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Leadership coaching as a catalyst for educational change

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Abstract

Relevance. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that today's education system is undergoing many changes, provoked not only by technological advances but also by other external factors such as epidemics, war events, etc., which force educational institutions to be flexible and adapt to the conditions that the situation offers them. It is also important to continuously improve the skills of all teaching staff in both schools and higher education institutions to be able to meet the demands that reality presents.

Purpose. The aim of this study was to explore the concept of coaching as a method of training and developing the professional and personal qualities of the school staff.

Methodology. The leading research methods were general theoretical methods of scientific knowledge, as well as various methods of collecting and systematising information, such as: analysis, synthesis, abstraction, idealisation, etc.

Results. In the course of the study, such types of coaching as internal and external were considered and their advantages and disadvantages were identified. A comparative analysis was also made of the concepts of "mentoring" and "coaching": how they differ and what they have in common. It also looked at the concept of "leadership" and why it is important to develop leadership skills in coaching.

Conclusions. Coaching was found to be one of those processes that improve a teacher's skills and effectiveness, and leadership development has a positive impact on the improvement of the whole institution. It is particularly important to

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develop leadership skills in school staff who are in leadership positions. The practical relevance of the study lies in the recommendations provided for the use of the coaching system in relation to the school workforce.

Keywords: school system; professional skills development; mentoring; personal qualities of the teacher; performance improvement.

Introduction

Improving the efficiency of the education system is essential for the development of a country, especially for reducing inequalities, accelerating socio-economic development, and increasing its economic competitiveness. Therefore, high demands are placed on every educational institution, including schools. In addition, because of the decentralisation policy, schools are becoming autonomous to cultivate and implement their own goals and policies. School administrators have to find new ways and methods of implementing educational tasks, as technological advances and, consequently, the development of society is already surpassing traditional teaching methods. The professional development of teachers and effective professional development programmes developed by the school administration play an important role in the development of the school. Purposeful leadership provides the impetus for change in the school and can be identified as a key element in ensuring school improvement.

The concept of coaching is known as a term used in the sport in the early 1970s, but by the late 1980s it had taken on a new meaning of advising and supporting staff in various fields. However, there are different interpretations of coaching. Coaching is the intensive and systematic facilitation of individuals or groups, using a wide range of behavioural techniques and methods, to help them achieve self-consistent goals or conscious self-change and self-development to improve their professional performance, personal well-being and, consequently, the effectiveness of the whole organisation. However, it can be argued that facilitation is not equal or reciprocal in coaching, as the coach is defined as a facilitator of the mentee rather than someone who learns from a coaching session. Coaching is also defined as a means of school transformation. It is believed that coaching can help the principal to clarify goals, create an effective plan and also help to implement them. At the same time, coaching can significantly help in the professional development of teachers and develop their leadership skills.

The topic of executive coaching is quite popular at the moment and has been studied by many academics. For example, Z.S.L. Boon [1] described the experiences of school leaders who worked with coaches to improve their leadership skills and acknowledged that these experiences were positive, inspiring, and useful. The aim of the study by L.V. Rojas and T.P. Klijn [2] was to present education with coaching as a pedagogical strategy that can develop and strengthen leadership skills. The article also presented several methods through which leadership skills can be improved. The work of D.W. Bertrand et al. [3] dealt with leadership dilemmas of academic deans. The outcome was favourable and showed coaching to be a good thing; it was found that intellectual stimulation was closely linked to the display of leadership skills. Also, the participants of the experiment noted that their self-awareness and empathic behaviour became much better, which proves the necessity

of applying coaching not only for the development of professional qualities, but also for personal characteristics.

B.J. Patterson et al. [4] looked at how long-term coaching (over 12 months) can affect leadership development in future professionals and concluded that coaching to identify and improve self-organisation and leadership among students shows good results and is recommended for many professions, including medicine. Another team led by M. Alias et al. [5], studying the Global Leadership Forecast 2018, set out to characterize leadership roles in a coaching culture and identify the benefits that organizations, namely higher education institutions, gain from implementing leadership roles in their coaching culture. Coaching has also been described as an integral part of professional development and a tool for developing student leadership skills. Previous research has shown that coaching is an effective methodology for developing leadership skills in educators, but the system of introducing coaching into schools has not yet been sufficiently explored, which will be done in this study.

Thus, the aim of the study is to explore the concept of coaching in different aspects and make recommendations on how it can be used in the school system.

Materials and Methods

This study is of an overview-theoretical nature; therefore, appropriate methods of scientific knowledge were used to realise the goals set. The method of analysis, which is used to divide the object under study into parts to study them independently, was used to describe the characteristics of coaching (non-directive, goal-oriented and result-oriented) and its main elements. The method of synthesis, which consists, on the contrary, in combining the parts into a whole, was useful in defining the concept of coaching and identifying its characteristics and forms, such as: observation of pupils' progress, diagnosis, instructions and feedback. In order to understand leadership more fully, it was necessary to identify its styles and for this purpose, the method of abstraction was used to identify individual features, relations, and properties of the subject under study. As the topic of this study is leadership and coaching aimed at developing leadership skills, the method of idealisation was used to distract from the real properties of leadership and to describe its features that are not realizable in reality.

It was important for the study to identify the similarities and differences between the concepts of coaching and mentoring, and the analogy method was used for this purpose. It is important to identify the similarities and differences between mentoring and coaching, and this was done using the analogy method. Using the comparative analysis method, the difference between the two concepts was identified, which is that a coach helps to unlock the potential of a student or specialist, which he/she will in turn use independently after training, while a mentor simply organises and supervises the work of a subordinate. The education system is continuously modernised, and employers now have not only professional but also

personal requirements for candidates, it is important for them that the employee is not only a good specialist but also possesses such qualities as: organisation, communication, independence, responsibility for their own and collective decisions, courage, etc. The methods of induction and deduction helped to trace the impact of coaching on the transformation of the educational process system through leadership and to identify different leadership styles and their impact on the learning process, which will help future professionals to be competitive and self-confident in the future.

The method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete has led to the conclusion that coaching has a number of advantages, which are reflected in its accessibility, effectiveness, and efficiency. The modelling method explored through idealised representations the attitudes of managers towards their work and the lack of attention paid to their professional and leadership qualities, which has a direct impact on the work of the whole institution, as the principal must not only be able to give orders, he must build the team so that all its members complement and support each other. It is through teamwork that teachers can achieve their goals and teach students so that they leave university filled with the professional and personal skills required for their future work.

Results

The general understanding of coaching is that it is a process whereby more experienced professionals pass on their skills to less experienced ones. However, this is not necessarily the case; the mentee may have more work experience than their coach. Despite this, coaches are expected to work with staff to enable them to improve their performance and skills. Coaching can also be initiated by both people, e.g., a student (mentee) who needs help and a coach to observe performance, learning progress and offer support [6]. In parallel, coaching is characterised as a way of teaching a specific job based on a conversation between two people. The coach may be an experienced colleague or an external consultant, working or not working in the same field as the mentee, but with coaching experience. Here, the definition of a coach as an “external consultant” may lead to another argument in terms of the capacity of coaching not to give advice or guidance. Thus, while some coaching functions disapprove of giving advice, others recognise that coaching guides the mentee. In this study, the mentee is defined as a school teacher who improves his or her personal and professional qualities under the guidance of a coach [7].

As mentioned above, the conversation is a key element in the coaching process, where the coach can help the mentee by using different approaches. Therefore, one of the characteristics of coaching is to help the coaches by reflecting and reformulating the mentee's reaction and facilitating the mentee's understanding and analysis of their situation through conversation. Also, silence, questions and challenge are tools of the coaches to help the mentee to achieve his/her goals. Silence is one of the most important tools, which is internal, where the mentee refreshes and re-evaluates his/her considerations after the coacher's reflection on his/her words [8]. Reaching this state seems to be an important part of the coaching process. With regard to the problem of the mentee underestimating

himself, the coach uses this tool to disconnect him emotionally from complaints and doubts about his abilities and helps the mentee to look at his problems from the outside.

The significance of the conversation during coaching is that it is a tool consisting of “hard listening” and “powerful speaking”, leading to long-term change through deep reflection. Here it can be seen that all effort is required from the coaches and not from the mentee. In this way, the coach, by listening carefully, shows that the mentee is valued and that he can share his ideas. Strong speech consists of aspects such as: clarifying the purpose of a particular conversation, avoiding advice and closed questions, closed questions can make the student dependent, defensive and unmotivated, while open questions are described as eliciting diverse responses, encouraging deep reflection, and focusing more on “solutions rather than problems”. With regard to avoiding advice, there is an importance for the pupil to make his or her own decisions, thus building trust in the pupil, which makes him or her feel independent and competent [9].

Feedback is necessary to enhance the learning effectiveness of school teachers, who in this case act as students of the coaches, through the development of self-reflection and self-reflection. Although feedback is defined as “supporting the learner”, there is an opinion that giving feedback is difficult, which may cause negative feelings in the learner [10]. Nevertheless, it is believed that the effectiveness of feedback depends on its features. There are three types of feedback, such as: negative, conciliatory, and communicative or reflective feedback. Negative feedback can lead to defensiveness and negative reactions from the trainee, while the conciliatory approach hides the weakness of the trainee, avoiding conflict, and appears “superficial and evasive”. Reflexive feedback starts by indicating what is being addressed, then points out the strengths of the person, followed by suggestions for improvement. The three main features of coaching that are widely recognised are: non-directive, goal-oriented and outcome-oriented, which helps to increase self-efficacy, self-development, and productivity. However, the definitions discussed above may refer to overlapping views of coaching and mentoring and require a contrasting view of the two [11].

The concepts of mentoring and coaching can be used interchangeably as they are both defined as “helping actions”. Some authors believe that mentoring has been “hijacked” by coaching, while others believe that coaching is part of mentoring [12; 13]. In particular, mentoring is defined as an umbrella term that includes many activities such as counselling, training, and guidance as well as coaching. However, mentoring is revealed as an intervention in which a more experienced person supports a novice or protégé by sharing expert knowledge, advice, and guidance. In addition, the mentor is described as a person who is superior, older, more experienced, and more mature than the mentee. This is considered a formal type of mentoring, which is conceptualised as hierarchical. Consequently, it appears that, unlike coaching, mentoring requires a higher level of dependency and reduces any risk-taking behaviour by the student. Whereas coaching encourages problem-solving and independent problem-solving skills at work.

Although both mentoring and coaching have a common goal in terms of helping the student develop, their approach to the problem can be different. The difference between mentoring and coaching is that the mentor's help is more general in terms of opportunities that are still being developed. However, coaching helps to achieve a specific goal in the work. At the same time, coaching differs from coaching in that it gives advice and guidance, whereas coaching is more about questions than direction. In addition, coaching is described as a "mirror reflecting you", meaning that the coach does not give an answer to the mentee directly, but allows the mentee to look for a solution himself, reflecting the mentee's opinion. To summarise, despite their differences, both mentoring and coaching refer to professional development programmes. Relationships play an important role for both of them to enable the learner to develop and change in order to achieve their goal [14]. There are forms of coaching such as: observation of pupils' progress, diagnosis, guidance, and feedback. Coaching is seen as both a short-term interaction and a long-term one that leads to a new way of thinking. In addition, coaching can be seen as an approach that helps to clarify to the mentee specific areas where improvements are lacking and to work on these by being more analytical and independent.

As mentioned above, coaching can be carried out by an external coach, this type of coaching is called external coaching. External coaching is defined as a factor contributing to school change and improvement, as external coaches have more experience in coaching and can offer different ideas and solutions, as coaching is their only job. However, external coaching has some disadvantages along with advantages such as: cost, time, and accessibility. External coaching may take more time to familiarise itself with the workplace and the situation of the student, whereas internal coaching is "an employee of the same organisation as those he or she is coaching" and knows more about the culture and system of work. At the same time, an internal coach is more accessible to the mentee than an external coach who is a member of the organisation. An external coach is also more expensive than an internal coach, hence the cost savings seem to be the main advantage of an internal coach.

External coaching from the teachers' point of view cannot be considered a flawless type of coaching. In addition, internal coaching, especially with peers, is important for increasing teacher commitment and learning effectiveness. Outside coaching is often judged not on ability, but on the status of an outside expert, which is considered more authoritative than internal coaching. More often than not, outsiders know little about the complexity and uniqueness of a particular school's training process, working with different kinds of learners and the complexities of the change process. This is another advantage of an in-house coach, as he or she is already familiar with the specifics of the school in question and can tailor his or her training system to suit it.

External coaching approaches, such as workshops, and conferences, are not welcomed by some learners, who see them as short-term sessions that may not offer effective ideas or may not be appropriate or useful for their practice. All new strategies offered to the student should be ongoing and improve in the process, be individualised to make progress in learning and improve student achievement.

Peer-to-peer coaching facilitates the transfer of new knowledge and strategies into pedagogical practice by sharing how effectively different skills are being used. Teachers are able to apply new methods more appropriately and achieve better results through frequent practice with their colleagues in the same school. Observation by an external coach of a lesson as an outside expert may be more acceptable as an evaluation or check from the teachers' point of view, whereas for their colleagues they may be more lenient because they are from the same profession. The cultural challenges posed by external coaching can also be explained by the fact that the external coach is neither an administrator nor a colleague in the workplace, so teachers do not usually talk about their work the way they do with the coach [8].

Coaching contributes to school transformation through leadership. In particular, executive coaching guides the principal as a leader to develop organisational goals, but the principal cannot implement it alone without the cooperation of the staff. Therefore, coaching together with the leadership of teachers and the principal must work together in order to achieve school improvement. Leadership coaching differs from other types of leadership in that it manifests itself in the context of a personal relationship rather than in teamwork. It emphasises the learner-coach relationship, where the coach helps his/her learner to develop personally and professionally in a way that enhances his/her leadership skills and performance. Consequently, the term "leadership coaching" arises from the idea that coaching includes different leadership styles that can lead to stronger leadership in the organisation and increase effectiveness. Because of this, as leadership and management develop, the importance of professional development as support will increase. Thus, coaching can be characterised as an integral part of a professional development programme [4].

Coaching teaches different leadership styles, such as: transformational, autonomous, subordinate, and distributed. Self-leadership, as the name implies, refers to people's ability to manage their own behaviour and develop personal effectiveness. In a coaching relationship, through trust and commitment, coaching enables the learner to become more reflective and autonomous by challenging and reflecting. While self-leadership focuses on self-development, transformational leadership refers to the leader bringing about positive change in others, and the value of transformational leadership lies in giving importance to the perceived needs of the follower rather than the leader. Moreover, it inspires followers both intellectually and emotionally by engaging them in collaboration and trust. Accordingly, cooperation and trust between coach and mentee is an integral part of their relationship, and coaches are described as change agents who work with people to unlock their hidden potential.

Aspects of subordinate leadership can also be seen in the functions of the coach, which serve as a resource to inspire the mentee. The characteristics of subordinate leadership are: puts others first, being tolerant of mistakes and seeing mistakes as an opportunity for continuous learning and helping people to create imagination, vision, and direction. Thus, the function of subordinate leadership corresponds to this characteristic of coaching: coaching can help people to identify where they are, allowing them to achieve what they want. Another leadership style is

distributed leadership, which coaching also teaches. Distributed leadership is characterised by problem solving and the collaborative nature of coaching, especially with the process of clarifying and discussing the problem and finding solutions together, which can lead to an increased aspect of shared decision-making in distributed leadership [2]. Coaching for school leaders is thus a tool with which the school administration can effectively manage and raise the awareness of its staff about the importance of their work. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the concept of leadership enables all teachers to be leaders and, accordingly, coaching helps to build leadership qualities in these teachers through different coaching approaches. Thus, leadership coaching can be introduced among school teachers and positively influence their workplace through increased productivity.

Discussion

In reviewing the academic literature on the topic, it was observed that research on coaching in education is more related to the training of students than to educators, who also need to gain some leadership skills. Coaching teachers are used to enhance their teaching skills and learn strategies by experimenting with new approaches and methods, problem solving and building collegial relationships. However, it is also important to consider previous research on the topic revealing student coaching, as coaching techniques can be used with students as well as with educators. For example, S.C. Sullivan and M. Polyzoï [15] conducted a study involving 24 students who met with a coach 3 times a week for one semester via video link. During the meetings, the participants performed various tasks, such as: filling in the leadership wheel, setting goals and objectives and building a plan for each student's development, and discussing the details with the coach. The same was done by the other students but without the coach. After summarising the results, the results of the group that worked with the coach were significantly higher than those of the group working independently, which proves the need for leadership coaches, but the issue requires further consideration. Since this study investigated the effectiveness of coaching on students, its results are not comparable to those of this study.

Researchers K.D. Jones and M.C. Ringler [16] tried to find out how teacher candidates' training with the help of computer technology affects their future work. They concluded that e-learning has recently become more productive in preparing future professionals for leadership and also demonstrated that teachers can use both video lessons and face-to-face interaction with a coach to develop personal leadership skills. This study looks at computer technology that contributes to leadership development, which can also be used in coaching for the same purposes, but the current study did not look at electronic coaching tools. At present, candidates applying for teaching jobs have special requirements, not only professional but also personal. N.C. Page et al. [17] have described the features of a leadership development programme in large groups of up to 130 students for a postgraduate programme. They were able to find that the number of learners affected the quality of learning and its outcomes, but nevertheless, by combining experiential learning with deliberate change theory, and by involving

experienced tutors and working closely with the students, the objectives and goals were achieved.

A study by D. Vlachopoulos [18] described the organisational changes taking place among executive coaches who work with and train heads of higher education institutions in leadership skills. They pointed out that most of the heads of educational institutions lack leadership qualities and plan to organise their employees. The coaches recognised that when working properly with heads of higher education institutions, not only their leadership qualities are developed, but also other personal characteristics such as honesty, openness, creativity, organisation, and others, so if the head of any educational institution is not coping well as a leader, they should enlist the help of a coach. The above study continues the findings of this study, as the results showed that coaching is important for the improvement of an educational institution, a process that depends on the head of an educational institution.

B. Llamas Moya et al. [19] conducted a four-year study on the leadership potential of students. The results were obtained by having students complete two questionnaires reflecting their rational-irrational and extrovert-introvert qualities. It turned out that students were more inclined to make rational decisions and the most popular leadership style was participation rather than managing or delegating. Therefore, the authors developed a new method – training students to develop qualities such as leadership, teamwork, creativity, and communication, which are quite important for their future work. The method developed by the authors can also be applied to school teachers. Given the need for teachers to improve their skills in using computers due to the rapid development of innovative technologies, S.D. Göker and M.Ü. Göker [20] argue that teachers' sense of efficiency and responsibility should also increase. As they are the intermediaries between the electronic information environment and the students, not only the success of the educational process but also the quality of services provided by the future professionals depends on them. In their study, the authors traced the impact of a cognitive coaching programme on the development of different pedagogical skills and found that the programme enabled teachers to better manifest and use their leadership skills.

Having studied the literature on coaching, it can be noted that there are various obstacles to the coaching process in the school context. The first and foremost of these is the lack of time, which can be related to workload, and the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the school, which makes it difficult to plan coaching activities with teachers. Coaching functions that need to be handled on a regular basis: classroom observation, conferences with teachers, lesson planning, debriefing, and attending meetings. Accordingly, coaching responsibilities may require additional time, energy, and effort from teachers to integrate them into their repertoire. In addition to the obstacles listed above, there is another one – the relationship between the coach and the mentee. There can be critical moments on the part of coaches that they encounter when working with trainees. One of these moments is the different character or temperament of the coach and the mentee. There is limited evidence that coaching is fruitful when temperaments differ. Thus, a coach who holds a different viewpoint may challenge the learner's assumption, which can lead to a complex

interaction between the two. Similarly, difficulties can arise when the coach is an extrovert and the mentee an introvert. Thus, it is difficult for the coach to deal with the mentee, to persuade him/her to come out of his/her "shell", or when the coach is not confident that the mentee will change, and the training is considered unproductive.

The next likely obstacle is when a trainer is pressured by the head of the organisation to deal with an ineffective employee for a period of time. Controlling emotions can also be a key challenge that a trainer faces in his or her work. When a mentee shares his anger about his colleague's behaviour, it is difficult for the coach to help in a way that can contribute to the mentee's development. Nevertheless, these critical moments were an opportunity for the coach to find deeper layers and new perspectives on things. Thus, it is evident that in order to successfully implement the objectives set, all staff members must work as a team with a common goal. The isolated work of teachers in their classrooms is a thing of the past, so teachers must now be open to innovation, and collaboration and be able to work together with the principle of a flourishing school. There is also the importance of moving from a management-based school to a leadership school where the focus shifts from the needs of teachers to meeting the needs of students. The principal is the key person to bring about change in the school through external coaching as he or she leads the school through different coaching approaches, including teachers, stakeholders, and students.

Conclusions

Thus, it should be concluded that the teaching profession requires continuous learning and development, which can be realised through coaching. Firstly, coaching has been found to be an effective tool for professional development when a teacher works one-on-one with the same or a more experienced teacher, i.e., a coach. Coaching helps the learner to achieve professional goals and allows the skills learned through coaching to be translated into action. The main advantage of coaching is that it is continuous and does not require leaving the workplace to take the course,

so it can be described as an accessible resource for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge. Secondly, the new coaching model, which moves from advising self-management through a powerful coaching conversation, allows teachers to be more independent and increases their self-efficacy in their work. In this way, through open and versatile questions that lead to deep thinking, the coaches help the mentee to reflect on the problem themselves and develop workable solutions. As a result, coaching can influence the trainee to be self-reflective, confident, and responsible for their actions.

At the same time, coaching can be carried out by colleagues who encourage cooperation, the exchange of ideas and feedback. This interaction can lead to improved team relationships, building trust and respect amongst staff at the institution. This will help to create a positive atmosphere in the workplace, leading to greater teacher confidence, improved performance, and job satisfaction. In addition to teachers, school leaders, especially principals, can also benefit from coaching by clarifying goals, making a plan, and implementing objectives. This can also help in adapting learning to the specific school context. Finally, coaching can help school staff to develop, which can lead to better results for the school as a whole. In this way, coaching proves useful not only for the learner but also for the whole organisation. A promising area for further research on the topic would be the study of the use of modern technology in coaching, especially distance learning methods are of particular relevance nowadays. Also, a comparison of different methods and types of coaching will be useful for school authorities to determine which coaching is suitable for use in their institution.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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Тренування лідерства як каталізатор освітніх змін

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Анотація

Актуальність. Актуальність дослідження полягає в тому, що сучасна освітня система зазнає багатьох змін, спровокованих не лише технологічним прогресом, а й іншими зовнішніми чинниками, такими як епідемії, воєнні події тощо, які змушують навчальні заклади бути гнучкими та адаптуватися до умови, які їм пропонує ситуація. Також важливо постійно підвищувати кваліфікацію всього педагогічного персоналу як шкіл, так і вищих навчальних закладів, щоб відповідати вимогам, які висуває реальність.

Мета. Метою даного дослідження було дослідити концепцію коучингу як методу навчання та розвитку професійних та особистісних якостей шкільного персоналу.

Методологія. Провідними методами дослідження були загальнотеоретичні методи наукового пізнання, а також різноманітні методи збору та систематизації інформації, такі як: аналіз, синтез, абстрагування, ідеалізація тощо.

Результати. У ході дослідження розглянуто такі види коучингу як внутрішній та зовнішній та визначено їх переваги та недоліки. Також було проведено порівняльний аналіз понять “наставництво” та “коучинг”: чим вони відрізняються та що в них спільного. Також було розглянуто концепцію “лідерства” та чому важливо розвивати лідерські навички в коучингу.

Висновки. Виявилося, що коучинг є одним із тих процесів, які покращують навички та ефективність вчителя, а розвиток лідерства позитивно впливає на вдосконалення всього закладу. Особливо важливо розвивати лідерські якості у шкільних працівників, які займають керівні посади. Практична значущість дослідження полягає в наданих рекомендаціях щодо використання системи коучингу по відношенню до трудового колективу школи.

Ключові слова: шкільна система; розвиток професійних навичок; наставництво; особистісні якості вчителя; підвищення продуктивності.