**Leader-as Coach: Good Shepherd or Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?**

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At the crossroads of leadership and coaching is the newly emerging practices of leadership/ managerial coaching[1], and this paper explores power issues inherent in this role.

What is brought to the leadership arena with coaching is a move away from traditional command and control approaches toward the promise of a style characterized by questioning, empathy, care, collaboration towards increased awareness, performance, and growth (Beattie et al., 2014). Most practices are anchored in strength-based change models and solution-focused approaches with roots in positive psychology.

This positive discourse portraying leaders-as-coaches as good shepherds should however not overlook the inherent complexity of the leader-coach role (McCarthy Miller, 2013). Many of the benefits of executive coaching can be attributed to coaches' status as 'friendly outsiders' (from action research - Greenwood and Levin, 1998) and the freedom to explore issues in a confidential space. These conditions are partially removed with leadership coaching, and the effectiveness of coaching methodologies by leaders may be even questionable when explored from a power and politics perspective. Indeed, hierarchical relationships in organizations are often hotbeds of political games and intrigue. In fact, there is at least a triple power effect of position, pay and progression. The leader-coach holds positional power which includes a strong and often direct influence on pay through salary and bonuses, plus the power to promote – or dismiss. Therefore, the risks associated to the employee engaging in dialogue and revealing vulnerabilities, stories, assumptions, and so on – all of which are normal fodder for a coaching conversation - should not be overlooked in leadership coaching.

It is thus likely that the inherent power relationships in any coaching intervention (Louis & Fatien Diochon, 2018) could be exacerbated with leadership coaching. Indeed, far from being the ideally portrayed practice of empowerment, coaching has been portrayed as offering a new face to organizational practices of domination and control (Nielsen and Nørreklit, 2009). Inherent political considerations in coaching generate several ethical challenges that arguably are not adequately covered by codes of ethics (Fatien Diochon & Nizet, 2015). While the reasons might be different, the leader-coach role may potentially and inadvertently be opening space for a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' approach. With a command and control approach, the power relationships are at least explicit. Leader-coach approaches provide opportunities for managers - who may have objectives that are not in the interests of the employee - to seduce and manipulate to the detriment of the employee.

Another issue related to power is the degree to which managers are skilled at using coaching approaches, and what can happen if coaching is poorly done in difficult contexts. Coaching methodologies are powerful. Many are drawn from evidence-based approaches from psychology and other areas of the behavioural sciences. Executive coaches usually come with training, experience and codes of ethics about how to use the various approaches, including guidelines on referring clients who may be exhibiting psychological distress. Bad things can still happen and do though there is little evidence in the research of major problems arising from executive coaching interventions. In the highly charged supervisor-employee relationship, the risks are arguably greater.

Delving into the inherent tensions of the "leadership-as-coach" position, this conceptual paper thus explores some of the issues surrounding this practice, particularly those linked with power and organisational politics. We note that little research has been done in this field. Literature reviews of managerial coaching by Beattie et al. (2014) and Lawrence (2017) make few references to consideration of power beyond noting the positional power differentials. Nielsen and Nørreklit (2009) through text analysis is an exception in taking a critical position. They conclude that in employee

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[1] We note that there is little clarity in the literature between leadership and managerial coaching and that definitions of both vary considerably. In this paper, we use the term leadership coaching to cover both, noting that a theoretical argument could be put for drawing a distinction.

coaching, the idea of discipline and control has not been abandoned and that coaching dialogue is used as method of reprogramming individuals' actions in accordance with the purpose of the system (Nielsen and Nørreklit, 2009: 202). Fatien and Otter (2015) described the challenge to manager in wearing multiple hats when they move into a coaching mode. We go a step further in exploring the challenge for the leader in coaching employees while representing multiple agendas and dealing with the increasing complexity of organisational life through the interplay of local, national and global forces.

The paper concludes with implications for practice and education. There may be positive benefits for employees, leaders and for organisations if ethical practice is embedded within coach-training and leadership development more generally. The latter needs to take account of cultural, political, interpersonal and systemic factors at play in the context. Paradoxically, we conclude that one way to assist leaders to work with the power-laden-challenges of the coaching relationship is using executive coaching in their leadership development. This step relies upon the executive coaching intervention to be solidly grounded on ethical principles and practices that navigate the organisational politics that inevitably govern the setting up of leadership development programs. Boytazis's Intentional Change Theory (ICT) (2006) is proposed as a meta-model for framing leadership coaching development. The model encourages a systems-level consideration of change and is centred on questions of meaning and purpose in encouraging ethical practice.

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