Academic Paper

Leadership Coaching as a Transformative Process in the Military

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Abstract

This paper examines the nature and impact of a leadership coaching program – a key component of a leader development course for the United States Air Force. To assess coaching training methods and understand participant voices, a three-phased qualitative convergent approach was used that analysed student survey data and instructor interviews via manual coding and NVivo software. The findings and answers to the research questions help frame leadership coaching as a transformative process that is values-based and best used in holistic/developmental ways for increasing leadership capacity in military leaders.

Introduction

The United States Air Force (USAF) developed a leadership coaching program as part of the development of instructors for a new leader development course that began in 2018. The Leader Development Course (LDC) is an educational program that trains and educates military and civilian leaders to thrive in the responsibilities of leading USAF organisations. To build an educational program that included coaching training for instructors and coaching for students, a search for similar programs in the military was conducted. While the literature review revealed much on the theoretical foundations of coaching education and training in educational programs, there was a lack of research on coaching practices in the military and a lack of clarity on the definition and practice of coaching in the USAF. Within the USAF, coaching is defined in different ways and often the concepts of coaching and mentoring are confused and used interchangeably.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature and impact of one USAF leadership coaching program, which was a key component of the LDC. The leadership coaching program involved the development of military instructors as coaches and then the coaching of students in a military context. The findings helped to frame leadership coaching as a transformative process that is

values-based and best used in a holistic, developmental ways for increasing leadership capacity of instructors and students.

Literature Review

The review of literature is organised in three sections covering: 1) education, training, and coaching in organisations - leader as coach; 2) relationships, power, and identity in coaching - self as coach; and 3) the context of coaching in the USAF - Air Force leader as coach.

Education, Training, and Coaching in Organisations: Leader as Coach

Key components of a coaching education program emphasise the relationship between coach and client, trust between coach and client, how increased confidence imbues trust, and how the identity of the coach impacts the development of the client (Eastman, 2019). Effective coaching methodologies are seen to encourage continuous leadership development over an extended period of several months (Grant & Hartley, 2013). A focus on the developmental needs of coaches within a supported coaching culture (Gallant & Gilham, 2014), a blended approach that encompasses both mentoring and coaching (Jones, 2015; Salter, 2014; Smith, 2017), and focused approach that enhances instructional leadership through a theories of practice approach (Houchens et al., 2016) have proven to be hallmarks of effective coaching education and leadership development programs.

The training of professional coaches generally consists of understanding psychological dimensions, mindfulness, distinguishing between related professional areas (e.g. therapy, counseling, mentoring, consulting, etc.), powerful questioning, active listening, establishing relationships, levels of awareness/analysis, roles and voices of a coach, client engagement and client logs, ethics and confidentiality of coaching (Bluckert, 2006; Gladis, 2017; Iliffe-Wood, 2014; Rogers, 2004, Silsbee, 2008, 2010; Western, 2012). Yet, leadership coaching in the military seems to be different from traditional coaching, especially when the coach is a military officer and former unit leader/commander where specific expertise has been gained by the coach and desired by the individual client (also called "coachee" by some training programs). Hence, developing a coaching theory that both describes and explains coaching in the military by experienced former commanders requires a new meta-theory with specific micro practices (Western, 2012). A meta-theory should address the uniqueness of coaching in the military and embrace the experienced "commander" type of voice that is present in the military, which is an addition to the seven traditionally recognized voices of coaches that include guide, teacher, contractor, reflector, investigator, partner, and master (Silsbee, 2008). Collectively, the voices and roles of a coach should be used in service of the client (Silsbee, 2008) in order to strengthen capabilities "grounded in the cognitive and social-emotional development of adult learners" (Laske, 2006, p. 45). Such an approach puts the client first by asking powerful questions to promote self-discovery, unlocking future potential (Palmer & McDowall, 2010), and as a relational process to accelerate learning (Parker et al., 2008).

The use of external coaches, often called executive coaching (Joo, 2012), has proven to be an effective tool for improving organisational effectiveness and employee behavior, as well as for sustaining organisational change (Ellinger et al., 2011; Hamlin et al., 2006) and linked to improving leadership capacities (Anderson, 2013). There has been a growing body of literature on managerial coaching or "leader as coach", where the manager coaches his/her own team members, rather than the context of an external coach coming into an organisation. While internal coaching is a challenging and demanding discipline (Lawrence, 2017), the transformative power of the "leader as coach" the improves and sustains individual and organisational performance (Zuñiga-Collazos, 2020), improves employees' behavior (Ahmad et al., 2021), and is positively related to

subordinates' wellbeing (Zhao, 2019). It can also aid others in feeling valued through specific micro-coaching practices (Echeverri, 2019), and benefits both employees and managers who practice coaching techniques (Carvalho et al., 2021). When considering the key components of a coaching program for employee or faculty development, it should be remembered that organisational or internal coaching has the potential for manipulation and abuse (Reissner & Du Toit, 2021), so internal coaches must be trained to understand and deal with the complexities, compromising conditions, and cautions of the allure of the darker side or manipulative elements that could come with authority and power in a coach role (Cox & Bachkirova, 2020).

Power and Identity in Coaching: Self as Coach

Establishing the coaching relationship or coaching alliance has been found to be a key step in the training of leadership coaches (Dyer & Renn, 2010; Eastman, 2019; Frankovelgia & Riddle, 2010; Rogers, 2004, Silsbee, 2008, 2010; Western, 2012). Mentoring and consulting are distinct from coaching (Bluckert, 2006; Gladis, 2017; Iliffe-Wood, 2014; Rogers, 2004, Silsbee, 2008, 2010; Western, 2012), since in coaching, the power between coach and client is shared. In mentoring or consulting, the power in the relationship remains with the mentor or consultant. This distinction was consistent across some literature (Rogers, 2004; Silsbee, 2008; Western, 2012; Williams, 2001), but mentoring and coaching are often conflated (Gallant & Gilham, 2014). Self-discovery, self-inquiry, and self-action are fundamental for any coaching program (Laske, 2006), and the development of leadership coaches involves mental or cognitive capacity, affective or emotional capacity, and relational capacity (Hunt & Weintraub, 1999; Laske, 1999; Parker et al., 2008; Polsfuss & Ardichvili, 2008).

Using negotiation and conflict transformation literature, some elements of coaching are already present. 'Power-Over' and 'Power-With' is a dichotomy used as a way to view the power dynamics between participants involved in negotiations or bargaining and alludes to choosing a dominant approach (more transactional and compliance) or shared approach (more transformative, values-based, and cooperative) (Matyók, 2019; McDonald & Millen; 2020; USAF, 2014). The Trust, Information, Power, and Options
(TIPO) Analysis Framework uses options similarly to how coaching emphasises exploring options so that the best way forward or strategy can be implemented to arrive at an optimal end state for all participants (USAF, TIPO Analysis Framework, 2014).

The identity of the military leader is important for the greater understanding of the study. Identity theory comprises how individuals make sense of self (Erickson, 1959) via social constructs (Burke & Stets, 2009; Oyserman et al., 2012) and in the context of culture, friends, and family (Leary & Tangney, 2012). In general, according to Oyserman et al (2012, p.76) the concepts of self and identity are social products in at least three ways:

1. people create themselves in terms of what is relevant in their time and place;
2. being a self requires others who endorse and enforce one's selfhood, who scaffold a sense that oneself matters and that one's efforts can produce results; and
3. the aspects of oneself and identity that matter in the moment are determined by what is relevant in the moment.

Identity and confidence in our ability as a coach are key elements of self-efficacy, and particularly in our cognitive and affective development as a coach (Bandura, 1994; Bandura & Schunk, 1981). At any given moment, how we construct self and identity is determined by what is occurring around us and how others and organisations influence time, place, and moment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Burke & Stets, 2009; Leary & Tangney, 2012; Oyserman et al., 2012).

The literature on identity and self-efficacy are essential elements in first understanding self as a coach and can be used as a foundation upon which to aid the student by asking a question that

serves the student rather than the instructor or coach. Yet, the primary function of leadership coaching in the military would be characterised by active listening, a skill to gain understanding that involves avoiding interruption, showing, and maintaining interest, postponing evaluation, organizing information (Kohpeima et al., 2016) and making an authentic, empathetic connection (Schein, 2016). Listening first allows the coach to get a clear picture of the student's reality before asking questions (Knight, 2017) and can provide the right mindset for a coach (Knight, 2009). As the formation of a leadership program should follow the identified function, it seems appropriate that the seven roles from Silsbee (2010) along with mentoring (Frisch, 2001; Western, 2012) and consulting (Schein, 2016) would be better used to aid the coach in asking the right questions for the client's development. The very nature of asking the right, powerful question is to invoke or be a catalyst for insight, innovation, and action (Vogt, et al., 2003) with brevity and directed at the client's developmental growth (Rogers, 2016).

Context of Coaching in the Air Force: Air Force Leader as Coach

The USAF has three publications that reference coaching. The AF Handbook 1 (2017) encompasses standards, policies, and procedures regarding the professionalism of Airmen (enlisted force) need to know. Coaching is mentioned eight times on five of the 581 pages and is used as a method to develop and inspire others in the competency of leading people and relates performance counseling to leadership coaching. In Air University (AU) 24 Concepts for AF Leadership (2008), coaching is mentioned three times in the 105 articles spanning 534 pages, and most commonly used in comparison to mentoring or related to performance counseling. In the AF Mediation Compendium on How to Manage and Mediate Workplace Disputes (2012), coaching is mentioned four times and defined as a method to resolve or mitigate conflict in the workplace. Leadership coaching is not defined in the three publications, which indicates that coaching needs greater clarification for use in the military, particularly as a transformative process.

There are few coaching courses in the USAF educational system. Within the Air War College (AWC) and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), there is one shared elective on Leadership Coaching. Within the Eaker Center, there are four coaching courses for civilians and the LDC contains one four-hour block of instruction on leadership coaching and practice. The GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options/Obstacles, Way forward; Whitmore, 2009) used by the Eaker Center and the LDC is a performance coaching model that is similar to performance counseling mentioned in the aforementioned two USAF publications.

Similar to many organisations, the USAF emphasises that for effective coaching, leadership development should be linked to student outcomes (McCauley & Hughes-James, 1994), and programs should be designed for impact and critical leadership capabilities like self-awareness, leading change, managing conflict, and building capacity in others (Dyer & Renn, 2010) and with the goal of producing more effective leaders or leadership effectiveness in others (Amagoh, 2012). In 2018, the AF instituted a Coaching Culture Working Group (CCWG) that seeks to embed coaching as part of the culture across the force of military members and civilians. Units and installations are encouraged to develop internal coaching capacities as "coaching is a sanctioned learning and development activity" (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2018, p. 1). While there is little formal guidance on the program content, delivery methods, and standardized outcomes, many organisations have developed internal training programs as they clearly see the value and benefits of coaching in accordance with OPM guidance and current publications.

In 2018, the RAND (Research ANd Development) Corporation published Improving the Effectiveness of Air Force Squadron Commanders, based on the USAF Chief of Staff's guidance. The publication was the basis for the AF Strategic Integration Group to oversee developing a pathway to achieve the leadership development goals. One of the outcomes was the creation of the LDC, which was housed under the Eaker Center for Leadership Development within AU located at Maxwell AF Base in Alabama. AU is the USAF's Pinnacle Institution and comprises several

subordinate organisations that oversee enlisted education, officer education, officer accessions, and professional development for civilians and military members, along with seven academic centers and related publications and research. The Eaker Center for Leadership Development is responsible for planning and conducting the LDC.

The LDC is an 8-day intensive course of lectures, seminars, and experiential events that build skills associated with leading others in a military context (e.g. knowing self, establishing climate and culture, values-based decision making, negotiation skills, building effective teams, dealing with conflict, administering discipline and justice, physical fitness events, and coaching practice). Students learn the content in week one and then, in week two, apply the knowledge in a variety of opportunities (e.g. case studies, experiential events, and virtual reality scenarios). The course culminates in a capstone experience involving augmented reality scenarios. The overall course objective is to "Improve leader development of officers and civilians approaching command selection in order to sharpen and focus leadership skills to achieve mission success through high-performing teams" (LDC-SC Smart Card, 2019).

The development of the coaching program for the 2018-2019 cohort of military instructors, all previously successful commanders/leaders of USAF Squadrons, was limited due to training time availability, and focused on four core coaching competencies of: powerful questioning; direct communication; designing actions; and planning and goal setting as used by the International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2019). The instructors used a performance-based coaching approach (Agarwal et al., 2009; McCollum et al., 2011; Snyder et al., 2015) in training students because it was the foundation of their own training. The approach of qualifying instructors, starting with outcomes, measuring effectiveness, delivering the program, and involving senior leaders was consistent with best practices identified in leadership development programs (Davis, 2014) and outcomes evaluation of leadership development initiatives (Packard & Jones, 2013).

Methodology

To identify and interpret patterns and themes across multiple participants, a qualitative approach was used that included end of course survey data from students, post course survey data from course graduates and their supervisors, and instructor interviews. In order to "value multiple perspectives and gain a deeper understanding" (Creswell, 2012, p. 87) of coaching in the USAF, a three-phased qualitative convergent approach was used to answer three research questions:

1. What are the key components of the leadership coaching program for the leadership development of the LDC faculty?
2. How should LDC students be coached who are expected to lead USAF Squadrons?
3. How should leadership coaching be framed for use in the military?

Phase one consisted of analysing open-ended responses from students' end-of-course surveys and from post-course survey data from graduates (former students) and their supervisors. The end-of-course survey (21 questions) was aimed at measuring course effectiveness of students achieving specified learning outcomes. The post-course survey (nine questions) asked graduates and their supervisors to what extent learning outcomes were achieved six months after course completion. Only the questions relating to coaching that helped answer the research questions were used in the collection and analysis. Phase two, which ran parallel to phase one, involved interviews of military instructors. Phase three compared the findings from phases one and two to look for convergence, divergence, and relationships.

Data Sample and Collection

Student data we collected via responses to three questions related to coaching in end-of-course surveys of five cohorts of students (n=288). Participants completed the survey electronically via a QR code in class before the course ended. Additionally, responses to four questions were used to collect data from graduates (former students) and their supervisors after course completion. Three questions related to coaching and learning outcomes in post-course surveys completed by graduates (n=79) and one question from their supervisors (n=31). Participants completed online surveys electronically via a link provided through a QR code in an email sent five months after course completion.

In phase two, interviews were conducted face-to-face in an informal environment. All eight participants were successful graduated squadron commanders. The sample included one female and seven males representing five different USAF career fields. Participation was voluntary, included informed consent of participants and the use of pseudonyms where applicable, and followed established research protocols.

Data Analysis

A multiple coding process was used that included five cycles of manual coding: pre-codes, primary/sub codes, categories, themes, and theories (Creswell, 2012; Saldaña, 2014). Two experienced researchers coded and analysed the data with 94% inter-coder reliability. Only questions that had coaching in the answers were used for analysis.

Questions from end-of-course surveys:

- "What are the five most effective areas of instruction?" with a scaled response regarding effectiveness.
- "What are the three things you liked most about the course and why?"
- "How do you plan on applying what you learned in the course so far?"

Questions from post-course surveys:

- "Select the subject areas you have practiced/applied the most since returning home" with an accompanying scaled response.
- Scaling question on agreement to five different statements that described the one-on-one coaching sessions (between instructor and student).
- Provide any other feedback on the LDC-SC program.
- Asked supervisors to assess perceived growth of their graduates in three areas, with a "yes", "no" or "I don't know" as available responses.

Questions from interviews:

- Please describe your experiences with coaching students in LDC.
- How would you define coaching?
- How would you describe your training to be a leadership coach?
- As a coach, you bring your whole self to the coaching situation - what do you think influences your coaching in LDC?
- What is most important to you as a coach?
- In some of the end-of-course surveys, students assessed coaching as one of the top ten subject areas - do you agree? Where would you rank coaching in the LDC?
- What do you think are the key components of a coaching program for future faculty?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

Transcripts were developed so member checking could be employed. A cumulative coding process moving from codes to categories to themes was produced using a priori, in vivo, descriptive, and thematic coding. Additionally, NVivo software was used to reinforce manual data analysis as computer software techniques could better aid in data analysis, particularly for an overview of the qualitative data analysis and to display rich data in easy-to-understand ways (Ozkan, 2004; Bazeley & Jackson, 2007). There were differences in some sub-codes early in the coding process but were not significant in categorical coding and did not affect the thematic analysis.

Findings

Phase One Findings

- Coaching was the fourth highest rated relevant subject (out of 26).
- 18% mentioned coaching as being the most effective area of instruction.
- 34% believed that coaching contributed to development of self and others.
- 12% thought were able to apply coaching to their military unit back home.
- 26% of the students said they felt they could put coaching into immediate practice/application.
- Coaching ranked as number 8 of 26 subjects that students applied the most since returning home.
- 80% talked about coaching as one of the best learning experiences.
- 80% expressed confusion between mentoring and coaching.
- Graduates believed that their coaching session was not effective due to unclear expectations.
- Supervisors felt that coaching was a powerful tool but did not see course graduates use coaching.
- Graduates and supervisors reported that more application of coaching skills is necessary along with understanding how to apply coaching to a military context.
- 75% of all respondents felt there were transformative elements involved with coaching.

Phase Two Findings

Instructors believed their experience with coaching was worthwhile but felt rushed (due to short coaching sessions) and involved a combination of teaching, mentoring, and development. They defined coaching as asking meaningful questions to promote self-discovery and helping others unlock potential, yet these responses link to the benefits of coaching and, it seems that the participants do not have a clear definition of coaching. However, using the participants own words, they were in near agreement that their training to be a leadership coach was just "okay", "missed the mark", or was "not deep enough" for what they were expected to do with coaching and teaching coaching to students. Their own experiences and their relationships with students were the two most cited areas of influence in their coaching at LDC. Trust, listening, authenticity, vulnerability, asking good questions, and relationships were the most important aspects of being a leadership coach. There was a range of responses when asked if they agreed with students that coaching should be ranked in the top ten subject areas; one responded with top five, a few responded with top ten, and others felt that coaching (along with other subjects) should not be ranked. Practice, application, understanding, and teaching were the highest mentioned key components of a coaching program for future faculty. Additional comments were grouped around coaching being a powerful tool, even transformative in nature for instructors and students, but more application is necessary together with understanding how to apply coaching to a military context.

Phase Three Findings

- **Theme 1:** Coaching was a valuable, meaningful experience (end-of-course surveys, post course surveys, and interviews).

- **Theme 2:** The three days of performance coaching training was insufficient and lacked depth; instructors need more information and training on other coaching styles and concepts (interviews).
- **Theme 3:** Background, experiences, training, and identity as a military leader were the most frequently mentioned regarding what influences their coaching in LDC (end-of-course surveys and interviews).
- **Theme 4:** The key to the coaching experience for all instructors was building a relationship with students with trust, authenticity, and active listening (end-of-course surveys and interviews).
- **Theme 5:** There was confusion between coaching and mentoring. Instructors believed that students wanted both but were unclear of the differences and benefits of both or when each is more appropriate with students (end-of-course surveys, post course surveys, and interviews).
- **Theme 6:** More practice of coaching techniques and processes is needed coupled with a holistic understanding of coaching so that the impact and transformative nature of coaching are best understood and implemented (end-of-course surveys and interviews).
- **Theme 7:** Instructors and students need to know when to use coaching with others in their units and the application of coaching in a military context (end-of-course surveys, post course surveys, and interviews).

Discussion

The discussion focuses on themes 3-7, particularly the development of instructors as coaches, the relationship between coaching and mentoring in the military, and the coaching models that influence coaching in the military. The research questions are answered at the end of the section.

The coaching literature supports the importance of developing identity as a coach as a key capacity of leadership (Eastman, 2019; Ng et al., 2012) and how coaching can empower students and clients to express identity (Ng, 2012; Rhodes & Fletcher, 2013), yet the scholarly field did not include military educational contexts, so this research supports current studies and adds the elements of military training in one specific context. Regarding the instructors in LDC, their identity as military leaders and as a successful former Squadron Commanders is critical to their overall identity as a coach. The military instructor who is training to become a coach for students who are to be future Squadron Commanders bridges the areas of overlap between coaching, mentoring, and consulting. Consequently, the instructor could feel a tension between their own identity, their relationship with the student, and their relationship and identity in the coaching context in terms of the military instructor wanting to provide advice and expertise rather than being a coach in the moment. It is these relational tensions that seems to be at the heart of the leadership development of military officers as coaches in their roles as instructors.

Rather than placing mentoring in a subordinate or as an alternative to coaching, this study found that mentoring was initially confused with coaching, which is a common concern in teaching and executive coaching (Frisch, 2001; Williams, 2001; Zey, 1984), and that the expert knowledge and experiences associated with mentoring are part of the input into the coaching role (Frisch, 2001). So, instead of subordinating the mentoring aspects that are accessible to the instructor, it seems more beneficial to embrace the unique expertise of being a military leader associated with mentoring and applied toward the role of coaching. Instead of separating coaching from mentoring (Wang & Millward, 2014), or blending mentoring with coaching (Smith, 2017), the instructor's unique experiences as a seasoned leader and former successful squadron commander become an informed part of the coaching process that is used in service of coaching and fully welcomed into the process. While coaching and mentoring serve different functions and produce different results, both can be used as an instructor in service of the student. Approaching the expertise of a military leader as the foundation in service of a coaching mindset is more akin to putting both concepts on

equal footing with an equality of opportunity (Salter, 2014) that deepens development and learning (Jones, 2015), and provides a lens through which powerful questions can be asked to aid others in self-discovery (Silsbee, 2010; Western, 2012), skill strengthening (Bluckert, 2006; Rogers, 2004), or behavior changes (Frisch, 2001). The knowledge and experience gained over the years of being a leader in the military with unique leadership and command positions may be just as important as the knowledge and skills of becoming a more experienced leadership coach (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) that supplement being a mentor as a career developmental tool (Hunt & Weintraub, 1999). In other words, the answer lies in not "coaching or mentoring" but in a holistic approach that utilises both techniques, and a "yes, and both" mindset to best serve the student.

Developmental coaching and performance-based coaching were the primary frameworks used to train the instructors, while performance-based coaching was the primary framework to train students. Relational elements were used in both training areas. Instructors evaluated this limited framework as not having enough depth, particularly as the instructors gained more experience as coaches in the program.

While there are several coaching models used by various programs, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Leadership Coaching Framework (2004) that uses a values-based framework is a useful model in relation to the USAF's core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do (USAF Volume II-Leadership, 2015) and the USAF's definition of developing full range leadership (AF Handbook 1, 2017). The CCL Coaching Framework puts emphasis on relationships, values, character, interpersonal skills, organisational knowledge, and change management (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004; Ting & Hart, 2004; Ting & Riddle, 2008; Ting & Scisco, 2006) – all of which are highlighted by the USAF's key leadership and developmental documents (AF Handbook 1, 2017; USAF Volume II-Leadership, 2015). The development of the human relationships is a key element in leadership development and directly related to an outcome of interpersonal growth for social intelligence (Goleman, 2007).

The LDC should incorporate a more holistic approach to coaching that goes beyond performance coaching for the student and expands on developmental coaching, holistic coaching as a cognitive and socio-emotional process, peer coaching, and relational leadership – all used to ask the right questions in the shared moment with the client. The dilemma and challenge of codifying an emergent coaching approach (Hamlin et al., 2009) is not unique to the military and presents unique challenges as a growing profession of coaching in the USAF profession of arms. Nevertheless, the recommendation to develop a more holistic approach in theory and practice is supported by studies describing developmental leadership and identity (Eastman, 2019; Stricker et al., 2019) and developmental coaching (Coughlin, 2013; Hunt & Weintraub, 1999; Kilberg & Kiedrich, 2007; Laske, 1999; Polsfuss & Ardichvili, 2008). The cognitive and socio-emotional development of coaches is relevant in the adult development of military leaders as leadership coaches (Laske, 2006) and is further supported by the 'three principles psychology' approach to coaching where mind, consciousness, and thought are three pillars in the crossroads of leadership development and coaching (Plsfuss and Ardichvili, 2008). Thus developmental coaching (Grover & Furnham, 2016; Hunt & Weintraub, 2004; Laske, 2006) is the best overall fit and description for how the LDC instructors could be trained, as their development required a deeper and more expansive understanding of coaching. Consequently, instructors should be trained on three aspects of coaching: developmental coaching with a greater reliance on cognitive aspects rather than a joining of cognitive, socio-emotional, performance coaching and less on leadership coaching, and relational elements of establishing the coaching relationship. The combination of the three aspects is supported when compared to the higher levels of learning in Bloom's taxonomy, especially since coaching training should strengthen analytical, creative, and synthesising skills as well as increase understanding for others, empathy, perspective taking.

Yet, what may be even more vital in the development of military leaders as leadership coaches is the bridging of peer coaching and relational leadership. Peer coaching is a dyadic relationship with a shared authority in coaching (Hagen & Peterson, 2014) that can accelerate learning in

developmental ways (Parker et al., 2008) and integrate with relational leadership in a peer-to-peer understanding of the challenges and shared territory of learning together (Palmer & McDowall, 2010). While 75% of respondents frame coaching as a transformative process used to unlock a better future, coaching was also used as a method to resolve conflict with others through relational negotiations using power, influence, and persuasion. Coaching should use a "power with" vs. a "power over" approach that situates both coach and client in shared authority (Graham, 1995) that leads to co-creation of goals and options.

Answering research question #1: What are the key components of a coaching program for the leadership development of the LDC faculty?

LDC should have six foundational components for the leadership development of their instructors as leadership coaches:

1. Basic understanding of coaching techniques, practice methods, advanced concepts of developmental coaching and more practice.
2. Use six theoretical frames for the coaching program: identity theory, human development, developmental coaching, using mentoring alongside coaching, cognitive-affective-behavioral domains, and relational leadership.
3. Establishing the coaching relationship using multiple techniques.
4. More intentional connection of connecting coaching to other course concepts like trust, values, empowerment, climate/culture, deliberate development of others, and creating a growth-mindset among students.
5. Clearly differentiate coaching and mentoring and provide recommendations as to when the opportunity for each is most appropriate.
   6. Recommend and/or codify a common definition of coaching for the military.

Answering research question #2: How should the military officers and civilian instructors as LDC faculty be trained to effectively coach students who are expected to lead USAF Squadrons?

The training should encompass the following seven elements:

1. The training of instructors as leadership coaches should be a joint effort between the civilian experts and the LDC seasoned faculty.
2. Formalise the training and education with accreditation from a nationally recognized professional coaching organization (ICF or BCC) and link with similar organisations conducting coaching training.
3. Train and educate the instructors in the art of coaching and the art of teaching coaching with emphasis on developmental coaching using cognitive, socio-emotional, and relational aspects.
4. To train students in coaching, instructors should use a performance-based coaching model with a focus on a coaching mindset, active listening and evoking awareness that includes asking powerful questions.
5. Follow a model of Educate, Practice, Educate, Practice, where practice continues to follow increased education in the art and science of coaching.
6. Move from coaching 1-on-1 coaching sessions with students to teaching coaching to students and allowing them to practice multiple ways (triads and dyads).
7. Include examples and methods of application in military organisations so students understand how to recognise coaching opportunities vs. mentoring as applied in the future military units they will lead.

Answering research question #3. How should leadership coaching be framed for use in the military?

The findings and answers to the previous research questions help frame leadership coaching as a transformative process that is values-based and best used in a holistic and developmental ways for increasing leadership capacity in military leaders. Coaching can be seen as how others deal with conflict transformation regarding the process of changing elements of their life for a better future and/or negotiating with others to resolve conflict.

Limitations and Impact

Most qualitative research studies are intended to examine a specific issue in a certain sample of a population group in a particular context. The richness of the findings adds layers to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of coaching in the military. The purpose of the study was not to be generalisable as in quantitative research. In qualitative research, there are four distinct types of generalisability: naturalistic generalisation, transferability, analytical generalisability, and intersectional generalisability. Because there are limited studies of coaching in the military, there is potential for transferability of the findings to similar programs. This study can help others analyse the findings and their own contexts to build an effective coaching program.

While the study is limited to just one program in AU within one branch of the US military, the groundwork provides a springboard upon which to examine in more detail how coaching is evolving across the military services. This small body of work will need to be expanded upon for the larger scholarly field and ingrained into key publications before becoming embedded in the USAF leadership literature and the culture of leadership development. Because of the lack of studies, this paper significantly adds to the field.

The impact of this study will provide a framework of key components of a coaching program for the leadership development of the faculty of the LDC as well as inform how to train military officers and civilian instructors as faculty of LDC. The research will help assess coaching training methods, understand challenges, and provide recommendations for program improvements and continued success.

Conclusion

This study is novel in that it is one of the first to research coaching and the development of instructors as coaches in a military context. Survey data and instructor interviews were analysed using a combination of manual coding and NVivo software to assess coaching training methods, understand participant voices, and provide recommendations for program improvements. The study goes beyond filling a gap in the current body of knowledge by adding research that examines development of instructors as coaches using a range of coaching literature and employing a multi-phased qualitative approach to both understand and to evolve an emergent leadership coaching program in the USAF. The research identified seven themes based on integrative analysis of the findings. In answering the research questions, it is suggested that seven foundational components should be used for a coaching program in the leadership development of instructors and the training program should be comprised of six elements. The study will aid in a more focused leadership development program for military leaders as leadership coaches, improve the training of students, and inform the greater coaching community of an emerging coaching program that is transformative for instructors and students.

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