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## Coaching as A Strategy for Empowering Communication Skills in The Educational Context

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### ABSTRACT

The ranking of education in Indonesia, which is quite far behind compared to other countries, shows several problem factors found by educators and students. Several facts were found by researchers when conducting preliminary research that communication skills between educators and students were less developed. Therefore, some strategies were developed to improve communication skills between teachers and students, one of which is using the coaching method. This study aims to describe the implementation of coaching as a strategy for empowering communication skills in the educational context. The method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative method. The results show that coaching can be a strategy for empowering communication skills in the educational context, especially between educators and students. By comparing with previous studies, the novelty element in this research is the coaching method implemented on students with different levels of education, namely in primary and secondary schools, which educators carry out with different qualifications.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the critical and dominant sectors in determining the progress of a nation, especially in supporting the national development process. As the primary means of developing human resources, education plays a significant role in helping students become productive resources and have professional abilities to improve the quality of life for the nation and state. Besides that, education is a cultural process to improve human rights and dignity through a long and lifelong process (Sudjana, 2013). Therefore, it is essential to produce qualified human resources and keep up with the current development of an increasingly advanced era through education. Improving the quality of education in schools is considered strategies for enhancing human resources.

In the education system, educators are the most crucial element in reaching the national education aims (Kaur, 2019). As a result, educators are always in the strategic spotlight. In developing education, especially those held formally in schools, educators play an essential role in determining students' success in the learning process. Several indicators showed the lack of educator performance in carrying out their primary duties as educators (Mulyasa, 2012). Consequently, whatever efforts are made to improve the quality of education will not bring

meaningful results without professional and qualified educators. In other words, improving the quality of education must start with the educator and lead to the educator.

Educators should recognize that students are not merely the object of education but also the subject of education. For this reason, to understand the essence of education, educators need to understand the general characteristics of students. Mostly, students have four characteristics, which are students in a state of being empowered, meaning in a state of power to use the ability; have a desire to develop and be mature; have different backgrounds; and need to explore the natural environment with their basic potentials (Slamet et al., 2017).

A professional educator must have four competencies: pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies (Syaiful, 2013). Social competence is one of the competencies that must be possessed by an educator so that the learning process runs well. Social competence is related to the competence of the educator in communicating with students. Effective communication between educators and students is marked by good interpersonal relationships (Rahmawati, 2012). An educator can act as a coach, mentor, and counselor by having good communication skills. As counselors, educators help students provide personal, social, and career guidance. The educator acts as a mentor when guiding students by providing accurate ways from the educator's experience to solve problems students face. The role of a coach appears when the educator fosters, encourages, assists, supervises, and provides support to students to obtain meaningful learning experiences and learning activities that are as natural as possible according to their respective potentials (Yuliawan, 2016).

Education aims to help students physically and mentally from their nature toward a better human civilization (Sujana, 2019). As emphasized by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Father of Indonesian National Education, the purpose of education is to guide the growth of the natural strength of children so that they can improve themselves. The educator acts as a coach, directs all potential students to achieve happiness as human beings and members of society (Suparlan, 2016), and adopts behaviors and transfers knowledge (Dimitrios et al., 2015).

Coaching in education has sustained growth over the last decade. Coaching is understood as a facilitative intervention to support an educator to take responsibility for adapting their behavior or ways of thinking to achieve better results. Alternatively, it can be said that coaching in education is about 'helping students to learn, rather than teaching them' (van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2018). The students' success cannot be considered separate from the educators who practice and carry out that system; no education model can offer services above the model's personnel (Kaur, 2019).

In the current context of Indonesian education, coaching guides students' independence in learning at school. It is an essential process carried out in schools, especially with the launch of the independent learning program by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. This program can make students more independent in learning to explore

themselves to achieve learning goals and maximize their potential (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020). Support students to attain their personal academic goals, such as study progress, academic performance, scholarship attainment, or class entrance (Diller et al., 2021). Besides, coaching is a process to activate students' brain work. Reflective questions guide students in carrying out metacognition. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) indicate that questioning by coaches, particularly Cognitive Coaches, could develop higher-order thinking skills in the classroom (Irons, 2019). Moreover, the questions in the coaching process also help students think deeply to discover their potential and develop it. Thus, coaching has a crucial role in exploring students' potential and developing them with various mutually agreed strategies.

There are several coaching skills that an educator should master, which are: active listening, summarizing, mirroring and paraphrasing, feedback, creating trust, monitoring, and good contact, spreading awareness, and promoting response and empathy coaching questions (Palcic, 2018). Mastering its basic skills can help the educator encourage his messages to students, thus raising communication. Hence, communication between educators and students is one of the most effective processes in the education system.

Considering the importance of the coaching process to maximize students' potential, educators should have coaching skills, particularly those related to communication skills. The coaching process is expected to be one of the proper steps for educators to help students achieve their goal of independence in learning. Thus, coaching can be an effective strategy for improving performance in the education system (Lofthouse et al., 2010). In addition to developing skills and achievements, coaching can also increase learning satisfaction and motivation. Effective coaching can provide unique work breadth and high explanation for what he does. It can be said that coaching increases students' motivation and increases their understanding of how to think and learn.

Coaching encourages educators to be more reflective and creative, increase their communication skills, and contribute to their professional development. It has prompted researchers to identify effective coaching strategies for the teaching-learning process. There are several commonly used models for coaching sessions, and this paper only discusses three coaching models in education, namely the GROW, OSKAR, and STRIDE models.

#### A. GROW Model

Sir John Whitmore, a coaching pioneer, developed the GROW model, one of the most popular and widely used coaching models in education. This model is an efficient and straightforward framework for solving problems (Kunos, 2017), which consists of four stages:

- 1) **Goals:** Identify the coachee's goals and focus on solutions rather than problems. Set clear and measurable goals for each coaching session.
- 2) **Reality:** Guide the coachee to identify his or her current situation to determine how to move forward towards achieving the goal.

- 3) Options: Lead the coachee to explore a set of possible options for achieving goals
- 4) Will: At this stage, the coachee needs to make the best choice to achieve the goal.

B. OSKAR Model

In *The Solutions Focus: The Simple Way to Positive Change* (Jackson & McKergow, 2007, as cited in Spaten et al., 2012), this coaching model consists of:

- 1) Outcome: Guiding the coachee in outlining the expected goals.
- 2) Scaling: The coachee describes the current condition using a scale (0-10).
- 3) Know-how and resources: The coachee shares what has been done and the resources that have been utilized to date.
- 4) Affirm and action: Direct the coachee to plan the following steps to move forward and commit to the plan.
- 5) Review: Define an evaluation process to help the coachee continue to evaluate his current situation.

This model focuses more on problem-solving, and both of these coaching models focus on the coachee's strengths and encourage the coachee to use his abilities in dealing with problems.

C. STRIDE Model

Will Thomas developed the STRIDE Model for coaches to help them solve problems and improve performance. The STRIDE model can help coachees learn to set goals, overcome limitations, and move forward toward goals (Thomas & Smith, 2012). The STRIDE model can be understood from its acronym:

- 1) Strengths: Focus on the coachee's strengths.
- 2) Targets: Identify the coachee's goals and motivations that can support achieving the goals.
- 3) Reality: Observe the coachee's current situation and find obstacles in achieving goals.
- 4) Idea: Identifying methods that can be used to solve obstacles in achieving goals.
- 5) Decision: Decide what to do and choose the most appropriate method.
- 6) Evaluation: Divided into two parts: evaluation of results (identifying the coachee's commitment to the decision and its execution) and evaluation of progress (identifying all progress made in achieving the goals)

This model focuses on the strengths of coachees and encourages them to identify challenges in achieving their goals and how to overcome those challenges. A coach's role is to ask open-ended questions to guide coachees in finding solutions to their problems.

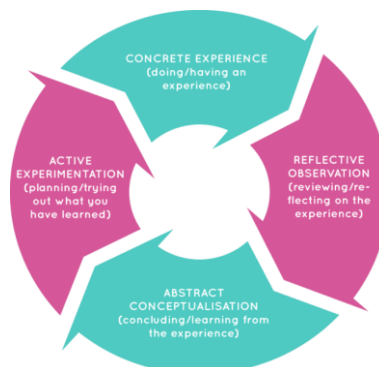
The GROW model is one of the most well-known models among those three models (Whitemore, 2009, as cited in Palčič, 2018). In this paper, the researcher chooses the Grow model as it is simpler, more practical, easier to understand, and used in coaching sessions. On the other hand, the researcher will conduct classroom action research to implement coaching as an empowering communication in education using the four-phase of Kolb's Cycle Model.

Using Kolb's Cycle Model is that it is one of the most well-illustrated management education learning and recognized as the critical theoretical model to express the nature of experiential learning (Baker & Robinson, 2016).

The importance of empowering the communication skills of educators in the educational context to help solve various problems faced by students makes researchers try to apply coaching as an alternative strategy. Many studies have been conducted previously on the effectiveness of coaching, both in the academic and career world, among others: the research entitled *Coaching: a New Model for Academic and Career Achievement* from the *Journal of Medical Education Online* vol 21 no. 33480, researched by Nicole M. Diorio, Patricia A. Carney, Leslie E. Kahl, Erin M. Bonura, and Amy Miller Juve in 2016; *Charting the Research on the Policies and Politics of Coaching* from the *Epa* vol. 22 no. 50, Sarah L. Woulfin (2014); *How Can Coaching Make a Positive Impact within Educational Settings?* Mary Devine and Raymond Meyers (2013); *Applying Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning to Coach Education*, Ashley E. Stirling (2013) *Impact of a Large-scale Coach Education Program from a Lifelong-Learning Perspective* by Diana Deek, Penny Werthner, Kyle J. Paquette and Diane Culver (2013). Novelty in the research conducted by the author is to use the Kolb Cycle Model to describe the implementation of coaching for students at the elementary and junior high school levels in Indonesia who often experience obstacles due to the inability of educators to build good communication skills.

## 2. METHODS

The research design uses classroom action research with a qualitative approach. Data is collected through interviews, checklists of coaching sessions, and coaching forms (coaching session forms, coaching progress, and evaluation), and ATLAS.ti is used as the qualitative data analysis software. The action research also uses the Kolb Cycle model (Tatkovi & Tatkovi, 2020), which describes a learning cycle based on the associated experience from reflection to a concept, which is then used as a practical guide in obtaining new findings. Kolb formulated these four stages as concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which can be seen in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Kolb's Cycle Model of experiential learning (Tatkovi & Tatkovi, 2020)

Four educators from the Pundarika Makassar School of Indonesia participated in this study. Two educators are working at the elementary school level, the first in the early grades and the other in the upper grades. Meanwhile, two other educators teach at the junior high school level, one of which is a homeroom teacher and the other is a teacher of certain subjects. Thus, researchers can get a broader picture of the implementation of coaching for students of different ages, grade levels, and maturity levels.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULTS

##### 3.1 First Phase: Reviewing

The study began by conducting interviews with the four participants to conduct reviews and observations and identify the extent of their knowledge of communication skills with students through coaching. The study results found that the four participants had minimal knowledge and did not even understand coaching in education.



Figure 2. Qualitative data analysis using ATLAS.ti

**Table 1.** Reflective Observation (Interview)

Participant 1	"I often have problems communicating with students, primarily if it is not related to my teaching-learning material ...I am confused about handling student problems, especially if it is about personal or family problems."
Participant 2	"I do not know much about coaching ...what I do know is that psychologists or psychiatrists usually use coaching to treat clients ...who have psychological problems or who need consultation."
Participant 3	"I have heard of it, ... but I am not interested. I do not have an idea ...how an educator can provide coaching for their students."
Participant 4	"Maybe coaching is practical, ... what are the proper steps to implement it...can I coach my students? ...That is what I have not tried."

### 3.2 Second Phase: Learning

After obtaining the initial findings, the researcher then conducts a literature study and formulates strategies that can be applied further to solve the problems identified in the first phase. From several coaching strategy models, researchers made some considerations based on the conditions of the place and research subjects in determining the most suitable model. Researchers chose the GROW coaching model because it is more straightforward but more powerful and flexible than other models.

### 3.3 Third Phase: Planning

Researchers developed a plan to equip participants with adequate knowledge and skills to apply coaching to students in their respective classes. The participants attended three coaching training and workshops to practice their mastery of coaching methods and practices. In each training, they conduct coaching simulations with their peers to ensure they master the GROW model as a coaching model practiced in class with students. The program is held for three weeks, taking advantage of the spare time of the educators.

### 3.4 Fourth Phase: Doing

Based on the GROW model, after having skills in coaching, educators apply it to students in their respective classes for two months. The coaching session begins with a meeting held by the educator as a coach with students as coachees based on their respective problems. During the educator's coaching, the researcher used three forms to monitor. After completing the first session, the coachee fills out the coaching session forms to record the following action plan. The coaching progress form is used to record the success or failure of coaching actions. Finally, in the evaluation form, the coachee provides feedback on the benefits of coaching that he feels after several coaching sessions are held according to his needs or the development of the problem.

The researcher also conducted observations and interviews with those educators who implemented the coaching process based on their perceptions, discussing the effectiveness of its application to students in the classroom.

Applying the Kolb Cycle Model, this study found that implementing the coaching strategy empowered communication skills with these participants. The following statements of the participants explained in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Concrete Experience (Result)

Participants 1 and 3	"I experience coaching techniques as a non-conventional approach to students ...to solve their problems. Here I was challenged to listen actively ...and ask students reflective questions, ...which proved to be very helpful for them.."
Participant 2	"It is undeniable that when together with the coachee, I am required to be skilled at communicating, ...I must be good at asking the right questions, which inspire and make them think for themselves ...on a solution to solve problems or whatever goals they hope for ...Furthermore, in the next coaching session, ...they are more advanced in solving their problems or the goals they want to achieve."
Participant 4	"Through the coaching process that applied to students with problems or in general to encourage them to learn better, I will hone the four competencies of an educator... with better and effective communication; I feel that the learning atmosphere in the classroom is becoming more comfortable and intimate, ...the students ...are also more enthusiastic about learning."

## DISCUSSION

In the first phase of the study, it was found that the four participants had a minimal understanding of coaching techniques in the world of education. Understanding coaching aspects, especially in education, is minimal, and most educators do not know or receive training on coaching before (Helmi, 2019). If educators can coach students, especially those with problems, it will help them find the solutions they need for themselves (Hasbrouck, 2017). Inadequate understanding will make it difficult for educators to distinguish between coaching and mentoring or counseling and choose among the three to deal with problematic students. The existence of an understanding and mastery of coaching techniques as an empowering communication between educators and students can be an alternative to finding solutions to various daily problems. With persuasive and effective interpersonal communication between educators and students, they can develop better and optimally. Coaching can be considered as an empowering form of communication that can help, motivate, and encourage students to move in a positive direction (Febrianti, 2014).

Concluding from experience, the researchers then set the GROW coaching model to be implemented by educators to students as it is simple but powerful. In addition, this model is more flexible than other models. In the GROW coaching model, one does not have to go through all the stages in sequence but can only go through the necessary stages. Similarly, this model is performance-oriented, and coaches need to ensure ongoing performance from the coachee. Thus, the model serves as a guide for coachees to know precisely the goal (Goal), the current reality (Reality), and many paths that can be taken for it (Option) so that in the



end, they can determine the choice to be executed (Will) in achieving the expected goals (Kunos, 2017). Therefore, this model best suits the needs of researchers who expect educators to apply this model to students at the basic education level. Thus, it can be concluded that GROW is a coaching model oriented to human development (Musta'in et al., 2020).



**Figure 3.** GROW Coaching Model (Kunos, 2017)

In the third phase (planning), educators participated in several pieces of training on coaching methods and practices and conducted simulations. They practice coaching with peers by approaching their problems. Starting with experiencing the benefits of coaching, the educators then implemented a coaching development program to improve their knowledge and skills. Developing coaching skills will lead to insights into their behavior and relationships (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015, as cited in van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2018).

The results show that coaching can be one of the best solutions for educators to be more reflexive and creative in guiding their students to solve every problem they face. In general, coaching in education can develop educator and student communication skills and cognitive resilience, reduce students' depression levels and improve educator and student performance (Devine et al., 2013).

Through the four phases of Kolb's Cycle Model, researchers found that by mastering the concept and implementing coaching practices, educators improved their social competence, especially their communication skills with students to find solutions to their problems and direct them to stay on the desired goals. Thus, coaching, in addition to providing positive benefits for students, on the other hand, also has an impact on educators as coaches (van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013):

- (1) Learning kills the improvement of planning and problem-solving skills.
- (2) Behavior at school: actively participate, accept suggestions from others, and be ready to assist.
- (3) Ready to learn: increased focus and awareness of the bigger picture and optimism.

- (4) Personal skills and qualities: increased emotional self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

As stated by the participants, educators who implement coaching techniques for students, coaching is a strategy that helps solve students' problems. By having good coaching skills, educators can help with learning difficulties, eliminate negative beliefs, and help solve problems that hinder student progress (Palčič, 2018).

Coaching interventions in the education ecosystem are seen as increasingly relevant for students and educators (van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013); therefore, in order to have a broader impact, it is essential to:

- (1) Conduct more academic studies on the impact and experience of coaching in educational settings.
- (2) Increasing the achievement of coaching in schools and universities.
- (3) Utilizing the support of local, regional, national, and international partners.
- (4) Educators need to spend more time implementing coaching.
- (5) Make coaching culture in educational organizations.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The implementation of coaching using Kolb's Cycle Model in educational institutions has shown that coaching is an empowering communication method in an educational context to help educators direct students to identify problems, find solutions, and stay on the goal. It provides a positive experience to get better results for both students and educators.

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