p. 178). Although data regarding the extent to which managerial coaching is being emphasized within organization-sponsored managerial and supervisory training were not identified, anecdotal evidence from multinational organizations, such as American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), support the notion that managerial coaching is also growing rapidly. Amid this explosion are opportunities to amplify our understanding of current professional coaching practice, synthesize extant HRD-related knowledge within the professional coaching context (what Cox et al. have, in part, provided in this issue), to extend a methodologically diverse evidence-based practice within the larger system of HRD, and to advance dyadic developmental relationships as a uniquely important change process.

Maltbia et al. (2014) hold up several lenses through which to view professional coaching, including professional coaching association credentialing processes, and their underlying frameworks; an integrative literature review emphasizing coaching competencies; and their own composite framework elaborating on coaching competencies. Interestingly, the Maltbia et al. framework—co-creating the relationship, productive dialogue skills, and helping others succeed—aligns well with the theoretical framing provided by Cox et al. emphasizing the importance of the context of the coaching relationship, the client and coach as individuals, and the coaching relationship and processes. They present a focused picture of the coaching relationship that
places greater emphasis on both the coach and coachee as co-creators rather than exclusively focusing on the coach’s role, or the coachee as a recipient.

A strength in Maltbia et al.’s framing of coaching is the encouragement that professional coaches extend themselves toward development of effective social, emotional relationship and helping competencies. This framework paints the generally skilled professional coach as someone with strong interpersonal capacity and a readiness to be an authentic helper and to engage as a dyadic partner. This perspective relates to interactional richness because it emphasizes what Barry and Crant call “relational content of messages” (p. 650) by focusing on how coaches’ interpersonal capacity—such as informality, self-disclosure, conversation, and empathy—can contribute to coaching effectiveness and an impactful coaching relationship. The Maltbia et al. framework supports the notion that social attributions and interactional richness, along with an appropriate volume of coach–coachee communication, lead to effective interpersonal relationships that can make coaching effective. Maltbia et al. align with Barry and Crant’s (2000) emphasis that “within the relational communication perspective, communication is a negotiated process through which communicators reciprocally define interpersonal relationships” (p. 651). The skilled coaches’ ability to relate to their coachees, and to facilitate rich coach–coachee exchange, enlivens not only the coaching relationship but also moves the coachee toward desired change and outcomes. From this point of view, by effectively focusing on interpersonal exchange and effectiveness as a dyadic partner, the coach can effectively align the coachee with her or his learning or performance-related goals.

A further advancement to the Maltbia et al. approach would be the inclusion of coaching-related contexts. More specifically, what are coaches’ and coachees’ areas of expertise and environments, which could include personality type, profession/industry, organization type, job role, coaching focus and objectives, managerial/supervisory scope and oversight, and other contextual factors.

Another area that could be expanded upon is professional coaching involving subject-matter experts (SMEs). The central aim of SME-based coaching is the transfer of specific knowledge, skills, and context-specific information. However, the terrain of SME-focused professional coaches has yet to be explored and elaborated upon. Such mapping of the SME-coaching landscape will likely emerge from groups of professional coaches within specific fields/professions, or who focus on particular subjects—in the way that groups of human resources practitioners and scholars frame their fields in contexts such as nonprofit, governmental and for-profit organizations, or industries such as health care or manufacturing. Even if, or when, professional coaching-related literature reaches such levels of SME-related specificity, Maltbia et al.’s framing will still have relevance. This is because the competencies provided in their framework, including capacities for facilitating coach–coachee interactional richness, emphasize the particular coaching capabilities needed beyond any specific emphasis, or context in which the coaching relationship may be situated. The fact that the framework is based on detailed insights gained from both professional associations and related literature enhances its relevance and credibility—along with clear connections to dyadic, interactional richness.
Managerial Coaching and Coaching Behavior

There is a fair amount of support that employees’ job satisfaction, career commitment, role clarity, learning motivation, and connection to their organization are all strongly influenced by their manager’s support, or lack thereof. Beattie et al. (2014) provide us with insights regarding managerial coaching. As noted, although the study of managers’ support for employees has received a fairly steady amount of attention over the years, managerial coaching is a substantially understudied area of management and HRD research. Whereas coaching has become an important topic for managerial training and development, research and elaboration regarding managerial coaching behavior, the impact of such coaching on employees, and the extent to which managers can be trained to coach effectively remain relatively unclear. As Beattie et al. point out, two additional key concerns are the tendency for managerial coaching to be framed optimistically (emphasizing coaching as an exclusively good practice and competency). In reality, managers may have difficulty finding the time to attend to the learning needs of their employees while immersed in an already full set of role-related expectations. Although not systematic, the overview of available literature focusing largely on empirical studies provided perspectives regarding managerial coaching across a number of contexts and various research methodologies.

Beattie et al. (2014) examined several contexts for managerial coaching—hierarchical dyadic, peer, team, virtual, and cross-cultural. In addition, the overarching framework presented included variables that are central to the efficacy of a coaching relationship—complimentary learning style profiles, shared values, complimentary personality traits, and modeling-and-exhibiting related behaviors (Beattie et al., 2014). These areas all align well with Barry and Crant’s “determinants of interactional richness” (p. 650) in that they emphasize individual and interpersonal elements of a coaching relationship that can lead to coachees determining that their managerial coaching relationship can be instrumental to their success and stimulate their related motivation. Also related interactional richness are four other aspects of the Beattie et al. model, including—antecedents, factors that facilitate managerial coaching, factors that inhibit managerial coaching, and managerial coaching-related outcomes. These authors provided key insights regarding the current state of the managerial coaching literature, while also presenting a framework that accounts for the current state of the literature while supporting researchers and practitioners regarding the future of HRD research-to-practice. Key aspects of managerial coaching highlighted for future exploration and elaboration were the need for longitudinal studies, an expansion of research regarding diversity-related issues, examination of the potential for e-coaching, and inquiries into the potential impact of managerial coaching in cross-cultural, multinational teams.

Team Coaching in Action Learning

Through the examination of coaching within a focused team context, O’Neil and Marsick (2014) not only extend our understanding regarding support for action learning, but their elaboration on this type of coaching provides key insights regarding
coaching in team contexts and coaching by SMEs (in this case, SMEs on action learning coached action learning teams). Action learning is used globally for learning, development, and change, and there are many organizations interested in the practice of action learning and action learning coaching. O’Neil and Marsick provide insights regarding the similarities and differences between action learning coaching, managerial coaching, and executive coaching. In addition, effective learning coaching is explored and elaborated upon. A key emphasis is the use of action learning conversations (Marsick & Maltbia, 2009) framed as an iterative process involving framing/engaging, advancing, and disengaging. In addition to identifying the many similarities between managerial and executive coaching, O’Neil and Marsick provide learning coach metaphors, or archetypes, based on the results of a qualitative inquiry involving 23 action learning coaches. Each of these metaphors frame different dispositions taken by action learning coaches—the radical, the consecrated self, the deep diver, the legitimizer, the sage, the wizard, the Benedictine, and the Jesuit—in a manner that informs our understanding of frames of action used by action learning coaches while in role.

Although O’Neil and Marsick contextualize these metaphors as distinctively different from other forms of coaching, more exploration, including a similarly designed comparative study, is warranted. However, their deduced metaphors provide useful elaboration regarding how 23 action learning coaches frame their experiences and interactions when working with teams. In addition, O’Neil and Marsick provide insights regarding team coaching in action learning contexts; they also amplify the similarities and differences across action learning coaching, executive coaching, and managerial coaching in terms of inputs, processes, and outcomes. These three types of coaching share similar inputs, including personality inventories, 360° feedback, and interviews. The outputs of each variant of coaching appear to be the same. Unique aspects of team coaching in action learning involving exploring assumptions, problem framing, and reframing are also detailed. O’Neil and Marsick’s archetypes and metaphors relate to important relational perceptions and “symbol-carrying capacity” (Barry & Crant, 2000, p. 651) developed by both coach and coachee. Metaphors and archetypes are important to HRD (Short, 2001) and are inherently related to symbols (interpersonal, organizational, and societal). These metaphors can provide meaningful representations for the potential richness of coaching relationships, as well as reference points for how both action learning coaches and other coaching contexts conceptualize and evolve throughout the coaching experience.

**Constructing and Measuring Coaching and Coaching Effectiveness**

Hagan and Peterson (2014) took on the monumental task of gathering an array of measurement scales aimed toward the support and testing of coaching constructs. Based on an extensive literature review, the 19 scales reported feature different but overlapping constructs aimed toward the assessment of managerial, executive, and peer coaching. Although anyone using such scales must carefully consider the quality and effectiveness of each, the survey items identified provide the opportunity not only to extend coaching research but also may provide HRD practitioners interested in assessing...
coaching effectiveness an opportunity to evaluate coaching workplace–related coaching.

Two areas for further consideration are the comparative nature of the underlying constructs across each of the scales and the potential for future use of meta-analysis (although it appears unlikely the number of coaching studies is yet large enough), which would provide an empirical overview regarding the antecedents and outcomes associated with coaching and coaching effectiveness. These scales and related constructs could also serve to further elaborate on the interactional richness (Barry & Crant, 2000) components of coaching relations by facilitating exploration of related antecedents and outcomes associated with coaching. For instance, exploration of coaching in the contexts of coach and coachee individual personalities, coach–coachee similarities and differences, task, job, interaction frequency, affective responses (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job-related motivation), and learning- and performance-related outcomes are all benefitted by Hagen and Peterson’s summative presentation of coaching-related scales. By providing these scales within a single source, Hagen and Peterson provide key tools for understanding coaching relationships in practice and research contexts.

Potential Connections for Coaching and Interactional Richness Theory

As noted earlier, it is beneficial to explore theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks that have the potential to inform and/or advance our understanding of coaching. In addition to connecting these issue articles in our aforementioned discussion, we organized key points provided by each author that we believe connect to interactional richness theory by elaborating on areas of potential for coach–coachee exchange. These elements have the potential to be incorporated into a coaching-based view of interactional richness theory. By integrating aspects of relational dyads with key aspects of coach–coachee developmental relationships, the potential for theoretical connection and advancement is presented.

Although the aforementioned discussion, and Table 1, provide clear potential connections between coaching and interactional richness theory, there is much more to be done to further elaborate on these connections. Conceivably, a new theory may emerge from further examination of the potential utility of interactional richness theory for coach–coachee relationships. The articles in this issue make contributions as individual pieces, each contributing to our understanding of coaching. Perhaps, in addition to these meaningful contributions, a broader theoretically oriented vantage point may further inform coaching and HRD theory and practice.

Potential for Advancing HRD Practice

As noted by Ellinger and Kim (2014), coaching practice and emphases on workplace coaching behaviors have often been criticized for being opinion and best practice
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue article</th>
<th>Potential connections for coaching and interactional richness theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck “Theoretical Traditions and Coaching Genres:</td>
<td>Structural Analysis of Coaching Engagement HRD-related theories informing coaching—andragogy, experiential learning, and transformative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping the Territory”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh “Executive and Organizational Coaching: A Review</td>
<td>Coaching for knowledge, skills, performance, and/or the executive’s agenda Factors contributing to a productive coaching relationship—clarity, conditions, commitment, and continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Insights Drawn from Literature to Inform HRD Practice”</td>
<td>Core executive coaching competencies—co-creating the relationship, effective dialogue skills, and helping others succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltbia, Marsick, and Ghosh “Executive and Organizational Coaching: A Review</td>
<td>Coaching for knowledge, skills, performance, and/or the executive’s agenda Factors contributing to a productive coaching relationship—clarity, conditions, commitment, and continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Insights Drawn from Literature to Inform HRD Practice”</td>
<td>Core executive coaching competencies—co-creating the relationship, effective dialogue skills, and helping others succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beattie, Kim, Hagen, Egan, Ellinger, and Hamlin “Managerial Coaching: A Review</td>
<td>Contexts for managerial coaching—hierarchical dyadic, peer, team, virtual, and cross-cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Empirical Literature and Development of a Model to Guide Future Practice”</td>
<td>Antecedents, factors that facilitate managerial coaching, factors that inhibit managerial coaching, and managerial coaching-related outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Neil and Marsick “Action Learning Coaching”</td>
<td>Action learning conversations—framing/engaging, advancing, and disengaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagen and Peterson “Coaching Scales: A Review of the Literature and Comparative</td>
<td>Coaching metaphors—the radical, the consecrated self, the deep diver, the legitimizer, the sage, the wizard, the Benedictine, and the Jesuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis”</td>
<td>Coaching tools and approaches—Personality inventories, 360° feedback, interviews, exploring assumptions, problem framing, and reframing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measuring and assessing managerial coaching, executive coaching, and peer coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antecedents, coaching behaviors, coachee actions/reactions, and coaching-related outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
based, with little empirical or theoretical grounding. This Coaching and HRD issue has brought together authors who have global expertise on coaching and have offered insights that have the potential to fundamentally influence the current and future practice of coaching in a variety of contexts. Consistent with the focus of ADHR, these issue authors have focused their contributions on the integration of research and theory to enhance practice. In particular, they collectively bring into the foreground key perspectives regarding the framing of coaching, coaching-related paradigms, coaching dialogue processes, tools for support, perspectives on self-care, and ways to measure coaching impact. With so much emphasis on employee engagement by organizations (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Hundley, Jacobs, & Drizin, 2007), Cox et al.’s (2014) key themes of learning, performance, and meaning of work resonate as potentially important connections between coaching, employee engagement, and work-related outcomes. And, measurement scales, such as those provided by Hagan and Peterson (2014), help HRD practitioners assess the potential connections between coaching and a variety of important engagement-related outcomes—learning, performance, motivation, satisfaction, and more.

Potential for Advancing HRD Theory and Research

Limited attention has been given to the theoretical underpinnings of coaching and coaching practice. In addition to the clear connections between current HRD-related theoretical framing and coaching identified by Ellinger and Kim (2014), we have drawn attention to the key questions and potential connections between the key issues and frameworks that have been provided collectively by the other contributing issue authors and interactional richness theory. Beattie et al. (2014) provide perspectives ripe with research questions regarding both the context and content of coaching relationships, including complimentary learning style profiles, shared values, complimentary personality traits, and modeling-and-exhibiting related behaviors. Along with their views regarding professional coaching dyads, these authors invite meaningful exploration of key factors influencing effective and ineffective coaching relationships. In addition, O’Neil and Marsick’s qualitative approach to elaborating on coaching should be extended to further examine phenomenological understanding of metaphors and archetypes in coaching.

Given the relative immaturity of coaching and professional coaching, we have highlighted the potential for theoretical approaches to be used for informing and grounding coaching practice, plus the development of employee/managerial coaching processes and behavior. We believe that, through their respective theoretical and empirical research offerings, the contributing authors to this Coaching and HRD issue have collectively informed a range of potential theoretical orientations for coaching that will further enhance research and theory building.

As stated by Ellinger and Kim (2014), coaching represents an area of practice roles, and workplace behaviors within the field of HRD that has considerable potential for enhancing individual, group/team, and organizational learning, development, change, and growth. Although the research base is “still lagging behind the world of practitioners, a similar increase in coaching interest was observed in the academic field [by
Stober and Grant, 2006)" (Segers, Vloeberghs, Henderickx, & Inceoglu, 2011, p. 204) and continue to grow in numbers. These trends suggest that, although currently understudied, academic research on coaching will continue to increase.

As noted by the scholars and practitioners in this Coaching and HRD issue, coaching is a growing HRD-related area with a very bright future. The explosion of the professional coaching field and growth of managerial and action-learning coaching should lead us to conclude that HRD at the dyadic level is an important area for research and theory development. The authors in this issue provided key insights, research results, frameworks, measures, theories, and multiple perspectives regarding coaching. These included a variety of perspectives related to the formation and maintenance of coach–coachee relationships. The enthusiasm for coaching may well be in the richness of dyadic learning and development exchanges. Looking ahead, there is much more to explore about this significant aspect of HRD.

Authors’ Note
This manuscript is the authors’ original work, has not been published, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References


**Author Biographies**

**Toby Egan**, PhD, is an associate professor at the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology—IUPUI and Purdue University Graduate School—where he leads the Human Resource Development program. In addition, he is a seasoned organization development practitioner, executive coach, and former vice-president of ProGroup, now a division of Korn/Ferry International. Dr. Egan was named outstanding Early Career Scholar by the Academy of HRD. Toby is the co-founder and former director of the Texas A&M University International HRD Programs and The Mays School of Business International HRM Programs. He also instigated the undergraduate minor in leadership studies at the University of Minnesota.

**Robert G. Hamlin**, PhD, FRSA, is an emeritus professor and chair of Human Resource Development at the University of Wolverhampton and an independent management and organization development consultant. His research focuses mainly on managerial and leadership effectiveness, managerial coaching effectiveness, and mentoring effectiveness, and the findings have been published nationally and internationally in a wide range of academic and practitioner journals. Bob has authored/co-edited two books, and he has contributed numerous chapters to a range of other HRD-related textbooks.