Presenting a Model for Enhancing Coaching of School Principals

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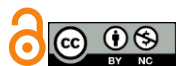* **Corresponding author email address**: m_moazzamiii@yahoo.com

A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

Objective: The objective of this study is to propose a model for enhancing the coaching of school principals in Tehran. The research aims to identify the indicators, components, and dimensions relevant to coaching school principals, as well as to determine the influential factors and validate the proposed model.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative and exploratory approach, utilizing the meta-synthesis technique. The study involves a systematic review of 33 sources, which are then filtered down to 11 highly relevant sources. Additionally, interviews with 23 experts in the field of coaching are conducted to complement the data. The findings are categorized and analyzed to identify key themes and dimensions.

Findings: The study identifies 56 indicators categorized into 14 components within 2 main dimensions: personal characteristics and organizational characteristics. Personal characteristics include traits such as communication power, patience, crisis management, and intelligence. Organizational characteristics cover aspects like creating an organizational chart for coaching roles, structural changes, and attention to the coaching process. Influential factors include personal limitations, informational barriers, coaching culture, conditions of students and principals, principal training, environment, and budget constraints.

Conclusion: The proposed model for enhancing the coaching of school principals in Tehran emphasizes the importance of both personal and organizational characteristics. Effective coaching requires principals to possess strong communication skills, patience, and crisis management abilities, while organizational support involves structural changes and fostering a coaching culture. Addressing personal limitations, improving informational resources, and providing adequate training and budget are crucial for the successful implementation of the coaching model. The findings underscore the need for a holistic approach that integrates individual competencies with organizational strategies to enhance the professional development of school principals.

Keywords: *human resources, education, coaching, principal coaching.*

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1   Introduction

Due to the limitations of informational and human resources today (Shahri Aini, 2013), despite claims of attention to human resources, unfortunately, this crucial resource is still viewed as interchangeable parts. This approach to the most important resource, competitive advantage, and main capital of organizations (human resources) (Esmaeili et al., 2021), as Matsushita said, "the greatness of any organization is proportional to the stature and dignity of the people who work for it" (Mulyati et al., 2022), has led to increasing problems and challenges. Therefore, it is essential to balance work and life, job goals, and ideals (Ng & Gossett, 2013) through training as the most important tool for improving employee performance (Fathi Vajargah et al., 2015), which plays a significant role in development, and consequently, the professional development of organizational capital (Hormozi Moghaddam et al., 2024).

In this regard, education in the 21st century, especially based on research results from the last decade of the 20th century, has become more professional and more complex than other professions such as medicine, law, and engineering. According to scientists, the comprehensive development of any country relies on having an efficient and strong educational system aimed at utilizing all possible capacities (Alvani & Mardani, 2013), which can enable scientific flourishing and drive economic wheels. In this context, the role of the educational institution as an investment of one generation for the next and a guarantee for creating transformation and development requires professional incumbents and can be considered a method of professional development (Salavert & Salavert, 2015). This is due to paradigmatic changes in the approach to education and shifting from authoritarian management styles to participatory management (Dehghaan Marvasti, 2017), lack of financial resources, shortage of knowledge, ineffective management, and lack of trained educators and facilitators (Tulu, 2019), environmental threats, and more, requiring greater attention. It is essential that educational managers and leaders, who are key elements in improving education, possess sufficient and appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes in line with current conditions to achieve desired goals (Abdollaahi, 2014); coaching, due to its greater impact on enhancing the quality of professional development programs worldwide (Vikaraman et al., 2017), can facilitate individuals' professional advancement (Campaña Liñan, 2017). Especially due to the inequalities arising from economic, social, and environmental changes worldwide, there is a greater need for serious attention to development.

Various approaches such as coaching have been identified for developing human capital as a specialized field (Smith, 2014). Some researchers consider this approach as a novel approach in professional development and training (Mohammadisadr et al., 2018), while others see the establishment of a coaching culture and its application as an innovative approach (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018).

However, issues such as lack of interest in attending school, teachers' lack of motivation to use new teaching methods, compulsory attendance in in-service training courses, low skill levels of teachers and principals, unappealing textbook content, unsuitable environments, and many other issues are symptoms of ailing education that, unfortunately, like many challenges in the country, are considered normal, and officials easily overlook them. Despite the high importance of this issue in education, topics such as coaching, unfortunately, have not been given much attention today (Ling et al., 2018). As a result, most research has focused on sports and individual coaching (Alvani & Mardani, 2013), and since there was no study that could fully describe coaching skills (Mohammadisadr et al., 2018), the present study aims to propose a model for enhancing the coaching of school principals in Tehran. The research questions are as follows:

- What are the indicators, components, and dimensions of coaching school principals in Tehran's educational system?
- What are the influencing factors on coaching school principals in Tehran's educational system?
- What is the model for enhancing the coaching of school principals in Tehran's educational system?
- How is the validity of the model for enhancing the coaching of school principals in Tehran's educational system assessed?

2   Methods and Materials

This research employs a qualitative research paradigm. One of the reasons for the necessity of qualitative research is that qualitative methods can provide more detailed insights into phenomena that are difficult to capture with quantitative methods. The statistical population of the study included books, articles, and documents. Additionally, 23 experts in the field of coaching participated in the process of interviews and indicator examination.

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In this study, to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used. Initially, a comprehensive search was conducted to include all related sources to ensure the study's validity. Subsequently, efforts were made to review and analyze sources directly related to presenting the coaching model. On the other hand, complete findings were presented to achieve transferability to other settings. To achieve dependability, expert interviews and opinions were also utilized.

3   Findings and Results

In this research, the meta-synthesis technique was utilized. Meta-synthesis is a qualitative method that entails qualitative analysis of the content of primary studies. Meta-synthesis analyzes and synthesizes the findings and results of other studies with similar and related topics; therefore, it is based on selected qualitative studies and their relevance to the research question. Previous studies have presented a 7-step process for conducting meta-synthesis as follows, which also explains the implementation of the present research:

Determining the Research Question: To determine the question, multiple elements such as the study population, what, when, and how are used. In this research, the research question was influenced by the research goal; thus, the research question is: What indicators, components, and dimensions have previous studies considered for coaching school principals?

Systematic Review of Studies: The data for the meta-synthesis is the text of past studies; therefore, the researcher must search for the most relevant keywords that encompass the maximum research topic to find all relevant sources. In this stage, the researcher found 33 sources by searching for maximum international and domestic keywords.

Search and Selection of Appropriate Texts: After collecting comprehensive sources, they are filtered in three stages to obtain the main research sources: 1) Reviewing the abstract, 2) Reviewing the title and keywords, 3) Detailed review of the article's text. In the present research, 11 highly relevant sources were found through the above stages (L1-11).

Extracting Information from Texts: In this step, the findings and information of the studies are categorized. The researcher obtained 44 identifiers from the mentioned sources. Additionally, due to the lack of theoretical saturation, the researcher conducted interviews with 23 experts in the related field. In total, 56 indicators were identified through the review of sources and interviews.

Analysis and Synthesis of Qualitative Findings: In this step, the researcher seeks topics that emerge during the meta-synthesis of existing studies. When these topics appear, the researcher categorizes the data and places similar categories and concepts in groups that best describe them. These topics form the basis for explanations, theories, or hypotheses. In this research, initially, all extracted factors from studies and interviews were considered as initial identifiers. Then, based on their meaning and content, they were categorized into similar concepts, and with further reading of the concept categories, themes were extracted and eventually converted into 2 dimensions and 14 themes.

Quality Monitoring: Quality monitoring was achieved through the comprehensiveness of the number of sources, the use of prominent sources, detailed presentation of findings, and confirmation by experts and scholars.

Presentation of Findings: In this step, the combined findings are presented in the form of tables as follows:

Table 1

Influential Factors and Components of Principals' Coaching

Dimension	Component	Item Description
Constituent Components	Personal Characteristics	The principal must have high communication power to be successful in coaching. The ability to communicate effectively and bilaterally is a good personal trait for coaching. The principal must have high acceptability among students. High patience and the ability to control emotions and anger are important personal factors for coaching. The coach must know what they aim to nurture. The principal should be a good scriptwriter. The coach should recognize untapped potentials. The principal should be familiar with crisis management principles. The principal should enter coaching with interest. The coach should be a researcher and intelligent. Coaches should be brave. The coach should be neat and tidy in appearance.
	Organizational Characteristics	Creating an organizational chart and separate positions for the coaching role of principals. Involving individuals and mentees in decision-making and policy-making is a pillar of coaching. Organizational attention to the coaching process of principals in schools. Implementing structural changes for the coaching role in schools. The school should have a flat and semi-centralized structure.
	Organizational Requirements	Attention to the coaching spirit of principals during recruitment. Coaches should have a minimum level of competency and characteristics to work with teachers. Coaches must be talented and capable.

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	Legal Requirements	Legal requirements for schools to develop coaching infrastructure. Performance evaluation of coaches. Developing a roadmap for the coaching responsibilities of principals. There is no mandatory requirement for principals to receive coaching training.
	Cultural Factors	The coach must interact with the environment in an organizational manner. Developing an organizational culture aligned with the value of coaching in education. The principal should be familiar with students' lives outside of school.
	Contextual Factors	The principal should clearly understand the start and end points, the path to goals, and the obstacles. Principals and teachers should be strengthened in anthropology and methodology discussions. The environment's architecture should be conducive to growth and enhancement.
Influential Factors	Personal Limitations	Expressing personal emotions is a good trait for a coach. Principals should be familiar with educational ideas and learning principles and control the environment through coaching.
	Informational Barriers	Coaches should be familiar with conflict management principles, and this knowledge can greatly enhance coaching. The level of principals' training in coaching and psychology should be raised to improve their coaching skills. Team and group flexibility improves the coaching performance of the principal. The coach should be willing to share their skills, knowledge, and expertise. The coach should provide constructive feedback and avoid aggression towards students.
	Coaching Culture	A high work ethic and performance are intrinsic qualities of coaching principals. The coach should be familiar with the stakeholders, audience, and customers of the school, as well as the economic, cultural, and political backgrounds of the mentees. The coach should be familiar with geographical cultures to respond appropriately within each geographical area.
	Students' and Principals' Conditions	The coach should maintain mutual respect, which helps earn respect. The coach should instill a sense of responsibility in individuals and prevent negligence. The coach should encourage mentees to express their emotions to gain proper feedback. The coach should not discriminate among mentees and should pay attention to their mental and physical needs. Balancing work and life and organizational citizenship is a pillar of success for coaching principals.
	Principal Training	Long-term training courses for principals to strengthen coaching skills are necessary. The coach or principal should pay attention to subcultures and align behavior and interaction with individual subcultures. The coach should have up-to-date knowledge and consistently engage in learning and coaching.
	Environment	Social harm and problems reduce the coaching abilities of principals, which should be controlled by organizational authorities and partly by the principal. Job satisfaction can positively impact the coaching abilities of principals. The coach should establish friendly and emotional relationships with mentees.
	Budget Constraints	Allocating educational budgets for training principals is crucial for enhancing coaching abilities. Not fearing educational costs and viewing training as an investment can improve coaching performance. There should be no cost-based perspective towards training, as every cost in training can improve the coaching skills of principals.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicated that coaching school principals in Tehran's education system includes components such as "personal characteristics, organizational characteristics, organizational requirements, legal requirements, cultural factors, and contextual factors." Additionally, according to the identified indicators, the principal must have high communication power to be successful in coaching, the ability to communicate effectively and bilaterally is a good personal trait for coaching, the principal must have high acceptability among students, high patience and the ability to control emotions and anger are important personal factors for coaching, the coach must know what they aim to nurture, the principal should be a good scriptwriter, the coach should recognize untapped potentials, the principal should be familiar with crisis management principles, the principal should enter coaching with interest, the coach should be a researcher and intelligent, coaches should be brave, and the coach should be neat and tidy in appearance. Studies by Smith (2015), Azduran and Tanwa (2017), and Hashemi Amooghin (2019) indicate that personal characteristics of the principal, such as interaction power and communication power, define their coaching skills.

On the other hand, concerning the organizational characteristics component, creating an organizational chart and separate positions for the coaching role of principals is of high importance. Involving individuals and mentees in decision-making and policy-making is a pillar of coaching, and organizational attention to the coaching process of principals in schools should be emphasized. Additionally, implementing structural changes for the coaching role in schools is a requirement for strengthening the coaching role of principals. The school should have a flat and semi-centralized structure. Furthermore, researchers consider organizational characteristics of education and schools as components of school principals' coaching (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Tanskanen et al., 2019). Regarding organizational requirements, attention to the coaching spirit of principals during recruitment should be prioritized by education authorities. Coaches should have a minimum level of competency and characteristics to work with teachers, and they must be talented and capable. The legal requirements component specifies that legal actions should be taken to develop coaching infrastructure in schools and make it a mandate. Performance evaluation of coaches should also be

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prioritized, and a roadmap for developing the coaching responsibilities of principals should be created. Furthermore, training requirements for principals to receive coaching training should be established. Studies also consider organizational and legal requirements as components of coaching (Tanskanen et al., 2019; Tulu, 2019).

The cultural factors component emphasizes that the coach should interact with the environment in an organizational manner. Additionally, developing an organizational culture aligned with the value of coaching in education should be pursued, and the principal should be familiar with students' lives outside of school. Researchers consider cultural factors as one of the components of school principals' coaching (Mohammadisadr et al., 2018; Tanskanen et al., 2019). Lastly, the contextual component states that the principal should have a clear understanding of the start and end points, the path to goals, and the obstacles. Principals and teachers should be strengthened in anthropology and methodology discussions, and the environment's architecture should be conducive to growth and enhancement. Studies have somewhat referenced the indicators extracted in the present study in their research (Matsuo, 2018; Mohammadisadr et al., 2018; Tanskanen et al., 2019).

The findings also showed that coaching school principals in Tehran's education system is influenced by factors such as personal limitations, informational barriers, coaching culture, students' and principals' conditions, principal training, environment, and budget constraints. Regarding personal factors, expressing emotions is a good trait for a coach, principals should be familiar with educational ideas and learning principles, and they should control the environment through coaching. Previous findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Tanskanen et al., 2019).

From the perspective of informational barriers, coaches should be familiar with conflict management principles, and this familiarity can greatly enhance coaching. The level of principals' training in coaching and psychology should be raised to improve their coaching skills. Team and group flexibility improve the coaching performance of the principal. As a coach, the principal should be willing to share their skills, knowledge, and expertise. The coach should provide constructive feedback and avoid aggression towards students. Prior findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Salavert & Salavert, 2015; Tanskanen et al., 2019).

From the perspective of coaching culture, a high work ethic and performance are intrinsic qualities of coaching

principals, and the coach should be familiar with the stakeholders, audience, and customers of the school, as well as the economic, cultural, and political backgrounds of the mentees. Additionally, the coach should be familiar with geographical cultures to respond appropriately within each geographical area. Prior findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Ling et al., 2018; Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2020).

From the perspective of students' and principals' conditions, the coach should maintain mutual respect, as it helps earn respect. The coach should instill a sense of responsibility in individuals and prevent negligence. The coach should encourage mentees to express their emotions to gain proper feedback. The coach should not discriminate among mentees and should pay attention to their mental and physical needs, understanding each individual's conditions. Lastly, balancing work and life and organizational citizenship is a pillar of success for coaching principals. Prior findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Mohammadisadr et al., 2018).

From the perspective of principal training, long-term training courses for principals to strengthen coaching skills are necessary, and these courses should focus on improving coaching skills. The coach or principal should pay attention to subcultures and align behavior and interaction with individual subcultures. The coach should have up-to-date knowledge and consistently engage in learning and coaching. Previous findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Abdollaahi, 2014; Alvani & Mardani, 2013; Ling et al., 2018; Tulu, 2019).

From the environmental perspective, social harm and problems reduce the coaching abilities of principals, which should be controlled by organizational authorities and partly by the principal. Job satisfaction can positively impact the coaching abilities of principals, and the coach should establish friendly and emotional relationships with mentees. Previous findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Abdollaahi, 2014; Alvani & Mardani, 2013; Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Mohammadisadr et al., 2018; Tulu, 2019).

From the financial or budget constraints perspective, allocating educational budgets for training principals is crucial for enhancing coaching abilities. Not fearing educational costs and viewing training as an investment can improve coaching performance. Additionally, there should be no cost-based perspective towards training, as every cost in training can improve the coaching skills of principals.

Prior findings somewhat confirm the results of the present study (Mehdibeigi et al., 2018; Mohammadisadr et al., 2018; Tanskanen et al., 2019).

Based on the results obtained, the following recommendations are made to improve and strengthen coaching among school principals in Tehran:

In management courses held for principals, an educational chart for enhancing coaching should be included, and necessary explanations about the importance of coaching should be provided.

Holding coaching and adolescent psychology courses for principals is essential as they need to understand whom they aim to nurture.

Principals should have high communication power to be successful in coaching; therefore, investment should be made in principals with high communication power.

Schools should have a flat and semi-centralized structure, and a comprehensive review of the administrative structure of schools is recommended.

Creating a separate organizational chart for the coach and coaching roles of principals in schools.

Creating a coaching mindset among principals and providing necessary explanations in this area is the responsibility of the education system.

Involving students in the internal decision-making processes of schools and providing a type of coaching method for their choices.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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