ЯК ПОБУДУВАТИ ЕФЕКТИВНУ СИСТЕМУ НАВЧАННЯ НА РОБОТІ. РОЗДУМИ ПРО ТЕОРІЮ І ПРОПОЗИЦІЇ ДЛЯ ПРАКТИКИ

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HOW TO MAKE ON THE JOB LEARNING WORK.
REFLECTIONS ON THEORY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

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Анотація. У цій статті автор порушує проблему браку кваліфікованих фахівців в Україні, що вже стає досить масштабною. Так, поволі тема ефективного розвитку управлінського та лідерського таланту набуває особливої важливості. Останні тенденції в області управління персоналам демонструють помітне зміщення акценту з формального на неформальне, з дотримання дисципліни та жорсткої субординації до більш лояльного підходу і вільного розвитку талантів. Однією з причин такої тенденції стало широко поширене правило 70-20-10 для інвестицій в розвиток. У цій статті розглянуто дві проблеми: надійність і придатність правила 70-20-10 та якість неформальних ініціатив в області розвитку. У цьому матеріалі коротко подано визначення та історія правила 70-20-10, а також більш грутовно та детально вивчено і змальовано теоретичні та практичні підходи ефективного неформального навчання на роботі. Безумовно, така практика може стати потужною рушійною
силою на шляху до вдосконалення та розвитку будь-якої компанії чи установи, адже розкутий працівник, націлений на творчість та успіх як власний так і корпоративний, буде набагато ефективнішим, генеруючи творчі ідеї та перебуваючи в процесі пізнання нового і зможе стати в рази кваліфікованішим та якіснішим фахівцем. Впроваджуючи подібні методи можна не лише підвищити фаховий рівень співробітників, досягти впевненого стабільного розвитку компаній, але й загалом вирішити проблему браку кваліфікованих фахівців в Україні, про яку вже йшлося вище. Ця стаття призначена для відкритого обговорення, для ведення діалогу між вченими і практиками про ефективні способи розвитку таланту. Обговорювані тут матеріали і висновки можуть бути корисними як для фахівців з управління персоналом, так і для менеджерів, не пов'язаних з персоналом чи просто для фахівців з розвитку.

**Ключові слова:** шлях до змін, інновації в області розвитку, практичний досвід розкриття таланту, поради менеджерам, поради фахівцям з управління персоналом, ефективне навчання на роботі, останні тенденції в області HR, розвиток управлінського та лідерського таланту.

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**Annotation.** The shortage of the qualified professionals in Ukraine is becoming a widely discussed issue (Pavlushenko, 2018; personal communications with clients). Subsequently, the topic of effective development of the managerial and leadership talent has grown in importance. Recent HR trends demonstrate a noticeable shift of focus from formal to informal talent development [1]. One of the reasons stated is the widely popular 70-20-10 rule for development investment. This article aims to consider two concerns: the robustness and applicability of the 70-20-10 rule and the quality of the informal development initiatives. I will first briefly discuss the definition and history of the 70-20-10 rule and then discuss potential theoretical and practical approaches of effective informal learning on the job. This article is intended as an opening of a debate between scholars and practitioners on effective ways to develop.
talent. The material and conclusions discussed here may be a useful introduction to this topic for both non-HR managers and development professionals.

**Key words:** a path to change, innovations in the field of development, practical experience of revealing talent, advice to managers, advice to personnel management specialists, effective training at work, recent trends in the field of HR, development of managerial and leadership talent.

**Formulas:** 0, **fig.:** 1, **tabl.:** 0, **bibl.:** 27.

**Introduction.** Before starting my research on leadership, I spent 15 years managing cross-cultural teams on three continents. My background makes me an experienced user of HR services, especially in the area of management and organizational development, both as a customer, requesting developmental strategies for the companies I managed, and as a participant of developmental programs of various modalities. In my experience, the most engaging and effective developmental actions were inspired, steered, and overseen not by HR experts, but by line managers and corporate leaders. As a management scholar, I see my role in connecting academic research with the needs of practicing leaders and managers to support them in building human capital necessary to create sustainable business success. This article serves precisely this purpose.

Since 1990, the management development community had increasingly followed the 70-20-10 rule for training investments. This rule was proposed in the 1980s by M.McCall, M.Lombardo, and R.Eichinger from the Centre for Creative Leadership, a reputed global leadership development firm. This rule summarized the view that the majority of workplace learning (70%) is informal and should take place on the job; 20% of learning happens as a result ‘learning from others’; and the remaining 10% of development is provided by a formal off-the-job training (later ‘70% rule’). Almost three decades after the 70% rule became a rule; we see a growing number of reports on cuts in training budgets, most often attributed to the reduction of investment in formal
training (Clardy, 2018). At the same time, there is a growing concern with the quality of talent development [2].

- 81% organizations admit that they are not effective in developing leaders (Loew, 2015) [3];
- 76% of managers believe that their learning and development functions are ineffective (Mitchel et al., 2017) [4];
- 11% of global executives felt that their leadership development efforts achieved desired results (Feser et al., 2017) [5].

Part of the reason may be that shifting the organizational focus from the formal training does not automatically improve quality of other developmental modalities. Despite the hopes that, motivated by their work-related challenges, people will figure out what and how to learn, informal development is a complex and risky endeavour. Sometimes people perceive their environment as risky and choose to stick to the ‘tried and true’ instead of venturing into learning new approaches (see Edmondson, 2019). Sometimes people learn on the job something that is not right, effective, or relevant for business[6].

So if in their pursuit of operating efficiency, businesses are to lean on the informal development on the job, perhaps, it is worth to critically consider the 70% rule from two perspectives. First, why 70% and how is it justified? Second, what is effective informal learning? Finally, if we were to outline a practical approach to informal learning for the effective development of managerial and executive talent, how should approach this task?

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Despite its widespread popularity and acceptance as a ‘rule,’ the scientific and theoretical basis of the 70-20-10 rule is not very strong (Clardy, 2018). While the authors originally formulated it as a ‘call for action and not a ‘rule’ (McCauley, 2013, para. 11), there are almost no empirical studies published that would support the exact breakdown of recommended activities (Clardy, 2018, Scott & Ferguson, 2014). Clardy (2018) provided a comprehensive review of the origins and empirical support for the 70% rule and concluded that most
studies that could be linked to the proposed ratio were related skills training and ignored the differences in development based on the job level. For unskilled workers shadowing and apprenticeship are main modalities; to prepare for a technical expert position would require structured formal training (Clardy, 2018)[7; 8]. As this article is concerned with management and leadership development, it is worth noting that most executive and leadership competencies are learned from practice, self-reflection and discussion with peer communities (CITE?).

Learning from experience is a complex process. On the job, experiences could be positive or negative and result in success or failure. Often work experiences are loaded with social risks. Researchers in the area of leadership, management, entrepreneurship and social psychology confirmed social learning as cognitively and emotionally demanding process (Catino & Patriotta, 2013)[9]. Finally, experiential learning on the job may result in costly mistakes and waste of resources (Mansoori, 2017), missed deadlines and declining motivation. Adults learn in a specific way and to be effective in their self-development endeavours, they need to know how to learn and where to find support. Below I discuss a theoretical model that may provide a useful perspective on how to approach effective informal learning at work[10].

**Setting objectives.** This article is intended for open discussion, for dialogue between scientists and practitioners about effective ways to develop talent. The materials and conclusions discussed here will be useful both for HR specialists and for non-staff managers or simply for development specialists.

**Research results.** A comprehensive review of all contemporary theories related to informal learning in organizations is not the purpose of this article. Organizational learning, the behavioural theory of the firm, the model of learning organization, sensemaking theory, and the organizational learning theory have contributed to a deeper understanding of various aspects the learning on the job, so comprehensive review of these theories deserves a special dedicated effort. Here I discuss only one theoretical model, which in my opinion reflects a pragmatic multi-disciplinary
approach to experiential learning and which is supported by peer-reviewed empirical studies.

**Experiential Learning Theory.**

David Kolb formulated the experiential learning theory in 1984 based on the philosophy of pragmatism, social psychology, and adult developmental theory (KELT; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2000). Kolb established learning as the major process of creating knowledge through a transformation of experience (Kolb, 2015). As an ultimate adaptation process, learning includes decision-making; problem-solving; and other, more specialized adaptive processes (Kolb, 2015) [11; 12].

One of the major contributions of KELT is the concept of the learning cycle. Kolb’s learning cycle includes a dialectic relationship between the two types of realities and two types of reality transformation. In every experience, an individual faces concrete and abstract forms of reality and engages in reflective observation or active experimentation, as the two modes of experience transformation. The learning cycle becomes a process of resolving dialectic tensions between action and reflection and between experience and abstraction (Kolb, 2015). Kolb summarized this dialectic interaction into four stages of the learning cycle: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (c) active experimentation. Thus, learning is happening constantly, at every stage of life and in every social setting; concrete experience becomes a basis for observation and reflection, and reflection creates abstract concepts that motivate actions. Finally, experimenting with new actions gives rise to a new experience (Kolb, 2015).

Researchers of individual and collective processes of learning outside education tested KELT’s application to managers, teams, and organizations and confirmed that the stages of the learning cycle are present and meaningful in an organizational setting (McCauley & McCall, 2014). Moreover, the ability to create knowledge from experience might be a critical distinguishing characteristic of learning managers (Matsuo, 2015) and learning teams [13; 14].
Application of KELT to organizational context. Applying KELT to the business organization context, Matsuo (2015) proposed a framework for understanding factors that shape and facilitate experiential learning as a tool for organizational development. Matsuo broadened Kolb’s original theory by including factors that would precede and facilitate the experiential learning of managers in the work context.

Facilitators of experiential learning at work. By including the three following factors as facilitators of experiential learning at work, Matsuo (2015) further addressed the critique of KELT. In Matsuo’s opinion the employee behaviours like seeking challenging tasks, critical reflection, and enjoyment of work facilitate conditions for employees to learn from work experiences (Matsuo, 2015). These three behaviours may serve as guidance for the practical steps managers can take to encourage their employees to learn from experience.

Seeking challenging tasks. Experience is the starting point and the main material for learning (Kolb, 2015). However, not every job experience brings relevant learning to a business. To facilitate the necessary competencies and skills, the experience should relate to business, have meaning (Matsuo, 2015) for the employee, and be salient enough to enable transformation into learning. Seeking challenging tasks is close to the concrete experience and active experimentation stages of the Kolb’s learning cycle (Matsuo, 2015). Creating learning experiences is a popular tool for management development. One of its applications is developmental assignments, which often involve higher responsibilities, developing a new course of action, coping with employee issues, or solving inherited problems (Day & Dragoni, 2015) [15]. To create meaningful and relevant learning from on-the-job experience, people need to seek challenging tasks actively (Matsuo, 2015). Managers can use other types of challenging experiences to create learning opportunities for their subordinates, like task forces, innovation labs, cross-functional teams, or job swaps.

Critical reflection. Recognizing the influence of social context and the role of power, influence, and control issues underlying organizations, Matsuo (2015) added critical reflection as a second facilitator of experiential learning at work and highlighted
the difference between reflection about the meaning of experience and critical reflection that challenges presupposed beliefs. Such reflection includes a re-examination of existing assumptions, established practices, and ingrained cultural norms. As employees transform their work-related experiences into new knowledge, there is a need to reassess the impact of established assumptions, attitudes, and actions of other people and the work environment (Cunliffe, 2016; Schippers, Edmondson, & West, 2014)[16;17]. Reflective practices create conditions for managers and employees to slow down and to adopt an attitude of inquiry (Matsuo, 2015), which is especially important when acting in an unfamiliar or unpredictable environment and leads to the discovery of innovative solutions or work methods.

*Enjoyment of work.* The third facilitator of experiential learning in organizations is the enjoyment of work (Matsuo, 2015). Matsuo built upon the studies of positive psychology and the theory of flow, developed by M. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihalyi, respectively. Enjoyment of work is necessary to maintain motivation for challenging tasks and for engagement in deep critical reflection (van den Hout, Davis, & Weggeman, 2018). Such a state often exists when a task both presents a high level of challenge and requires a high level of skills, which is what Csikszentmihalyi called flow (Tse, Fung, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2016) [18;19].

Facing a challenging task and performing to the edge of their abilities stretches employees’ capabilities and creates a possibility to learn something new and build a sense of self-efficacy. Such a combination may produce feelings of enjoyment that boost motivation. Enjoyment of work supports active experimentation and reflection and positively relates to performance and career (Matsuo, 2015). Experience of flow can happen at the collective level when teams perform at the peak of their capabilities and report a higher level of enjoyment compared to an individual’s experience of flow (Aube, Rousseau, & Brunelle, 2018). Knowing factors that facilitate such experiences can help managers to create better conditions for experiential learning[20].

*Antecedents of experiential learning at work.* In addition to the individual attitudes and behaviours that facilitate learning from experience at work, Matsuo (2015)
considered external conditions that promoted those behaviours. These antecedent conditions are learning goals and developmental networks. The antecedents work in combination with the facilitating behaviours to shape a social environment that motivates and supports learning from experience in organizations (Matsuo, 2015). By influencing those antecedent conditions, managers shape the environment for their teams to encourage and facilitate learning from experience.

**Learning goals.** Goals orientation refers to a mindset that guides behaviour in situations that challenge abilities or involve competition (Heslin & Keating, 2016). Two types of goals orientation are performance goals orientation and learning goals orientation (LGO; Heslin & Keating, 2016). Performance goals orientation refers to a mindset that includes a focus on proving abilities, characterized by risk aversion and a limited learning curve (Heslin & Keating, 2016)[21]. Learning goals orientation refers to an orientation to persist through the challenge, seek developmental feedback, and sustain effort to perform in an unfamiliar or uncertain situation (Matsuo, 2015). In application to a business setting, a strong performance goals orientation leads to choosing tasks and activities that provide an opportunity to demonstrate existing abilities with a focus on delivering a performance outcome and avoiding risk (Porter, Franklin, Swider, & Yu, 2016). In contrast, a strong LGO motivates a preference for tasks that lead to acquiring new knowledge, mastering new skills, and learning from experience (Porter et al., 2016) [22]. Researchers have confirmed a positive relationship between LGO and performance outcomes in leaders and teams (Heslin & Keating, 2016, Hezlett, 2016) [23].

Managers can influence team performance by setting objectives, providing resources, and shaping team culture by role modelling attitudes and behaviours. Porter et al. (2016) confirmed the positive influence of managers’ LGO on teams’ task commitment and performance. Learning-oriented leaders help their teams succeed in performance-oriented environments (Heslin & Keating, 2016; Porter et al., 2016). Led by managers with a strong LGO, teams become learning-goals oriented, pursue more ideas, and engage in more experimentation (Porter et al., 2016).
As LGO has a greater impact in situations with a high level of challenge and high personal importance of tasks (Heslin & Keating, 2016), this orientation is fundamental for promoting a search for challenging tasks, which is a key facilitating behaviour of experiential learning (Matsuo, 2015). Also, because LGO predicts behaviour that is more positive after setbacks and overall higher intrinsic motivation, this trait can support persisting at all four stages of the experiential learning cycle. Matsuo (2015) included LGO as one of the two antecedent conditions for experiential learning at work.

Developmental networks. The second antecedent condition for experiential learning is developmental networks, defined as person-centric and context-relevant parts of social systems that serve employee learning and development (Matsuo, 2015). Developmental networks consist of external and internal supporters that take active interest and action toward advancing their protégé’s learning and growth (Harvey, Moeller, & McPhail, 2017; Yip & Kram, 2016) [24; 25]. Matsuo (2015) defined developmental networks as consisting of different types of relationships: individual mentors and mentoring circles, intra-organizational networks, and discussion groups. In addition to those, coaches and career sponsors are valuable members of a manager’s networks of development (Harvey et al., 2017; Opengart & Bierema, 2015) [26]. Participation of direct supervisors in the employees’ developmental networks is critical, especially in the early career stages (Dunn, 2017; Harvey et al., 2017) [27].

The comprehensive framework that facilitates experiential learning at work described in this section is summarized in Figure 1. This framework incorporates findings from various social science disciplines, such as management decision-making, adult learning theory, positive psychology, as well as various organizational learning theories that lead us into the next section.

The above theoretical review is by no means comprehensive and reflects my research on and practice of developing leaders in organizations. Nevertheless, even such a brief overview could be summarized in three conclusions that are worth considering for design of effective approaches to talent development. Moreover, apart
from initial set up investment, that such approaches do not have to be budget-heavy to start bringing results in terms of engagement, motivation and competency building.

1. To be effective and relevant, on-the-job learning needs to be structured around the main stages of the experiential learning cycle, that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and direct experimentation.

2. To reap the results of informal learning, managers need to create an infrastructure that would support antecedents and encourage behaviours that facilitate experiential learning.

![Figure 1. A framework for facilitators of experiential learning [14]](image)

3. To facilitate effective informal learning in their organizations, managers need to be directly involved in setting and supporting the experiential learning infrastructure and role-model learning goals orientation and critical reflection.

**Conclusions.** “So what?” – Implications for managerial practice. However selective and brief, the above theoretical review provides a good starting point to develop recommendations for managerial practice. In the spirit of bridging theory and
practice and inviting a discussion between scholar and practitioners, I propose the following principles of successful developmental interactions for the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operating environment.

1. The 70-20-10% rule should be taken with a grain of salt. Given the difficulty of establishing the solid empirical base for this ratio and the radical change of working environment since its inception, the divide between formal and informal, relational and personal has created unhelpful schemata that more often hinder than support people development at the workplace. Instead, as proposed by Clardy (2018), we should seek to develop a range of developmental initiatives from those based on fully structured curricula to the ad-hoc on the spot developmental interactions between people on the job.

2. Line managers and direct supervisors should play a leading role in creating and supporting workplace learning. To be able to request, inspire and steward relevant and effective developmental initiatives for their teams, managers need to understand the leading theories and empirical science behind adult learning. Perhaps the notorious 5% of classroom training should be dedicated to precisely these topics.

3. Management should consider investment in creating a solid infrastructure to allow learning from the work-related experiences. Creating processes and culture that support reflective observation and abstract conceptualization of the concrete on-the-job experiences could be the first step. Promoting learning goals orientation among managers so they could build organizational culture open for experimentation, is a potential second move. Investing in the creation of developmental networks and design of challenging assignments to generate rich learning experiences that could be reflected upon with support of trusted mentors is another fruitful path. Organizations could choose which path to pursue in what sequence based on their business needs and availability of resources.

4. To be able to design meaningful developmental interventions for their teams, managers themselves need to be open to experimentation, demonstrate tolerance to mistakes, and know how to provide coaching to their teams. To prepare managers for
these critical tasks, organizations ought to allocate budgets and time to develop their managers as learning leaders.

Finally, in the VUCA world, no useful learning could be brought from the outside to be downloaded into people’s operating systems. In this day and age, effective and business-relevant learning can only be co-created inside organizations by its employees with the support of flexible and robust structures based on empirically proven science. To be able to establish such structures and reap their rewards, leaders need to become learners themselves, and perhaps this should become a focus of the learning and development strategies that work.

Reference:


Література:


