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COACHING – A TOOL OF [IN]EXPERIENCED COACHES

Introduction

Coaching, which is a relatively new concept in Poland, is becoming increasingly popular and common. At first it referred mainly to sports. However, it spread in Poland also – and perhaps mainly – in business.

The amount of literature on coaching has been increasing consistently in the last few years both in bookshops and bookstands. Moreover, the Internet is full of the offers of trainings, presentations and study programs whose multitude may guarantee the adjustment of the offer to individual needs. It is not a problem to find presenters who will share their knowledge in this field and the only obstacle may be the client's preferences or financial means. It is just enough to find the answer to the question: which offer is going to meet our expectations (with regard to the price, time, etc.)?

As it was said above, an individual who is willing to use this form of self-development has several opportunities. However, there is no such abundance as regards scientific research. The research deals to a very limited extent with the issue of coaching and its general impact which may be both positive and negative. It is difficult to come across dissertations that would confront science with coaching or articles that would have a scientific approach to the issue in question.

Thus, the following questions arise: *What is coaching? Is there a need to introduce a new profession on the labor market? Is the existing psychological assistance insufficient? Are the individuals who implement this method competent?*

The aim of the article is to present the concept of coaching, the idea of the profession of a coach and to discuss the differences between coaching and psychologist's work.

1. The origin of coaching and its popularity

Before coaching reached Poland and found its place in the areas of business and motivation with which it is mainly associated now, it had become popular in the United States primarily due to sports.

The term *coach* was used for the first time at the Oxford University in 1830 and referred to a sports trainer whose task was to prepare sportsmen to exams. In 1831, the term was officially accepted for use¹. *Coaching*, as a verbal noun derived from the noun *coach* and meant providing instructions and training for sports competitions². With time the term was used more frequently in other areas of life and denoted giving advice, instructions or simply training.

The definition of the word in Polish was slightly more difficult to find as it does not appear in the *Wielka Encyklopedia PWN*³, *Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*⁴ or *Leksykon Uniwersalny*⁵; the *Słownik Współczesnego Języka Polskiego* (the Dictionary of Contemporary Polish Language) defines the term *coach* as a *trainer of a sports team*.

The Polish literature on the subject seems to be fairly new and the area itself does not seem to be assigned to a particular category. The publications on the subject of coaching can be found under various themes from *Psychology*, *Managerial Coaching* to *Guides* and *Personal Development to Business and Economy*. The collections of the Jagiellonian Library include publications on coaching mainly in the two first categories listed above⁶; the category *Applied Psychology* shows 31 results where the majority of titles refer directly to psychology, e.g. *Job adviser's instruments: pedagogical and psychological aspects*⁷, *Issues of Applied Psychology in the light of Empirical Research*⁸, *Practical Applications of Psychology*⁹ while the remaining ones refer mainly to the psychology of life and everyday living. The second section (*Managerial Coaching*) includes only seven titles that concern mainly the work of a coach and his/her experiences.

Nevertheless, the profession of a coach is becoming increasingly popular in Poland. In March 2009, Coaching Chamber was established in Warsaw, where accreditation can be obtained. The website of the Chamber includes its Statute and the Ethical Code of a Coach. At present the Chamber has its offices in 17 Polish cities¹⁰. In 2014, the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy entered the profession of a coach to the classification of professions and

¹ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/coach>, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

² https://www.etymonline.com/word/coaching?ref=etymonline_crossreference, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

³ J. Wojnowski (ed.), *Wielka Encyklopedia PWN*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2002.

⁴ B. Kaczorowski (ed.), *Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN, Volume 2*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004.

⁵ T. Dziemińska, *Leksykon Uniwersalny A-Ż*, Antyk, Kęty 2000.

⁶ As on 04.09.2018

⁷ B. Wojtasik, *Warsztat doradcy zawodu: aspekty pedagogiczno-psychologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, Warszawa 1997.

⁸ M. Jędrzejczak, *Problemy psychologii stosowanej w świetle badań empirycznych*, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1988.

⁹ A. F. Grasha, *Practical applications of psychology*, Toronto: Little, Brown and co., Boston 1983.

¹⁰ www.izbacoachingu.com, (accessed: 04.04.2018)

specializations¹¹. The Ministry defines the profession of a coach as follows: *Personal trainer (coach, mentor, tutor) helps clients introduce changes in personal and professional development and achieve designated targets, supports the process of change in all aspects of life, reveals untapped potentials in the course of individual and group sessions, motivates to act, finds effective solutions in cooperation with the client*¹².

It is worth noting that coaching is extremely popular not only in Poland but also in the whole world. According to www.coachfederation.org there are over 53 thousand coach practitioners in the world (2016) with the majority in Western Europe, which is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Leaders using coaching skills – estimates by world region (2016)

	Coach practitioners	Managers/leaders using coaching skills
North America	17 500	3 100
Latin America and the Caribbean	4 000	1 000
Western Europe	18 800	2 700
Eastern Europe	4 500	1 500
Middle East and Africa	2 400	700
Asia	3 700	1 500
Oceania	2 400	400
Global	53 300	10 900

Źródło: www.coachfederation.org, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

According to the statistics given in the report of the *Szkoła Coachingu 2014* concerning the national market, 81 coaching courses and programmes were held up till November 2013 and the schools under survey trained approximately 4.7 thousand coaches¹³.

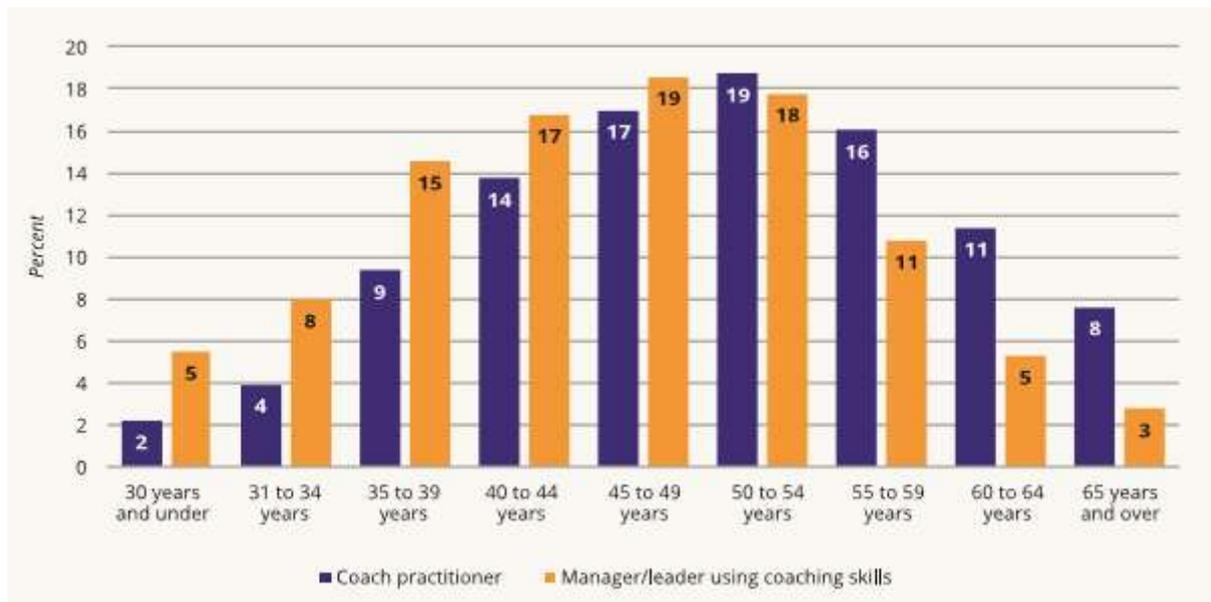
The analysis of the statistics concerning the age of coach practitioners shows that individuals in the age range 45-50 constitute the majority. The statistics for all age groups are given in Diagram 1.

¹¹ *Rośnie zapotrzebowanie na coaching. W Polsce jest już prawie 5 tys. profesjonalnych trenerów*, 18.11.2005: www.wirtulnemedi.pl, (accessed: 04.04.2018)

¹² *Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, klasyfikacja zawodów i specjalności*: <http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/bazy-danych/klasyfikacja-zawodow-i-specjalnosci/>, (accessed: 05.04.2018)

¹³ A. Gniewek (ed.), *Raport Szkoły Coachingu 2014*: https://ps4coaching.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/ic_raport_szkoły_coachingu_2014.pdf, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

Diagram 1. Age profile of coach practitioners



Source: www.coachfederation.org, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

Why is coaching so popular? First of all, it is easy to become a coach as there are no regulations as regards the required minimum knowledge, training or experience. However, this does not mean that such knowledge is not required. According to M.Huflejt-Łukasik (a coach and faculty member at the Faculty of Psychology, Warsaw University), one of the most important factors in professional coaching is a thorough preparation of the coach as well as the adequate education in the field¹⁴. Another factor that attracts people to this job is the money. It is generally well known that fees for all kinds of courses or trainings range from a few to a dozen or so thousand zlotys and sessions with a coach also involve substantial expenses. For example, a cycle of studies offered by an accidentally selected institute that offers coaching trainings costs 14 760 zlotys while the fee for an advance course with “mentor coaching” is either 8610 zlotys or 7995 depending on the selected option¹⁵. What benefits do such courses offer? According to an advertisement on the website of one of the schools, after the first session of a professional program one can join IFC (International Coach Federation) and be referred to as a coach. After the second session one can individually run training sessions and after the

¹⁴ *Rośnie zapotrzebowanie na coaching. W Polsce jest już prawie 5 tys. profesjonalnych trenerów*, 18.11.2005: www.wirtulnemedi.pl, (accessed: 04.04.2018)

¹⁵ Gross price for the whole cycle, in one payment. (as at 10.04.2018)

third session a mentor coaching process can be started¹⁶. Another school which claims that its operations as based mainly on NLP (Neuro Linguistics Programming) offers trainings for 5200 (payable in four instalments) or 5920 zlotys (in eight instalments) for 13 hours of training in 18 days. The price includes an “IA-NLP” certificate for 51 NLP techniques and tools, a set of the indispensable handbooks, a permanent contact with trainers, an access to a closed user-group in a social portal as well as “one test profile (...) that determines the styles of thinking and operating and the hierarchy of values and motivations” and one test profile for the determination of professional abilities.

2. Differences between a coach and psychologist

A question should be asked here: what is coaching in practice and what are its objectives? When browsing the literature on the subject, one can see a certain pattern that is followed by numerous trainers. Firstly, the client’s potential should be assessed and then he/she should be assisted in the development of skills and attitudes without offering ready solutions. According to S.Jarmuż and M.Tarasiewicz, the whole work is focused on the client: *the coach supports the development of the coachee principally by asking inspiring questions. The client finds solutions for various situations but the aim of the coaching is to achieve a general development of a particular competency*¹⁷. One should emphasize the fact that the work of a coach frequently involves making such statements as *you can do better* or *this is the time to stop wanting and start doing*, which – through a positive reinforcement – aim to encourage to do one’s best and consequently to improve the quality and effectiveness. However, according to Z.Nęcki, such approach involves numerous problems particularly now when corporations are profit-oriented and their staff is expected to be fully committed and dedicated to work¹⁸. In Z.Nęcki’s opinion, big companies do not only expect their staff to fulfill their duties but also to achieve particular effects that would result in company’s profit in a defined period of time, which makes their work stressful. Consequently, the employer’s high expectations lead to a kind of competition between the employees within the company or even within particular teams. As a result, rivalry replaces cooperation. The employees who are constantly subject to supervision, competition

¹⁶ International Coach Federation defines mentor coaching “as providing professional assistance in achieving and demonstrating the levels of **coaching** competency demanded by the desired credential level sought by a coach-applicant (mentee).

¹⁷ S. Jarmuż, M. Tarasiewicz, *Alfabet mitów menedżerskich, czyli o pułapkach bezrefleksyjnego działania*, GWP, Gdańsk 2017, p. 71.

¹⁸ A part of a programme: „Świat się kręci” of 12.01.2016 r.: <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/swiat-sie-kréci,12012016,23295777>, (accessed: 03.04.2018)

and assessment may be more vulnerable to stress and their self-esteem will decline. Thus, when confronted with a coach who – instead of a professional psychological conversation – runs a training session that aims at convincing the employee that he/she can work better and be more effective, the staff will become even more convinced that they are not fit for anything. Consequently, professional assistance of a psychologist or psychotherapist may be then necessary for reasons that are not only related to the workplace itself.

However, why not look at a coach as a person who completed professional training, acts in good faith and strives to assist the client using high moral and ethical standards. Then the question arises: *How does the work of a coach differ from the work of a psychologist?*

After his work with several coaches, Dr Michael Bader, a psychologist and psychoanalyst from the University of California wrote that they work “with the future”, with conscious mind and to make healthy clients better in a specific time limit while he - as a psychologist - works “with the past”, with unconscious mind and frequently has no time limits for his work¹⁹. He says that the role of both coaches and psychotherapists is to understand their client’s/patient’s problem and to take necessary measures to solve it. Moreover, in M.Badder’s opinion, coaching has filled a gap in the area and is the solution for the ones who need assistance but shame, embarrassment or fear do not let them seek help at a qualified psychologist or psychotherapist. However, one should bear in mind that in order to understand patient’s problem and to have a wider overview of the issue, a psychotherapist has to go back to the patient’s childhood or particular events or memories. Such approach requires a sound preparation of psychologists and psychotherapists, thorough knowledge and the experience that can be gained during many years of studies and work afterwards.

When choosing a psychologist or a therapist one should be sure that this is a person who is well prepared to give advice and provide assistance in a professional way. As regards coaching, nobody needs to give such guarantees because – as it was mentioned above – there are no adequate legal regulations. However, this does not mean that coaching as a rule is bad and coaches are unprofessional. Considering the fact that the term *coach* appears against the names of professional psychologists and psychotherapists, one can have the impression that it supplements the qualifications of professionals who decided to meet the demand of the market and developed their qualifications by a new specialization.

¹⁹ M. Bader, *The Difference Between Coaching and Therapy is Greatly Overstated*, „Psychology Today”, 15.04.2009: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-is-he-thinking/200904/the-difference-between-coaching-and-therapy-is-greatly-overstated>, (accessed: 05.04.2018)

Conclusions

Despite the fact that a substantial number of coaches are individuals who consider their job as a passion and do it with a desire to help other people or for other reasons, an increasing number of them are professionals of psychology, psychotherapy or similar specializations. Adequate preparation to work with clients does not only increase the reliability of training sessions but also minimizes the risk of a failure or even harm.

Finally, one should have in mind that in fact anybody can become a coach and although there are institutions that run training courses and grant certificates, their credibility and qualifications should be carefully checked before their services are used.

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Abstract

The article deals with coaching which is a relatively new area in Poland. The author analysis the origins of this popular term and its connotations. It presents the assumptions of the coaching profession and the differences between the work of a coach and a psychologist.

Key words

Coach, coaching, trainer, manager, psychologist