

CHAPTER 1

Coaching in Schools

An Introduction to the Global Framework for Coaching in Education

WELCOME!

Welcome to *The Leader's Guide to Coaching in Schools*! We are delighted that you are interested in the potential and possibilities of coaching within your educational context. This is a research-informed and evidence-based book that focuses on effective practice. Like you, we are interested in the *difference* that coaching can make to students, teachers and educational leaders. Our aim is to provide educational leaders with information and insights that can support them as they introduce or embed coaching practices and cultures within their educational institutions. The concepts and practical interventions presented in this book are based on latest research, theory and best practice. As coauthors, we both have in-depth practical experience of delivering coaching programs and training within educational institutions over many years. We both started our careers as teachers, and we are as passionate about the power of education today as we have ever been. We sincerely hope that this book will support you to maximize the potential of students and educators within your institution.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

There are 10 chapters:

1. **Coaching in Schools: An Introduction to the Global Framework for Coaching in Education:** This chapter presents an overview of the Global Framework for Coaching in Education to provide a broad conceptual framework and context for coaching in schools.
2. **What Is Leadership Coaching?** We provide some key definitions in this chapter to support our exploration of leadership coaching. The key differences between coaching and mentoring are presented. We also discuss the differences between coaching and using a coaching approach.

3. **The GROWTH Coaching System:** This chapter outlines a system that provides the basis for many coaching programs in educational institutions. The system includes a coaching framework, a set of conversational skills, and a particular way of being.
4. **Applying the Eight-Step Coaching Framework:** This chapter provides detailed information about the conversational process called the GROWTH framework.
5. **Positive, Strength-Based Approaches Underpinning the GCI Coaching System:** The solution-focused approach underpins the GROWTH Coaching System and is ideally suited for use in educational contexts. Positive, strength-based approaches are explored in this chapter.
6. **Using a Coaching Approach to Enhance the Performance and Well-Being of Teachers:** This chapter considers how a coaching approach can support performance review processes for educators.
7. **Creating the Right Context for Feedback:** The important role of giving and receiving feedback is explored in this chapter. It is considered in the context of leaders adopting a coaching approach.
8. **Using Coaching Approaches to Enhance the Performance and Well-Being of Teams:** Issues, techniques, and practices that leaders can use with their teams are presented in this chapter.
9. **Leading a Coaching Culture:** The concept of a *coaching culture* is discussed in this chapter. Strategic and practical ideas for encouraging a coaching culture are presented.
10. **Conclusion:** The final chapter reviews the main concepts covered in the book and looks to the future of coaching in schools.

COACHING IN EDUCATION

The good news is that the use of coaching in educational settings continues to flourish. Initially attracting interest in the late 20th century, coaching is now recognized globally as a powerful intervention that can support educators and learners (Campbell, 2016; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2017). It has received support from many national, strategic educational organizations such as Learning Forward (<https://learningforward.org/consulting/coaches-academy>) in the United States, the Department for Education and Skills (2003), the National College for School Leadership (Creasy & Paterson, 2005), the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (2016) in the UK, and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2016) in Australia. Furthermore, there is a growing body of research (van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2016) that is providing an increasingly strong evidence base for its use

in schools. And perhaps even more important, teachers and educational leaders in schools and colleges around the world are experiencing for themselves the transformative effect that coaching can have on themselves and others.

THE NATURAL HOME OF COACHING

While many assume that coaching has been imported into education from other fields such as sports or psychology, it is reasonable to argue that education is the natural home of coaching. In fact, the first recorded use of the term *coaching* to refer to a one-to-one supportive relationship occurred in an educational setting. Etymologically, the word *coach* was used to denote a type of horse-drawn carriage called a *kocsi*. It was called that in the Hungarian language because these carriages were built in a village called Kocs. In the 1830s, educators at the University of Oxford extended the concept of a vehicle that takes a person from Point A to Point B by using the term *coach* as slang to refer to a tutor who supports students to pass exams. In other words, the tutor (or coach) would take a person from “not knowing enough” (Point A) to “knowing enough to pass the exam” (Point B). Notably, the first recorded use of the word *coach* in an athletic sense did not occur until 1861, some three decades after its use in an educational setting. In any case, it seems logical to argue that places of learning (such as schools, colleges, and universities) are ideal places for coaching to flourish. Coaching and education share the same purpose: helping people learn, grow, and develop. Furthermore, some people would argue that coaching is simply a form of personalized learning. We believe that every coaching session is essentially a conversation about learning.

OUR DEFINITION OF COACHING IN EDUCATION

One of the challenges facing the profession of coaching is a lack of definitional clarity. There are many definitions of coaching, and people can understand the term differently. However, there is general agreement that coaching is “a managed conversation that takes place between two people,” that it “aims to support sustainable change to behaviors or ways of thinking,” and that it “focuses on learning and development” (van Nieuwerburgh, 2017, p. 5).

The phrase “coaching in education” is used to cover a range of interventions and approaches that are designed to improve the performance and well-being of learners and educators. For the purposes of this book, we are using the following definition:

A one-to-one conversation that focuses 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. (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012, p. 17)

Educational leaders will immediately notice some important elements within this definition. First, educational leaders are ultimately responsible for enhancing “learning and development” opportunities within their institutions. They will also be interested in encouraging higher levels of “self-awareness,” “personal responsibility,” and “self-directed learning” in students and staff within the organization. Finally, educational leaders will appreciate the importance of creating “supportive and encouraging” educational environments. Coaching in education, therefore, can be a powerful way of empowering learners, increasing engagement, and creating positive learning cultures.

THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR COACHING IN EDUCATION

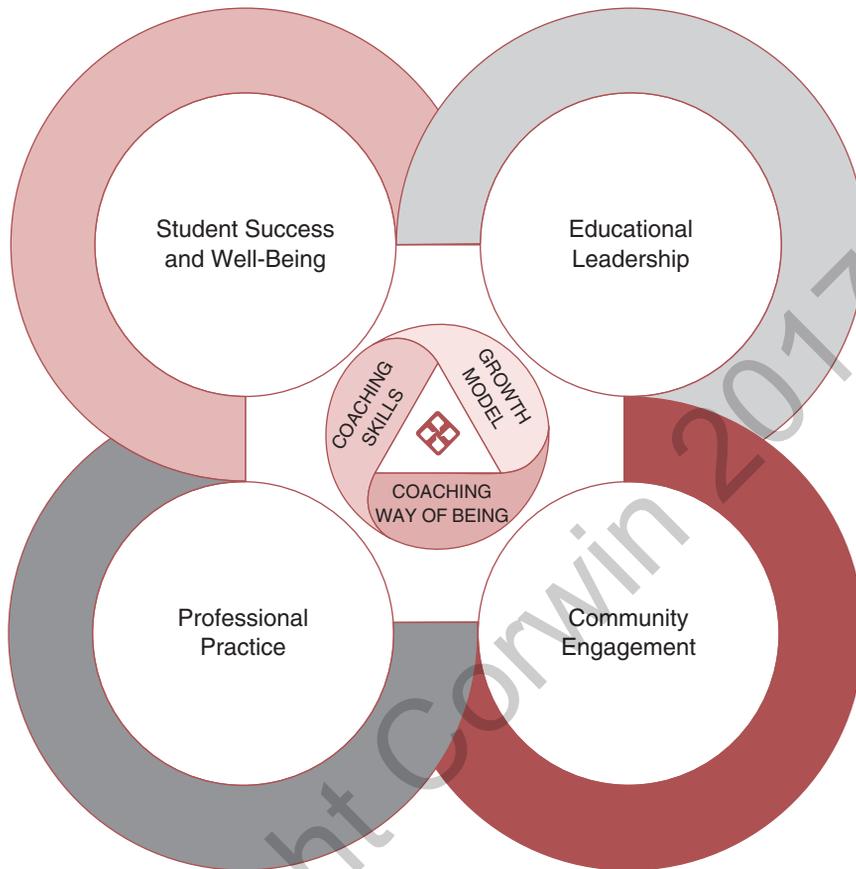
In response to the growing popularity of coaching in schools and colleges all over the world, the Global Framework for Coaching in Education has been devised (van Nieuwerburgh, Campbell, & Knight, 2015). Its purpose is to provide an inclusive playing field that incorporates the broadest range of coaching interventions. The playing field is divided into four quadrants, also called *portals* (see Figure 1.1). The portals represent ways in which coaching can be used effectively in educational settings. Each is a “way in” to introducing coaching within schools, colleges, or universities.

The framework can be a valuable tool for an educational leader. First, it can be used to assess the extent to which an organization is already using coaching within the different portals. Second, the framework provides four entry points for those seeking to introduce coaching into an institution. Third, the framework can offer ideas about the best coaching initiatives to use to have an impact where it is most needed. Fourth, it helps provide a focus for further research in the field of coaching in education. And finally, the framework allows leaders to take a strategic view of coaching within their organizations. The framework is a work-in-progress because the field is young and continually developing. There is no correct order of opening each of the portals. Each school or educational leader is best placed to decide where to start. Given the focus of this book, we begin by presenting the Educational Leadership portal.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

As a leader yourself, you will be aware of the critically significant role that school, college, and university leaders play within their organizations. The educational leadership portal covers a range of interventions that can improve the quality of leadership in educational institutions and provide

FIGURE 1.1 The Global Framework for Coaching in Education



SOURCE: © Growth Coaching International.

personalized support to leaders. Broadly speaking, the two main areas of interest are giving educational leaders access to executive coaching and training principals to become coaches.

Leaders Having Access to Executive Coaching

It has often been suggested that being a principal can be a lonely job. With the level of responsibility vested in the role and the variable characteristics of the reporting line to a governing body or administrators, school leaders can find themselves feeling relatively unsupported at times. For these reasons, ensuring that leaders have access to an executive coach can be helpful. One qualitative study suggested that principals found access to a coach helpful for their leadership practice (James-Ward, 2013). In many authorities and districts, first-time principals are automatically provided with mentors.

This is excellent practice because some advice and support will be needed as the new leadership role is embraced. We propose, however, that newly appointed principals (who are experienced leaders and taking up positions in new schools) might find more value in having access to a coach. This is because the leaders would already bring considerable experience and skills to the role and could benefit from a thinking partner to consider the positive impact that they would like to have on their new institutions. In this regard, programs such as “first 100 days” might be helpful (see box).



IN CONTEXT: First 100 Days Coaching

This type of coaching program is designed to support principals during their first 100 days in a new school. It is a powerful way of providing additional strategic support during a very important period in a leader’s professional life. Often, the tone of a leader’s style and her vision is set during this initial period. Ideally, the school leader would have access to the coach as soon as she has been appointed. During the contracting phase, it would be made clear that the coaching agreement would conclude 100 days into the new principal’s contract at the school. This helps focus minds and ensures that no sense of dependency is created. The focus of the coaching sessions is also sharpened as a result. The key questions that are addressed are: “What is your vision for the school?”; “What will you have achieved by the 100th day?”; “What kind of a leader do you want to be in this school?”; and “How will you know that you have achieved what you have set out to achieve?” Generally speaking, this coaching agreement can include a number of face-to-face or Skype coaching sessions (usually 4–6) and some e-mail communication in between sessions.

Aspiring school leaders can also benefit from coaching support. This can be one way of encouraging more potential leaders to consider becoming principals. Sometimes, independent support from an external coach can provide an aspiring leader with an opportunity to explore possibilities and ideas that it might be difficult to discuss with her own principal. Some training and development programs for aspiring school leaders include executive coaching sessions for their participants. For example, UK-based educational charity, Ambition School Leadership (<https://www.ambitionschoolleadership.org.uk>) incorporates coaching in their training programs as does the Leadership Diploma of Education in Denmark (Schleicher, 2012). These coaching sessions are delivered mainly by former or experienced school leaders. Such initiatives are supported by research. For example, a U.S. study showed that

feedback *with coaching* made it more likely that principals would change their professional practices rather than feedback alone (Goff, Goldring, Guthrie, & Bickman, 2014).

Leaders Learning to Become Coaches

Another effective way to impact on educational leadership is to train principals to *become* coaches themselves. In an important text that had a significant role in the development of the field of coaching in education, *Leading Coaching in Schools*, there is a very strong message that leaders interested in introducing coaching into their institutions should develop *themselves* first (Creasy & Paterson, 2005, p. 10). Interestingly, the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (2005) proposed that learning to become a coach or mentor was one of the most effective ways for leaders to become excellent practitioners. So not only does learning to become a coach support principals to introduce or embed coaching within their institutions, but it is suggested that it can also lead to improvements in their role as leaders. In a recent study, educators who undertook a coaching skills course reported that this led to insights about their own behaviors and relationship, suggesting that such training can be developmental beyond the course content (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015). Indeed, there may be multiple benefits in having school leaders who are trained coaches (see box).



IN CONTEXT: Possible Benefits of Having School Leaders Who Are Trained Coaches

- Coaching can be used to maintain energy and motivation in oneself and in others.
- Training to become a coach encourages reflective practice and self-development.
- Coaching skills are transferrable, allowing a principal to use these skills in her role as leader.
- School leaders will be able to provide coaching support to future and aspiring leaders within their organizations and elsewhere.
- Coaching processes can be helpful for managing meetings, professional development events, and training days.
- Feedback can be provided using a coaching approach.
- School leaders would be leading by example, encouraging more people within the organization to adopt coaching practices.

So the Educational Leadership portal focuses on providing leaders with access to coaching or building their coaching skills. In both ways, the quality of educational leadership can be improved with immediate and positive effects on the whole school community.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The second portal that we consider here is *coaching for professional practice*. This refers to the use of coaching to improve the capabilities, performance and well-being of staff within educational organizations. This includes the pedagogy and teaching practices of educators. While it is right that many school districts and authorities focus very clearly on the performance and well-being of their students, it must be acknowledged that the performance and well-being of educators is equally important. Broadly speaking, coaching to improve professional practice can take the form of teachers supporting one another or providing follow-up for educators and other school-based staff who have been on training programs.

Teachers Supporting Each Other

Educators working with one another to improve their teaching practice is a cost-effective and mutually supportive way of delivering professional development that helps build a collegial culture. Through the Kansas Coaching Project, Dr. Jim Knight (2007) has undertaken significant research into effective ways of improving teaching practice through coaching. Instructional coaching has been used widely across the United States and provides an evidence-based approach to supporting teachers to perform better in classrooms. In this approach, the instructional coach shares evidence-based teaching practices with her coachee (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). These practices are discussed and agreed between the coach and the coachee before they are implemented in the classroom. While the instructional coach must be an expert in certain teaching practices, and is often required to demonstrate them to the coachee, the relationship between the coach and the coachee is characterized by a certain set of “partnership principles” (Knight, 2007). Knight (2007) argues that these principles are necessary to respect the professionalism of teachers (pp. 41–51).

The term *peer coaching* is used in other contexts to denote a reciprocal relationship between two colleagues (Foltos, 2013; Robbins, 2015; Robertson, 2008). In this case, both educators can be peers with neither one required to be an expert in specific teaching practices. In peer coaching, teachers work together to discuss areas of development that might lead to improvements in classroom practice. Usually, the teachers plan lessons together or decide on changes to classroom practice. This is followed by the new practice being trialed in the classroom before reconvening to reflect and evaluate the success of the lesson plan or new practice. Peer coaching is one way of providing cost-effective support for educators to improve teaching practice in

classrooms (Kidd, 2009). It is also suggested that such approaches can enhance the development and well-being of both partners (Robertson, 2008).

Both approaches provide nonthreatening, tailored support to teachers that can lead to tangible improvements in classroom practice. Furthermore, such coaching interventions aim to respect the professionalism of educators and encourage experimentation in the classroom with the intention of improving teaching and learning.

Follow-Up for Educators and Other School-Based Staff

Another effective use of coaching within this portal is to provide support for educators and other school-based staff who have attended professional learning events. While 1-day or shorter courses for educators seem time effective, there is growing recognition that such professional development is not leading to significant improvements in the classroom. In fact, it has been argued that “one-shot” workshops can be counterproductive, leading to feelings of frustration when teachers find that they are unable to implement what they have learned on short courses that they may have been mandated to attend (Knight, 2000). Following a review of the academic literature, Cornett and Knight (2009) concluded that traditional training methods did not lead to changes in classroom practice. Knight (2012) subsequently refers to the “failure of traditional professional development” as a reason for introducing coaching into educational settings. Seminal work by Joyce and Showers (1995) showed that coaching can increase implementation of practices learned on training days. This is supported by later research by Shidler (2008) who finds that coaching educators about their teaching methods can have a direct positive impact on student achievement. All this suggests that providing coaching to educators who have attended training or professional development programs can be an effective way of leveraging the investment of time, making it more likely that these educators will think of ways to introduce the new learning into their everyday practice. This process can be inclusive of administrative and support staff who may be introducing new technologies, strategies, or ways of working.

WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY

While the idea of using coaching to create connections with the wider school community is appealing and has received attention recently, it is relatively under-researched (van Nieuwerburgh & Campbell, 2015). The term *wider school community* includes parents, caregivers, community leaders, and other stakeholders who can impact positively on the learning experiences of students. It is included in the Global Framework for two reasons. First, through practice, it has been realized that while providing coaching initiatives within schools can improve the experience of learners when they are on the premises, this is not always sustained when students return to their

homes or community. Second, coaching interventions and approaches have the potential to develop and improve the ways in which schools connect with important stakeholders. This can be done in a number of ways. Below, we consider the ideas of training parents in coaching skills and teachers using a coaching approach when interacting with members of the wider school community.

Parents as Coaches

One approach that has been considered successful is providing parents and caregivers of students with coaching-related skills. Some schools have developed their own “parent as coach” programs in which school-based staff provide parents with coaching experiences or skills training. Parents who receive coaching skills training have reported better relationships with their children and an improved ability to support their learning (Bamford, Mackew, & Golawski, 2012). Such training can support parents by giving them an insight into coaching approaches and building their own confidence (Golawski, Bamford, & Gersch 2013; Wilson, 2011).

Using a Coaching Approach

In addition to imparting coaching skills to parents and caregivers, some educators are finding that using a coaching approach during parent conferences and parents’ evenings improves communication. Some teachers find interactions with some parents difficult. The use of a coaching approach may improve relationships between teachers and parents, especially if the shared interests of all parties (the success and well-being of the student) can be established at the start of any interaction.

Although further research is evidently required, we believe that there is merit in using coaching approaches to build a sense of community around schools and improve relationships between parents and teachers.

COACHING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

While it is hoped that coaching-related interventions in any of the portals of the Global Framework will ultimately lead to improvements in student success and well-being, this portal focuses directly on this outcome. It is now widely accepted that providing coaching directly to students can have positive results (Devine et al., 2013).

Research has shown that students can derive various benefits from being coached. In one study in the UK, 16-year-old students received coaching over a three-year period. Compared to students who did not receive coaching,

there was improved examination performance and increased levels of hopefulness (Passmore & Brown, 2009). A couple of studies based in Australian schools found that coaching provided by school-based staff led to increases in student resilience, well-being, and hopefulness (Campbell & Gardner, 2005; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007). In another interesting study from Australia, teachers coached eleventh-grade students. This resulted in increases in academic goal-striving (Green Norrish, Vella-Brodrick, & Grant, 2013). Two more recent studies from England suggest that coaching can have a positive impact on young people categorized as “at risk” (Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Robson-Kelly & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). Overall, the growing body of research gives us reason to be hopeful about the effects of providing coaching directly to students in our schools.

It appears that there are also benefits for students who coach *others*. In a few important studies, it has been shown that students who are trained to become coaches (and subsequently coach other students) enhance their communication skills, improve their problem-solving abilities, and demonstrate increased confidence in finding solutions (van Nieuwerburgh, Zacharia, Luckham, Prebble, & Browne, 2012). In a related mixed methods study, 17- to 18-year-old high school students were trained to become coaches. After the newly trained student coaches had coached other students in their school, the study showed increases in their Emotional Intelligence scores. The newly trained student coaches also reported improvements in their study skills, self-confidence, communication skills, and relationships with others (van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013).

Coaching can even have positive effects on elementary age children (Briggs & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). In an earlier study, Briggs and van Nieuwerburgh (2010) showed that elementary school children could learn some peer coaching skills, even at the ages of 9 to 11. In a follow-up study, children were able to reflect on the reasons that they were more likely to accept feedback from some people rather than others (Dorrington & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015). Although the use of coaching in elementary school settings requires further research, initial findings are encouraging.

CONCLUSION

We have now surveyed the four portals of the Global Framework for Coaching in Education. We hope that this has provided a helpful conceptual playing field and context. In our experience of working in and with schools in different parts of the world, we believe that many of these initiatives can have a significant positive impact on student attainment, teacher well-being, and the school culture. As an educational leader, your engagement with coaching will play an important role in defining the school’s culture. This Global Framework can provide a coherent way of thinking about, talking about, enhancing, and implementing various coaching initiatives in your school context.

SMALL STEP STARTER

At this stage, it may be helpful to understand what you hope to achieve by reading this book. Please take a moment to start a learning journal to capture your thoughts as you read. Jot down your answers to the questions below before getting into the next chapter.

- What do you hope to learn by reading this book?
- What would convince you that reading this book was a good investment of your time?
- What is your current view of coaching?
- How would you define “coaching in education” in one sentence?
- What type of leader are you striving to be?
- What type of leader does your school require?

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