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**THE WAY TO EMPOWERING LECTURERS – PERSONAL
ACADEMIC COACHING AS CONTRIBUTION TO LECTURER-
COACHES**

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Abstract

The Personal- Academic Coaching Program was developed at ORT Braude College of Engineering in Israel, in light of over 30% of students' drop out during their first year of engineering studies, for the purpose of promoting students' learning and preventing dropping out.

Different studies conducted in recent years reveal that personal coaching has a significant contribution to the students who are coached (coachees) and to the lecturer-coaches.

Research Aim: to examine the contribution of personal coaching to lecturer-coaches on the personal level as well as on the professional level.

Research Methodology: Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 lecturer-coaches in an academic college. The interviews were analyzed by content analysis according to themes and categories.

Findings: the research findings testified to a unique perception on the part of lecturers-coaches regarding the personal academic coaching process – that it contributes a great deal to them beyond its contribution to students.

Conclusions: In the eyes of lecturer-coaches, coaching contributed to their development both personally and on a professional level as lecturers.

Implications and applications: With reference to the contribution of personal coaching to lecturers, it is possible to construct a program to integrate personal academic coaching program for teachers during their academic training at teacher training institution

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Keywords: Personal academic coaching, lecturer-coaches', personal and professional contribution.



1. Introduction

A high rate of failure among first year engineering students led to the development of a personal-academic coaching program at ORT Braude College of Engineering in order to provide students with tools for coping with the challenges of academic studies. The program is based on the Six-Stage Model which relies on imparting learning strategies and improving self-efficacy so as to allow students to improve their academic achievements. 24 lecturers at the College were trained as personal-academic coaches (lecturer coaches) in this unique coaching program implemented by experts from the "Coaches" College, and the Center for Teaching and Learning (Ben Yehuda, 2015).

This research seeks to examine the perceptions of lecturer-coaches regarding the personal academic coaching process and its contribution to them.

1.1. The personal-academic coaching program

Personal coaching in recent years has been implemented in high schools (Green & Norrish, 2013), during the early stages of students' learning (Jones & Frydenberg, 2000), as well as during various periods of students' academic studies (ibid; Barkley, 2011).

Academic performance can be influenced by the learning environment, and the academic experience itself. Personal coaching promotes students' social and academic skills and builds a better learning experience (Alkadounmee, 2012; Martinez, 2015).

Personal coaching leads to a decrease in symptoms of anxiety, tension, and depression; increases hope, life quality, and resilience (Grant, 2003; Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Grant & Cavanagh, 2011; Ebner et al., 2017).

The ability to enable pupils/students to define their aims and objectives, identify their strengths, and use them to reach their goals, has increased the popularity of personal coaching in academia over the recent years. This popularity has contributed to students' improvement and students. The road, is therefore paved to researching and examining the effectiveness of Personal Academic processes Grant, 2006).

1.2. The Personal-Academic Coaching Contribution to Coaches

Recent studies emphasize the significance of the personal coaching to the coaches. A sense of improved functioning following coaching training was found in studies by Feger, Woleck & Hickman (2004) and Grant (2008), which have proven that as a result of the coaching process, coaches' capabilities and mental resilience are enhanced.

Steller (2013) reviewed the history of personal coaching in the last decade while emphasizing unique characteristics such as the coaching influence on the coach and the importance of a coach being professional, as well as emphasis on the contribution of the coach-coachee relationship to the success of the coaching process.

2. Problem Statement

Personal Academic Coaching program for students in academic studies is new and no previous studies were conducted with regard to its contribution to lecturers-coaches

3. Research Questions

What is the contribution of Personal Academic Coaching c to lecturers-coaches?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research aim was to examine the contribution of personal coaching to lecturer-coaches on the personal level as well as on the professional level.

5. Research Methods

The research used in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to examine the perceptions of lecturer-coaches regarding coaching processes they provide to students and the contribution of this process to their development personally and professionally. Each interview took between 45 minutes and one hour.

The research population included ten lecturers-coaches who coach students, some expert coaches with five or more years' experience and novice lecturer-coaches with a year experience who have only coached 2-3 students. All coaches are lecturers who teach in the framework of the engineering studies

The interviews were analyzed according to themes and categories emerged in the content analysis.

6. Findings

Four key themes emerged in the interviews with the lecturer-coaches:

Figure no.1 show the themes and the categories in every theme.

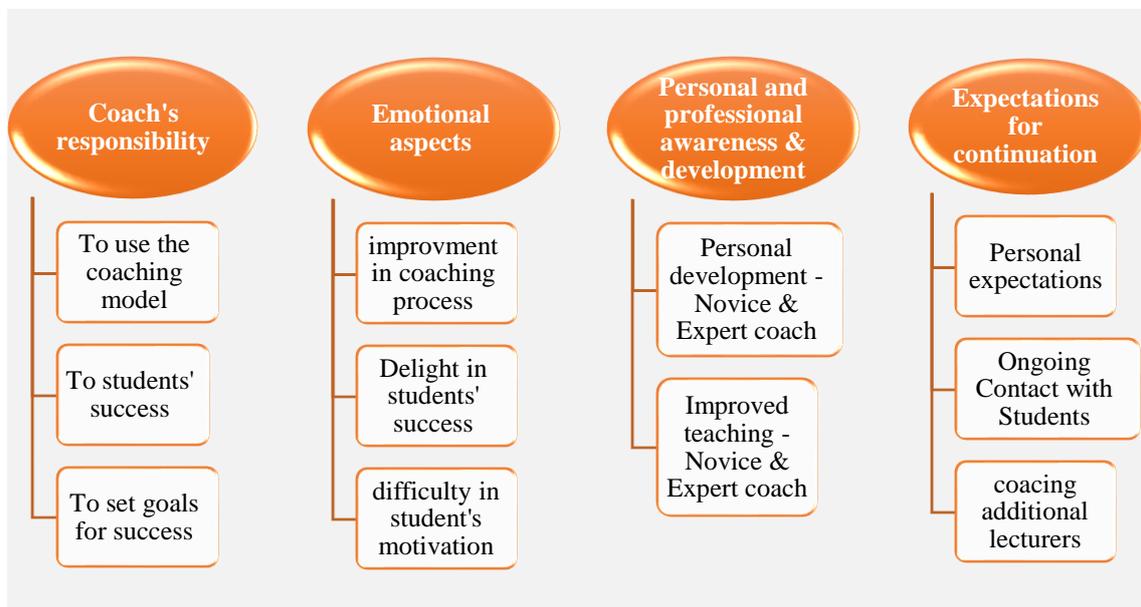


Figure 01. The four key themes in interviews with lecturers-coachess

This article refers to theme Personal and Professional Awareness and Development its significance and. Figure 01 reveals the four main themes raised by lecturers-coaches in the interviews.

The findings emphasize the lecturers-coaches' great involvement in the personal academic coaching process and its various aspects.

6.1. Personal Development among Expert Lecturer-Coaches

The following quotes show how positively expert lecturer-coaches refer to their personal development as well as their awareness of the process's effect: *"In the coaching process, I learned a great deal about myself, I think that only through such coaching can one learn about oneself"* (H); *"In my opinion, the course and coaching processes gave me a lot, firstly personally – My approach has changed – as an engineer, everything was problem/solution, and now I take a different approach, and therefore it is easier for me to understand the students and mentor them"* (O); *"It also influenced my personal life a lot. I saw myself in all sorts of places and every process, every time I saw myself in some place and it made me understand my own behavior, and that gave me so much"* (RV).

6.2. Personal Development among Novice Lecturer-Coaches

In contrast to expert lecturer-coaches who testified to the strong effect of coaching on them, among novice lecturer-coaches, the effects of coaching were referred to hesitatingly and in a much more measured way, as can be seen from the following examples: *"I am still not fully satisfied and cannot say to myself, 'great, I'm good'. I still don't feel that I have reached the goal, but I feel that I am changing"* (N).

Expert lecturers-coaches emphasized their personal development and changes that they underwent as a result of the coaching process.

6.3. Teaching Improvement - Expert Lecturers-Coaches

Most expert lecturer-coaches referred to the change that had taken place in their teaching as a being very obvious to them, as can be learned from the following examples: *"Since I started coaching five years ago, my presence in class has become more genuine and stronger...in coaching I hear about students' difficulties and I feel as if I employ this in class as a lecturer"* (H); *"The coaching tools help me enormously as a lecturer, particularly at the beginning of the coaching process I felt the change. Today, many years have passed and it is harder for me to see the effect, because I have already assimilated most tools and today I am a better lecturer and better project coordinator"* (HN).

Some of the lecturers-coaches stated that in coaching, they learnt how to leave their comfort zone and dare to adopt new teaching strategies.

6.4. Teaching Improvement - Novice Lecturer-Coaches

In contrast, novice lecturer-coaches talk about their sense of empathy with students, the ability to understand them and their teaching methods with a sense of discovery, as can be seen in the following quotes: *"I feel suddenly that I have acquired the ability to listen, often I hear students' stories that help me notice the students' difficulties"* (S); *"I definitely think that I have really improved in my subject as a lecturer in class, my attentiveness to and judgment of students"* (N); *"I think that I understand the world of students better, understand they have difficulties and it is hard for them to cope"* (Y).

Most lecturers refer to the improvement in themselves both in their personal lives and as professionals, feeling that the more their coaching improves, the more attentive they become to students, reveal empathy as well as improve their teaching skills.

Experiencing the students' coaching caused them to become better lecturers and advisors with better understanding, analysis and mentoring.

This finding was expressed in students' interviews as well when discussing lecturer-coaches' attitudes toward them and their sense of confidence.

Table 01. Summary of lecturer-coaches' interviews

Responsibility			
Responsibility towards the process		Responsibility towards students	
Novice Coaches' Use of the Coaching Model	Expert coaches Use the Coaching Model	Responsibility for student goals	Responsibility for students' success
<i>"I try very hard to stick to the model we learned. I believe that otherwise it will not be possible to achieve desired results"</i>	<i>"I work with stories, with cards with questionnaires and I also use everything we learned"</i>	<i>"I think it is important that a student learn how to define goals and I really work with them until they succeed in doing so"</i>	<i>"Success means overcoming some barrier that a student has - first it is important to acknowledge that there is a barrier and to understand and believe he or she has tools to deal with it and it is very important for me that they understand it and succeed"</i>
Emotional Aspects			
Towards the Process	Towards students		
	Student Success	Students' Motivation	
<i>"I come to each coaching session with an open mind and flexible approach and in each session, my challenge to learn how to dance as if it is my first time."</i> <i>"I really like the process, I have really enjoyed it for almost five years"</i>	<i>"I think that an important aspect of coaching is its contribution to a student. As I see it, it is important and rather moving when a student sees himself or herself as succeeding and making progress afterwards is important"</i> Whereas in another case: <i>"There are those who had come to us in a real state of survival and it really hurts me to see them like that"</i>	<i>"Sometimes I have questions about students' motivation. Perhaps they feel that they are being judged according to whether they participate in coaching or not. In coaching, I often realize that it is hard to motivate them to make changes in their life. A lot of time passes before they understand the importance of the process and I find this difficult"</i>	
Awareness and Personal Well-being			
Personal Well-being (Self)		Improve Teaching and Mentoring	
Novice Lecturer	Expert Lecturer	Novice Lecturer	Expert Lecturer
<i>"I believe I went through a change during the course, sometimes I see myself through a different prism"</i> <i>I am still not fully satisfied and cannot say to myself, 'great, I'm good'. I still don't feel that I have reached the goal, but I feel that I am changing"</i>	<i>"I learned so much about myself, coaching contributed to my personal life, to my wellbeing, to setting goals for myself, acknowledge my strengths and construct a program for the future "</i>	<i>"I feel suddenly that I acquired the ability to listen to students' stories and understand them without judging."</i>	<i>"The coaching process contributed to my understanding of group dynamics, helps me as a coach, and I became a mentor and a guide. Dialogue with students in class has improved."</i>
Expectations for the Future			
Expectations for Self	Expectations for Coachees	Giving Coaching to all Lecturers	
<i>"I think the course was excellent. I miss it continuing. I miss going up a level, another course level"</i> <i>"I wanted more training to deepen my training, to have refresher meetings to remind us of the material"</i>	<i>"In the next semester, there should be a meeting once a month or every two months, before any significant stage"</i> <i>"Even after students have gone through the coaching process they come in the following semester to consult and continue their practice. It shows that they understand the importance of the coaching process for them and it is important that they have an address to turn to"</i>	<i>"I think that such a course contributes to everyone, to lecturers in particular, coaches or not, as they are more tolerant, more attentive"</i> <i>"In my opinion, it is important that every lecturer at the college participate in the course even if they do not want to serve as coaches, because I think it helps them understand students and ourselves better improves our behavior"</i>	

7. Conclusion

Interviews with lecturer-coaches revealed that they benefit greatly from the coaching process. Many lecturer-coaches emphasized that the training course contributed a great to them, their view of self and conduct. Nevertheless, it was found that novice lecturer-coaches still do not feel that they are good enough, although they do see the influence of the training process on the way they conduct themselves.

This finding demonstrates the significance of the training process for coaches. This process contributes to coaches' skills in the knowledge of coaching processes in general, and academic coaching in particular.

These findings show that coaches find great significance in preserving what they have learned and acquire additional tools which they can impart to their students.

This approach testifies to the significance of acquiring personal tools and insights of coaches about themselves and their conduct. The significance of these coaches' insights lies in their ability to make a transformation and understand the process which student-coachees undergo during the process.

Both expert and novice lecturer-coaches referred to the personal benefits they gained from the personal coaching process on the emotional level. With expert coaches the sense of mission in their role was emphasized.

The lecturer-coaches testified in their interviews to the benefits they gained throughout their work as personal coaches, both personal and professional. Lecturer-coaches testified that following the process of personal academic coaching, they felt they had become better listeners, more sensitive to their environment both in their personal and family life and their relationship with students.

The lecturers testified that they suddenly began to understand the students' distress, and consequently, they became more attentive and supported the students better. Lecturers also testified that the personal academic coaching process has turned them into better lecturers in class, more attentive, empathetic, and with orientation towards more active learning in class, in contrast to their previous frontal lecture style. This finding is of the utmost significance as many recent studies have testified that the more lecturers allow for active learning, the more they help students become active independent learners – effective independent students.

The contribution of the personal academic coaching process to the coaches has not been researched much. Studies which did address this contribution to coaches are mostly studies about sports coaches. Therefore, it appears that this research has a unique contribution to knowledge in these aspects.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the personal academic coaching process has greatly influenced lecturer-coaches, who noted the sense of mission in the coaching process, their sense of responsibility for the students' success and most importantly, the influence of the process on them as more attentive people and lecturers, when their teaching process changes from traditional teaching to one of active teaching that is more attentive to students.

These findings enable thinking about holding processes of coaching and training to a wider audience of lecturers to develop their attention to and empathy toward students, empath and improve their teaching strategies.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that it may be a good idea to introduce personal coaching training to teachers during their academic training in the teacher education institutions, to construct these processes as part of the teachers' learning processes.

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