

Advocating Effective Instructional Coaching In Education

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.14.04.2024.p14827
[10.29322/IJSRP.14.04.2023.p14827](https://doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.14.04.2023.p14827)

Paper Received Date: 21st March 2024
Paper Acceptance Date: 21st April 2024
Paper Publication Date: 30th April 2024

Abstract- The article considers Instructional coaching implementation in the Armenian secondary education. It investigates the difficulties and challenges of practicing the Instructional coaching approach as an alternative educational method in RA schooling premises. It also examines the responsibilities of instructional coaches, as well as the relationship between the coach, school principals and the teachers. Accordingly, the article suggests some steps that may help conduct effective coaching cycle. Also, the article derives the seven principles of Instructional coaching model to encourage reflection and collaboration. It also introduces interactive implications for Instructional coaching proving that professional development can directly affect student learning.

Index Terms-Instructional coaching, instructional coach, alternative education method, principles of instructional coaching model, coaching cycle

I. INTRODUCTION

Many factors affect academic achievement in the classroom. To maintain secure and trusting relationships not only between teachers and learners, but also between colleagues and peer-teachers we should work hard to nurture dedicated and effective goal-driven educational environment. We need to have a strong instructional team to support relationally-based learning/teaching strategies which will impact success in education. The ability to support these strategies comes from building a tight-knit team of caring specialists who have a desire to positively impact student learning, who create such a classroom experience that reinforces learners' knowledge and builds both confidence and skills, who establish managerial relationships that support effective practice and motivate continuous improvement. Hence, the impact of effective teachers on students is well established, but what happens when a teacher, no matter new or experienced, faces difficulties which should be overcome as soon as possible not to have a failure or disappointment? Those difficulties may be of various kind: increasing class sizes, students' cultural and language diversity, changes in curricula standards, rapid developments in teaching practices. Here the institute of the instructional coaching comes handy. So, how can instructional coaches support the established environment of secure and trusting educational relationships?

Instructional coaching is an alternative educational method that helps develop teaching staff. The method uses the principles of deliberate practice and allows teachers to learn effective habits and accomplish their target goals by achieving a series of sub-goals with the assistance of a coach. An instructional coach works with teachers to improve the quality of their lessons and the quality of students'

education. They serve as mentors and role models, helping teachers stay fresh and use the latest techniques and technologies in their classrooms. Instructional coaches partner with teachers to help them improve teaching and learning so students are more successful. To do this, coaches collaborate with teachers to get a clear picture of current reality, identify goals, pick teaching strategies to meet the goals, monitor progress, and problem solve until the goals are met. This doesn't only apply to new teachers – all teachers have areas in which they can improve, and the most efficient way of doing this is to undergo direct, explicit instruction. Also, when feedback is given in majority of cases it is highly generic, specifying what needs to be changed but not how the change can happen. Feedback like 'You need to improve your questioning' is equivalent to a footballer being told 'You need to score more goals' or a surgeon being told 'You need to heal more patients'! As we can understand from the above mentioned examples, general feedback and instructions won't help; they should be specific, pointing out the problem and suggesting solutions with vivid examples.

II. STUDIES AND FINDINGS

We should state that trustful and respectful relationships are a necessary component for all forms of coaching. In order to work toward improving classroom instruction, coaches engage in a variety of in-class activities such as modeling instructional methods, observing teachers at work, out of class activities, co-planning, analyzing student data, developing curricula, and conferencing with teachers. [7],[2]

Instructional coaching inspires teachers to grow and develop their expertise in the field. Here are some steps that may help you conduct effective coaching cycle:

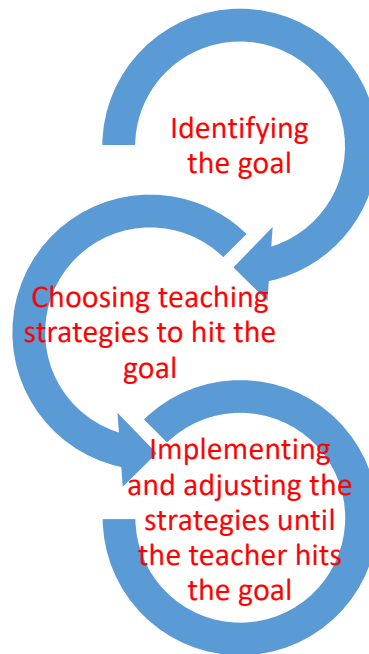


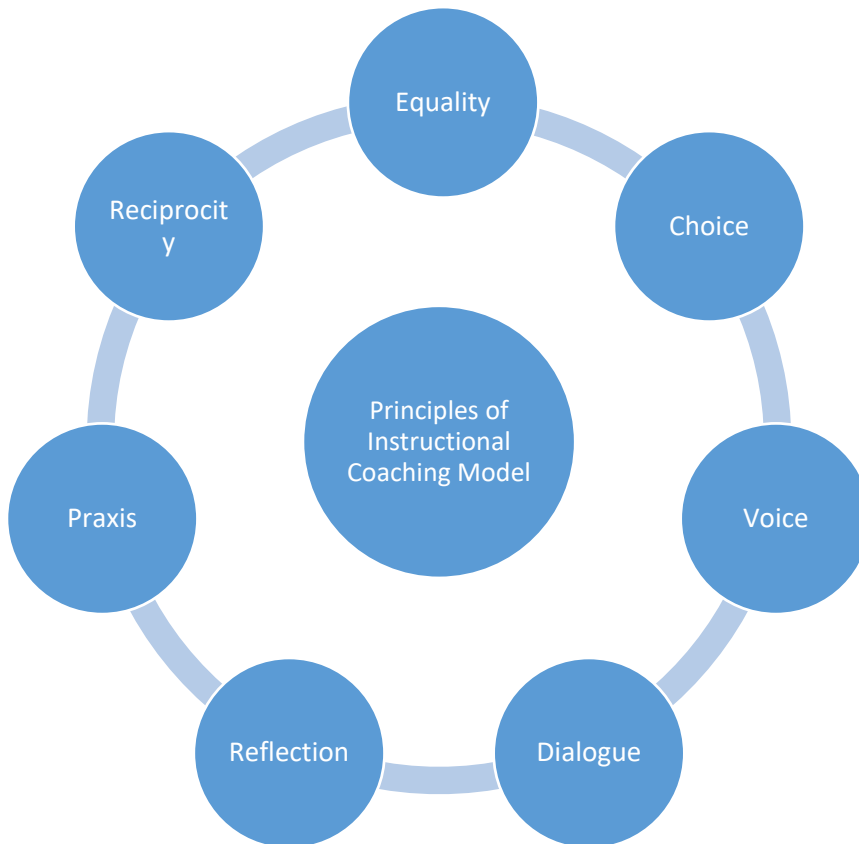
Table 1: Coaching cycle

1. During the first meeting with the teacher who we are intended to coach, we should discuss their goals and career aspirations. It is recommended to apply the information gained to your teaching style and work with the teacher to create a realistic growth plan that helps them accomplish a long-term goal. To make the journey easier and simply more fun, we can set several smaller goals, or milestones, that help with maintaining motivation and evaluating the cycle's progress.

2. Diversifying our teaching efforts may make our sessions more effective and enlightening for the teacher we coach. For instance, we may use research strategies to prepare them for each coaching cycle and then invest our energy in encouraging them to engage in practice-based learning. This may be especially beneficial if we're new to coaching, as it may also help with discovering which path you want to focus on in the future.
3. During each one-on-one session, we should observe the teachers' behavior and carefully listen to what they're saying. We may also take notes during our meetings. Remember to encourage openness by maintaining an atmosphere of trust and honesty. This may help us develop a stronger bond with the person you're coaching and better understand their thoughts and everyday challenges.

After each session, we can quickly evaluate the notes we took and share positive and negative feedback that helps the teacher reflect on their progress, approach or mindset. Sharing honest feedback that incorporates both positives and negatives allows us to inspire someone's growth. Whenever the feedback we want to share is negative, we must provide examples of how they may improve their processes, behavior or mindset. This way, we show them that there's always a way to grow. [4]

The instructional coaching model is grounded in the seven principles of 'partnership philosophy' as delineated by Jim Knight:



1. Equality: instructional coaches and teachers are equal partners
2. Choice: teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn
3. Voice: professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers
4. Dialogue: professional learning should enable authentic dialogue
5. Reflection: reflection is an integral part of professional learning
6. Praxis: teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning

7. Reciprocity: instructional coaches should expect to get as much as they give (5)

Table 2: Principles of Instructional coaching model

Until now, the area of instructional coaching hasn't been extensively studied in Armenia. In some of our schools we have implemented the culture of instructional coaching, but widely speaking, there is a gap between the coach and the teachers, as the teachers reflect to the coaches' recommendations and advice as directive instructions. This is a current practice in many schools, where observations are largely about judging the effectiveness of a teacher. Maybe, it is because before enforcing instructional coaching, schools, and particularly teachers, must understand how coaching can affect students, principals and teachers. Empirical evidence validates the necessity for instructional coaching in schools. Research reveals that instructional coaching encourages reflection and collaboration. Also, the research revealed that effective coaching widens teacher capacity by promoting positive cultural change and by embedding professional teacher learning.

In the 1970s, evaluations of professional development that focused on teaching strategies and curriculum revealed that as few as 10 percent of the participants implemented what they had learned. Well-researched curriculum and teaching models did not find their way into general practice and thus could not influence students' learning environments. However, through implementing seminars and coaching sessions, results were consistent: implementation rose dramatically.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, we recommend that teachers who study teaching and curriculum form small coaching groups that will share the learning process. In this way professional development might directly affect student learning. [9]

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