



Design and Validation of a Practical Coaching Guide for Iranian Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim was to design and validate a practical coaching guide for Iranian secondary schools based on the most recent documents in the world. Therefore, this study attempts to provide a practical model for implementing educational coaching at the school level by utilizing global experiences and Iranian cultural requirements.

Method: The research is qualitative and multi-stage. In the first step, the desired status of school coaching in international documents and sources was examined using the document analysis method. In the second step, based on the findings, a practical coaching guide was compiled in three sections and ten chapters. In the third step, the initial version was content-validated with the opinions of experts in the fields of coaching.

Results: The results showed that the designed guide has a rich content and standard framework. The detailed findings of the research led to the identification of four fundamental axes in the practical guide that form the main body of the model: 1. Learning-centered goal setting; 2. Reflective dialogue; 3. Structured feedback cycles; and 4. Collaborative learning. Also, the findings showed that the content validity of this guide was assessed by experts at a high level, and components such as "transparency of implementation protocols", "compliance with the Iranian schools' educational calendar", and "providing valid assessment tools" were identified as the main strengths of the guide.

Conclusions: In general, the designed guide can provide an effective framework as an operational roadmap to enhance teachers' professional capabilities and change the paradigm from control-oriented supervision to development-oriented support. Institutionalizing this guide in secondary schools will create a sustainable path to improve the quality of teaching and ultimately the academic achievement of students in the Iranian educational context.

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Introduction

Rapid social, technological, economic, and cultural transformations have increased the complexity of teaching and placed growing demands on educational systems worldwide. Teachers are no longer regarded merely as transmitters of subject knowledge; rather, they are expected to facilitate learning, respond to diverse student needs, engage in reflective practice, and continuously develop their professional competencies. Consequently, teacher professional development has become a central concern in efforts to improve educational quality. Research suggests that professional learning is more likely to influence classroom practice when it is sustained, collaborative, closely connected to teachers' everyday work, and accompanied by opportunities for active learning, reflection, and feedback rather than being limited to episodic and transmission-oriented training (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Traditional forms of professional development, particularly short-term workshops and one-way transmission of theoretical knowledge, may provide teachers with information but do not necessarily create sufficient opportunities for translating that knowledge into sustained improvements in classroom practice. Contemporary approaches therefore increasingly emphasize continuous professional support, structured reflection, meaningful feedback, and the systematic use of evidence from teaching practice. Evidence from primary and secondary education indicates that feedback can contribute to improvements in teaching quality when it is embedded within a purposeful process of professional reflection and instructional development (Röhl et al., 2025). Within this shift toward practice-embedded professional learning, instructional coaching has emerged as an important development-oriented approach. Instructional coaching provides an ongoing structure through which teachers can identify professional goals, examine classroom evidence, reflect on instructional decisions, experiment with alternative practices, and receive focused feedback within a collaborative professional relationship. Unlike conventional one-off professional development activities, coaching is closely connected to teachers' everyday professional practice and is commonly organized around iterative processes of goal setting, action, observation, feedback, and reflection. Meta-analytic evidence has demonstrated positive effects of teacher coaching on instructional practice and student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). More recent empirical evidence also suggests that coaching integrated into professional development can strengthen teachers' implementation of instructional practices and professional confidence and, in particular instructional contexts, contribute to improved student learning outcomes (Traga Philippakos et al., 2025).

A key issue in the application of coaching within educational settings concerns its conceptual distinction from mentoring and educational supervision. Although all three approaches may contribute to professional development, they differ in their purposes and relational structures. Mentoring generally involves guidance from a more experienced practitioner who shares professional knowledge, advice, and experience with a less experienced colleague. Educational supervision, particularly in its traditional form, is more closely associated with organizational accountability, classroom monitoring, performance appraisal, and compliance with professional standards. Coaching, by contrast, is primarily developmental and emphasizes inquiry, reflective dialogue, goal setting, professional agency, and collaborative problem solving (Van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2017; Knight, 2007). Rather than positioning the coach primarily as an evaluator or expert who prescribes solutions, coaching supports teachers in examining their own practice and making evidence-informed decisions about improvement. This distinction is particularly important in school settings. If coaching is perceived as another form of administrative supervision or performance evaluation, professional trust and teachers' willingness to engage openly in reflection may be reduced. Effective coaching therefore requires partnership, trust, professional dialogue, shared responsibility, and respect for

teachers' professional agency. From this perspective, coaching represents a shift from control-oriented supervision toward development-oriented professional support, in which classroom observation and feedback function primarily as resources for learning rather than as instruments of judgment.

The need for more continuous and school-embedded forms of professional development is particularly relevant within the Iranian educational context. Recent domestic research has identified structural, educational-managerial, and cultural conditions that influence teachers' professional development. Yasavol et al. (2024) identified challenges related to the structure, management, education, and culture of teacher professional development and emphasized the importance of systematic needs assessment, supportive organizational conditions, appropriate infrastructure, monitoring, and continuous improvement of professional learning processes. These findings suggest that professional development cannot be reduced to the provision of formal training courses but requires organizational and cultural conditions that enable sustained professional learning within schools. Challenges related to school leadership and organizational structures further reinforce this need. Tamadoni and Hosseingholizadeh (2023) highlighted institutional and organizational constraints affecting Iranian schools, including bureaucratic structures, limited school-level autonomy, ambiguity in educational policies and procedures, and the increasing complexity of school leaders' responsibilities. Such conditions may restrict schools' capacity to create sustained opportunities for professional dialogue, collaboration, and teacher learning. School leaders therefore play an important enabling role in establishing the organizational conditions required for school-based professional development, including the allocation of time, development of professional trust, and support for collaborative learning.

Evidence derived specifically from Iranian secondary schools also supports the importance of workplace-based professional learning. Ghorbanzadeh Kalati et al. (2024), in a qualitative study of secondary school teachers, identified forms of professional learning including reflective learning, learning through work and experience, feedback, interactive learning, mentoring, observational learning, self-directed learning, and participation in professional learning communities. These findings indicate that meaningful teacher development occurs not only through formal training but also through reflection on practice, interaction with colleagues, feedback, and collaborative workplace learning. Such mechanisms closely correspond with several core processes of instructional coaching. Accordingly, instructional coaching may provide a useful mechanism for connecting formal professional development with teachers' authentic classroom needs. By integrating goal-oriented professional dialogue, classroom observation, evidence-informed reflection, structured feedback, and collaborative problem solving, coaching can provide a continuous, practice-based, and context-sensitive approach to professional learning. Its successful implementation, however, requires supportive instructional leadership, sufficient organizational time, professional trust, role clarity, and a clear distinction between developmental coaching and administrative evaluation. Within this perspective, teachers constitute the primary participants in the coaching process, school leaders provide the organizational conditions necessary for its implementation, and students are regarded as the ultimate beneficiaries of improvements in instructional practice.

The design of an effective school-based coaching framework also requires an explicit theoretical foundation. The present study adopts an integrative rather than a single-model approach. No individual international framework was adopted in its entirety. Instead, the design drew on complementary elements of several established reference frameworks, including Knight's Partnership Approach to Instructional Coaching, Cognitive Coaching, the GROW model, partnership-based and collaborative coaching approaches, and the Danielson Framework. These frameworks were selected because they contribute complementary elements

relevant to school-based coaching: Knight's approach emphasizes professional partnership and teacher agency; the GROW model provides a structured process for goal setting and action planning; Cognitive Coaching emphasizes reflective questioning and self-directed professional thinking; partnership-based and collaborative approaches reinforce dialogue and shared professional learning; and the Danielson Framework provides a structured reference for examining evidence of instructional practice. Their shared and contextually relevant elements were integrated with the categories derived from document analysis and adapted to the cultural, organizational, and professional conditions of Iranian secondary schools. This integrative orientation is important because international coaching frameworks have been developed within educational systems that may differ from Iranian schools in terms of school autonomy, professional roles, organizational structures, cultural expectations, and mechanisms of teacher evaluation. Direct transfer of a single model without contextual adaptation may therefore reduce its practical relevance. Recent theoretical research has similarly emphasized the diversity of theoretical foundations underlying coaching as a form of ongoing professional development and the importance of clearly specifying the conceptual and theoretical basis of coaching interventions (Elek et al., 2025).

Despite growing attention to teacher professional development, workplace learning, educational leadership, and teacher empowerment in the Iranian literature, existing studies have primarily examined particular dimensions of professional learning, organizational conditions, leadership challenges, or specific development strategies. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the existing domestic literature has not yet provided a comprehensive and contextually validated operational framework specifically for the systematic implementation of school-based instructional coaching in Iranian secondary schools. At the same time, reliance solely on international coaching models without systematic contextual adaptation may not adequately address the structural and cultural characteristics of the Iranian educational system. This reveals a gap between established theoretical knowledge concerning instructional coaching and its context-sensitive operationalization at the school level. Against this background, the central problem addressed in the present study is the need for a coherent, context-sensitive, and operational coaching framework capable of connecting established international knowledge on instructional coaching with the structural, cultural, and professional realities of Iranian secondary schools. Accordingly, the present study aims to design and validate a practical coaching guide for Iranian secondary schools by integrating findings derived from international documents and scholarly literature, established reference frameworks, and the contextual requirements of the Iranian educational system. The proposed guide encompasses the conceptual foundations of coaching, implementation processes, professional roles and responsibilities, practical tools and methods, reflective and feedback cycles, and mechanisms for evaluation, monitoring, and sustainability. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a scientifically grounded pathway for moving from predominantly control-oriented educational supervision toward a more developmental, collaborative, reflective, and learning-oriented model of teacher professional support.

Literature Review

Instructional coaching has increasingly been recognized as a promising and empirically supported approach to teacher professional development. In contrast to conventional professional development models that often rely on short-term workshops and one-way knowledge transmission, coaching emphasizes sustained, practice-embedded professional learning, individualized support, reflection, and feedback connected to authentic classroom practice. Meta-analytic evidence based on causal studies has demonstrated positive effects of

teacher coaching on instructional practice and student achievement, while also highlighting challenges associated with maintaining effectiveness when coaching programs are implemented at larger scales (Kraft et al., 2018). Experimental evidence further supports the potential of job-embedded instructional coaching. For example, Reddy et al. (2021), using a randomized controlled design in high-poverty urban elementary schools, examined a coaching model integrating classroom observation, formative assessment, and performance feedback and demonstrated its promise for strengthening teachers' classroom practices. Research on effective professional development also provides a broader theoretical rationale for coaching. Professional learning is more likely to result in meaningful changes in practice when it is sustained, connected to teachers' everyday work, and accompanied by opportunities for active learning, deliberate practice, feedback, and structured reflection (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). These characteristics are closely aligned with the underlying logic of instructional coaching, in which teacher development is understood as an iterative process of identifying goals, examining practice, receiving feedback, reflecting on evidence, and refining subsequent actions.

More recent research has moved beyond the general question of whether coaching can be effective toward examining the interpersonal and organizational conditions that influence its implementation. Smith and Desimone (2025), for example, identified meaningful differences between teachers' and coaches' perceptions of professional learning and curriculum quality. Their findings also indicate that teachers' perceptions of coach quality, expertise, and interpersonal relationships are associated with their broader perceptions of professional learning experiences. These results underscore the importance of attending to how coaches and teachers interpret and adapt their shared work rather than assuming that the formal provision of coaching alone ensures successful professional learning. At the organizational level, the sustainability of coaching depends on the conditions created within schools. Swayne and Moynihan (2026), drawing on the experiences of school leaders across multiple educational systems, found that sustainable coaching cultures require attention to leadership, relational trust, staff development, available resources, and resistance to organizational change. Their findings suggest that coaching is most likely to become embedded in school culture when it is supported organizationally rather than treated as an isolated professional development activity (Swayne & Moynihan, 2026). The design and structure of coaching interventions are also important. Wikman et al. (2025), in a cluster-randomized pilot study of a practice-based teacher-coaching intervention, examined coaching as a means of supporting classroom climate and student development, illustrating the value of systematically designed coaching processes. At the theoretical level, Elek et al. (2025), through a meta-narrative review, demonstrated that coaching as a form of ongoing professional development is informed by multiple theoretical traditions. Their review highlights the importance of conceptual clarity and explicit theoretical grounding when coaching programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Although empirical research specifically addressing instructional coaching in Iranian schools remains relatively limited, several domestic studies provide important evidence concerning its potential as well as the contextual challenges associated with its implementation. An early empirical investigation by Javadi Pour et al. (2015) examined the effect of coaching on the psychological empowerment of first-grade primary school teachers in the Seydoun region of Khuzestan Province. Using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design, the study involved 28 teachers who were assigned to experimental and control groups. The findings provided evidence supporting the potential contribution of coaching to teachers' psychological empowerment. Nevertheless, the study was conducted with a small sample within a single geographical area and educational grade, and its primary focus was psychological

empowerment rather than the broader processes required for institutionalizing instructional coaching at the school level. Consequently, although the study demonstrates the potential value of coaching in the Iranian context, its findings have limited applicability to the development of a comprehensive implementation framework for secondary schools. A more directly relevant contribution was made by Bazoobandi and Mortazavi Emami (2022), who designed and validated a coaching model and examined its effectiveness in relation to teachers' perceptions of fear associated with teaching. Their mixed-methods research incorporated qualitative model development as well as a quasi-experimental evaluation. Importantly, the study identified concerns among teachers about exposing their teaching performance to colleagues for examination and discussion. This finding highlights a significant contextual issue for coaching in Iranian schools: observation and professional dialogue may generate apprehension when teachers perceive them as potentially threatening or evaluative rather than developmental. The study therefore underscores the importance of professional trust and appropriate conditions for reflective dialogue. Nevertheless, its primary evaluative focus was teachers' perceptions of fear of teaching rather than the full range of organizational, procedural, evaluative, and sustainability requirements involved in implementing a school-wide coaching system.

Complementary evidence can be found in the field of mentoring. Enayatizadeh and Ghoroonch (2024) developed a conceptual framework for the use of mentoring by educational group leaders to support the professional development of primary school teachers. Based on a systematic grounded-theory approach and interviews with educational leaders, teachers, and school managers in Qaynat, the study identified organizational support and appropriate professional environments as important contextual conditions and educational, social, technical, economic, and cultural factors as intervening conditions affecting mentoring. The study is valuable because it demonstrates that sustained professional support cannot be separated from the organizational and cultural context of schools. However, it addresses mentoring rather than instructional coaching, focuses specifically on primary education within one locality, and proposes a conceptual framework rather than testing a comprehensive operational guide for implementation in secondary schools. Taken together, these domestic studies do not indicate that coaching or mentoring has failed in Iranian educational settings. Rather, they demonstrate both the developmental potential of these approaches and important limitations in the existing evidence base. The available studies have tended to focus on specific outcomes, limited geographical settings, particular educational levels, or conceptual models. They also highlight contextual issues—including professional trust, perceptions of classroom observation, organizational support, and cultural and structural conditions—that must be addressed if coaching is to move from an isolated intervention toward a sustainable form of school-based professional learning.

Accordingly, the key gap concerns the translation of coaching principles into a coherent and context-sensitive implementation framework. International research provides substantial evidence concerning the potential of coaching and increasingly identifies the relational, theoretical, and organizational conditions associated with its implementation. Iranian research, meanwhile, demonstrates the relevance of coaching and mentoring while revealing contextual considerations that may affect their application. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, however, the domestic literature has not yet provided a comprehensive and contextually validated practical guide that systematically specifies the implementation of school-based instructional coaching in Iranian secondary schools. Such a guide would need to integrate theoretical foundations with operational components such as goal setting, professional dialogue, observation, feedback, reflection, role definition, evaluation, and mechanisms for sustainability. The present study addresses this gap by designing and validating a practical

coaching guide specifically adapted to Iranian secondary schools. Rather than directly transferring a single international model, the study integrates evidence derived from the international literature and established reference frameworks with the structural, cultural, and professional requirements of Iranian schools. This approach is intended to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge of instructional coaching and its practical, sustainable implementation within the school context.

Research Questions

Research Question 1:

- What characterizes the desired state of school-based coaching in international documents and scholarly literature?

Research Question 2:

- Based on the findings of the first phase, what are the defining features of a practical coaching guide tailored to Iranian secondary schools?

Research Question 3:

- From the perspective of experts in instructional coaching, to what extent is the designed guide considered scientifically valid and practically applicable?

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, and its implementation process was conducted in three consecutive phases. In the first phase, inductive content analysis was employed to extract foundational categories from the literature. In the second phase, deductive content analysis was conducted to design the coaching guide based on established reference models. In the third phase, the guide was validated through a two-round qualitative Delphi process involving the same panel of six experts. In the first round, the preliminary guide was reviewed by the experts and their comments and revision suggestions were collected and analyzed. Based on the results of this round, the guide was revised and subsequently resubmitted to the same experts in the second round. Given the qualitative and open-ended nature of the Delphi process, consensus was assessed through the qualitative convergence of expert judgments. The process was concluded after the second round when the major issues identified in the first round had been adequately addressed and no further substantial modifications to the guide were required. This integrated approach ensured that the design of the guide was grounded not only in international scientific evidence but also refined through the validation of local experts, thereby enhancing its content validity and contextual relevance. In the first phase, all relevant international documents, scholarly sources, and peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2024 were considered as the research population. From this corpus, 112 sources were purposively selected through thematic screening and relevance-based criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised publication between 2014 and 2024, direct or substantive relevance to school-based coaching or teacher professional development, presentation of conceptual models or practical implementation strategies, and adequate scientific or institutional credibility. Sources were excluded when they were unrelated to educational settings, lacked sufficient information on coaching or professional development, or did not provide relevant conceptual, practical, or policy-related evidence. These sources formed the basis for the extraction of conceptual categories and the subsequent development of the practical coaching framework. In the validation phase, the expert panel consisted of six

distinguished university faculty members and leading scholars in the fields of educational sciences and coaching. Participants were selected using purposive, criterion-based sampling to ensure alignment with the study's objectives. Given the specialized nature of the study, emphasis was placed on the relevance and depth of participants' expertise rather than numerical representativeness. The six-member panel was considered adequate because all participants met the predefined expertise criteria, participated in both Delphi rounds, and demonstrated sufficient qualitative convergence in their judgments by the end of the second round. To guarantee the scientific rigor and content validity of the research, insights were solicited from well-established experts possessing both strong theoretical backgrounds and practical experience in educational settings. The demographic and professional characteristics of the experts, including their academic rank, professional experience, and specific coaching-related expertise or field experience, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Experts Participating in the Delphi Process

No.	Participant Code	Field of Specialization	Academic Rank / Position	Years of Experience	Type of Contribution to the Study
1	M1	Curriculum Studies	Associate Professor, Kharazmi University	15	Delphi feedback and scholarly review of the guide
2	M2	Educational Management	Full Professor, Kharazmi University	18	Delphi feedback and scholarly review of the guide
3	M3	Educational Management	PhD in Educational Management	20	Delphi feedback
4	M4	Educational Management	Faculty Member, Shahid Beheshti University	10	Delphi feedback
5	M5	Educational Management	Full Professor, Kharazmi University	30	Delphi feedback and scholarly review of the guide
6	M6	Curriculum Studies	Full Professor, University of Tehran	15	Delphi feedback

Data Collection and Analysis Instruments

Specific instruments were employed in alignment with each phase of the study. In the document analysis phase, data collection tools included systematic note-taking checklists and structured forms for extracting meaning units from textual sources. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach, following the frameworks proposed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Mayring (2014). The analytical process was conducted in three stages: preparation, organization (including coding and categorization), and final reporting. During the validation phase, a researcher-developed qualitative Delphi questionnaire was utilized. This instrument was distributed to the expert panel along with a summary of the preliminary version of the practical coaching guide. The questionnaire consisted of a set of open-ended questions addressing key dimensions of the guide, including structural coherence, conceptual comprehensiveness, feasibility of implementation, cultural relevance, and evaluation mechanisms. Experts were invited to provide detailed feedback, critiques, and revision suggestions in narrative form. The data obtained from the Delphi process were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Following initial coding, expert responses were categorized into shared themes and proposed modifications. Areas demonstrating conceptual convergence among experts were incorporated into the final revision of the guide.

Prior to its administration to the main expert panel, the content, clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the researcher-developed Delphi questionnaire were reviewed by the research supervisors and academic advisors. Based on their feedback, necessary revisions were made to improve the wording and coverage of the questions. Because the questionnaire consisted primarily of open-ended qualitative questions, analytical rigor and consistency were enhanced through iterative code review and interpretive comparison during data analysis.

Phase One: Identification of Components through Inductive Content Analysis

In the first phase of the study, an inductive qualitative content analysis approach was employed to identify the components of the desired state of school-based coaching. This approach enabled the extraction of relevant concepts and patterns directly from the documents without imposing any predetermined theoretical framework. The research population consisted of all international documents, scholarly articles, and reports related to school-based coaching published between 2014 and 2024. Sources were purposively selected based on scientific credibility, indexing in reputable databases, and relevance to the research topic. Data collection was conducted using systematic note-taking checklists and structured forms for extracting meaning units from the texts. The selected documents were subsequently imported into ATLAS.ti 8 software to ensure a systematic, transparent, and well-documented analytical process. Data analysis followed the inductive content analysis model proposed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and was carried out in three main stages. In the first stage, open coding was conducted line-by-line within the software environment, and meaning units were transformed into initial codes. In the second stage, similar codes were continuously compared, merged, and organized into subcategories and broader categories. In the third stage, conceptual abstraction was performed, whereby categories were synthesized at a higher level to generate overarching themes representing the desired state of school-based coaching. The use of ATLAS.ti 8 facilitated systematic data management, structured coding procedures, conceptual linkage among categories, and the visualization of analytical networks. This enhanced the transparency, coherence, and traceability of the analytical process.

Phase Two: Design of the Practical Guide through Deductive Content Analysis

In the second phase, deductive qualitative content analysis was employed. The theoretical foundations of this phase were grounded in Mayring's (2014) framework, while the procedural implementation followed the analytical structure proposed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). In this approach, the exploratory findings derived from the previous phase were reinterpreted and reorganized within the structure of established theoretical models, such as developmental and coaching reference frameworks. The research population and sample in this phase consisted of the extracted data from Phase One alongside the conceptual dimensions of recognized coaching models. The primary data collection tool in this phase was a classification matrix designed according to the dimensions of the selected reference models. Data analysis proceeded in three main phases: (1) preparation and determination of the unit of analysis; (2) organization and development of theory-driven main categories; and (3) finalization and drafting of the preliminary version of the practical coaching guide. This deductive process enabled the alignment of empirically derived categories with established theoretical structures, thereby strengthening the conceptual coherence and applicability of the proposed guide.

Phase Three: Validation of the Guide through the Delphi Technique

In the third phase of the study, a qualitative Delphi technique was employed to validate and contextualize the practical coaching guide. The primary objective of this phase was to achieve conceptual consensus among experts regarding the dimensions, structure, and practical feasibility of the proposed guide. The expert panel consisted of six university faculty members and specialists in the fields of coaching and educational management. Participants were selected through purposive, criterion-based sampling, with selection criteria including academic expertise and practical experience in educational settings. The data collection instrument for this phase was a researcher-developed qualitative Delphi questionnaire, which was distributed alongside a summary of the preliminary version of the practical coaching guide. The questionnaire comprised a series of open-ended questions addressing key aspects of the guide, including structural coherence, content adequacy, feasibility of implementation, cultural appropriateness, and evaluation mechanisms. Experts were invited to provide detailed feedback, critiques, and revision suggestions in narrative form. The data generated during the Delphi process were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. After initial coding, expert responses were categorized into shared themes and proposed revisions. Elements demonstrating conceptual convergence among panel members were incorporated into the final revision of the guide. Content validity at this stage was ensured through expert engagement and iterative interpretive review of the data. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout this phase, including informed consent, confidentiality of participants' identities, and faithful representation of their viewpoints.

Figure 1. Conceptual Map of the Three-Phase Process for the Design and Validation of the Practical School Coaching Guide

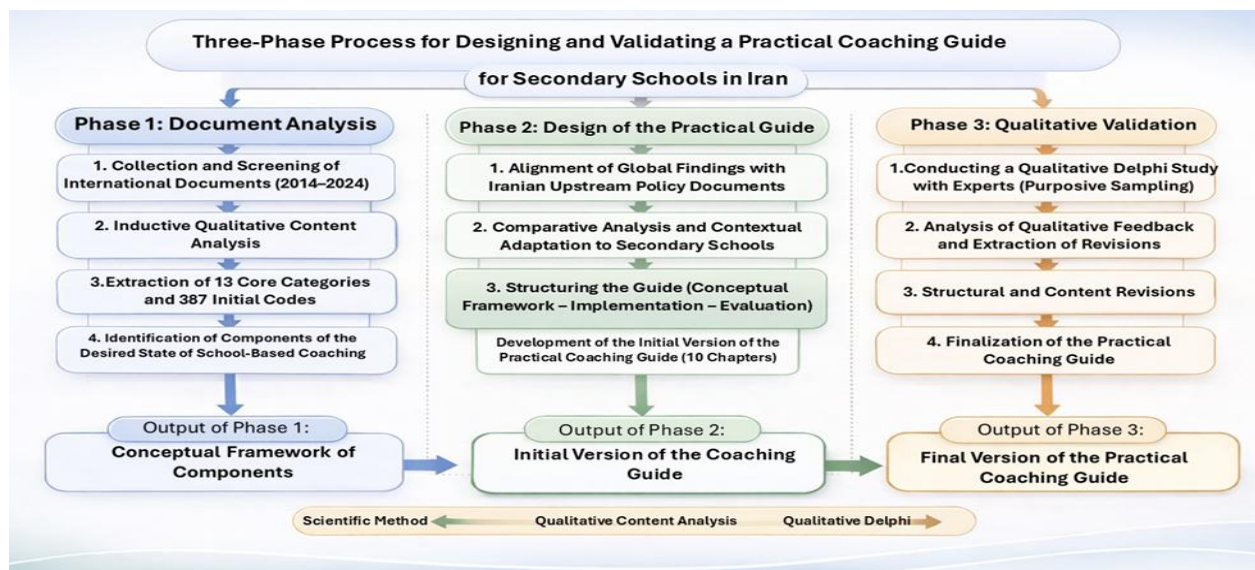


Table 2. Final Structure of the Practical Coaching Guide: Organization of Ten Chapters within Three Overarching Sections

Overarching Section	Chapter	Chapter Title	Main Purpose
Section I: Foundational Concepts and Roles	1	What Is Coaching and What Are Its Benefits?	Defines transformative coaching, distinguishes it from counseling and guidance, and explains its benefits for teachers and schools.

Overarching Section	Chapter	Chapter Title	Main Purpose
	2	Coaching Approaches in Schools: Which Approach for Which Purpose?	Introduces major coaching approaches, including reflective, peer, data-driven, problem-solving, growth-oriented, and equity-oriented coaching.
	3	Who Is Involved in Coaching and What Are Their Responsibilities?	Clarifies the roles of the coach, coachee, coordinator, and the school-based implementation structure.
Section II: Coaching Implementation Process and Practices	4	How Is Coaching Implemented in Schools?	Presents the step-by-step stages of an applicable school-based coaching cycle.
	5	What Skills Are Required to Be an Effective Coach?	Describes the core competencies of educational coaches at basic, professional, and advanced levels.
	6	What Tools Are Used in Coaching?	Introduces practical tools such as forms, video recordings, feedback instruments, observation tools, and checklists.
	7	How Should Coaching Conversations Be Conducted?	Provides a structure for coaching conversations, sample questions, suggested statements, and appropriate communication strategies.
	8	How Should Individual and Group Coaching Be Conducted?	Describes individual, group, peer, and collaborative coaching formats and provides practical scheduling guidance.
Section III: Evaluation and Institutional Alignment	9	How Can We Determine Whether Coaching Has Been Effective?	Presents practical methods and indicators for assessing coaching progress and outcomes.
	10	How Can Coaching Be Aligned with Formal Educational Programs?	Explains how coaching can be linked with professional evaluation, teacher-ranking systems, and the Fundamental Transformation Document of Education.

Results

In the validation phase, the expert panel consisted of six faculty members specializing in coaching and educational management. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on clearly defined criteria of expertise and professional experience. In methodological studies employing the Delphi technique, the number of experts typically ranges from 5 to 20, with primary emphasis placed on participants' expertise and qualifications rather than sample size alone (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Accordingly, given the specialized nature of the topic, the inclusion of six experts in this study was deemed sufficient to achieve conceptual consensus.

The findings of this study emerged across two major phases. The first phase focused on the development of the preliminary version of the practical coaching guide, while the second phase was dedicated to its validation and refinement based on expert feedback. Analysis of international documents in the first phase provided a relatively clear understanding of the core components shared across successful coaching models. Although differences were observed in terminology and sequencing of stages, comparative examination revealed that these models converged around three foundational pillars: (1) a clear theoretical framework defining and delineating the concept of coaching, (2) precise and traceable implementation processes, and (3) a set of evaluation and institutionalization mechanisms designed to ensure sustainability within the school context.

Research Question 1: What is the desired state of school-based coaching in international documents and scholarly sources?

The findings of the study indicated that the desired state of school-based coaching in contemporary international literature possesses a coherent and multidimensional structure that can be articulated into 13 main categories. These categories encompass a range of theoretical, procedural, organizational, and value-oriented dimensions of coaching and present a relatively convergent picture of the dominant coaching paradigm in leading educational systems. At the theoretical level, coaching is defined as a collaborative and development-oriented approach grounded in professional dialogue, critical reflection, and situated learning. Within this framework, the relationship between coach and teacher is collaborative and non-hierarchical in nature, aiming to strengthen teachers' professional agency, self-efficacy, and accountability for student learning. In this conception, coaching is regarded not as a tool for supervision, but as a mechanism for internal empowerment and continuous professional growth. At the procedural level, the desired state of coaching is based on structured and iterative cycles that typically include learning-oriented goal setting, systematic classroom observation, evidence-based descriptive feedback, and post-practice reflective dialogue. Process models such as the Growth Model and other cyclical frameworks emphasize the linkage between developmental goals, professional practice, and ongoing review. The continuity of this cycle and its alignment with authentic classroom needs are reported in international documents as key indicators of coaching effectiveness. At the professional development level, coaching is introduced as one of the most effective strategies for strengthening teacher capacity. Emphasis on instructional analysis, the use of classroom data, enhancement of reflective skills, and the promotion of collaborative learning are considered central components of this dimension. Effective coaching moves professional learning beyond fragmented workshop formats and transforms it into a school-embedded, continuous, and practice-based experience. At the organizational and cultural level, instructional leadership support, the presence of a climate of professional trust, and the institutionalization of a culture of dialogue are recognized as essential prerequisites for successful coaching. Coaching approaches the desired state when it holds a formal position within the school structure and is regarded as part of the organizational learning system. Furthermore, the findings indicate that educational equity and attention to contextual differences have gained a prominent place in recent coaching literature. Within this perspective, coaching is viewed as a tool for enhancing instructional quality in diverse classrooms and for supporting the learning of all students. Overall, the desired state of school-based coaching in international documents and scholarly sources rests on four fundamental pillars:

1. A collaborative and dialogue-oriented approach;
2. Structured and cyclical processes;

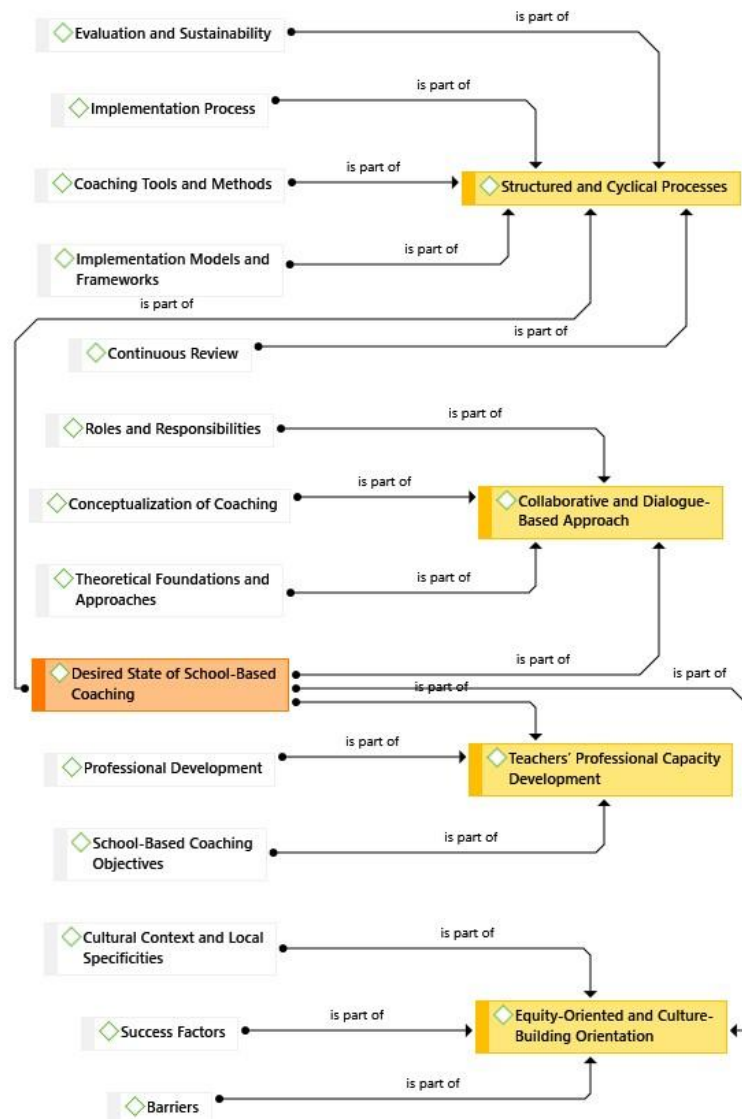
3. Development of teachers' professional capacity;
4. An equity-oriented and culture-building direction at the school level.

These findings demonstrate that within the global paradigm, coaching has evolved from a control-oriented instrument into a dialogical and reflective mechanism aimed not merely at correcting teaching behavior, but at enhancing teachers' professional agency and sustainable capacity within the school context.

Table 3 :Summary of the Coding and Data Aggregation Process in Phase One of the Study

No.	Thematic Code	Category	Sample Initial Codes (Concepts)
1	Theoretical Foundations and Approaches	Interactive nature of coaching; evidence-informed practice; focus on individual growth; effective learning; flexible approaches; problem-solving orientation; equity perspective; attention to professional context	Collaborative approach; data-driven approach; developmental orientation; performance-focused; blended approach; facilitative role; equity-oriented
2	Implementation Models and Frameworks	Successful operational models; innovation and research orientation; theoretical grounding; program operationalization; diversity of roles and leadership models	Knight Model; GROW Model; Cognitive Coaching; Partnership Coaching; Danielson Framework
3	Definition of Coaching	Supportive, reflective, social, systemic, and dialogic definitions	Supportive definition; non-judgmental definition; reflective definition; participatory definition
4	Coaching Objectives	Professional development; equity and social responsibility; instructional leadership and sustainable capacity-building	Improving instructional quality; enhancing self-efficacy; teacher agency; career sustainability
5	Implementation Process	Structured process; experiential learning; feedback and observation; continuous review	Action research; needs assessment; planning; observation; feedback; evaluation
6	Practical Tools and Methods	Diverse communication platforms; technology and data-informed approaches; multidimensional evaluation approaches; performance reflection tools	Checklist; observation form; reflective journal; analytical software; digital platform
7	Roles and Responsibilities in Coaching	Supportive and interactive roles; facilitation and modeling; instructional and knowledge transfer roles; evaluation and feedback; transformational leadership and management	Coach as collaborator; facilitator; feedback provider; instructional leader
8	Learning and Professional Development	Specialized training and capacity-building; development of practical skills; continuous professional growth	Practical workshops; in-service training; effective feedback; lifelong learning
9	Evaluation and Sustainability	Multidimensional evaluation; monitoring behavioral change; assessing long-term impact	Qualitative and quantitative evaluation; attitude change analysis; performance analysis; job satisfaction
10	Key Success Factors	Structural and organizational support; professional collaboration and participation; positive psychological and motivational climate	Principal support; safe environment; positive relationships; mutual trust; teacher motivation
11	Barriers and Challenges	Structural and organizational constraints; individual and psychological challenges; technological and cultural barriers	Time constraints; workload pressure; teacher resistance; weak technological infrastructure
12	Cultural Context and Local Specificities	Diversity of educational contexts; adaptation to local conditions	Cultural differences; bilingual schools; contextual adaptation; local needs
13	Continuous Review and Updating	Process dynamism; flexibility and ongoing refinement	Model revision; policy improvement; structural modification; adaptation to change

Figure 2. Conceptual Network of the Desired State of School-Based Coaching Based on Document Analysis (Four Foundational Pillars and 13 Core Categories)



Research Question 2: Based on the findings of Phase One, how is the practical coaching guide for Iranian secondary schools designed?

The design of the practical coaching guide for Iranian secondary schools was grounded in the belief that no single, predetermined model can be effective for all schools. Each school possesses its own culture, needs, and constraints; therefore, the guide must be flexible, context-sensitive, and at the same time grounded in scientific evidence. In the first phase of the study, a range of international documents and research studies were examined in order to extract the core components of school-based coaching within successful educational systems. The findings of that phase indicated that coaching becomes effective when it is integrated into the school's learning culture and embedded in teachers' daily professional practice. These findings served as the point of departure for the design of the practical guide. In developing the guide, an effort was made to integrate global evidence with the realities of Iranian schools. For this reason, rather than adopting a single foreign model, several well-established international frameworks—such as Cognitive Coaching, the Growth Model, Collaborative Coaching, and the Danielson Framework—were reviewed, and their shared and effective elements were aligned

with the national educational context. The design process of the guide proceeded through four main steps: extraction of key components, integration with local needs, organization of thematic domains, and final compilation of the guide.

Table 4 :Process of Designing the Practical Coaching Guide

Step	Stage Title	Main Output
1	Extraction of Components from Phase One Findings	Identification of 13 core categories and 387 initial codes
2	Integration with Local Needs of Iranian Schools	Alignment of components with the cultural and structural conditions of the education system
3	Structuring the Axes and Framework of the Guide	Development of ten thematic chapters and design of a comprehensive implementation cycle
4	Final Development and Revision	Finalized practical guide prepared for the validation phase

Step One: Extraction of Core Components

In the first step, data derived from the analysis of 112 international documents and scholarly articles were reviewed, and 13 main categories of school-based coaching were extracted, including theoretical foundations, models, objectives, implementation processes, tools, skills, and roles. From the 387 initial codes generated, those components that demonstrated the greatest alignment with Iran's cultural context and educational structure were selected. The primary focus at this stage was to identify concepts that would be practically applicable for Iranian teachers and school leaders while remaining grounded in robust scientific evidence.

Step Two: Integration of Findings with Local Needs of Iranian Schools

In the second step, global findings were integrated with national policy documents and the field realities of Iranian schools. To this end, the researcher examined key national policy documents, such as the *Fundamental Reform Document of Education* and the Professional Competency Development Program for Teachers, among others, in order to identify the contextual needs and structural constraints of Iranian schools. Challenges such as limited instructional time, centralized administrative structures, insufficient opportunities for professional dialogue, and the need for effective feedback mechanisms were among the key considerations incorporated into the design of the guide. Consequently, global coaching components were simplified, localized, and reorganized in accordance with the structural characteristics of Iranian schools to ensure practical feasibility.

Step Three: Organization of Thematic Domains and Overall Structure of the Practical Guide

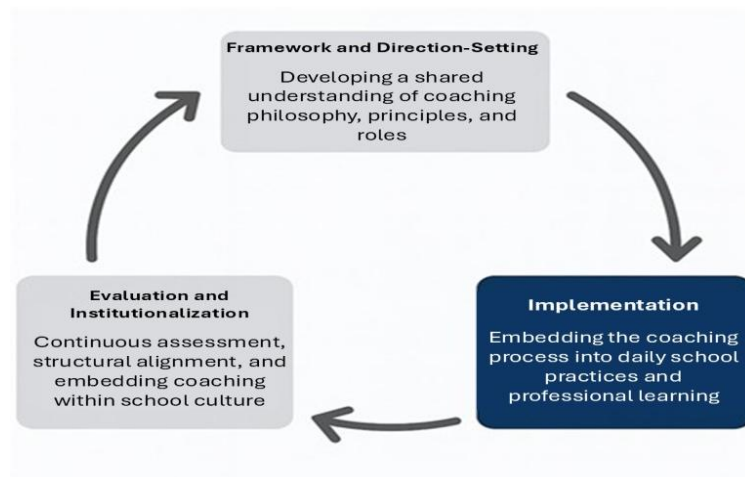
In the third step, the selected components were organized into ten main chapters designed to cover the theoretical, practical, and evaluative dimensions of coaching comprehensively. The sequence of chapters was structured to guide the reader from an understanding of foundational concepts to practical implementation and evaluation of outcomes. The structural design aimed to ensure that each chapter could function independently while also collectively forming a coherent cycle of learning and professional development. In this way, the guide serves both as an educational resource for teachers and as an implementation reference for school leaders and instructional coaches.

Step Four: Final Compilation and Content Revision

In the final stage, the preliminary version of the guide underwent multiple rounds of review and revision to enhance coherence, clarity of language, and alignment with the study's objectives.

To ensure scientific rigor and practical applicability, feedback was solicited from two university professors specializing in curriculum planning and instructional coaching. Their recommendations primarily focused on clarifying the sequencing of stages, strengthening connections among chapters, and simplifying technical terminology. The revisions ultimately resulted in a version that is both scientifically grounded and practically applicable within real school settings. In summary, this phase integrated global findings with Iran's upstream educational policy documents—particularly the *Fundamental Reform Document*—and the field realities of secondary schools. The design process was conducted in four stages (extraction, contextual integration, organization, and final compilation). The practical guide was structured into ten chapters, beginning with the “Creation of a Culture of Trust” and progressing to “Observation and Feedback Protocols,” and concluding with a “Monitoring System.” The defining feature of this guide is its *implementation flexibility*, designed to address challenges such as administrative centralization and time constraints within Iranian schools.

Figure3. Cyclical Model of School-Based Coaching Implementation



Research Question 3: To what extent is the designed school coaching guide evaluated as valid and applicable from the perspective of experts in instructional coaching?

Interpretive analysis of the experts' perspectives indicated that their evaluation of the designed guide can be conceptualized at three analytical levels: content validity, contextual compatibility, and organizational institutionalization capacity. These three levels revealed complementary dimensions of the guide's scientific and practical credibility and provided a multilayered understanding of the quality of the final version. At the first level, content validity, the experts confirmed the conceptual coherence of the model. In particular, the interconnection among learning-oriented goal setting, reflective dialogue, evidence-based feedback, and collaborative learning was identified as the logical core of the guide. The panel emphasized that the proposed framework does not suffer from theoretical fragmentation or incoherent conceptual integration; rather, it demonstrates an acceptable alignment between the theoretical foundations of instructional coaching and its operational structure. From their perspective, the model successfully elevates coaching from a short-term intervention to a systematic mechanism for continuous professional learning. At the second level, contextual compatibility, responses indicated that the guide is substantially aligned with the structural and cultural conditions of Iranian secondary schools; however, certain refinements were necessary to enhance its practical effectiveness. The most prominent theme extracted at this level was the need to reorganize the guide into three overarching sections: *conceptual framework*, *implementation process*, and

assessment and monitoring system. This restructuring clarified the implementation pathway, reduced ambiguity between theoretical foundations and practical guidelines, and facilitated usability for school leaders and teachers. Furthermore, emphasis on professional ethics, the role of emerging technologies in facilitating coaching interactions, and the simplification of implementation tools reflected the experts' attention to the practical realities of school environments. At the third level, organizational institutionalization capacity, the experts stressed that the guide possesses the potential for sustainable implementation provided that certain prerequisites are met—such as instructional leadership support, formal allocation of time for professional dialogue, and the cultivation of trust among teachers. Analysis of responses indicated that the experts viewed the guide not merely as a training package, but as a framework for transforming the professional culture of the school. Their recommendation to design a monitoring system based on observable teacher behaviors and to conduct an initial pilot implementation further reflected concerns regarding institutionalization and long-term sustainability. Overall, the experts' suggested revisions were primarily complementary and improvement-oriented, and the foundational structure of the model was not fundamentally challenged. This indicates that the guide's conceptual validity was largely affirmed, and subsequent revisions were mainly directed toward enhancing implementation clarity, strengthening scholarly grounding, and increasing contextual transferability to Iranian school settings. Following these revisions, the final version was evaluated as theoretically more robust, structurally more coherent, and practically more feasible. In sum, the findings of the validation phase suggest that, from the experts' perspective, the practical coaching guide demonstrates content validity, contextual compatibility, and institutionalization potential within Iranian secondary schools. It may therefore serve as an intervention framework for transitioning from control-oriented supervision toward development-oriented support in teachers' professional learning.

Figure 4. Conceptual Framework of the Practical Guide for Iranian Schools



Discussion

The present study aimed to design and validate a practical coaching guide tailored to Iranian secondary schools through a multi-phase qualitative approach. In accordance with the three research questions, the findings are discussed in relation to the desired state of school-based coaching, the characteristics of the designed practical guide, and the scientific validity and practical applicability of the final guide from the perspective of experts. Regarding the first research question, findings from the first phase indicated that the desired state of coaching in

leading educational systems is grounded in thirteen core categories encompassing the theoretical, procedural, and cultural dimensions of the field. These results are aligned with the theoretical perspectives of Jim Knight, as well as Kraft et al. (2018), who conceptualize coaching as a goal-oriented, interactive process structured around cycles of observation and feedback. A fundamental convergence between the findings of this study and the global literature lies in the recognition that effective coaching must move beyond being merely an instructional technique and instead be embraced as a sustained culture of professional learning within schools. Indeed, the analysis of 112 international documents indicated that reflective cycles and active collaboration between coach and teacher constitute important foundations for improving instructional practice in the classroom. The theoretical and substantive dimensions of the findings are strongly aligned with the philosophical foundations and collaborative models of instructional coaching. More recent studies have similarly emphasized the theoretical diversity of coaching as an ongoing form of professional development and the importance of structured, practice-based coaching processes (Elek et al., 2025; Wikman et al., 2025). This convergence may further be interpreted in light of Whitmore's (2017) perspective, which views coaching as extending beyond technical consultation and rooted in a Socratic philosophy aimed at fostering teachers' internal empowerment—an approach that was incorporated as a foundational principle in the first chapter of the designed guide. Likewise, the results correspond with the findings of DuFour et al. (2013) regarding the necessity of cultivating a culture of collective learning and collaborative systems, as the present guide also frames school improvement as dependent upon group interaction rather than isolated individual action. From an implementation standpoint, clear alignment is observed with the study of Devine et al. (2013) and Knight's (2007) partnership model. The emphasis of the localized guide on enhancing teacher self-efficacy and strengthening reflective practice corresponds with key outcomes identified in international models of practice-based learning. This alignment indicates that the designed guide establishes a scientific linkage between global principles—such as choice, partnership, and professional trust—and the developmental needs of teachers. Recent research also highlights the importance of coach–teacher alignment, relational quality, and shared understanding in supporting professional learning through coaching (Smith & Desimone, 2025). Regarding adaptability and structural challenges, the findings of this study are consistent with Piper et al. (2018), whose research demonstrates the feasibility of implementing coaching-related professional support in diverse educational contexts. However, in articulating the distinctive features and innovations of the present guide, attention must be drawn to the issue of workload. While excessive responsibilities assigned to coaches may diminish the quality of coaching interactions, the present guide introduces an operational innovation by emphasizing a peer coaching model and leveraging internal school capacities. This approach seeks to mitigate challenges arising from the shortage of external coaching specialists in Iran. Regarding the second research question, the findings concerning the characteristics of the practical coaching guide indicate that the integration of international evidence with the contextual realities of Iranian schools was essential to developing an applicable framework. Unlike models primarily developed within Western educational contexts, the present guide integrates global concepts into ten operational chapters specifically adapted to the Iranian educational context. In doing so, it bridges the gap between theory and practice within Iranian secondary schools. The integration of established approaches—such as Cognitive Coaching—into a contextually grounded framework reflects an advancement beyond prior single-dimensional studies and demonstrates the developmental contribution of this research to the field of instructional coaching.

In the second phase of the study, which was devoted to the design of the guide, the inductive findings were integrated with the educational realities of Iran. The major distinction and innovative implication of this research, compared with international models, lies in its level of contextualization and operational realism. The designed guide, taking into account time constraints and the centralized administrative structure of the Iranian educational system, proposes simplified and more flexible implementation strategies. This finding is consistent with domestic studies that emphasize the necessity of establishing supportive structures and adapting professional-development processes to the actual conditions of Iranian schools. It is also compatible with recent international evidence suggesting that sustainable coaching cultures depend on leadership support, relational trust, organizational resources, and appropriate conditions for professional learning (Swayne & Moynihan, 2026). The final guide consists of ten operational chapters organized within three overarching sections. The first section, Foundational Concepts and Roles, includes Chapters 1–3; the second section, Coaching Implementation Processes and Practices, includes Chapters 4–8; and the third section, Evaluation and Institutional Alignment, includes Chapters 9–10. Therefore, the three overarching sections do not replace the original ten chapters; rather, they provide an organizing framework that enhances the coherence and usability of the guide.

Regarding the third research question, the collection of expert opinions through the two-round Delphi process led to the refinement and finalization of the guide. Expert feedback supported the scientific grounding, contextual compatibility, and practical applicability of the proposed framework while also leading to structural and operational refinements. In particular, the experts' recommendations contributed to organizing the ten chapters within the three overarching sections of foundational concepts and roles, implementation processes and practices, and evaluation and institutional alignment. The expert evaluations further emphasized the importance of professional ethics, clear implementation procedures, feasible assessment mechanisms, leadership support, and professional trust. These findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing that successful coaching depends not only on the technical structure of the intervention but also on the quality of professional relationships and the organizational conditions supporting its implementation (Smith & Desimone, 2025; Swayne & Moynihan, 2026). Overall, having passed through both theoretical scrutiny and contextual validation, the designed guide can be considered a scientifically grounded and contextually adapted framework for supporting professional development in Iranian secondary schools. Rather than positioning coaching as another form of evaluative supervision, the guide seeks to strengthen a developmental orientation based on professional support, reflective dialogue, evidence-based feedback, and collaborative learning. The final conclusion indicates that the designed guide demonstrates sufficient scientific validity and practical applicability and can provide an operational framework for enhancing teachers' professional competencies in Iranian secondary schools. In summary, the design and validation of the practical coaching guide represent a significant step toward strengthening continuous and school-based professional learning in Iranian secondary education.

Conclusions

The findings of this study—emerging from the analysis of 112 international documents and refined through contextual adaptation and expert validation—demonstrate that coaching extends beyond a technical instrument and may also be understood as a professional philosophy of collaborative growth. The developed guide provides an operational roadmap for school leaders and teachers to move toward the creation of more dynamic and learning-oriented

schools. Its systematic application may contribute to a gradual shift from traditional supervision toward professional support and create greater opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous reflection and collaborative professional learning. From a practical perspective, it is recommended that implementation of the guide initially begin on a pilot basis in selected secondary schools. School leaders should provide sufficient time and organizational support for coaching conversations and collaborative learning activities. Teachers who undertake coaching roles should receive appropriate preparation in active listening, reflective questioning, classroom observation, and evidence-based feedback. The use of peer coaching should also be encouraged to make use of existing professional capacities within schools, particularly where access to external coaches is limited. In addition, coaching activities should be clearly distinguished from formal teacher evaluation in order to strengthen professional trust and encourage teachers' active participation. Simple and applicable monitoring tools should be used to assess the quality and continuity of the coaching process.

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations. First, the document-analysis phase was limited to international sources published between 2014 and 2024 and selected according to the objectives and inclusion criteria of the study. Second, although the guide was evaluated through a two-round Delphi process, the expert panel consisted of six specialists; therefore, the validation findings should be interpreted primarily as evidence of expert-based scientific and contextual validation. Third, the present study focused on the design and validation of the guide and did not include its field implementation or experimental assessment in actual school settings. Consequently, the effectiveness of the guide in improving teachers' instructional practices or student learning outcomes requires further empirical examination. Future research is therefore recommended to evaluate the guide through pilot implementation in different Iranian secondary-school contexts. Mixed-methods, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal studies may examine its effects on teachers' self-efficacy, reflective practice, instructional quality, and professional collaboration. Future studies may also compare peer coaching with external coaching, investigate the role of school leadership and professional trust in successful implementation, and explore the use of digital technologies for facilitating coaching processes. Such studies can provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of the proposed guide. In conclusion, the present study achieved its stated objective of designing and validating a practical coaching guide tailored to Iranian secondary schools and opened new avenues for future research in educational management, curriculum planning, teacher professional development, and instructional coaching within the national context.

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