

# Determinants of Successful Coaching Outcomes: Case Review of Eskom's Matla Power Plant, South Africa

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## Abstract

Workplace health and safety is an important aspect of the success of organisations as it considers the well-being of both employees and the company. Present research is based on the impact of coaching on a perception of developing a health and safety culture. In this regard, the qualitative study has been conducted to assess the role of coaching in developing the health and safety culture for Eskom's Matla power plant in South Africa which is prone to workplace risk. The outcomes of the study are based on both the primary and secondary data wherein 20 middle managers of four plants of Eskom's Matla have been selected. The analysis brought forth the outcome that coaching is the effective way to provide the practical experience related to a health and safety environment among new employees. However, existing managers faced the issue of consumption of time in coaching and workload. Subsequently, it was found that coaching makes it easy for the business to reduce the gap between employees and management which leads to set the safety culture in the right manner and to reduce the risk. Coaching can therefore be provided for adopting the changes in the current practices of imparting knowledge to employees and for enabling them to support the organisation to ensure its long-run survival.

**Keywords:** coaching; occupational health and safety; transformation; employee attitude; guidance and support

## Introduction

### **Concept of Coaching**

Coaching can be defined as the methodology to direct, instruct and train a group or an individual to achieve pre-specified goals (Theeboom et al., 2014). The potential of coaching was understood in the business sector in the United States between the 1970s and 1980s. During that time, it was observed that coaching is essential to aid and support managers to effectively meet the performance criteria for ensuring the long-run survival of the business. From the 1990s to 2004, the industry of coaching started growing with the association of a large number of coaching professions (Morrison, 2017). In this manner, coaching has been used in several business sectors for the purpose of updating the knowledge of employees and providing them with the right guidelines to work with integration. Workplace coaching refers to the process of equipping people with the knowledge, tools and opportunities they require to accomplish their given task and by ensuring their own development (Drake et al., 2008). A good coach should have several effective skills such as active listening, championing, an appreciative inequity approach and supporting the continuous improvement of personnel (Institute of Coaching, 2017). Workplace coaching can be provided for career enhancement and new learning among the workforce to work in an effectual manner. On a critical note, coaching is imparted with the help of a professional expert to help businesses accomplish the aim of organising the coaching. Also, the corporation needs to invest a certain amount of income in providing coaching to employees in a financial year (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Coaching therefore made it possible for businesses to improve their employees and to increase their productivity.

However, coaching in occupational health and safety (OHS) has helped organisations to lower the chances of accidents while working (Leka et al., 2016). Furthermore, it increases the precautionary levels among the employees and also the performance of the organisation. Most importantly, the organisation attains financial stability too.

### **Need for Coaching in Developing Occupational Safety Culture**

Coaching is considered the developmental intervention for businesses which support employees to learn new practices and to work in the direction of growth and development of the business (Theeboom et al., 2014). The workplace coaching is solution-focused and results-oriented through which employees focus on the performance criteria set by the management of the business (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). However, the aspect of coaching is very important in the case of workplaces with higher risks.

In this regard, the management of the business uses coaching by preparing the content for occupational safety and accordingly providing employees with detailed guidelines. Furthermore, an occupational safety culture is developed in the organisation and employees are made aware of the same. This proves to be effective for companies to reduce risk at the workplace because employees get to know the use of varied tools and

equipment as well as the safety measures at the workplace (Segers et al., 2011). Moreover, the development of an occupational safety culture supports the consistent growth of the business as opposed to an increased rate of accidents which affects its performance to a great extent. At this juncture, varied aspects of coaching are applied to raise awareness among employees regarding the use of safety equipment (Morrison, 2017). Coaching is therefore essential to the communication regarding the hazards at the workplace and the aspects applied to reduce the risk.

### **Overview of Case Organisation: Eskom's Matla**

The study under consideration is based on Eskom's Matla power station, which is a coal-fired power station and base-load plant. The plant is situated 30 kilometres from Secunda in Mpumalanga, South Africa. Its continuous operation requires a company to maintain the safety culture to ensure increased productivity. However, scheduled stoppage occurred regularly for the purpose of maintenance and inspection in particular units of the plant. There are 600 MW units in Matla at the 3 600 MW installed capacity (Eskom, 2017). The average production of the plant during the last three operations years was 250 199 GWh with the average availability of 93.84 per cent. At the time of construction, it was estimated that the operating lifespan of the plant would be 30 years, but it was extended to 60 years (Eskom, 2017). This aids to provide security for the business for a longer time span as continuous return can be generated without incurring excessive costs for its construction, design, etc. Furthermore, the continuous operation of the plan reflects that maintenance is mandatory to ensure an uninterrupted supply of the product and services. There are a number of employees, students and contractors associated with Matla power station. The involvement of human capital makes it compulsory for the power station to apply the safety practices and procedures to reduce harm and hazards at the workplace.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of the study is to assess the impact of coaching on the workplace safety culture in the context of Eskom's Matla. However, to achieve the main objective, the following sublime objectives need to be dealt with:

- determine the current OHS policies in the case organisation;
- evaluate the challenges in providing successful coaching on OHS policies;
- determine the drivers and motivators of successful coaching on OHS policies; and
- assess the changes made in the current policies after coaching on workplace safety.

## Literature Review

### **Impact of Safety Leadership on Workplace Safety Culture**

Bass and Riggio (2006) asserted that leadership plays an important role in providing good working conditions for employees and shifting their focus to achieving the long- and short-term objectives of the business. They further explained that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with the enhancement of occupational safety through which a high-performance work system can be established. This is because transformation leaders communicate the value of safety because of their personal relationship with the effect of an idealised influence. It allows their followers to act like leaders and to complete what has been allocated to them. In addition, the inspirational motivation of a transformation leader proves to be effective in convincing followers to attain the safety goals. Freiwald (2013) explained that a safety climate and leadership should be integrated through which employees and employers can work for the betterment of the business. Many authors such as Zohar and Luria (2004), Mearns et al. (2003) and Dejoy et al. (2004) found that leadership has a direct impact on the workplace safety culture because leaders promote the safety behaviour among their employees and influence them to adopt the safety procedures while working.

According to Brown and Treviño (2006), ethical leadership is significant because employees observe the behaviour of the leader by perceiving them as the credible or attractive model of appropriate behaviour. It is served as the social learning among employees which enable them to apply the safety practices directed or communicated by the leader of the group. In addition, it is the only leader who conveys the importance of ethical standards and practices related to the workplace and who ensures the effective use of the available resources.

Yang et al. (2017) stated that safety performance is improved and affected with the help of actions and activities of the leader. They discovered that contingency leadership has a positive impact because the leader provides a well-managed system that facilitates the provision of safety for working employees. Also, the leader with such a kind of management style ensures the provision of learning among employees regarding the safety measures.

According to McClellan (2011), workplace safety is very important for an organisation and the performance of its employees. If safety practices are conducted, workers will feel safe and their satisfaction towards their jobs will increase. These can be possible if leaders guide their followers in an effective manner. The organisation can conduct programmes for its leaders so that they will know the different safety measures and overall risks which can be reduced to some extent. This can create a positive safety culture in the workplace. On the other hand, Wu et al. (2017) argued that ineffective leadership can cause injuries at the workplace on a continuous basis. If guidelines are given to the employees in an appropriate way, they can handle the work and maintain a

high level of safety. In this way, leadership plays a vital role in the organisational safety culture.

### **Determinants of Coaching Outcomes**

Hermel-Stanescu (2015) stated that an effective coaching practice conducted at the workplace involves two parties who both have to play their respective roles. The following determinants present the outcomes of coaching practices:

- **Transformational change:** This type of change can happen in the workplace when coaching programmes are implemented. Anderson and Anderson (2015) determined that these changes will take place when an enterprise uses different models. This outcome can be attained and used to reposition itself in the market. By implementing radical changes, overall workplace safety can be improved and goals be attained.
- **Employee attitudes:** An attitude of a person can be described by the way they feel. It can be related to the feelings of an employee towards their company and co-workers. If staff members emotionally connect, it will help the organisation to achieve the desired coaching outcomes. In order to meet the expectations of the employees, the higher authorities have to take care of their safety (Brightbase, 2017). Each employee has their own attitude towards the environment of a company, which can affect their performance and which therefore needs to be ensured by improving the safety at the workplace.
- **Employee engagement:** This important factor describes the relationship between the organisation and its employees. Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009) stated that an engaged worker can be defined as the one who is fully committed or involved in the work. If this kind of involvement level is high, an enterprise will be able to attain its coaching goals as the employees will follow the instructions that are given by their leader. In addition, the employees have their position attitude towards the organisational policy and its values. Employee engagement will therefore help them to work hard and to improve their performance, which will be beneficial to the enterprise.
- **Employee goal setting:** This is an aspect through which the overall performance of workers can be enhanced positively. A manager or leader has to encourage their employees by setting attainable or measurable goals. This will help them to focus on the short-term and long-term objectives. In addition, the respective organisation can perform well in the market (Paychex, 2015). If such kind of employee goal setting will be implemented at the workplace, the coaching outcomes can be achieved efficiently.
- **Employee skills and performance:** Hameed and Waheed (2011) examined that an employee should have certain skills and knowledge to improve their performance. These two terms are directly related to each other and will help the organisation to accomplish its specified goals. If employees have skills, they

can handle all the work in an appropriate way, which will help to achieve the coaching outcomes. If the workplace safety practices can be improved, the number of accidents will be reduced. This factor can therefore help the company to implement the coaching practices at the workplace.

## Methodology

### **Coaching Practices at Eskom's Matla**

The coaching practices applied at Eskom's Matla were initiated by the authors to develop a deep understanding among the middle managers of the plant. These managers received coaching for developing a workplace health and safety culture for three months. They were made aware of the risks at the workplace and aspects applied to reduce the risks by following the safety culture. In order to develop a workplace health and safety culture, training sessions, conferences and workshops were conducted. These were attended by all the middle managers from four power plants of Eskom's Matla. The rationale behind using different modes of coaching was to increase the understanding of the actions to be taken at the time of a typical situation of the business.

However, it was not easy or feasible for the researcher to approach all the employees of the company as most of them were not ready for the interviews or had different shifts which led to their unavailability. Also, incorporating the middle managers in the coaching practices would be effective because they are directly connected with the employees and can therefore communicate the safety practices which are to be applied at Eskom's Matla. After finishing the coaching practices, the middle managers were interviewed to assess the impact of the coaching on the workplace health and safety culture. It was effective and efficient to accomplish the aim of the current study and to apply the suitable coaching practices for developing a health and safety culture at Eskom's Matla.

### **Research Strategy**

In order to assess the impact of coaching practices on the workplace health and safety culture, a qualitative investigation has been done. The rationale behind using a qualitative study was to perform an in-depth analysis on the basis of collected information. Furthermore, both primary and secondary data were collected for the deep insight of the study. The primary data were collected with the help of an interview questionnaire (Appendix A). The secondary sources for collections of the secondary data were journals, books and online articles.

The current study is based on a descriptive research design through which the perceptions of the managers of Matla's coaching practices to improve the health and safety performance of the business were determined. Purposive sampling was applied for the selection of participants, which consisted of middle-level managers from four power plants of Eskom's Matla.

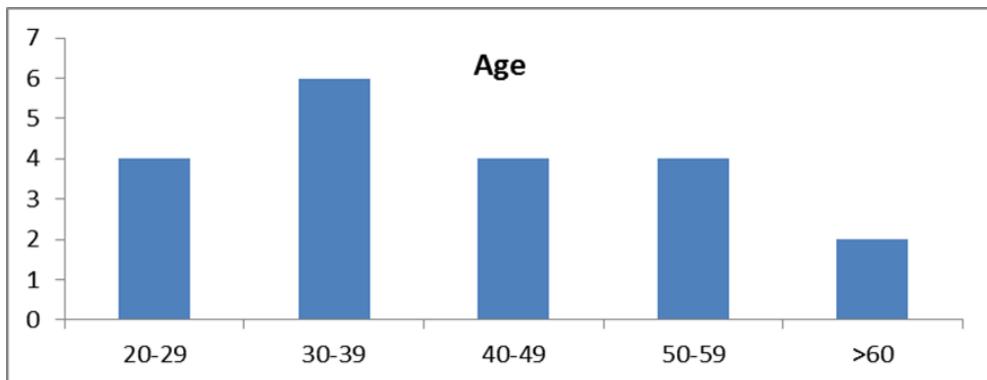
The rationale behind selecting the purposive sampling is to consider the convenience and to meet the specific purpose of the research which is to assess the impact of coaching on the workplace safety culture in the context of Eskom's Matla. Since the research was targeted on most experienced employees of Eskom's Matla, the selection of purposive sampling is regarded as appropriate. In this regard, 20 middle-level experienced managers of the organisation were selected who provided deep insight into effective ways of developing the safety culture and environment. The collected information was analysed by using a thematic content analysis. In this regard, separate themes were prepared to support the analysis and to draw valid outcomes. In addition, the demographic profiles have also been analysed by demonstrating appropriate information. Subsequently, suitable methods and procedures have been applied to collect relevant information from the participants.

## Results and Discussions

### Demographic Profile of the Participants

The demographic profile of the participants consists of age, gender, qualification and job position in the organisation. This helps to interpret the collected information in an effectual manner so as to draw the valid outcome.

According to the collected primary information, the majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 30–39 years and only 10 per cent of the respondents lie in the age group > 60 (Figure 1). The overall study is based on 40 per cent female managers and 60 per cent male managers. This reflects that the proportion of male is higher in comparison to female owing to the risky workplace.

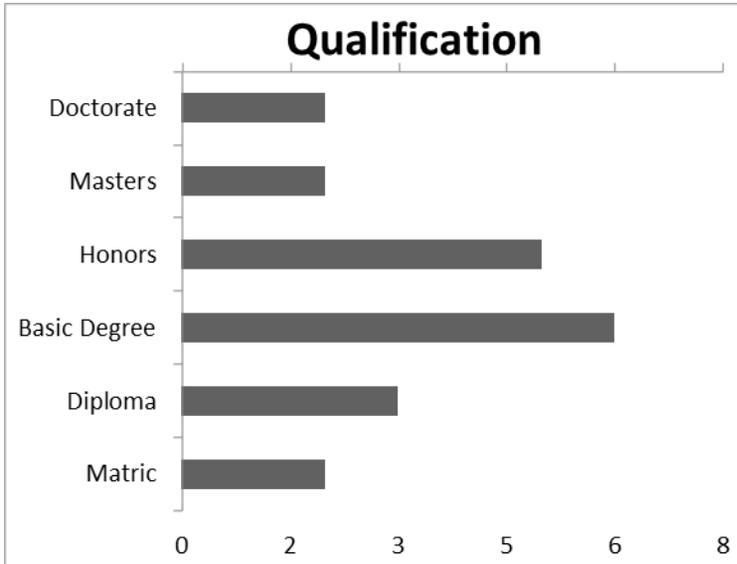


**Figure 1:** Frequency distribution for age of the respondents

### Job Levels and Qualifications in the Organisation

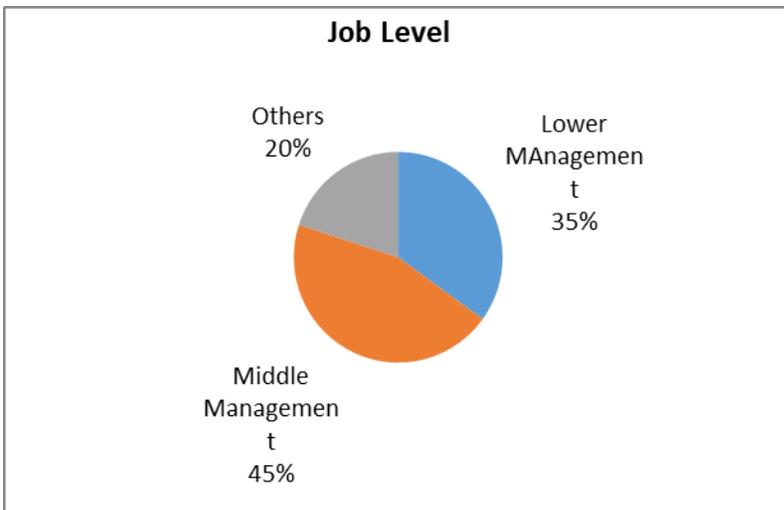
The graph in Figure 2 shows that the majority of the participants have a basic degree qualification whereas the second majority of the participants have honours degrees.

Only 10 per cent of the respondents have doctoral and master’s degrees and matric. These qualifications therefore indicate that the participants are highly educated and can understand the health and safety cultural aspects of power stations.



**Figure 2:** Frequency distribution of qualification of the respondents

Figure 3 indicates that 45 per cent of the participants are middle-level managers and 35 per cent of the respondents are lower-level managers. This therefore indicates that middle-level managers can effectively contribute towards developing a strong health and safety culture at the workplace.



**Figure 3:** Frequency distribution of the level of employment

## **Characteristics of Existing Coaching Practices**

Coaching practices improve health and safety in the workplace by providing more practical experiences to employees. When discussing this with the participants, it was found that coaching bridges the communication gap between management and employees. This helps the workforce to resolve their issues and to work with more securities and safety. With the help of coaching, Eskom's Matla changes the guidance and support approach which is provided for new employees. It would be effective for the corporation or plant to set the safety culture and reduce the risk or hazards at the workplace to a great extent. This leads to derive valid outcomes and ensures the well-being of employees and the company as a whole.

### *Coaching Procedures*

According to the data collected from the interviews, different coaching practices are adopted in Eskom's Matla. The first one is "learn as you work" where group coaching directs employees at the workplace. It facilitates employees to apply the safety measures at the workplace and to reduce the risk to a great extent. The "recruitment" method appoints employees who have enough information or knowledge related to health and safety. The "perks and benefits" procedure provides weekly rewards to the best coach, mentee or follower, which encourages them to implement the health and safety culture at the workplace. These dynamic coaching practices applied in Eskom's Matla can therefore directly or indirectly reduce the risk and help to establish a health and safety culture.

### *Guidance and Support*

Guidance and support are crucial to new employees when they join the organisation. At this juncture, an induction programme for new employees provide proper information related to the health and safety culture (Ashwathappa, 2007). This reflects that employees should be provided with proper facilities and infrastructure where they can easily help a company to maintain the health and safety culture. The results from this study indicate that the employees are provided with theoretical information and practical knowledge which are supplemented by their experience. The participants stated that their supervisors or mentors informed them of the safety measures and risks associated with the job. However, currently, they get more support by being involved in the management or their supervisors who help them to accomplish the work by resolving all doubts related to health and safety at the workplace. The results of the study indicate that the managers are assisted by their supervisors who provide good mentoring, guidance and support. The approach related to coaching seems to be effective when the employees are involved in setting the health and safety culture and the coach does the close monitoring by providing deep understanding among the employees.

## **Outcomes of Coaching on Workplace Health and Safety**

With respect to outcomes of coaching on workplace health and safety, various researchers gave insight into their findings which support the current findings. Coaching refers to the process of promoting and maintaining the mental, social and physical well-being of workers associated with all occupations (Acakpovi & Dзамikumah, 2016). For this purpose, the management of the organisation should take corrective action to provide a safe and improved work environment for their employees. They should provide the proper safety measures for their employees to complete their tasks with fewer risks. The results of the study indicate that the participants were less interested in adopting safety practices in their daily work schedules.

However, they attend the safety drills and training sessions. This reflects that Eskom's Matla does not have a health and safety culture, but only communicates rules to its employees regarding the safety practices. Since health and safety are crucial to the organisation, government mandates the same for employers to ensure the safety of staff. In this regard, Eskom's Matla follows the occupational regulations stipulated by the OHS Act (The South African Labour Guide, 2017). The managers indicated that they are aware of the set of guidelines but that they cannot implement them effectively because of several issues such as a lack of willingness and resources. Some participants reflected that the coaching practices consumed their time and interrupted their daily work. These practices also increased their workloads and stress.

Most of the participants stated that coaching updated their knowledge related to health and safety and that they received the relevant coaching when they joined the organisation. When promoted, the employees apply the same practices to their subordinates regarding the safety measures and ensure that they understand the importance of following the OHS guidelines. The results indicate that now Eskom's Matla provides more opportunities for new employees to obtain practical experience from their managers, which helps to establish a health and safety culture at the workplace.

## **Conclusions**

The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of coaching on the workplace safety culture in the case organisation. The case organisation was Eskom's power plant Matla, which is a coal-fired power station and base-load plant. On the basis of the literature review chapter, it can be concluded that leadership has a direct impact on the health and safety culture of the organisation. This is because leaders positively influence their employees and serve as coaches to ensure that the workforce understand their roles and responsibilities associated with the business.

Furthermore, transformational leaders are more effective in boosting the motivation level of employees and generating positive attitudes among them to focus on the health

and safety aspect of the business. Owing to this, leaders or managers should understand the importance of a health and safety culture and accordingly communicate the information to their employees. However, employee engagement, the attitude of employees and transformation changes affect the perceptions related to a safety culture.

On the basis of the current OHS policies in the case organisation, it was found that a very basic framework of health and safety policies was managed, which was inefficient. It was also found that the framework had various gaps that hampered the successful implementation of the OHS policies. With respect to challenges and motivators of successful coaching methods, unacceptance, attitudes, incompetence and the lack of experience could be implied as the challenges. In addition to the support from various institutes and the local government, virtual modes and personal precautions of the employees are the most important opportunities in the OHS coaching. Lastly, with respect to changes in the current framework after coaching on OHS, not much improvement was made except for more frequent training sessions, mock drills and fun tests to determine the level of health and safety knowledge.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

### **The Impact of Coaching Health and Safety Managers to Improve Health and Safety Performance at Eskom's Matla Power Station**

#### *Section A: Demographic Profile of Participant*

How old are you?

20–29       30–39       40–49       50–59       > 60

What is your gender?

Male  Female

What is your highest academic qualification?

Matric    Diploma    Basic degree    Honours    Master's    Doctorate

In which category does your present job level fall?

Lower management    Middle management    Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Section B: Present Coaching Practices in Case organisation*

Q.1 What is your opinion of the current coaching practices in your organisation?

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Q.2 What are the different coaching procedures currently being undertaken?

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Q.3 Tell me about the guidance and support provided when you joined this organisation.

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Q.4 How has this support changed since then now that you are a manager?

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#### *Section C: Barriers/challenges to current practices*

Q.5 How would you rate the current coaching practices in the organisation?

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Q.6 What do you think are the gaps in the current induction and orientation process?

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Q.7 How does management take initiative regarding the existing coaching practices?

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*Section D: Outcomes of current coaching practices*

Q.8 What are the present outcomes of coaching practices?

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Q.9 What are the different strategies adopted by management in improving the coaching–mentoring practices?

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Q.10 What are your recommendations to improve the current coaching practices?

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Any other comments

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Thank you for your time