

Coaching Competencies for Human Resource Management in Educational Institutions

A Conceptual Framework for Developing Transformational School Leaders

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Abstract

Educational institutions increasingly require leaders who can manage human resources through partnership, reflection, and professional empowerment rather than directive control. This article develops a conceptual framework for coaching competencies in educational human resource management and examines their relevance to leadership development in the context of Ukrainian educational transformation. The study uses an integrative qualitative design combining a structured review of coaching and educational leadership literature, comparative analysis of international competency frameworks, and reflective synthesis of applied training experience at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. The analysis identifies six interrelated competency domains: ethical practice, relational trust, active listening, reflective inquiry, collaborative decision facilitation, and developmental feedback. These competencies support a transition from administrative supervision to facilitative leadership by strengthening teacher agency, team learning, psychological safety, and responsibility for organizational goals. The article also proposes a staged implementation model linking professional training, supervised practice, reflective learning, and communities of practice. The findings are interpretive rather than causal; accordingly, the framework should be empirically tested using validated indicators of leadership behavior, organizational climate, staff engagement, and educational outcomes. The study contributes a context-sensitive model for embedding coaching in educational human resource management and outlines priorities for institutional implementation and future evaluation.

Keywords: coaching competencies; educational leadership; human resource management; school leadership; professional development; psychological safety; Ukraine

1 Introduction

Educational leadership is being reshaped by institutional autonomy, accountability, digitalization, and the growing expectation that schools operate as learning organizations. These changes require leaders to do more

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than administer resources and monitor compliance. They must cultivate professional capacity, coordinate collective learning, support staff well-being, and create conditions in which teachers can exercise responsible autonomy.

In Ukraine, systemic educational reform has intensified the need to reconsider how leaders influence pedagogical teams. Directive management may produce short-term compliance, but it is poorly suited to complex environments in which employees must interpret change, experiment with practice, and collaborate across professional boundaries. Coaching offers an alternative managerial logic grounded in dialogue, reflection, trust, and shared responsibility.

Coaching competencies include active listening, purposeful questioning, constructive feedback, facilitation of decision making, and the creation of psychologically safe relationships. Although these competencies are increasingly discussed in leadership development, their integration into educational human resource management remains fragmented. The literature often treats coaching as an isolated intervention rather than as a coherent set of managerial capabilities embedded in organizational practice.

This article addresses that gap by developing a competency-based framework for coaching-oriented educational leadership. It asks three questions: (1) Which coaching competencies are most relevant to human resource management in educational institutions? (2) Through which mechanisms can these competencies influence professional and organizational development? (3) How can educational institutions build and sustain coaching capability among leaders?

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Coaching as a Leadership and Human Resource Practice

Coaching is commonly understood as a developmental partnership that helps individuals clarify goals, examine assumptions, generate options, and assume responsibility for action. Whitmore (2009) positioned coaching as a means of unlocking potential, while Knight (2007) translated partnership principles into instructional coaching through equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. These perspectives distinguish coaching from inspection, advice giving, and performance correction.

Within human resource management, coaching links individual development to organizational capability. Its value lies not only in improving discrete skills but also in strengthening self-regulation, learning orientation, and adaptive performance. Stober and Grant (2006) emphasized evidence-based practice, whereas Passmore (2016) highlighted professional standards and the integration of coaching with leadership development.

2.2 Coaching in Educational Leadership

Educational settings add distinctive relational and ethical demands. Leaders work with professionals whose motivation, judgment, and collaboration directly affect teaching quality and student experience. Van Nieuwerburgh (2018) argued that coaching in education can contribute to cultures characterized by trust, learning, and shared improvement. Coaching conversations encourage educators to articulate challenges, examine evidence, and select actions without reducing professional development to compliance.

Recent research reinforces this developmental orientation. Mbokota and Myres (2024) identified the capacity to create safety, foster self-awareness, support motivation, manage emotion, and strengthen responsibility as central to transformative coaching. Majola et al. (2024) linked coaching-oriented principal leadership to learner success and school climate. In Ukraine, Seminikhyna and Lutsenko (2024) emphasized the importance of adapting international coaching practices to national educational realities.

3 Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework integrates international professional standards with the requirements of educational human resource management. It treats coaching competence as a coordinated system of ethical, relational, communicative, cognitive, and facilitative capabilities rather than a collection of conversational techniques.

Competency domain	Observable leadership practice	Expected organizational mechanism
Ethical practice	Clarifies roles, boundaries, confidentiality, and accountability	Creates legitimacy and protects professional trust
Relational trust	Demonstrates respect, empathy, consistency, and non-judgment	Strengthens psychological safety and willingness to engage
Active listening	Attends to meaning, emotion, context, and unspoken concerns	Improves diagnosis of professional and team needs
Reflective inquiry	Uses open questions to examine assumptions, evidence, and alternatives	Promotes self-awareness and professional learning
Decision facilitation	Supports goal setting, option generation, and action planning	Increases autonomy, ownership, and implementation commitment
Developmental feedback	Provides specific, dialogic, future-oriented feedback	Connects reflection with sustained performance improvement

The domains are mutually reinforcing. Ethical clarity supports trust; trust enables honest listening; listening improves the quality of inquiry; inquiry expands decision options; and developmental feedback sustains learning. Weakness in one domain can compromise the others. For example, sophisticated questioning without relational trust may be experienced as interrogation, while supportive dialogue without accountability may fail to produce action.

4 Methodology

The study applies an integrative qualitative design. First, it synthesizes foundational and contemporary scholarship on coaching, instructional coaching, educational leadership, and evidence-based practice. Second, it compares competency expectations articulated by the International Coaching Federation and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council with the functional demands placed on leaders of educational institutions. Third, it uses reflective synthesis of the author's experience in designing and delivering coaching-related modules for educational leaders at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University.

The analytical process comprised four stages: identification of recurrent competency constructs; grouping of overlapping constructs into higher-order domains; interpretation of their relevance to educational human resource management; and development of an institutional implementation model. Applied examples from training modules were used to illustrate the framework, not to establish causal effectiveness. No experimental or longitudinal data were collected; consequently, claims are limited to conceptual coherence, practical relevance, and theoretically supported mechanisms.

5 Findings

5.1 From Directive Management to Facilitative Leadership

The synthesis indicates that coaching competencies can reorient managerial behavior from command and correction toward inquiry and facilitation. This does not eliminate authority or accountability. Instead, it changes how leaders exercise authority: expectations remain clear, but employees participate more actively in diagnosing problems, generating solutions, and evaluating progress.

Four organizational effects are consistently associated with this shift. First, teachers are more likely to articulate professional goals and assume responsibility for development. Second, listening and structured dialogue can improve communication and reduce defensiveness during change. Third, reflective inquiry can reveal assumptions that sustain ineffective routines. Fourth, collaborative decision processes can strengthen commitment because staff understand both the rationale for action and their role in implementation.

5.2 Developing Coaching Competence

Coaching competence cannot be developed through theoretical instruction alone. Effective preparation combines conceptual knowledge, observed demonstrations, repeated practice, feedback, supervision, and reflection. Professional communities then help leaders sustain development after formal training.

Development stage	Core activity	Evidence of progression
Foundational learning	Ethics, coaching principles, communication, and leadership theory	Leader distinguishes coaching from mentoring, consulting, and supervision
Guided practice	Role plays, cases, observed conversations, and structured feedback	Leader demonstrates listening, inquiry, contracting, and goal clarification
Supervised application	Use of coaching conversations in authentic managerial situations	Leader adapts practice to context while maintaining ethical boundaries
Reflective consolidation	Journals, case review, peer dialogue, and after-action review	Leader identifies patterns, limitations, and development priorities
Community and renewal	Peer supervision, professional networks, and advanced learning	Practice is sustained, evaluated, and integrated into institutional routines

5.3 Applied Training in the Ukrainian Context

Current Ukrainian initiatives demonstrate several pathways for developing coaching capability. Pedagogical coaching activities at the International University of Economics and Humanities engage future teachers in professional problem analysis, goal setting, emotional awareness, and feedback. Leadership-oriented programs at the State University Kyiv Aviation Institute integrate coaching and mentoring into management education. Training materials developed for in-service education similarly emphasize the transformation of staff groups into collaborative teams.

At Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, the author's applied courses combine team coaching, mentoring, career management, and educational leadership. Learning activities draw on the GROW model, SMART goal formulation, strategic analysis, scaling, metaphor-based reflection, case sessions, and after-action review. Their pedagogical value lies in allowing leaders to rehearse coaching behavior, observe its relational consequences, and connect reflective dialogue with managerial decisions.

6 Discussion

6.1 Coaching as an Organizational Capability

The findings suggest that coaching should not be confined to individual conversations or short training events. Its sustained value depends on organizational conditions. Leaders require time for developmental dialogue, clear role boundaries, access to supervision, and performance systems that reward learning rather than mere compliance. If the wider culture remains punitive or highly centralized, coaching techniques may be perceived as inauthentic.

A coaching culture therefore develops through alignment among leadership behavior, human resource policy, professional learning, and institutional governance. Recruitment and promotion criteria can include relational and facilitative capabilities. Performance review can incorporate reflective goal setting. Professional development can use coaching cycles rather than one-off workshops. Team meetings can adopt inquiry-based protocols that distribute voice and responsibility.

6.2 Digital and Hybrid Coaching

Digital platforms expand access to coaching, supervision, and peer learning, particularly when leaders are geographically dispersed. Online coaching can support continuity, documentation, and flexible participation. However, technology does not replace relational competence. Confidentiality, data protection, conversational presence, and equitable access must be addressed explicitly. Digital tools should support, rather than automate, professional judgment and human interaction.

6.3 Contextual Adaptation

International competency frameworks provide valuable standards, but implementation must reflect national regulation, institutional culture, and the professional realities of Ukrainian education. Contextual adaptation does not mean lowering standards. It means translating general competencies into situations leaders actually face, including reform implementation, staff workload, resource constraints, crisis management, and the rebuilding of professional communities.

7 Implications for Educational Human Resource Management

- Embed coaching competencies in leadership standards, recruitment profiles, appraisal criteria, and succession planning.
- Use multi-stage development programs that combine instruction, practice, supervision, and workplace application.
- Create confidential peer-supervision and professional learning communities for school leaders.
- Align coaching initiatives with organizational goals while preserving employee agency and ethical boundaries.
- Evaluate implementation through leadership behavior, staff engagement, psychological safety, retention, and team-learning indicators.
- Develop digital coaching resources with explicit safeguards for confidentiality, access, and professional accountability.

8 Limitations and Future Research

This article develops and illustrates a conceptual framework; it does not test the causal effect of coaching competencies on managerial or educational outcomes. The applied examples derive from selected programs and the author's professional experience, which may limit transferability. The literature base also combines professional frameworks, books, institutional materials, and empirical studies with different levels of evidential strength.

Future research should operationalize the six competency domains and test their reliability across educational settings. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies could examine whether leadership development produces observable changes in communication, psychological safety, teacher engagement, staff retention, school climate, and student outcomes. Comparative research should also assess how institutional autonomy, organizational size, crisis exposure, and digital readiness moderate the effectiveness of coaching-oriented leadership.

9 Conclusion

Coaching competencies provide a credible foundation for a more developmental approach to human resource management in educational institutions. Ethical practice, relational trust, active listening, reflective inquiry, decision facilitation, and developmental feedback enable leaders to combine accountability with professional agency. Their value lies not in replacing management, but in improving how leaders mobilize expertise, respond to change, and cultivate collective responsibility.

The proposed framework positions coaching as an organizational capability that must be developed through staged learning and supported by human resource policies, supervision, professional communities, and an enabling institutional culture. The framework is especially relevant to Ukrainian education, where leaders must navigate reform, uncertainty, and the need to rebuild sustainable professional capacity. Its practical promise is substantial, but robust empirical evaluation is required before claims of effectiveness can be generalized.

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