

CURRENT TENDENCIES OF MODERN EDUCATION

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POSSIBILITIES OF APPLICATION OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL COACHING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The author raises the question of the possibility of using one of the coaching methods, which is cognitive-behavioural coaching, within the education system. The first part presents an analysis of the very concept of coaching, including research on its effectiveness in solving selected problems or improving selected areas/ problems of the education system. In the further part, the author approaches and defines one of the types of coaching, that is cognitive behavioural-coaching. He cites the research on the effectiveness of this method, indicating the potential areas of its application in the education system. In order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of the cognitive-behavioural coaching method, the author refers to examples of techniques of working with a client (student, parent) derived from cognitive-behavioural therapy, which, in the author's opinion, can be successfully transferred to the ground of cognitive-behavioural coaching. The article is exploratory in nature. The author raises the question of the application of cognitive-behavioural coaching in educational institutions, at the same time attracting attention to the need for in-depth empirical research in this area.

Key words: *coaching; cognitive-behavioural coaching; cognitive-behavioural therapy.*

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INTRODUCTION

For many decades, the people responsible for the education system have been trying to derive inspiration from solutions, techniques and methods of work which are also applied in other areas (e.g. in the area of human resource management in organizations, etc.). One of such solutions, which has been implemented for some time in broadly understood educational services, is the coaching method.

Coaching can be perceived as a short-term intervention aimed at improving performance or developing a defined competence (Clutterbuck, 2003), the process of helping people to reach their peak potential (which involves developing strengths, helping to overcome inner resistance, and overcoming one's own limitations in order to achieve personal perfection) (Dilts, 2003) or an interactive process helping the other person to increase the effectiveness of performance, improve functioning and support their development (Wujec, 2012).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the traditionally understood coaching, the work of a coach relates mainly to the level of client's behaviour, helping him to improve the efficiency of specific actions undertaken by him (O'Connor, 2009). According to this approach, the teacher-coach observes the behaviour of the interaction partner and helps to modify his behaviour patterns in specific situations and contexts. By assuming the role of a coach, the teacher becomes a guide who leads his "client" along the path leading to the achievement of the goals set for himself (Rogers, 2010).

BACKGROUND

However, it should be remembered that the effects of attempts to 'implement coaching' into the repertory of teacher's work tools are not clear-cut. They often remain undefined as there is not enough of in-depth research on this subject (Bennewicz, 2011). The situation is additionally complicated by the fact that we are still dealing with the influence of many factors that potentially reduce the effectiveness of the adaptation of coaching techniques to the education system.

One of such factors is the relatively low level of substantive preparation of teachers and a fairly general knowledge of what coaching is and to what extent, in what situations it can be used in the work of a teacher and educator. Furthermore, this applies to both teachers themselves, as well as, for example, psychologists and educators employed in educational institutions.

A certain type of stereotyping in the perception of coaching and its professionals is another factor potentially increasing the level of resistance to use coaching in schools, etc. These stereotypes are frequently negative and often give coaching the features of a pseudoscientific technique of working with people.

Certainly, this is not facilitated by a certain lack of an understandable and well-established system that confirms the competences and qualifications of people working in the coaching profession. Although there are several international organizations involved in the process of coach qualification certification, still they are in a sense autonomous and competitive organizations. Moreover, there apparently are no real instruments to verify the quality of work of people who define themselves as coaches, and who, at the same time, have not obtained such certification. All this results in a certain lack of definition, e.g. who the coach is, what are his methods and techniques of working with the client, what qualifications are required of him. This, in turn, leads to greater resistance to resorting to techniques / methods applied in coaching.

The perception of coaching as a technique of working mainly or exclusively with adults (which reflects the belief that it is a method reserved primarily for managing the development of employees of large corporations) is another element affecting the process of using the coaching method in the work of a teacher, educator, etc. As a result, it may repeatedly reduce the belief that the use of coaching is justified in supporting the child among teachers, educators, school psychologists, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The above-mentioned circumstances are only some of the factors that may reduce the readiness to implement coaching into educational practice by people performing their tasks at school / university etc. On the other hand, as shown by research and analyses of many independent institutions (including AMA — American Management Association — research from 2008), the market of coaching services shows a highly dynamic growth potential, which is also expressed in professionalising the coach profession, distinguishing new types of coaching, popularising coaching techniques in completely new areas. The above-mentioned circumstances should cause an in-depth discussion on the key questions: “Can coaching be / Is coaching useful in the practice of a teacher / educator / tutor?”; “How should the coaching process be implemented to make it really efficient in improving the performance of broadly understood teacher-student-parent relations?”; “Which coaching trends / methods are most useful for people implementing this process within the education system?”. Answering the first two questions appears to be an exceptionally complex task and certainly goes beyond the scope of this article. However, the third question seems to be crucial and essentially served the author of the article as a starting point for further considerations.

MAIN RESULTS

The intention of the author of this chapter was therefore not to analyse many different types of coaching, but to focus on one that may possess a particularly

high application value for the education system. The type of coaching, which in the author's opinion may be of significant importance to the education system, is the so-called cognitive behavioural coaching. According to the author, it can have a significant application on different levels (see Fig. 1).

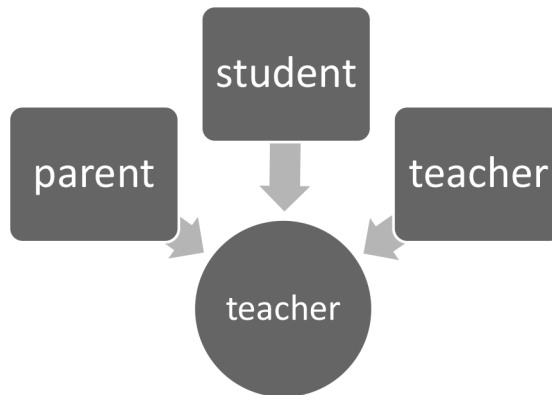


Fig. 1. Areas of potential application of coaching in educational institutions (own work)

As shown in Fig. 1, the application of selected types of coaching can take place both in the relation of the teacher with the student and the teacher / educator with the parent (less often), but also in cooperation with other teachers or while managing a team of teachers (in the supervisor-subordinate system) (Grzymkowska, 2012; Łukowska, 2011, Kowalik 2012). On each of these levels, completely different techniques of the coach's work may take on a special meaning. The method of cognitive-behavioural coaching appears to be particularly significant in the teacher / lecturer / educator — student / student / listener relation.

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL COACHING — SOURCES, DEFINITION, GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching (CBC) is a method derived from the assumptions of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck, 2005; Ellis, 1962). The latter refers directly to the cognitive method of explaining the emergence of mental disorders, which, according to this model, are created on the basis of such elements as automatic thoughts, cognitive schemas, cognitive distortions, etc. The cognitive “methods” of processing information about the world and oneself stimulate and maintain certain emotions and have a secondary influence on behaviour (Popiel & Pragłowska, 2008).

The cognitive-behavioural trend, from which CBC is derived, adopts a few main assumptions, including a) cognitive functioning translates into human behaviour, b) a human being actively creates the image of the reality that surrounds him, i.e. selects certain information that he receives then he interprets and assigns meaning to it in a specific way, c) cognitive processes, cognitive content, schemes, etc. can be monitored and empirically tested

at the same time, d) by changing the structure of the content and / or cognitive processes, we can make a change at the level of emotions and behaviour of an individual (ibid.). The very change on the side of the patient / client, which results from changes at the cognitive level, also requires the patient to become aware of his thoughts and then notice the relation of the individual content of thinking with specific emotional states and behaviours.

Certainly, the trend of cognitive-behavioural therapy itself has also evolved over the past few decades. In various periods of its development, particular assumptions were given greater significance. Initially, during the so-called the first wave the focus was placed primarily on learning processes derived from behavioural theory. Behavioural therapy in line with this approach focused on a thorough analysis of the stimuli influencing an individual and the implementation of behaviour and its consequences (reinforcements) (Popiel, Pragłowska, 2009). The second wave introduced a shift of emphasis and began to highlight the cognitive aspect to a greater extent. Among other things, the significance of cognitively assigning of the meaning to stimuli and it was pointed out that the change in the cognitive sphere is crucial for changing the broadly understood functioning of an individual. The current, third wave has introduced a new tendency to open up to new methods and techniques as well as ways of understanding human functioning. For example, the area of interest began to include cognitive therapy based on mindfulness based on Eastern meditation techniques or psychotherapy based on functional analysis.

The article does not aim at presenting all the assumptions and directions of development of cognitive-behavioural therapy. It should be emphasized, however, that cognitive-behavioural therapy is one of the techniques of psychotherapeutic work with the highest effectiveness rates (Butler, 2006). As noted by Popiel and Pragłowska (2008), systematic increase in interest in cognitive-behavioural therapy is observed in new areas and scientific fields, as well as attempts to “implement” CBT assumptions and techniques to new situations / contexts.

Furthermore, it appears that a number of CBT assumptions make it extremely useful material to be applied in the coaching process. CBT itself is strongly oriented towards a specific goal, limited in time (i.e. it is crucial that an impact on the patient will allow him to achieve the desired effect as quickly as possible), in the early stages of the therapeutic process it is focused on the present, it has an educational character.

In the context of the above premises, it seems that cognitive-behavioural coaching (CBC) derived from CBT can constitute a useful tool in the work of teachers / educators. This is reflected in the literature on the subject, where in the last 20 years it is more and more frequently indicated as particularly effective in the context of different impacts, including those aimed at students within the education system.

Before selected results of research on CBC are presented, it is worth clarifying the method of defining this concept. Palmer and Szymanska (2007);

Williams, Edgerton, and Palmer (2010) understand CBC as a multi-faceted approach, based on a cognitive and behavioural component, using a variety of problem-solving strategies which are to help the client achieve the realistic desired goals. CBC focuses on supporting the client in constructing cognitive-behavioural regulation skills, e.g. by changing their irrational and inadequate beliefs (Neenan & Dryden, 2002).

Naturally, the method of working within CBC is not the identical with CBT, because in the case of CBT, the goal is primarily to solve the problems of people with specific mental disorders or people in crisis, etc. CBC is a much more superficial process, focused mainly on the present and future of the client (setting goals, selecting methods to achieve these goals, improving the quality of life, etc.).

In spite of the fact that CBC is a relatively new approach, a systematic increase in studies related to this method is observed (Barry, Murphy & O'Donovan, 2017). Furthermore, the studies that we have in the literature on the subject consequently confirm the effectiveness of CBC in different areas. For instance, it has been successfully found that cognitive-behavioural coaching is a beneficial method in achieving goals, creating a positive attitude, increasing the level of subjective quality of life and reducing the level of experienced stress (Grant, 2003; Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006).

A particularly interesting verification of the CBC's effectiveness was carried out in his research by Hugh O'Donovan (2009; 2010). In the experimental study conducted with the participation of secondary school students, he tried to verify to what extent the implementation of a short programme of coaching meetings in the cognitive-behavioural model translates into changes in mental functioning, understood mainly as changes in the level of depression. People from the experimental group were provided with a series of 4 coaching meetings, lasting about 40 minutes over several weeks, based on the use of different types of games and tasks to make participants aware of the ways they use to interpret reality and events and their consequences for behaviour, selected cognitive distortions, even in the form of catastrophizing, over-interpretation, etc. As the author of the study notices (O'Donovan, 2009; 2010), all meetings were subordinated to one important piece of information that the way of thinking and adopting specific cognitive interpretations translates directly into the experience of appropriate emotional states. Interestingly, the obtained results showed a clear decrease in depressive attitudes in those students who were included in the cycle of cognitive-behavioural coaching meetings, while no such change was noted in the control group. These results should certainly be treated with caution due to the relatively small number of respondents and the fact that the control group students were not subjected to any influence, e.g. carried out under a different coaching model. It should certainly also be noted that the very duration of individual coaching sessions was relatively short, which caused a certain superficial impact. However, ignoring these indicated methodological doubts and remembering about

the imperfection of Donovan's experiment, it should nevertheless be noted that the influence of CBC on the level of broadly understood student functioning was undeniable. It follows a certain logic of other studies in this area, which showed that CBC is a method that is able to effectively reduce the intensity of depression, increase the sense of mental well-being, etc. (Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006).

Since the above-mentioned studies confirm the potential legitimacy of applying CBC and its potential effectiveness, the question arises which techniques of working with the patient used in CBT have the greatest potential usefulness in the framework of coaching at school / university. Certainly, it is impossible to give an unequivocal answer in this regard without detailed empirical research. Nevertheless, it is apparently justified to try to select those techniques which, due to their characteristics, complexity, and cognitive requirements, mainly related to self-awareness and insight, may have potential application in the education system. Selected techniques are presented below. This comparison is exploratory in nature and is based on an arbitrary choice of the author.

BALANCE OF GAINS AND LOSSES TECHNIQUE

Once the client recognizes the thoughts evoking unpleasant feelings, the coach's task is to examine the motivation for a possible change of this thought. It is therefore crucial to guide the client in such a way that he is able to determine the consequences (positive and negative) of a given thought, belief, etc. After determining the profit and loss balance, the client can independently determine how attractive it is for him to maintain or change this belief (Leahy, 2008).

An exemplary statement from the coach could be as follows: 'Please evaluate the gains and losses associated with maintaining this belief. If you had the opportunity to indicate the system of benefits and losses in the form of a percentage, how many percent of the hundred would you ascribe to positive, and how many to negative consequences. Now consider what the possible division of positive and negative consequences will look like if you change this belief or replace it with another.'

The application of this technique may be difficult, especially when the client encounters some difficulties in estimating, for example, the benefits of negative beliefs. In addition, it is crucial to involve the coach in the sustainability process in analysing both long-term and short-term benefits.

ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGES IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS TECHNIQUE

This technique refers directly to the theory of attribution (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 1997) and the tendency to focus on a single behaviour and to generalize

it and assign as a permanent feature to another person. As a result, in many situations, also in everyday language, there is a tendency to generalize and assign constant properties without noticing the variability of behaviour that occurs depending on the circumstances and situations. In this case, the coach's activity should focus on making the client aware of the extent to which the specific observed behaviour is conditioned by situational factors, to what extent it was the situation, and not the permanent qualities of another person, that decided about it (Leahy, 2008). The coach, together with the client, tries to go beyond the individual situation in order to analyse the inter-situational variability of behaviours.

For instance, a coach may refer to the belief of a particular person (client), according to which he attributes to himself e.g. helplessness. The questions on the part of the coach may be as follows: «Does the helplessness indicated by you last all the time?», «In what situations, in what moments of the day do you feel that you are more or less helpless?», etc. The aim is to guide the client to make him notice the variability of defined characteristics depending on different situations.

DISTINGUISHING PROGRESS FROM PERFECTION TECHNIQUE

The technique responds to the tendency of some people to strive for complete perfection instead of striving for progress. Striving for perfection is an expression of unrealistic expectations and standards. As a result, it translates into a feeling of failure in the absence of an ideal — perfect state. The task of the coach is to sensitize the client to the fact that gradual progress in a particular area is much more realistic than the assumption that a particular task will be performed perfectly. The coach's statements may sound as follows: «Please try to indicate the benefits resulting, for example, from the fact that you strive to improve your functioning in a particular area, instead of the desire to achieve the final state, which will be perfect. Focusing on the desire to achieve the ideal status quo will lead to a feeling of frustration, because it is unrealistic».

As part of this technique, the client learns about the advantages of making little progress in his performance. His attention is directed to noticing small achievements, celebrating them and using them in the process of self-motivation. The difficulty in applying this technique may be related to the fact that some people may accept a high level of self-criticism (expressed, for instance, in the lack of appreciation of minor successes) as an appropriate attitude beneficial for real development (Leahy, 2008).

SPLIT CAKE TECHNIQUE

The application of this technique is related to the tendency, which is visible in some people, to assign the entire responsibility for different kinds of difficult

situations and failures only to themselves. As a result, only zero-one categories are used in the description of reality. The split-cake technique is supposed to foster the perception of the complexity of the causes leading to a given difficult situation. The client is asked to draw a pie chart with parts of different sizes marked. Then, he lists different potential factors that could have influenced the occurrence of a given difficulty / failure. After drawing up a list of potential triggers, the client is asked to enter them in defined parts of the pie chart, assigning a specific rank (size) to them at the same time. Among the different determinants of a difficult situation, the client should also indicate the level of his responsibility for failure at this stage. This technique makes the client sensitive to noticing also other causes of defined events, etc.

One of the difficulties in applying this technique may be a situation when the client is unable to go beyond the pattern of thinking about the event as being solely caused by his actions. Sometimes this type of procedure makes the client able to somehow unblock the way of thinking so as to see the complexity of the causes of a given event / situation (Leahy, 2008).

The above-mentioned work techniques applied in cognitive-behavioural therapy constitute only a section of their broad spectrum. They are presented in this article to show examples of methods that can successfully find their place in the cognitive-behavioural coaching process because of their simplicity and clarity. Naturally, we must remember that both the above-mentioned and other techniques usually contain a number of additional details in the form of special cards / work tables, possible homework and other elements that constitute a kind of supporting instruments.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this article was not to describe all techniques in detail, but to emphasize the need to reflect on to what extent / which elements of cognitive-behavioural therapy can be successfully implemented within the education system, within a much more superficial method than therapy, i.e. coaching. According to the author's intention, the aim of this article is to try to popularise the idea of cognitive-behavioural coaching and to show the need for empirical verification of its efficiency.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ КОГНІТИВНО-ПОВЕДІНКОВОГО КОУЧИНГУ В СИСТЕМІ ОСВІТИ

Ремігіуш Коц, соціальний психолог, політолог, доцент Інституту соціальних наук Університету економіки в Бидгощі. вул. Гарбари, 2, 85-229, м. Бидгощ, Республіка Польща, remigiusz.koc@byd.pl.

Автор статті порушує питання про можливість використання в системі освіти одного з методів коучингу, яким є когнітивно-поведінковий коучинг. У першій частині представлено аналіз самого поняття коучингу, включаючи дослідження його ефективності у вирішенні вибраних проблем або вдосконалення окремих сфер системи освіти. Автор визначає один із видів коучингу — когнітивно-поведінковий коучинг. Він наводить дослідження ефективності цього методу, вказуючи на потенційні сфери його застосування в системі освіти. Для того, щоб продемонструвати потенційну корисність методу когнітивно-поведінкового коучингу, автор посилається на приклади прийомів роботи з клієнтом (учнем, батьками), отриманих з когнітивно-поведінкової терапії, які, на думку автора, можуть бути успішно перенесені на ґрунті когнітивно-поведінкового коучингу. Стаття носить дослідницький характер. Автор порушує питання застосування когнітивно-поведінкового коучингу в навчальних закладах, водночас привертаючи увагу до необхідності поглиблених емпіричних досліджень у цій сфері.

Ключові слова: коучинг; когнітивно-поведінковий коучинг; когнітивно-поведінкова терапія.

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