

Advancing the future of workplace development: integrative approaches to mentoring and coaching

Workplace mentoring and coaching have long been recognized as powerful tools for personal and professional development. As the workplace continues to evolve, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance and complexity of these developmental relationships has grown – and possibly changed – in both scope and direction. This special issue of the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* brings together a collection of studies that provide fresh insights and practical strategies for enhancing mentoring and coaching across diverse organizational contexts. In this concluding “outro” article, we aim to synthesize the findings from the eleven studies included in this special issue, identify emerging themes and propose future directions for research and practice in the field of workplace mentoring and coaching. This synthesis aims to capture the current state of research, pinpoint key insights and highlight areas requiring further exploration.

Background

It has been over 14 years since the publication of two important handbooks that spurred research in workplace mentoring: Allen and Eby's *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach* (2007), and Ragins and Kram's *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2007). Additionally, the development of coaching handbooks and emerging research on coaching have mirrored the advancements seen in mentoring literature, focusing on the practical applications and theoretical underpinnings of coaching practices. As a more recently emergent field of study, coaching has benefitted from a few more recent handbooks, such as Palmer and Whybrow's *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners* (2018), and Stober and Grant's *Evidence based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients* (2010). In the time since these handbooks, substantive progress has been made in understanding mentoring and coaching in the workplace, spurred by contemporary theories and considerations (e.g. Baranik *et al.*, 2010; Meister and Willyerd, 2010; Ragins and Verbos, 2017), discussions in foundational texts (e.g. Scandura, 2022) and subsequent research. Notable meta-analyses of mentoring conducted in 2004, 2008 and 2013 have provided comprehensive overviews of the field's evolution. Further, we have benefitted from several subsequent and meaningful commentaries and ensuing discussion spurred by publications in both fields. Examples include Chandler *et al.* (2011) ecological systems perspective of mentoring; Clutterbuck's (2009) elaboration on divergences and similarities between coaching and mentoring; Hurst and Eby's (2012) discussion of negative mentoring experiences and strategies for improving well-being in developmental relationships; Köbis and Mehner's (2021) consideration of ethical questions raised by AI-supported mentoring and Ivey and Dupré's recent critical review (2022) in which they conclude researchers should address fairness and motivation in the context of the developmental relationship, considering the broader impact on all participants.



Current focus and future directions

While previous summaries have extensively covered where the field has been, this special issue illuminates our current understanding and suggests future pathways for research and

practice. The present collection of studies in this special issue addresses diverse themes, such as diversity and inclusion, the transformative potential of mentoring and coaching, identification of candidates for mentoring and coaching and considerations for matching developers with those on the receiving end of mentoring or coaching efforts (“developees”).

This outro article will explore emergent themes and key findings from the included studies, drawing connections between them and proposing integrative approaches. The goal is twofold: to provide an overview of the landscape of workplace development as characterized by the articles in this special issue; and to identify gaps and opportunities for future research that set in motion a call for research that will further advance today’s field.

As is evidenced from the articles herein, the evolving post-pandemic workplace has underscored the relevance of mentoring and coaching, with increased reliance on distance formats and a heightened need for supportive developmental relationships in a world characterized as highly connected but increasingly lonely (Hertz, 2021). This article will synthesize the findings from the special issue and propose future research directions that address contemporary challenges and opportunities in mentoring and coaching practice.

The evolving workplace landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed relationships in the workplace, bringing about lasting changes that have increased the relevance of mentoring and coaching. Several elements have become enduring features of the modern workplace: Remote and hybrid work models have become standard practice across many industries (Nyberg *et al.*, 2021). The flexibility and adaptability required during the pandemic have persisted – if not as requirements, as employee desires, allowing them to balance professional and personal commitments more effectively. Relatedly, emphasis on mental health and well-being has grown, with organizations recognizing the importance of supporting employees’ holistic needs. Coaching and mentoring are often sought to as organizations navigate the complexities of this “new normal” workplace and provide support to their employees.

Increased comfort with distance coaching and mentoring. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools and platforms, making distance coaching and mentoring more accessible and widely accepted. Both developers and developees have become more comfortable with virtual interactions, which offer flexibility and convenience. In fact, virtual mentoring is now essential for provision of emotional support, dialogue, helping employees manage work-life balance, interpreting the reward system and enhancing well-being and belongingness for employees working in remotely (Yarberry and Sims, 2021).

Need for developmental relationships in a connected yet lonely world. Despite increased connectivity through technology, many individuals experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. Developmental relationships play a crucial role in providing support, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing growth and capabilities that help employees to move forward. These relationships offer a human touch that is essential for emotional and psychological well-being, helping individuals navigate challenges and build resilience. However, these relationships may develop differently developer–developee dyads in virtual relationships.

Diverse professions covered in the special issue

The articles in this special issue span a range of professions, illustrating the broad applicability and importance of mentoring and coaching across different fields. We will highlight a few of these professions here. Mentoring and coaching can lend vital support for **entrepreneurs**, providing guidance, support and networking opportunities essential for business growth and success; teachers and other **educators** benefit from professional development through mentoring, which supports their growth and effectiveness in the classroom and coaches working with **executives** in large companies help these leaders

navigate complex organizational dynamics, enhance their leadership skills and drive strategic initiatives. The inclusion of these diverse occupations added new outcome variables for mentoring and coaching research such as those for entrepreneurs and educators.

Technological advances and distance coaching

The increased acceptance of remote coaching and mentoring has significant implications for future practice. Technology enables more frequent and flexible interactions, breaking down geographical and even time barriers and making developmental support more accessible to a broader audience. Integrative techniques such as online collaborative platforms, digital tracking tools and virtual reality simulations are emerging as effective methods to enhance coaching and mentoring experiences across diverse contexts. As noted above, artificial intelligence (AI) is all the rage presently in discussions across contexts, and the use of AI in coaching and mentoring is an emerging trend that requires careful consideration.

AI can offer personalized insights, track progress and provide data-driven recommendations, enhancing the effectiveness of developmental programs. However, ethical considerations must be addressed, including data privacy, the potential for bias and the need for human oversight. AI should complement, not replace, the human elements of empathy, understanding and personal connection that are vital to successful mentoring and coaching relationships. As we embrace technological advancements and adapt to new modes of interaction, establishing meaningful developmental relationships will continue to be integral to personal and professional growth.

Where is the field moving?

The articles in this collection demonstrate that the field is continuing to expand conceptualizations of what and who is a mentor. Following the suggestions for defining mentoring suggested by [Haggard *et al.* \(2011\)](#), mentoring need not be confined by a definition of a one-on-one relationship between a senior person and a junior person which was the traditional definition. They defined mentoring in terms of three core attributes as follows:

We propose three core attributes of workplace mentoring that should be taken into account by researchers—core attributes that distinguish mentoring from other kinds of work-related relationships. These core attributes are *reciprocity*, *developmental benefits*, and *regular/consistent interaction over some period of time*. (p. 292).

Given this redefinition of mentoring, a mentoring relationship could be a hierarchical mentor, a supervisor, a peer and/or a coach. All of these are represented in the articles in this collection and could be equally attributed to coaching relationship as well. Yet, what the future holds for this new definition appears to be the combinations of these forms of mentoring for one developpee. A developpee could simultaneously have a boss providing mentorship, and a higher-level mentor in the organization, a mentor in a formal mentoring program, a mentor outside of the organization, a peer mentor and a coach. This is the mentoring networks conceptualization which is consistent with the later [Haggard *et al.* definition of mentoring \(Higgins and Kram, 2001\)](#). In addition, these forms of mentoring within a developmental network could be various combinations of online versus face-to-face mentoring. Future research will not doubt begin to examine different forms of mentoring within and across various types of developmental networks.

The field appears to be moving in directions that address the post-pandemic work environment. With more employees working remotely, studies are beginning to examine virtual mentoring. More research is needed on the development of trust in virtual mentoring and coaching relationships. An article in this collection by Weinberg and Hausfeld found that

developees' trust in their online coach was positively related to their personal learning. Future research should examine the potential mediating role of trust in explaining the relationship between mentoring provided and job attitudes and performance. Meta-analytic results have demonstrated that trust explains the relationship between leader behaviors and performance (Legood *et al.*, 2021) and the same should hold true for mentoring and coaching. Yet, trust has been shown to be challenging to develop in remote work relationships (Parker *et al.*, 2020).

We expect that the coming years will see the continued exploration of AI-assisted mentoring and coaching. This is already underway and AI coaching has been defined as "... a machine-assisted, systematic process to help clients set professional goals and construct solutions to efficiently achieve them" (Graßmann and Schermuly, 2021, p. 109). There are advantages and disadvantages of using AI for developmental relationships. Communications and feedback can be standardized and the AI coach would be available 24/7. However, there may be difficulties consistent with the limitations of generative AI including limits to individualization and accuracy of content. There is powerful potential in AI coaching and mentoring but care must be taken in the development and implementation of this practice. More research is needed to understand the potential and constraints of AI coaching and the ethical implications of its use. In addition, research should address whether and how AI coaching can be combined with human mentoring and coaching. In other words, the use of AI coaching should be explored as a supplement to human coaching rather than a replacement.

Future research will continue to expand the outcomes of mentoring and coaching. In this collection, it is interesting to note that mentoring functions appear to not be of current interest. That said, personal learning remains important to the study of mentoring in the new contexts represented by these studies. The literature review of coaching for entrepreneurs examined different aspects of effectiveness than previously studied: Development of skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes and goal-directed self-regulation (Marras, Opizzi and Loi). Coaching leadership was positively related to taking charge which is extension of prior research (Ren, Yin, Zhang and Zhu). Taking charge is a form of proactive employee behavior in which they exert constructive and self-initiated efforts to alter their work procedures. In a sense, this relates to voice at work and future research could be extended to examine effects of mentoring and coaching on positive voice (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). Such studies could include psychological safety which may be increased by having a supportive mentor or coach. Also, workplace withdrawal is of interest, and turnover intentions are an outcome variable in two of the studies. Future research could extend this to examine psychological withdrawal and "quiet quitting" that may be mitigated by effective coaching and mentoring. This may be particularly important to study in the context of remote work.

Dyadic studies are increasing and this is a positive trend. Several studies in this collection had paired data (Ren, Yin, Zhang and Zhu, 355 pairs; Hu *et al.*, 251 pairs; Weinberg and Hausfeld, 196 pairs; Alonso, Marshall, Porter, and Kraiger, 145 pairs). This is significant since five of the eleven articles did not employ quantitative data collection. We expect this to portend future research in which both the perspectives of mentor/coach and developpee will be examined. Future research will likely begin to examine the degree of agreement between the parties to the developmental relationship, and how this relates to job attitudes and performance. The matter of what happens if the mentor/coach and developpee do not agree on the quality of the relationship or the personal learning experienced is a potentially valuable area for future research.

Emergent themes and key findings and their implications at various levels of analysis

In this section, we will briefly explore the key themes and findings from the articles in this special issue, organized by levels of analysis. This review of the multiple-levels examined in

these studies allows us to understand the diverse impacts of mentoring and coaching, from individual experiences to broader societal implications.

Individual-Level. A core outcome of both mentoring and coaching, **Personal learning**, or the acquisition of skills and knowledge, are, not unexpectedly, highlighted throughout the articles, as it applies to learning within and across various contexts such as career development and performance improvement. The articles by Dong *et al.* and Jones and Woods discuss aspects of **personality and stable differences**, focusing on individual traits and how they can be influenced through mentoring and coaching. Their surprising findings suggest that mentoring and coaching may create changes in personality which have been assumed to remain the same over the life course. Individual preparedness and **readiness for coaching** is highlighted in the Weinberg and Hausfeld article, along with other individual-level considerations such as the developpee's perceptions about the coach; their consideration of **client trust in coach** signifies that the level of trust an individual places in their coach can influence the coaching outcome. Hu *et al.* draw attention to the importance of individual passion for work (**harmonious work passion**) and how it affects one's reactions to mentoring. Lastly, change within oneself emerged as an individual-level theme in this special issue, with Musselman and Becker's piece on **generativity** and legacy highlighting the transformative potential of developmental relationships. In the past, most research on mentoring has focused on how it affects the developpees, however this study suggests that mentoring may transform the mentors themselves.

Dyad-level. The importance of **matching strategies** between developers and developpees is discussed in several articles. **Mutual support** and co-creation within dyadic relationships are essential for the success of both mentoring and coaching. Weinberg and Hausfeld demonstrate how these elements help in building trust and facilitating effective learning and development. Alonso *et al.* further this discussion in their focus on the **co-creation of mentoring** and their analyses together with Hu *et al.*'s introduction of **moqi** – a state of unspoken understanding within a developmental dyad – demonstrate that effective matching, based on complementary and supplementary fit, is crucial for the success of developmental relationships. The concept of Moqi emphasizes the importance of intuitive and empathetic connections between mentors and mentees. Weinberg and Hausfeld focus on several dyadic elements of a client-centric coaching process; effective coaching involves understanding and addressing the client's cognitive processing and personality shifts during sessions. Tailoring the coaching process to the client's needs enhances learning outcomes.

Lastly, the **mode of interaction** (online, offline or blended) and factors in the external environment substantially impact the outcome of mentoring and coaching relationships. While mode of interaction comes up across several of this special issue's articles, Michalik and Schermuly's work on coaching format, Weinberg and Hausfeld's focus on distance coaching and Marras, Opizzi and Loi's review provide perhaps the greatest insights into the ways through which these contextual factors influence and are influenced by dyadic processing. Dong *et al.* highlight the ability of mentors to provide **secure-base support** to foster growth and courage in mentees, noting that such support is crucial for the successful socialization and integration of employees, especially newcomers.

Team- or Group-Level. While the articles in this special issue predominately focus on individual and dyadic-level considerations, throughout the articles, several authors allude that group coaching and mentoring remains a fruitful area for future exploration. Group-based developmental interventions can potentially leverage collective learning and support, especially in team settings. Despite prior theory on team coaching (Hackman and Wageman, 2005) and research on team mentoring (Williams *et al.*, 2009), it is perhaps surprising that the field has not seen further development of team coaching and mentoring. This may be due to the perception that team mentoring is not the same as developmental relationships. However, there is a great deal of practice interest in team mentoring, particularly in situations where

qualified mentors and coaches are limited in number. While this collection did not include any studies of mentoring networks, there is a clear need for additional research on them, particularly in the post-COVID work environment and remote work.

Organization-Level. Mentoring and coaching programs contribute to **organizational learning and effectiveness** by fostering a culture of continuous development. These programs can lead to improved performance and innovation within organizations. Weinberg and Hausfeld provide insights into some distinctions between **formal versus informal mentoring and coaching programs**. Whether an organization comprises structured programs versus organic relationships will have distinct influences on organizational dynamics. Formal programs offer systematic support, while informal relationships can provide personalized and flexible developmental opportunities. Musselman and Becker discuss how mentoring can enhance **organizational identification**, leading to greater commitment and reduced turnover. Generative mentoring, in particular, helps mentees feel connected to the organization's broader mission. Inclusive practices in global organizations are vital. Steel and Karmowska's study emphasizes the importance of coaching across cultural and linguistic barriers, promoting diversity and inclusion. Lastly, generative mentoring (Musselman and Becker) encourages mentees to contribute positively to their organizations, fostering a legacy of continuous improvement and engagement.

Broader Industry- and Socio-Cultural-Levels. Tailoring mentoring and coaching to specific industries such as entrepreneurship (Marras, Opizzi and Loi) can enhance their effectiveness. The unique challenges and opportunities in different sectors often require customized developmental interventions. Relatedly, programs operated outside the immediate organization, such as those within industry incubators, provide additional support and resources, thereby further enhancing the developmental experience. Regarding cultural differences, it goes without saying that cultural backgrounds can significantly influence the coaching process. Steel and Karmowska delve deeply into these considerations to highlight the importance of understanding language and cultural nuances to foster effective developmental relationships.

The final broader-level consideration we would like to highlight are post-pandemic workplace changes. The pandemic brought about broader societal shifts in workplace norms, affecting mentoring and coaching practices. Zhang, Ma, Xu and Lu discuss the need for research to systematically investigate these changes and their implications for developmental relationships. As we can see, even within the relatively slim number of articles contained within this special issue, it did not take much for us to extract several multifaceted impacts of and on mentoring and coaching in today's world – some factors, such as matching, the answers to which remain elusive and several newer questions that have more recently emerged. Evidence-based guidance on what combinations of variables result in the most effective matching would be particularly valuable. We encourage future research to continue to explore these themes across different contexts and within and across levels.

Methodological innovations

Another way to view the value of this collection of articles is as a primer on methodological approaches to the study of mentoring and coaching. As with much prior research, some studies employed self- and mentor-reported survey data (Musselman and Becker). These studies collected data at multiple points in time and contained reports from both developers and developees.

Other studies collected data at multiple points in time which is a positive trend. For example, JMP-01-2023-0044.R2 was a cross-lagged panel using structural equation modeling (SEM) for analysis. Weinberg and Hausfeld offer a longitudinal study of distance coaching with data collected at two points in time. Future research may employ experience sampling

and daily diaries to capture the dynamics of mentoring and coaching as it unfolds over time (Gabriel *et al.*, 2019; Ohly *et al.*, 2010).

The articles by Jones and Woods, and Michalik and Scernly were quasi-experiments with coaching interventions which are not often seen in the literature. This is noteworthy, since the execution of experiments in field settings is challenging and requires the development of long-term working relationships with organizational partners (Grant and Wall, 2009).

The collection includes qualitative research with the study of coaching in a non-native language (Steel and Karmowska). Rich text analysis (RTA) was employed to analyze the interview data. Literature reviews were also represented. Marras, Opizzi and Loi offer an integrative literature review examining existing works on entrepreneurial coaching. SLA Text Analysis was employed to analyze literature and extract themes. The group of studies included a meta-analytic review of the association between workplace mentorship and teachers' professional development (Zhang, Ma, Xu and Lu).

There is a range of research methods represented in this group of studies. Future research should employ mixed methods in which different methodologies are employed to address the same research questions (Molina-Azorin *et al.*, 2017). In this way, the strengths and weaknesses of the methods can be counterbalanced.

Ethical considerations in mentoring and coaching

Ethical considerations are paramount in the practice and research of mentoring and coaching in the workplace. The articles in this special issue highlight several ethical issues that need to be addressed to ensure that these developmental relationships remain characterized by integrity, effectiveness and fairness. Here, we emphasize the need for ethical guidelines in coaching and mentoring, particularly considering the findings and themes discussed in this special issue. The ethical responsibilities of mentors have been discussed (Feldman, 1999; Moberg and Velasquez, 2004). Hurst and Eby (2012) point out that mentors have a responsibility to dedicate sufficient time and attention to meet developpee needs and expectations. Mentors and coaches must carry out the process in a professional manner and respect diversity. In addition, access to mentors must be fairly provided (Ivey and Dupré, 2022).

Personality changes. Coaching and mentoring can lead to significant personality changes, as highlighted by Jones and Woods. And personality plays an important role in altering the ways in which participants engage in developmental relationships, as exhibited by Dong *et al.* These changes underscore the responsibility that coaches and mentors have toward their clients. Ethical considerations for researchers and practitioners include ensuring that any personality change aligns with the client's goals and consent, investigating the mechanisms behind these changes to understand their long-term impacts and addressing the sustainability of personality changes and whether they require continuous coaching.

Ethical guidelines and psychological safety. Integrating ethical guidelines and psychological safety practices from both mentoring and coaching can enhance the overall effectiveness and integrity of developmental relationships. For instance, mentors and coaches can jointly develop a code of ethics that includes confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary participation, ensuring that all parties feel safe and respected throughout the relationship. Creating a psychologically safe environment is crucial for effective mentoring and coaching, as it lightly touched upon in several articles throughout this special issue. This involves, at minimum: ensuring that developpees feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment or retaliation, providing support and resources to help developpees manage stress and emotional challenges and building trust and fostering a supportive atmosphere that encourages open communication. Psychological safety is also prerequisite for employees to express positive voice.

AI-assisted coaching. The use of AI in coaching and mentoring raises several ethical questions. Considerations include data and privacy (i.e. ensuring that client data is protected and used ethically); bias and fairness (i.e. addressing potential biases in AI algorithms and feeding the AI prompts that are specifically designed to help ensure fair treatment of all clients and human oversight (i.e. maintaining the human element in coaching relationships to provide genuine empathy, understanding and personal connection. As AI continues to improve, there may come a day when it is difficult to determine whether the developpee is interacting with a person or a machine, and the issue of full disclosure will emerge.

Voluntary participation. Participation in coaching and mentoring should always remain voluntary. Ethical guidelines should, at minimum, ensure that developpees and developers are not coerced into participating, participants have the freedom to influence the choice of mentors or coaches and to opt out if desired and assure that informed consent is obtained, with a clear understanding of the process and expectations of participants.

Cultural and language sensitivity. Coaching and mentoring across cultural and linguistic barriers require sensitivity and inclusivity. Studies like that by Steel and Karmowska highlight the importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences, using inclusive language and communication methods that accommodate diverse backgrounds and providing training and resources to developers to enhance cultural competence.

Power dynamics. Improperly managed power dynamics can impact the effectiveness and fairness of coaching and mentoring relationships, especially if they are company sponsored. Ethical considerations include clarifying the role and responsibilities of the developer, ensuring that power dynamics do not undermine the developpee's autonomy and agency, appropriately training the program coordinator for formal mentoring and/or coaching programs to set design mechanisms into the program that account for potential power differentials and challenges, providing mechanisms for feedback and promptly addressing power imbalances.

Outcome transparency. Transparency about the desired outcomes of coaching and mentoring programs is essential to establish mutual understanding and co-creation. Ethical guidelines should ensure that organizations clearly communicate the goals and expected outcomes of these programs; coaches, mentors and clients openly share their definitions of success and there is mutual agreement on the criteria and measures used to gauge success and progress.

Sustainable solutions. Many of the articles in this special issue focus on short-term interventions, but there is also a need for sustainable long-term outcomes. Related ethical considerations include understanding the long-term impacts of coaching and mentoring on developpees' well-being and professional development, investigating how the context of the relationship affects long-term outcomes and developing strategies for sustaining positive changes and ensuring continued support beyond the initial intervention.

By addressing these ethical considerations, future research and practice in mentoring and coaching can ensure that workplace developmental relationships are conducted with integrity, respect and a shared commitment to the well-being of all participants.

Emergent integrative approaches

The articles in this special issue of the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* provide a rich foundation for developing integrative approaches that combine elements of both mentoring and coaching. These integrative approaches can enhance the effectiveness of developmental relationships by leveraging the strengths of each method. Here, we discuss the potential for integrating coaching techniques within mentoring relationships (and vice-versa) and suggest several examples based on the new knowledge that emerged from the included studies.

Blending mentoring and coaching techniques. In the Care to Dare study by Dong *et al.*, mentoring techniques that provide secure-base support can be combined with coaching strategies that encourage personality and behavioral changes. A mentor could use coaching techniques such as goal-setting and reflective questioning to help mentees develop courage and confidence while providing the emotional support characteristic of a secure-base mentor.

Cross-cultural and distance coaching. Steel and Karmowska's study on coaching in a non-native language highlights the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural coaching. Integrating mentoring techniques that focus on cultural sensitivity and personal relationship building with coaching methods that facilitate structured skill development can create a more inclusive and effective developmental relationship. For instance, a coach working with a non-native speaker can incorporate mentoring practices that foster trust and understanding while using coaching tools to enhance professional skills while accommodating any concerns associated with language proficiency.

Technology-enhanced developmental relationships. Weinberg and Hausfeld's research on distance coaching suggests that technology can play a substantive role in supporting developmental relationships. Integrating coaching tools such as virtual reality simulations and digital tracking systems into mentoring relationships could provide immersive and continuous learning experiences both during and in follow-up to the cultivation phase of these developmental relationships. For example, a virtual mentoring program could include simulated scenarios where mentees practice new skills, receive feedback from mentors and track their progress over time.

Generativity and legacy building. Musselman and Becker's study on generative mentoring emphasizes the importance of legacy building in mentoring relationships. Combining this with coaching techniques that focus on goal achievement and personal growth can help mentors and mentees work together to create a meaningful impact. A generative mentoring relationship might include regular coaching sessions where the mentee sets specific legacy goals, receives guidance on how to achieve them and reflects on their progress and contributions.

Future integrative research directions

The integration of mentoring and coaching techniques presents several promising avenues for future research. We will highlight a few of them here.

Experimental designs and longitudinal studies. Future research should continue to employ experimental designs and longitudinal studies to test the (sustained) effectiveness of integrative approaches. By systematically investigating the outcomes of blended mentoring-coaching programs, perhaps through an initial case study approach with an appropriate audience, researchers could identify best practices and optimize these developmental relationships.

Specific populations and contexts. Research should explore how integrative approaches work across different populations and contexts, such as entrepreneurs, educators and executive audiences. Understanding the unique needs and challenges of these and other groups, researchers and practitioners can contribute to more highly tailored and tailorable developmental programs to maximize their impact.

Technological innovations. Investigating the role of emerging technologies, such as AI and virtual reality, in supporting developmental relationships that integrate elements of coaching and mentoring can provide insights into how these tools can enhance learning and development across complex and dynamic contexts and needs. Ethical considerations such as data privacy and bias should be a not-so-tangential focus of this research.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusion. Future studies should examine how cultural sensitivity and inclusivity can be integrated into coaching and mentoring practices. Research

should explore how elements from both fields can help developers and developees to effectively navigate challenges (e.g. learning style differences or goal misalignment), barriers (e.g. societal, language) and help to create inclusive, supportive and authentic developmental relationships.

Integrating coaching techniques within mentoring relationships, and vice-versa, holds a great deal of potential for enhancing the effectiveness of each approach. By drawing on the strengths of both mentoring and coaching, practitioners can create more comprehensive and impactful developmental programs. The insights and findings from the articles in this special issue provide a starting place – a valuable foundation for developing these integrative approaches, which can be further refined through future research and practical application. As the workplace continues to evolve, these blended strategies will be essential for fostering personal and professional growth across diverse and dynamic workplace environments.

Conclusion

This outro article has briefly consolidated some of the findings from the eleven studies in this special issue on workplace mentoring and coaching. We have described these contributions as they contribute to the current landscape of research, explored several emergent themes across various levels of analysis, addressed ethical considerations and proposed integrative approaches that leverage both mentoring and coaching techniques. This synthesis highlights the progress made in these often parallel fields and underscores the need for ongoing exploration at the crossroads of these dynamic fields.

We urge researchers, practitioners and organizations to collaborate in advancing our understanding of workplace mentoring and coaching. By pushing the boundaries of existing knowledge, embracing innovative methodological approaches, addressing ethical considerations and cautiously bridging technological innovations while retaining a uniquely human experience, we can enhance the effectiveness of developmental relationships. Together, we can create a future where mentoring and coaching not only drive growth but also foster resilient and thriving workplaces.

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