

Coaching New School Principals during Their Professional Integration: Exploring Opportunities for Improvement

Nancy Lauzon¹

Abstract

The general objective of this study is to examine the coaching offered by Québec school boards to new school principals during their professional integration period. More specifically, it aims to study coaches' perceptions of: 1) the positive impacts expected from executive coaching, 2) the factors that facilitate this coaching, and 3) the factors that impede it. The data-gathering tool is a semi-structured interview. A total of 33 coaches from five school boards in the same large region of Québec, Canada were interviewed. This study offers insight into coaches' perceptions regarding the factors that can facilitate or impede the coaching provided to new school principals during their professional integration, factors which can be grouped according to whether they relate more to characteristics of the coaches, characteristics of the coachees, the coach-coachee relationship, or the coach's approach. Determining these factors allows us to identify a number of possible opportunities for improving the coaching offered to new principals. A more in-depth analysis suggests that some parameters of the coaching mechanism might have an impact on the facilitating/impeding factors. More concretely, these parameters correspond, for example, to the coach-selection process, the support and training available to coaches, and the recognition given to them.

Keywords: school principal, professional integration, executive coaching

Several studies suggest that school principals have an impact on students' success (Cotton, 2003; Dumay, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011).

This impact, which is generally considered indirect, is realized through various actions by the principals, including those related to the school's culture and implementing systems to control and monitor educational processes or student results, as well as efforts aimed at motivating and developing the skills of school staff (Brown, 2001; Calman & Laforest, 2010; Cotton, 2003; Endrizzi & Thibert, 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Nettles & Herrington, 2007).

Given the significance of the strategic role played by principals in students' success, the senior management of their school boards² place particular importance on new principals' professional development as they start their career. This concern is heightened even more by the fact that the principals generally have no initial management training because they were previously teachers for the most part. Consequently, several school boards offer them coaching by more experienced principals during their professional integration period. The general goal of this coaching is to enable these new administrators to develop their "competent action"³ relative to the various situations they are facing or will face (Le Boterf, 2011).

¹ PhD, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Sherbrooke, Longueuil Campus, (Office 15824), 150, place Charles-Le Moyne, Longueuil, Québec, Canada J4K 0A8. Phone: 1 888 463-1835 (61660), E-mail address : Nancy.Lauzon@USherbrooke.ca

²In Québec, principals report to school boards.

³ Free translation of the French expression "agir compétent"

This “competent action” can be developed through, among other means, the transmission of knowledge from more experienced principals and learning in action (Lauzon & Corriveau, 2013; Lauzon et al., 2013). Our current work on the coaching of new school principals during their professional integration suggests that the level of satisfaction with this activity varies greatly for both school board senior management and the coaches and coachees. In light of the importance of the principals' role, it is relevant to ask: What factors are likely to facilitate or impede the coaching of new school principals during their professional integration?

1. Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the coaching offered by Québec school boards to new school principals during their professional integration period. More specifically, it aims to study coaches' perceptions of: 1) the positive impacts expected from executive coaching, 2) the factors that facilitate this coaching, and 3) the factors that impede it.

2. Focus of the Study

Our review of the literature as well as recent work done point to the need for an examination of executive coaching from a broader perspective, that of a guidance and support process in a dyadic context aimed at transmitting the knowledge of a more experienced manager (expert) to a less experienced one (novice) (Lauzon et al., 2013; Paul, 2004; Wilkesmann & Wilkesmann, 2011). Note that the transmission of knowledge is not considered here in its strictest sense, but rather as a process within which organizational actors discuss ideas, receive knowledge and are influenced by the other's experience (Van Wijk, Jansen, & Lyles, 2008). This perspective thus holds that both the coach and the coachee have an active role to play in the coaching process.

3. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Several authors propose a definition of executive coaching (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Douglas & Morley, 2000; Joo, 2005; Kilburg, 1996; Baron & Morin, 2010). Within the context of this study, the expression is understood to mean the process by which an experienced school principal plays a coaching role with a new principal during his/her professional integration period⁴. More specifically, we have adopted the definition proposed by Baron and Morin (2010, p. 48) based on that of Douglas and Morley (2000, p. 40, free translation):

Executive coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective [...]. Executive coaching involves the teaching of skills in the context of a personal relationship with the learner, and providing feedback on the executive's interpersonal relations and skills [...]. An ongoing series of activities tailored to the individual's current issues or relevant problem is designed by the coach to assist the executive in maintaining a consistent, confident focus as he or she tunes strengths and manages shortcomings [...].

3.1 Positive Impacts Expected From Executive Coaching

An examination of the factors that can facilitate or impede the success of executive coaching warrants considering the positive impacts that are expected from it. According to some authors, the general goal of executive coaching is the development of the coachee's professional competencies (Baron & Morin, 2009). More precisely, Baron & Morin (2009, p. 88) indicate that some research suggests a link between executive coaching and individual performance (McGovern et al., 2001; Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997; Smither et al., 2003), the feeling of effectiveness (Baron & Morin, 2007; Evers et al., 2006), organizational engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Olivero et al., 1997), leadership (Thach, 2002), conflict resolution (McGovern et al., 2001), the coachee's self-awareness and time management (Gegner, 1997).

⁴The expression “school principal” is intended here to include both principals and vice-principals.

3.2 Factors That Can Facilitate or Impede the Coaching of New School Principals

Our review of the literature points to a number of factors that can facilitate or impede the coaching of new school principals. We have grouped them based on whether they are more related to the antecedents of coaching or to the coaching process itself. (Joo, 2005).

3.2.1 Antecedents of the Coaching Process

The antecedents of coaching refer to characteristics of the coach and the coachee (Joo, 2005; Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012). These characteristics can be examined based on two complementary concepts: coaches'/coachees' motivation and their ability to transmit knowledge and to integrate it (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Kalling, 2003; Ko, Kirsch, & King, 2005; Lee & Wu, 2010; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998; Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Szulanski, 1996, 2000). A variety of factors could influence a coach's motivation to transmit knowledge: having an interest in doing so from a career standpoint, obtaining monetary or symbolic recognition, or demonstrating organizational commitment and adherence to the values advocated by the organization (Burgess, 2005; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Ko, Kirsh & King, 2005; McNichols, 2008; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998). With respect to coaches' abilities, some of the literature discusses them from a relational perspective, from a communicational perspective, and in terms of facilitating the coachee's learning (Baron & Morin, 2009; Dingman, 2004).

Coaches' relational abilities are evidenced, for example, through an ability to demonstrate a sincere interest, treat the coachee with respect and show confidence in the coachee. The communicational abilities are those related to asking questions, rephrasing, providing critical and constructive feedback, and confronting coachees' beliefs. Lastly, the abilities related to learning include, for example, the ability to establish an agreement with the coachee and to implement a structured work method, including determining clear objectives (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009; Spence, 2007) and identifying learning difficulties encountered and possible situations for learning transfer. Finally, some authors mention the ability to grasp the issues and reality of the coachee's organizational environment (St-Onge & Gins, 2011).

As for coachees' motivation, it appears related to their openness to receiving feedback from the coach and to self-examination and reflection, as well as to incorporating the coach's knowledge into their own to create new knowledge that they will then use in their professional activities (Carey, Philippon, & Cumming, 2011; Coutu & Kauffman, 2009; Joo, 2005; Peterson, 2009; St-Onge & Gins, 2011; Wilkesmann & Wilkesmann, 2011). With regard to the factors that could influence coachees' motivation, there are the coach's status and perceived reputation in the organization (Szulanski, 1996). As previously mentioned, coachees should play an active role in the coaching process. However, this role would greatly depend on their absorptive capacity, i.e. the ability to recognize the value of certain knowledge possessed by the coach, assimilate it and subsequently apply it in their professional activities (Kumar & Ganesh, 2009, p.168; Liyanage et al., 2009; Tang, 2011). In this respect, it is reasonable to suppose that a new principal undergoing professional integration who has a poor absorptive capacity might be unable to integrate certain knowledge transmitted by the coach. Finally, this capacity appears closely tied to the coachees' pre-existing knowledge (Szulanski, 1996, p.31).

3.2.2 Coaching Process

Two important factors were identified in the literature reviewed. The first concerns the quality of the relationship between the coach and the coachee and the second involves certain aspects of the process used by the coach. Regarding the coach-coachee relationship, several authors view it as the key factor for successful coaching (Baron & Morin, 2009; Critchley, 2010; Joo, 2005; Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Luebbe, 2005; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Peterson, 2009; St-Onge & Gins, 2011).

Indeed, Visser (2010, p. 892) notes that:

[...] the relationship between coach and executive increasingly has received attention. Maintaining a strong and productive relationship with clients empirically has been identified as a critical success factor in successful coaching outcomes, slightly more than professional attitude and working methods of the executive coach.

As for the components of a quality relationship, several authors emphasize the trust that must develop between the coach and coachee (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Jones & Spooner, 2006; Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012; Luebbe, 2005). Some of them even consider it the key factor in the quality of this relationship (Luebbe, 2005). In terms of its conceptualization, this trust appears to have two main facets: one emotional and the other cognitive. The emotional facet, often referred to as a benevolent trust (Abrams, Cross, & Levin, 2002 *in* Keshavarz-Nia, 2011; Keshavarz-Nia, 2011), can be defined as the degree to which a coach appears to want what is best for the coachee without looking to benefit. Synonyms such as loyalty, frankness and caring support are used (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman 1995). With respect to the cognitive facet, it refers to coaches' ability to keep their commitments relative to transmitting knowledge and the coachee's learning. The factors that can help develop this trust include transparency and assurance that the coach will maintain confidentiality as well as clarification of the limits of this confidentiality (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). The reputation of the experienced executive transmitting the knowledge, in this case the coach, also plays a part in the development of this trust, a reputation that relies in particular on the value placed on the coach's previous actions (Rao, 1994), past professional performance, and overall competency or specific skills related to particular duties or responsibilities (Lucas & Ogilvie, 2006). This reputation seems to depend as well on colleagues' comments and the assessment of past interactions with other employees (Child & Rodrigues, 1996 *in* Lucas & Ogilvie, 2006; Shenkar & Yochtmann-Yaar, 1997). Regarding the more specific role played by this trust in the relationship, Wales (2003) notes that it enables the development of a safe, supportive environment where the coachee's fear and anxiety can be addressed. Furthermore, one could argue that when this trust is prevalent, coaches would be more willing to share their knowledge with their coachees and the coachees would be more open to receiving it and integrating it into their work practices (Andrews & Delahay, 2000; Joia & Lemos, 2010; Srinivas, 2000 *in* Sichinsambwe, 2011; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Tsai & Ghosal, 1998 *in* Sichinsambwe, 2011).

This trust would also promote the creation of a common language between the parties, thereby facilitating the transmission of knowledge (Perez-Nordtvedt et al., 2008). In a similar perspective, attributes such as respect, collaboration and mutual commitment are also included in these positive characteristics of the relationship (Jowett, Kanakoglou, and Passmore, 2012; Ting & Hart, 2004 *in* Baron & Morin, 2010).

With respect to the approach taken by coaches, some authors highlight the importance of using a structured process (Bush, 2005 *in* Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003), a key factor of which would be the establishment of clear objectives, since this would enable coachees to self-regulate and would provide them with an indication of what constitutes an acceptable level of performance (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Spence, 2006). In this regard, Feggetter (2007, p. 155) notes: "As coaching is a goal-focused process (...), goal attainment represents a key dependent variable for any coaching intervention." Additionally, for the process to work, the coach and coachee must have time and a suitable location for their meetings. More concretely, they need sufficient time to experiment, reflect and discuss (Fahey & Prusak, 1998; Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Riege, 2005; Roberts, 2000). They must also have access to a meeting place for both formal and informal discussions (Davenport & Prusak, 2000).

4. Method

Given this study's general objective, the approach chosen is qualitative (Creswell, 2013) and descriptive (Creswell, 2013). The data-gathering tool is a semi-structured interview.

The interview framework, which was pre-tested, is based on our review of the literature on executive coaching, the guidance and support in the fields of administration and educational administration provided to new school principals during their professional integration, and transmission of knowledge from a more experienced employee to one who is less experienced. A total of five school boards in the same large region of Québec, Canada participated in this study. In each school board, the person responsible for the coaching provided to new principals during their professional integration was asked to identify a certain number of coaches. The sampling was based on the criteria of expertise and voluntary participation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Furthermore, the principals interviewed had to be coaching or have coached new school principals at the time of the study in one of the five participating school boards.

The interviews, which lasted 45 to 75 minutes, were conducted in person at the coaches' workplace. Each interview was recorded and transcribed (verbatim). A total of 33 coaches were interviewed. This number made it possible to achieve information saturation (Karsenti & Savoie-Zajc, 2011). Content analysis was carried out using the software application QDA Miner with predefined categories based on the theoretical framework and emerging categories. An inter-rater approach was utilized for the analysis.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 The Positive Impacts Expected From Executive Coaching

In order to identify the positive impacts expected from coaching, the study focused on the objectives targeted by the coaches. Our analysis indicates that a majority of them have no explicit objectives for the coaching they provide to new school principals during their professional integration. Furthermore, a very small number of them indicate that this subject is addressed at the beginning of or during the coaching process. One coach stated: "Honestly, I've never stopped to think about it. I've done my coaching with my coachees with the aim of meeting their needs." A number of coaches explain this situation by the fact that the expectations for the coaching communicated to them by their school board are more or less formal, even nonexistent in certain cases. Some coaches note, however, that even though their school board has no formal expectations and they themselves do not define explicit objectives with their coachee, they nevertheless aim to have the coachee master all of the documents related to managing the school's human resources (e.g. the role of each category of employees) and financial, material and technological resources. The topics covered also include the school's culture and knowledge of the roles of the various school board departments. Finally, one coach indicated that the mandate is broad, that it involves helping the coachees develop their skills, and another coach mentioned that, in his opinion, it consists of training, guiding and orienting a person undertaking a school-management career. That said, the vast majority of the coaches noted that it is very difficult for them to monitor the coachee's progress given that they do not set any explicit objectives. Several said they used their intuition to evaluate the progress and noted that they are therefore "in the realm of impressions." Some stated that they have to rely on what they are told by the coachee, "on the coachee's word." So they will try to evaluate the coachee "from the way he talks about his experiences."

Some coaches nevertheless point to indicators, which after analysis, have been grouped as follows: 1) indicators related to the coachee's gradual adoption of a management posture and credibility as a school principal; 2) indicators related to the nature of the problems presented by the coachee and the coachee's analytical ability; 3) indicators specific to the coachee's reported impact in the coachee's environment; 4) indicators related to the coachee's self-evaluation of his/her actions relative to particular problems.

These comments are thus in line with those of authors who state that the general goal of executive coaching is to develop the manager's professional competencies, individual performance or feeling of effectiveness (Baron & Morin, 2009).

As a result, the coaches endeavour to transmit to the coachees knowledge that they think is necessary to manage the school's various resources, inform the coachees of the support available from the school board to accomplish their mission, and help the coachees manage situations perceived as problematic for them. However, there generally does not seem to be any indications from the school board regarding the specific knowledge to be transmitted and the professional situations that new principals need to master during professional integration to demonstrate performance. Furthermore, owing to the lack of specific objectives, coaches' evaluation of a coachees' progress is still often intuitive and informal.

5.2 Factors That Facilitate Coaching

5.2.1 The Coach and the Coachee

As for the coaches and, more specifically, their sources of motivation, the elements most often cited were to feel useful and offer assistance to the coachee that they themselves did not receive when starting out as a school principal. Other reasons mentioned included the opportunity to reflect on their own practices, further develop their management skills, and obtain recognition from the coachee as well as from the school board in certain cases. Our analysis therefore suggests that facilitating the coachee's performance through a successful professional integration and receiving symbolic recognition from the coachee and the school board can be sources of motivation for the coaches, as noted by some of the authors reviewed.

At the same time, the results also suggest another possible source of motivation to be added to the theoretical framework that was not indicated in the literature reviewed: the opportunity for the coaches to strengthen their management skills and reflect on their professional practices through their discussions with and the questions from the coachee. It is an element that supports the perspective that coaching appears to be a process in which organizational actors discuss ideas, receive knowledge and are influenced by the other's experience, as suggested by Van Wijk et al. (2008). Regarding the coaches' perception of having the abilities to play this role, the three categories of skills discussed in the literature, namely relational skills, communicational skills and the ability to facilitate the coachee's learning (Baron et Morin, 2009), were mentioned at one point or another during the interviews. In this regard, some coaches mentioned that certain relational skills were necessary in order to establish and develop a relationship of trust with the coachee. As for communicational abilities, these seem to be influenced by the fact that certain coaches received training on asking questions, listening and rephrasing. Finally, with respect to learning-related skills, some coaches indicated that they must be able to identify the coachee's strengths and weaknesses, guide the coachee and provide structured feedback. Some coaches also consider their knowledge of the coachee's work environment an asset.

As for the coachee's characteristics, this aspect was less often discussed by the coaches. Some of them nevertheless talked about elements related to the coachee's motivation and others about the coachee's abilities. A number of coaches affirmed that the coachee's commitment is the first factor of success in coaching, even an essential condition. On this subject, one coach mentioned: "She was ready, very organized and very professional. She asked questions, she took notes... she had prepared all of her questions ahead of time. It was part of her profile. She is very meticulous. It was helpful." Concerning the coachee's abilities, one coach also mentioned a capacity for introspection and reflection.

5.2.2 The Coaching Process

As indicated by the literature reviewed, the element of trust within the relationship between the coach and coachee appears to be fundamental for all of these coaches. This trust is linked to a relationship where the coach does not judge the coachee and frankness, honesty, confidentiality, transparency and mutual respect prevail.

Our analyses suggest it is more so the emotional dimension that is highlighted here by the coaches. Some used the term "chemistry" to qualify this trust or referred to the presence of shared values.

Their comments can therefore be related to the expression “working alliance” introduced by Baron and Morin (2009). That said, a few coaches still emphasized the coach’s credibility as a factor in enabling the development of trust in the relationship. One of them indicated that this credibility is tied to the coach’s knowledge of the main aspects of a school’s management. Another mentioned:

[...] The coachee has to feel the coach is credible. It’s the first thing. So you have to develop this relationship because, seeing as we didn’t know each other at all, she had never heard of me... seeing as she wasn’t in my team or in my school board, she didn’t know that I was someone recognized in my workplace... She had to realize that I am someone with judgement, someone who would be able to help her develop.

Regarding the coaching process, some coaches emphasized the importance of a certain formalization of the process. In this respect, our analysis highlighted the relevance of establishing organizational objectives for the process of coaching new principals during their professional integration. One coach mentioned that this enabled him to link his actions to the organization’s objectives. Certain coaches also noted the importance of defining each person’s roles and objectives, of establishing a working framework from the outset and adhering to it throughout the year. In a similar perspective, a number of coaches pointed to the importance of structuring the meetings by setting an agenda. In this respect, some coaches who had received coaching training indicated that it had enabled them to clarify what they were going to work on while coaching and what they needed to put in place to accomplish that.

Other coaches emphasized the fact that not having to evaluate the coachee was very positive because it promoted trust between them and their coachees and made it possible to maintain confidentiality. In a similar vein, the majority of the coaches indicated that they did not need to formally report on their coachees’ progress or performance. Finally, some coaches asserted that the fact the choice of coach is not imposed on the coachee promotes the development of a relationship of trust. Some even went so far as to say it ensured success.

5.3 Factors That Impede Coaching

5.3.1 The Coach and the Coachee

Several coaches indicated that the factors likely to hinder coaching were in fact the absence of the factors for success. With respect to the coach, some mentioned poor skills in communicating and in facilitating the coachee’s learning. For example, in the first case, a coach might have difficulty giving structured feedback, and in the second, a coach might impose his/her ideas on the coachee instead of helping the coachee progress and learn. A number of coaches also pointed to the coachee’s attitude as a factor that could impede the coaching process. Some mentioned, for example, situations where the coachee does not seem to “take the coaching seriously,” feels that s/he “already knows everything,” is not very receptive to the coach’s suggestions, is afraid of being judged, or is not ready to deal with the problems the coachee is encountering in performing his or her duties. On this topic, one coach stated: “The desire to get involved... If I find myself with someone [and] that person is unwilling to make an effort, to get involved, to move the school forward, to share a vision, that becomes a problem. At that point, it is very difficult.” These results thus support the importance of the coachee playing an active role and being committed and motivated to learn (Carey, Philippon and Cumming, 2011; Coutu and Kauffman, 2009; Peterson, 2009) and also the importance of certain coaching skills (Baron and Morin, 2009).

5.3.2 The Coaching Process

The other main factors that impede coaching noted by the coaches have to do with the coach-coachee relationship and with certain characteristics of the coaching mechanism. Concerning the relationship, the most often cited problems were those related to trust.

On that subject, one coach mentioned: "If the element of trust isn't there, I think it will be very difficult... because of fear of being judged or not being good enough, I think it won't work at all." Another coach insisted on the importance of confidentiality, as Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) noted following their work. This coach stated:

The risk of confidentiality being broken, I think that has a negative impact. I had a relationship with a mentoree that was difficult to establish because, according to him, I was one of his boss's colleagues and I think he was concerned about that.

He didn't really know me and it took a long time to build that relationship of trust with him.

As for the coaching mechanism, several coaches noted difficulties related to the fact that they do not know the school board's expectations relative to coaching new principals during their professional integration. One coach stated:

I think we should have clear parameters. Among other things, what are the school board's expectations for the coaches? Do they have specific expectations? Right now, we do as we see fit. Going forward, do they have expectations or not? I imagine they do; it's impossible for them not to have any. What do you expect? [...] you expect us to be able to do what, to lead the coachee to what point? Just how far can we go?

This absence of expectations combined with the absence of clear objectives for coaching new principals during their professional integration further creates difficulties in terms of monitoring the coachee's progress and enabling the coaches to evaluate the impacts of their coaching. Other factors cited as impeding the coaching process were a lack of organization during coaching meetings, including not having an agenda, and a lack of tools and training to support the coaching process (decision tables, guidelines, etc.). On this topic, one coach indicated that it would be interesting: to have training or maybe even work tables that would tell us what topics to cover during the first meeting and to maybe include some sort of grid that we could use to monitor improvement, progress.

Finally, additional factors noted were infrequent meetings, a shortage of time for the coach or coachee owing to their workload and the daily emergencies to be managed, confidentiality problems related to the location of the coaching meeting, and the distance between the coach's and coachee's schools.

6. Possible Opportunities for Improvement

This study offers insight into coaches' perceptions regarding the factors that can facilitate or impede the coaching provided to new school principals during their professional integration, factors which can be grouped according to whether they relate more to characteristics of the coaches, characteristics of the coachees, the coach-coachee relationship, or the coach's approach.

Determining these factors allows us to identify a number of possible opportunities for improving the coaching offered to new principals. A more in-depth analysis suggests that some parameters of the coaching mechanism might have an impact on the facilitating/impeding factors. More concretely, these parameters correspond, for example, to the coach-selection process, the support and training available to coaches, and the recognition given to them. As will be discussed, these parameters could in turn influence certain characteristics of the coach, including the coach's abilities, certain characteristics of the coachee, including motivation, the quality of the coach's approach and the coach's credibility—an aspect that bears on the quality of the coach-coachee relationship. Given the school boards' decisional power relative to these parameters, examining the opportunities for improvement seems all the more relevant.

More specifically, in light of the study results, two main parameters of the coaching mechanism are examined here: the objectives targeted by the mechanism and the support provided to the coaches. Firstly, the study results underscore the importance of specifying the objectives for coaching new principals.

These objectives can be articulated in terms of two complementary levels: a strategic level and a more operational one. At the strategic level, it appears essential that school board senior management⁵ clearly state their expectations regarding the coach's expected role, identify a certain number of professional situations that the coach must work on with the coachee in order to develop the coachee's "competent action" and, finally, determine relevant knowledge that the coach should transmit to the coachee. Establishing these strategic objectives should make it possible to better define and then explicitly communicate the performance expected of new principals during their professional integration, not only to the coach and the coachee but also to the coachee's immediate superior, who will have to evaluate the coachee. Note that this exercise could also serve as an opportunity for a process of collective reflection and mobilization, leading senior management to ask themselves questions and consult the members of the organization in order to determine the professional situations that new school principals need to master during their professional integration and the management practices that they must employ to participate in the organization's mission of retaining students and ensuring their success.

Determining these strategic objectives would also make it possible to clearly identify the selection criteria to use for potential coaches. In this respect, several experienced principals who participated in the study did not know why they had been chosen to play a coaching role. Asked about it, some reasoned it must have been because they had a profile that corresponded to what the school board wanted, but they could not provide any further clarification. A more targeted selection of principals asked to play a coaching role would most likely also contribute to influencing their perceived credibility, owing to the fact that they would be chosen based on their expertise in the areas valued by the school board. And as has been mentioned, this credibility can have an effect on the development of a relationship of trust between the coach and coachee, a factor perceived as fundamental to the success of executive coaching. Furthermore, this more targeted selection could contribute to the school board's symbolic recognition of the experienced principals chosen as coaches, by presenting them as models in the organization. And as some studies indicate, this recognition can be a source of motivation for coaches.

At the operational level, namely that of the coach's approach, the strategic objectives determined by the school board's senior management should not only enable the coaches to better delineate their role but also help them define the objectives of the coaching process, in cooperation with their coachees, and monitor the coachees' learning progress relative to the objectives. These objectives should also allow the coachees to self-regulate throughout their learning process and provide them with a source of motivation relative to their professional development. As a result, the topics discussed during the meetings would no longer be confined to the problems submitted by the coachee but would also be determined based on strategic directions defined by the school board.

Secondly, the study results suggest that the competencies required to play a coaching role with new principals during their professional integration can be approached from two perspectives: the competencies related to the function of school manager and those pertaining to a guidance and support role. With regard to the first category of competencies, as has been mentioned, they are greatly dependent on the objectives targeted by the school board relative to a principal's "competent action." Experienced principals can therefore rely on their professional experience as managers, on the expertise they have developed and that contributes to their credibility.

As for the second category of competencies, it seems important that the school board offer support to the experienced managers serving as coaches so they can deepen their understanding of the coaching models and approaches and strengthen certain abilities relative to asking questions, rephrasing, providing critical and constructive feedback, and confronting coachees' beliefs.

⁵School board senior management is comprised of a director general (DG) and deputy directors general (DDG).

The abilities related to the coachee's learning should also be considered, namely how to establish an agreement with the coachee, determine clear, motivating objectives, and identify learning difficulties encountered and possible situations for learning transfer. Finally, there are a variety of possible approaches for offering this support. Some coaches suggest short presentations, others propose setting up co-development groups, while others mention the possibility of engaging the services of someone experienced in the field of coaching.

7. Research Limitations and Avenues

This study comprises a number of limitations, including the fact that it focuses on the coaches' perceptions. Therefore, in subsequent stages of this research program, work will be done to determine the perceptions of the other parties affected by the coaching of new principals during their professional integration, including the coachees (new principals), the individuals responsible for the coaching mechanisms (Human Resources management), and school board senior management. Another limitation of this study concerns the makeup of the sampling: the school boards that participated in the study were those that had assigned coaches. This study also raises research questions, some of which would call for a more of quantitative approach. These questions include: To what extent can the results relative to those factors perceived by the coaches as being able to facilitate or impede the coaching of new principals during their professional integration be generalized? And would some of these factors have a greater potential impact than others on the success of the coaching process? Finally, given the importance placed on the quality of the coach-coachee relationship, it would undoubtedly be relevant to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to developing this relationship.

References

- Andrews, K. M., & Delahay, B. L. (2000). Influences on knowledge processes in organizational learning: the psychosocial filter. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37, 797-810.
- Bacon, T. R., & Spear, K. I. (2003). *Adaptive coaching: The art and practice of a client-centered approach to performance improvement*. Palo Alto: Davis-Black.
- Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2009). The Coach-Coachee Relationship in Executive Coaching: A Field Study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20, 1.
- Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2010). Le coaching des gestionnaires. Mieux le définir pour mieux intervenir. *Gestion*, 1(35), 47-55.
- Brown, L. I. (2001). A meta-analysis of research on the influence of leadership on student outcomes. (3110265 Ph.D.), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Ann Arbor. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.usherbrooke.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304729141?accountid=13835> ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text database.
- Burgess, D. (2005). What motivates employees to transfer knowledge outside their work unit? *Journal of Business Communication*, 42, 324-348.
- Calman, R. C., & Laforest, P. (2010). *Explorer les caractéristiques sous-jacentes des écoles à rendement élevé*. Toronto: Imprimeur de la Reine pour l'Ontario.
- Carey, W., Philippon, D. J., & Cumming, G. C. (2011). Coaching models for leadership development an integrative review. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(1), 51-69.
- Cotton, K., & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, A. V. A. (2003). Principals and student achievement: What the research says.
- Coutu, D., & Kauffman, C. (2009). What can coaches do for you? HBR Research report. *Harvard Business Review*, 1, 91-97.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Critchley, B. (2010). Relational coaching: taking the coaching high road. *Journal of Management Development*, 29(10), 851-863.
- Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (2000). *Working knowledge. How organizations manage what they know*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Dingman, M. E. (2004). The effects of executive coaching on job-related attitudes. Doctorate thesis. School of Leadership Studies. Regent University, VA.

- Douglas, C., & Morley, W. (2000). Executive coaching, an annotated bibliography. Greensboro: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Dumay, X. (2009). Origins and consequences of schools' organizational culture for student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(4), 523-555.
- Endrizzi, L., & Thibert, R. (2012). Quels leaderships pour la réussite de tous les élèves? Dossier d'actualité, Veille et analyses, 73, 28. [Online] Available: <http://ife.ens-lyon.fr/vst/DA-Veille/73-avril-2012.pdf>.
- Fahey, L., & Prusak, L. (1998). The 11 deadliest sins of knowledge management. *California Management Review*, 40(3), 265-276.
- Feggetter, A. J. W. (2007). A preliminary evaluation of executive coaching: Does executive coaching work for candidates on a high potential development scheme? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 129-142.
- Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2000). Knowledge flows within multinational corporations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 69, 44-60.
- Gyllensten, K., & Palmer, S. (2007). The coaching relationship: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 167-177.
- Haldin-Herrgard, T. (2000). Difficulties in diffusion of tacit knowledge I organisations. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 4, 357-365.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9(2), 157-191.
- Joia, L. A., & Lemos, B. (2010). Relevant factors for tacit knowledge transfer within organisations. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 14(3), 410-427.
- Jones, G., & Spooner, K. (2006). Coaching High Achievers. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(1), 40-50.
- Joo, B. K. (2005). Executive Coaching: A Conceptual Framework From an Integrative Review of Practice and Research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 462-488.
- Jowett, S., Kanakoglou, K., & Passmore, J. (2012). The Application of the 3+1Cs relationship model in executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 64(3), 183-197.
- Kalling, T. (2003). Organization-internal transfer of knowledge and the role of motivation: A qualitative case study. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 10, 115-126.
- Kampa-Kokesch, S., & Anderson, M. Z. (2001). Executive coaching: A comprehensive review of the literature. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 53(4), 205-228.
- Karsenti, T., & Savoie-Zajc, L. (2011). *La recherche en éducation : étapes et approches*. Montréal: ERPI.
- Keshavarz-Nia, N. R. (2011). A qualitative study on knowledge transfer among members of the United States Intelligence Community. Dissertation, Washington: George Washington University.
- Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 48(2), 134-144.
- Ko, D. G., Kirsch, L. J., & King, W. R. (2005). Antecedents of knowledge transfer from consultants to clients in enterprise system implementations. *MIS Quarterly*, 29, 59-85.
- Kumar, R. J. A., & Ganesh, L. S. (2009). Research on knowledge transfer in organizations: a morphology. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 13(4), 161-174.
- Lauzon, N., & Corriveau, L. (2013). L'apprentissage expérientiel comme approche de coaching de directions d'établissement en insertion professionnelle. In É. Charlier, J. F. Roussel, & S. Boucenna (Eds.), *Expériences des adultes et professionnalités des formateurs* (pp. 91-102). Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- Lauzon, N., Roussel, J. F., Solar, C., & Bouffard, M. (2013) La transmission intraorganisationnelle des savoirs : une perspective managériale anglo-saxonne. *Savoirs*, 31, 9-48.
- Le Boterf, G. (2011). Apprendre à agir et à interagir en professionnel compétent et responsable. *Éducation permanente*, 188, 97-111.
- Lee, C. Y., & Wu, F. C. (2010). Factors Affecting Knowledge Transfer and Absorptive Capacity in Multinational Corporations. *The Journal of International Management Studies*, 5(118), 118-126.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17(2), 201-227.
- Leithwood, K., & Seashore, Louis, K. (2011). *Linking leadership to student learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, An Imprint of Wiley.
- Leonard, D., & Sensiper, S. (1998). The role of tacit knowledge in group innovation. *California Management Review*, 40(3), 112-132.

- Liyanage, C., Elhag, T., Ballal, T., & Li, Q. (2009). Knowledge communication and translation, a knowledge transfer model. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 13(3), 118-131.
- Lucas, L. M., & Ogilvie, D. (2006). Things are not always what they seem: How reputations, culture, and incentives influence knowledge transfer. *The Learning Organization*, 13(1), 7-24.
- Luebbe, D. M. (2005). *The three-way mirror of executive coaching*, Ph.D., Union Institute and University, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., McNulty, B. A., & Association for Supervision and Curriculum (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integration model of organizational trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20, 709-734.
- McNichols, D. (2008). *Tacit knowledge: An examination of intergenerational knowledge transfer within an aerospace engineering community*. Dissertation, Phoenix, AZ : University of Phoenix.
- Nettles, S. M., & Herrington, C. (2007). Revisiting the importance of the direct effects of school leadership on student achievement: The implications for school improvement policy. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(4), 724-736.
- O'Dell, C., & Grayson, C. J. (1998). If only we knew what we know : identification and transfer of internal best practices. *California Management Review*, 40(3), 154-174.
- Osterloh, M., & Frey, B. S. (2000). Motivation, Knowledge Transfer, and Organizational Forms. *Organization Science*, 11(5), 538-550.
- Passmore, J., & Fillery-Travis, A. (2011). A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An international Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 4(2), 70-88.
- Passmore, J., & Gibbes, C. (2007) What does the current literature tell us and what's next for coaching research? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 116-128.
- Paul, M. (2004). *L'accompagnement : une posture professionnelle spécifique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Perez-Nordtvedt, L., Kedia, B. L., Datta, D. K., & Rasheed, A. A. (2008). Effectiveness and efficiency of cross-border knowledge transfer: An empirical examination. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(4), 714-744.
- Peterson, D. B. (2009). Does your coach give you value for your money? HBR Research report. *Harvard Business Review*, 87(1), 29.
- Rao, H. (1994). The social construction of reputation: Certification contests, legitimation, and the survival of organizations in the American automobile industry: 1895-1912. *Strategic Management Journal*, 15, 29-44.
- Riege, A. (2005). Three-dozen knowledge-sharing barriers managers must consider. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 9(3), 18-35.
- Roberts, J. (2000). From know-how to show-how? Questioning the role of information and communication technologies in knowledge transfer. *Technology Analysis and Strategic Management*, 12(4), 429-443.
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2013). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach*. West Sussex: John Wiley et Sons.
- Shenkar, O., & Yochtmann-Yaar, E. (1997). Reputation, image, and goodwill: An interdisciplinary approach to organizational standing. *Human Relations*, 50, 1361-81.
- Sichinsambwe, C. M. (2011). *Effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge transfer in supplier development: Key antecedents and buyer-supplier outcomes*. Cleveland: Cleveland State University.
- Spence, G. B. (2007) GAS powered coaching: Goal attainment scaling and its use in coaching research and practice. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 155-167.
- St-Onge, S., & Gins, C. (2011). Le coaching de gestionnaires. Mesure de l'efficacité et conditions de succès. *Revue internationale de psychosociologie et de gestion des comportements organisationnels*, XVII(42), 89-113.
- Szulanski, G. (1996). Exploring internal stickiness: Impediments to the transfer of best practice within the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17, 27- 43.
- Szulanski, G. (2000). The process of knowledge transfer: a diachronic analysis of stickiness. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 82(1), 9-27.
- Tang, F. (2011). Knowledge transfer in intra-organization networks. *System Research and Behavioral Science*, 28, 270-282.
- Van Wijk, R., Jansen, J. J. P., & Lyles, M. A. (2008). Inter- and Intra- Organizational Knowledge Transfer: A Meta-Analytic Review of Assessment of its Antecedents and Consequences. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(4), 830-853.
- Visser, M. (2010). Relating in executive coaching: A behavioural systems approach. *Journal of Management Development*, 29(10), 891-901.
- Wales, S. (2003). Why coaching? *Journal of Change Management*, 3(3), 275-282.
- Wasylyshyn, K. M. (2003). Executive coaching: An outcome study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 55(2), 94-106.
- Wilkesmann, M., & Wilkesmann, U. (2011). Knowledge transfer as interaction between experts and novices supported by technology. *The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, 41(2), 96-112.