TEACHERS' POTENTIALS ON BECOMING PROFESSIONAL COACHES

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Info Artikel	Abstrak

Artikel ini berfokus pada bagaimana pengajar bahasa mempunyai potensi untuk menjadi guru professional ketika mereka diberi kesempatan dan memahami konsep professional coaching. Data penelitian didapatkan dari sebuah studi kasus yang diperoleh peneliti dari sebuah perusahaan BUMN ketika mereka melatih perusahaan tersebut, melalui sebuah program terstruktur dengan menggunakan konsep pembentuan coaching team dan pribadi yang professional. Penelitian ini diharapkan bisa membantu para guru dari latar belakang bahasa maupun disiplin ilmu yang lain untuk mengadopsi siklus pembelajaran professional untuk memperbaiki performa pengajaran mereka dikelas maupun diluar kelas.

Abstract

This paper will focus on how language teachers have the potentials to smoothly transform into professional coaches when they are given the right opportunity and understand the concepts of professional coaching. The data of the research are collected from a case study conducted by the researchers while they coached a team from an Indonesian State Company through a structured program using the concepts of personal and team development coaching. The study is expected to help teachers from language teaching background (or any other fields) to adopt professional coaching cycles to improve their teaching performance inside and outside the classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

More often than not, teachers or instructors who teach foreign language as a second language in regular classrooms on daily basis would find it troublesome when they get an offer to coach a particular team to achieve particular goals (e.g. winning a championship or coaching a company CEO to deliver an annual speech). Especially if it is the first time for them to design and conduct a coaching program. There are plenty scenarios which make this particular situation eventually come to some English teachers or instructors. I will try to mention some: an English teacher at a senior high school who is instructed by the school principal to coach a team to join English news reading competition; an English teacher in a private English institution who should coach a team who wants to join a English drama performance; an elementary school teacher who coaches a group of students to compete in a regional spelling bee contest; and a university lecturer who has to be responsible for a team which would join a national debate competition. The types of similar situations are limitless. It means that as English (or any subject) teachers, they likely have to seize the coaching opportunity when the time comes. Smith (2002) argues that teachers should be ready to be coaches even at any given time:

> "... but the focus has shifted-perhaps permanently- from the professor as the expert dishing out information to students at his or her feet. Knowledge now is constructed, teaching is akin to coaching, and learning is active or interactive."

No matter how troublesome it is for the first time, teachers should be prepared to take the chance to be a coach since it will support their personal development and in turn will improve their quality of teaching. To help teachers achieve this, this paper would share a successful effort of a structured-coaching to prepare employees in a state-owned company in Indonesia to join a national level public speaking competition. Successful here refers to two indicators: (1) the achievements on the competitions and (2) the survey held before and after the coaching session shows that there is a significant improvement on participants' perception of the competition and training.

Key Concepts of Professional Coaching

It might not be safe to bet that all good teachers will turn into good coaches. Although both teaching and coaching would probably fit perfectly into the realm of human resource development, the two have slight but fundamental differences. With better understanding in subtle gaps between teaching and coaching, teachers might have better chance to develop their coaching skills. This section would review the key concepts of professional coaching.

Rhodes (2004) has reviewed some working definitions on how coaching is defined. From those working definitions, it can be summarized that coaching is a cycle of focused activities in a defined time frame involving an expert and a number of participants on which the main attention of the expert is to unlock and facilitate the potentials of the participants to achieve the best outcomes desired by both parties. It is better to stick with the coaching concept of 'a single expert with multiple participants in certain short periods' for the sake of clarity and consistency because 'a single expert with a single participant over a relatively long period' can be categorized as *mentoring* (Clutterbuck, 2004)

Wilson (2007) added that coaching involves self-directed learning and in some situations coaching can be used in formal sessions and coaching might not the answer to every situation. Wilson identifies seven key principles which make coaching unique:

Figure 1. Seven principles of coaching (Wilson, 2007)

Described in *figure 1*, Wilson expects a coaching program can nurture the following situations: (1) the participants should move forward on their awareness and supported by their own will, (2) participants should take full responsibility of what they do during and after the coaching session, (3) coach should help building participants' self confidence, (4) coach should avoid participant-blaming situation, (5) coach should not be overwhelmed by the problems and forget to solve the problems, (6) coach should help the participants to gain new perspective and aim higher and (7) coaching should in the end trigger the desire to act and change.

As part of being aware of their own problems and potentials, participants should also recognizes their individual learning styles. Different learning styles will be parts of consideration to fine tune the coaching process. According to Honey and Mumford (1992), a coach should understand whether their participants are (1) *activists* who will learn best when they are involved and try,

(2) *reflectors* who will productively create and work with ideas they discuss with others, (3) *theorists* who tend to think comprehensively and find new pattern and (4) *pragmatists* who depend on planning and trying using common sense.

When coaching involves adult participants (which applies to most coaching cases), the coaches should adjust the way how they conduct the coaching program. Kearsly and Shneiderman (1998) offers *Relate, Create* and *Donate* cycle. *Relate* refers to the process where the participants work as a team to identify the nature of the problem and connect it with their previous experiences and preconceived knowledge. *Create* indicates the process where the participants build a creative working scheme to solve the problem. *Donate* ensures the participants are able to contribute their findings on the real life situation.

Peters (1991) argues that coaching should involve the following cycles: D-A-T-A (Description, Analytical, Theorizing, Action)

Table 1. Cycles involved in coaching abbreviated as DATA (Peters, 1991)

	Role of the learners	Role of the coach
Description stage	Identify those factors that contributed to the issue the learner wishes to improve. These factors may be assumptions, beliefs or rules (real or imagined)	Share information based on observation
Analytical stage	Clearly describe the issue and what the learner wishes to do about it in order to improve	Encourage the learner to think about their previous experience. Try out critical questioning of the learner's assumptions.
Theorizing stage	This involves the learner considering the theories that brought about the issue and to develop a new theory that would fit the required new approach	Proposing possible theories or other people who might offer advice. Work with the learner to draw up a new theory.
Action stage	Put new theory into action and then follow data after the results are seen	Support the actions of the learner reassure the learner.

On her paper, Imel (1998) suggests that the activities of coaching shall call for the following principles: (1) involve learners in planning and implementing coaching facilities, (2) draw upon learners' experience as a resource, (3) cultivate self-direction in learners, (4) create a climate that encourages and supports learning, (5) foster a spirit of collaboration, and (6) maximize small groups. The approach used Imel, will be used as a case study in this research.

Teachers' Challenges on Becoming Professional Coaches

Schoenfeld (1988) mentions that, in general, a well structured teaching process will eventually lead to better administration and better formal academic results. On the other hand, he also mentions that our contemporary teaching paradigm has a potential of failures. There are four important findings on his study illustrating the potential teaching failure:

(1) Teaching involves measuring the accuracy of the students' works against the teachers' ideal criteria and authoritative resources. Most of the time, it is done via formal testing or assessment.

(2) Teaching involves templates and standardization which sometimes hinder creative process. It is done via rigid curriculum and strict administration process.

(3) Due to time limits in classroom setting, students tend to believe that most problems can be solved in short periods. In common classrooms situation, students are given questions with limited time to answer.

(4) Students coming up with new ideas and methods is a very rare occurrence. Most of theories and ideas are generated or orchestrated by teachers.

Those indicators are serious potential threats to our formal teaching and learning process on a classroom based setting. Teachers and education administrators might have been well aware of those problems, yet they still insist on applying some counter-productive measures against students' independence and creativity. This

phenomenon is heavily affected by the view of B.F. Skinner (1968) stating that:

> "But discovery is no solution to the problems of education…It is quite impossible for the student to discover for himself any substantial part of the wisdom of his culture, and no philosophy of education really proposes that he should."

This belief has been held for long time and has tempted teachers to provide and present cooked knowledge to the students and assess their ability against certain normative standard. The teacher should, if they are able to adopt professional concepts, facilitate the students to acquire the knowledge they need and assess the students' mastery prior and after the facilitation. In this case, the students are competing using internal benchmark instead of external one.

On the extreme side, Walters-Parker (2007) seriously doubts the categorization of teacher as profession. As a profession, a teacher should be held responsible for any educational damage he/she has caused to the students. However, educational malpractice is very hard to prove, even at the court's level. Walters-Parker, on her paper, discussed the right of students to take strong legal actions against their teachers and their schools due to their poor reading ability. She tries to emphasize that schools and teachers lack of control on the quality of students and graduates they produce. This weakness is costly to the students because they have to compensate their basic incompetency (assumingly attributed to the faulty education system) with their future, simply because the system has failed to detect individual differences and fine-tune the process.

Myriad problems are related with our current educational settings which in turn affect the teachers to become ideal coaches for their students. The pressure of passing national standardized tests, socio-cultural problems and imbalance dispersion of educational funding (Park, 2008) are some external problems which adversely affect the teacher facilitation to the students. Those typical situations mentioned above make it hard for teachers to apply professional coaching concepts to their classrooms.

Case Study: Conducting and Evaluating a Structured Coaching at a Corporate Environment

This study utilizes action research style by applying particular framework to the program design. The data of the study are collected from the 3 coaching programs spread out on 3 consecutive years involving 4 different teams. The members of the teams coached are selected through a very strict screening, involving representatives from all branches in two provinces. The total of participants joined the screening at the first stage is ranging from 40 to 60 employees annually. The researchers have been appointed by the company to coach the teams due to their prior consultancy service at the company. The coaching programs are set up to prepare the member of the teams to join regional and national level competition on English Presentation. The coaching sessions are held in three days and commonly held in September because the national competition is usually held on October to celebrate the company anniversary at national level. Although the rules of competition changed a little bit over the years, the format of the competition is relatively the same. The competing teams are expected to present a topic under the chosen theme that year in a formal presentation using prepared slides. The length of the presentation is 10 minutes for each team. The presentation is delivered in a team of three in which each speaker is given 3 to 3.5 minutes to talk. After the

presentation, the participants of the competition are expected to answer questions from the jury. The total participants who joined the coaching programs in 3 years are 16 people and all of them have been asked to fill the same questionnaires.

The research instruments on this study are the video recording of the coaching sessions and the perception questionnaires prior to and post the coaching sessions. From the questionnaires administered prior to coaching programs, the following conditions are revealed: the employees joining the screening are mostly not prepared well by the branches due to short notice. The representatives are always appointed by the branch manager and never

volunteers by nature. Most of them, if given the options, prefer to stay at their branch offices to finish their daily tasks rather than joining the coaching sessions or the competition at very first place. Most of them think that other employees deserve better to represent the company on the competition. The participants of the audition think that this competition and the coaching contribute a little to their daily task in the company.

From those pre-conditions reflected on the pre-questionnaires, the researchers as the coaches of the team then decided to use the professional coaching framework explained in the beginning of this paper. The framework of Imel (1998) is mainly used in the design of the coaching processes.

Table 2. The adoption of professional coaching concept to a customized coaching program

Cycle in Imel (1998)	Realization in the coaching design by the researchers
Involve participants in planning and implementing coaching facilities	The coach reminds the participants the purpose of the coaching. The coach asks the participants on the styles of learning they like and they believe to be effective. The coach present the structure of the coaching and ask the input from the participants
Draw upon participants' experience as a resource	The coach elicits participants' experience of past trainings and coaching they joined. The coach tries to figure out the trainings of which the participants think as effective or ineffective The coach summarizes the participants experience and adopt them to the coaching sessions if possible
Cultivate self-direction in participants	The coach gives games and simulations related with the public speaking and English pronunciations The coach gives time for the participants to create their own slides and design their presentation as they wish The coach gives inputs to the participants' product
Create a climate that encourages and supports learning	The participants take turns to have speech on the chosen topic individually. The participants take turns to have speech on different topics to trigger creativity. The participants and the coach evaluate their performance by playing back the video recording.
Foster a spirit of collaboration	From the evaluation, the participants work together to create combined speech

	The coach check grammatical mistakes and the participants respond to the correction.
	The coach and the participants finalize the content of the presentation.
	The coach ask the other employees who are not selected to be audience and give input to the participants
Maximize small groups.	The participants rehearse the presentation in groups for several times and the coach gives input.
	The coach gives tips on how to maximize oral presentation using PowerPoint slides
	In team, the participants present the topic in front of the audience.
	This is a beta test with the top management acting as the jury.

After the implementation of the adapted model above, the same questionnaires are given to the participants. The results show that the dominant negative perception from the participants has been changed positively. After the training, the participants think that although mostly they were appointed by the branch office and did not volunteer, they now have more confident in joining the competition. They also state that leaving the office temporarily to join the training and the competition has been worthwhile. To some extent, their opinion has slightly changed that they deserve the chance of being the representatives of the company. Furthermore, they think that the competition and the coaching session have contributed in improving their confidence in using English and there is a possibility that this will help them in their work places.

The end-results and achievements of the teams in the competitions can be seen on table 3. Three years in a row the teams have been champion at the regional level. As at the national level, the teams have achieved the first runner up in 2010, the third runner up in 2011 and the fourth runner up in 2012.

Table 3. Summary of coaching programs for English presentation competition

Year	Number of Teams	Employees joining audition	Number of people coached	Type of Coaching	Level of Competition	Competition Results
2010	1	46	5 (3 team members and 2 officials)	Coaching for English Presentation Competition	Regional and National	Champion in Regional and Runner up in Nationals
2011	2	51	6 (all six are team members)	Coaching for English Presentation Competition	Regional and National	Champion in Regional and Third Runner up in Nationals
2012	1	56	5 (3 team members and 2 officials)	Coaching for English Presentation Competition	Regional and National	Champion in Regional and Fourth Runner up in Nationals

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings in the previous section, there are at least four conclusions which can be inferred from the study:

(1) There are some potentials and challenges in transforming teachers into coaches due to the different nature of teaching of coaching.

(2) Teachers need to understand the key concept of professional and structured coaching in order to prepare a coaching program.

(3) When key concepts of professional coaching are adapted into coaching program, the participants' perception will change positively.

(4) As the participants' perception tends to be positive, there is a bigger opportunity that the post-productivity improves significantly.

There are some limitations of this research due to a very specific study case which may not suit wider application of coaching and a quite low number of participants joining the coaching program. These limitations are opportunities for other researchers to be improved in their upcoming studies. Despite of limitations born by the study, the authors highly encourage teachers to apply the concept of professional and structured coaching, inside and outside the classrooms.

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