

Naslov članka/Article:

## Collegial Support in Schools: Potential and Challenges

Kolegialna podpora v šolah: priložnosti in izzivi

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.59132/vviz/2023/54/62-83>

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Priznanje avtorstva-Nekomercialno-Brez predelav



### Vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju 54 št. 1/2023, letnik 21

ISSN 1581-8225 (tiskana izdaja)

ISSN 2630-421x (spletna izdaja)

Izdal in založil: Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo

Kraj in leto izdaje: Ljubljana, 2023

Spletna stran revije:

<https://www.zrss.si/strokovne-revije/vodenje-v-vzgoji-in-izobrazevanju/>

# Collegial Support in Schools: Potential and Challenges

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## Abstract

*The aim of the text is to present selected results of research focused on coaching and respectively other forms of collegial support in schools, on conditions for the implementation of these forms in schools and, to a certain degree, also on practice in sectors other than education. The data shows different and often lacking support of these forms of professional development in the school systems, including unclear financing. This is so even though these forms seem to be principal for the support of quality work for people in schools, just as they were proven principal in other organisations, and it is desirable to develop them in schools as well.*

**Keywords:** *coaching | mentoring | supervision | collegial support | schools | school leaders*

## Kolegialna podpora v šolah: priložnosti in izzivi

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### Povzetek

Namen prispevka je predstaviti izbrane rezultate raziskav, ki so se osredotočale na coaching oziroma druge oblike kolegialne podpore v šolah, na pogoje za izvajanje omenjene podpore v šolah in v določeni meri tudi na prakso v drugih sektorjih, ne le v šolstvu. Podatki kažejo, da so takšne oblike profesionalnega razvoja v šolskih sistemih zelo različne in zanje primanjkuje podpore, obenem pa je nejasno tudi financiranje – čeprav so omenjene oblike podpore ključne za kakovostno delo zaposlenih v šolah, ravno tako kot so se izkazale za bistvene v drugih organizacijah, zato bi jih bilo treba razvijati tudi v šolah.

**Ključne besede:** coaching | mentorstvo | supervizija | kolegialna podpora | šole | vodje šol

## 1. Introduction

A rapidly changing society places increasing demands on teachers to provide effective education and instruction. To meet these demands, teachers must adopt and acquire new professional practices, skills, competences, and knowledge. This does not only relate to their intake of new knowledge but also to their ability to use their individual potential and implicit knowledge in taking on various forms of teacher support such as coaching, mentoring and supervision. The potential of these types of support for professional development, indisputable as it is, has been used in a variety of forms and intensities in various European countries.

In the last decades, there has been a growing debate about the efficiency of internal support for teachers, and plenty of research has been conducted. The research clearly indicates that professional and collegial support in the workplace is a useful stimulus for the development of competencies and the improvement of teaching quality (Devine, Housseman, & Meyers, 2013; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). However, it also helps to prevent burn-out syndrome, supports teachers' wellbeing, decreases professional stress, supports good relationships in the organisation and serves as a potentially positive influence for the school's development as a whole (Allan, 2007; Brock & Beama-Diglia, 2018; and more). Furthermore, research confirms that teachers who have been coached or mentored are more likely than non-coached peers to transfer newly acquired teaching practices into the classroom (Cornett & Knight, 2009). It is also known that the collegial support in all forms decreases the risk of developing burnout syndrome and, at the same time, increases teachers' commitment to the school. Several studies demonstrate its potential for increasing student achievement (Kretlow et al., 2012; Stormont et al., 2015). Meanwhile, there is often less attention given to collegial support in schools than to education through the means of internal or external courses and seminars. Data from Talis showed relatively low participation of teachers in peer collaboration, coaching or mentoring relations, learning visits etc. (Eurydice, 2018, 2021). It is also beyond doubt that the management in schools hold an important role in supporting these activities (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013).

It is the support of coaching on which the Erasmus+ project titled ‘Coaching for Staff Professional Development in Education’ (CoDe)<sup>1</sup> was focused. The primary aim of this three-year-long project, which started in 2019, was to explore the experience and best practices of partner countries in using coaching as a tool for more effective change management and for creating a supportive and growth-oriented environment, and additionally to identify the opportunities that coaching provides for staff development and collaboration. The project focused on the transfer of potential and experience from coaching activities in companies into schools as well.

In this text, the primary focus is put on coaching in schools. It is evident that collegial support incorporates a whole range of forms. Among the forms of collegial support most often mentioned include coaching, then also mentoring and supervision.

All these forms of support usually take place directly in the workplace and are implemented by internal or external employees. In the secondary research, which was done as a part of the above-mentioned project, the focus was intentionally broadened to other forms of collegial support due to a whole range of reasons described in the methodology section below.

## **2. Coaching, Mentoring and Supervision as the Forms of Professional Support in Schools**

The term ‘coaching’, which is the primary focus of the aforementioned project, is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as ‘mentoring’, ‘teaching’, ‘tutoring’ (van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2016) and sometimes with the term ‘supervision’ as well. All these forms of ‘collegial support’ are used in the education milieu and they are not strictly differentiated from one another. In this text, we focus on coaching, mentoring and supervision because these forms of collegial support are typically (though not uniformly) used in partner countries participating in the project and they therefore became the center of the project’s concern.

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1 CoDe, ref. number 2019-1-LV01-KA201-060345. Project’s coordinator is the National Centre for Education (VISC - Latvia), in partnership with Information Services of Riga City (Latvia /LV/), Masaryk University (Czech Republic /CZ/), Learn Sheffield (United Kingdom /UK/), Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (Cyprus /CY/), Education and Teacher Training Agency (Croatia /HR/) and School Inspectorate of Iasi County (Romania /RO/).

**Coaching** has traditionally been associated with sports and business; however, the idea of coaching has already been present in the school environment for many years as well. Coaching has been defined in many ways and there is currently no agreed definition of coaching. However, there is a broad agreement that coaching is an intervention that can help people to achieve their goals or improve performance through structured conversations (Gormley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore, 2012).

Similarly to mentoring and supervision, coaching is considered a powerful tool for personal change and learning. In other words, coaching is considered a collaborative relationship between a coach and a participant, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and to employ a goal attainment process with the aim of fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the participant (Grant & Stober, 2006). Coaching is understood as a facilitative intervention, which is aimed at supporting a coachee in taking responsibility for adapting his/her behavior or ways of thinking in order to achieve better results (Whitemore, 2009). At the core of the coaching approach, there is the facilitation of learning which uses active listening and inquiry and provides appropriate challenge and support (Devine, Meyers, & Houssemand, 2013).

Within the educational setting, the term ‘coaching in education’ covers a broad range of interventions with the objective of improving outcomes for learners. The goal of a coach in schools is to improve student achievement by building teachers’ capacity and understanding of instructional practices (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Similarly, van Nieuwerburgh (2012, p. 17) states that coaching in education is ‘A one-to-one conversation that focuses on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate’.

Devine, Meyers, and Houssemand (2013, p. 1383-4), supported by a great number of other authors, summarise several types of coaching in the education field based on their focus and methods of work: behavioral coaching, solution-focused coaching, cognitive-behavioral approaches, executive coaching (or coaching for educational leadership) and peer coaching.

In schools, coaching is offered not only to the school's management, teachers and advisors, but to students as well (Whitmore, 2009). "Participants" of coaching (similarly to mentoring and supervision) therefore do not have to be only the teachers, but student teachers or students of the school as well.

In contrast to mentoring, coaching is not focused directly on gaining professional competencies with professional support from an expert in the field. It is understood more widely as a tool for 'unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance' (Whitmore, 2009, p. 10). The coach is not necessarily a domain-specific specialist (Grant & Stober, 2006); however, he/she should be prepared to lead the process of coaching.

On the contrary, in mentoring it is usually demanded that the mentor has the same or similar expertise as the mentee (Jonson, 2008) even though the term mentoring is not only encountered on the professional level. It can be understood as a support of the youth in their growth and direction (Goldner & Maysel, 2009).

**Mentoring** is considered one of the oldest models of human development. Literature focused on professional development defines mentoring as a relationship between the more experienced and those less experienced with the more experienced offering support, advice or help. A mentor is considered a friend, "guide", and especially as a teacher (Drago-Severson, 2004). Usually, mentorship is the special relationship that is cultivated between a mentor and protégé whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both personally and professionally (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000).

In school practice, mentoring is often connected to the induction of beginner teachers (Jonson, 2008; Portner, 2005) or even students of teaching (Pířová et al., 2011) with its aim being especially to support professional growth. Mentoring, however, does not only aim to support beginners but has an important role in the peer support of experienced teachers as well, with the objective of improving the quality of teaching, support collaboration in the school, and the prevention of burnout syndrome.

The term **supervision** evokes monitoring and control from superiors (Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001); however, both the process and the aims of supervision have a variety of forms and models. It is a form of support



rather typical for care-providing professions, originally used in clinical practice and social work especially. Together with the increasing number of specialised employees (school psychologists, counsellors and more) in schools, this term has gradually settled in the education field as well. In recent years, an emphasis has been put on “healthy” relations in schools. There has also been an increase of pupils at risk. Therefore, relationship supervision and clinical supervision have found themselves in an important position in schools. This means that in the school milieu both “clinical supervision” (focused on parents or pupils as “participants”) and the “managerial model of supervision”, which suggests rather a controlling version of supervision, can occur. In the last few decades, supervision has been looked upon (similarly to coaching and mentoring) especially as a type of help and support. In this sense, it could imply the “cooperative model” of supervision which accentuates rather the process of learning (Orlans & Edwards, 2001).

Supervision can be aimed at improving self-awareness or understanding of a given situation, nurturing creative thinking and developing new perspectives of professional behavior. The supervisor helps the supervised individual, group or organisation to pay attention to and reflect on his/her/their work, relations, and find new solutions to problematic situations.

Supervision is more typically provided by an external supervisor – expert in the given field with training in supervision – and it does not necessarily have to be a long term relationship, which is more typical in mentoring. In many cases, it is therefore not a “classical” form of collegial support, even though it has an irreplaceable position in some schools and school systems as a form of professional development.

It is therefore possible to summarise the presented forms of collegial support that are the center of interest of this project as having different histories and different aims that can be partially differentiated (in mentoring, there is the focus on specific professional competency; in supervision, there is the supervision of a difficult case or work promotion; or in coaching, the development of people’s potential).

If all three presented forms are understood as non-directive collegial support with the objective of supporting professional growth, then it is possible to refer to the similarities in regards to relations, contracts or processes and methods used in all forms of collegial support (active listening, open

dialogue, techniques for increasing self-awareness and taking responsibility, and more). In the last few decades, non-directive approaches have been typical not only for coaching, but for mentoring and supervision as well. Whitmore (2009) explicitly states that coaching is about ‘helping [people] to learn, rather than teaching them’, thus setting ‘coaching’ apart from ‘teaching’. This can similarly be said about mentoring and supervision. In this sense, all forms of collegial support can broaden the repertoire of educators by providing a non-directive approach which supports others to learn for themselves. When it comes to practice and their relationship, these forms overlap in many cases and often can only be differentiated from one another by the specific term that is traditionally used in a specific institution. It is therefore likely necessary to count on the fact that in various schools these terms will keep being used in many cases inaccurately, with regards their needs, context and traditions.

In connection to the implementation of all forms of collegial support in schools, it is important to mention the role of school administrations, which have the objective of creating not only a comprehensible and manageable program for the realisation of collegial support, but particularly to also support a climate and culture in which collaboration and sharing between teachers will thrive (Evans 2011).

A range of authors offer inspiration for individual steps in implementing programs of mentoring or coaching and provide recommendations on improving the culture of collegial support (Aguilar, 2019; Brock, 1999; Creasy & Paterson, 2005; Gromley & van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; Tolhurst, 2010).

A school is a specific institution which has a specific time structure and organisation; the profession of a teacher is often labeled as individualistic. A teacher is ready to pass on rather than to receive (knowledge, stimuli), and the culture of openness can be threatening to him/her. Furthermore, after their work in class teachers often do not have enough energy to do time-demanding activities (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992).

Hawkins (2012) describes the need for a ‘coaching infrastructure’ which includes governance and management aspects and a requirement for integration of coaching interventions within an organisation together with an evaluation of impact. Van Nieuwerburgh & Passmore (2012) identify the characteristics of effective coaching, which seem to be analogically relat-

able to mentoring and supporting supervision: mutual trust, timeliness, awareness of the need for change, ownership of goals, supportive relationships, genuine care and a positive outlook. It is suggested that these characteristics could inform a school-wide ‘collegial support culture for learning’.

## 3. Professional Support of Teachers in Selected Countries – from Qualitative Research

### 3.1 Methodology

The first task of the project was the secondary research with its aims being: (1) to describe the arrangement, opportunities and limitations of coaching in selected schools and companies, and (2) to identify the specifics and challenges/limitations of the implementation of coaching in selected schools. For these purposes, we opted for a qualitative approach. During January and February 2020, we conducted in-depth interviews with selected coaches and coachees (those who provide and receive support) in each partner country. The questioning structure for coaches was as follows:

- *What is the target group of your coaching?*
- *How is the coaching process organised in the institutions you are involved in?*
- *What are the main coaching topics?*
- *What is the impact of coaching?*
- *Where are the major limitations?*

As to the semi-structured interviews with coachees, the structure of questions was as follows:

- *What were your expectations related to coaching?*
- *How is coaching organised in your institution/school?*
- *What is the benefit/impact of the coaching?*
- *Where are the limitations of the coaching?*

The data was obtained through 27 interviews with men and women of various ages, respectively:

15 coaches (mentors, supervisors) active in various sectors (schools of various levels, NGOs, businesses) and various professions or positions – headteachers, business managers, educators, school counsellors etc.; and 12 coachees (mentees, supervisees) active as teachers and headteachers, educators, clown-doctors, athletes, and leaders in various sectors such as schools, businesses and NGOs.

The respondents were coaches and coachees from various sectors since we intentionally focused on inspiration also from a non-education environment. During the dialogues at schools, it was not, however, possible to focus only on coaches, as different forms of support were typical for the schools in partnered countries. Aside from coaches and coachees, supervisors/supervisees and mentors/mentees were therefore also our respondents from schools.

Thus, it was not possible to distinguish unambiguously between data valid for coaching in companies and that in schools; they agree with, one other in many respects and we do not have data on identical types of respondents from all countries. The criteria for a strict selection of respondents could not be adjusted because some coaches were involved in multiple forms of support and were engaged in a variety of organisations. Identifiable differences in coaching in businesses, NGOs, schools, and other institutions, as well between countries, are pointed out as they are encountered.

This text does not take into consideration coaching alone, but refers to all these forms of professional support. In line with the focus of this project, we will predominantly use the term ‘coaching’ although it is evident that ‘mentoring’ or ‘supervision’ might be used as well. The data shows that coaching is connected with the continuous development of competences and personal potential. It is free of intentions to externally evaluate the status quo, or any errors committed.

*Some 7-8 years ago, the perception of coaching was like ‘fixing a problem’... there were negative reactions from the employees... if they offer me coaching, it means I am problematic. Today, it is seen as ‘top talent development’ and the company wishes to retain these people and invest in them. The positive perception is: you are valuable; therefore, we give you a coach. (HR)*

The interviews were conducted in the respective languages of the partner countries, recorded and transcribed. The data was categorised with open

coding and arranged into an interpretation framework in relation to the research questions. In order to strengthen the validity of the gathered data, the authors/researchers evidenced these categories with respondents' direct quotations.

In this text, only selected data is presented.

### 3.2 Selected results: Main topics, Expectations and the Impacts of Coaching

The main topics and expectations from coaching are connected to the development of personal potential (i.e., development of personal competences or personal potential, communication skills, creativity, independence, and the ability to take decisions and responsibility). In the schooling sector, the coaches commented on the need to develop teachers' well-being, self-recognition, positive view of themselves, self-confidence, and work satisfaction.

*Sometimes they need to adopt a feeling of self-confidence, but in the beginning, they don't tell you, of course... Sometimes it's weird to see how insecure teachers are, it's just horrible self-exploration, they are stuck in bitter doubts... It's a part of their insecure profession. (CZ)*

The coaches consider positive support to be one of the most important objectives of coaching. Besides the development of personal competencies, the participants expect the development of professional skills as well. In schools, specifically, the objective is support which develops the quality of teaching, innovations in teaching, testing of new methods and the quest for options to promote school success, class management and so forth. Coaching makes it possible for teachers to realise that a problem is not their fault and helps them to discover and use hidden skills and knowledge. In the process of coaching, teachers and school leaders must often solve problems of work relations on all levels: between leaders and teachers, between teachers, between teachers and pupils, between teachers and parents, between leaders and the establishing entities. School leaders expect that coaching will clarify their leadership roles, improve their competences in staff leadership and, consequently, increase the quality of work. It is evident that the expectations are not only related to the development of individuals or teams, but to whole organisations as well.

*I'm speaking as headteacher now: I've had mentoring and coaching here for years, and first of all I expected it would change the school culture. I thought teachers would start talking to each other and learn to support each other. (CZ)*

If coaching is sponsored by an organisation or project, there can be a more or less specific topic in which the organisation is interested (e.g., improvement of relations), especially in the case of group coaching or supervision. However, objectives and expectations should be the participant's own or, at least, agreed on by a group of participants.

*The sponsor tells the coachee: These are your main qualities and strengths, and these are the prospective areas for your development, so my expectations from the process are the following... When the organisation orders coaching, first a contract is signed with the sponsor. The sponsor defines what the coach should achieve during the process... (HR)*

As to specific topics of coaching in businesses, coaches mainly mention: time management, change management, problem solving, human relation management, capacity building and innovations in the company, among others.

The respondents described the impacts of coaching in relation to the expectations and aims of the coaching. They commented on the impacts of the coaching in many domains: the change in thinking, attitudes and working behavior, the improvement of performance, awareness, and the calming effect. If performance is difficult to evaluate in schools, so is the effect of coaching on pupils' learning. Most impacts cannot be seen immediately; some coaches say it takes half a year at least. The respondents opine that positive effects are faster and more important if the coachee has been coached before.

According to the respondents, teachers and other coachees can calm down, adopt more self-confidence and self-assurance, and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. People feel better about themselves (UK). Furthermore, coaching enables people to find time for themselves and think about their work and themselves in a safe, understanding and uncritical setting. They also have the opportunity to reflect on their goals, current reality and resources, both their own and external.

The impacts of coaching are often discussed, because most of them cannot be seen immediately and are hardly measurable. On the other hand, some coaches observe teachers in classes, therefore they can observe the changes directly. In the evaluation of impacts, the coaches often rely solely on their feelings.

*I feel there's an impact on the school. If this observation is a positive example, teachers won't be afraid when someone comes to observe their lessons next time. Introducing the culture of observation can change school culture as such and help the school to open up. (LV)*

*A clear impact for individuals working at the school was that there was a self-esteem 'boost' for the participants... This foundation of trust in the individual means that they are confident in moving the process forward... People are more inclined to reform rather than repeat unsuccessful behaviour. (UK)*

Unlike schools, businesses and manufacturing companies generate results that are more clearly measurable for both the whole organisation and individual employees. Therefore, coaching must have a clear and valuable effect on the performance of teams as well as individuals.

An important expectation and realistic impact of collegial support that was mentioned by the respondents is also the influence on the school's culture. The main indicators of changes occurring in school culture are modifications in teachers' openness and increased courage to collaborate, express doubts and try new things. The open culture of a school is therefore a condition for success in establishing all forms of teacher support, and these processes also support an open and collaborative school culture.

### 3.3 Selected results: Limitations Related to Coaching

According to our respondents, relevant limitations are related to the organisation of coaching, the coachees and coaches. Coaches and coachees remark that there is a lack of infrastructure, facilities and funding in other settings too.

In the school systems of some of the participating countries (e.g., Czech Republic), the system of mentoring or coaching in schools is mainly built on European projects, while specific communities promote coaching in

British schools, generating isotopes of good practice. With regards to where the system is lacking, the requirements for education of coaches who should provide support for schools are usually defined in an unclear way. A different system is offered in Croatia where supervision is provided centrally. Some institutions with a closed organisational culture can face a variety of burdens, which naturally happens in and beyond the domain of schools.

*Mistrustful individuals create mistrustful systems. Some systems believe themselves to be self-sufficient. There's also prejudice that helpers, due to their profession, are good at helping themselves, which isn't true. When I know, as a helper, that I need help, it's a sign of being mature in terms of my profession. (HR)*

Several questions emerge in some of the countries involved: Who are in fact the coaches in education? What should their training consist of? Who should finance coaching in schools? Who should have access to coaching in schools? Financing through projects is a limiting factor as it does not guarantee sustainability. Once the project financial support is over, coaching does not survive long. Moreover, coaching administered through a project can result in formal discharge of the duties and an increased administrative load. In a very few instances headteachers strive for their own internal system of coaching/mentoring and intend to train most teachers in coaching/mentoring. These can then provide support to each other. Particular attention is paid to the option of coaching by superiors, which is considered limiting by the coaches themselves.

*As headteacher I avoid coaching and mentoring in my own school, although the double role of a headteacher coach would be immensely useful for me. I could disseminate a specific form of communication in the school, using the principles of coaching, but I don't do it. (CZ)*

However, every system requires a clear distribution of roles, tasks and responsibilities, and the necessary transparency. In education, local coaches and mentors do not usually work full-time but are encouraged to pursue their main job (as teachers, consultants, lecturers, and so on) and their education; authorisation and responsibilities among others must be clear.

The more coaching is enforced in a top-down fashion (by school leaders, education policy and others), the more it will be formalised. Also, the



more it is perceived as reaction to mistakes, the bigger the probability is that coaching will not be accepted positively by all people in the school. This, of course, is true beyond schools as well: coaches in all domains sometimes work with unwilling participants, which makes their work frustrating for both sides.

*The biggest problem comes when a company hires a coach for someone who's not interested in personal development, when coaching is used as a punishment and managers don't know what to do with an employee, having unrealistic expectations that coaching can change the guy. I find it unacceptable, and I have an agreement with the companies I work for: coaching is for those who are successful and want more. (HR)*

It is the problem participants, in particular those who are unwilling or on the threshold in terms of their personality, or even mentally ill, whom the respondents consider to be one of the most important limitations for their work. Also, the group of challenging participants includes those who have unrealistic expectations or are not prepared for accepting support. These participants are not able to be open in an adequate way, express feelings, reflect, be authentic and have confidence.

*(A lack of) emotional barriers, empathy and willingness to speak openly with another individual are paramount factors for the effectiveness of the coaching process. So is the authentic involvement of both parties in the process, clear goals, relevant and complete information, mutual trust and respect. (RO)*

In failed cases, coaches are helped with supervision and observation of work psycho-hygiene. In any case, all participants are steered towards taking responsibility for the results of coaching, their own development and the change they find the resolve to make. The coach is mainly responsible for the process and his/her professional approach and readiness.

Some coaches can see another limitation in the fact that coachees or the leaders of the organisation do not understand the mission of coaching and fear it. Teachers can be afraid of being watched by someone who would discover their mistakes; they are afraid of criticism.

*One of the big misunderstandings is what coaching is. People often mix up the terms coach, trainer and consultant. The coach is seen as someone*

*who gives advice and offers solutions, which is not the case... Supervision sounds to people like some sort of control. Someone will check how good or not good I am, and my superior may find out. (HR)*

It again confirms that the misapprehension of the concept of coaching or a bad initial experience can affect the attitude of teachers and the whole school for a long time. Therefore, a selection of great coaches is essential for successful coaching.

We mentioned in the beginning that many of our respondents worked as both coaches and mentors, without many distinguishing features between these two forms of work. Though they can distinguish between coaching, mentoring and supervision in theory, the ways of work merge into each other in practice. Also, they use similar work procedures and techniques and do not ponder about whether it is coaching or mentoring. They do not consider it important to distinguish between coaching and mentoring 'here and now'.

*I simply can't differentiate whether I do coaching or supervision. If it digresses somewhere I can't say this is supervision, which is what I don't do, so let's call it a day. That's why I don't differentiate sometimes. (CZ)*

As already remarked, coaches with an unclear professional identity and those frustrated by difficult communication with challenging participants or even organisations are supported with supervision and psycho-hygiene.

Special attention was paid by respondent coaches to their own possibilities and limitations. They mentioned conditions under which coaching cannot be carried out properly. Not only does this refer to the type of participants discussed above, lack of time or remuneration, but also one's own mood. The coaches say that they must not have the feeling of being overloaded, manipulated and acting as if they were a victim.

*This can't be done in a rush. I've got to get in the mood, prepare myself, sometimes I first read what we did last time so that I get started more easily. Then I feel I'm not absent-minded. Once I took my notebook with me and prepared for lessons on the train, but it was strange then... I've got to take my time with self-reflection... calm down and slow down. I miss this in my hectic life. I've got to start coolheaded, have a coffee, get myself in the mood in the car. I have to concentrate. (CZ)*

Although money is not always an essential condition, it plays its role, and coaching in schools must be appreciated and remunerated. Also, coaches say that sometimes they can feel pressure from participants or organisations about expressing certain opinions or attitudes. It is a true test of professionalism to maintain neutrality and keep a distance, a detached view and impartiality.

## 4. Discussion

The character of teachers' work is related to the specificities of school culture, which is different from the culture of businesses. It is also a matter of employer-employee relations, interpersonal relations, methods of communication and evaluation of work. According to the respondents, what are the main differences between coaching in schools and businesses?

There are two main types of career structures in teaching: flat (single level) and hierarchical (multi-level). Half of the education systems in Europe organise their career structures hierarchically, in formal ascending career levels, usually denoting a greater complexity of tasks and responsibilities. However, in many countries, the teacher career remains rather flat (Eurydice, 2018). Within the school there are not many levels for a teacher to ascend, and they usually do not engage outside school.

Coaching in businesses is more closely related to career growth and people are more often reminded that it is up to them to decide how they will grow (Hillman et al., 1990). Employees in companies know that responsibility and career growth is in their hands, so they are more motivated to be responsible for themselves. The data from our research confirms that people in companies are more often reminded that it is up to them to decide how they will grow. People in companies receive more feedback on their work and their managers evaluate their performance more profoundly, suggesting topics for coaching of individuals and teams.

Conversely, in schools and NGOs, more attention is given to employees' current needs. Coaches in companies are used to deploying a variety of tools (e.g., questionnaires) for diagnosing and evaluating the effects of their work; they are professionals and require the best working conditions (The Coaching, undated).

The above-presented data shows that coaching systems in businesses are more transparently anchored, particularly in big companies, as part of an

employees' professional development. The responsibility for these processes is usually carried by HR departments. It is an integral component in large companies whose leaders plan, organise and evaluate coaching. On the other hand, in schools teachers might feel that coaching and mentoring have a lesser impact on their professional growth and on bettering their position in the school. People can lack motivation for coaching and supervision in schools where coaching is financed through projects and a transparent and sustainable system is missing, or in NGOs where supervision is ordered (and provided 'free'). Teachers can also feel that they are only 'completing someone else's objectives'. Worthy of mention is also the higher professionalisation of coaches in the business sphere, where coaches are clearly certified and use more tools for diagnosing and evaluating the effects.

If we want to transfer some of the good experience and traditions of coaching from businesses to schools, it is, first of all, necessary to take into consideration and respect the specificities of schools as organisations (Pol, 2007) as well as the specifics of teaching. The coaching of teachers in schools is specific because of the target group; teachers are used to 'transferring the truth' and working individually. They do not like to reveal their work, they protect their know-how and use a certain time structure in which there is no scope left for collegial discussions. Therefore, teachers who have no experience with coaching look at these processes distrustfully, considering them to be aimed at revealing errors rather than a development activity and learning process.

## **Conclusions**

The differences between coaching in companies and schools reflect the distinct forms of financing and internal adjustments of culture and accountability. Commercial businesses can invest large amounts in coaching and require clear evidence of efficiency. Coaching in them is more professionalised and is a part of human resource development, helping the career advancement of employees.

As for schooling, it seems that there is generally a lack of experience and high-quality tools that could facilitate the work of coaches. Moreover, despite the shift to evidence-based interventions, it is questionable to what extent we measure the efficiency of coaching in schools. Schools, which are accountable to their establishing entities, must abide by relevant legis-

lation; coaching therefore must face a variety of limitations. Most of them are related to financing and coach training. Some countries have adjusted coaching or supervision systems in schools according to their legislation, whilst others feature coaching in schools as rather an informal or semi-formalised process.

The data shows that an important introductory step is to increase the awareness of schools/teachers about coaching and similar forms of collegial support. At the same time, it is necessary to present these processes as helpful, not to penalise or expose errors. Teachers' trust in these forms of collegial support can be increased by a good first experience with expert coaches. Indeed, a bad first coaching experience, lack of transparency and unclear systems can cause more harm than good. The role of school leaders is essential in this context.

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