

COACHING AS A SUPPORT FUNCTION FOR POTENTIAL ENTREPRENEURS

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There is an on-going debate on whether the practice of coaching support is useful for entrepreneurs who lack the skills and assistance needed to make a success of their businesses. The aim of this paper was to gain a better understanding of the benefits derived from coaching support, this study explores the debate on whether coaching is useful as a support function for entrepreneurs and the confusion that exists between mentorship and coaching. Throughout literature, coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably since both methods encourage an individual to solve problems themselves. However, mentoring is perceived as a voluntary relationship with a long-term focus on the overall business endeavour that assists entrepreneurs in broadening their personal horizons and teaching them how to be an entrepreneur. Coaching, on the other hand, is perceived as a business relationship with a short-term focus on assisting entrepreneurs in improving business performance through the development of specific skills and goal achievement, for the purposes of growth and success benefits include new perspectives, increased productivity and performance, goal attainment, life and work satisfaction and fulfilment, better quality of work, increased adaptability, enhanced communication, increased self-awareness. Coaching is a development tool that can be used by entrepreneurs to overcome various challenges, improve efficiency, achieve future success and develop necessary skills. This study employed a qualitative research design and used 12 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews that were conducted with participants from the Pretoria region, between August and October 2015. The study found that confusion still exists around the concepts of coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, it was found that both mentoring and coaching are useful as a support function for entrepreneurs, as evidenced through the benefits derived from the support intervention. These benefits mainly include the development of skills, particularly of 21st century skills, new perspectives, enhanced communication, increased self-awareness and learning, and were facilitated by learning. Both mentoring and coaching can benefit potential entrepreneurs; however, each form contributes different benefits. Coaching contributes to self-development of entrepreneurs while mentoring assists in the development of managerial functions needed to successfully start and grow a business. It is clear that these different forms of support intervention aid in developing different skills, and therefore, entrepreneurs should articulate their required needs before engaging support.