

Implementation of a Coaching Approach in the Educational Process from the Perspective of Principals and Teachers of Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

Introduction: Pilot examined coaching in Slovak kindergarten, primary and secondary schools and integrated a SWOT.

Methods: Interviews with principals/teachers (n=29); uniform definitions; thematic synthesis.

Results: Benefits: communication, feedback, reflection, team culture. Barriers: time/logistics, capacity, long-term commitment, unclear coach qualifications; threat: pro-forma uptake. Opportunities: mentoring/supervision, management development. Specifics: kindergarten low-cost; primary burnout prevention; secondary change management.

Discussion: Requires leadership support and gradual, context-adapted implementation.

Limitations: Qualitative, non-random sample; no causal inference.

Conclusions: Mixed-design studies should quantify change and compare models

Key words: coaching approach, schools, SWOT analysis, qualitative pilot study, implementation barriers.

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Introduction

We assume, as Soroková (2019) and other authors write, that education is an opportunity to improve living standards. A lasting challenge, however, is finding ways to place skilled, motivated, and proactive principals in schools, reduce unnecessary curriculum, and strengthen the preparation of future teachers. One promising path is coaching, a rapidly developing profession. As Belan, Martinská and Šrobárová (2025, pp. 41-42) note, human resources are the most expensive and largely irreplaceable capital in an organization; they emphasize that supervisors must continuously adapt their work style, shifting from “supervisors” to team leaders who listen, motivate, and coach rather than merely command (Halušková, 2020). Coaching can thus support positive change in the work quality of school leaders, teaching teams, and ultimately students. Students may perceive teachers not only as mentors and evaluators, but also as coaches accompanying them toward knowledge, better performance, self-confidence, and satisfaction and success at school. This impact is also linked to teachers’ self-efficacy, which can be developed through coaching that specifically supports teachers in strengthening their confidence in teaching and learning skills (Gorghiu et al., 2024). In a changing school environment, it is also important to consider current demographic and migration pressures on support services (Kimpanová, 2023), which may increase the need for coordinated crisis intervention and school-based psychosocial support (Šrobárová & Špánik, 2025; Šrobárová, 2016). True coaching formalizes the structure and procedures of supportive, mutual conversation that helps people think more clearly and perceive reality - and themselves - more accurately (Soroková, 2019). Coaching is defined as a partnership with a client in a thought-provoking conversation that inspires a person to maximize personal and professional potential; Soroková’s (2019) definition is based on the International Coach Federation definition. Although coaching is often seen as a beneficial innovation for school leadership and teachers, recent work notes that “coaching culture” lacks a uniform interpretation in school settings, which calls for further systematic investigation and a more precise definition (Butler, 2024). Effective coaching also requires a safe environment built on transparency and discretion, active listening, and trust between coach and coachee (van der Baan et al., 2022). At the same time, digital forms bring notable ethical risk-confidentiality and data security (including recording and storage, potential audio/video recordings), reduced non-verbal communication, and more demanding trust-building - while limited regulation of the profession may increase the likelihood of ethical failure (Diller, 2024). In this context, it is also relevant to consider gender specificities in school populations: Štefáková et al. (2025) found statistically significant differences among secondary school students in motivation and perceived barriers to volunteering,

as well as in emotional reactions, supporting the need for gender-sensitive school interventions.

1 Coaching in the Slovak publication portfolio

Published sources by Slovak authors in the domestic or foreign publishing environment also show that coaching as a targeted release and strengthening of the development potential of both participants - coach and coachee - has become firmly established in Slovak conditions, e.g. Birknerová, Benková and Lajčin (2023) focused on the topic of coaching for human capital development, Benková, Birknerová, Nemec and Brendzel (2023) presented an analysis of selected sociodemographic indicators from the perspective of coaching. Kraľovičová (2023) addressed the specifics of coaching, Čulková and Vadíková (2021) paid attention to individual and group coaching for women from the perspective of benefits and limits, Langermann (2019) dealt with coaching in relation to self-confidence, Beňušová (2014) analyzed coaching as a tool for employee education, Beňušová (2015) also addressed coaching as a tool for increasing human resource productivity, Gálik (2014) analysed coaching as a tool for leading people, Miško (2017) wrote about coaching as a method of managing stress in the workplace (Homolová, 2026), Ostrihoňová (2024) paid attention to coaching and feedback as a tool for increasing motivation, Račková (2014) described coaching through a psychodynamic approach. Žilinčíková and Štofková (2020) wrote about mentoring and coaching of public sector employees, similarly, Schubert (2015) reported on coaches and coaching in Germany from the perspective of the current state and problems at that time, Kráľová (2018a,b) addressed the importance of the coaching position of a Christian coach for the coach and the client, the author also elaborated on another topic, namely - when and how to coach a person in a difficult life situation. Kráľová (2023), Seemann, Štofková and Biňasová (2019) paid attention to coaching as a modern form of business management and development to increase its competitiveness, Brišová (2018) and Homolová (2024) mapped the process of planning activation and employment - job coaching for people with autism spectrum disorder. Halamová, Mihaľo, and Bakoš (2023) focused on the impact of emotion-focused training in the field of emotional coaching, provided as a mobile application, on self-compassion and self-criticism, Pavlík (2020) wrote about coaching in relation to career development and the development of adult competencies through coaching (Pavlík, 2021b). Dobrovič (2016) dealt with management coaching in the education of small and medium-sized enterprises, Alcnauer (2016) presented a perspective on coaching and an unconventional view of its new possibilities with the advent of Web 3.0 technologies. Hrehová and Žiaran (2016) point out that being able to coach well is both a skill and an art. All of the named entities -

coaching as a tool for employee training, as a tool for increasing human resource productivity, as a tool for leading people, as a method of managing stress in the workplace, coaching and feedback as tools for increasing motivation - can and even should be applied to the field of education, but so far our practice shows insufficient connections and possibilities for coaching in the Slovak educational process. Therefore, the aim of the project KEGA 022KU-4/2025 "Application of Coaching with the Use of International Theory and Practice in the Slovak Educational Process (2025-2027)" is to create a multimedia platform for providing content and tools that will be available in an online environment for teachers and professional staff with a focus on the application of coaching in the school educational process, using international theory and practice, as well as to create a proposal for an innovative educational program in accordance with the Act on Pedagogical and Professional Employees, focused on coaching in the educational environment.

Coaching directly in the educational environment has been observed by several authors, Štofková et al. (2024) dealt with new methods of education using coaching in a university environment, Ľubová (2018) focused on career coaching in an educational environment, Soroková (2019) paid attention to coaching as an innovative element in a school environment, Krásna and Barnová (2019a) dealt with e-coaching, e-mentoring in adult education and also focused on e-coaching, e-mentoring and e-tutoring in the work activities of a university teacher (Krásna & Barnová, 2019b), Babiaková (2018) wrote about collegial self-evaluation, supervision, coaching, benchmarking and benchlearning as external elements in self-evaluation in school conditions, Kráľová (2018a,b) looked at Christian coaching as one of the possible tools for improving the quality of children's education, Seemann and Štofková (2021) and Homolová (2019) looked at coaching as a global approach to developing skills in various areas, including HORECA and academia, Kráľová (2020) paid attention to the development of cognitive skills of preschoolers in kindergarten using a coaching approach, Gajdoš and Čakoci (2014) looked at the possibilities of using coaching in higher education, Birknerová, Frankovský and Daňková (2017) examined the evaluation of coaching as an educational method by management students, Kormancová (2020) focused on the coaching approach in higher education, Theodoulides et al. (2020) processed the support of critical thinking in higher education through a coaching approach from the perspective of theory and practical applications, Liptáková (2020) focused on the essence and importance of coaching in the process of education aimed at developing critical thinking, Pavlík (2021a) wrote about coaching as an educational method, Birkner and Birknerová (2014) wrote about coaching in the school environment and the teacher in the role of a coach, Račková and Matochová (2016) addressed coaching through gamification, Tökölyová and Klepáčová (2025) focused on

career coaching as a catalyst for youth development and career path navigation, as well as the development of civic skills, Seemann et al. (2024) addressed the coaching approach as a sustainable means of improving skills of management students.

The result of coaching should be a certain sequence from the highest management staff in education, through school principals, to educators. This creates a need for everyone to learn how to coach and help their team members develop in the areas required for the organization to function in an ever-changing clientele. Coaching is a proven and effective tool for personal development, a way of supporting the development of abilities and skills of individuals and groups, managers and educators, states Soroková (2019).

2 Specific opinions of principals and teachers of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools on the topic of implementation of a coaching approach in the educational process

We conducted semi-structured interviews in preliminary research to map the needs, motivators, and barriers of teachers and professional staff in Slovakia that must be addressed for coaching to become a sustainable tool for professional development and teaching quality. The sample included 29 voluntary respondents - principals and teachers from kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools - focused on implementing a coaching approach in education. To ensure consistency, respondents received a definition of coaching and brief distinctions from mentoring and tutoring before answering.

Coaching is a collaborative, goal-oriented process that supports self-development by using active listening and purposeful questioning to deepen self-understanding and enable action planning and accountability.¹²

Coaching supports self-development through guided questioning rather than providing solutions.

Tutoring is direct instruction focused on teaching specific skills and correcting errors.

¹ In an open learning environment, we apply the CARE-KNOW-DO framework, guiding students from engagement with real-world problems (CARE), through contextual understanding (KNOW), to responsible problem-solving and decision-making for sustainability (DO) (Gorghiu et al., 2024).

² Conceptual frameworks also emphasize the autonomy of the coachee - the coach supports the coachee's own assumption of responsibility and "ownership" of goals and actions (van der Baan et al., 2022).

Mentoring is a longer-term developmental relationship where an experienced mentor shares expertise, offers guidance, and facilitates professional networking to support career growth.

Digital coaching is human-led via technologies, whereas AI coaching is machine-assisted without a human coach; both still rely on the coach–client relationship and self-reflection (Diller, 2024). DigComp can guide implementation across information/data, communication, content creation, security, and problem solving (Gorghiu et al., 2024).

2.1 Specific opinions and statements of kindergarten principals and teachers on the topic of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process

In my view, coaching can support teachers' further education and improve the educational process. One principal, however, names clear barriers in her kindergarten: teachers are overloaded with administration, preparation and substitutions, and many single mothers work additional jobs. In such conditions there is little space for systematic coaching; planning meetings, classroom visits or video coaching would be logistically demanding and would often conflict with working hours and direct work with children (principal, 44 years old, 15 years of teaching experience).

Another principal is openly sceptical and considers coaching in kindergarten meaningless - both for staff development and for work with older children - given other "existential problems" the school faces (principal, 46 years old, 15 years of teaching experience).

A third principal highlights motivation, teamwork, open communication and feedback as her priorities, and therefore views coaching positively as a tool for developing team culture, kindergarten culture and internal communication. At the same time, she notes that the current evaluation system leaves little room for support, and acute issues (e.g., high staff turnover) consume the team's capacity, leaving insufficient time for individual teacher support (principal, 54 years old, 25 years of teaching experience).

In a SWOT analysis, another director describes coaching as a natural extension of progressive management and pedagogical innovation, but raises practical questions: who would coach, what training is needed, and what "manual" or standard procedures would guide practice (principal, 51 years old, 30 years of teaching experience, 20 in management).

A teacher from a Bratislava city district compares the situation to a "tankless water heater": rapid turnover and many unqualified or short-term employees. She sees coaching as potential initial methodological support, but doubts whether experienced teachers will invest their time and know-how in newcomers who may soon leave, and whether coaching would become a stable professional anchor for these groups. She also admits she uses coaching-like methods

intuitively with children aged 5-7 (teacher, 53 years old, 32 years of teaching experience).

One director, reacting to limited funding and staffing, sees coaching as a “low-cost” way to improve quality without major external expenses, but also anticipates the need to justify financial rewards for a coach (e.g., quarterly bonuses) (principal, 52 years old, 33 years of teaching experience).

Overall, the interviews show a generally positive perception of coaching as support for teachers’ development and school improvement, but major barriers recur: lack of time and logistical feasibility, scepticism and low perceived relevance, high turnover, and questions of coaching quality and financing (principal, 44...; principal, 46...; principal, 54...; principal, 51...; teacher, 53...; principal, 52...).

In a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the reactions of principals and kindergarten teachers to the topic of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process, we can name:

1. Strengths of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in kindergartens:
 - Supporting further education of teachers in kindergartens.
 - Coaching as one of the options for developing team culture and open communication.
 - Coaching as a support for innovation in practice.
 - The possibility of “low-cost” use of coaching.
2. Weaknesses of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in kindergartens:
 - Time and logistical requirements for systematic coaching sessions.
 - Sceptical attitude towards the importance of coaching among some kindergarten management.
 - Questionable motivation to invest time in people who are likely to drop out of kindergarten.
 - Unclear quality of coaching, question of coach training/certification in kindergarten settings.
3. Opportunities for implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in kindergartens:
 - Coaching as part of systematic methodological support for teachers in kindergartens.
 - Internal coaching between experienced teachers in a kindergarten environment.
 - Integrating coaching into regular pedagogical practices in kindergartens.
4. Risks of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process in kindergartens:

- High turnover of teachers in kindergartens - short-term transfer of know-how in kindergartens .
- Risky instability of the teaching team, of inclu team..., lack of funding (not only financial rewards for employees in kindergartens.
- Presumed possible lack of commitment or motivation of those coached in the kindergarten environment.

Coaching is seen by several respondents (including principals and kindergarten teachers) as an innovative tool to strengthen pedagogical quality, team motivation, and kindergarten culture. Key barriers include limited time, logistical and financial constraints, staff turnover, unclear coach quality, and scepticism. Effective implementation therefore requires clear standards for coach qualifications, context-specific goals, pilot testing, and secured time and funding.

2.2 Specific opinions and statements of primary school principals and teachers on the topic of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process

The principal of a private elementary school presents the coaching approach as a tool that strengthens correct questioning, effective feedback, active listening, and internal communication. She therefore considers it important for teachers' professional growth - both in didactic and personal development. At the same time, she notes that implementing coaching would require it to be planned in the personnel strategy and treated as a long-term "project," which she sees as a drawback in an environment that currently prefers short-term solutions (principal, 52 years old, primary school, 22 years of teaching experience).

A language school director describes how coaching techniques helped her listen more actively and ask effective questions instead of immediately solving situations for others; she believes this approach would support teachers' independent reflection and problem-solving (principal, 39 years old, language school, 12 years of teaching experience).

An elementary school principal emphasizes the need for supervision and sees coaching as a partial form of it, especially given that a systemic model is missing or not implemented in practice. In his view, coaching would develop teachers' reflection and listening skills, strengthen autonomy, and help the team find solutions faster internally - potentially reducing stress, improving work comfort and satisfaction, and increasing efficiency (principal, 41 years old, primary school, 11 years of teaching experience).

Another private elementary school principal sees coaching as a practical support for methodological meetings (eMZetká), helping translate proposals into practice and encouraging greater teacher independence; he also views it as a complement to mentoring already used at the school (principal, 43 years old, primary school, 15 years of teaching experience).

A private elementary school teacher believes some older teachers are burned out and professionally stagnating; for those willing to change, coaching could help renew motivation, instead of the attitude “I’ll somehow make it until retirement” (teacher, 44 years old, primary school, 19 years of teaching experience).

In contrast, one primary school teacher does not see introducing a coaching approach as important compared to other priorities in primary education, though she would adapt if management decided to implement it (teacher, 34 years old, primary school, 10 years of teaching experience).

Overall, the interviews point mainly to perceived benefits - supporting teachers’ growth, autonomy, communication, and potentially serving as a partial substitute for supervision - while the key limitation mentioned is the time- and strategy-demanding, long-term nature of implementing coaching (principal, 52...; principal, 39...; principal, 41...; principal, 43...; teacher, 44...; teacher, 34...).

In a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the reactions of primary school principals and teachers to the topic of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process, we can name:

1. Strengths of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in elementary schools:
 - The coaching approach in the educational process can help development of effective communication and feedback.
 - A coaching approach in the educational process can support reflection, active listening, and independence in decision-making.
 - The coaching approach in the educational process can help mentoring, it can also support methodological meetings of colleagues.
 - The coaching approach in the educational process can be one of the measures to prevent professional burnout and professional stagnation.
2. Weaknesses of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in elementary schools:
 - The coaching approach in the educational process requires systematic planning and integration into the strategy.
 - The coaching approach in the educational process represents a long-term commitment, but the requirement of pedagogical practice is to achieve quick results.
 - The weakness of the coaching approach in the educational process is the potential frustration with short projects or time pressures for results.
 - The coaching approach in the educational process may be met with resistance from teachers (especially experienced ones), who do not always accept changes with enthusiasm, and we assume that this may also apply to beginning teachers who are not yet professionally oriented and could consider this an additional burden.

3. Opportunities for implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in primary schools:
 - As part of supervision and internal development.
 - Combination of coaching and mentoring.
 - The opportunity to "revitalize" burned-out or stagnant teachers.
4. Risks of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in elementary schools:
 - Time-consuming and possible resistance to long-term implementation.
 - Risk of interest fluctuation if outputs are not secured.
 - Disharmony with the school's personnel strategy.

Elementary school respondents - both management and teachers - viewed coaching as largely positive, linking it to systematic feedback and stronger listening, reflection, autonomy, and team culture. The literature associates coaching with affective, cognitive, and skill outcomes and suggests it can complement mentoring and reduce professional stagnation (van der Baan et al., 2022). Key challenges are its long-term nature and the need to embed it in personnel strategy, which may conflict with preferences for short-term interventions. Private schools described coaching as especially valuable for teacher development, knowledge sharing, and building a professional community, but only with clear strategies, trained coaches, regular programmes, and sustained commitment.

2.3 Specific opinions and statements of principals and teachers from secondary vocational schools on the topic of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process

A school principal sees a clear benefit of coaching for school leadership, not only for improving communication and professional expression. She assumes that management education combining mentoring and coaching would bring new impulses, experience sharing, and cultivation of leadership skills among principals and their deputies (school principal, 44 years old, 19 years of experience).

In contrast, a secondary school teacher with a background in the commercial sector says colleagues often expect concrete advice and precise instructions, which coaching does not provide. He also worries about the lack of truly qualified "school/teacher" coaches: even with certificates, he fears sessions may rely on rehearsed questions and become a waste of time (secondary school teacher, 42 years old, 11 years of experience).

Another respondent notes that the coaching approach sounds attractive, but doubts who would realistically support it in daily school life. She points to teacher shortages, student behaviour issues, demanding work with parents, heavy bureaucracy, and lack of time and staff capacity; she also questions whether

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teachers could act as coaches given their workload and limited institutional support (secondary school teacher, 39 years old, 9 years of experience, second year as school representative).

A younger teacher describes earlier attempts to engage in projects, workshops, and even student coaching, but felt it was not “worn” or appreciated by management and was met with resistance from colleagues. She therefore retreated to traditional practices and expects coaching would end similarly - like a rejected offer of free mentoring (secondary school teacher, 34 years old, 6 years of experience).

Finally, a secondary school director warns that coaching can work only if it is not imposed broadly and formally. Forced or pro-forma coaching, in her view, risks high effort with minimal effect, so the investment of time and money must be carefully considered (director of secondary school, 59 years old, 26 years of experience).

Overall, the interviews show both potential (leadership development through mentoring/coaching) and significant concerns in secondary vocational schools: preference for immediate concrete solutions, distrust of coaches without real school experience, high workload and limited capacity, low support from colleagues/management, and the risk of ineffective “blanket” implementation (school principal, 44...; secondary school teacher, 42...; secondary school teacher, 39...; secondary school teacher, 34...; director of secondary school, 59...).

In a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the reactions of principals and teachers of secondary vocational schools on the topic of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process, we can name:

1. Strengths of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in secondary vocational schools:
 - Support of a determination and reflection of each coachee.
 - Improving of the communication, strategic leadership and team collaboration.
 - Support of a positive school culture.
2. Weaknesses of implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in secondary vocational schools:
 - The necessity of a long-term commitment.
 - Capacity limits related to time, staff, motivation, support from school management.
 - Without guarantee of sustainability.
3. Opportunities for implementing a coaching approach in the educational process in secondary vocational schools:
 - The opportunity to use coaching as one of the ways of managerial development and sharing experiences.

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- Sustainability of school management.
 - Effective change management in school.
4. Risks of introducing a coaching approach in the educational process in secondary vocational schools:
- So that the school management can "save" teachers and time, the introduction will be only formal.
 - Level of admitted scepticism.
 - Doubts about the quality of coaches without practical experience in a school environment.

In summary, quality coaching in schools can strengthen leadership skills, management effectiveness, and school culture through reflection, strategic leadership, and team development. At the same time, respondents from secondary vocational schools highlight key challenges: the need for concrete solutions, trustworthy coaches with school experience, minimal additional administrative burden, and a sensitive, well-planned implementation.

From the semi-structured interviews, several themes emerge:

- Some principals view coaching as a way to improve communication, professional expression, and leadership development.
- Respondents acknowledge its potential to enhance internal communication, reduce stress, and increase teachers' job satisfaction.
- Coaching is also seen as a complement to methodological meetings and mentoring, supporting teachers' autonomy in applying new approaches.
- A major barrier is limited capacity - teacher shortages, administrative load, and high workload make time-intensive coaching difficult.
- Some educators perceive coaching as unsupported by school leadership and fear failure if it is introduced poorly or formally.
- There are concerns about coaches lacking real school practice, which may weaken effectiveness.
- Implementation should be gradual and adapted to each school to reduce resistance and improve outcomes.
- Sustainable coaching requires active, consistent support from school management as a tool for improving education quality and the working environment.

2.4 Integrated SWOT analysis

Based on separate SWOT analyses for kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, an integrated SWOT table was compiled. This synthesis summarizes shared trends and level-specific factors shaping the implementation of coaching in school settings.

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Table 1

SWOT analyses

<u>Cross-cutting across all levels (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school)</u>	<u>Specifics for individual stages</u>
<u>Strengths:</u> - Development of communication and feedback (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school) - Supporting teamwork and school culture (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school)	Kindergarten: low-cost potential; supporting innovation in practice Elementary school: prevention of burnout and stagnation; reflection, active listening and independence; connection to mentoring and methodological meetings Secondary school: strengthening decisiveness and reflection; positive school culture
<u>Weaknesses:</u> - Time and logistical requirements, capacity limits (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school) - The need for long-term commitment vs. pressure for quick results (elementary, secondary school) - Scepticism or resistance from teachers and management (kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school) - Questionable qualifications and quality of coaches (kindergarten, secondary school)	Kindergarten: questionable motivation to invest time with teachers who may leave the school Secondary school: absence of sustainability guarantee
<u>Opportunities:</u> - Connection with mentoring and supervision (elementary school, secondary school) - Integration into school development and management leadership (kindergarten, secondary school)	Kindergarten: internal coaching; systematic methodological support; integration into regular pedagogical practice Elementary school: "revitalization" of burned-out and stagnant teachers Secondary schools: strengthening the sustainability of school management; effective change management
<u>Threats:</u> - Risk of formal (pro-forma) implementation without real support (secondary school, potentially other levels) - Fluctuation and instability of teams; financial constraints (kindergarten, partly elementary schools)	Kindergarten: lack of commitment or motivation of those being coached Elementary school: time-consuming long-term implementation; fluctuation of interest; disharmony with personnel strategy Secondary schools: doubts about the quality of coaches without experience in the school environment

The SWOT analysis highlights improved communication, reflection, and collaboration as key benefits of coaching across education levels, while major weaknesses involve time and capacity demands and the need for sustained commitment despite expectations of quick results. Level-specific emphases differ: kindergartens favour low-cost, simple formats, primary schools focus on

burnout prevention and reflective practice, and secondary schools on managerial development and change management. Recurring risks include pro-forma implementation and staff turnover. These risks correspond with the ethical interdependence model, underscoring the need for ethical training, supervision, and transparency when AI supports human coaching (Diller, 2024). Evidence also suggests coaching benefits coaches themselves (Bailey et al., 2025), and international findings link teacher self-efficacy to addressing classroom heterogeneity, curriculum pressure, and didactic complexity, including CARE–KNOW–DO aligned with DigComp (Gorghiu et al., 2024).

Conclusions

The aim of this pilot preliminary research was to map how principals and teachers in kindergartens, elementary schools, and secondary schools understand implementing a coaching approach, and what they perceive as its benefits, barriers, and conditions for sustainability. In qualitative semi-structured interviews (n=29), benefits related to communication, feedback, reflection, and team culture were repeatedly confirmed across all school levels, while barriers concerned mainly time and logistical constraints, staff turnover, questions about coach qualifications, and the risk of formal (pro-forma) implementation without real support in practice.

The educational vision is relatively clear: to prepare students who think critically, are willing to discover and experiment, can cooperate toward shared goals, and develop core civilizational values. Stachoň (2015) and Kováč (2021) emphasizes communication as an opportunity to add value to coexistence, contribute to community safety, and express mutual expectations, needs, and attitudes through which we recognize our possibilities. Quality coaching can support this by creating a partnership-based atmosphere and open dialogue that helps school leadership - together with teachers and parents - seek strategies aligned with the school's vision and mission. Soroková (2019) adds that if teachers are to cultivate creativity, discovery, learning from mistakes, and confidence in children, they must also have space to discover and experiment in their own professional lives. She argues that a school can offer quality only to the extent that its individual elements are themselves of quality, and that Slovak education needs mechanisms for continuous learning, reflection on environmental changes, and healthy self-reflection.

Finally, synthesized findings indicate that coaching in open education for sustainability may increase teacher self-efficacy and improve learning experiences by raising awareness of challenges and strategies, strengthening pedagogical competencies, and supporting collaborative development (Gorghiu et al., 2024).

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