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COACHING AND MENTORING – EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

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In the recent years, coaching and mentoring have become popular methods of supporting personal development. They are willingly used, in particular,

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in management and business, but not only. Both methods are strongly associated with pedagogy as well as educational and philosophical reflection on the transfer and personalized creation of individual resources of knowledge. The article discusses the basic assumptions of coaching and mentoring, as well as differences and similarities between them. This reflection is important from the point of view of the need to enrich traditional education, both in and outside of school – especially in the education and re-education of adults.

COACHING I MENTORSTWO – PODEJŚCIE EDUKACYJNE

Słowa kluczowe: coaching, mentoring, rozwój osobisty, indywidualne zasoby wiedzy.

Coaching i mentoring stały się w ostatnich latach popularnymi metodami wspomagającymi rozwój osobisty. Szczególnie chętnie wykorzystywane są w zarządzaniu i biznesie, choć to nie ogranicza ich zastosowań. Obie metody są silnie związane z pedagogiką i edukacyjną filozoficzną refleksją na temat przekazywania i spersonalizowanego tworzenia indywidualnych zasobów wiedzy. Artykuł ukazuje podstawowe założenia coachingu i mentoringu, różnice i podobieństwa między nimi. Refleksja taka jest ważna z punktu widzenia konieczności wzbogacania tradycyjnych kształcenia, zarówno szkolnego, jak i pozaszkolnego – szczególnie edukacji i reedukacji dorosłych.

Introduction

The modern world is still looking for effective and attractive methods of unleashing human potential, effective forms of teaching and stimulating personal development, both for children and adults. It is interesting that it was in the area of adult education that the efficiency factor - in particular the ratio of the results to the time and financial costs incurred - was the driving force behind the development of modern, active forms of education and motivation for change; a self-improvement engine under the guidance of a specialist educator. Such forms of educational activities as coaching and mentoring developed (Passmore et al. 2016). In human history, they are not completely new, and their beginnings can be traced back to ancient times. However, it is their current development that requires reflection on how coaching and mentoring enrich traditional education.

The main assumptions of coaching

Coaching has become one of the most dynamically developing educational activities in the world in recent years. They are often referred to as “innovative teaching methods, adapted to the modern reality” – reality of the 21st century. But work in “student-master” relation (just like in coaching and mentoring) has been known for centuries. The best example from Antiquity is Socrates’ and Plato’s method of dialogue, based on specific questions and conversations with students (Raele 2000, p. 379). One of the main and magnificent roots of coaching is the Socratic maieutic method, which was used already in the 5th century BC. The maieutic method brought remarkable results in the change of perspective, widening horizons and enabling students to discover the truth about themselves and the world. In the 20th century, coaching sessions showed again the power and efficacy of this fundamental philosophical method in working with individuals, teams, and organizations. Today, the process of professionalization in coaching still refers to historical sources (Krawczyńska-Zaucha 2017).

The popularity of coaching is due to the fact that it helps people achieve success in both professional, business, science and private life. Its beginnings in business and management trace back to the 1930s, when superiors sought for various methods to enhance individual effectiveness of their employees’ work (Berg, Karlsen 2007). In the opinion of many coaches, training brings extraordinary effects and, as a result, growing financial resources are allocated to coaching employees in the world’s largest companies and corporations. Where one manages big money, usually, every penny is carefully watched before it is spent.

Coaching is a form of thoughtful, methodical support that can be used in virtually all areas of human activity: at work, at school, in adult education, in offices, in production plants, in non-governmental organizations, and in psychosocial assistance. It can also be used in private life when a person in trouble turns to others for help. This is a special form of help that is neither information nor advice, much less therapy. The coach uses tools, and even becomes the coachee’s¹ tool to help organize their ‘internal chaos’, set personalized goals, determine the direction of action, find the right answer, and activate resources to act (Abraham 2016, Goodman 2019). The ability to ask the right questions is the basic tool in the coach’s work. However, one of the most important factors to achieve success is commitment to the process of coaching and faith in the possibility of achieving the goal (Goodman 2019). The main premise of coaching is the belief that the coachee has

¹Coachee – a person who receives training and support from the coach.

everything necessary - all the potential needed - to find their own solutions to problems and to achieve the set goals (McCarthy 2017, Knowles 2018). Given this, the coach does not have to advise, but only support his client on the difficult path to success.

Coaching is a tool for development and it is regarded as a personal change accelerator; however, it is not the sole factor of change, but one of many, not always clear factors that interact with one another. This makes it difficult to assess the role of coaching in change, development and the achieved successes.

Coaching seems to be a highly structured process, however, not in the sense of a rigid algorithm. Although the mental models used in this framework (GROW, TGROW, PRACTICE, Dilts model and others – see, e.g., Bennewicz 2011) seem to be formal steps, the search for solutions in coaching is always heuristic. A wide range of coaching tools are available (e.g., discovering horizons of available possibilities, SWOT analysis, priority circles, visualizations, etc.), but above all, the perfected art of asking questions, derived from the above-mentioned Socratic method (Krawczyńska-Zauchna 2017). It is worth noting that the progress in coaching development is associated with the use of evidence-based practices, i.e., strategies, methods and techniques that are grounded in proven science (Cavanagh et al. 2005; Green et al. 2010; Losch et al. 2016; Nezu, Nezu 2008; Stober, Grant 2006).

Mentoring as a form of personal guidance

The description of mentoring and presenting its development is difficult (Passmore et al. 2016). It is impossible to separate this concept from other factors supporting development. Its history is at least as long as the history of pedagogy: the word ‘mentor’ (Greek) literally means ‘thinker’. It was also the name of the mentor of Telemach, son of the mythical Odysseus (Karwala 2007).

The new wave of interest in mentoring in education, especially at universities and institutions of academic education, goes back to the end of the 11th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries, mentoring gained a new meaning and was enriched with new human experience. Mentoring can be defined simply as *a partnership between the master (mentor) and the student (mentoree²), oriented at discovering and developing educational and / or professional self-awareness. Mentoring not only allows a person to discover the way of self-realization, but also built motivation to follow it fearlessly* (Karwala 2007, Podgorska-Jachnik et al. 2018, p. 15).

²Mentoree / mentee – one who is being mentored.

Mentoring can be described also as a personalized knowledge management strategy. It can be used as a factor supporting life change, e.g., as in the Łódź project for supporting the unemployed 50+ (Dubas et al. 2008). Mentoring assumes and enables personal contacts in which exchange of experience and knowledge between the mentor and the mentoree takes place. The effectiveness of mentoring results from associating with another person, which involves rich motivational potential – greater than in the traditional approach to knowledge transfer. Mentoring triggers creativity and abstract thinking, makes it easier to discover one's own resources and potential, encourages self-improvement and learning. At the same time, it reduces the replication of errors and highlights the mechanisms that support the implementation of new ventures. It also increases the desire to learn and experience new things (Karwala 2007, p. 24).

In principle, mentoring is a process that consists in taking care of a mentoree at various stages of his/her development and improving their skills through the use of the mentor's experience, competences and position in the organizational hierarchy. The basic goal of mentoring is to accelerate the adaptation process and intensify the development of the mentorees by helping them understand the culture of the organization, the prevailing rules, decision-making methods and common methods of problem solving.

Mentoring seems to affect the individual in a less structured and more complex way than coaching. Due to this complexity, it is more difficult to assess the effectiveness of mentoring in terms of evidence, but this applies primarily to assessing short-term effects. The methodology of evidence-based coaching / mentoring (EBC/M) methodology is developing intensively (Bozer, Sarros 2010; Green et al. 2007; Nezu, Nezu 2008; Cavanagh et al. 2005; Stober, Grant 2006). When it comes to long-term effects, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Master-Student relationship, as evidenced in particular by phenomenological studies (Gajdzica 2012, Michalski 2012). Mentoring is primarily based on a more complex and personalized relationship, including the personal influence and guidance from the mentor who acts as a master. This seems to be more applicable in the school situation, in a long-term educational process, where the child has limited possibilities of taking responsibility for his/her own development. However, these are not all aspects of comparison, especially since both mentoring and coaching or their elements are used in school education. A separate section is devoted to comparative analysis of both educational and development strategies.

Repeating after the above-mentioned sources, one can say that there is a shortage of evidence that would testify to the effectiveness of coaching

(and even bigger one in the case of mentoring), however, science already has an extensive database for differentiating the strategies of specific activities to increase their effectiveness in specific applications and cases.

Coaching and mentoring – similarities and differences

Coaching and mentoring are frequently described together (Bennewicz, 2011; McCarthy 2017, Passmore et al. 2016). In fact, however, these are two different forms used to support education and development, and they should be used with full awareness. Some of differences between them are of a fundamental nature. As we write in another article, they define the boundaries between methods, but also the area of modification and creative search for the coach or mentor. *The need to maintain boundaries results from both the basic assumptions of the methods, competency conditions (more frequently supported by a formal professional certificate, or even the degree of specialization), as well as ethical issues (e.g., the problem of responsibility for change effects)* (Podgorska-Jachnik et al. 2018, p. 15). In a similar way, researchers also distinguish: coaching from therapy (Peltier 2010; Watkins, Clum 2007), coaching from counselling (Jacobson 2017), and mentoring from tutoring (Grunwald 2011). Given these boundaries, we consider coaching to be closer to teaching, and mentoring closer to counselling. The scope of their impact will also be different This is particularly covered in the following areas:

1. Coaching – acquiring skills and knowledge, supported by an expert providing effective strategies to achieve an educational goal;
2. Mentoring – personal transformation in a deeper relationship with the mentor, focused on the mentoree’s development (it covers more than simple acquisition of specific skills or knowledge) (Podgorska-Jachnik et. al 2018; Dubas et al. 2008).

A complete list of similarities and differences identified by the authors is provided in Table 1. (with minor modifications).

Comparison of educational aspects of coaching and mentoring

Table 1

Coaching	ASPECTS OF COMPARISON	Mentoring
task-oriented	ORIENTATION	relationship-oriented
short-term	TIME DIMENSION	long-term
performance-driven	BASIS	development-driven
does not require design	DESIGNING OF ACTIVITIES	requires a design phase
primarily focus on object issues (knowledge, skills)	SUBJECT – OBJECT RELATION	maintains balance between the object and the subject (knowledge, skills, and personal change)
often relies on software and online systems	BASIC FORM OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION	usually happens face-to-face, but some tasks involved in creating a program and setting up can benefit from the online system
can be done for remedial purposes	CORRECTIVE AND THERAPEUTIC USE	is never remedial
the focus is on the individual to develop greater expertise in his/her activity	PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION	the interaction between the mentor and mentoree leads to mutual change and, thus, more directly affects culture
may include a component on how to address issues of diversity	CHALLENGE OF DIVERSITY	always involves diversity because part of the dialogue that takes place between the mentor and mentoree concerns their differences
concerned about behavioral transformation	RANGE OF TRANSFORMATION	concerned about personal transformation
one-directional, focused on the coachee's needs; whether the coach gains insight into himself/herself as a coach or learns anything new from the coachee is irrelevant to effective coaching	DIRECTION OF EDUCATIONAL RELATION	bi-directional; both mentors and mentorees gain from the relationship
coaches are often / mostly 'outside experts'	ASSUMED ACCESS TO EXPERT RESOURCES	mentors are 'inside experts'
opinions are divided on whether the coach must be a specialist in the field of coaching content, whether in the field of generating change or managing it	SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE OF THE GUIDE IN THE AREA OF IMPROVEMENT	the mentor is a developmental facilitator; he/she may be an expert in a field content, moreover, it is important that they have interpersonal skills to create a safe learning environment

Source: based on Podgórska-Jachik et al. 2018.

Conclusion

Coaching and mentoring are modern educational methods, but with deep roots in the development of pedagogy and philosophical reflection on the transmission and personalized creation of individual knowledge resources. Today, they have been not only revived in management and business, but also used at school, entering virtually every stage of education (with certain restrictions that can be overcome by conscious use), and especially useful in andragogical auxology (Dubas 2009), adult education and re-education (Dubas et al. 2008). Both methods are beginning to be successfully used,

e.g., in such a difficult area as changing health habits (Rapuš et al. 2008; Podgórska-Jachnik 2016). Coaching and mentoring are frequently listed together (Bennewicz 2011, McCarthy 2017; Passmore et al. 2016), also alongside other forms of educational interaction, such as tutoring (Grunwald 2011), counselling (Jacobson 2017), psychoeducation, or psychotherapy (Peltier 2010; Watkins, Clum 2007), however, each of these two strategies has its own specificity. The effectiveness of these two methods is already legendary and confirmed also by scientific research, contributing to the creation of evidence-based practice of coaching and mentoring. Therefore, they should enter the didactic workshop of every pedagogue.

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