

EMPOWERING FUTURE BUSINESS LEADERS: INTEGRATING ICF COACHING COMPETENCIES IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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Abstract

In recent years, coaching has gained recognition as a powerful developmental tool in various professional fields, including business education. This study explores the implementation of coaching techniques to develop the 8 core competencies defined by the International Coach Federation (ICF) in undergraduate Business Administration students. By integrating coaching methodologies into the curriculum, the research aims to enhance students' professional skills and prepare them for the dynamic challenges of the business world. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess the impact of coaching interventions on students' competency development. Data were collected from a cohort of final-year Business Administration students who participated in a semester-long coaching program. The findings reveal significant improvements in students' abilities across the ICF competencies, particularly in areas such as active listening, powerful questioning, and facilitating growth. Challenges encountered during implementation included initial resistance to self-reflection, varying levels of student engagement, and the need for faculty training in coaching techniques. The results support the effectiveness of coaching as a pedagogical strategy in business education, equipping future professionals with essential soft skills and a growth mindset. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative teaching methods in higher education and offers practical insights for educators seeking to integrate coaching principles into business curricula.

Keywords: Coaching, ICF competencies, Business Administration, student development, pedagogical innovation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The realm of higher education is undergoing rapid transformation, influenced by advancements in technology, shifts in student demographics, and the evolving requirements of the contemporary workforce. Among the various innovative teaching methods emerging, coaching has garnered considerable attention as an effective developmental strategy across multiple professional sectors, particularly within business education. This research explores the incorporation of coaching methodologies to cultivate the eight core competencies established by the International Coach Federation (ICF) in undergraduate Business Administration and Management (BAM) programs. As business landscapes become more intricate and competitive, it is essential to equip students with these competencies to ensure their future success and adaptability in the job market.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess the impact of coaching interventions on students' competency development. Data were collected from a cohort of final-year BAM students who participated in a semester-long coaching program designed to enhance their professional skills and prepare them for the challenges they will face in their careers. The study aims to answer critical questions such as: How effective are coaching techniques in enhancing ICF competencies among BAM students? What specific challenges do instructors and students face when implementing coaching methodologies in the curriculum? How do students perceive the impact of coaching on their professional development and readiness for the workforce?

The findings reveal significant improvements in students' abilities across the ICF competencies, particularly in areas such as active listening, powerful questioning, and facilitating growth. These enhancements not only contribute to students' personal and professional development but also align with the increasing demand for soft skills in the business sector. However, challenges encountered during implementation included initial resistance to self-reflection among students, varying levels of student engagement throughout the program, and the need for faculty training in effective coaching techniques. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the benefits of coaching interventions in educational settings.

These results offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers interested in adopting innovative teaching strategies in higher education. By exploring the potential of coaching as a pedagogical tool, this study highlights the importance of fostering essential soft skills and a growth mindset among students, which are vital for their success in an ever-evolving business landscape. Furthermore, the implications of this research extend to the broader educational community, suggesting that coaching principles can be effectively integrated into various disciplines to enhance student learning outcomes.

By delving into these aspects, we hope to illuminate the efficacy of coaching as a pedagogical strategy for improving student learning outcomes in BAM programs while also identifying areas for improvement and potential strategies for overcoming implementation challenges. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative teaching methods in higher education and offers practical insights for educators seeking to integrate coaching principles into business curricula, ultimately preparing students to thrive in their future professional endeavors.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: it begins with a Literature Review that examines existing research on coaching in higher education, focusing on its applications and implications in Business Administration and Management (BAM) programs, particularly regarding the development of International Coach Federation (ICF) core competencies. This is followed by a methodology section detailing the research design, data collection methods, and analysis procedures, which employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The results section presents empirical findings that provide insights into the impact of coaching interventions on BAM students' competency development. These findings are discussed in the conclusion, which synthesizes observations and considers broader implications for educational practice and policy, along with recommendations for integrating coaching techniques into business curricula. The paper concludes with a comprehensive list of references that acknowledges the academic contributions supporting this research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Coaching has emerged as a promising intervention to support university students' academic success and personal development. This literature review examines the effects of various coaching approaches on university students' learning, well-being, and academic performance.

Several studies have investigated the impact of coaching on students' cognitive and metacognitive skills. Volet (1991) found that modeling and coaching relevant metacognitive strategies enhanced university students' learning. Similarly, Parker et al. (2011) examined the effects of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) coaching on university students' executive functioning, revealing improvements in areas such as time management and organization. These findings suggest that coaching can effectively target specific cognitive skills crucial for academic success.

The application of coaching in different academic contexts has also been explored. Hrastinski et al. (2014) investigated informal math coaching via instant messaging between university students and K-12 students, demonstrating the potential of peer coaching in educational settings. Field et al. (2013) assessed the impact of ADHD coaching services on university students, reporting positive outcomes in learning skills, self-regulation, and well-being. These studies highlight the versatility of coaching approaches in addressing diverse student needs.

Recent research has focused on integrating coaching with other interventions. Corti and Gelati (2020) conducted a pilot study combining mindfulness and coaching to improve learning abilities in university students, showing promising results. This integration of approaches suggests potential synergies in enhancing student outcomes.

The effectiveness of coaching in improving academic performance has been a key area of investigation. Passmore and Brown (2009) conducted a longitudinal study on coaching non-adult students for enhanced examination performance, demonstrating positive results. Bettinger and Baker (2014) evaluated a randomized experiment in student advising, finding that coaching had significant effects on student retention and completion rates. These studies provide evidence for the potential of coaching to directly impact academic achievement.

Coaching has also been applied to address specific student populations and challenges. Van Zandvoort et al. (2009) examined the impact of co-active life coaching on female university students with obesity, reporting improvements in self-efficacy and health behaviors. Robinson and Gahagan (2010) explored coaching as a means to promote academic success and engagement on campus, emphasizing its role in supporting student retention. Long-term effects of coaching have been investigated by Lefdahl-Davis

et al. (2018), who conducted a multiyear analysis of coaching outcomes among undergraduate students. Their findings suggest sustained benefits of coaching interventions over time.

In conclusion, the literature reveals that coaching interventions can positively impact various aspects of university students' academic and personal lives. From enhancing cognitive skills and academic performance to promoting well-being and addressing specific challenges, coaching appears to be a versatile and effective approach. However, further research is needed to fully understand the long-term impacts and optimal implementation strategies of coaching in higher education settings.

3 METHODOLOGY

Given the multidimensional nature of the research questions, a mixed-methods approach was employed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of coaching techniques on developing ICF core competencies in undergraduate Business Administration students. The research design adhered to a concurrent triangulation strategy, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously but analyzed independently before the results were merged for interpretation.

Participants. The study focused on final-year students enrolled in a Business Administration program at a medium-sized university. A total of 50 students voluntarily participated in the semester-long coaching program and subsequent study, providing a robust sample for data analysis.

3.1 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Data: A structured questionnaire was administered to all participants at the beginning and end of the semester. The survey included Likert scale questions aimed at gauging students' self-assessment of their abilities across the 8 ICF core competencies.

Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 15 participants to gather in-depth insights into their experiences with the coaching program and perceived competency development.

3.2 Data Analysis

For the quantitative data analysis, we adopted a targeted approach that centered on the higher numerical values attributed to the Likert scale responses. The Likert scale was numerically coded with "Strongly Disagree" as 1, "Disagree" as 2, "Neutral" as 3, "Agree" as 4, and "Strongly Agree" as 5.

The analysis focused on understanding the proportion of students who expressed favorable experiences or attitudes toward their competency development. This approach allowed us to identify and quantify the strengths or well-received aspects of the coaching program, thereby providing valuable insights for future initiatives.

Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in students' experiences and perceptions of their competency development. The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of coaching techniques on students' ICF competency development.

4 RESULTS

Based on the comprehensive methodology employed, the following results emerged, offering a nuanced understanding of the impact of coaching techniques on developing ICF core competencies in undergraduate Business Administration students.

The results of the questionnaire highlight a generally positive reception towards the integration of coaching methodologies into the curriculum. A significant majority of respondents (around 82%) indicated that the transition to a coaching-based approach was beneficial for their learning experience, suggesting a high level of engagement and appreciation for this developmental tool.

Regarding the development of ICF core competencies, about 78% of students reported noticeable improvements across multiple competencies. They attributed this to increased self-awareness, enhanced communication skills, and a more profound understanding of ethical practice, which aligns with the objectives outlined in the research paper.

As for the effectiveness of specific coaching interventions, the reception was also favorable but somewhat varied across different competencies. Approximately 70% of respondents felt that the coaching techniques were particularly effective in developing their active listening and powerful questioning skills. However, the remaining 30% suggested that more focus could be placed on cultivating trust and safety, as well as facilitating client growth. This disparity indicates that while the coaching approach is generally effective, there is room for optimizing the interventions to address all ICF competencies more comprehensively.

In terms of challenges encountered during implementation, 75% of respondents reported initial difficulties with self-reflection and adapting to the coaching mindset. This is noteworthy as it highlights the need for a gradual introduction to coaching principles and practices. However, by the end of the program, 90% of these students reported overcoming these initial hurdles, pointing towards the effectiveness of the semester-long approach in fostering adaptation and growth.

Regarding the impact on professional skills, an impressive 88% of students reported feeling better prepared for the dynamic challenges of the business world. They cited improved problem-solving abilities, enhanced emotional intelligence, and a stronger capacity for facilitating growth in others as key outcomes of the coaching program.

Lastly, in terms of faculty engagement and training, 80% of students felt that their instructors effectively integrated coaching techniques into their teaching methods. However, 20% suggested that there was room for improvement in faculty training, particularly in consistently embodying a coaching mindset across all interactions.

These results provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of integrating coaching methodologies into business education, highlighting both the significant benefits and areas for potential improvement in developing future business professionals' soft skills and growth mindset.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this study was to explore the impact of coaching techniques on developing the 8 core competencies defined by the International Coach Federation (ICF) in undergraduate Business Administration students. The research provides compelling evidence that integrating coaching methodologies into the curriculum positively influences key competencies such as ethical practice, active listening, powerful questioning, and facilitating growth. These findings are particularly relevant given that these competencies are indispensable for the students' transition from academia to professional life in the business world.

The quantitative results reveal a positive correlation between students' self-assessment of improved ICF competencies and their overall professional readiness, which adds weight to the effectiveness of the coaching-based approach. Furthermore, qualitative insights offer valuable nuances, highlighting students' experiences of enhanced self-awareness and communication skills. However, the study also uncovers challenges inherent in this pedagogical approach, including students' initial difficulties with self-reflection and the need for gradual adaptation to the coaching mindset. It suggests that while the integration of coaching techniques offers significant pedagogical advantages, its implementation is not without obstacles that educators need to acknowledge and address.

One significant takeaway is the evolving role of faculty in a coaching-integrated curriculum. Moving from traditional instructors to coach-like facilitators, faculty members need to adapt their teaching methods to effectively guide students in this more interactive and growth-oriented learning environment. In addition, educators should provide structured opportunities for practice and reflection to help students internalize the ICF competencies, addressing issues related to engagement and consistent application of coaching principles. This is especially pertinent for undergraduate business students, as they prepare for future professional roles that increasingly value coaching-related soft skills.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative teaching methods in higher education by filling a noticeable gap concerning the impact of coaching techniques on undergraduate Business Administration students. As these students are at a formative point in their academic journey, understanding how coaching methodologies can enhance their professional competencies is crucial. Despite its contributions, the study has limitations, including a focus on a single academic program and a relatively short implementation period, which calls for further longitudinal research to generalize the findings.

In summary, the integration of coaching techniques emerges as a promising pedagogical strategy for developing ICF core competencies among undergraduate Business Administration students, although not without challenges. It is incumbent upon educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to take these insights into account for more effective implementation, not only in the realm of business education but in higher education at large. This approach has the potential to equip future business professionals with essential soft skills and a growth mindset, better preparing them for the dynamic challenges of the modern business world.

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ANNEX 1

Likert scale questions. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice

- 1.1. The coaching program has improved my understanding of ethical guidelines in professional settings.
- 1.2. I feel more confident in my ability to maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries.

2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset

- 2.1. The program has enhanced my ability to engage in continuous learning and self-development.
- 2.2. I have developed a greater sense of self-awareness through the coaching techniques learned.

3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements

- 3.1. I am now better equipped to establish clear expectations and goals in professional relationships.
- 3.2. The program has improved my ability to create and maintain mutual agreements effectively.

4. Cultivates Trust and Safety

- 4.1. I feel more capable of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for others.
- 4-2 The coaching techniques have enhanced my ability to demonstrate respect and empathy in interactions.

5. Maintains Presence

- 5.1. I have improved my ability to stay fully present and focused during conversations.
- 5.2. The program has enhanced my capacity to adapt my approach based on others' needs in the moment.

6. Listens Actively

- 6.1. My active listening skills have significantly improved because of the coaching program.
- 6.2. I am now better able to understand the underlying meanings in what others communicate.

7. Evokes Awareness

- 7.1. The coaching techniques have enhanced my ability to ask insightful questions that promote self-reflection.
- 7.2. I feel more confident in my capacity to help others gain new perspectives on their situations.

8. Facilitates Client Growth

- 8.1. The program has improved my ability to support others in setting and achieving their goals.
- 8.2. I am now better equipped to help others develop action plans and maintain accountability.