

Taking the Role of Social Media in Coaching among English Language Coaches in Malaysia: An Explanatory Study¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this contribution is to investigate the practices of English Language School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+) in Malaysia on the use of social media for coaching. In this study, a mixed-method approach is employed as a process of inquiry to collect and analyze data. The main finding of the study indicates the power of communication as the heart of the relationship that exists between both SISC+ and teachers. Coaches believe that better communication tools contribute to having a positive impact on the relationship with their teachers and help them to achieve their coaching objectives. The study suggests utilizing blended coaching to be implemented for the improvement of face-to-face coaching practice. The findings show that a healthy coach-teacher relationship enhances communication activities. Offering new knowledge relevant to how social media is being used to improve a coach-teacher relationship, this study contributes a different and positive perspective to research and practice on coaching by introducing a blended model of face-to-face and online coaching.

Resumen

La finalidad de esta contribución es investigar las prácticas de los *Coaches* Especialistas en Mejoramiento de Escuelas de Idioma Inglés Plus (SISC+) en Malasia sobre el uso de las redes sociales para el *coaching* y las contribuciones de estas prácticas.. En este estudio, se emplea un enfoque de método mixto como proceso de investigación para recabar y analizar datos. El principal hallazgo del estudio indica el poder de la comunicación como el corazón de la relación que existe entre el SISC+ y los docentes. Los coaches creen que mejores herramientas de comunicación contribuyen a tener un impacto positivo en la relación con sus profesores y les ayudan a lograr sus objetivos de coaching. El estudio sugiere utilizar el coaching mixto para mejorar la práctica del coaching presencial. Los hallazgos muestran que una relación saludable entre entrenador y maestro mejora las actividades de comunicación. Este estudio, que ofrece nuevos conocimientos relevantes sobre cómo se utilizan las redes sociales para mejorar la relación entre el coach y el maestro, aporta una perspectiva diferente y positiva a la investigación y la práctica del coaching al introducir un modelo combinado de coaching presencial y en línea.

Introduction

Coaching has been a crucially essential element of teacher professional development (Yoshikawa et al., 2015) in helping teachers to achieve their full potential (Whitmore, 2009). Research on teacher coaching focuses on using coaching in education in various ways, including as an instrument of professional development in pursuit of raising students' performance and developing teachers' efficacy (Anstey & Clark, 2010; Bearwald, 2011; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight, 2011; Netolicky, 2016; Zwart et al., 2008). Through coaching, teachers are trained not only to be knowledgeable and skillful, but also intelligent, innovative (Tompkins et al., 2014), and develop professionally (Salas, 2016). Thus, coaching gives teachers an opportunity to be updated with knowledge and skills to be competent in their teaching. They are, therefore, expected to improve their teaching practice for them to be able to provide quality education to learners to face the 21st century challenges (Leich et al., 2018; Matherson & Windle, 2017).

Realizing that teaching has become a demanding profession (Kieschke & Schaarschmidt 2008; Loughran 2013; Malmberg 2008) and that updating and upgrading knowledge is dynamic, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) through social media platforms has been considered a tool to promote blended coaching. The advancement of technological devices and telecommunication networking has therefore given coaches the opportunity to support face-to-face coaching. To elucidate this, Media Richness Theory (MRT) stresses that individuals have different media platforms to communicate (Daft & Lengel,

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1986), and more specifically, digital media has become a powerful medium of communication (Oregon et al., 2018).

This study is part of a larger study that examined the types of social media used by SISC+⁶ (hereafter referred to as coaches) to carry out their professional work and duties as a coach. It was found that the Malaysian coaches mainly used *Telegram* and *WhatsApp*, apart from other social media, in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. In this study, we report how the Malaysian coaches utilized these social media for communication, relationship building, and pedagogical knowledge transfer. Basically, the aim is to identify the coaches' use of English language to use social media platforms for coaching, and to understand how they contribute to their coaching practice in Malaysia. Hence, the term *social media* in this paper refers to the various social media that were used and reported by the coaches, and not necessarily *WhatsApp* and *Telegram* per se.

The authors employed a mixed-method approach to better understand how combining online coaching with face-to-face coaching enhanced the coaching practice in the education context of Malaysia. In other words, the focus of the paper is to put forward a proposal for promoting a blended model of coaching that seeks to strengthen the coach-teacher relationship in their coaching practice.

Coaching practice in Malaysia

Teacher coaching is a key component in teacher professional development locally and internationally (Hammond & Moore, 2018) and in the context of Malaysia. To raise the teaching standard of teachers and their overall professional development in schools, the topic of teacher coaching in Malaysia officially started in 2013 under the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2013) by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Since its beginning, teacher coaching has mainly focused on coaching teachers in their content area. Based on the blueprint, master teachers were appointed to be placed at the district education offices throughout the country as coaches. They were suggested to provide face-to-face coaching to teachers in their respective districts to enhance teachers' teaching practice, and to develop new knowledge, as well as professional and personal skills. However, research indicates that the major drawbacks of adopting face-to-face coaching are time and distance constraints, which have made the implementation of face-to-face coaching a challenge in some cases (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Kilburg & Hancock, 2006). The lack of implementing face-to-face coaching efficiently is therefore a cause for worry. This unsatisfactory result has raised the researchers' concern to enhance teacher coaching implementation in Malaysia.

This drawback has made it challenging for the coaches to meet their teachers frequently. In essence, they are unable to provide sufficient coaching. Although research in Malaysia that focuses specifically on teacher coaching is limited, in recent years, there has been an interest in teacher coaching which has focused on teacher professional development. For example, Kilburg and Hancock (2006) believe that inconsistent and insufficient coaching will affect the quality of teacher coaching. Similar critique has been made by Kabilan and Veratharaju (2013) who claim that teachers in rural areas, who are usually 'left out' of professional development programs, rarely enjoying the same 'luxury' as teachers in urban areas. This is specifically due to the time and distance constraints that hinder coaches from meeting those teachers teaching in rural schools.

Using social media for coaching

Online coaching is practical in helping teachers' professional development. Both coaches and teachers have accepted this new technique in the context of helping teachers to develop professionally (Ribbers & Waringa, 2015). As a highly accessible and interactive one-on-one development process between coaches and teachers, online coaching has a great impact on teachers' continuous learning, change and growth (Hakim, 2000). In conjunction with the advancement of technological devices and networking, social media plays a vital role in coaching in Malaysia. Edwards et al. (2018) define social media as web-based services while Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe it as a group of Internet-based applications. In broader perspectives, however, social media is described as a process of developing mutual understanding among users specifically on the content generated by them in communities they are part of (Kettunen, Sampson &

⁶ SISC+ is an acronym which stands for School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus. SISC+ are coaches appointed by the Malaysia Ministry of Education with the aim to improve school performance by providing coaching to teachers based on three dimensions that are curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. <https://www.moe.gov.my/menunedia/media-cetak/penerbitan/dasar/1207-malaysia-education-blueprint-2013-2025/file>

Vuorinen, 2015). This is because the social media can be easily accessible at anytime and anywhere (Tess, 2013). Relevant research has, therefore, shown a great interest in using social media in the education sector.

With the help of technology, there has been an increasing interest to use social media platforms for the purpose of teacher professional development (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015). More specifically, as pointed out by the important work of Borko (2004), high quality online professional development programs enhance teachers' practice. The work of Kabilan et al. (2011) has mainly focused on teachers' collaborative activities through computer-mediated communication due to the advancement of technology. Likewise, DuFour and Eaker (2009) and Stigler and Hiebert (2009) highlight that when teachers collaborate and engage with other teachers through online professional development programs, they will experience learning and overcome their own issues more effectively (Moon et al., 2014; Wilson, 2013).

Based on the education blueprint, coaches are expected to visit schools, meet their teachers face-to-face, and monitor their teaching practice. This is specifically done to provide them with feedback and offer on-site training to improve the teachers' performance to maximize their professional learning and improve their teaching practice. Coaches are still unable to provide the necessary training and monitoring their coaching practice on a regular basis due to time and distance barriers. That being said, coaching still has to be carried out and barriers should be reduced so that teachers can be coached on a regular basis. This study therefore suggests the use of technology and the Internet for coaching to support face-to-face coaching. The idea of this study began with the emergence of the use of social media by both coaches of English language and teachers to enhance teacher professional development.

Although the aspects of time and distance constraints in teacher coaching in Malaysia have been discussed and coaches have continuously lamented that they do not have sufficient contact hours with their teachers, little empirical data are available to investigate and identify the consequences of this pitfall. This study is, therefore, carried out with the aim of identifying an alternative way of teacher coaching through using social media. Specifically, two research questions guided this study:

RQ1. In what ways do coaches use social media for communication, relationship building, and pedagogical knowledge transfer?

RQ2. How do coaches perceive the benefits of social media for coaching?

Methods

Study design

An explanatory sequential mixed methodology was selected to frame the research design. The explanatory sequential nature of this study allowed the researchers to collect the quantitative data first, and then qualitative data respectively. The rationale of using this specific method was that the results of the quantitative data provided a general picture of the research problem. Next, we collected qualitative data to obtain richer information into understanding of the use of social media in coaching in the Malaysian context (Johnson et al., 2007). In other words, we used this explanatory design to illustrate and explain the initial quantitative findings in depth as highlighted by Bryman (2006) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).

Data collection

To collect the quantitative data, we designed a questionnaire to measure the practices of coaches of English language using social media in coaching in Phase 1. After we conducted a preliminary analysis of the quantitative data, we wrote down a list of topics to explore the practices of using social media platforms in coaching in the country during the interview stage. The integration of the quantitative and qualitative results only occurred after phase 2 when we compared and contrasted the quantitative statistical results with the qualitative thematic findings.

Since little research exists on the practices of English language coaches using social media for coaching in the context of Malaysia, it was decided to devise and implement a questionnaire on the use of social media in coaching in Malaysia. The quantitative data were gathered utilizing a list of twelve statements on using social media for coaching to indicate their level of agreement on each statement pertaining to using social media in coaching.

Being active members of the platform, an official *Telegram* group (i.e., *English SISC+ Malaysia*) was utilized to obtain the contact details of every coach in Malaysia. A total of 162 coaches nationwide became the entire sample for the quantitative phase. Prior to submitting the online questionnaire, a question was provided to the respondents at the end of the document, allowing them to express their agreement pertaining to their participation in Phase 2 of the study.

Employing a mixed methods design increases the validity of the findings and permits important interpretations to emerge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were carried out to provide an in-depth understanding of the results of the quantitative data for *RQ1* and to explore *RQ2* (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). To do this, we obtained handful representative number of volunteers from each state for the interview by using the responses given in the questionnaire. This was specifically done through having a section at the end of the questionnaire where we invited respondents to be the interview participants. However, since this study was a nationwide study, we decided to select one participant from each state across Malaysia. This was especially considered to ensure the participation from all over the country. We included fifteen coaches from thirteen states and the two federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan on the basis of purposive sampling technique to serve the purpose of the study. Based on the demographic data, the majority of the participants were males. However, the present study does not aim to look at the gender differences pertaining to using social media platforms for educational purposes.

Since this is a nationwide study, face-to-face interviewing with all the selected respondents from different states was challenging. As pointed out by Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015), email interviewing is a relevant as well as an effective medium of communication. Therefore, individual semi-structured interviews took place using email (Creswell, 2012) to encourage the participants to share their understanding of using social media for coaching and the contributions the practices make to their coaching. To add, as highlighted by James (2016), email interviewing is a comfortable approach allowing participants to express their feelings and thoughts, and provide more thoughtful answers.

Data analysis

This study reports the outcomes of the participants' responses that pertains to the practices of English language coaches on the use of social media for coaching and the benefits of practicing social media in coaching. Measuring frequency, percentages, mean score, and standard deviation in SPSS, simple descriptive statistics were calculated to describe and interpret the participants' answers utilizing the questionnaire. As for the qualitative data, we retained the words or phrases from the participants verbatim to describe the problem addressed in this study.

Applying the thematic analysis approach, which is a "method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79), the researchers adhered to the six steps to analyzing the qualitative data. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through close reading and re-reading for comprehension. Utilizing the data, the researchers searched for statements which showed a single idea or concept to develop the codes. We then searched for coherent and overarching themes in the codes by looking for meaningful patterns that represent the participants' perceptions relevant to the research questions.

Through continuous review of the transcripts by the researchers to get accuracy in identifying themes, the themes generated from the codes were verified and organized by comparing, reflecting, and careful reading of the codes. After the themes were verified, the researchers reached a consensus by defining and naming the emergent themes through splitting, discarding, and identifying redundant themes. Based on the actual quotes from the transcripts and emergent themes, the final step was the write up of the analysis. As highlighted by Creswell (2007), this type of collaborative teamwork by the researchers led to a better understanding of the collected data, which results in more accurate and valid conclusions.

In the final phase of the analysis, the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to answer *RQ1* to obtain a richer and fuller understanding of using social media in coaching. Throughout the qualitative data analysis and reporting process, pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality of the interviewees. Nevertheless, in understanding the data, the readers should bear in mind that the data do not necessarily and specifically refer to the coaches' usages of WhatsApp and Telegram, as there are coaches who have employed other social media in the context of this research.

Research Findings

This study reports the usage and benefits of social media in teacher coaching in Malaysia. For the purposes of clarity and comprehension, the write up is organized around three themes, namely, establishing strong lines of communication, relationship building, and pedagogical knowledge transfer. In each section, we discuss the quantitative findings first and then present the interview data. Based on the analysis, the results are sorted from the highest (4.25) to the lowest (3.88) mean score as presented in Table 1.

No	Items	n	Disagreement		Neutral		Agreement		M (SD)
			f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Social media is used to have online communication between coaches and teachers.	162	10	6.17	5	3.1	147	90.74	4.25 (0.96)
2	Social media is used to establish networking for coaches and teachers.	162	8	4.94	11	6.8	143	88.27	4.23 (0.94)
3	Social media is used to help coaches minimize time constraints.	162	11	6.79	6	3.7	145	89.51	4.21 (0.99)
4	Social media is used to help coaches minimize distance constraints.	162	11	6.79	6	3.7	145	89.51	4.20 (0.99)
5	Social media is used as a practical solution for distance constraints.	162	11	6.79	7	4.3	144	88.89	4.20 (1.00)
6	Social media is used as a practical solution for time constraints.	162	13	8.02	8	4.9	141	87.04	4.17 (1.07)
7	Social media is used to sustain a coach-teacher relationship.	162	9	5.56	14	8.6	139	85.80	4.14 (0.93)
8	Social media is used to convey information about pedagogical aspects.	162	8	4.94	16	9.9	138	85.19	4.12 (0.91)
9	Social media is used to improve communication between coaches and teachers.	162	11	6.79	10	6.2	141	87.04	4.11 (0.98)
10	Social media is used to convey information about the curriculum.	162	9	5.56	16	9.9	137	84.57	4.11 (0.93)
11	Social media is used to convey information about assessment.	162	8	4.94	17	10.5	137	84.57	4.09 (0.90)
12	Social media is used to build trust between coaches and teachers.	162	15	9.26	23	14.2	124	76.54	3.88 (0.96)

Table 1: Respondents' level of agreement on the practices of using social media for coaching

Based on the qualitative data to explain the practices of using social media for coaching, the three main themes identified were: a) establishing strong lines of communication, b) relationship building, and c) pedagogical knowledge transfer.

Establishing strong lines of communication

Items 1-6, and 9 in Table 1 highlight the way coaches used social media for communication. It is reported that over 85% agreed that social media are used for communication and networking and are a practical solution to minimize time and distance constraints. Apart from looking at the establishment of networking and relationship maintenance, the researchers also developed items to investigate whether social media were used to minimize the gap between coaches and teachers. The findings show that social media were used to help coaches to minimize time and distance constraints. As for the item pertaining to the practicality of social media, the results show that 141 (87.04%) agreed that social media were used as a practical solution for time constraints, while in terms of the practicality of social media for distance constraints, 44 (88.89%) agreed with the statement. These two items also show that the majority of the respondents revealed their agreement. However, the two items indicate there are 8 and 7 respondents chose neutral.

The majority of the participants claimed that they used social media to increase their communication with their teachers. They used social media actively by creating groups so that they could stay connected with the teachers. One participant reported that the platforms had made it easy to create a group for communication, "WhatsApp enables me to form a group chat to do group coaching, which can be highly interactive" (C13). Regarding being interactive, another participant explained: "The teachers become more open and excited to share their experiences and ideas among them" (C5). Apart from interacting with group members, the participants also used social media platforms to share information in order to update their teachers with the current policies and instructions they receive from the Ministry, Education Department, and the office. (C12, C14)

Using social media to increase communication is considered important as one of the participants reported "their phone is in their hands most of the time and they always check their WhatsApp texts" (C1). The coaches could therefore reach teachers fast and more easily (C4). Apart from reaching out for their teachers, social media were used "mainly to keep in touch....so that these platforms serve as two-way communication" (C10). Being responsive is one of the fundamental principles of communication, and from the responses, it was found that participants were responsive on social media. One of the participants responded that "connect, collaborate and share are the three words that explain how social media helps me to improve my communication with my teachers" (C13). Another participant continued, "using social media really helps us to communicate anytime and anywhere, and I found out that my teachers become more open when using social media compared with face-to-face sessions" (C5) and "sometimes there are things not being shared during face-to-face as time is limited, so we continue through social media" (C6).

One participant added that, "social media can be very effective because it can be used at our convenience" (C15). From the responses, it was revealed that the participants encouraged discussion when another participant reported that social media was used to, "...convey ideas and opinions which could not be done during face-to-face communication and come at a later stage or afterthoughts" (C8). Showing availability but in the flexible condition was described by another participant when she explained:

Ubiquitous access is possible using these social media platforms. Through these social media platforms, nobody needs to be accessible at the same time but can be included in a discussion and have a say and reply either by texting or sending voice messages or a video call after reading the messages. In short, asynchronous communication is possible using social media. (C13)

Apart from all the positive responses that social media platforms increase communication and build rapport, surprisingly, one of the participants disclosed her doubt and uncertainty that social media were used to improve communication. She revealed that "sometimes the actual intention/meaning does not come as planned" (C11). Thus, miscommunication can occur due to the misinterpretation of messages exchanged between the coaches and the teachers.

Relationship building

From the results of the quantitative data, most of the respondents agreed that social media was used to build networking between the coaches and teachers. When the interviewees were asked how social media was used to sustain their relationship with their teachers, over half of the participants (73.3%) commented that social media bridged the gap between the coaches and the teachers. Four participants (C6, C5, C9, C7) mentioned that social media was used to defy the challenge of time and distance; "as a coach, I can't be at the same school or with the same teacher for the whole week, so we do continue the session through social media" (C6). Therefore, "I can communicate with teachers without worrying about time limitation" (C5), as "it is important for me to maintain relationships with my teachers through maximizing coach-teacher contact hours, virtually, through WhatsApp" (C9). As a result, "after a while they turn to social media naturally when they want answers to certain questions or they need help in their work" (C7). Also, one participant found that "the constant postings on social media provide us a sense of connectedness" (C10). By establishing the group chats (C13), a participant found it convenient (C15) to help them keep in touch and bridge the gap (C2, C11, C12, C14). By establishing a group chat, it was found that providing coaching has become convenient (C13) because they could keep in touch with teachers (C15), and they therefore could lessen the gap between them (C2, C11, C12, C14).

A relationship involves emotions and feelings, and it is considered essential whether it is personal or professional. In the context of this study, interview items emerged to explain how coaches sustained the relationship they had built with their teachers. Most of the interviewees responded that they bolstered their relationship with the teachers based on their responses through social media. They explained that the relationship was built on mutual respect and understanding. As one participant described, "social media can easily maintain my relationship with my teachers... and most importantly to understand each of them (teachers)" (C5).

The findings show that two-thirds of the interviewees (66.7%) used social media to improve their communication by building rapport. One participant highlighted the importance of good rapport:

I build my rapport with them by sending them greetings and wishes on special occasions. This will help create familiarity, which is important if we want the teachers to share their problems and be forthright about the issues they face in the classroom. (C7)

Building rapport also means that coaches and teachers need to have mutual understanding. The participant considered that teachers needed to be notified through personal communication before they were visited for coaching. In the context of building rapport, coaches had to make teachers understand that they were there in schools to provide coaching. Therefore, teachers needed to be notified prior to the visit.

Before I go for coaching and mentoring, I used to text them via WhatsApp to set the day and time, as I do not want them to be unaware of my presence. Through this way, I was able to build good rapport with them and they tended to be more relaxed. (C2)

To allude to the notion that social media platforms continue to build rapport, one of the participants stated that “the comments that we exchanged pertaining to certain photos or events could be good to foster better rapport and understanding and narrow the gap between us” (C3).

Building rapport is important because the language used between coaches and teachers must be chosen carefully. As one of the participants stated:

It improves my communication with my teachers because I can be more careful with my choice of words compared to face-to-face coaching, and I always check that I've put my messages correctly in words before I click the send button. (C9)

Considering respect and understanding, appropriate words were used to text. It is because words can either make the relationship stronger or break it into pieces. Participants were very sensitive and empathetic when communicating with their teachers on social media: “when it comes to social media, words are carefully planned and sent to avoid any kind of uneasiness for both the parties involved” (C2).

Only words or comments that are positive and uplifting were used in the chat. Sustaining a relationship was shown through the feelings of comfort (C8, C12) and “sense of belonging in a group” (C10) and “sharing of ideas and feelings” (C6, C7, C9, C11) with each other. Sustaining a relationship was also described as borderless or having no boundaries and going beyond the four walls of the classroom, school compound, and stipulated time and distance. As one participant stated, “the ubiquity of the social media enables the relationship between coaches and teachers, which begin at school, extend into the homes of the coach and teachers” (C13).

In contrast to the abovementioned findings which describe social media platforms to bridge a gap and help build mutual respect and understanding, it was also found that a small number (20%) of those interviewed commented that using social media to sustain the relationship was limited. One interviewee (C3) felt that “sustaining relationships can be somewhat unsuitable,” as she has very limited access to social media. Another participant (C4) commented, “social media does not provide a conducive platform for professional interaction.” The findings of the study also reveal that out of 162 respondents, 124 respondents showed their agreement that social media was used to build trust between the coaches and teachers.

One of the participants shared how she was responsible when responding; “I would reply to inquiries made by my teachers as soon as possible and never ignore their messages” (C9). Similarly, another participant responded, “I will never leave them behind or ignore their need of my help” (C6). According to another participant (C7), making an effort to be online on social media just to be with their coaches and involved in discussion signified “that they trust us and know that we are the right people they can turn to when they need help.... and I will help them to seek solutions to the issues raised” (C7). Likewise, “social media can be used by teachers to convey personal emotions and opinions on related issues, and coaches could explore this opportunity on their own opportunity at their expense” (C8). Importantly, while responding to the needs of their teachers, the elements of respect and understanding were also there when two participants showed their concerns:

I never message them things that I would find inappropriate to say or share even to send to my friends. From these small little things, I make it into a good habit to treat my teachers with the respect that they deserve. Slowly, coach-teacher trust could be developed (C9), and when sharing work, participating in conversations, and connecting with others in the group, respecting each other is the priority. (C13)

Another point about building relationships was that communication has become borderless; there is no limitation to communicating with each other through social media. As was stated by one participant:

We need not be in school (which is limited) for teachers to connect with us. To ensure trust, I make sure I respond and react to every post they send. I also make it a point to share ideas, news, events, and developments with them

constantly so that they know I am connected [with teachers] even though I do visit or have an appointment with them in school. (C7)

The participants mentioned “the fact that our communication is beyond face-to-face” (C6) and “as their coach, I need to understand them personally through social media” (C5). “This is because social media is not always used for coaching purposes, but also to spread love among group members by being constantly in contact” (C10). According to another participant, “trust is very important because if they trust me, they will not hesitate to text asking about any new updates. They will also ask for my opinion on certain things, and they even text me just to chit-chat” (C11). In the same vein, another participant disclosed that:

We build trust when I reply or acknowledge any messages, especially when they private message me. Not only that, I also post photos and videos of their good work in the group for everyone to see. I even answer them at midnight. (C14)

It was revealed all the above-mentioned happened within agreed boundaries where coaches have opened the door and welcomed their teachers to text them anytime and anywhere whether there are personal or professional issues. The findings also show that the borderless world of social media has made it possible for the building of the trust between coaches and teachers.

In contrast to the other responses, this research study revealed that four participants disagreed with the idea of building trust using social media. One of them responded that “social media can’t beat face-to-face approach” (C3). This point was supported by responses which revealed why social media was not the option in building trust among the coaches and teachers. For example, “in writing, it is not easy for me to understand people” (C1) and “it is difficult to judge a response or feedback using social media, so it is not trustworthy” (C4). Another participant made his point clear when he said, “it depends on how the coach treats with his/her teachers; building trust is never easy, it takes time” (C2). Thus, while coaches agreed that social media improved communication, they were not unanimous on the use of social media to build and sustain their relationships with teachers.

Pedagogical knowledge transfer

The results of the study showed that social media are vital in transferring information. One hundred and thirty-eight respondents agreed that social media were used to convey information about pedagogical aspects. In terms of conveying information about curriculum and assessments, the same number of respondents 137 (84.6%) agreed that social media were used to convey information about the curriculum and assessments.

Based on the interviewees’ answers to the question regarding their opinions on the use of social media to deliver information about the curriculum and assessment, the responses indicated that all the participants used social media to share information with their teachers. One participant stated that “I shared lots of stuff through *WhatsApp* with my teachers and so far that helps” (C3) and “...transfer all the doc in just a click” (C12) as “to change the way my teachers’ teaching” (C5). The participants also reported using social media to “send and receive documents” (C8, C11, C15), “...materials” (C9) and “other related resources which are made available” (C8) in any form “especially the ones in graphic forms” (C2) such as “soft copies, video clips, audio and the Internet links related to the curriculum and assessment are posted in social media for easy access” (C8, C13, C15). To clarify concepts further with the teachers, the participants suggested that “they can also share ideas via video call or voice call” (C8, C11). Conversely, two respondents said, “I still need to meet my teachers on a one-on-one basis through face-to-face sessions to provide the most suitable guidance” (C9) because “...the content can be delivered but you have to initiate conversation and further discussion about the materials during face-to-face coaching” (C10) as well as “to provide their opinions and views on issues raised” (C7).

In this study, the main objective was to investigate the practices of participants pertaining to the use of social media in coaching. Social media contributed in terms of time management (C8). Participants were able to manage their schedule as it was highlighted by the participants: “I’ve got time limitation to meet with my teachers frequently” (C5). “Social media were used ...especially when I need to make appointments and get information about the lesson plans and also receive feedback from the teachers” (C7). Also, it was revealed that “... even the teachers’ timetables are sent via this social media” (C2). One respondent also stated:

It is also an excellent way to monitor the teachers' and pupils' progress where teachers can report on the effectiveness of the interventions" (C7). However, one participant found social media contributed but "to a certain extent. I still find maximizing the physical contact hours with my teachers would be the key to effective coaching" (C9). "I believe social media is a great complement to my face-to-face coaching (C13).

Apparently, all the participants used social media and agreed that the ease of use and the use of social media have contributed to their effective coaching. They perceived using social media as a convenient avenue of communication. As was reported by the participants, being familiar with the features of typing and clicking made it easy for them to use those social media platforms.

Based on their answers, participants suggested using social media in many ways to help support coaching and improve their teachers. The participants found that both the participants and their teachers gradually suggested using social media in their coaching. To support this, one participant explained:

I started using social media as a coach at the start of my career. Teachers do find it difficult at first because they only use social media for personal not for professional growth. ... I find social media such a blessing and it helps to make up for the lost time. (C10)

Discussion

The use of social media for coaching

The findings of the study highlighted that establishing strong lines of communication is the heart of the relationship between the coaches and teachers. The findings indicated that the English language coaches use social media to communicate online with their teachers. Utilizing social media is a new form of communication for both coaches and their teachers in line with the evolution in social communication (Hassan & Landani, 2015). Likewise, to increase communication, "it takes two to tango" (Six, 2008, p.4) for both coaches and teachers to be responsive in their duties. Rigotti and Rocci (2006) described communication as a complex task which depends on the context of communication.

Another major finding was that by using social media platforms, the English language coaches were able to communicate with their teacher more effectively. In today's communication age, where connecting and engaging are available via social media platforms (Edwards et al., 2018), it has been possible for the coaches to build good rapport and a healthy relationship with teachers. Although communication via social media happens virtually, it has the capability to bridge the communication and connection between coaches and teachers (Hassan & Landani, 2015). The English language coaches also describe themselves as committed to building good rapport with their teachers by being active in giving feedback (Hu & Veen, 2020). Social media have always had the potential to build relationships as they have four major elements, namely, communication, interaction, engagement, and involvement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Once building relationships is considered successfully, there is a need to sustain the relationship. The practice of using social media platforms for coaching has enabled the English language coaches to establish networking to sustain the relationship with their teachers based on respect and mutual understanding.

This study signifies that the practice of using social media has built trust between the coaches and the teachers. Building trust is important in a relationship whether face-to-face or online (Paliszkievicz & Koohang, 2016). According to Bibb and Kourdi (2004), building trust requires authentic communication, competence, support process, boundaries, contact, positive intent, and forgiveness. Based on the quantitative results, there were various responses on building trust via social media. As highlighted by Bibb and Kourdi (2004), truthfulness is defined as authentic communication and being real. By keeping promises and supporting their teachers, the coaches were able to establish trust and enhanced their interpersonal relationship with their teachers (Kjørmo & Halvari, 2002; Mudrack, 1989; Tekleab et al., 2009). It is therefore essential to understand the coaches' integrity and competence to build a successful relationship via social media platforms (Paliszkievicz & Koohang, 2016). Being knowledgeable and skillful help gain trust from teachers who have faith in their coaches' ability (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004).

From the major findings, the participants have shown that the teachers usually refer to their coaches when they need anything within the scope of their work. They were perceived as having credibility, which has made their teachers turn to them to get help, being trustworthy and believable (Edwards et al., 2018), for their knowledge, skills, and experience. The word *borderless* refers to something that is without boundaries. However, in the context of building trust, it is all about freedom within boundaries. Therefore, Bibb and

Kourdi (2004) have made a clear explanation why in building trust, freedom and a lack of borders come together as one:

If you trust people, you are assuming that they will be accountable and responsible and so, within agreed boundaries, they will deliver what is needed. This is not the same as 'blind trust', which is a denial of the reality of the situation. The reality in organizations is that responsibility has to be taken, agreements have to be made and commitments kept. Putting in place these 'boundaries' gets the job done (p.54).

Apart from providing continuous feedback, "encouraging discussion and showing availability" (Hassan & Landani, 2015, p. 436), the practice of providing feedback promotes teachers' professional growth. Edwards et al. (2018) extracted two points from the participants' response: discussion and flexibility. They have defined communication as an on-going process whereby it involves exchanging and interpreting the meaning of the message.

When there are obstacles that hinder the building of trust, people face difficulties in their relationship and most importantly the relationship might not be sustained. Social media are all about connectivity, interactivity, and information sharing as proposed by Paliszkiwicz and Koohang (2016). According to Baron and Morin (2009), the three key elements of a good relationship include: connection, collaboration, and commitment. When the relationship is supported by a feeling of safety and comfort on the part of the teachers (Paliszkiwicz & Koohang, 2016) and by the positive intentions of the coaches (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004), the association can only grow stronger. This finding also illustrates the forms and functions of MRT in the practice of using social media, in which media richness refers to the variety of media used, and how they are used to communicate and convey information to avoid ambiguity (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

The contribution of social media to coaches' coaching

Constraints and challenges have potential in building obstacles between coaches and their teachers. Therefore, the use of social media contributes to overcoming constraints. The current study finds that the use of social media contributed to coaches being able to coach by supporting face-to-face encounters and promoting online contacts. The results of this study suggest that the use of social media platforms for coaching contributed to supporting face-to-face meetings by helping coaches manage their schedules, organize distance encounters, maximize contact hours, and complement face-to-face coaching, contributing to effective coaching. These findings are consistent with Lowenthal's (2010) suggestion that the social learning platform is relevant to online learning activities, which helps to establish and maintain a social presence.

Another important finding is that social media contribute to promoting online coaching because they offer a practical approach, a possible solution, and an alternative tool. It was found to be a practical approach because, through the platform, discussions were carried out, and it reduced the tension of coaches and their teachers. Another point which is highlighted in this finding was that it has become a possible solution to overcome some practical issues in coaching. The use of the platforms has helped coaches overcome the time and distance limitations, reduced expenses and time spent traveling, and helped them keep in touch with the teachers.

Social media have made online coaching relevant and practical for transforming the education system for future generations. Online communication does not need any physical presence. Thus, it is important to treat face-to-face coaching and online coaching differently. To further support this, online coaching involves technology-based communication, which does not need any in-person communication. It rather uses technology not just to communicate, but also to coach (Clutterbuck & Hussain, 2010).

Online coaching is gaining popularity and it is regarded as essential to fit teachers' needs (Ribbers & Waringa, 2015). Social media can be a practical approach, but it needs to be used carefully as discussed by Markam et al. (2017). Using technology has always been a debatable topic as to whether it is good or bad. Apparently, it depends on individuals and how they decide to use it carefully.

Implications

Implication for the practice of blended coaching

Coaching under the School Improvement Program that was introduced in 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2013) has only stressed on face-to-face approach. However, the findings of the study showed the significance of using social media platforms for coaching making it relevant in overcoming the time and distance constraints

which have been the biggest challenge for the process. This study therefore provides insights into how ICT and the Internet can be related to coaching.

The current educational situation needs the integration of technology in many aspects of education to support the existing traditional approach. Online teacher professional development supports cooperation in learning and teaching to develop a healthy relationship among the members of the community (Ostashewski et al., 2011). It is important to understand that the principle that underlines coaching programs is to enhance existing practices. The findings suggest that communication on social media is a collaborative process when messages are used to participate in discussion and exchange ideas, knowledge, and skills (Edwards et al., 2018). In this context, coaching for teachers is job-embedded learning, which means that teachers learn by reflecting on their teaching to improve.

Since the job is teaching and it happens throughout an academic year or semester, it means that the teachers' education should run in parallel. Likewise, it cannot be completed on a single occasion, but should be continuous because teachers find different issues in teaching and therefore, need ongoing coaching. To support this, Geissler et al. (2014) found a positive impact from the combination of face-to-face coaching and technology-mediated coaching. It is believed that blended coaching can be one of the high-impact programs of the Ministry of Education since the combination is seen as convincing and promising. Previous studies have also confirmed that technology-mediated professional learning is helping to provide the training systematically (Stone & Douglas, 2015). Dede et al. (2009) further support the idea that professional learning and technology has improved the access to high-quality professional development programs. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in Malaysia consider blended coaching for teachers rather than depending only on face-to-face coaching.

Implications for Practice Improvement

The present finding is significant because it has important implications for coaches to increase their knowledge and skills not only in the subject matter, but also to understand, and apply the principles of online coaching as highlighted by Ribbers and Waringa (2015). Moreover, coaches had their own experience of being part of online activities as part of their professional development programs.

Apart from the Ministry of Education and the state education departments or district education offices' responsibility to promote online teacher professional development programs, coaches should also be versatile by adapting and adopting techniques to make the lesson suitable to achieve the objectives. The creativity and innovation of coaches are much needed here to assure that not only the content is relevant to their teachers' needs, but also the delivery of the content is interesting. Another implication of the findings is that coaches should consider improving their practice from a conventional to revolutionary approach or at least to incorporate online coaching as a common practice.

Conclusion and Limitations

The main goal of the current study was to investigate the use of social media platforms for coaching by the English language coaches to enhance the professional development of teachers. Therefore, the study was designed to investigate and understand social media, the practice, the support, and the experiences of coaches. Basically, social media platforms are used to improve their communication with their teachers because communication helps to maintain and sustain the coach- teacher relationship. The results of this contribution indicate that sharing of knowledge, skills, best practices, and words of motivation are the practices to support face-to-face coaching.

The scope of investigation of the study examined social media platforms without separating them into Social Networking Sites (SNS) and Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM). Basically, SNS offers Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). However, since there are more users in favor of the platforms, more options are given to users to choose: the SNS mobile version and the MIM desktop version. Although both SNS and MIM serve the same purposes, such as sending and receiving messages, interaction, and information sharing, users have their preference as to whether use SNS or MIM or both. The study did not examine the disparities between SNS and MIM to understand if they affect the practice to support face-to-face coaching.

The present study did not look at social networking sites and instant messaging separately either. Researchers might want to study both social networking sites and mobile instant messaging separately. This is because users might have a preference which might affect their opinions on the effectiveness of online coaching. Future studies, therefore, can examine the differences between the two to understand what

coaches and teachers prefer to use. Given the importance of these issues, future studies may lead to a better understanding of online coaching through the use of social media platforms.

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