

Academic Paper

Impact of Coaching Intervention Programmes on Indian Educators in Tier-2 Cities: Evidence from the Parevartan Ignite Project

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Abstract

Research on the impact of coaching interventions on Indian educators has been sparse. Therefore, this evaluative case study examines the impact of a coaching intervention programme (the Parevartan Ignite Project, supported by the International Coaching Federation Foundation) on a private school in Ghaziabad, a tier-2 Indian city. Fifteen schoolteachers and leaders underwent more than eight online coaching sessions, between October 2020 and April 2021. Despite the challenges brought about by Covid-19, the coachees reported having experienced both personal and professional development, creating institution-wide effects in the school ecosystem. For building further evidence, the project's impact should be measured in other tier-2 cities.

Keywords

coaching intervention, impact, education, tier-2 cities, accessibility

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Introduction

Coaching can be defined as a process of 'unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance' (Whitmore, 2009, p.10) by forging a partnership with them. The International Coaching Federation (ICF), an accreditation and credentialing organisation dedicated to professional coaching, defines coaching as a 'thought-provoking and creative process' that empowers clients to 'maximise their personal and professional potential', by challenging the status quo, thinking outside the box and looking inward for solutions rather than outward (ICF, n.d).

In education, the term coaching is at times used interchangeably with other forms of assistance interventions such as 'mentoring', 'teaching', or 'training'. However, these terms do have

differences (van Nieuwerburgh and Barr, 2016). According to van Nieuwerburgh (2012), coaching in education involves

A one-to-one conversation that focuses on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate. (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012: 17)

Thus, coaching is a non-directive approach that is more focused toward helping others learn for themselves rather than towards teaching them (Whitmore, 2009). The positive effects of coaching can be experienced not only by individuals, but also by teams and organisations.

Coaching is associated with enhanced leadership and communication styles; an increase in goal attainment, resilience, and workplace wellbeing; and a decrease in depression, anxiety, and stress (Grant et al., 2010). By supporting teachers' professional development coaching indirectly impacts student outcomes as well. Therefore, coaching can be an effective strategy for promoting ongoing teacher development (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1987; Knight, 2009).

Several studies have documented the benefits of coaching for teachers and educators in the developed world. Coaching positively influences teacher practices and increases student achievement (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolten, & Zigmond, 2010; Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010; Carlisle, Cortina, & Katz, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010; Matsumura, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2012; Powell, Diamond, Burchinal, & Koehler, 2010). Coaching interventions for teachers in developed countries have not only focused on developing their individual leadership capacity, but have also enabled them to develop the necessary skills and mindsets to become system leaders, who initiate systemic changes in organisations, and consequently, have a larger societal impact (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010; Srivastara & Cooperrider, 1990). Facilitating one-to-one learning among educational leaders, teaching staff, and students can foster a systemic change and help educational institutions establish a coaching culture. Furthermore, change in one part of the system also catalyses change in another (Srivastara & Cooperrider, 1990).

A recent study conducted at Leeds Beckett University found that specialist coaching programmes that support head teachers in dealing with the specific challenges and complexities associated with their role, significantly impact their resilience, wellbeing, and work-life balance while improving their self-belief and confidence. In particular, coaching helped head teachers address the feeling of isolation commonly experienced by them and empowered them to prioritise their physical health (Lofthouse & Whiteside, 2020).

Despite the considerable evidence on the impact of coaching in the developed world, the bulk of the evidence on coaching in emerging economies only comes from a 2014 USAID Report. A USAID-funded coaching initiative in Macedonia (Sturtevant & Linek, 2007), in which the coaches served as teacher-leaders, found that the local culture and context were powerful factors affecting teachers' responses to coaching. Over time, however, coaching was seen as having a positive influence on teaching practices because coaches better understood the school context and had established credibility with their peers. Sailors, Hoffman, Pearson, Shin, and McClung's (2012) study in Malawi found that coaching positively influenced teacher attitudes, motivation, and classroom practices.

Nevertheless, many developing countries lack access to coaching interventions in education. This dearth is particularly pronounced in India (one of the world's fastest growing economies) and its tier-2 cities (Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, GoI, 2015), where most of its young population resides. While tier-1 cities are characterised by better standards of living, exposure and job opportunities, tier-2 cities are still developing their infrastructural facilities including educational

institutions, industries, and businesses. A review of coaching literature reveals that empirical research on coaching outcomes in India and its tier-2 cities is sparse.

The USAID Report (2014) highlighted several challenges that should be considered while designing and implementing coaching programmes in emerging economies, including India: differences in schools' learning and teaching traditions, non-conducive organisational structure of schools, underprepared teachers, absenteeism among teachers and students, large coaching load, and the need for the coaches to travel great distances to make coaching accessible to schools (Akhlaq, 2008; Davidson & Hobbs, 2013; GPLMS, 2012; Hussain & Ali, 2010; Korda, 2012; Malawi Coaching Manual, 2011; Pallangyo, Hoesein & Khan, 2012; Piper & Mugenda, 2013; Salas, 2013).

Despite these potential challenges, coaching interventions in such regions can produce valuable outcomes for the teachers, and their organisations, creating a ripple effect in the larger society. Therefore, this evaluative case study focuses on the processes and impact of a coaching intervention at Parevartan, a school in India's largest state's tier-2 city. Given the lack of data on coaching interventions for Indian educators, this study provides valuable insights for developing further coaching programmes for schools operating in similar local contexts in India and other emerging economies.

The Case: Parevartan Ignite Project

Key Stakeholders

Ignite Projects are a flagship programme of the ICF Foundation (ICFF), a tax-exempt, education- and research-oriented legal entity of the ICF ecosystem. The ICFF primarily works with organisations of social impact whose missions are aligned with one of the United Nations' Sustainable development Goals (SDGs). Its Ignite projects aim to leverage the transformative power of professional coaching by helping partner organisations improve their performance levels and effectiveness. With specific parameters in place for its coaching projects, Ignite is designed to provide tools, outline best practices, and support coaches in making the greatest impact (ICFF, n.d.).

The Parevartan Ignite Project aimed at providing pro-bono coaching to the teachers and administration of the Parevartan School with the help of ICF-trained coaches, thus enabling them to embark on a journey of personal and professional development. Parevartan is a senior-secondary school located in Ghaziabad, a tier-2 city in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and is affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Started as a play school in 2003, today, Parevartan provides quality K-12 education to over 2,000 students, mostly belonging to the middle class. The school emphasises experiential learning and enables students to transform into self-inspired individuals. Parevartan in English means change (Parevartan School, n.d.). One of the reasons this school was selected for the Ignite Project was that it is focused on furthering two SDGs: SDG 4, 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and SDG 5, 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.' (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.)

Another key project stakeholder was the UP Coaching Council of the Women's Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (WICCI), which aims to make coaching accessible and create awareness about it in the state of UP. The President and Vice President of the WICCI UP Coaching Council expressed interest and approached the two of ICFF's Global Council of Ambassadors (who are based in India) to implement an Ignite process.

At the management level, the two Global Council of Ambassadors were the key contact points between Global ICFF Team, the WICCI UP Coaching Council, and the Parevartan School

management. On behalf of the ICFF, the Council of Ambassadors (COA) spearheaded the overall project in alignment with the UN SDG 4. They worked with the WICCI UP Coaching Council President and Vice President (leadership team) to identify a partner organisation for the project (i.e., the Parevartan School). The WICCI UP Coaching Council President and Vice President led the on-ground implementation of the project by coordinating with two project managers, one appointed by the UP Coaching Council, and the other appointed by the Parevartan School, who reported to the school principal. The project managers were responsible for the on-ground execution of the Ignite project for their respective groups. Fortnightly review meetings were conducted between the Global Council of Ambassadors, the WICCI UP Coaching Council leadership team, the WICCI UP Coaching Council project manager and coaches to track progress, address unforeseen challenges and ensure relevant support for each stakeholder.

All the coaches were ICF credentialed coaches. The WICCI UP Coaching Council President was one of the coaches participating in this project. The other five coaches were members of the WICCI's National Coaching Council or the WICCI UP Coaching Council.

Local Context, Challenges, and Considerations

Demystifying coaching in the Parevartan School

A major constraint while initiating this project was that the concept of coaching as a means to enhance professional and personal efficiency was completely alien to the school staff. Most of the participants (93%) had never undertaken professional coaching before. Therefore, trust and safety about the process and outcomes needed to be established before the project began. Accordingly, the WICCI UP Coaching Council President, also a coach in the project, took upon the challenge of educating the school leadership and the participating teachers regarding the benefits of coaching.

UP Coaching Council President conducted an interactive workshop in an initial session to provide all the stakeholders at Parevartan School with an overview of the project aims and the structure of the Ignite Project. The workshop clarified how the methodology of coaching differs from other human development approaches through a live demonstration of a coaching session and by mapping the coach and coachee relationship. Subsequently, the coaches and the participants discussed and agreed on the timelines to kick-start the project. This session helped the school management understand the impact of coaching on the educators and how it aligned with the vision of the organisation. The WICCI UP Coaching Council leadership also explained the project process, the roles and responsibilities of both the coaches and coachees, the timelines, and how the outcomes would be measured. The presence of the participating coaches in this meeting gave them an opportunity to build a rapport with the coachees, establish trust and safety, and helped them understand the context and background of the coachees' work environment.

Obstacles brought about by Covid-19

Initiating a coaching intervention amid the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge in itself. Covid-19 disrupted the very structures and processes of learning that the coaches and the participants were used to. The pre-existing education disparities further exacerbated in emerging economies such as India, which was still developing and expanding its education infrastructure in its interiors and tier-2 cities. For most educators, the transition to virtual instruction was a completely new experience. Consequently, educators faced unique challenges in adapting to remote learning while balancing the impact of the pandemic on their personal lives (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Many educators lost their loved ones and colleagues to Covid-19 (Diliberti, Schwartz & Grant, 2021), which made them overwhelmed with stress, anxiety, trauma, depression, and burnout. Thus, interventions that would help teachers attend to their mental health were especially important during this period (Steiner & Woo, 2021; Santamaría, Mondragon, Santxo, Ozamiz-Etxebarria, 2021).

Not only the teachers, but the coaches also faced unique pressures and challenges during the pandemic. During the project, the coaches were either coping with Corona themselves or were acting as support systems and caregivers to their family members grappling with the infection. Amid all this uncertainty, as stated by the coaches themselves, coaching came to their rescue.

Project Management

Based on previous studies, the Council of Ambassadors and UP Coaching Council President were mindful that the effectiveness of a coaching intervention depended on the institution's level of ownership and commitment (USAID, 2014). Therefore, this sense of ownership had to be built into the project from the very beginning, by establishing a clear contract agreement and by setting the right expectations to guide the process. The structure of the Ignite process used in this project was developed by the ICFF through continuous improvisation over the last five years based on the experience of working with diverse stakeholders. Thus, the format of the Ignite Project can cater to any group or organisation keen to use coaching to achieve their goals.

An Ignite Project is implemented in different phases. In the first phase, the coaches initiating the project familiarise themselves with the Ignite process. Next, they clarify the UN SDG they wish to focus on and identify a prospective partner organisation working on that SDG. After explaining the project objectives, providing the partner organisation with an overview of coaching, and gauging their interest in experiencing a coaching intervention, the chapter leaders/coaches officially sign up for the Ignite Project by filling the mandatory *Project Initiation Form*. Thereafter, they conduct a meeting or workshop to clarify the ICF's definition and process of coaching to the partner organisation. Subsequently, the chapter leaders/coaches and the partner organisation sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalise the Ignite Project. The final phase is measurement and reporting. After the project's conclusion, the coaches complete the Ignite End of Coaching Survey and the chapter leaders/coaches submit the Ignite Data Completion Form (ICFF, n.d.). In the Parevartan Ignite Project, the ICFF Council of Ambassadors were responsible for familiarising the WICCI UP Coaching Council President and Vice President with the Ignite Project process. For each phase, they had access to the relevant templates, talking points, fact sheets, MOU, agreement forms available in the Ignite Resource Suite (ICFF, n.d.).

The ICFF Council of Ambassadors also worked closely with the WICCI UP Coaching Council's leadership team to develop a discovery process to understand the history and dynamics of the Parevartan School. This process included understanding the school's vision, short and long-term goals, key pain points, bottlenecks, and the background and characteristics of each coachee. Based on this information, the Ignite process and the end-of-coaching survey were carefully customised to ensure that the outcomes were tangible and measurable.

The Parevartan School demonstrated its commitment to the project by appointing a project manager to ensure the implementation of the coaching intervention. The School Principal was also committed to receiving coaching herself and was involved with the coaching team at all times. She actively participated in the meetings and contributed to the project immensely. Soon after she started receiving coaching, the coaches noticed a visible change in her quite early on. She was also open to multiple brainstorming sessions during the project to smoothen the entire process smoothly, leading to effective outcomes.

This initial investment for understanding the target group and their situation and customising the project was time and effort intensive. However, we believe that a coaching intervention supported by a strong design and project management team can create a more sustainable impact than an intervention without such support.

Target group

The school staff comprised a total of 132 teachers and coordinators. Of these, the Parevartan School management chose 15 participants for the project, with a good mix of senior educators, administrators, and regular faculty, teaching students from kindergarten to grade 12 students. Most participants (henceforth, coachees) were graduates and postgraduates with five to over fifteen years of teaching experience. The selected coaches were seen as leaders or potential leaders who could influence the school culture and create a ripple effect. Approximately 68% of the coachees were above 40 years of age and had an experience in the private education space. Approximately 93% of the coachees had never experienced coaching before.

Project duration

Each coachee received at least eight online coaching sessions of 45–60 min, conducted every two weeks. The project was completed over six months, starting from October 2020 to April 2021.

Coaching goals

The school principal and headmistress in consultation with the WICCI UP Coaching Council President, with guidance from the Council of Ambassadors, decided on 'operational efficiency' and 'personal effectiveness enhancement' as the overarching themes of this project. The coachees chose to focus on both personal and professional enhancement as part of their goals. The coaching goals between coach and coachee were finalised after the coachee had a discussion with their respective supervisor to have their support and input on the professional goal focused on .

Ethics and confidentiality

In any coaching intervention, establishing clear boundaries and contracts are crucial to ensuring the success of the process. The major ethical considerations were voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. As the project only involved ICF-credentialed coaches, we worked within the parameters of the Code of Ethics laid down by ICF. The Project also had a binding coaching agreement that clearly spelled out the coaching relationship, which all parties had to follow.

Data Collection Approach

The project's impact on the coachees and the programme's ripple effect for the school was measured using a comprehensive survey comprising both qualitative and quantitative questions. Most questions were closed-ended, and gathered data on their demographic characteristics, occupational backgrounds, and coaching goals. However, some descriptive questions were also included to trace the experiences and perceptions of the coachees. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the coaching experiences (i.e., motivation, trust on the coach, etc.), personal and professional gains (through 11 items on leadership skills, time management, and problem solving, etc.), and institution-wide impact (i.e., 'the ripple effect') of coaching in terms of operational efficiency, employee engagement, and so on. The coachees were asked to mark their responses on using the following anchors: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*.

The Ignite Projects' standard measurement survey was designed by the ICF Research Team and ICFF Team. The survey was further customised for the Parevartan Ignite Project by the ICFF Council of Ambassadors for India (with ICFF team). This survey was administered after all the coachees completed their final sessions. The survey was rolled out through an online survey

platform, Impact Mapper, which made data collection and analysis simpler. The coachees were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire and submit their final answers.

The survey report was generated and consolidated by the help of the ICFF team.

Table 1: Types of Data Collection used in the Case Study

	Categories	Measure
1	Demography 1. location, 2. age, 3. gender	Quantitative
2	Occupational Background 1. current job role, 2. years of work experience, 3. prior job and work role	Quantitative (Multichoice)
3	Coaching Goals 1. Undertaking coaching before; 2. Top three coaching goals; 3. How many goals were met; 4. Percentage of goals achieved	Quantitative & Qualitative
4	Coaching Experience 1. Motivation and Interest 2. Coaching Solution 3. Coaching Environment	Quantitative (Likert Scale) Qualitative(Descriptive)
5	Limitation 1. Gaps in coaching	Qualitative (Open-ended)
6	Hindrance in work environment	Qualitative (Open-ended)
7	Personal and professional gains 1. Communication 2. Developing and managing people 3. Leadership 4. Negotiating and influencing others 5. Personal development 6. Problem solving 7. Professional confidence 8. Resource planning 9. Teamwork 10. Time management 11. Work-life balance	Quantitative (Likert Scale)
8	Institution-wide impact in terms of operational efficiency 1. time savings, 2. reduction of costs or expenses, 3. employee retention, 4. employee engagement 5. Changes are seen within the organisation	Qualitative (Open-ended) & Quantitative (Likert Scale)

Impact of the Coaching Intervention

After consolidating the survey responses, a survey report was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Ignite process. The following section highlights the key results that emerged from the survey responses. It also presents some of the coachees' experiences that they shared in their final coaching sessions and at the end of the project.

Coaching Goals and Experiences

In the survey responses, 93% of the coachees expressed their agreement or strong agreement about having a keen interest in participating in the coaching sessions. All the coachees agreed or strongly agreed about having clarity regarding their coaching goals. In the review meetings, the coaches reported that initially, the coachees were apathetic about goal setting and struggled to articulate their goals; they merely viewed it as a task to be checked off on their checklist. Therefore,

in the initial two sessions, the coaches practised deep listening and supported the coachees in arriving at personal and professional goals that truly mattered to them. Consequently, the coaches observed a significant shift in their enthusiasm levels. Approximately 75% of the coachees felt that they had met 51–100% of their goals and approximately 68% of them reported that they found it easier to meet their targets after participating in the coaching sessions. All coachees affirmed that they were motivated to take further action based on their coaching outcomes, and 93% of the coachees were confident about finding the right resources to achieve their goals.

Hindrances in the Work Environment

During the initial phase of the project, when the coaches were still building rapport and trust with the coachees, they faced challenges in coordinating time for sessions with their coachees. Initially, the coachees, who were already working long hours from home, were apprehensive about finding free time for coaching sessions. However, by sessions three and four, in which the goals and desired outcomes were defined, the coachees started experiencing the power of coaching. Thereafter, the coaches observed a significant shift in the coachees' initiative and eagerness to schedule subsequent sessions.

Personal and Professional Gains

The survey report, prepared as part of the Ignite process, particularly aimed at highlighting the personal and professional shifts the coachees experienced after the sessions. Some of the major changes the school management observed among the coachees were an increase in their creativity levels and ability to reflect on challenging situations, which in turn enabled them to become more confident and decisive.

One coachee reveals significant changes in her own perspective and its impact on her working style.

For me, my biggest challenge was how to enhance my sense of self-realisation. Through this journey in coaching, I learned two golden words, 'baby steps'. Baby steps will remain with me forever. Baby steps are gifts of this beautiful journey that one should not stop and wait for miracles to happen. We can create our own miracles. Every day, we take baby steps to reach that goal.

Another coachee emphasised that personal growth has given her a direction in terms of professional efficiency: 'I am a more confident person now, sure of what I am, and what I want from my life, and where I should be heading'.

Approximately 68% of the coachees were confident about their ability to handle unforeseen challenges and 87% of the coachees were satisfied with the level of the coaching engagement. Further research can be undertaken to understand the reasons for the lack of satisfaction and meeting of goals among certain coachees.

One of the coachee spoke about the positive shift in perspectives, saying:

My coach made me explore my potential and helped me facilitate and plan my needs and responsibilities in a manner that I could plan and deliver to the best of my abilities. She really helped me tap into my strengths that I didn't know I possessed.

Trust between the coach and coachee was instrumental in creating the transformation during this coaching journey. The non-judgmental, empathetic, and safe space provided by the coach enabled the coachees to realise their resourcefulness.

As another coachee shared:

It (the coaching journey) started with challenges, deep thinking, identifying my own strengths and potential, and also looking inwards for the solutions. I really appreciate my wonderful coach who walked with me through thick and thin. She understood my concerns, my apprehension and my fears. She really pushed me to look inwards and find the solutions on my own. Else, every time we wait for someone else to come and guide us. She gave me the faith that everything is inside.

The questionnaire had a distinct category to measure the coaching intervention's impact on the coachees' personal and professional development. The coachees were given a list of 11 skill sets. For each of these skill sets, the coachees were asked whether they felt they had made any significant changes to their working styles, had applied the skill at least once or did not apply the skill to any of their workplace activities.

For communication, 67% of coachees responded that they applied at least one new approach of communications skills and 33% of coachees responded having made significant changes in their communications skills. Approximately 93% of the coachees reported having applied the skills required for developing and managing people. 60% of coachees reported that they have made significant changes in their leadership skills and 33% of coachees that they have tried at least one new approach. All coachees (100%) reported significant shifts in their problem-solving, time management skills, negotiation, and influencing skills. 50% of coachees reported they have applied at least one new approach to personal development in their everyday lives and 50% reported they have made significant changes in this area.

One of the coachees who headed a team of 12, had always been conscious about following-up with her team. Consequently, she would often end up doing half the work without asking for support. This was one of her pain points that she hoped to overcome through coaching. After completion of the project, she shared:

If I have to give numbers to follow-ups with my team, on a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate myself between 5 and 6 at the beginning of coaching. Now, after completing 9 sessions with my coach, my follow up techniques have improved significantly. Now I would give myself 8.5 to 9.

During the intervention, two coachees who had lost their parents to Covid-19 were able to cope with their loss with a sense of calmness. One of them shared how their coach helped them build resilience to overcome their personal loss by inculcating various personal development skills such as emotion regulation.

My family and I had Covid in May 2021, my husband had a long Covid and was admitted in the ICU for 22 days with very serious condition. This whole trauma took us almost 6-8 months to recover, the physical recovery was faster than the mental agony this had caused.

Through this anxiety-filled experience, coaching became my ally as it helped me process my internal thoughts and stay calmer to handle my own emotions along with managing my kids and family (old parents).

The coachee also described how the coaching sessions helped them achieve a better work-life balance during a difficult time.

The Ignite project came as a boon as it allowed me to view coaching not only as a self-healing process but also a strong process to provide clarity, strength and courage to handle many shifts and changes due to teaching having become online and the work base shifted from school to home. This added a different kind of pressure to learn new methods and adjust to a work from home pattern where drawing boundaries between work and home was difficult. Coaching

provided a space to vent out emotions in a judgement free conversation that gave them support, clarity, focus and growth possibilities.

Institution-wide impact

The School Principal had an important story of school-wide impact that encompasses the shift in thinking, perspective, and behaviour experienced by the teachers and staff.

That it is a transformative process... In the regular working of the school, I was simply fixing what was wrong; That was where my entire day went, rather than in building a strong foundation - a process which would automatically make things work.

From October 2021, we left the fixing of routine things to the front-end team. The management started thinking of ways to make the school a better place. For example, in the staff room, the teachers were discussing the case of a child who was not learning. The parents were not showing support while the teacher was working hard. The child was not able to learn. Just then, one of my leaders who was in the coaching session remarked, 'Let us wear the hat of the coach and see what we can do'. At that moment, I knew the coaching mind-set had arrived in the school. They had started thinking of solutions rather than being judgemental about things and passing the buck.

Now they hardly come to me for routine matters. They come to me for anything that is critical but they come to me with solutions and like three options. This is the shift we are talking about. This shift is heartening.

A key aim of the survey was to understand the key areas in which the coachees experienced a significant impact as a result of undergoing the coaching intervention. The responses revealed that 75% of the coachees experienced significant positive impact in their operational efficiency and time management.

Discussion

Analysis of the survey responses, feedback from the coachees at the end of the programme, and the coaches during regular review meetings revealed the following themes, which provide valuable insights for designing better coaching intervention programmes in similar contexts.

Importance of transforming educators into system leaders

Investing in school leadership increases the likelihood that teachers will change classroom practices. Meanwhile, school leaders who work with teachers can significantly influence their instructional practices. (Supovitz *et al.*, 2010; Devine, Meyers, Houssemand, 2013). The results of the Parevartan Ignite Project showed a coaching approach in which the coach acted as a sounding board, an anchor, or catalyst and made coachees pause and reflect on their existing resources, capabilities, and helped them manage time and effort more effectively. Furthermore, the coachees' personal and professional transformation also had a broader institutional impact.

These findings align with those of previous research, which highlighted when educators received adequate support to develop the skills and mindsets to become system leaders, they could initiate systemic changes in organisations, consequently creating a larger impact in society (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010; Srivastara & Cooperrider, 1990).

Feedback from the coaches and the school principal showed that coaching helped the teachers to see the big picture, understand where they stand, and how their smallest contribution adds up. This

realisation helped the teachers to shift their perspectives, re-frame their thought process, recognise their own contributions, regain their self-worth, and gave them a sense of ownership in fulfilling their institution's goals.

Increased efficiency at an institutional level

The coaching intervention brought about greater sustainability in the Parevartan School workforce. It acted as the medium to help the staff build long-term professional capacity at the individual and collective levels. It supported teachers and leaders to develop effective management approaches, prioritise the issues that needed resolving, develop their competence in decision-making, and work positively with and empower their colleagues. Coaching enabled the teachers to engage in productive thinking which led them to develop new problem-solving approaches.

Role of technology and the mode of coaching

Regarding coaching accessibility, the role of technology in delivering coaching programmes in emerging economies must also be considered. The Parevartan Project used technology to deliver coaching lessons to teachers at a time when schools were closed. Notably, Parevartan was a private school, therefore all the coachees owned personal mobile phones and laptops to participate in the coaching sessions. Technology is a powerful tool for delivering coaching to teachers in emerging economies, with a large proportion of young population in the workforce.

The various modes of coaching have their own advantages and disadvantages. While many find face-to-face or hybrid coaching models more effective, our experience with Parevartan Ignite Coaching Project showed that online coaching can also be effective and sustainable. In our experience, online coaching, when equipped with thoughtful planning, well-established processes, and careful execution, can produce positive results.

Within the context of our project, online coaching provided the following advantages over face-to-face coaching.

- a. Freedom from temporal and geographical constraints: Online coaching provided both coachees and coaches with the flexibility to schedule sessions and based on their mutual convenience and attend them from any location. Owing to the lack of geographical constraints, the Project Management Team could prioritise on ensuring an appropriate coach–coachee matching while selecting the coaches.
- b. Safety during the pandemic: Online coaching mitigated the risk of infection and the stress associated with it during the pandemic.
- c. Cost-effective: Online coaching saved travel and other incidental costs for both the coach and the coachee. Thus, with the right technological support, such initiatives can be successfully implemented even in remote areas where resources are limited.
- (d) Choice over platform and gadget: Online coaching enabled the coachees to use any platform that they were comfortable and familiar with. Platforms such as Zoom provide a free, basic version, accessible on both phones and laptops.
- d. Choice over being watched: The coachees had the freedom to turn the video off while interacting with the coaches, depending on their Internet bandwidth and circumstances (e.g., to accommodate for the challenge of sharing physical space with family members while attending sessions from home).

Conclusion

This study represents an early attempt to understand the positive impact of coaching on the teachers and school leaders of a tier-2-city-school. As a result of the coaching sessions, the coachees at the Parevartan School demonstrated a visible shift in their mindset and their overall approach towards life, as observed in their self-reported data on the personal and professional gains from coaching. Institutionally, the coachees' focus shifted from solely fixing their immediate problems towards building a foundation for a school ecosystem that is efficient and sustainable. The inward journey of coaching helped the teachers connect to their purpose and values, increase their self-awareness, identify their strengths, weaknesses, passions, areas needing work, and find meaning in their contribution.

Despite the project's impact, the study has some limitations. First, the project involved a fairly homogeneous group of educators. Second, the study did not measure the sustainability of the shift or change in the individuals over time. For this, the impact of coaching must be measured using a longitudinal study design. Third, the survey did not consider the perspective and impacts of coaching on the external stakeholders; that is, the students of the teachers and school leaders who participated in this project, and the students' parents.

Despite its limited scope, this study makes the following contributions to the field of coaching. First, to the best of my knowledge, this study is one of the first to provide evidence on the impact of a coaching intervention programme on Indian educators. The Parevartan Ignite Project represents an early initiative aimed at making coaching accessible to an Indian school in tier-2 city. Second, it highlights the need to consider the local context, opportunities, and challenges while designing an effective coaching intervention programme in emerging economies, particularly, in tier-2 cities of India. Third, the project was designed based on ICFF's standard Ignite Project protocol, which can be replicated and customised to other chapters and locations, especially within India and other emerging economies. Finally, this study hopes to raise further research interest on the impact of coaching interventions in India's tier-2 cities and its potential for catalysing sustainable and long-lasting transformation in the education sector.

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