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Posted Date: 3 January 2023

doi: 10.20944/preprints202301.0025.v1

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*Article*

# Coaching Approach as a Sustainable Means of Improving Communication Skills of Management Students

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**Abstract:** The impetus for the development of coaching as a professional managerial activity is based on the needs and requirements of a modern sustainable society. The paper aims to explore the awareness of academic students about the coaching approach and to formulate recommendations for its application in the academic environment, so that students were prepared for the requirements of practice. The article focuses on the views of experts in the field of coaching approach as a means of improving communication in the academic environment, characterizes communication skills and coaching approach, coaching models and its benefits and barriers. The research is aimed at a survey of awareness of the coaching approach among college and university students of in Slovakia and the possibilities of its application in the academic environment. The primary research was carried out by the questionnaire method in 689 students. The evaluation of the questionnaire and the statistical evaluation of established hypotheses and assumptions concerning the coaching approach. According to the survey, 468 students, representing 68% respondents have knowledge about coaching. Furthermore, 68% of students had or have doubts about achieving their goals during their studies. According to the results of the survey, only 24% of students had experience with coaching. The cooperation with a coach was regarded as beneficial for 76% of these students which had already experience the coaching lectures, took part in the survey. The proposal of students was the implementation of the subject "Basics of coaching" which could be taught for all students at University of Zilina, Slovakia. The students of managerial fields would benefit in enhancing leadership skills and providing support of their working teams accomplishing the final thesis, searching the professional job opportunities, but also with coping in everyday life and stressful situations. Finally, suggest organizing an introductory full-day workshops in specific areas of coaching for students of management, the future managers. To raise awareness of coaching approach in the University of Zilina in a cooperation with the Counseling and Career Center and its activities.

**Keywords:** management; sustainability tools; coaching process; communication; educational institution; sustainability of human beings

## 1. Introduction

Guiding questions are perfect for getting your employees to open and be more vulnerable. They are a form of open-ended questions designed to develop critical thinking skills in the recipient. Managers who use guiding questions exhibit better collaboration and teamwork with their

employees. Asking guiding questions improves skills such as: creative thinking, collaboration, listening, communication.

Managerial communication is a type of social communication that takes place in the internal and partly external environment of the given organization. In terms of content, it is focused on ensuring the functioning of the organization, on supporting the fulfillment of set goals. [1] This is also reflected in the use of specific means of expression, communication tools and in the nature of the organization's entire information system. Its bearer is the manager (team of managers), who fulfills his managerial roles through communication.

Coaching is a sophisticated way of acting and communicating, especially in the advanced management environment of 21st century leaders. In this approach we provide others with what they need at a given moment - certainty, understanding, hope or energy. We also support them in being creative in finding solutions, taking their own decisions and bearing their responsibility.

Coaching is an activity that has its justification both now and in the future. Every day, mastering coaching techniques is a sought-after strength of not only the manager at work but also students during their studies and everyday life. Moreover, the coaching approach is used by advanced teachers at schools or universities and in some places, students are even taught to master coaching techniques.

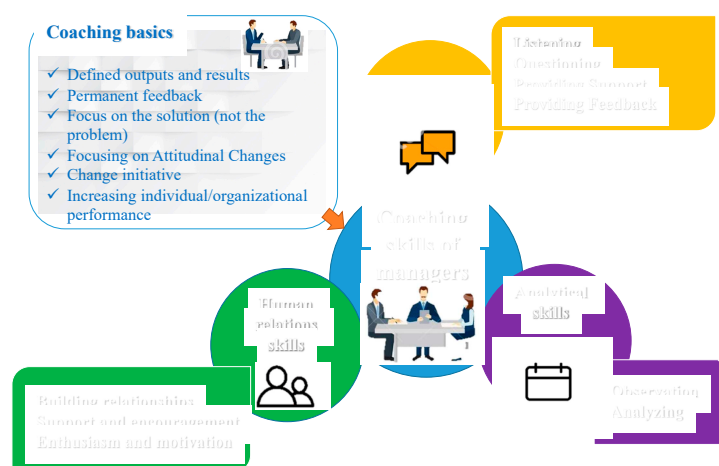
Coaching can be defined in many ways. The essence of coaching is helping people and especially students to change what they wish and helping them to go in the direction they want to go - encouraging them at every level to become who they want to be, - building awareness, giving choices, and leading to change. [2–4] The International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership. [5].

It focuses on high performance and improvement at work, although it can also affect an individual's private life. It focuses on specific skills and objectives [6,7].

Coaching is about gaining inspiring awareness and skills, but most of all it's about changing attitudes. It focuses mainly on creating, strengthening, and developing positive attitudes of each manager towards themselves, people and the company.

Coaching is a relationship between two equal partners - the coach and the coachee - based on mutual trust, openness and sincerity. It is oriented towards the success and growth in the professional and personal life of individuals and teams. The coach guides the coachee to answer themselves, get to themselves and their surroundings better, set their vision for the future, derive their goals from it and then gradually implement them. [8]

The coach supports the coachee and uses specific means and styles of communication. Effective coaching skills are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Coaching skills of managers.

Coaching reinforces several valuable qualities such as responsibility, openness and sincerity, positive attitude, the joy of work and life, life optimism, respect, tolerance, and sensitivity to other people, distance and foresight, focus on goals and priorities, fairness, self-control and self-confidence. [9–11]

The coach entirely focuses on the client, supports the client's self-expression, client's awareness and prospects into action and learning. Coach also facilitates client's autonomy in the coaching process. [12–14]

Coaching is understood in quite different ways. It is used in a wide range - from on-the-job training - especially to new employees, through stimulating potential and as an aid in coping with difficult situations. It is used in different cases, for different purposes and to achieve other goals. To meet the individual characteristic needs, various coaching approaches, styles and techniques are constantly being developed, and supplemented. [15] Coaching can successfully work for a group or a team, too. The examples of coaching themes and main type of coaching are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The coaching themes.

Coaching involves a binding alliance between an experienced consultant and a manager or a group who actively collaborate to meet the individual's and the organization's needs.

The need for coaching can be many and complex. It can be useful to reflect on the purpose of the coaching before getting started. Coaching can typically address one or more of the following topics:

Strategic coaching is about helping managers solve dilemmas and overcome barriers to strategic choices. Strategic coaching is also to a greater extent about understanding the overall picture (internal and external) and returning one's own learning to the organization.

Operative coaching focuses on the daily tasks the leader or group faces. There may be a clearer focus on results, implementation power, collaboration challenges, innovation capacity and standing in uncertainty/unpredictability.

Personal coaching focuses on challenges the individual faces. It can be stress management, personal effectiveness and boundary setting; being too kind or having too much or too little faith in oneself.

Skills coaching is training on leadership behavior and tools such as feedback, delegation and conflict prevention.

Professional coaching borders on mediation and is about providing knowledge about management, collaboration and communication that the manager or group can reflect on. [16–18] The context of the use of coaching is practically unlimited, from management decisions, self-command,

work-life harmony and education enhancement, to coping with stress or being stuck, to partner life and well-being, or sports. [19–22] The limiting factor is the actual need within the topic. Coaching helps with defining one's goals, visions and finding motivation, pathways and the commitment to achieve them. Coaching doesn't provide knowledge or training in the traditional meaning. Instead, it facilitates one's development and advocates a change of mindset.

One of the most important and sought-after skills in the modern workplace is the ability to coach others. [23,24] It's one thing to identify coaching as a vital capacity — it's another thing altogether to develop that capacity.

During coaching, the coach uses various tools and models to help achieve the goals set by the coachee. Active listening is an essential coaching competence that a coach should master. Active listening means taking note of the speaker, maintaining eye contact with them, giving them full attention, verifying understanding of what they said and reflecting on the received information, and focusing on nonverbal communication.

A coach focuses on what the clients say and what they do not say explicitly to fully understand the subject of communication concerning the circumstances in which the given client is, thereby supporting the client in expressing his thoughts and feelings. In addition, the coach considers the client's identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to understand better what the client is communicating.

Asking questions is another crucial coaching skill. Different managerial situations require further questions. Properly asked coaching questions can be characterized by three points: they are simple, they are based on a particular system, questions on goals, current state, search for possibilities, they are designed to have a positive impact on the client. The questions are mainly used to define the client's goal. The coach helps to create a comprehensive and detailed description of the client's target state, where the problems are already solved. Experienced coaches begin coaching interviews with relatively broad questions during most coaching processes. As the interview progresses, the questions gradually focus on the details, and the coach uses open-ended questions.

According to John Whitmore, one of the founders of coaching [25], The coach does not obtain the information to use it for himself. Instead, the questions' purpose is to determine if the client has the information he needs. However, the answers the coach receives often show him where to focus the following questions.

The meaning of coaching questions is in searching for possibilities and not in the answers. Their job is to help them take responsibility for their own goals and results and not to tell the coach what exactly to do.

A transparent system of questions linked to other methods of people management, John Whitmore [25], named the GROW model. It is non-directive coaching method that leaves the solution's finding solely up to the coachee. It assumes that every person has great potential, which is mostly not fully utilized. The model deduces that the responsibility for the process outcome rests with the coached person, who determines the content of the process. [26,27]

If the coach wants to structure coaching using the GROW model, he should first discuss the goal with the coachee. The coach and the coachee must look at the behavior, activity or skill that the coachee wants to change, and then structure this change as a goal they would prefer to achieve together. [28–30]

It is necessary to make sure that the goal is SMART, that is, a goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. [31] Team coaching involves a single coach — either a skilled outsider or trained team leader — working with a group of managers or executives. [32–34] Often, there are two coaches to facilitate the team coaching process (Figure 3).





Figure 3. Process of team coaching.

When the coaching approach is used by management and most leaders in an organization, a coaching culture may be created. The benefits of introducing a coaching culture in a global organization are:

- positive impact that creating a coaching culture has on the strategic objectives of organizations, leads to improved business results, [18–20]
- introducing coaching competencies is a strategy to create an adaptive workplace culture committed to the ongoing development and learning process, [21,22]
- leads to significantly reduced staff turnover, increased productivity, and higher level of employees' satisfaction at work,
- a coaching culture promotes open communication, builds trust and respect, and improves working relationships, [23]
- organization can benefit from a more conscious focus on people, even if it may not be directly measurable in terms of financial issues [24].

An organization that adopts a coaching culture will also gain higher performance and productivity, human development, better ability to learn, better relationships, higher quality of life, more time for the manager, the creator of thought, better use of people, their abilities and skills, resources, faster and more effective response to threats, greater flexibility and adaptability to change, more motivated employees, culture change, widely usable and vital ability. [35–37] To sum up, the coaching culture contributes to the sustainability and development of the organization staff.

In the following survey, we study how informed and experienced with the coaching approach the students are, especially those of managerial fields/subjects – future leaders.

## 2. Materials and Methods

According to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, there were 133,558 students at colleges and universities enlisted in the Slovak Republic in the academic year of 2021/2022. This number of students represents a sample set for our survey. We therefore calculated the relevant sample size as follows:

$$n = \frac{(z^2 * p * (1 - p)) + e^2}{e^2 + z^2 * p * \frac{(1 - p)}{N}} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n – relevant sample [pcs]

N - population size [pcs]

e - permissible margin of error [%]

p - dispersion [%]

z - confidence level [%]

For our survey, the population size was 133,558 students. In our survey, the margin of error was set at 5%, the variance at 50%, and the confidence level at 95%.

According to the formula, the relevant sample for our survey was 385 respondents. 689 of respondents took part in our survey, and therefore we obtained a relevant sample for our survey.

**The questionnaire aimed to determine whether the respondents had knowledge about the coaching process and had experienced the coaching process or approach.**

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions focused on basic demographic data about the respondent, such as gender, age, level of study, the field of study and college/university.

The second part of the questionnaire was devoted to knowledge about coaching. Finally. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of questions focused on the respondent's college/university, whether he encountered professional help during his studies, and whether the subject of coaching is introduced at his college/university.

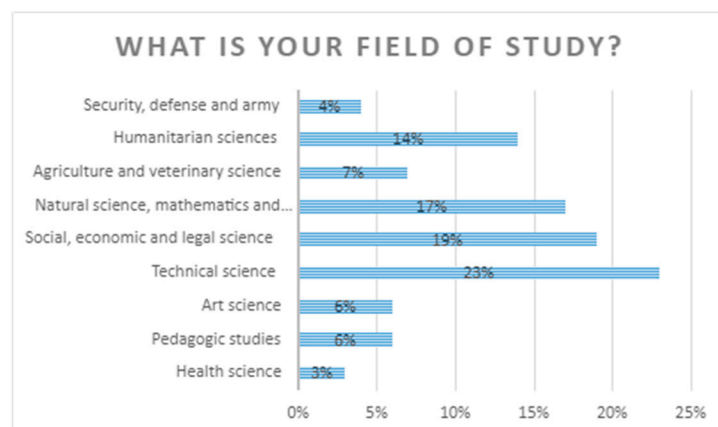
According to the gender 60% of our respondents were women, and 40% were men. 56% of participants were in the age group of 19-22 years, 30% participants were in the age category of 23-26 years, and 13% of respondents belonged to the age category of 27 years and more.

A further question was oriented on which degree of study the participating students attended, i.e. whether they study at the bachelor level, master or PhD level of study. There were 57% of bachelor students involved in the study, 38% were at the master level of study, and finally 5% of our respondents were PhD students.

With the next question, we found out what field/branch the respondent studied. The largest group of participating students were of technical science, namely 161 (23%). The second largest category of students comes from the social, economic and legal sciences, namely 132 students (19%). Students of natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, students of humanities, students of arts and education, students of agricultural and veterinary sciences, students of health sciences and fields aimed at improving the quality of life, students of security sciences, defense and military were also involved in the study.

In our paper, we established three hypotheses based on specific questions, and three assumptions.

This survey was carried out with a questionnaire method. It was administered electronically in February 2022.



**Figure 4.** The field of study.

Afterwards contingency table of expected frequencies was processed. Then, it was necessary to determine the level of significance  $\alpha$ , which we set at the level of 5%. Next, we had to create contingency tables from the obtained data, which show the actual frequencies. There were created contingency tables with theoretical (expected) frequencies. Then the test was determined when evaluating the hypotheses. If not meeting the condition of expected frequencies (should be bigger than five), we performed Fisher's exact test. We also found out how strong the dependence between

the variables is, after comparing the value of Kramer's V. We used the IBM SPSS STATISTICS 25 statistical program for the evaluation of hypotheses. We also determined how strong the dependence between the variables is after comparing the value of Kramer's V.

### 3. Results

The survey of awareness of coaching approach and the possibility of its application in an academic environment. Another goal was determining whether the respondents have experienced coaching or would recommend it, and if they have no experience with it, whether they would be interested in the coaching process. The final goal was to find out whether the respondents would be interested in signing up and completing the study subject "Basic of coaching" at their college or university.

The following prerequisites were established for further needs to fulfill individual goals:

**Assumption no. 1:** 75% of respondents had doubts about achieving some goals during their studies.

**Assumption no. 2:** 90% of respondents had no coaching experience (did not work with a professional coach).

**Assumption no. 3:** 80% of respondents who had experience with coaching had a positive impression of working with a professional coach.

**Assumption no. 4:** More than 60% of respondents would accept to study the subject of coaching at universities.

According to the results, we found out that 69% of respondents had or have doubts about achieving their goals during their studies. Based on the survey results, 75% of respondents had no experience with coaching or have never cooperated with a professional coach. For 76% of the respondents who cooperated with a coach it was beneficial and very beneficial. Therefore, we can claim that this assumption was not fulfilled. They have a positive impression of cooperation with a professional coach. For 71% of the respondents would like to implement teaching the subject "Basics of Coaching" at their university or College. According to the results of the survey, this assumption has been fulfilled.

#### **Question No.1: What do you think the term coaching means?**

According to the survey, we found that 68% (468 students) are aware of coaching, as their answers to this question were correct. On the other hand, we found that 32% (221 students) do not know about coaching because their responses were incorrect. Participants in the survey regarded the coaching as: management (28.16%), training (15.09%), guidance (11.90%), mentoring (4.21%), management (3.05%), development (9.58%), motivation (3.77%), helping students (9.87%), improvement (1.02%), learning (6.10%), support (2.32%), process of achieving a goal using the questions the coach asks (1.31%). Meanwhile, 1.45% of involved students considered coaching to be the transfer of experience from the coach to the coachee. Also, 2.18% of students could not answer this question.

#### **Question No.2: Do you have experience - have you ever worked with a coach?**

We found out that some respondents have experience with coaching and have been coached. Out of the total number of respondents, only 172 students have experience with coaching, representing 25%. Most students, 75% (517 students), have no experience with coaching.

#### **Question No.3: Would you be interested in working with a professional coach?**

With this question, we asked respondents who had not yet had experience with a coach, they would be interested in working with a professional coach.

This question was answered by 517 respondents, i.e., those respondents who do not yet have experience with coaching, were 249 students (48.2%) were more interested in cooperating with a coach, and 153 students (29.6%) were more disinterested in cooperating with a coach. 65 students (12.6%) were interested in coaching and 50 students (9.7%) would not be interested in coaching.

**Question No.4: Did you use the services of the following experts during your studies? (Option to mark more answers)**



Respondents had the option to mark multiple answers. Most respondents did not use the services of any expert during their studies (539 responses). The second most marked answer is a psychologist (85 answers) and a career counselor (31 answers) and a coach (31 answers). Respondents also use the services of a psychotherapist (27 responses) or a psychiatrist (21 responses). 17 respondents also marked the option other and therefore used the services of a coach, educational advisor, special pedagogical advisor, teacher or trainer when writing the final thesis. They also used counseling services from their friends or acquaintances or classmates.

**Question No.5:** *To what extent do you believe you would achieve your goals more effectively when working with a coach?*

As many as 461 students (67%) rather believe and 118 students (17%) believe that cooperation with a coach will achieve their goals more effectively. 85 students (12%) rather do not believe, and only 25 (4%) students do not believe that working with a coach will achieve their goals more effectively.

The following hypotheses were established for the fulfilment individual goals:

**Hypothesis No. 1**

*H0: There is no dependence between the benefit of cooperation with a professional coach and the recommendation of cooperation with a professional coach.*

*H1: There is a dependence between the benefit of cooperation with a professional coach and the recommendation of cooperation with a professional coach.*

**Hypothesis No. 2**

*H0: There is no dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance of the coach's focus.*

*H1: There is a dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance and focus.*

**Hypothesis No. 3**

*H0: There is no dependence between the student's doubt regarding the achieving of the set goals and the consideration of receiving help from a professional coach.*

*H1: There is a dependence between the student's doubt about achieving the set goals and the consideration of receiving help from a professional coach.*

**Hypothesis No. 1** (the hypothesis is based on the question: "To what extent the cooperation with a coach was beneficial for you" and on the question: "Based on your experience with a professional coach, would you recommend cooperation with a professional coach to your friends?"

**Ninth question:** *To what extent was cooperation with the coach beneficial to you in achieving your goal?* This question was answered by those students only who already have had experience with a coaching process, and therefore the total number of responses is 172. For 76 students (44%), cooperation with a coach in achieving the goal was beneficial, and for 55 students (32%), cooperation with the coach was very beneficial. 36 students (21%) could not determine the degree of benefit. We can also positively evaluate the fact that for only 5 students (3%) cooperation with the coach was not beneficial and for no student it was not beneficial at all.

**Tenth question:** *Based on your experience with a professional coach, would you recommend working with a professional coach to your friend?* Cooperation with the coach is evaluated positively by students, and up to 84 students (49%) would recommend it to their friends. 75 students (44%) would rather recommend it. 12 students (7%) would rather not recommend cooperation with a coach, and 1 student (1%) would not recommend it at all.

We established the following null and alternative hypothesis:

*H0: There is no dependence between the benefit of cooperation with a professional coach and the recommendation of cooperation with a professional coach.*

*H1: There is a dependence between the benefit of cooperation with a professional coach and the recommendation of cooperation with a professional coach.*

The value of Kramer's V is at the level of 0.404 (Figure 5), which means that there is a moderately strong dependence between the variables. The benefit from working with a professional coach and the variable of recommending working with a professional coach, because the value is in the interval

0.3-0.8. To summarize, we state that based on the statistical evaluation of hypothesis no. 1, we found out that there is a medium-strong dependence between the benefit of working with a professional coach and the recommendation of working with a professional coach.

Symmetric measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,404	0,000
	Cramer's V	,404	0,000
N of Valid Cases		172	

Figure 5. Cramer's V value for the hypothesis No. 1.

**Hypothesis no. 2** (the hypothesis is based on the question: "What topic would you like to solve when working with a professional coach?" and on the question: "Is it important for you to work with a coach from a specific field?")

**Twelfth question:** What topic would you like to solve when working with a professional coach?

The surveyed respondents would be most interested in working with a coach on the topic of career (286 answers), personal development (282 responses), education and study (258 responses) stress (206 responses). Respondents would also be interested in coaching on the topic of finance (201 responses) and time management (171 responses). Among the topics that the respondents would not be very interested in were time management (171 answers), fears and anxieties (165 answers), sports (164 answers) and partner life and relationships (151 answers). In this question, seven respondents indicated another option, and thus they would be interested in topics such as a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating, writing a bachelor's thesis, eating disorders, or coping with urges and conflict situations.



Figure 6. The topics of coaching.

**Fifteenth question:** Is it important for you to work with a coach from a particular field? We can see that the professional focus of the coach is important to the respondents, because for up to 305 students (63%) it is important that the coach is focused exactly on his topic. 108 students (22%) prefer the coach's general focus, and 73 (15%) respondents do not care about the coach's professional focus.

**We established this null and alternative hypothesis**

**H0:** There is no dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance of the coach's focus.

**H1:** There is a dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance and focus.

Firstly, it was necessary to determine the level of significance  $\alpha$ , which we set at the level of 5%. Frequencies. Based on it, we created a contingency table with theoretical frequencies (expected), with the help of which we could determine the test we will use to evaluate the hypothesis. After merging some categories, we found that we meet the condition, as 17 theoretical abundances out of 21 are greater than or equal to 5. Therefore, we could use the Chi-square test, in the next step.

Chi- Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Squared	45,767 <sup>a</sup>	12	0,000
Likelihood Ratio	38,405	12	0,000
N of Valid Cases	486		

a. 4 cells (19,0%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.70.

**Figure 7.** Representation of the sig value of Chi-square test.

The Figure 8 showed that the significance value was 0.0 and thus was less than the significance level value which is 0.05. Therefore, we rejected the established null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis: There was a dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance and focus. Using the value of Kramer's V, we also determined how strong the dependence between the selected variables is.

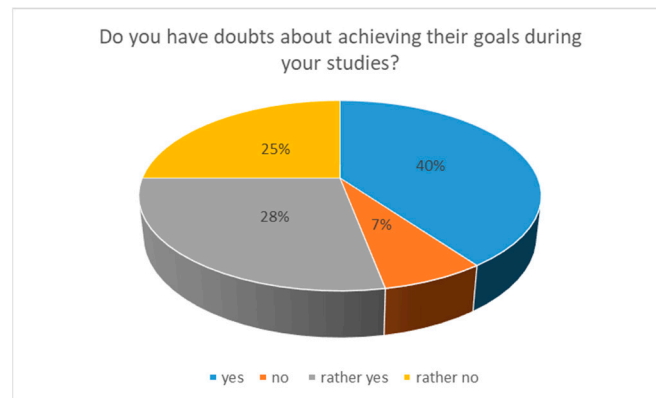
Symmetric measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,307	0,000
	Cramer's V	,217	0,000
N of Valid Cases		486	

**Figure 8.** Cramer's V value for the hypothesis No. 2.

Based on the value of Kramer's V, we found out that the dependence between the need for coaching in a specific area and the importance in the coach's focus is a weak dependence.

**Hypothesis no. 3 (the hypothesis is based on the question: "Did you have doubts about achieving certain goals during your studies?" and on the question: "During your studies, would you accept the professional help of a coach who would be able to help you achieve your goals? 303 students (44%) would accept, and 264 students (38%) would rather accept the professional help of a coach during their studies. 92 students (13%) would rather not accept and only 30 students (4%) would not accept the professional help of a coach during their studies.**

**Twenty-first question: Did you have doubts about achieving certain goals during your studies? (Figure 9)** As many as 276 students (40%) had doubts about achieving specific goals during their studies. Furthermore, 196 students (28%) stated they had rather more doubts about achieving their goals. 170 students (25%) had no doubts about setting their goals, and only 47 students (7%) had no doubts at all about achieving their goals.



**Figure 9.** Students' doubts about achieving their goals during studies.

We stated the following null and alternative hypotheses:

**H0:** *There is no dependence between the student's doubt regarding the achieving of the set goals and the consideration of receiving help from a professional coach.*

**H1:** *There is a dependence between the student's doubt about achieving the set goals and the consideration of receiving help from a professional coach.*

Firstly, it was necessary to determine the level of significance  $\alpha$ , which we set at the level of 5%. We calculated that the significance value is 0.0 and thus is less than the value of our determined significance level of 0.05, in Figure 10. Therefore, we stated there is a dependency between the variables "doubts about achieving goals" and "receiving help from a coach". In the next step, according to the value of Kramer's V, we determined how strong the dependence between the variables was. Finally, according to Kramer's V, the dependence between the variables was weak.

Symmetric measures				
		Value	Approximate Significance	Exact Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,270	0,000	0,000
	Cramer's V	,270	0,000	0,000
N of Valid Cases		689		

**Figure 10.** Cramer's V value representation for the hypothesis No.3.

According to our survey, up to 75% of students at the University of Žilina in Žilina, Slovakia, did not know whether the university offers any form of coaching for students.

However, the UNIZA Counseling and Career Center operates at the University of Žilina in Žilina, which offers coaching and psychological counselling for university graduates. This is precisely why we recommend raising awareness of our activities and services, as up to 69% of students would be interested in these services if they knew about them.

Therefore, we would recommend raising awareness of the UNIZA Counseling and Career Center by updating the website, by creating an account on social networks, recording podcasts, but also provide professional information about psychological and coaching intervention, organizing job fairs, by organizing workshops where university graduates can create the necessary documents for a job interview, get valuable advice on how to handle a job interview, etc. According to the survey, we founded out that 67% of students in our survey were interested in the subject Basics of coaching at the university.

Therefore, propose organizing a series of workshops, "Basics of coaching" for students in managerial fields- future managers. The workshop would be aimed at students in their final study years, who could learn the coaching skills necessary for their future work life. Similar workshop

could be offered to university teaching staff, to get informed about the coaching approach and its use in the university environment. Learning coaching competences would help teachers upgrade their teaching skills and enhance the quality of education they provide. If the coaching approach would be used in academic management, it could bring similar benefits to better business-communication and leadership, enhance teamwork, etc. Implementation and applying the coaching approach in the academic environment are also aligned with the overall goal to innovate the teaching and learning process and improve the quality of education.

#### 4. Discussion

Many colleges do not use authentic coaching or coaching approach in their curricula as well as many universities do not develop these skills in students- future managers yet.

Coaching can be personal, which requires a different level of relationship. While management is relatively neat, coaching can get messy. Coaching involves “going deep” — it requires that someone let a coach in to see how clients are observing, how they are feeling, what mood they are in and what’s getting in their way. [16,17] Coaching leads one to think in more detail, and thus helps one find one’s own answers to questions or solutions to challenges.

The benefits of personal coaching are as broad as the individuals themselves who are affected by the coaching. Many students reported that coaching has had a positive impact on their careers as well as their own lives by helping them set goals and take steps to achieve them; to become more self-sufficient and independent; gain higher satisfaction with life and work; become more efficient in teamwork; take greater responsibility for their actions; work smarter and more productively with your co-workers or superiors; communicate more effectively.

Coaching improves employees' performance and helps them develop their skills and knowledge about work, tasks, and responsibilities. Employees perform better and at a higher level when they know what to do and do it. Effective workplace coaching also makes it possible to identify employees with high potential and prepare them for promotion.

According to the International Coach Federation [6], one can achieve through coaching:

62.4% better target settings, 60.5% more balanced life, 57.1% less stress, 52.4% more self-confidence, 44.3% better quality of life, 25.7% higher income.

If the coach is firmly convinced that the coachee has sufficient potential and responsibility, then he will think that he needs the expertise that will enable and help him coach. [25]. There is a difference in knowledge and attitudes between managers and employees. [38–41]. Managers lack contact with people and confidential knowledge of what is happening at a lower organizational level. On the contrary, employees generally do not have a broader view and knowledge of management techniques and approaches. This difference leads to mutual misunderstanding and often to the demotivation of employees and consequently limits the company's success. Coaching can significantly reduce or even eliminate this difference.

Although effective coaching can play a valuable role in society, there are barriers to coaching and operational use of coaching. Therefore, it is important to understand these perceived barriers in society and to address them to increase the likelihood of coaching success.

We can identify various elements as barriers that prevent organizations from using coaching organizational culture; insufficient understanding of the value of coaching; coaching is not considered a business priority; resistance from top management; low level of coaching skills and experience within the organization; lack of time and financial resources [42–45].

Bond [41] identifies other obstacles such as the leadership and management style of the organization; credibility of internal coaches; demand for coaching vs. coaching capacity; costs of external coaches; little understanding of the impact and benefits of coaching; conflicting relationships.

When considering the use of coaching in organizations, it is essential to understand and address potential barriers to coaching in both approaches and communication [46–49].

It is also necessary to be aware of the risks and difficulties that are part of coaching. During the in-depth process, the coachee may also discover something of which he is ashamed or frightened. To



some extent, such a concern is needed because of the change that is about to take place. The coach must be prepared for that and ensure a safe environment for coaching [50–53].

## 5. Conclusions

Coaching is a method and a skill that can be learned. Coaching embedded in the system in the organization contributes to an open, learning, engaged and supportive culture, which is gradually strengthened. The intention is for the coaching skills to spread from senior managers to customers and users. One of consultants coach managers, managers coach employees, and employees coach customers/users to achieve results that are best for all parties.

The aim of this paper was to map out the awareness of the academic audience about the coaching approach and the possibilities of its application in the academic environment formulate recommendations for its implementation in the academic environment. Coaching approach as a means of improving communication in the academic environment could significantly improve students' skills, teachers' teaching and management leadership in the academic environment. According to the survey, we found out that 75% of students have no experience working with a coach. According to the survey, 468 students, representing 68%, have knowledge about coaching. Based on this it is possible to claim that it is important to implement the coaching approach in the curricula. Furthermore, 68% of students had or have doubts about achieving their goals during their studies. We also found that for 25% of students had experience with coaching, cooperation with a coach was beneficial in 76% and 71% of all students are interested in the subject "Basics of coaching" at their university or College.

Based on the evaluation of hypotheses, we found out that there is a dependency between the need to be coached in a specific area and the importance of the coach's professional focus. Furthermore, we found out that there is a dependency between whether students had doubts about achieving goals and accepting help from a coach. Therefore, the students who have or had doubts about achieving their goals during their studies were interested in getting the help of a coach.

It is necessary to raise awareness of coaching approach in Universities and Colleges and the implementation of the subject "Basics of coaching" not only for all students at Colleges and Universities in Slovakia. According to the survey, we founded out that 67% of students in our survey were interested in the subject Basics of coaching at the university.

The cooperation with The Counseling and Career Center, which is based by the University of Zilina, which offers coaching and psychological counselling for university graduates. This is precisely why we recommend raising awareness of our activities and services, as up to 69% of students would be interested in these services if they knew about them.

Therefore, propose organizing a series of workshops, "Basics of coaching" for students in managerial fields- future managers. The workshop would be aimed at students in their final study years, who could learn the coaching skills necessary for their future work life. Learning coaching competences would help teachers upgrade their teaching skills and enhance the quality of education they provide. If the coaching approach would be used in academic management, it could bring similar benefits to better business-communication and leadership, enhance teamwork, etc. Implementation and applying the coaching approach in the academic environment are also aligned with the overall goal to innovate the teaching and learning process and improve the quality of education.

**Author Contributions:** "Conceptualization, P.S., Z.S.; methodology, P.S.; software, P.S.; validation Z.S.; formal analysis V.B.; investigation, V.B.; resources, P.S.; data curation, Z.S.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.S.; writing—review and editing, V.B.; visualization, V.B.; supervision, V.B. and Z.S.; project administration, V.B. and P.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript."

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgments:** This paper was supported by project VEGA 1/0460/22, KEGA No. 052ZU -4/2021 and VEGA 1/0248/21.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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