

Surveying the Scholarly Landscape: A Literature Review on Enhancing Leadership Coaching Capacity for School Leadership Development

Facilitating Leadership Coach Capacity for School Leadership Development: The Intersection of Structured Community and Experiential Learning

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Abstract:- The article "Facilitating Leadership Coach Capacity for School Leadership Development: The Intersection of Structured Community and Experiential Learning" explores the development of leadership coaching capacities in experienced school leaders to support less-experienced school leaders in continuous improvement efforts. The study, conducted over a 2-year period, focuses on the Leadership Learning Community (LLC), a research-practice partnership involving predominantly rural, high-poverty schools and two universities. Through qualitative research methods, including participant observations, interviews, and artifact analysis, the authors investigate the possibilities of enhancing leadership coaching capacity through structured and experiential learning. The study adds to the limited research on leadership coaching in the context of school leadership development.

I. INTRODUCTION

The article addresses the need for ongoing professional development opportunities for school leaders to meet the increasing demands on them. It highlights the role of leadership coaching as a promising strategy for supporting school leaders and improving educational outcomes. The research question guiding the study is, "How can the leadership coaching capacities of experienced school leaders be developed to support less-experienced school leaders in leading continuous improvement efforts?"

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides an extensive background on leadership coaching, its potential benefits, and its relevance to school leadership development. It underscores the personalized nature of coaching and the advantages of coaching for school leaders, particularly in improving student achievement.

The article discusses the various definitions of coaching and coaching models, emphasizing the importance of questioning techniques and critical self-reflection in the coaching process. Leadership coaches are described as highly skilled professionals who help leaders develop their hidden potential and navigate the challenges of leadership.

III. BENEFITS OF LEADERSHIP COACHING

The article presents evidence from studies showing the positive impact of leadership coaching on school leaders' activities and professional growth. It emphasizes the personalized and context-based nature of coaching, making it a valuable tool for leadership development. The role of coaching within facilitated professional communities is highlighted, as this social interaction accelerates the professional learning of adults.

IV. DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP COACHES

The importance of developing leadership coaches is underscored, and the need for training in coaching skills and strategies is emphasized. The article suggests ongoing professional development activities like shadowing experienced coaches and participating in a community of practice to enhance coaches' abilities. It also recognizes the emotional and intensive nature of coach development.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The article adopts a constructivist view of leadership coaching development and draws on transformative learning theory. This perspective acknowledges that coaches bring their prior knowledge and experiences to the coaching relationship and that learning is a complex, ongoing process.

The conceptual framework of the study includes multiple sources of learning, such as coaching facilitators, coaching communities, and coaching experiences. These sources work in conjunction to enhance leadership coach learning through self-reflection, dialogue, and action. The study also recognizes that coaching itself is a critical source of experiential learning, allowing coaches to experiment with new strategies and assess their effectiveness.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative research, which aims to investigate how experienced school leaders' coaching capacities can be developed to support less-experienced leaders in rural, high-poverty schools. The study context is the Leadership Learning Community (LLC), a 3-year research-practice partnership between 12 predominantly rural, high-poverty schools and two universities. The LLC involves university-based facilitators working in collaboration with the schools. The study selects eight leadership coaches based on specific criteria. Data collection methods include LLC session agendas, meeting minutes, facilitators' field notes, exit surveys, coaching session reflection and preparation documents, as well as artifacts from the leaders' problems of practice. Additionally, semistructured interviews with the coaches and leaders, conducted by university-based facilitators, form a crucial part of data collection.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a multi-step process that begins informally during the data collection phase and continues throughout the study. The research team meets regularly to discuss LLC sessions, site-based coaching, and data collection. Transcripts of interviews, amounting to approximately 850 pages, are the primary data source for analysis. The analysis occurs in several rounds, with different researchers contributing to the process. The first round focuses on transcription quality. In the second round, inductive coding is applied to identify emergent codes. In the third round, deductive coding is performed based on the interview questions. A fourth round of coding categorizes the data by coach. These categories are then grouped into themes. Through this iterative process, the research team identifies key themes relevant to the development of leadership coaching capacities.

VIII. FINDINGS

The study's findings highlight three key ways in which leadership coaching capacities of experienced school leaders can be developed:

Structured and Responsive Formal Learning: The first theme emphasizes the importance of structured and responsive formal learning. During the LLC sessions, coaches engage in professional development activities. These activities focus on the development of directive, collaborative, and reflective

coaching strategies. These strategies are intended to enhance the coaches' abilities to work with leaders effectively. The use of Aguilar's transformational coaching model serves as a guide. Coaches also develop coaching protocols, including a six-phase cycle to prepare for and document coaching sessions. This structured learning approach facilitates their development as leadership coaches.

Enacting Leadership Coaching: The second theme revolves around the actual practice of leadership coaching. Coaches apply what they learn during LLC sessions in their coaching sessions with leaders. This experiential learning allows coaches to refine their coaching skills and adapt to the unique needs and contexts of their respective leaders. By working directly with leaders on their problems of practice through action research, coaches not only contribute to the leaders' growth but also enhance their own coaching capabilities.

Utilizing Leadership Coaching Facilitation: The third theme emphasizes the role of facilitation in improving coaching practice. The facilitators play a crucial role in guiding coaches and supporting their development. They debrief coaching sessions with the coaches, assisting them in structured reflections. Facilitators also help coaches address challenges encountered during the action research process. This coaching facilitation, provided by experienced facilitators, contributes significantly to the coaches' growth and their ability to support less-experienced leaders effectively.

Overall, the study highlights the multifaceted nature of developing leadership coaching capacities and underscores the significance of formal learning, experiential learning, and skilled facilitation in this process. The findings shed light on how experienced school leaders can enhance their coaching abilities to support less-experienced leaders in challenging educational settings.

IX. ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

The action research process described in the article is a crucial component of the leadership coaching development initiative, shedding light on how leadership coaches utilized and benefited from this process. The review of the action research process reveals several key points:

- **Adaptation Through Action Research:** The action research process played a pivotal role in facilitating the development of leadership coaches. It enabled the coaches to adapt to the unique coaching needs of their leaders, particularly by addressing problems of practice over an extended period. This extended duration differs from their prior coaching experiences, which often involved one-time interactions. This adaptability allowed leadership coaches to gain a deeper understanding of their leaders' problems and how to support them effectively.

- **Structured Professional Learning:** The structured nature of the leadership coaching professional learning program, including the use of leadership coaching frameworks and tools, alongside the action research process, provided the coaches with a clear direction for their interactions with their leaders. This structure aided them in understanding and applying their coaching skills during both the LLC sessions and on-site coaching visits.
- **Role Playing for Skill Development:** Role playing emerged as a valuable learning activity during the formal sessions. Coaches found this hands-on approach beneficial, as it allowed them to observe coaching interactions and provided practical examples. Role playing was particularly valuable for those who are more visual learners and appreciated the opportunity to see coaching strategies in action.
- **Feedback-Driven Improvements:** Feedback was instrumental in enhancing the coaching experience. University facilitators used feedback from LLC sessions and observations of job-embedded coaching sessions to refine and tailor future sessions to better meet the learning needs of the leadership coaches. The coaches greatly appreciated this iterative approach to improving their coaching practice.
- **Enacting Leadership Coaching:** One of the most significant aspects of the action research process was the opportunity for leadership coaches to engage in actual coaching. This hands-on experience, both during the LLC sessions and on-site visits to leaders' schools, allowed coaches to practice their coaching skills and apply what they had learned. This practical approach was highly effective in consolidating their learning and improving their coaching abilities.
- **Debriefing for Reflection:** After each job-embedded coaching session, the coaches engaged in debriefing sessions with university facilitators. These debriefs allowed them to analyze their coaching approaches, discuss the effectiveness of their interactions, and receive guidance on how to better engage with their leaders. The third-party perspective provided by the facilitators helped coaches see their progress and refine their coaching techniques.
- **Utilizing Facilitators for Development:** The university facilitators played a critical role in the coaching process. They provided modeling and guidance, helping coaches understand when to be directive and when to use other coaching approaches. The facilitators also acted as thought partners, assisting the coaches in their relationships with leaders and helping them address challenges effectively.

Overall, the action research process within the leadership coaching initiative proved to be an effective and multifaceted approach for developing leadership coaches. It allowed them to gain valuable coaching experience, receive timely feedback, and adapt their coaching strategies to best serve the needs of their leaders. The structured learning, role playing, feedback, and facilitation provided by university facilitators contributed significantly to the growth of the leadership coaches, ultimately helping them support less-experienced leaders in addressing complex problems of practice.

X. DISCUSSIONS

The discussion section of this study provides a comprehensive overview of the research methods, focusing on the development of leadership coaching capacities within the context of a 3-year research-practice partnership. The study explored the growth of eight experienced school leaders as leadership coaches, aiming to support less-experienced leaders in leading continuous improvement efforts.

The key points and insights in the discussion can be summarized as follows:

- **Theoretical Framework:** The study embraced a constructivist learning framework, in line with Robertson's concept that professional development, especially when it includes facilitated leadership coaching within a critical learning community, can lead to enhanced practice. This framework served as a solid foundation for understanding the development of leadership coaches and their ability to contribute to the transformation of leaders and their organizations.
- **Three Sources of Learning:** The discussion revolves around three primary sources of learning that contributed to the development of the leadership coaches. These sources include:
 - **Coaching Facilitator:** The role of coaching facilitators was highlighted in guiding and supporting the leadership coaches throughout their learning journey. The facilitators provided valuable feedback, modeled effective coaching approaches, and helped the coaches understand when to adapt their coaching strategies. The discussion underscores the importance of this facilitation in nurturing the growth of leadership coaches.
 - **Coaching Community:** The study emphasized the significance of the coaching community as a supportive and collaborative environment for leadership coach learning. The interaction and knowledge sharing among coaches within this community contributed to their collective development. The discussion suggests that the coaching community was not isolated but a vital component of their learning journey.
 - **Coaching Experience:** The hands-on experience of coaching, both within the LLC sessions and on-site visits to leaders' schools, was a fundamental aspect of the coaches' development. The discussion highlights that this practical experience allowed coaches to refine their coaching skills, practice what they had learned, and adapt to the unique needs of their leaders.

➤ **Interconnected Learning Sources:** The discussion acknowledges that these three sources of learning were interconnected and not mutually exclusive. Instead, they worked in tandem to create a supportive learning environment that fostered the growth of leadership coaches within the LLC. The interplay of coaching facilitators, the coaching community, and coaching experience contributed to a holistic approach to professional development.

The discussion section effectively synthesizes the study's findings and presents a cohesive narrative on how these leadership coaches developed their coaching capacities. It underscores the importance of a multi-faceted approach to professional development, emphasizing the roles of coaching facilitators, coaching communities, and practical coaching experience. The study's insights provide a valuable contribution to the field of leadership coaching and have implications for similar initiatives seeking to develop coaching capacities to support leaders in educational settings.

XI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The article concludes by highlighting the importance of developing leadership coaching capacities in experienced school leaders to support less-experienced leaders in school improvement efforts. It calls for further research to understand how the coaching capacities of leadership supervisors and developers can be facilitated.

The implications of this research are significant for national and state administrator organizations, educational service districts, and school district administrators, as they strive to meet the learning needs of school leaders through leadership coaching. The article contributes to the literature by emphasizing the potential benefits of structured community-based learning opportunities and experiential learning in enhancing leadership coaching capacity.

Overall, this article provides valuable insights into the development of leadership coaching capacities and its role in supporting school leadership development. The combination of structured and experiential learning in the Leadership Learning Community offers a promising approach to enhance leadership coaching and ultimately improve school leadership.

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