

PERCEPTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS REGARDING THE PRACTICE OF COACHING TOOLS: CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to examine the perception of the administration sciences students of two colleges, regarding the practices of coaching tools sciences. The methodology used consists of an exploratory and cross-sectional design. It is done through a quantitative methodology, applied through self-administered questionnaires to 180 students of administrative sciences, of two colleges of the city of Medellín (Colombia). Among the main results, it can be demonstrated clear skills of students to carry out coaching processes such as critical thinking, assertiveness to ask questions, active listening, feedback, and others. It is further intended that from these results, strategies can be designed in future research for strengthening the skills and capacities of professionals in administration science, allowing them in the future a better performance in their professional practice.*

Keywords: *Coaching; skills; university; students*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is growing international acceptance of the need for a large-scale educational reform to meet the challenges of the 21st century, Devine, Houssemand and Meyers, (2013). Rapid social change has dramatically influenced the needs in areas such as education; prompting a transformation of the structure and process of teaching and learning, King and Frick, 1999, cited in Wang (2012).

According to Teemant, Wink and Tyra (2011), teachers in many countries increasingly faced the challenge of educate equally students with racial, cultural, linguistic, economic, or geographically diversity; and unfortunately many teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach students with such diversity.

The teacher is at the center of the process of educating children, and in contexts where teachers are poorly educated and poorly prepared for their roles, effective in-

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service training and support, can help improve outcomes in a sustainable way, Piper and Zuilkowski (2015). Improving teaching quality is essential for optimal student achievement, Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011).

Teachers often have little time and energy to devote to their own professional development, Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013) and that is why the challenge in many countries, is to determine how to provide teachers the guidance and support they need, within the financial limitations of the system, Piper and Zuilkowski, (2015).

Wink and Tyra, (2011), focusing on supporting the professional development of teachers will have, therefore, the most significant impact on student outcomes. Research shows that coaching is an effective strategy for the ongoing development of teachers, Cornett and Knight, (2009); Joyce and Showers, (1987); Knight, (2009), cited in Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013) According to Knight (2009), cited in Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011), the coaching advocates itself on a large-scale of districts and states as the most promising strategy to improve the achievement of schools and students.

A growing body of research in the US suggests that coaching can have positive effects on teachers' pedagogy and students outcomes, Blachowicz *et al.*, (2005); Lovett *et al.*, (2008); Reinke *et al.*, (2014); Sailors and Price, (2015), cited in Piper and Zuilkowski, (2015).

Coaching has been defined as a methodological technique that encourages the development of human potential, directing from where you are to where you want to reach. Establishing goals and activities, Sánchez and Boronat, (2014) as well relationships, in which it seeks to evaluate and understand the coachee (trained: person involved in coaching, in order to improve their skills) facing limitations while exploring new possibilities to achieve goals, Ting and Hart, (2004), cited in Ely, *et al.*, (2010).

The Center for Creative Leadership, CCL by its acronym, defines coaching as a formal relationship one-on-one, "in which the coachee and coach, work together to evaluate and understand the coachee and his development leadership tasks, to challenge current limitations, while exploring new possibilities, ensure accountability, support achievement of objectives and sustainable development" Ting and Hart, (2004, p 116), translated, cited in Ely, *et al.*, (2010). Today, coaching is increasingly recognized as a methodology that aims to increase the effectiveness of the dialogue for a better analysis, reformulation of the values, and objectives; in order to find solutions to problems Zeus and Shifftington, (2008), cited in Dobrea and Maiorescu, (2015).

Coaching is a powerful tool for personal change and learning, Devine, Houssemand and Meyers, (2013), which can be found in various forms, and it can be applied to a wide range of activities in a wide range of populations and problems. Passmore (2010), cited in Dobrea and Maiorescu, (2015). An example of this, is coaching for learning, which can be defined as an evolution learning relationship between a facilitator of learning and students through effective coaching conversations, in order to improve student's performance and create lifelong learners as the long-term goal, Wang, (2012).

According to Devine, Meyers and Houssemand (2013), at the heart of coaching approach, is facilitating learning through active listening, research and the provision of appropriate support. According to Griffiths, (2005), cited in Devine, Houssemand and Meyers, (2013) There is a change in the role of teachers in schools, from instructor to facilitator; by using a Socratic coaching approach where teachers begin helping students learn rather than teach, Whitmore, (2002), cited in Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013). Orth, and Benfari Wilkinson (19879); cited in Ensminger, Kallemeyn, Rempert, Wade and Polanin, (2015) they make a clear distinction between an evaluator and coach. An evaluator judged actions based on results and agreed expectations, while a coach helps learners to learn, develop, and apply new knowledge to improve their skills.

Coaching is a tool that is approached as an integrator of knowledge from different areas, skills, and fields tools such as psychology, management, philosophy, social sciences, among others, Fazel, (2013). It is also used in a wide range of educational settings for a variety of purposes, Burley and Pomphrey, (2011), cited in Wang, (2012), which include:

- The initial training of teachers, using coaching as a key part of the training process.
- The continuing professional development of teachers.
- Leadership programs that use coaching for the specific development of individuals, to senior level and broader institutional purposes.
- Use coaching to support school students with learning or behavioral problems.
- Work with school students in order to develop motivation and aspiration.
- Use coaching in schools to develop skills, abilities and talents in specific areas such as music, art or sports.

Marsh (1992), cited in Ensminger et al, (2015) created six dimensions of effective coaching: (1) be open to ideas and enable learning through autonomy, (2) creating a supportive environment (3) provide feedback and constructive criticism, (4) show personal interest and commitment, (5) establish clear objectives and monitor results, and (6) be prepared for meetings and professional development activities.

Coaching is based more on personal development, the assumption of duties and responsibilities and less guidance and control, Misiukonis, (2011) cited in Dobrea and Maiorescu, (2015). The coaching skills required includes communication skills, analytical skills, skills assessment and feedback, planning skills, goal setting skills, organizational skills, creativity and ingenuity, ability to motivate and encourage, ability to challenge and confront others, focus on results and accountability, integrity, empathy, care, be friendly, accessible, flexible, empowering, and trustworthy, Ely, *et al.*, (2010).

At the heart of the discovery process of coaching, are answers to simple and powerful questions. Coaching is a technique that uses powerful questions to facilitate the coachees finds their own answers. The interesting thing of one particular question, is that causes people automatically start looking for an answer. Coaches ask questions instead of giving answers, because questions lead to learning, and responses may not. The coachee has to use open-ended questions that do not lead to a particular response. Therefore, the ability to make divergent or open questions is essential to developing understanding and creativity, Fazel, (2013).

As coaching is a holistic multifaceted approach to learning and change, Skiffington and Zeus, (2003) cited in Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013) it has a key role to play in education: in the classroom, in the professional development of key stakeholders in the educational system, and in the creation of learning cultures. Therefore, below it is presented how coaching supports the development of teachers, school leaders and students.

1.1. Coaching for teachers

In their review of coaching investigation, Speck and Knipe (2001); cited in Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011) argue that teacher coaching as a follow-up to a new learning, has increased the application of new concepts and strategies for teachers, and has improved student achievement. For example, Sailors and Price (2015) argue that an approach to improve performance in reading (the ability of students to understand a text) is to improve the ability of teachers to teach effectively their students.

More recent research shows that coaching can provide the kind of support that teachers needs to improve their teaching on reading strategies, Hsieh *et al.* (2009), cited in Sailors and Price, (2015). According to Piper and Zuilkowski (2015), a growing number of studies have indicated the potential for coaches to support teachers to improve performance, especially in the literacy area. Hamman *et al.* (2000), cited in Wang, (2012) examined the types and frequency of coaching in high school and its relationship with the strategic learning of its students. The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that the students strategic learning activities were significantly related to learning coaching for teachers.

Among the models of coaching, Cornett's and Knight's, (2009), cited in Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011), there is the "instructional coaching for teachers", which has been proven to be an effective form of providing support, intensive assistance, and differentiated to the teachers in order to incorporate teaching practices based on research on teaching, Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013).

Instructional coaching takes place in teachers classrooms and points to teacher's performance during instruction, Knight, (2004); Kowal and Steiner, (2007), cited by Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011). An instructional coach can be a partner, a veteran teacher, or an external consultant to the system, Teemant, Wink and Tyra, (2011). In addition, instructional coach is specialized and based on the content that has been

proven to be effective in supporting the professional development of teachers and even more students outcomes, Cornett and Knight, (2009), Joyce and Showers, (1987); Knight, (2009); Vogt and Rogalla, (2009), cited in Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013).

The principles on which the instructional coaching is based are, Devine, Houssemand and Meyers, (2013):

- Equality (the partnership is a relationship between two equal professional peers)
- Choice (the choice of what must be learned and how to learn is from the the teacher)
- Voice (in a partnership, each voice, opinion, perspective and point of view is valued)
- Dialogue (because it is a partnership, one party does not impose or dominates)
- Reflection (teachers are encouraged to think about and consider ideas before choosing or adopt)
- Praxis (after reflection and planning, the core of the approach is to implement learning in every working day life)
- Reciprocity (all partners benefit from the process of instructional coaching)

1.2. Coaching for school leaders

There is evidence that high quality leadership makes a significant difference in improving the school and the student learning outcomes, Leithwood et al., (2006); Bush, (2009), cited in Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013). Coaching for school leaders is vital, not only to develop the capacity of individual leadership, but also the develop of leading the systems. In addition, effective educational leaders create environments that promotes thedevelop of capacities; building, strengthen, and sustain continuous learning, Devine, Meyers and Houssemand, (2013).

1.3. Coaching for Students

According to Devine, Houssemand and Meyers (2013), coaching has been used successfully with students by coaches, teachers, school counselors, and also coaching students, showing promising results, since coaching actives skills development, increases well-being, cognitive resistance and hope, decreses levels of depression, and develops study skills and personal learning goals, which contributed to improved performance. For example, the motivating principle for InsideTrack (the largest provider of student coaching in America) is that the student can lead to participation, learning, retention, and more likely to complete a degree, Bettinger and Baker, (2013).

2. METHODOLOGY

For the development of this article, an exploratory research, not experimental, in the field, from a non-probability sampling was conducted, to measure student perceptions of Administration programs of two Colleges in the Medellin City, Colombia; about the necessary aptitudes to implement coaching action skills. 180 self-administered questionnaires were applied to students.

The questions were divided in three sections; the first one focused on investigating by the knowledge and training received in coaching, with dichotomous questions (yes / no); a second section with questions in 5 levels of Likert scale, with response options, Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), neither agree nor disagree (NA, ND), Disagree (D) , Strongly Disagree (SD) and do not know, no response (Dk / Nr) and thirdly a set of questions with dichotomous answers (yes / no), to establish the perception of students in front of these skills.

In the analysis of the results, it was performed first a characterization of the study population, in relation to descriptive variables. Later was analyzed the group and individual aptitude skills of those surveyed, against the practice of coaching.

Table 1
Link with workplace Vs interest in coaching

	<i>Not interested</i>	<i>Interested</i>	<i>Dk /NA</i>	<i>Total</i>
Do Not Work	2,8%	8,9%	0,0%	11,7%
Work	20,0%	63,3%	3,9%	88,3%
Total	22,8%	72,2%	3,9%	100,0%
Authors				

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the participation rate related to the working world of the students surveyed, in front of their interest in learning about coaching. This aspect becomes important to develop the scope of this article, while it is necessary to know how many students have had contact with the labor market, as there is a close relationship between coaching skills and participation in work activities.

According to these results, is evident that a high percentage of students have some employment experience , about 88% say they have worked, compared to 11% who do not work. In connection with their interest in learning topics related to coaching, it can be appreciated a representative portion that claim to be interested. In total, 72.2% of students surveyed express interest in acquiring more knowledge related to coaching.

3.1. Experience and training in coaching

In this regard, in Table 2 two important variables are appreciated to determine the suitability of students to practice coaching, they are: the training they have received and the application of coaching tools that they have made. About 34% say they have

Table 2
Career Coaching vs Application

	<i>The student has not received training</i>	<i>The student has received training</i>	<i>DK/NA</i>	<i>General total</i>
The student has not applied it.	38,8%	17,4%	0,6%	56,7%
The student has applied it.	7,9%	24,2%	0,6%	33,7%
DK/NA	6,2%	1,7%	1,7%	9,6%
Total	52,8%	43,3%	2,8%	100,0%

Authors

been applied coaching tools in their work, and of these, 24.2% have been coached. This result becomes important to ensure that a significant percentage of students are applying elements of coaching from foundations acquired in the training that they have received. On the other hand, it is important to note that 38.8% of students, who have not applied coaching tools in their work, are not coached.

3.2. Individual skills

In this section, the results refer to those individual skills manifested by the students surveyed regarding the coaching practice. In Table 3 there are the five questions in Likert scale clustered in this case.

It is noteworthy that in the case of exploring new ways to support others, near 95% of students surveyed agreed and strongly agreed this statement. This result indicates a close relationship with the points made by Marsh, (1992), cited in Ensminger *et al.*, (2015) posed as one of the six dimensions of effective coaching the “creation of a supportive environment”, coupled with this, Ely, *et al.* (2010) poses as one of the coaching skills required to motivate and encourage others. In this sense, this result is very important for the analyzed institutions while their students have basic skills to apply coaching tools.

In the case of the other questions, it stands out that about 80% of the students surveyed said they agree and strongly agree with individual skills that were raised and related to the application of coaching tools.

3.3. Group skills

In a Similar way, the group skills of the students surveyed were analyzed, in Table 4 the results of the questions grouped in this section are observed:

In this case it is noteworthy that about 92% of those surveyed said they agreed and strongly agreed with the statement “I offer opportune information, request the opinion of the other and allow him to participate in decisions.” This statement is closely related to the issues raised by Devine, Houssemand and Meyers, (2013) posed as some principles of instructional coaching the “voice” and “dialogue”. The first refers to the value that is given to the opinions and views of others in the coaching process; and the second is related to the characteristic of not imposing an opinion on the other, but rather to reach an agreement.

Table 3
Individual Skills

	SA	A	N	D	SD	DK/NA
I am willing to explore and try new ways to support others	60,0	35,0	4,4	0,0	0,0	0,6
I establish ambitious but achievable goals	46,9	43,0	7,3	1,7	0,0	1,1
I distinguish the observations of judgments or assumptions	27,9	55,3	13,4	1,7	0,6	1,1
I consider myself a good role model	23,5	46,4	25,1	2,2	0,0	2,8
I pay attention and avoid distractions when someone is talking to me	37,6	49,4	10,7	0,6	0,0	1,7

Authors

SA: strongly agree. A: Okay, N: Neutral D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, DK / NA: Do not Know / Not Available

Table 4
Group skills

	SA	A	N	D	SD	DK/NA
I like to provide to my teammates, both positive and negative feedback	41,0	47,2	6,7	3,4	1,1	0,6
I use open questions to encourage the exchange of ideas and information	37,2	45,0	14,4	2,2	0,6	0,6
Before providing feedback to my colleagues, I look carefully and without prejudice to the person	35,4	53,9	7,9	2,3	0,0	0,6
I offer opportune information, request the opinion of the other and allow him to participate in decisions	40,0	52,2	6,1	1,1	0,0	0,6

Authors

SA: strongly agree. A: agree, N: Neutral D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, DK / NA: Do not Know / Not Available

Along with the above, it is important to mention that there is a strong tendency in students surveyed by eliminating pre-bias feedback to their peers, the incentive to provide feedback to peers and encouraging the exchange of ideas. These skills had levels of agree and strongly agree 89%, 88% and 82% respectively.

4. CONCLUSIONS

According to the literature review that was conducted, it was determined that coaching practices have not only been implemented in organizational environments, but have been extrapolated to academic contexts; demonstrating a significant contribution to the pedagogical and educational process while allowing improved performance on both teachers and students.

It is important to establish that coaching tools in learning processes, allow to activate in the students skills that otherwise would not be as effective, such as study skills,

learning, cognitive resistance, and decreased depression. In that sense, it is suggested to educational institutions analyzed in this research, encourage these practices not only in their students but also in the teachers who are part of them.

According to the results of the surveys, it was established that students in the Colleges analyzed, manifest have various aptitudes in coaching skills in a considerable percentage of acceptance. Skills such as teamwork, assertive communication, capacity for dialogue and feedback, are some of the skills that are evident in the students surveyed; reflecting a positive outlook facing the implementation of coaching tools in the students of the studied institutions, thus enabling the design of strategies for the continued strengthening of these skills.

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