SUSTAINABLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COACHING: BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Assoc. Prof. Irina Ivanova, Assoc. Prof. Penka Kozhuharova, Prof. Rumyana Todorova
Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen (Bulgaria)

Abstract. Rapid changes in society and education, and the demand for high professional standards as a prerequisite for successful student learning, necessitate a constant update of teachers' professional knowledge and skills. In this context, coaching is seen as a powerful tool for self-development and self-actualization, which unlocks learners' potential and maximises their achievements. The article focuses on ensuring sustainability in teachers' professional development and improving teachers' competence by introducing them to basic coaching skills which they can use to improve learners' results and their relationships with educators. The discussion is based on data from the implementation of a coaching-based teaching methodology comprising 3 modules which deal with different aspects of coaching. The modules were piloted and evaluated on the basis of their overall effectiveness, and teachers' and learners' development. The participants in the study included 39 educators working in educational institutions in 6 European countries. The analysis is based on data collected by means of questionnaires for the participants, post-piloting focus-groups and individual interviews. The findings suggest improvement in teacher – student relationships, creativity, motivation, goal-setting, and job satisfaction. In terms of benefits for teachers, the highest values were given to the development of professional competence, and improving the effectiveness of teaching. In terms of module content, the participants preferred the linear progression from general to specific, thus choosing to focus on coaching essentials and basic coaching skills before moving on to their application in working with learners. In their feedback the participants singled out the topics of self-reflection, active listening and focusing on solutions as most interesting and useful. As for modules' usefulness for learners' development, the highest values were given to learners' ability to set goals, followed by improving creativity, improving communication, and increasing motivation.

Keywords: coaching; sustainability; professional development; teachers; learners

Introduction

Professional development covers different forms of formal and informal learning undertaken by teachers after they have completed their pre-service education. These forms include courses and seminars, private reading, in-school development, internship or job shadowing, among others. Professional development can also take the form of training programmes offered by universities, teacher training institutions, or developed as a result of international cooperation under different projects in the field of education.

In teacher training, an emphasis has been placed on problem-oriented approaches that link theory to practice (Rasmussen & Rash-Christensen 2015). Through these approaches, teachers actively research their own practice in reference to planning, pacing, differentiated instruction and classroom management, and enter into ongoing dialogues with other practitioners on how to improve their progression towards the acquisition of certain competencies.

Sustainable professional development should reflect the ongoing changes in the professional status of teachers, with an emphasis on their personal responsibility in meeting their personal professional needs in line with the needs of the communities they work in. Teachers' work is closely linked to developing relationships with students and fellow-teachers, establishing a rapport with others involved in the education process, and contributing to its success through their own personal efforts and qualities. This affects the roles teachers perform as experts in their subject; as facilitators of students' learning; as motivators and sources of inspiration for other teachers and students. These roles and the ways they are perceived by society are culturally embedded and differ depending on a variety of factors, such as the type of school management system in the country, and the degree of responsibility and freedom teachers have.

Coaching has recently established itself as a powerful tool for enhancing self-development and self-actualization in a variety of contexts, including management, leadership and teaching (Forde 2011; Cavanagh 2013). As students are increasingly expected to become more autonomous and take responsibility for their own learning, teachers have to acquire new competencies in order to help learners develop autonomy and achieve higher results. Although the aims and objectives of school education and coaching are very similar, there is insufficient research on the application of coaching in different contexts of classroom teaching. There is more research on using coaching in leadership and professional development since its benefits are more obvious and well understood (Forde 2011; Afrikanov 2021, 555). By definition, this is achieved by 'facilitating learning and in the social cognitive theory where 'individuals are viewed as executors proactively engaged in their own development and who actively control their own actions' (Moen & Skaalvik 2009, 33).

1. Previous research in the field
1.1. Coaching as self-enhancement through cooperation and support

As a form of professional development in companies, coaching facilitates the development of openness, partnership and trust between individuals (Skiffington & Zeus 2000). The mechanisms through which this can be achieved are based on the principles of cooperation and support for the other. As Edge points out, cooperation with others helps us understand better our own experiences and opinions. In teacher development, collaboration is 'any sustained and systematic investigation into teaching and learning in which a teacher voluntarily collaborates with others involved in the teaching process, and in which professional development is a prime purpose' (Edge 1992, 242).

Similarly, the International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching as '<…>partnering with clients/learners in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential' (Fitzpatrick 2014, 161). Irrespective of the approach, problem-focused and solution-focused coaching are both beneficial in terms of reflection, understanding and achievement of goals.

Effective coaching is based on identifying the areas where it can help, and devising tasks and activities leading to the desired goal. For example, a coach can facilitate the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate (Nieuwerburgh 2012). Although real-life coaching conversations are not solely solution- or problem-focused, coaches as agents of change should aim for a solution-focused theme in their work if they wish to conduct effective goal-focused sessions (Grant 2012). The coach does not need to be an expert in the discussed topic, as his/ her role is to assist the other person in connecting to their own wisdom and finding a way to use more of their potential. Through using basic coaching skills, teachers can support the learners in any area they want to discuss, such as dealing with stress, or making important decisions.

1.2. Coaching as a tool leading to improved learner outcomes

Coaching in education is defined as 'a one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate' (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh 2015, 190; Vitanova & Miteva 2017). Researchers have found evidence that coaching in education as a form of professional development leads to improvements in the teaching skills of educators Other studies indicate improved specific behaviour managemen skills (Auld et al. 2010; Capizzi et al. 2010), direct instruction skills (Scheeler et al. 2006) or communication skills

(Rathel et al. 2008). As a result of engaging with a coaching process there are improvements in the effectiveness of practice skills, and exchange of teaching methods and approaches (Vacilotto and Cummings 2007).

Empowered with basic coaching skills, teachers find it easier to convince students that the initiative and willingness for a certain activity evolves from the students themselves (Beatty 2000). One way of developing students' life or transversal skills, needed for a future career, is providing constructive feedback consistently during the lessons (see Becker, Darney et al. 2013). In addition, researchers found that the coaching process known as GROW (Goal – Reality – Obstacles/ Options – Way Forward) can lead to enhanced self-reported leadership and communication styles (Grant et al. 2012).

1.3. Coaching as a means for improving self-reflection and feedback

Research shows that different coaching models have the capacity to develop teachers' reflective practice, which can enhance and promote ongoing professional development (Ditchburn 2015; Körkkö et al. 2016). Similarly, in Rock et al.'s (2009) model, teachers reflected about the coaching process and their own development, with 80% saying that feedback is a powerful tool for improving teacher performance. The coaching can promote additional reflective thinking, including evaluation, problem solving, creativity, exploring options and potential consequences (Kurtts & Levin 2000), theorizing and thinking about teaching (Ovens 2004). While increased reflection was not the primary aim of the peer-coaching model in Gemmell and Carlisle (2003) research, they found that it provided pre-service teachers with opportunities for reflective discussions on teaching practice.

Something that is not done on a larger scale at schools and universities is 'personalized feedback' based on 'extensive data collection' mentioned by Reinke et al. (2011, 214) in their Classroom Checkup Model (CCU). Progress monitoring, performance feedback and reflection as well as self-reflection (on part of teachers and students) are not given much attention either. Cheliotes & Reilly (2010) have pointed that the coaching conversations have the power to transform school cultures in that respect.

Feedback which is linked to the goals and standards to be achieved by a learner, can be internal, self-generated, and external, i.e. provided by the teacher and other learners (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Self-generated feedback, leading to a pro-active approach to learning, can be successfully fostered by coaching, with its practices of reflection, critical thinking and self-evaluation. Unfortunately, in many teaching contexts, from state schools to higher education institutions, the authority of the teacher as the only decision maker and evaluator of students' achievement remains unquestioned, which prevents self-regulation, autonomy and sustainability. In order to achieve maximum effect, supportive

feedback must be integrated with reflection in the form of conversations in which the coach guides the reflection without taking over. Thus the message contained in feedback can be integrated into students' work.

Since there is hardly any financial support and resources for coaching expertise and mentoring outside schools, another type of collaboration within school-based professional communities is peer-coaching, the 'confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect upon current practices; expand, refine and build new skills; share ideas; conduct action research; teach one another, or problem solve within the workplace' (Robbins 1995, 206; Ma et al. 2018). The same refers to peer-networking, the collaboration among colleagues from different institutions.

2. Data collection and methods of analysis
2.1. Background of the study

In the literature on coaching in teacher development, some basic components were common to the models of learning which included coaching. Beginning with the intended outcomes, the learning design was constructed as a process of learning which integrates multiple prominent pedagogical strategies to produce the holistic learning experience. The key pedagogical strategies used include observation; coaching in general, Real-Time Coaching, layers of feedback and reflective practice. Key aspects of the design include attention to authentic practice through purposeful learning activities; provision of multiple forms of feedback, including real-time feedback; peer evaluation and critique; reflective practice; and interaction. Specific training in certain skills such as an instructional method or content delivery was a feature of almost all coaching models, which was analyzed.

The present discussion is based on the results from piloting a coaching methodology dealing with different aspects of coaching, developed under the Erasmus+ project COACH4U with participants from the UK, Sweden, Spain, Poland, Cyprus, and Bulgaria. The findings from the study are further used to suggest how this methodology can be used in training educators in order to increase the sustainability in their professional development. The content of the training was developed and piloted in 2015 in each of the participating institutions, taking into account the specifics and socio-cultural characteristics of the participants to be trained in each country. In the aftermath of the project, the training was included in the Erasmus+ Funded Training Courses and in the program for continuing professional development of pedagogical specialists in the participating teacher training institutions. The present paper discusses the results of the evaluation of the training programme by the participating educators conducted after the piloting of the project. The evaluation was done continuously and systematically, as feedback after the training.

The needs analysis conducted in the participating countries showed that teachers largely recognized the need for learning new skills that would enable them to help learners to be successful and manage their own lives. However, teachers admitted that they often feel powerless in such situations as they lack relevant skills to assist their learners. Traditionally, teachers focus solely on transmitting knowledge, and are emotionally detached, ignoring the human element in the teacher – learner relation. Alternatively, they might overempathise with the learners and get emotionally involved in their problems, or try to solve the learners' problems by offering direct advice. It was assumed that through gaining basic coaching skills, educators might be able to empower learners and assist them in finding their own solutions.

2.2. The coaching modules: content and participants

The three alternative coaching modules designed under the project focus on a different aspect of coaching and offer different methodology and tools. Their content is based on thorough needs analysis and study of best practices in coaching, following guidelines for adapting coaching skills to educational context.

The modules were designed by professional coaches, psychologists, trainers, consultants and adult education professionals. The piloting was followed by feedback from the participants in the form of questionnaires aimed to assess the attractiveness, relevance and usefulness of the modules for both educators and learners. The analysis of the received feedback was used for improving, adjusting and fine-tuning the contents and structure of the modules. It also led to identifying contexts, mechanisms and outcomes that work in different circumstances. Commonalities and differences across educational contexts identified elements that might be universal or culture sensitive. The three modules are briefly presented below:

Module 1: Coaching Essentials introduced the underlying philosophy of coaching; the skills and attributes of an effective coach; the nature of effective coaching relationship; the main coaching methods and their most important benefits. It demonstrated how coaching can be used to enhance adult teaching and learning. It looked into teacher – learner relationship and the ways it can be improved by adopting a coaching approach. It involved listening with attention and no agenda, practical experiments, reflection, and focusing on solutions rather than problems.

Module 2: Basic coaching skills focused on increasing the effectiveness of communication process and enhancing educators' capacity to build satisfying and empowering relationships with learners through creating rapport, listening,

and asking questions. It focused on asking 'powerful' questions which help learners go to the heart of the matter, create new perspectives, and point towards desired results. It emphasized the power of giving and receiving feedback, and highlighted the role of intuition, spontaneity and flexibility by exploring metaphors and stories.

Module 3: Coaching skills for improving learners' results presented the effective coaching model GROW (Goal – Reality – Options/Obstacles – Will/Way forward). It focused on goal setting and helping learners to plan and take actions in pursuit of their goals. It also presented tools for enhancing educators and learners' motivation. In aligning the goals with learners' deep values, it suggested using creativity activities, such as The Disney Strategy (a three-stage NLP technique developed by R. Dilts (1993), outlining the Dreamer, Realist and Critic stages of thinking), as well as seeing things from a different perspective by using pictures and metaphors.

The **participants in the surveys** included 39 adult educators working in the following institutions in six European countries: *Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning (WCLL)* – a department of Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC), a local public authority in central London, UK, responsible for lifelong learning. The 7 participants were experts from community learning and work based learning provision (apprenticeship programmes, supporting learners with learning difficulties and learners who are trying to get back into education); The *University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz, Poland* – the participants in the survey were from the National Career Counseling Forum, and the University of the Third Age. The total number of participants was 6, all of them working in the field of pedagogy; *Asociación de Servicios a las Empresas y Actividades Diversas de Madrid* (Adesema) – with an extensive training programme focused on labour integration especially for unemployed. There were 6 participants working in the field of social studies, business administration and education; *Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Bulgaria* – the total number of participants was 9 adult educators working in the field of pedagogy, psychology, and teacher training; *Folk universitetet Kursverksamheten vid Lunds Universitetet, Sweden* – an educational institution that offers a wide range of adult education all over Sweden. There were 5 participants working in the field of pedagogy, coaching and foreign language teaching; Inspired Learning Centre (ILC) – a company located in Cyprus specialized in training and coaching services. There were 5 participants, among which psychologists, coaching professionals, and educators, experienced in providing in-service seminars to adult education professionals, soft skills training, personal development workshops to adults and coaching. The study

also included 6 facilitators of the modules (1 for each country) who were all experienced certified coaches.

2.3. Methods of analysis

Post-piloting data analysis was based on several types of data: information obtained from the questionnaires which contained feedback from the participants; results of on-going monitoring done by the team responsible for the execution of the trainings; and post-piloting focus-group and individual interviews with participants. Several sets of indicators were used to assess the modules: the first set was related to assessing the overall effectiveness of the modules with respect to meeting participants' expectations, content of the modules, methods and techniques, and usefulness of the materials; the second set of indicators targeted the development of teachers' professional competence, improving the effectiveness of their teaching, their relationships with students, improving teachers' creativity, and their ability to set goals; the third set of indicators reflected the benefits for students as a result of their educators' participation in the training modules in terms of improving students' communication skills, their ability to set goals, increasing their motivation, creativity, and improving their learning skills.

Participants' responses were obtained by means of a standard five-point Likert scale and an option for an open response. The statistical analysis of the results was conducted by means of descriptive statistics. The data were processed by SPSS 21.

3. Discussion of results
3.1. Module 1: Coaching Essentials

Module 1 is designed for adult education professionals who wish to learn more about how the coaching approach can benefit adult education teachers and adult learners and how they can use coaching techniques to improve their teaching style.

The general assessment of the module is presented in table 1, where the figures for all countries are shown according to the selected indicators. The values of the coefficient of variation indicate that the sample of study was approximately homogeneous. The sample size was n = 39 and, therefore, the standard error of Skewness at $\alpha = 0,05$ is As = 0,795, with the standard error of kurtosis at $\alpha = 0,05$ is Ex = 1.556.

The data show that the distribution is symmetric and negatively skewed. As can be seen in table 1, the overall assessment is the highest for the module content (M = 4.52). The values for meeting expectations, methods and techniques are the same at M = 4.36, while the value for the usefulness of the module materials are slightly lower at M = 4.26 (Table 1).

Table 1. General assessment of Module 1: Coaching Essentials

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
General assessment of the seminar	4.42	0.59	4.00	4.00	13.34	-0.228	-1.00
Meeting the expectations	4.36	0.66	4.00	4.00	15.13	-0.246	-0.642
Content of the seminar	4.52	0.59	5.00	5.00	13.88	-0.646	-0.665
Methods and techniques	4.36	0.66	4.00	5.00	15.13	-0.565	-0.631
Usefulness of materials	4.26	0.64	4.00	4.00	15.02	-0.363	-0.744

N = 39

With respect to partners' general awareness of coaching and coaching skills the results show that only the British and the Spanish participants have a lot of knowledge about coaching. About the same percent of participants from Cyprus, Poland and Bulgaria have enough knowledge of coaching skills, and a significant percentage of people (more than half) have very little knowledge. In Sweden the majority of the participants have enough knowledge of coaching, and only 20 % have very little knowledge.

Most of the participants' reactions were positively influenced by the fact that the module was adapted to the context they work in. Results showed that the module met participants' expectations, as they had learned a lot about coaching and the alternative methods of working with adults. Some participants needed more examples based on analysis of individual cases. Other participants demanded more practice and less theory on the way coaching tools work. Overall, they expressed their satisfaction with the way the trainers built an excellent working atmosphere and provoked interesting group discussions. In terms of benefits for teachers, the highest values were given to the development of professional competence (M = 4.47), and improving the effectiveness of teaching (Table 2). Second with equal values was improving the relationship with students (M = 4.38). The highest standard deviation was observed in building relationships with students and meeting teachers' personal needs, mostly since these categories reflect diverse personal opinions and are therefore difficult to measure. The distribution is highlynegatively skewed (Table 2).

In their feedback the participants singled out the topics of self-reflection and focusing on solutions as most interesting and useful. They underlined the importance of focusing on building relationships between teachers and learners. Participants' responses showed that the module had improved their assertiveness and their capacity for active listening.

Table 2. Benefits for teachers in Module 1: Coaching Essentials

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Development of professional competence	4.47	0.75	4.50	5.00	16.77	-0.98	1.549
Improving the effectiveness of teaching	4.41	0.71	4.00	5.00	16.09	-0.742	0.294
Improving the relationship with students	4.38	0.79	4.50	5.00	16.89	-1.13	1.34
Improving creativity	4.20	0.72	4.00	4.00	17.14	-0.68	1.232
Developing the ability to set goals	4.23	0.77	4.00	5.00	18.20	-0.69	0.295
Satisfaction of personal needs	4.37	0.81	4.50	5.00	16.24	-1.187	1.89

N = 39

Although the techniques were not new to some of them, they were not fully aware of their importance in the relationships with their learners and in their private life. Participation in the module increased their empathy and openness in communication. These findings are in accordance with Barr & van Nieuwerburgh study in which participants emphasized the significance of collaborating with other people to make meaning by sharing narratives, practising with a partner and learning as a group (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh 2015). Some participants mentioned the importance of listening skills, giving full attention to another person and awareness of one's own state of mind. They also listed clarifying teaching goals, increasing one's own creativity, building relationships, asking the right questions, and using stories to make lessons more interesting.

An important benefit of coaching is increased reflection leading to a better understanding of one's feelings and emotions. In their feedback participants linked the awareness of their emotional state to the quality of their relationship with learners. Other benefits involved being better listeners, allowing things to happen and not seeing them as obstacles, using powerful questions, etc. Other positive changes were mentioned such as: having more confidence in challenging learners in a supportive way; focusing on strengths; giving more attention to people and trying to ask the right questions; allowing people to make their own choices and believing more in their capabilities. Some of these changes resulting from participating in coaching sessions correspond to findings of previous research. For example, Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading also mention increased confidence, problem solving, self-awareness, and reflection (Bachkirova, Arthur, & Reading 2015).

The table below shows how the participants evaluated the module with respect to learners' development. Top priority was given to setting goals, followed by improving learning skills and increasing motivation. Improving communication and increasing motivation came second and third, and improving learners' creativity was last with a mean value of M =4.47 (*Table 3*).

Standard deviation indicator was the highest for improving communication. These results could be linked to the findings of previous studies on the effect of coaching on learners, especially with regards to increased proactive behavior management and anticipation of student problems by teachers (see Bradshaw et al 2018).

Table 3. Development of learners in Module 1: Coaching Essentials

Variab les	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Improving communication	4,57	0,65	4.50	5.00	14.22	-0.69	1.35
Setting goals	4,71	0,54	4.00	5.00	11.46	-0.52	0.126
Increasing motivation	4,66	0,47	4.50	5.00	10.08	-0.82	1.02
Improving creativity	4,47	0,49	4.00	4.00	10.96	-0.32	1.032
Improving learning skills	4,68	0,37	4.00	5.00	10.04	-0.46	0.217

N = 39

In general, participants responded positively to the module. Most of them thought that the methods used during the seminar had a very positive effect on their professional experience. Some participants expected the coaches to use more examples from their own practice and demonstrate how to act indifferentreal life situations. They wanted more exercises in using coaching tools in different coaching sessions.Training in coaching techniques was identified as problematic in a number of other studies, with pre-service teachers feeling underprepared for some aspects of coaching (Gemmell & Carlisle 2003; Ovens 2004).

3.2. Module 2: Basic coaching skills
The participants' feedback on Module2 presented in the table below shows the highest values for the module overall assessment, followed by content, methods and techniques used in it. The values for meeting participants' expectations are the lowest: M = 4.23, while the value for the usefulness of the module materials is slightly higher at M = 4.36 (Table 4). In terms of participants' knowledge of specific coaching techniques, the summary from all countries shows that the majority of the participants (75%) know very little about specific coaching techniques. 14% know enough, and only 11% know a lot. Understandably, these participants come from the UK and Spain where coaching has a longer tradition of use in educational contexts.

Table 4. General assessment of Module 2: Basic coaching skills

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
General assessment of the seminar	4.41	0.54	4.50	5.00	12.24	-0,698	-0.429
Meeting the expectations	4.23	0.62	4.00	4.00	14.65	-0,322	-0.697
Content of the seminar	4.41	0.53	4.50	5.00	12.01	-0,378	0.625
Methods and techniques	4.43	0.51	4.50	5.00	11.53	0,397	1.036
Usefulness of materials	4.36	0.58	4.00	4.00	13.34	-0,211	-0.621

N = 39

Participants highlighted the applicability of coaching tools and techniques to the context of adult education.

With respect to benefits for teachers, the data below (Table 5) show the highest values for meeting participants' expectations. Several topics were particularly interesting for the participants: feedback techniques, managing emotions in the classroom; empathic listening and communication.

Developing teachers' professional competence is a long process which entails improvement in a wide scope of areas such as instruction time and quality, student engagement and increased students learning gains (Burns, Costa & Cunha 2018). The data show that the distribution is approximately symmetric and negatively skewed.

Table 5. Benefits for teachers in Module 2: Basic coaching skills

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Development of professional competence	4.48	0.51	4.00	5.00	11.38	-0.736	-0.31
Improving the effectiveness of teaching	4.16	0.63	4.00	4.00	15.14	-1.102	1.48
Improving the relationship with students	4.12	0.56	4.00	4.00	13.59	-0.073	-0.45
Improving creativity	3.76	0.54	4.00	4.00	14.36	-0.141	-0.28
Developing the ability to set goals	4.18	0.51	4.00	4.00	12.2	-0.025	0.01
Satisfaction of personal needs	4.36	0.76	4.50	5.00	17.43	-1.147	1.602

N = 39

Personality factors contribute the largest variance to predicting successful coaching (McKenna & Davis, 2009). One important individual factor related to appraising work, possessing a sense of self-efficacy, and having an internal sense of locus of control is cognitive hardiness. The cognitive hardiness acts as a relatively stable personal resource influencing the outcomes of coaching, and as something that can be improved by coaching (Niemirowski 2021).

In the area of learners' development (Table 6), the highest values were given to improving learners' communication skills and increasing their motivation. The values were slightly lower for the other two indicators. The fact that creativity was given the lowest values in both teachers' and learners' perceived benefits means that participants cannot see improving creativity as relevant to improving the process of adult education.

Table 6. Development of learners in Module 2: Basic coaching skills

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Improving communication	4,12	0,59	4.50	5.00	14.32	-0.62	1.102
Setting goals	4,04	0,5	4.00	5.00	12.37	-0.543	0.391
Increasing motivation	4,06	0,55	4.50	5.00	13.54	-1.124	1.26
Improving creativity	3,82	0,51	4.00	4.00	13.35	-0.57	1.031
Improving learning skills	4,23	0,58	4.50	5.00	13.71	-0.49	0.253

N = 39

There were some recommendations about the layout of the module materials. Some participants expected more exercises and more visuals. Others would have liked to have longer sessions as they felt that the time was not enough to assimilate the ideas.

3.3. Module 3: Coaching skills for improving learners' results

The mean value for the general assessment of the module was the highest overall (M = 4.63). The highest values were assigned for the content of the module, followed by methods and techniques, and meeting participants' expectations (Table 7). According to the participants, the most useful aspect in the module was self-reflection, followed by active listening and focusing on solutions. Reflection and language exercises were also considered most beneficial.

Table 7. General assessment of Module 3: Coaching skills
for improving learners' results

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
General assessment of the seminar	4.63	0.61	5.00	5.00	13.17	-1.36	1.13
Meeting the expectations	4.61	0.58	4.50	5.00	12.58	-0.72	-0.788
Content of the seminar	4.57	0.56	5.00	5.00	12.25	-0.88	-0.236
Methods and techniques	4.43	0.59	5.00	5.00	13.31	-0.75	-0.469
Usefulness of materials	4.48	0.61	4.00	5.00	13.61	-0.865	0.255

N =39

In terms of teachers' benefits (Table 8), the highest values were given to

developing professional competence and improving creativity. Second came meeting of personal needs, followed by developing ability to set goals, and improving the effectiveness of teaching. Standard deviation was highest for the development the ability to set goals.

According to the participants, the most interesting and useful topics related to the development of their professional competence involved: internal motivation; principles of building relationships between teacher and learners in coaching; principles of goal setting, as well as learning about alternative methods of working with adults.

Table 8. Development of teachers' professional competence in Module 3: Coaching skills for improving learners' results

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Development of professional competence	4.28	0.59	4.50	5.00	13.78	-1.122	0.619
Improving the effectiveness of teaching	4.14	0.57	4.00	5.00	13.76	-0.032	-0.06
Improving the relationship with students	4.37	0.79	4.00	4.00	15.78	-0.681	-0.74
Improving creativity	4.28	0.53	4.00	5.00	12.38	0.345	-0.44
Developing the ability to set goals	4.31	0.56	4.00	5.00	12.99	-0.109	-0.50
Satisfaction of personal needs	4.22	0.78	4.00	5.00	18.48	-0.882	1.981

N = 39

As for learners' development (Table 9), the highest mean values were given to learners' ability to set goals, followed by improving creativity, improving communication, and increasing motivation, respectively. Standard deviation was highest for increasing learners' motivation, and the lowest, for improving communication. According to the participants, the most effective aspects of the module were motivating learners and goal setting. They emphasized the importance of breaking down goals into smaller SMART targets with the aim of making them achievable, and the need for compiling a bank of good questions for the learners.

Table 9. Development of learners in Module 3: Coaching skills for improving learners' results

Variables	M	SD	Me	Mo	V %	As	Ex
Improving communication	4,06	0,76	4.50	5.00	18.71	-0.78	0.547
Setting goals	4,27	0,58	4.00	5.00	13.58	-0.446	0.427
Increasing motivation	4,05	0,64	4.50	5.00	15.80	-1.03	0.74
Improving creativity	4,22	0,78	4.00	4.00	18.48	-0.81	1.02
Improving learning skills	4,24	0,52	4.00	5.00	12.26	-0.57	0.361

N = 39

In terms of improving the module content, participants' expected to receive more information about the psychology of coaching in general; and to have more practical tasks which resemble real coaching sessions. It would be useful to use the development opportunities that are observed in the theory of coaching. For example, H. Weich proposes a new model of coaching by redesigning the GROW process and integrating it with the narrative coaching process. He argues that the new model, called ROGWin, can be seen as 4th generation (4GC) coaching in terms of the evolution of coaching psychology as a professional discipline (Law 2021). According to some participants handouts were well prepared but not user friendly for ESL groups, and much of the material presented was not ideally designed in terms of ethnicity, diversity or inclusion.

4. Outcomes and implications
The overall assessment of all three modules was very positive, with Module 3. Coaching skills for improving learners' results, scoring the highest mean value of M = 4.63, followed by Module 1. Coaching Essentials (M = 4.42) and Module 2. Basic coaching skills – M = 4.41, respectively. The modules scored high both in terms of the benefits for educators' professional development and learners' development (Tables1, 4 and 7).

They were further assessed on the basis of meeting participants' expectations, module content, methods and techniques. In terms of meeting participants' expectations, the module content, the coaching` methods, and usefulness of teaching materials the highest scores were given to Module 3. Coaching skills for improving learners' results (Tables1, 4 and 7).

There were two major areas of assessment – benefits for teachers and learner development.

In terms of developing educators' professional competence, Module 1. Coaching Essentials, was found by far the most useful compared to the other two, with a score of M = 4.76, whereas modules 2 and 3 scored M = 4.17 and M = 4.16, respectively (Tables 2, 5 and 8).

Educators' improved professional competence was presented as involving the following components: effectiveness; relationships with learners; creativity; goal-setting; meeting teachers' professional needs. The results were similar for the second set of criteria related to learner development - module 1 scoring the highest, followed by 2 and 3. Learner development was seen in terms of improved communication skills; goal-setting, increased motivation and creativity (Tables 3, 6 and 9).

According to the participants, the overall effectiveness of the modules can be increased if the materials are improved in terms of ethnicity, diversity and inclusion, and adapted for use with smaller or larger groups depending on the profile of the respective institution and the type of training and tuition they

offer. Since much of the material in the coaching activities is text-based and contains special terminology, they recommended that the language of modules be adapted to the needs of people for whom English is a foreign language. Since coaching aims to encourage self-reflective learners who can assess themselves and come up with their own solutions, it should be part of all teacher training courses and a key element in initial teacher education. In addition, coaching skills need to be built into teachers' continuous professional development cycle. Educators need to set up peer groups to support their self-reflection.

Module facilitators, who were all experienced certified coaches, also added some recommendations for embedding coaching into teaching. These involved: improving learners' self-esteem and self-awareness; creating conditions for reflective practice; using icebreakers to set the mood for learning; enhancing motivation, creativity and thinking 'outside the box'. They emphasised the importance of using relaxation techniques for reducing the stress associated with learning and improving learners' resilience. Another important consideration was giving rewards for recognizing achievement. The coaching techniques which were given priority included asking powerful questions for challenging and removing the barriers to learning, and active listening, mindfulness and attentiveness in the learning contexts. Module facilitators listed some context-related factors which affect the implementation of coaching sessions. These included: the difficulty of delivering a pre-planned course, and the need for customization and adaptation of coaching techniques to different educational contexts; the need for increased visualization to meet the needs of visual learners; the importance of setting the scene for learning and embedding coaching techniques into class teaching; getting learners to ask their own questions and find their own solutions.

Conclusion

Data analysis showed that in general participants' attitudes to coaching and its implementation in the context of education were positive, and that they understood the usefulness and the potential of coaching for transforming the nature of teaching and learning and increasing their effectiveness. In terms of modules' overall assessment, participants gave preference to module 3, which focused on the use of coaching skills for improving learners' outcomes. This is not surprising, as all innovations in education are principally measured through their effect on improving learners' results. In terms of module content, the participants preferred the linear progression from general to specific, thus choosing to focus on coaching essentials and basic coaching skills before moving on to their application in working with learners. The methods and techniques used in module 3 – coaching skills for improving learners' results, received better scores than those in the other two modules, and the same refers

to the materials used in working with the learners. Further research is needed into different ways of implementing coaching in a variety of educational contexts. This research should be based on careful needs analysis, including a consideration of culture-based specifics and attitudes. One possibility for a sustainable, gradual and staged introduction of coaching in the teaching process is to integrate it into teacher training courses: as a key element in initial teacher education, and as a part of teachers' continuous professional development cycle.

REFERENCES

AFRIKANOV, L., 2021. Developing coaching skills of school leaders *Pedagogika-Pedagogy.* **93**(4), 551 – 557. DOI:10.53656/ped2021-4.08. [In Bulgarian].

BACHKIROVA, T.; ARTHUR, L. & READING E., 2015. Evaluating a coaching and mentoring programme: Challenges and solutions. *International Coaching Psychology Review.* **10**(2), 175 – 189.

BARR, M.; VAN NIEUWERBURGH, C., 2015. Teachers' experiences of an introductory coaching training workshop in Scotland: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review.* **10**(2), 190 – 204.

BEATTY, B., 2000. Teachers Leading Their Own Professional Growth: self-directed reflection and collaboration and changes in perception of self and work in secondary school teachers. *Journal of In-Service Education.* **26**, 73 – 97.

BECKER, K.; DARNEY, D.; DOMITROVICH, C.; KEPERLING, J.; IALONGO, N., 2013. Supporting Universal Prevention Programs: A Two-Phased Coaching Model. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review.* **16**, 213 – 228. DOI: 10.1007/s10567-013-0134-2.

BRADSHAW, C. P.; PAS, E.T.; BOTTIANI, J.H.; DEBNAM, K.J.; REINKE, W.M.; HERMAN, K.C.; ROSENBERG, M., 2017. Promoting Cultural Responsivity and Student Engagement Through Double Check Coaching of Classroom Teachers: An Efficacy Study. *School Psychology Review.* **47**(2), 118 – 134.

CAPIZZI, A. M.; WEHBY, J. H.; SANDMEL, K. N., 2010. Enhancing mentoring of teacher candidates through consultative feedback and self-evaluation of instructional delivery. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children.* **33**(3), 191 – 212.

CAVANAGH, M., 2013. The coaching engagement in the 21st century: New paradigms for complex times. In: S. DAVID, D. CLUTTERBUCK &

D. MEGGINSON (eds.). *Beyond goals: Effective strategies for coaching and mentoring*. London: Gower Publishing, 151 – 184. Available from: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315569208 [Viewed 15 June 2022]

CHELIOTES, L. G. & REILLY, M. F., 2010. *Coaching conversations: Transforming your school one conversation at a time.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

CLANCY, A. L. & BLINKERT, J., 2010. Appreciative coaching: Pathway to flourishing. In: J. PASSMORE (ed.). *Excellence in coaching: The industry guide.* London: Cogan Page, 147 – 156.

DILTS, R., 1993. *Skills for the future.* Cupertino: Metapublications.

DITCHBURN, G. M., 2015. Remembering reflection in pre-service teachers' professional experience. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education.* **40**(2), 94 – 111.

EDGE, J., 1992. *Cooperative development.* London: Longman.

FITZPATRICK, L., 2014. The cycle of creativity: Gestalt coaching and the creative process. *Gestalt Review*. **18**(2), 161 – 171.

FORDE, C., 2011. Approaches to professional learning: Coaching, mentoring and building collaboration. In: C. FORDE & J. O'BRIAN (eds.). *Coaching and mentoring: Developing teachers and leaders*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

GEMMELL, J., & CARLISLE, L., 2003. *Building a professional learning community in preservice teacher education: Peer coaching and video analysis.* Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts.

GRANT, A. M., 2012. Australian coaches' views on coaching supervision: A study with implications for Australian coach education, training and practice. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*. **10**(2), 17-33. [Viewed 15 June 2022]. Available from: https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/dda84f3c-a85a-4cdd-91c4-8565e16d302e/1/.

KNIGHT, J., & NIEUWERBURGH, C. van, 2012. Instructional coaching: A focus on practice. *Coaching: International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice.* **5**(2), 1 – 13.

KÖRKKÖ, M.; KYRÖ-ÄMMÄLÄ, O. & TURUNEN, T., 2016. Professional development through reflection in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education.* **55**, 198 – 206.

KRAFT, M.; BLAZAR, D.; HOGAN, D., 2018. The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence. *Review of Educational Research*. **88**(4), 547 – 588.

KURTTS, S., & LEVIN, B., 2000. Using peer coaching with preservice teachers to develop reflective practice and collegial support. *Teaching Education.* **11**(3), 297 – 310.

LAWH., 2021. Narrative coaching - Part 4: Redesigning the GROW model as the 4th generation coaching for people and the planet. *Coaching Psychologist.* **17(**1), 59 – 69.

MA, N.; XIN, S.; DU, J., 2018. A Peer Coaching-based Professional Development Approach to Improving the Learning Participation and Learning Design Skills of In-Service Teachers. *Educational Technology & Society.* **21**(2), 291 – 304.

MOEN, F. & ALLGOOD, E., 2009. Coaching and the effect of self-efficacy. *The Organization Development Journal*. **4**, 69 – 82.

NICOL, D. & MACFARLANE-DICK, D., 2006. Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education.* **31**(2), 199 – 218.

NIEMIROWSKI, A.; NOWACK, K., 2021 Cognitive hardiness in coaching: Personality trait, skill, or outcome? *Coaching Psychologist.* **17**(1), 14 – 31.

NIEUWERBURGH, C. J. (ed.), 2012. *Coaching in education: Getting better results for students, educators and parents.* London: Karnac.

OVENS, A., 2004. Using peer coaching and action research to structure the practicum: An analysis of student teacher perceptions. *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*. **37**(1), 45 – 60.

RASMUSSEN, J.; RASH-CHRISTENSEN, A., 2015. How to improve the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice.* **14**(3), 213 – 230.

RATHEL, J. M.; DRASGOW, E.; CHRISTLE, C. C., 2008. Effects of supervisor performance feedback on increasing preservice teachers' positive communication behaviors with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.* **16**(2), 67 – 77.

REINKE, W.; HERMAN, K.; SPRICK, R., 2011. *Motivational interviewing for effective classroom management: The classroom check-up.* New York: Guilford Press.

RHODES, C.; STOKES, M.; HAMPTON, G., 2004. *A Practical Guide to Mentoring, Coaching and Peer Networking.* London and New York: Routledge Falmer.

ROBBINS, P., 1995. Peer Coaching: quality through collaborative work. In: J. BLOCK, S. F. EVERSON & T. R. GUSKEY (eds). *School Improvement Programs: A Handbook for Educational Leaders*. New York: Scholastic Press.

ROCK, M. L.; GREGG, M.; THEAD, B. K.; ACKER, S. E.; GABLE, R. A.; ZIGMOND, N. P., 2009. Can you hear me now? Evaluation of an online wireless technology to provide real-time feedback to special education

teachers-in-training. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*. **32**(1), 64 – 82.

SCHEELER, M. C.; MCAFEE, J. K.; RUHL, K. L.; LEE, D. L., 2006. Effects of corrective feedback delivered via wireless technology on preservice teacher performance and student behavior. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*. **29**(1), 12 – 25.

SKIFFINGTON, S. & ZEUS, P., 2000. *The complete guide to coaching at work.* Sydney, New York: McGraw Hill.

VACILOTTO, S.; CUMMINGS, R., 2007. Peer coaching in TEFL/TESL programmes. *ELT Journal.* **61**(2), 153 – 160.

VITANOVA, N. & MITEVA N., 2017. Coaching. Educational Coaching. *Strategies for Policy in Science and Education-Strategii na Obrazovatelnata i Nauchnata Politika*. **25**(4**)**, 430 – 442. ISSN 1310-0270.

✉ **Assoc. Prof. Irina Ivanova, PhD**
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0216-7061
E-mail: irina.ivanova@shu.bg

✉ **Assoc. Prof. Penka Kozhuharova, PhD**
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8518-6216
E-mail: p.kozhuharova@shu.bg

✉ **Prof. Rumyana Todorova, PhD**
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7476-5554
Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen
9700 Shumen (Bulgaria)
E-mail: r.todorova@shu.bg