

Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Innovation

innovPlus Challenge 2021 - Run 2



CHALLENGE STATEMENT #06

1. Challenge Owner Index and Pseudonym

#06 – CoachMe

2. Challenge Statement

We are looking for a solution that can enable educators and students (as coachees) to better prepare and engage in coaching conversations

3. About the Challenge Owner Organisation

We are an institute of higher learning involved in teaching and supervising students. The main target group of adult learners that we are trying to support are our educators, who are novices in the practice of coaching. Our educators work with a variety of students, from young adults to mature adults who are transitioning to work-study mode. We prepare and support our educators in coaching our students who have diverse needs and priorities that may affect learning journey.

4. Define the Challenge

Current Situation

Current coaching process:

The coaching process starts when an educator identifies a coachable moment during his/her interaction with the students. In the first example, Educator A could become aware of a first-year student who is not managing time well and is always late for assignment submissions. In another example, Educator B could be approached by a mature student to discuss about stress and how to manage studies along with other competing demands. In the coaching process, the educator will meet the student for a coaching conversation and encourage the student to make his/her own record on what to follow-up on. The follow-up (if any) would typically be done via channels such as emails or personal meetings. With the increase of online learning and less face-to-face interaction, it can be harder for the educator to have a casual chat to follow-up on progress after a lecture or tutorial.

Potential coaching process with a reflective pedagogical paradigm for practice:

Using the same examples as above, when an educator identifies a coachable moment in his/her interaction with a student, the educator can begin the coaching engagement by using a technological solution that facilitates the planning of the coaching conversation. The educator can then use the solution for self-reflection to recall the knowledge that he/she has learnt from the coaching workshop and determine how he/she can apply what is relevant for having a successful coaching conversation with a student, e.g., when and where the conversation can take place, the type of questions to ask to draw new insights, empathize with the prevailing situation that has led to the coaching session (cognitive reflection).

Next, the educator will then organize a time to engage and coach the student to - on raising the student's awareness, encouraging goal setting, and co-creating strategies towards the student's goal.

After the coaching session, the educator can then review and reflect on how the conversation went and if there has been any shift in his/her feelings, mindset, and confidence (affective reflection).

Concurrently, after the coaching session, the student will use the technological solution to record his/her goals, strategies, and set some checkpoints for accountability of actions. He/she will share the information with the educator. The solution will provide nudges, reminders and affirmation for the student to follow-up on the strategies. Over the next few weeks, as some of the strategies are being tried and milestones being met, the educator will notice, nudge and affirm the student's progress. The pair can determine if another coaching session is needed to follow-up on accountability of the goals.

At the end of the coaching engagement, the educator will reflect on the whole coaching process and set his/her expectations for future coaching sessions. In this entire process, the educator is reflecting on the experiential learning with the application of coaching skills and sharpening newly acquired tools and techniques (process reflection).

Additional innovation for consideration:

- In addition to planning and reflection on the coaching, analytics based on the data of conversation recordings can also provide information for the educator to identify what to improve on. For example, if the student is open for the coaching conversation to be audio recorded, the recording can be automatically transcribed and analysed. Useful results from the conversational analysis may include percentage of time the student is speaking compared to the educator, percentage of time spent in the non-directive mode of asking questions (versus directive mode of advice giving / telling), types of questions asked, and number of affirmative statements used. Such analysis can be based on good coaching principles and practices (such as engaging in more asking and less telling, and using positive language). These results can help the educator track his/her performance and progress as a coach.
- Speech recognition capabilities that may have features that can pick up affective elements of the coach-coachee dialogue (which can yield insights beyond coaching skills analysis) and provide supporting information which can be useful for the coach in the current conversation and for future coaching sessions.
- To encourage sharing of practice within a network of educators who coach, a technological solution that enable them to share their success stories, get ideas on challenging situations, or contribute to good coaching questions can be very helpful.

Current situation for educators:

Many educators in our organization are new to coaching. After attending a basic coaching workshop, some may actively seek opportunities to apply the coaching skills. Some, as novice coaches, may be apprehensive on how to apply the new skills effectively. Despite learning fundamentals, these educators may not be confident to coach a variety of student profiles or handle different scenarios related to academic, career and personal situations. If they do not actively plan for the coaching sessions, they may also miss the past experiences and strengths that the individual student may bring (e.g., leadership skills that a working adult student possess). With early planning and thoughtful reflection, there is a higher likelihood for the educator to demonstrate the coaching competencies and have a constructive session, rather than have a rushed conversation.

Currently, apart from contacting the workshop trainer, we do not have a solution that provides just-in-time guidance for planning and considering coaching in different types of scenarios. For instance, when coaching a student who is performing poorly at internship in the workplace, the coaching conversation should include getting student to consider perspectives of the work stakeholders (supervisor and organization). This may not be intuitive to an educator who is a novice coach, and he/she may rush into non-coaching interventions, such as problem solving and advice giving.

Currently, we rely on educator's own motivation and initiative to reflect on their performance and follow-up with students on the progress or effectiveness of coaching. With a reflective pedagogical paradigm, the real application of learning starts after the workshop. The educators should be supported with a solution that can encourage them to engage more effectively in their coaching sessions with students and regular reflective practice with self, which can result in greater confidence and efficacy.

Current situation for students:

With CoVID-19, there are more online lessons and less face-to-face interaction with their educators. Students who are coached are left to the modes of traditional communication channels such email to communicate on progress. They may also rely on their own ways of taking down notes and reminders to work on the strategies discovered. We currently do not have a technological solution for students to connect with educators to work on their coaching goals. Increasingly, we have more students who are working adults and need to juggle with their workplace, university and home challenges. This group of students can be supported by and highly benefit from coaching conversations.

(Example of challenges reported by our working adult students Experience of Students in Cooperative Education – A Case Study of Singapore's Work-Study Degree Programme, Journal of Adult and Continuing Education <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/X7ZKCPKRUEDSPEINMNI2/full>).

Past & Current Solutioning Efforts

In our training programme, we teach our educators the coaching fundamentals and assess them on coaching knowledge, skills and abilities (with quizzes, pre-post coaching mindset surveys, reflection reports and peer observations). For our training, we have our Learning Management System (LMS) to support us as a repository of resources. In addition, learning aids such as coaching cards are given out during the training sessions. We run our training either face to face or online. After the training, there is no current technological solution to equip the educators on their journey to coach students. Any notes on how they plan and conduct of their coaching sessions is left to them, such as to reflect on the coaching conversations with students, what went well, and lessons learned.

Having educators rely on reviewing their training materials and making their own ad hoc reflection notes may not be the most effective way to sustain and improve their skills, especially if they have not yet internalized it. While the training resources on LMS can be helpful, they may not be readily accessible at a given moment. The educator may not readily recall the relevant information or find it quickly to apply it for the present situation. Having a handy digital tool can be very helpful for educators in managing their coaching interactions with students. Through regular coaching engagements with students and intentional reflective practice, educators will gain more experience in handling various student situations, deepen their skills and be more confident. Our current solution after training is limited to consultation with trainers or running monthly Community of Practice sessions to discuss and learn about additional coaching techniques.

For the students, they can take down their own notes during and after a coaching conversation. What happens thereafter rests on the students' intention and volition. Students who are motivated may follow through on their commitments, but many students may either forget the discussion points of the coaching conversation, or not be proactive. The working adults will benefit much from coaching and while the educators make time to coach them, these students may not have the time to document down their plans and follow-up on strategies. In our current situation, what educators do is to follow-up with students via their traditional ways of communication on whether goals are met.

While there are existing coaching apps in the market, they are designed for executive coaches who are in the business of coaching professionally. These users are typically certified corporate coaches who use internalized coaching models serving the corporate market. These solutions do not have a

clear pedagogical element, such as a reflective pedagogical approach, to encourage the learning, practice and reflection of coaching skills. They users have them deployed mostly serve to the administrative and organizational needs of their coaching business and clients' information.

Challenge / Gap / Unrealised Potential

For educators who are new to the coaching approach, as novices, they may not be fully effective in their initial sessions to conduct coaching conversations. The educator's coaching performance can get better with time, with positive intention and regular practice in the planning and application of different types of coaching tools and techniques, coupled with reflection.

Challenge:

Without support, there may be some educators who feel that they do not have a positive experience in coaching students. After initial attempts, they may feel frustrated and lose confidence. They may yield too soon on the assumption and premature conclusion that coaching does not work and revert to the default mode – using a directive, telling approach with students. With time constraints, the educators may not always have time in advance to contact their coaching trainers for advice before a coaching conversation takes place.

Potential:

However, with a solution that extends beyond their basic coaching training, educators can have a resource which continuously supports them in their coaching practice. The solution can promote reflective practice and be a resource that they can readily accessed - a practical coaching toolbox with frameworks, checklists, question banks and reflection questions that is available on demand. The solution can be an aid for coaches to help their coaching conversations to be more effective. This handy resource can help to boost confidence and reduce the likelihood of anxiety and frustration from unproductive coaching conversations with students.

Another unrealized potential is creating a network of learning practitioners who feel connected. By sharing practical tips and experiences with fellow educators on good coaching techniques, tools, methods and powerful questions, an engaged and supportive learning community can be formed. The tech solution can be a means to enable peer learning and reflective pedagogy to be applied more widely, beyond the initial learning that happens in the coaching workshop.

Challenge:

Young people (specifically Millennials and Generation Z) are technologically advanced and capable of looking for information through different ways, for example, crowd sourcing through social media for quick solutions. Millennials are natural-born multitaskers who value giving and getting feedback in real time. This group of young people may not value being lectured or told what to do and may be put off by unsolicited advice or suggestions. Instead, they value coaching and given the opportunities to brainstorm solutions and strategies that cater to their individual needs. Being multitaskers who may be easily distracted in a busy world, timely nudges and reminders may be helpful for them to practice strategies and stay accountable in working towards their goals.

Educators, being content experts in their disciplines, may be very used to giving advice or consulted for answers in their domain expertise. However, this mindset cannot be used in coaching. If a standard directive set of "expert" advice is provided (e.g., it is important to get adequate sleep, the use of a planner can improve productivity), it will put the students off and such a session of coaching will be ineffective. From our experience in the coaching workshops, the main challenges our educators experienced were asking effective, open-ended questions and refraining from giving advice too quickly. Students who are "coached" by educators based on giving unsolicited advice may feel impatient, bored, and frustrated, concluding that the coaching is a waste of time.

Potential:

For the students, there is a great potential to create solutions which helps them in setting goals and working on their holistic development as part of their educational journey. This platform can enable them to focus and work with intention on goals in the domains of: (i) Academic achievement, (ii) Career readiness, and (iii) Personal effectiveness. Therein lies the unrealized potential of students following through on what has been discovered from the coaching conversation and getting positive reinforcement on being accountable for achieving their goals.

The students/coachees can use the tech solution at the start to record their coaching goals and strategies related to their academic, career and personal priorities. Over time, they can make updates and monitor their progress through the process of exploration, discovery, and reflection. Such a solution will help students to develop good learning habits and work discipline, and promote positive attributes such as commitment, responsibility, and accountability. When they share their strategies and progress with their educator/coach, it will enable the educators to cheer them on with their progress or affirm them for achievements. This is especially important for students who are less organized or overwhelmed with the challenges unique to their circumstances (e.g., mature students with family responsibility, working adults managing work-study loads, and students with special needs). With additional demands, students who are working adults may achieve more effectiveness from the coaching when there is a platform that nudges and affirms them on their progress.

5. Targeted Learners / Users

1. The first group of users are educators who have been introduced to the basic principles of coaching. Their teaching experience may be extensive, but they are novices in the practice of coaching. They are new in applying the skills to conduct effective coaching conversations. It is often a mindset shift for them, from telling the students what to do / offering solutions, to taking the coaching approach of empowering learners to discover solutions. They can be more effective in applying their coaching skills if they are
 - supported in planning and conducting coaching conversations,
 - provided with easily accessible references to potential coaching questions
 - prompted for cognitive, affective and process reflection, before and after coaching conversations
 - given access to their students' strategies record and progress (with students' permission)
 - connected with other educators who coach as a learning community

There are around 400 educators in our organization who are involved in mentoring and coaching students. In Singapore, there are around 10,800 educators in universities and 5600 educators in polytechnics. While not all educators may be aware to the coaching approach, if coaching is systematically introduced to 50% of educators in institutes of higher as one way of developing students, there are potentially 8000 educators who can benefit from this solution.

There also lies the potential of scaling up the solution to other educators, allied educators and school counsellors in junior colleges and secondary schools who are novice to the approach of coaching.

2. The second group of users are students who are being coached by the educators. While a majority are young undergraduate students, we pay special attention to supporting the group of working adults who are transiting from work to study or doing workplace learning. Our students are mostly millennials and Generation Z who need to feel heard, affirmed and positively challenged to stay accountable. After coaching conversations, there are greater chances that they can improve if they can
 - record their coaching goals,

- record and update strategies discovered
- set reminders to act on their plans
- share their plans and progress with their educator
- receive need affirmation when any progress is made
- nudged for growth mindset behaviours
- have the option to share previous coaching goals and strategies with other educators who may work with them

There are 8000 enrolled students in my organization. While there are 74,000 students enrolled in university and 70,000 students enrolled in polytechnics in Singapore, it is unlikely that all will be introduced to coaching. Considering institutions with similar needs, even with a conservative estimate of 20% of the student population benefitting from coaching in higher education, potentially 28,800 students can benefit from it.

3. The other stakeholders include trainers and administrators from the university's teaching and learning centre. The coaching trainers will serve as subject matter experts in providing the initial suggestions of good coaching resources and questions for different scenarios, and in designing questions for reflective practice. When a community of educators start sharing ideas, the trainers need to monitor the quality of inputs. The administrator will also be the users who pull out data from the analytics to understand the usage of the solution, patterns of use and effectiveness of the platform

6. Deliverables

- Understand principles that promote learning, motivation and reflective practice.
- User centric and able to take perspective both from educator and students' perspective
- Has a designated person with experience in UI/UX.
- Capabilities to build in analytics for data to be collected and evaluated.
- Clear milestones, provide regular update and receive feedback from stakeholder, preferably through development using the Agile methodology and work in SCRUM.
- Has track record of developing mobile application, experience with both Android and IOS.
- Understand and comply with requirements on information security and PDPA.
- Good habit of documenting source code.
- Capable of developing visually pleasing graphic and platform design.
- Application is extendible with future features. Microservices architecture in mind.

7. Expectations of Solution

The solution must enable users to access to it on the go (indoor and outdoor), mobile friendly.

The solution must allow cater to confidentiality of information, allowing users to grant access to certain person and certain information.

The solution must allow for integration with other application on mobile device (e.g., calendar).

The solution must cater to both Android and IOS users.

The solution must abide to PDPA.

8. Measures of Success

Educators:

- Confidence in planning and executing coaching conversation

- Satisfaction in quality of coaching conversation
- Ability to adapt coaching conversation to different population of students (e.g., working adults with family demands)
- Ability to use of different types of coaching questions to guide students/coachees achieve goals
- Contribution of good quality coaching questions to the community of educators who use coaching
- Ability to identify more coachable moments

Students/coachees:

- Improved learning habits
- Accountability in following through strategies generated from coaching conversation
- Satisfaction in meeting goals
- Positive shift in behavioural psychology indicators
- Improved self-efficacy after meeting goals

70% of educators who complete their basic coaching training will use the solution to follow up with planning for coaching conversation

1-point reported by educators in confidence of coaching after 3 months follow-up survey

75% of students who use the solution will meet their stated goals

70% of students who use the solution and met their goals will report improve self-efficacy