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## The perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the utilization of coaching and mentoring approaches in teaching literature

Coaching and mentoring methods in literature classes can be particularly effective in helping students engage with complex literary texts on a deeper level. In this study, teachers reported integrating coaching techniques such as guided questioning and goal-setting to help students analyze texts more critically. For instance, rather than asking students to simply summarize a literary work, coaching encourages them to explore underlying themes, character motivations, and the author's intent. Teachers guide students through this process by asking reflective questions like, "What might the author be trying to convey through this character's actions?" or "How does this passage reflect larger societal issues?". Mentoring helps students connect literature to their own life experiences, making the subject matter more relatable and impactful. This method allows students to apply lessons from literature to their personal development, using stories and characters as models for navigating their own growth. By integrating coaching and mentoring, teachers move away from the traditional approach of rote memorization. Instead, they create a dynamic learning environment where students are active participants in their own learning journey.

**Keywords:** Coaching, mentoring, methodology, literature, school.

### Introduction

Educators hold the potential to transform the world by instructing and motivating their students. "Teaching at its core is a moral profession. Scratch a good teacher and you will find a moral purpose" [1; 1]. The role of a teacher is indeed profound and impactful. According to Fullan (1993), "Moral purpose keeps teachers close to the needs of children and youth; change agency causes them to develop better strategies for accomplishing their moral goals" [1; 2]. There will be a more positive change if there are more morally motivated educators. I emphasize the importance of teachers' coaching and mentoring since they can affect not only students but also the whole world. From assisting with daily tasks to providing support during critical moments, every individual requires ongoing motivation, coaching, and mentorship. This need is particularly evident in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, where dependence on technology is pervasive, necessitating continuous guidance. Across historical periods, a mentor has consistently been recognized as a reliable and supportive advisor. According to O'Shea many accomplished individuals attribute their success to a supportive adult figure who guided them through life's challenges during their formative years [2]. This caring individual may have been a family member, teacher, or community member who took a special interest in their development and served as a guide into adulthood" [2; 72]. According to Cordingley et al. teachers inhabit "multiple professional identities" [3; 15]. Each professional area has its own set of responsibilities, but teachers' responsibilities are multidimensional because they not only teach but also engage with students, encourage them, and coach and mentor them. Teachers may encourage and motivate their students, as well as transform them for the better by coaching and mentoring.

### Literature review

Over the last decade, scholars have attempted to increase students' academic engagement as a crucial step toward educational achievement and enhancing educational quality. Teachers should clearly understand "what factors lead to students' difficulties with school" [2; 73]. Otherwise, "students who dropout of school also report that it was a lack of a supportive adult in the school community that led to their decision to quit" [2; 73]. All in all, there are different effective ways of coaching and mentoring. Although researchers offer various strategies for enhancing academic success and fostering critical thinking through coaching and mentoring, few studies have explored how these strategies specifically apply to literature teaching. This gap

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is particularly noticeable in the context of Kazakh literature, where works by figures like Altynsarin and Abai provide rich opportunities for mentoring but have not been fully examined through this lens. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how Kazakh literature teachers apply coaching and mentoring techniques in their classrooms. While Koek et al. argue that literature plays a crucial role in achieving educational goals and influencing personal development, their study does not provide specific strategies for applying coaching and mentoring in the context of secondary education [4]. This gap presents an opportunity for further exploration in Kazakh literature classes, where unique cultural and historical elements may enhance students' personal growth through mentoring. Moreover, literature education may be a perfect context for students to develop critical thinking and holds significant importance in fostering citizenship, such as expanding cultural perspectives and nurturing empathy [4, 5]. Indeed, through reading, analyzing and discussing literature, an instructor can coach and mentor secondary school students to form as an individual as reading literary fiction has been viewed as a transformative life experience that can influence readers' personal growth [5, 6, 7]. According to Koen et al. literary theorists have long considered it's characteristic of literary texts to elevate readers' awareness of the world, prompting them to perceive familiar aspects as if experiencing them anew [8]. Kazakh literature offers unique opportunities for mentoring, as seen in the works of Ybyrai (Ibrahim) Altynsarin, who used poetry to encourage children to broaden their horizons through education [9]. In a modern classroom, teachers can use such works as mentoring tools, guiding students to reflect on their own educational journeys and develop a growth mindset. Similarly, the values promoted by Abai Kunanbayev — such as honesty, patriotism, and resilience — can serve as a foundation for coaching students not only in their academic achievements but also in their personal character development [10]. To investigate how literature impacts students' motivation, we conducted research involving school teachers specifically teaching Kazakh literature.

The interpretive philosophical position was chosen as the core paradigm. Hitchcock and Hughes defined ontological assumptions as of nature of reality and things [11; 21]. They noted epistemological assumptions as to the research approach about the nature of reality and the nature of things. Cohen et al. added that the ontology of interpretivism gives way for multiple realities and there is not an absolute single truth, while its epistemology is a way in which a particular researcher needs to understand the context both specifically and holistically focuses on subjective accounts, views and interpretations of the participants [12].

The interpretive approach seems to be the most appropriate philosophical assumption as data collection was made via semi-structured interviews and the goal of them was to understand the perceptions of the participants. The positivistic approach is not convenient for this small-scale research because of its macro-sociological persuasion [12]. Moreover, it relates to the “cause” and “effect” theory of the natural sciences and quantitative data [13]. Further, an interview-based data collection and data analysis require an interpretive approach since this approach helps to investigate people's subjective experiences and understandings, participants' actions as the manifestation of human's behaviour, and individual interpretations of the world around them through their own eyes [14; 12].

### *Methods*

According to the context of the research, firstly all the participants had to be recruited from Kazakhstani schools. Then they should be working with the secondary school students. An additional requirement was about teachers' leading subjects. As well as the study investigating the impact of implementing coaching and mentoring techniques in literature lessons, only teachers whose subjects have been related to the literature were invited to interviews. More than twenty teachers were invited to participate in the research; however, only eight of them could take part. Six out of eight participants were teachers of Kazakh language and literature, one was Russian, and another one was an English teacher. As thematic analysis is used to make coding and analyzing transcripts at least six people needed to be interviewed [15]. The invitation emails, consent forms, information sheet, and interview design of the research were sent to participants' e-mails. In addition, WhatsApp messenger was used to be in contact with the participants and discuss different issues relating to the interviews (time, place, length, etc.).

The semi-structured interview format was chosen to allow participants to freely express their experiences and perspectives on the use of coaching and mentoring techniques in their literature teaching. The interview guide included open-ended questions to encourage reflection and in-depth responses [16]. Examples of questions included:

*“Can you describe a time when you used coaching techniques in your literature class?”*

*“How do you think mentoring has influenced your students' engagement with literature?”*

*“What challenges have you faced in applying mentoring methods in your teaching?”*

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and were conducted in-person or via video conferencing, depending on the participants' availability. This flexible approach ensured that participants could comfortably share their insights in a manner convenient for them.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes in the participants' responses. After transcribing the interviews, the data were systematically coded using an inductive approach. Codes were grouped into “chunks” of related information, which were then refined and categorized into broader themes. The themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately reflected the key patterns in the data, and each theme was defined based on its relevance to the research questions. The flexibility of thematic analysis allowed us to capture both the commonalities and nuances in the teachers' experiences with coaching and mentoring [12, 15, 16]. Renaming, giving definitions to the “chunks” in qualitative research analysis called “coding and theming process”.

The study's participants were secondary school teachers. Every aspect of dealing with the “who” of our research required thinking about the ethical considerations relating to them [17]. As the interviewers were adults, we did not need any permission from school staff. First, invitation emails attached with informed consent and participant information sheets were sent to all potential participants.

### *Discussion*

According to the responses of teachers, new curriculum reform provided in Kazakhstani schools between 2016–2020 represented a successful outcome in a short period. There is a change from the “teacher-centered education” of the Soviet time to the “student-centered education”, where students became the “central figures” working and learning by themselves. All of the participants tend to agree that new teaching techniques including Coaching and Mentoring helped to vary and enrich lessons. Several teachers expressed that coaching and mentoring were less effective for more didactic or content-heavy literature topics, such as analyzing complex classical texts. Teacher C mentioned, “For more theoretical discussions, I find that coaching doesn't provide enough structure, and students can become lost without more direct guidance”. In the next words Teacher G explained how she tried to “use” the advantages of old and new curriculums altogether:

*“I cannot say that I do not use the old techniques, I am using them as well as new ones. Coaching and mentoring are the new tactics that I have been applying in recent times. The old and new techniques fulfill each other. I employ both old and new approaches where suitable. Because not each of them is appropriate for every lesson”* (Appendix, C).

People who affect students' academic motivation are called “learning mentors”. Van Nieuwerburgh (2012) described “learning mentors” as people who help students “learn to learn”, while Parsloe & Leedham (2009) defined them as “skilled elder people (teachers or elder students) who help students to overcome obstacles for learning” [18, 19]. Studies about “learning mentors” by Lay (2017) and Cossentino (2004) suggested the positive influence of it on students' outcomes [20, 21]. In this case, teachers can be considered as “role models”, “motivators”, or “facilitators” for children, because of their support and guidance, which they provide during the teaching process.

According to Maslow (1970), people are more engaged in work or study if they have their “inner motivation” [22]. People with a good inner motivation act depending on their own intentions, not being dependent on the thoughts of surrounding circumstances and people. Teacher C highlighted the motivational impact of coaching on students, stating, “When students set their own goals, like applying for university, they are much more focused and driven”. Similarly, Teacher G noted the importance of intrinsic motivation, saying, “It's not enough for students to study just to avoid negative feedback; they need to find their own reasons to engage”.

If we talk about coaching and mentoring in the school context, these techniques seem to be helpful for students to establish their own goals and develop their intrinsic motivation. Therefore, Teacher C stated, “there are many similarities between coaching/mentoring and literature subjects since the way that both of them can influence students' inner motivation and morale”. Some Teachers (B, C, and E) claimed that children of different ages have different motivations. Both Teachers A and B noted that coaching and mentoring were more effective with older students, who tend to have more intrinsic motivation. Teacher B explained, “Students in grades 10-11 are already thinking about their future careers, so they take coaching more seriously. Younger students, however, need more direction from teachers. Teacher E mentioned, “Didactic topics are more convenient for students of 6–8 grades when 9–12 graders prefer to study according

to their own preferences”. Moreover, Teacher F added, “students who follow their interests tend to learn, read, investigate new topics, and gain additional knowledge and experience”. In addition, a good practice, which is “leading a diary of deals” significantly increased students’ academic achievements and productivity (Teacher C) [23, 24, 25].

Writing diaries with certain plans and establishing deadlines can be a very helpful instrument for time management. Teacher D pointed out some useful short-term exercises like “reading a chapter from a book”, “reading a short poem”, and “playing”, which contributed to using the break times effectively. However, Teacher C noted that despite integrating several time-management coaching tips in lessons most students did not build the habit of good time management. Although, she continued that older children are more aware of the value of time than their younger counterparts. Half of the Teachers (A, C, E, and H) mentioned applying coaching and mentoring techniques at school helped to build good morale among students. Some didactic topics of literature like “A mother who missed her child” by Mussirepov in 5th grade dedicated to establishing a good moral in children (Teacher H). In this regard, the teacher added, “giving students a home task to read a novel together with parents and make an interview with them about their feelings was a very useful experience for both children and parents”.

The broad themes were extensively discussed above, now this section turns to the advantages, drawbacks, and similarities of the 5 themes that came from the analysis of the interviews. Theme 1 is an introductory part of the previous heading that provided general information about teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of new curriculum reform.

Literature is a very broad subject with plenty of topics of different characters. Some studies support this idea. Empirical research by Djikic et al. concludes that reading literary works significantly influence personality growth and maturation [28]. Moreover, “using poetry in coaching may offer both (client and coach) insights into parts of themselves that they may have previously been unable to articulate” [29]. A group of researchers mentioned the helpfulness of the literary element Metaphor. Integrating them in coaching and mentoring relationships made people’s morale and health stronger [19, 26, 30, 31]. However, as Teachers A, C, and G noted Coaching and Mentoring tips were not appropriate for every topic of the literature. Coaching and Mentoring concentrate on understanding the current situation, working on mistakes, and achieving goals [32]. Moreover, as half of the Teachers (A, C, E, and H) stated only “didactic” and “moral” topics were convenient to “use” some elements of Coaching and Mentoring techniques. As noted by Fletcher & Mullen (2012), coaching cannot be seen as a one-size-fits-all solution to educational challenges [33]. Teachers A and C cautioned that these approaches may not suit all students or all literature topics, particularly those that require more traditional, didactic teaching methods.

The influence of new techniques on students’ academic achievements is the 2nd Theme. Some Teachers (B, C, and E) considered taking into account students’ inner motivation in this regard. They explained that students who study to achieve their own goals like passing the final examination or applying for scholarships have more concentration on their studies, in comparison to students who study to avoid teachers’ or parents’ negative comments. In this case, Coaching and Mentoring techniques such as time management, and working with diaries were more convenient for the former rather than the latter. Thus, Coaching and Mentoring approaches seem to be more relevant for older children who feel responsible for choosing their future profession, applying for university or preparing for adult life. According to the Teachers (A, B, C, and E), the program was not well adapted relating to children’s psychology and behavior at different ages. For instance: “Coaching/mentoring approaches do not work for all groups of children similarly” (Teacher A); “Students of 5–7th and 11–12th grades have different motivations to study” (Teacher B). However, Van Nieuwerburgh (2012) claimed that coaching and mentoring affect both groups of children [18]. Although, most of the research on coaching and mentoring children is dedicated to investigating older groups [34, 35]. Thus, practicing coaching and mentoring for older students is more relevant.

A further half of Teachers (B, C, E, and H) noted the usefulness of Coaching and Mentoring techniques to build students’ speaking skills, overcoming a public speaking barrier, and increasing self-belief (Theme 3). In general, we can group Theme 1, Theme 2, and Theme 3 as “the benefits of new curriculum” or as “the benefits of Coaching and Mentoring approaches”. However, the changes were not tremendous, and they did not change the teaching process completely (Teachers A and C). Why? Maybe, teachers could not use new methods appropriately. Maybe, the old curriculum was normal and there was no need for the curriculum reform. Maybe, it is very early to make judgments about new curriculum reform. According to Fullan (2005), changes and reforms in education are not an easy process that requires much effort and time [36]. Studies by Allen & Eby (2010, P. 14); Styles & Morrow (1992); and Kolar & McBride (2011)

suggest that the length of the relationship between coachee and coach (mentee and mentor) is important because short-term relations (6 months) did not affect children when long-standing ones showed positive outcomes [37, 38, 39].

The last two themes of the study Theme 4 and Theme 5 combined the Challenges and Recommendations. Despite the general success of the new curriculum, many teachers (A, B, D, and F) noted the lack of methodical guidance and resources as a major challenge. Teacher A remarked, “We often have to improvise because there aren't enough materials to properly implement the coaching techniques”. The shortage of materials confused them, so they started improvising. Unfortunately, participants did not mention the challenges they faced during teaching the literature subject. Mostly they tended to concentrate on the general problems. Although, the fact about the lack of methodical materials and guidance about the new curriculum in general, helps to understand that there was no guidance by each subject as well. Furthermore, some Teachers (A, B, D, and H) suppose that using a Soviet-based education curriculum for 25 years led Kazakh education to stagnation, which interrupted its development. In addition, some Teachers (C, F, and H) suggested their recommendations such as investigating new approaches further (including investigating them in literature context) and they wish to participate in the international courses and exchanges, which was the final Theme of the study.

Half of the Teachers (B, C, E, and H) stated that coaching and mentoring techniques helped children to develop speaking skills, thus, children became more social and friendly to their classmates. It is understandable with the integration of new techniques of the new curriculum based on functional literacy when the former curriculum mostly concentrated on the memorization and grammar parts of the language (Reading and Writing); the new program aims to develop students' speaking skills as well as reading, writing and listening. Teacher E noted that it is practical to develop children's speaking skills using discussions in the TED Talks format.

Teachers H and F noted that overcoming a public speaking barrier helped students to develop constructive criticism behavior and build their “ideal self”. Teacher H noted that literature characters and heroes with good morals could become “role models” for children to gain good qualities and avoid bad ones. The teacher of Russian language and literature, Teacher G mentioned Pushkin's poem “Exegi monumentum” as an example of the power of self-belief and “Taras Bulba” novel by Gogol as an example of honor and honesty. In this regard, (Burns, 2009) recommended reading “Therapeutic stories” for people with psychological difficulties [26]. Moreover, McCartney (2018) mentioned poetry as a helpful instrument to support people with emotional problems and to facilitate their insight and communication qualities [27].

### *Conclusion*

This study highlights the potential of coaching and mentoring approaches in enhancing students' personal development, particularly in areas like academic motivation, self-confidence, and time management. While these methods have proven more effective with older students, who tend to have clearer goals and responsibilities, their impact on younger students remains inconsistent, suggesting a need for further adaptation to suit different age groups.

In the context of Kazakh literature, coaching and mentoring are particularly suited for didactic and moral lessons, where literature characters serve as “role models” that help students explore personal values and build character. However, the findings reveal that these approaches are less effective for more analytical or content-heavy literature topics, where traditional teaching methods remain essential.

The results emphasize that while coaching and mentoring techniques provide valuable tools for student engagement, they are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Schools must consider the diversity of student needs and literary topics when integrating these approaches. Furthermore, the limited availability of methodical resources highlights the importance of developing more comprehensive training and guidance for teachers. Future research should focus on how these approaches can be tailored to younger students and more complex literary subjects. Exploring long-term effects of coaching and mentoring on students' academic performance and personal growth, especially in diverse cultural settings like Kazakhstan, would also be valuable.

Overall, while coaching and mentoring have shown promise in certain areas, they should be integrated thoughtfully, complementing rather than replacing traditional teaching methods, particularly in literature, where moral and didactic elements vary greatly.

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### **Әдебиетті оқытуда коучинг және менторинг әдістерін қолдану жайында орта білім беретін мұғалімдердің түсініктері**

Әдебиет сабағында коучинг және менторинг (тәлімгерлік) әдістерін қолдану оқушыларға күрделі әдеби мәтіндерді тереңірек түсінуге көмектесе алады. Бұл зерттеуде мұғалімдер мектеп оқушыларына мәтіндерді сыни талдауға жәрдемдесу үшін «сұрақ қою» және «мақсат қою» сияқты коучинг әдістерін енгізу жайы талқыланған. Мысалы, білім алушылардан әдеби шығарманы қайталап айтып беруді сұраудың орнына, коучинг әдісі арқылы олар негізгі тақырыпты, кейіпкерлердің характерін және автордың айтпақ ойын түсінуге жол ашады. Мұғалімдер «Автор осы кейіпкердің іс-әрекеті арқылы не айтқысы келді?», «Бұл үзінді үлкен әлеуметтік мәселелерді қалай көрсетеді?» сынды рефлексиялық сұрақтар қою арқылы оқушыларға бағыт-бағдар береді. Менторинг оқушыларға әдебиетті өздерінің өмірлік тәжірибелерімен байланыстыруға көмектеседі, бұл әдебиет пәнінің өзектілігін, тиімділігін арттыра түседі. Бұл әдіс білім алушыларға оқиғаларды, әдеби кейіпкерлердің іс-әрекетін өзінің тұлғалық дамуы үшін пайдалануға мүмкіндік береді. Коучинг пен менторингті біріктіре отырып, мұғалімдер жаттанды білім беруден алшақтайды. Керісінше, оқушылар оқу үдерісіне белсене қатысатын динамикалық оқу ортасын қалыптастыруға жол ашады.

*Кілт сөздер:* коучинг, менторинг, әдіс, әдебиет, мектеп.

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### **Восприятие педагогов среднего образования относительно применения методов коучинга и наставничества в обучении литературе**

Методы коучинга и наставничества на уроках литературы могут оказаться особенно эффективными для помощи студентам в более глубоком изучении сложных литературных текстов. В рамках данного исследования учителя сообщили о внедрении коучинговых методов, таких как управляемые вопросы и постановка целей, чтобы содействовать более критическому анализу текстов со стороны учеников. Например, вместо того чтобы просто просить учащихся пересказать литературное произведение, коучинг побуждает их исследовать основные темы, мотивы персонажей и намерения автора. Учителя направляют студентов в этом процессе, задавая рефлексивные вопросы, такие как: «Что автор пытается передать через действия данного персонажа?» или «Как этот отрывок отражает более масштабные общественные проблемы?» Наставничество помогает ученикам связывать литературу с их собственным жизненным опытом, что делает предмет более актуальным и эффективным. Этот метод позволяет учащимся применять уроки литературы для своего личного развития, используя истории и персонажей в качестве моделей личностного роста. Интегрируя коучинг и наставничество, учителя отходят от традиционного подхода, основанного на механическом запоминании. Вместо этого они создают динамичную образовательную среду, в которой ученики становятся активными участниками своего учебного процесса.

*Ключевые слова:* коучинг, наставничество, методология, литература, школа.

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