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Campus Administrators' Perceptions of Their Influence on the Success of Instructional Coaching Programs in Urban Elementary Schools

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Sakinah S. Burroughs

MA, Cambridge College, 2003

BS, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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August 2022

Abstract

Instructional coaching programs are designed to improve teacher effectiveness to ultimately improve student performance. The role of the instructional coach varies among schools and is dependent on building leadership or the most recent trends of a school district. Inconsistency in the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches can impede coaches' ability to improve teacher effectiveness. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about assigning and aligning research-based practices with job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. Partnership principles theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. The study consisted of a convenience sampling of eight metro-area building administrators in one school district in a southern state. The research question was used to identify building administrators' perspectives on their role in implementing a coaching program that promotes research-based practices aligned with an instructional coach's job responsibilities. All data were analyzed thematically using open and axial coding. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing building administrators and instructional coaches with a common language on the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches. School districts and building administrators can use the findings from this study to create a clear job description and expectations for the role of the instructional coach. Providing clear expectations of the role of instructional coaches may allow teachers to benefit by becoming more effective teachers through more meaningful work with instructional coaches.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my incredibly supportive family and friends. I would not have been able to complete this endeavor without the continuous optimism and encouragement of my dedicated husband and daughters. The support of my very close girlfriends gave me the strength to persevere through the process. The unwavering love and cheerleading of my mother, until the day she passed, is the ultimate dedication of this work. I did it, Mama!

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To my husband: for always being my rock and shoulder to lean on. Your continuous belief in me gives me the energy to keep going. I love you!

To my lovely daughters: for being the light of my life, and my reasons for being. I look forward to continuing to be an example of endurance for the both of you. Remember that life will not always be easy, but we must always push through to the end. This is for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Instructional coaches are one of the latest trends used in schools across the United States to improve instruction and provide professional learning (PL; Knight, 2017). Instructional coaching (IC) improves teaching techniques among classroom teachers to ensure that effective teaching occurs across content areas (Stefaniak, 2020). However, Stefaniak (2020) stated that coaches take on many different roles that have nothing to do with instruction in many instances. Although research acknowledges that coaches are not supervisors, there are several instances when coaching and supervising overlap (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). Without a professionally written universal program to explicitly describe how instructional coaches should be used to best meet the goal of improving teaching practices, school campus administrators are left to decide their instructional coaches' roles. If carefully planned, implemented and supported, IC can be a powerful social agent of change that enhances teachers' practices, which may potentially improve student achievement (Tanner et al., 2017). Campus administrators must ensure that coaches are allotted time to coach and refrain from disrupting the coaching program by continuously asking them to take on responsibilities such as scoring or administering tests, serving as substitutes, or conducting hallway and lunchroom duties (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). Without clear expectations and roles established between principal and coach, coaches juggle multiple assignments while still being held responsible for supporting many if not all teachers in their buildings (Van Ostrand et al., 2020).

Although IC has become a reality in many school districts across the United States, many campus administrators are challenged with knowing how to use the coach

effectively (Johnson, 2016). Due to overwhelming demands on campus administrators and misunderstanding of what roles instructional coaches should serve, many campus administrators convert to using instructional coaches in administrative roles, many times serving as assistant campus administrators attending to paperwork and discipline (Van Ostrand et al., 2020). While researchers see IC as a useful resource for improving teachers' instructional practices, limited research addresses instructional coaches' universal roles. For an IC program to be successful, campus administrators must ensure that there is vested time for professional growth sessions between coaches and teachers through deliberate planning, implementation, and continuous assessment of the work (Tanner et al., 2017). Establishing a clear understanding that coaches are not evaluative and will not provide information for the evaluation of teachers ultimately allows for healthy relationships to form between a coach and the teachers they serve (Johnson, 2016).

Instructional coaches placed in the right environment and used effectively can be the catalyst needed in a school's social transformation. Coaches can bring teams together by promoting and modeling healthy collaboration, teaching administrators and teachers how to plan for growth (Aguilar, 2017). Coaches build emotional resilience by supporting teachers and administrators' social-emotional needs by allowing time for the emotional release of frustrations and issues before jumping into lesson plans, agendas, and data analysis (Aguilar, 2017). By helping both administrators and teachers to see the big picture of the work, and how the work aligns with the needs of students, teachers, and administrators, coaches can facilitate systems change (Aguilar, 2017).

A school district in the southeastern United States developed an IC program that describes instructional coaches' improvement in teaching practices. According to surveys designed by Knight (2018) and distributed by the Office of Federal Programs in this unified district, among the 129 instructional coaches in 84 elementary schools, there was an overwhelming consensus of wanting one coaching model implemented districtwide. A structured IC program for all schools may help the district reach its desired outcomes of improved teaching strategies, hopefully correlating to improved student achievement.

The instructional coach's role is to assist teachers in obtaining and implementing research-based, best teaching practices that will ultimately benefit student achievement. The use of instructional coaches has become a widespread means of increasing teacher effectiveness and has been used intensely in reform processes in several school districts throughout the United States (Stefaniak, 2020). However, without a uniform framework of how to effectively use instructional coaches as a resource to improve teaching strategies, campus administrators are left with no guidance on how to implement the use of instructional coaches in their buildings. The gap in practice is the lack of organizational knowledge that often leads to a coach's barriers such as job assignments, workloads, and the inability to develop productive relationships with campus administrators and teachers.

Background

While some form of teacher coaching has existed for decades, IC has emerged as an essential policy in most districts to improve teachers' instructional practices due to recent federal and state reforms. Standards-based state and federal reforms efforts of the

late 1990s and early 2000s, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTTT), and Common Core State Standards (CCSS), have placed pressure on district leaders to show improvement in teaching practices to produce student achievement growth (Galey, 2016). Coaching emerged as a reform to improve literacy in American schools. Still, the expansion of coaching in mathematics and other subjects has become more common in response to districts' policy demands to use "evidence-based" practices to improve student achievement (Galey, 2016). Provided in research is promise for instruction as a reform where trained experts work with teachers to learn and implement new practices, foster positive shifts in classroom instruction, and promote students' skills and achievement (Jacobs et al., 2018). However, for school administrators to implement effective IC programs, they must have a deep understanding of the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches. Administrators must also understand the importance of hiring adequate personnel to carry out these roles and responsibilities and acknowledge the partnership in helping the instructional coach carry out their role and responsibilities (Johnson, 2016).

While it is shown in research that IC improves instructional practices among teachers, school administrators must evaluate their role in the instructional coaches' success that serve in their schools. Although IC is a model of reform used in many schools today, there is a gap in practice as many school administrators lack background and experience in effectively using instructional coaches (Johnson, 2016). Administrators must possess a clear vision of the instructional coach's role and responsibilities in their schools and communicate that vision to the faculty and staff. They must understand that

they play a significant role in the coach's ability to facilitate, model, and execute professional development (PD; Johnson, 2016). The lines between a coach's role and that of an administrator are often blurred, and the key to improving teachers' effectiveness is creating a partnership (Knight, 2018). Building a strong partnership between coach and principal allows coaches time to establish trusting relationships with teachers, making it easier for the coach to promote buy-in to the principal's vision for school improvement (Jacobs et al., 2018).

Due to the onset of data-driven schools, higher teaching standards, and increased teacher accountability, the implementation of IC programs in schools across the United States has increased (Knight, 2017). Instructional coaches work to close achievement gaps for students by building teachers' instructional capacity (Woulfin, 2018). Coaches provide opportunities and support for teachers' reflection on content learned and the learning process (Tanner et al., 2017) by providing time for one-on-one work with teachers and using a protocol to guide coaching conversations between the coach and teacher throughout the process (Jacobs et al., 2018). Coaches can guide teachers through reflective processes of evaluating current beliefs and practices in conjunction with new knowledge and skills to shift their thinking and delivery of instruction (Knight, 2017). Instructional programs are effective when coaches work alongside individuals and groups of teachers, helping them to reflect on practice, make sense of instructional standards, align curricular plans to state assessments, and use student data to improve instruction (Knight, 2017). Campus administrators and coaches collaborate in purposeful, strategic

ways to improve instructional strategies, thus shaping the coaches' work (Woulfin & Jones, 2018).

Although districts create a job description for instructional coaches, there are vast variations in the conceptions and nature of coaching across districts and schools (Woulfin, 2018). There is no standard model or definition of IC, leading to its being a multipurpose resource that can be modified to meet local needs, creating obstacles when building trusting relationships with teachers (Tanner et al., 2017). Coaches often function as quasi-administrators, dealing with building logistics, discipline issues, and sometimes teacher evaluations (Woulfin & Jones, 2018). Instructional coaches can fill various educational and political roles through any number of models or defined categories (Woulfin, 2018). Without an in-depth understanding of IC by school administrators and a clear vision related to both the coach and faculty, both the instructional coach and the coaching program are destined to fail (Knight, 2018).

Descriptions in recent research address what effective instructional coaches do and what to do to create effective IC programs; however, there is little peer-reviewed research on coaches' roles or work (Jacobs et al., 2018). While there are large and growing bodies of research that provide a solid starting point for further investigation, the understanding of IC's effects on teacher practice or student learning is still emerging (Galey, 2016). Researchers believe that most educational leaders generally understand the various IC parameters and some of their effects; however, there is a small amount of systematic examination of what kinds of coaching work best or the broader institutional factors shaping coaching policy and practice (Galey, 2016).

Problem Statement

The problem was that, nationally, campus administrators struggle to implement best practices when assigning instructional coach job responsibilities. This problem was also found in the local research setting, a school district, which serves as an example of this larger problem. Instructional coaches are one of the latest trends used in schools to improve instruction and provide PL; however, school administrators must use them effectively to positively influence students' instructional success as intended (Knight, 2017). After participating in an instructional coaching PL experience, there was an overwhelming consensus among district leaders that there was a need for the district to create one coaching model (Knight, 2018). Whether metro versus rural or Title I versus non-Title I, Knight's IC program can assist district leaders and school administrators in defining proper use of their instructional coaches. IC is viewed as essential and valuable; however, this position can also cause more damage than good if there are no clear job descriptions understood by campus administrators, coaches, and teachers (Pawl, 2019). According to Kane and Rosenquist (2018), evidence about the overall effectiveness of IC has shown mixed results because coaches' job descriptions often include a wide variety of disparate duties. Only a quarter of academic coaches' time is used to work directly with teachers on instruction, and the rest of the time is used on duties such as locating curriculum, tutoring students, substitute teaching, collating test data, or organizing student's log-in information for various software programs (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Although IC has shown positive effects on teachers' classroom practices, there is no direct correlation between IC and overall student improvement (Kraft et al., 2018). In

metro-area school districts in a southeastern state, Title I schools use federal funds to hire instructional coaches as an extra resource to provide job-embedded PL for teachers, modeling of best practices, and observation of teachers with immediate feedback. (Kurz et al., 2017). Some districts hire coaches to serve several schools, and other districts allow campus administrators to hire school-level coaches to service only their school 5 days a week (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). Coaches hired by the district may have more significant opportunities to spend time with teachers on long-term instructional improvement goals. District leaders may be better able to shield them from extensive administrative work. Findings from Kane and Rosenquist (2018) affirmed that instructional coaches accountable to campus administrators attend to duties unrelated to supporting teachers' instructional improvement, even when campus administrators themselves highly value this goal. Campus administrators may consider them to be marginal to the school's improvement goals, relegating them to work with only the new or "struggling" teachers (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Nationally, school districts have established procedures for instructional coaches and directives for their responsibilities; campus administrators often modify the coaches' responsibilities according to their school's needs (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). The metro-area southeastern school district developed an intentional coaching model. The district surveyed instructional coaches and campus administrators to find an overwhelming consensus of wanting one coaching model implemented districtwide so that all coaches would be responsible for similar roles in every school building (C. Velde-Cabrera, personal communication, May 16, 2022). Instructional coaches reported doing tasks such

as monitoring daily attendance, checking weekly lesson plans, and serving as an in-school suspension or substitute teacher. Acting as the Title I liaison, completing proposals, ordering material, and conducting morning, afternoon, and cafeteria duties were also among the tasks reported by instructional coaches (Knight, 2018). Campus administrators reported the need for more human resources to conduct the day-to-day activity in the building and for the flexibility of using the instructional coach because they did not have a homeroom (Knight, 2018). Nationally, various assignments and tasks given to instructional coaches distract from the central focus of the role and the goal to influence instruction (Knight, 2010).

For an IC program to be successful, campus administrators must ensure that there is vested time for professional growth sessions between coaches and teachers using deliberate planning, implementation, and continuous assessment of the work (Tanner et al., 2017). Pawl (2019) showed that when administrators use instructional coaches effectively, their coaching supports building collective leadership, continuously improving teacher instructional capacity through ongoing PL, and increasing student learning opportunities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about challenges in following research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities to the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. Findings of this study may help school districts identify the need for research-based uniform practices in using instructional coaches and explore

the importance of the campus administrator and instructional coach partnership, thus providing support for instructional coaches.

Researchers have shown that campus administrators experience a vast number of responsibilities and require teacher leaders' assistance to keep the building running (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). Campus administrators spend 70% of their day building protocols such as buses, budgets, and behavior, and the other 30% on instructional issues that affect student achievement (Callahan, 2016). Curriculum specialists, data analysts, professional developers, and mentors are the intended roles of instructional coaches. However, administrators often use them as evaluators, which contradicts their intended purpose (Pawl, 2019). I conducted semistructured interviews with campus administrators from urban elementary schools in a metro region in a southeastern state to gather data on campus administrators' perceptions of their influence on their schools' IC program's success.

Research Question (Qualitative)

What are administrators' perceptions on the challenges to implementing best practices in assigning duties to instructional coaches?

Conceptual Framework (Qualitative)

According to Varpio et al. (2020), a conceptual framework justifies conducting a study. The conceptual framework describes the state of general knowledge, identifies gaps in understanding phenomena or problems, and outlines the research project's methodological underpinnings (Varpio et al., 2020). This study's conceptual framework addressed why the research was essential and what contributions the findings would

make to what was already known (Varpio et al., 2020). This basic qualitative study used a conceptual framework to identify challenges faced by school administrators in providing job responsibilities for instructional coaches that aligned with research-based best practices. The research from this study adds to the literature to help school districts learn the fundamentals of constructing IC programs that help teachers overcome setbacks by evaluating the past and planning for current reality (Aguilar, 2017). This basic qualitative study's conceptual framework focused on Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory.

Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory supports the belief that adults learn best when doing actual work. The partnership principles theory uses equality principles where the coach and the campus administrator share ideas and make decisions together as equals. This theory also involves dialogue principles whereby everyone shares ideas through back-and-forth interactions promoting balance advocacy; there is collaboration between coach and administrator through reflective conversations that are engaging, energizing, and valuable. Praxis, where coaches model applying knowledge and skills to work, ensures that coaching is productive, meaningful, and helpful. Additionally, reciprocity is evident as the coach demonstrates developing an authentic partnership and engaging in real-life situations (Knight, 2010).

The lack of clear, research-based job descriptions for instructional coaches, which may result in the principal's inconsistent use of their time and efforts to support teacher instructional improvement, was addressed in this study. I examined the principal's perception of their role to assign tasks to instructional coaches to improve instructional practice. Interview questions for this study used Knight's partnership principles theory to

determine how campus administrators decide how to use their IC to assist their school best. This basic qualitative study's problem and purpose were aligned with Knight's partnership theory in researching the importance of collaboration between campus administrators and coaches to determine effective processes in implementing an effective coaching program that will improve teachers' instructional practices. Asking semistructured interview questions helped in gaining a clear perspective on the school administrator in relation to challenges that they face when assigning roles to instructional coaches and how they view themselves as an intricate part of the success or failure of the program. Coding the interview transcripts using coding software determined themes, patterns, and trends among the different administrators' answers. Knight's partnership theory's conceptual framework allowed this study to contribute to the literature on helping school administrators construct IC programs that promote roles for instructional coaches that attend to research-based best practices.

This framework organized the literature review's relevance to research the history of IC and its intended use, IC models, benefits of IC, and obstacles that may arise in using instructional coaches for their intended purpose. The basis of the research question is to determine whether campus administrators support authentic partnerships among collaborating teachers, instructional coaches, and campus administrators to develop continued student instructional success. Using the aspects of Knight's partnership principles theory, campus administrators can assess their teachers' needs and plan strategically with the instructional coach to deliver effective embedded PL to promote students' growth and improve the culture and social environment of the school (Farver &

Holt, 2015). Understanding how the adult learners in the building learn best and applying those styles during PD opportunities provides avenues for the instructional coach to support teachers and build capacity to influence students and organizational outcomes (Farver & Holt, 2015).

Instructional coaches have complex, multifaceted roles that are challenging but significant to student outcomes (Dilmar, 2017). Campus administrators face deciding how coaches serve those they work with to improve teaching and learning; however, they often make their decisions with insufficient clarity and specificity, which leads to complications and barriers faced by instructional coaches (Dilmar, 2017). Coaching initiatives must allow coaches to build ongoing relationships with both campus administrators and teachers and maximize their time spent working with teachers to improve instruction (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Nature of the Study

This study used a basic qualitative study design. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), qualitative research helps the researcher develop a deeper understanding of a participant's social setting or activity perspective. This qualitative research was consistent with understanding the perceptions of campus administrators related to instructional coaches' intended uses.

This study was a basic qualitative inquiry regarding the attitudes, beliefs, values, opinions, and experiences of eight urban elementary school campus administrators about their challenges to implementing best practices when assigning instructional coach job responsibilities. Basic qualitative inquiry is derived philosophically from

constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interaction. Researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Percy et al. (2015), basic qualitative inquiry involves investigating people's reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences in the outer world. Basic inquiry reaches beyond the "what," "where," and "when" questions that quantitative analysis investigates. It also supersedes the "why" and "how" behind human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Basic inquiry is a powerful tool for learning more about people's lives and the sociohistorical context in which they live. This research method should possess applicability, confirmability, and consistency throughout the evaluation process (Noble & Smith, 2015). Percy et al. (2015) asserted that basic inquiry requires semi- or fully structured interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and content- or activity-specific participant observations. Basic inquiry's core focus is external and focused on the real world, as opposed to internal and psychological (Percy et al., 2015). The concepts of basic inquiry offer an opportunity for researchers to play with boundaries, use tools that established methodologies offer, and develop research designs that fit their epistemological stance, discipline, and particular research questions (Thorne, 2016).

The data collection used semistructured interviews, for which I prepared a limited number of questions in advance and planned to ask follow-up questions for clarity (Amankwaa, 2016). This questioning type helped I focus more on the planned items that spoke to the research question (Amankwaa, 2016).

Definitions

For a better understanding of the study, defining the following terms adds context to this research.

Instructional coaches: Teaching professionals whose jobs require working collaboratively with classroom teachers to improve their instructional practices to increase student learning (Knight, 2018).

Instructional coaching (IC): A form of ongoing, evidence-based PL used to provide teachers with specific resources to alter their instructional practices and beliefs (Castillo & Miller, 2018).

Collaborative learning: Emphasizes social and intellectual engagement and mutual responsibility, including instructional approaches involving joint and active efforts (de Back et al., 2020).

Campus administrator: Single administrative officer of a school who shapes the vision of academic success, creates a climate of changes, cultivates leadership in others, improves instruction, and manages the operation of the school (Krasnoff, 2015).

Assumptions

Assumptions in research are things that the reader will generally accept as either accurate or plausible (Wolgemuth et al., 2017). The first assumption in this study was the honesty of all participants. Providing participants with a consent document that included the opportunity to withdraw from the interview process at any time, along with a guarantee that all personal information, participation, and interview disclosures would

remain confidential, created a safe environment where participants felt free to answer openly and honestly (Saldana, 2016).

The second assumption was that all participants had a vested interest in the study with no other alternative motives or benefits to be gained from the study. Providing a clear explanation of the study's purpose and explaining that there would be no monetary or material gain ensured its accuracy (Saldana, 2016). I selected participants from a pool with no immediate or past connections, eliminating any biased responses or any motive to impress the interviewer (Wolgemuth et al., 2017).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this basic qualitative study focused on elementary campus administrators' perspectives on their challenges of providing instructional coaches with job responsibilities aligning with research-based practices. This study examined the administrators' understanding of IC programs. It offered suggestions to districts on the need for uniform descriptions of how to use coaches for maximum benefit. The scope of this study reflected the lack of research regarding effective uses of instructional coaches from the perspectives of eight urban elementary campus administrators. The decision to focus on campus administrators provided transparency and trustworthiness, as they could speak from their perspectives through a semistructured interviewing process. Transferability of findings relates to similar demographics experiencing the same phenomenon (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Participants were selected from an urban school district in a southeastern state, drawing from schools to reflect the district's and

state's socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Direct quotes from participants during interview sessions increased transferability (Roulston, 2018).

Delimitation for this study used Knight's (2010) theory of partnership. I considered using Knowles's theory of andragogy as a framework, in that it focuses on the importance of the environment in adult learning and the collaborative nature of such learning, which connects to the school environment (Knowles et al., 2020). I ultimately rejected Knowles's theory because the study's goal was to understand administrators' perspectives on the concept of IC and the ability to create a shared understanding with coaches assigned to their schools, which are not addressed in this theory (Knowles et al., 2020). Therefore, delimitations in this study was based on Knight's (2010) belief that adults learn best when doing the actual work with equity principles. Administrators and coaches share ideas and make decisions together as equals. Semi-structured interviews were used instead of surveys or observations to gain greater insight into the administrators' actual perspectives and maintain a timeline of a school semester to gather data.

Limitations

This basic qualitative study was limited to me as the primary tool for data collection and dependent on my skills (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Relying on my committee's knowledge and experience ensured that the research methodology met the rigorous standards required to be considered viable. Another limitation of this study was the small sample size, which is typical in qualitative studies. The participants' sampling was drawn from 38 elementary schools within a southeastern school district, with at least

two administrators per school for a total of 10 participants. The interviewing of at least 10administrators ensured data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). Mitigating geographic or socioeconomic limitations regarding transferability, participants' selection was from various regions of the district to reflect the larger southeastern state's socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Fusch et al., 2018).

My role as an interviewer was also deemed a limitation, in that my previous work as an instructional coach might have resulted in bias. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative researchers need to be aware of their own biases and perspectives and admit that human participant studies are often subject to unavoidable bias. Alleviating this limitation meant not choosing participants for whom I might have worked for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Maintaining an awareness of positionality concerning the study helped to eliminate potential bias. The use of a peer reviewer ensured that coding and analysis of data were free of bias (Saldana, 2016). The results of this study may also contribute to social change by increasing teacher retention and decreasing the teacher shortage that has worsened due to the national pandemic.

Significance

The study could assist district leaders and campus administrators with effective methods to follow research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities of instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. The research may provide insight to school districts as to how campus administrators perceive the role of academic coaches and protocols and roles that may be needed to establish an effective coaching program. District leaders should provide opportunities to build and create

positive campus administrator–coach relationships through PD where administrators learn about academic coaching and build relationships with academic coaches (Whitmore, 2017). Gaining a better understanding of academic coaches' roles and responsibilities for the betterment of the school will help build a culture and communication between administrators and coaches and promote cohesive leadership teams within the building (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about challenges in following research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. Knight's (2010) partnership theory provided the foundation for defining equality principles whereby both administrators and coaches share ideas, make decisions together, and learn from their collaboration. The problem was that, nationally, campus administrators struggle to implement best practices when assigning instructional coach job responsibilities. A fundamental assumption of the study was that all participants would be open and honest in their responses and have a vested interest in the study with no other motives or benefit expectations. A small sample size of eight elementary campus administrators from across an urban school district in a southeastern state participated in a semistructured interviewing process. The small sample size may limit transferability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study's potential significance includes information that may assist district and school leaders in understanding the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches that align with

research-based practices. Chapter 2 of this study contains a review of relevant literature to illustrate the importance and necessity of this study by highlighting the literature gaps regarding campus administrators' challenges in providing job responsibilities for instructional coaches aligning with research-based practices. The gap in practice is the lack of organizational knowledge that often leads to coaches’ barriers such as job assignments, workloads, and the inability to develop productive relationships with campus administrators and teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about challenges in following research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. Current research depicts the vast number of duties required of campus administrators to effectively run a school building (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). In many facilities across the southeastern state in which I conducted this study, campus administrators' responsibility is to establish and implement effective IC programs. Effective coaching programs require the campus administrator and coach to develop a shared understanding through relationship building that leads to healthy collaboration (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). Developing this shared understanding ensures that both campus administrators and instructional coaches play an intricate role in combating challenges in implementing an effective coaching program. The problem is that, nationally, campus administrators struggle to implement best practices when assigning instructional coach job responsibilities.

This study addressed the gap in campus administrators' understanding of IC in a southeastern state school district, and their challenges in assigning research-based practices to instructional coaches (Robertson et al., 2020). According to Anderson and Wallin (2018), there is a gap in practice in that there are no national norms governing IC practices for administrators to streamline roles and responsibilities to support teaching pedagogy and accelerate learning to close achievement gaps. Many school administrators lack background and experience in effectively using instructional coaches, revealing a

gap in practice in a metro-area southeastern school district (Johnson, 2016). The literature displayed in this chapter served as the foundation for this study. This chapter includes the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework for the study, and a literature review addressing the following key concepts: inception of IC, instructional coaches' roles, IC as PL, benefits of IC, challenges in IC, and campus administrators' roles in IC.

Literature Search Strategy

Various online search engines and academic databases provide resources relevant to coaching, collaboration, understanding, and effective coaching programs. EBSCOhost, Education Research, ERIC, PsycINFO, ProQuest, the Walden Library, and the Clayton State University Library provided information relevant to this study's development. Linking Google Scholar to the Walden and Clayton State libraries ensured access to current articles. Searching for keywords and phrases such as *developing instructional coaching programs, instructional coaching in elementary schools, instructional coaching benefits, principal's roles in instructional coaching*, and *instructional coach's roles* contributed to the body of literature in this study. Limited research on campus administrators' role in IC led to broadening the search to use phrases related to IC's intended purpose. Notwithstanding, the study focused on elementary school instructional coaches' job responsibilities.

Conceptual Framework

This study explored campus administrators' challenges in their elementary schools' IC programs. I sought to understand the campus administrators' understanding of partnering through collaboration, PD, and relationship building related to IC programs.

Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory captures learning's fundamental concepts through collaboration and PD. Knight's view was beneficial to this study, which framed the research literature regarding coaching (Desimone & Pak, 2017), collaboration (Connors-Tadros, 2019), PD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), and adult learning (Marsick et al., 2017).

Knight (2019) stated that the human yearning for caring connections, peace, equality, and freedom guides people's genetic equipment to build partnerships that structure their social beliefs. Partnerships are mindsets or paradigms of understanding how the world works (Knight, 2010). When campus administrators and instructional coaches offer opportunities to make meaningful choices, they move toward partnership (Knight, 2010). Relationships are genuinely productive when individuals feel valued and valuable, are mutually respectful and caring, and help each other grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (Knight, 2019). IC programs require both campus administrators and instructional coaches to work in a partnership paradigm to yield the program's most significant effect.

According to Knight (2010), the principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity are the frame upon which partnership learning is built and provide benchmarks by which administrators and coaches can decide how to construct the meaning of learning. Knight's seven principles derive from adult learning (Knowles et al., 2020) and organizational theory (Davis & Lopuch, 2016). To create an impactful IC program based on partnership, both campus administrators and instructional coaches must build relational trust by displaying and expecting the qualities of respect,

personal regard for others, competence, and personal integrity (Davis & Lopuch, 2016). Partnership learning recognizes that all participants' opinions must be valued (Knight, 2010).

Fullan (2018) asserted that the single most crucial factor in moving a school forward is that the campus administrator is also a learner. Campus administrators and instructional coaches must allow teachers to voice their needs and have a voice for their PD. Teacher-guided PD puts partnership relationships among campus administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers at the heart of school improvement initiatives (Knight, 2018). In contrast, when the option of choice does not exist in a partnership, the members without intention will dig their heels in and resist (Knight, 2018).

A partnership is an arrangement in which individuals agree to collaborate to advance their mutual interest (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2020), and collaboration occurs when two or more individuals create a shared understanding of an experience through the process of social interaction (Jornet & Roth, 2017). Knight's (2010) partnership principles of equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity provide a conceptual language that describes how administrators and coaches strive to work together to improve instructional strategies. In the partnership between campus administrator and instructional coach, both parties must possess a feeling of equality and responsibility for guiding teachers to use PL successfully (Knight, 2017). Equality does not mean that each participant has the same knowledge, but it means that each participant's opinion is essential and that every point of view is worth hearing (Knight, 2010). Therefore, in this study, I aimed to explore campus administrators' challenges

related to their role in implementing an IC program that promotes research-based practices.

A person's perspective is their interpretation of truth, and experience is compelling and influential in human thought and behavior (Johnson, 2016). Examining campus administrators' perspectives allows them to share not only their experiences, but also their honest thoughts connected to IC, the meanings that they have associated with IC, and their reflections on their understanding of IC (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The choice to explore campus administrators' perspectives, rather than experiences, stemmed from Knight's (2010) assertion that people operating within the partnership paradigm should believe that their partner's knowledge and expertise are as necessary as their own. Additionally, people should have faith in their partner's abilities to invent useful new applications of the content they are exploring.

Search strategies for literature to ground this study emerged from both the concept of understanding the research-based practices of IC and Knight's lens of partnership learning. The use of terms such as *collaboration* and *relationship-based coaching* reflects the idea that IC is a collaborative partnership that requires strong relational foundations. The literature review is organized by themes that emerged from both the literature itself and Knight's partnership theory application. For example, to fully understand the purpose and need for IC, the literature is organized under the theme "benefits of IC to campus administrators." This organizational strategy provided information vital to understanding the study and reflected the importance of meaning-making in context.

The application of Knight's theory to this study provided a solid framework to define the concepts of partnership and PL and shape the understanding and internalization of IC best practices and benefits (Robertson et al., 2020). The problem and purpose statements reflected campus administrators' knowledge of IC through Knight's (2010) lens. The research question in this study guided my effort to gather data to build upon previous research (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2020) and provide evidence of Knight's (2010) theory's applicability to the given setting. Knight's partnership theory also provided a clear strategy for collecting and organizing literature related to campus administrators building effective IC programs in their buildings.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Many studies have addressed IC as it relates to providing PL as a part of school reform (Hui et al., 2020; Johnson, 2016; Kurz et al., 2017), but few researchers have discussed campus administrators' understanding of instructional coaches' roles that yield the outcome of teacher efficacy. Obtaining campus administrators' perspectives through interviewing helped to build an awareness of their knowledge of what is needed to increase their understanding of IC and its benefits and the many barriers that instructional coaches may encounter during the process (Kraft et al., 2016). I sought to expose the need to foster collaborative partnerships between campus administrators and instructional coaches to aid in developing effective IC programs that help to improve teachers' instructional practices, which leads to the successful growth of the school. IC has become a phenomenon to ultimately develop a keen understanding of its implementation and the best practices for its implementation to ensure that the purpose is evident.

Numerous studies have provided vital research about the promise of IC (Jacobs et al., 2018), its need and importance (Galey, 2016), and the roles of the instructional coach (Knight, 2018); however, research has fallen short of furthering the knowledge and expertise needed by campus administrators to implement a program in their buildings effectively. According to Johnson (2016), campus administrators must possess a deep understanding of IC, their partnership in the role, and the importance of hiring instructional leaders who share and support their vision for success to implement IC programs effectively. The research in this study provided information on areas of strength in implementing IC programs and highlighted growth opportunities, with campus administrators voicing their thoughts and understandings of IC during the semistructured interviewing process. Providing unified research-based practices for developing collaborative partnerships between campus administrators and instructional coaches can influence IC programs that will work in any school district (Aguilar, 2017).

The Inception of Instructional Coaching

IC was developed as a response to national reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Reading First, Race to the Top, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). According to Knight (2018), school districts connect instructional strategies to student achievement. IC began as an alternative to traditional PL after it was learned that only 10% of teachers applied what they learned (Carter Andrews & Richmond, 2019). Federal and state funding was issued to increase

instructional efficacy and ultimately student achievement within an overall School Improvement Plan (SIP; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

During the standards movement, state and federal mandates for teacher quality and student achievement accountability were at the forefront (Johnson et al., 2019). IC has evolved to meet the demands of educational research, reforms, technology, and other advancements in education (Woulfin, 2018). Numerous aspects of educational practice and policy have pushed IC to the front lines for increasing teacher efficacy, learner outcomes, and overall school improvement (Walkowiak, 2016).

IC is intricate work because of the multiple definitions of what coaching is and the multiple capacities in which coaches are fluent for their practice, and the wide range of approaches or orientations to coaching or a coaching program (Knight, 2018). According to Knight (2018), district leaders should develop IC practices or protocols specific to their desired coaching program outcomes. There are many IC objectives, but Knight (2017) described coaching as a process that engages one professional to clarify and achieve goals. Killion and Harrison (2017) formalized the instructional coach as a person designated as a coach, a specialist, or a knowledgeable individual who has some formal preparation to develop a specific body of knowledge or pedagogy. Joyce and Showers (1981), two of the first researchers on IC, defined coaching as a process of providing companionship, delivering technical feedback, analyzing application, and adapting practice to students. Loman et al. (2020) described coaching as being performed by specifically trained teachers who observe other teachers and give them support, feedback, and suggestions. Although there are many IC models, the different models

provide a foundation for campus administrators and instructional coaches to develop their specific IC programs (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

IC supports various strategies designed to build collective leadership and continuously improve teacher instructional capacity (Kraft et al., 2018). IC models reflect a recognition that effective PL must be continuous with specific follow-up feedback to help teachers integrate their new knowledge and skills into classroom practices (Hammond & Moore, 2018). Knight (2018) advocated that IC accelerate growth and results by increasing teachers' knowledge and skill, ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality. Effective IC supports several activities designed to build collective leadership, continuous learning, and student learning (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

The Instructional Coach

Although instructional coaches are prevalent in many schools across the United States, there is no standard model or uniform definition of an instructional coach (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). Due to the myriad of ways in which the instructional coach works within a school district, it is challenging to create a standardized list of roles or responsibilities universally (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Instructional coaches serve as resource providers, visionary partners to school leaders (Johnson, 2016; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017), and the glue that binds theory, practice, and reforms. Instructional coaches implement leadership visions to create shared understandings for a desired change in approach, contributing to school improvement (Knight, 2018).

According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), a shared understanding and common language about the nature of a desired change and work specific to all stakeholders are

critical to school improvement. Instructional coaches work in concert with the campus administration to develop a shared understanding of effective research-based instructional practices (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019) and school improvement reforms, initiatives, or goals (Woulfin, 2018). Instructional coaches may spend time working with teachers and may have other administrative responsibilities. Their main task is to bridge instructional leadership by providing classroom modeling, supportive feedback, and observations of individual teaching practices (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

Current research defines the instructional coach as someone whose primary professional responsibility is to bring studied practices using various research methods into classrooms by working with adults rather than students (Killion & Harrison, 2017). However, school officials define coaches' roles differently depending on their local context, reform, and PL goals (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). According to Anderson and Wallin (2018), individual instructional coaches vary vastly, and there is little definitive understanding of what makes an instructional coach effective. Without clear goals that focus on students and teachers, instructional coaches may lose focus, especially when given a variety of additional duties (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

Research has shown that leaders in school districts with longstanding, effective IC programs realize that coaches require PL of their own to improve their knowledge and skills and keep up with their teachers and schools (Knight, 2018). Effective instructional coaches possess pedagogical knowledge, an understanding of how children learn, and strategies to improve student learning. Instructional coaches have content expertise and have a thorough knowledge of the subject area and the current curriculum. Instructional

coaches possess interpersonal capabilities, having the ability to build relationships that establish trust and credibility, and they tailor assistance to individual educators' needs (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). To achieve a standard understanding level, campus administrators must have a shared inquiry in working as partners and view instructional coaches as consumers of current research who serve as information resources and curators for teachers (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). While a well-prepared and talented instructional coach can accomplish a great deal, the influence of their work will not magnified if there is no partnership with an effective leader (Knight, 2018). The instructional coach and campus administrator must have a shared understanding and vision of expected instructional outcomes (Knight, 2018).

Killion and Harrison (2107) assert that coaching is intricate work because of the multitude of capacities in which a coach is fluent in the wide range of approaches to coaching and coaching programs. Instructional coaches must adopt a partnership approach where they implement equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity, with all they deem as partners (Knight, 2018). Instructional coaches must master collaborating, communicating, encouraging, listening, reflecting, implementing, and continuous learning (Knight, 2018). Instructional coaches shape team norms, facilitate the school-wide implementation of interventions, motivate the unmotivated, tackle difficult conversations, and stand in opposition to anything that is not good for students (Hammond & Moore, 2018).

The Many Roles of Instructional Coaches

Bierly et al. (2016) reveal that instructional coaches have complex, multifaceted roles. The roles can include taking on school leaders' instructional tasks, providing coaching and feedback teachers are not getting otherwise, and assuming many instructional development responsibilities that typically fall to campus administrators (Bierly et al., 2016). Instructional coaches can find themselves completing many complex tasks such as meeting with teachers, modeling in classrooms, observing, gathering classroom data, building relationships, preparing materials, facilitating teams, attending meetings, completing paperwork, and conducting hallway and lunchroom duties (Knight, 2018). Kraft et al. (2018) exclaim that each day brings instructional coaches special surprises, challenges, and rewards that test even the most resilient coach's flexibility.

Killion and Harrison (2017) provide insight into instructional coaches' ten significant roles, including resource provider, data coach, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, a catalyst for change, and learner. Providing a distinction among these IC roles defines the coach's job expectation, allows campus administrators to frame the knowledge and skills presented in PL, helps instructional coaches consider how to serve teachers best, and provides a way to measure the effectiveness and accountability of instructional coaches (Knight, 2018). With the expectation of performing so many roles, many instructional coaches feel the need to do everything (Walkowiak, 2016). IC without perimeters limits the depth of focus a coach can provide, limiting their influence on teacher quality and student success (Woulfin, 2018).

Instructional coaches as resource providers help teachers access and use resources for planning, instruction, and assessment. They offer teachers resources, recommend resources related to discussion topics, and share research on emerging trends and best practices with school staff (Killion & Harrison, 2017). In this role, instructional coaches provide PL that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students and serve as an essential human resource to their colleagues while developing trust and credibility with partners (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

Instructional coaches acting as data coaches help teachers use multiple data sources to inform instructional decision-making (Knight, 2017). Instructional coaches become experts in disaggregating data to move the school toward successfully meeting goals (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Using data to manage conversations with teachers helps Instructional coaches communicate objectively and provides evidence of strengths and weaknesses (Reeves & Chiang, 2019).

When instructional coaches serve as instructional specialists, they align instruction with curriculum to meet all students' needs (Killion & Harrison, 2017). In this role, instructional coaches affect the planning and implementation of classroom instruction to increase student learning (Reddy et al., 2019). In the role of instructional specialist, instructional coaches support teachers in designing various formative and summative assessments to make informed instructional decisions to address student learning gaps (Whitacre, 2018). Instructional coaches in this role are most effective when they believe all teachers can learn, just as they expect teachers to believe that all students can learn (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

Instructional coaches also serve in the role of curriculum specialist to ensure understanding and high-level implementation of the adopted curriculum (Killion & Harrison, 2017). The instructional coach's responsibilities in this role are substantial as the curriculum describes the concepts and skills needed to be learned by students, the sequence in teaching them, and the critical benchmarks for demonstrating achievement of the content (Remillard, 2016). According to Killion and Harrison (2017), instructional coaches as curriculum specialists emphasize students' learning content to ensure that students achieve identified learning outcomes standards and prepare them to be college and career-ready.

As classroom supporters, instructional coaches increase the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction for high levels of learning for all students (Killion & Harrison, 2017). These instructional coaches influence teacher practice and implement new strategies to increase student learning (Barkley, 2016). This role requires the instructional coach to model or demonstrate for teachers, co-teach, and observe and reflect on teaching (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

Instructional coaches as learning facilitators design, implement, and evaluate collective and individual, job-embedded, standards-based PL in a collaborative environment (Killion & Harrison, 2017). In this role, instructional coaches plan and implement a wide range of learning opportunities for teachers to develop teachers' capacity for effective teaching (Micheaux & Bosio, 2019). Instructional coaches engage teachers in building their professional knowledge, skills, and practices (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

When acting in the role of mentor, an instructional coach acculturates and supports the induction of new teachers, teachers new-to-the school, and other staff coupled with different functions (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Instructional coaches provide the moral, emotional, and psychological support new professionals need to gain confidence, efficacy, and a sense of belonging within their professional community (Knight, 2017). As mentors, instructional coaches acknowledge the individual differences among teachers and adapt their supports to teachers' needs. (Zugelder, 2019).

As a school leader, an instructional coach acts as a thought partner with teachers and building administrators to advance school change initiatives that focus on educator and student results to influence the school systematically (Killion & Harrison, 2017). These instructional coaches commit to the school vision and display attitudes, behaviors, and commitments that align with the school vision to make a positive difference (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). According to Barkley (2016), instructional coaches are the most crucial change agent in a school next to the campus administrator. In school buildings where instructional coaches are school improvement partners with campus administrators, students are more successful in learning.

Instructional coaches are often the catalyst for change where they change the current state to examine effects and alternatives to expand and refine practice (Eisler et al., 2016). In this role, instructional coaches seek to influence improvement by introducing new ideas and shifting interpretations and assumptions (Killion & Harrison, 2017). Instructional coaches often raise possibilities about how leaders could be more effective, move beyond the current state, and challenge mental models (Garmston &

Wellman, 2016). Furthermore, as learners, instructional coaches model continuous learning while keeping current as a thought leader in the school (Killion & Harrison, 2017). When instructional coaches learn and model continuous improvement, they can influence others through their actions and potentially influence teacher attitudes and behaviors (Martin, 2017). Instructional coaches as learners use reflection as a process to support their learning and avoid the potential of becoming complacent (Killion & Harrison, 2017).

Instructional Coaches as Professional Developers

National reforms mandate that states ensure high-quality PD for all teachers; however, there is no definition for high quality, nor has it been determined how it would be measured (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). According to Johnson (2016), PD expectations have ensured that they include job-embedded on-going activities. The activities should be available to all staff and support the broader school improvement plan. Instructional coaches should determine PD that is collaborative, data-driven, and regularly evaluated (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Instructional coaches serve as on-site professional developers who empower teachers through collaborative partnerships to incorporate research-based instructional methods into classrooms (Knight, 2018). Instructional coaches are responsible for accelerating learning and closing achievement gaps for students by building teachers' capacity (Hunt, 2016). Instructional coaches facilitate learning through the craft of problem-solving facilitated through dialogue, reflection, and analysis (Kraft et al., 2016).

Instructional coaches guide teachers through a reflective process of evaluating current beliefs and practices and new knowledge and skills to shift thinking and instruction (Nowell et al., 2017). Teachers acquire better dispositions, skills, and knowledge necessary to implement research-based practices with coaching as a facilitated PD (Vikaraman et al., 2017). Evidence-based PD practices will push for greater emphasis on increasing student outcomes through teacher quality (Johnson, 2016).

Instructional coaches play an increasingly important role in district-level policy implementation as "professional sense-makers" that develop expertise in academic content standards to help administrators and teachers translate them to classroom practice (Galey, 2016). Instructional coaches provide a new form of PD that is content-based and intended to support teachers in meeting instructional reform aims through situated, embedded work (Hui et al., 2020). Instructional coaches master facilitating teacher sense-making around standards-based reform, allowing teachers to gain a deeper understanding of new instructional ideas (Galey, 2016).

Through purposeful PD, instructional coaches build individuals and the organization (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). Instructional coaches focus on facilitating continuous and collaborative teacher learning around new and existing instructional practices and influence teachers' instructional beliefs and behaviors (Berger et al., 2016). In providing job-embedded PD, instructional coaches help teachers understand and utilize new curricula and pedagogies, use data to close gaps, and collaborate in groups around instruction (Billingsley et al., 2019). Instructional coaches essentially exist in an

intermediary space between encouraging self-directed learning and implementing specific instructional approaches promoting process over practice (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018).

Implementing effective IC programs takes time and resources, which means it is not always as extensive of a PD tool; however, teacher interaction through collectively participating in PD is a powerful way of creating a productive learning environment (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). PD is successful when teachers have more frequent opportunities to practice what they have learned and receive explicit data-driven feedback (Desimone & Pak, 2017). In conjunction with providing modeling, encouragement, and clear direction, instructional coaches must build active engagement and teacher leadership opportunities through PD (Billingsley et al., 2019).

Administrators' Role in Coaching

Research shows that behind every successful instructional coach is a supportive campus administrator (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). However, campus administrators often lack experience or background in utilizing instructional coaches (Johnson, 2016). According to Ippolito and Bean (2019), nothing halts instructional coaches' work more quickly than a neglectful or harmful campus administrator. Campus administrators must play an active role in creating a partnership with the coach to ensure improvement in the coaching program's teacher capacity and success (Knight, 2017). Campus administrators must first have a deep understanding of IC and their partnership in campus administrators' role to effectively implement and hire instructional coaches (Johnson, 2016).

In schools where IC programs succeed, campus administrators establish and maintain a building-wide atmosphere that encourages the adoption of coaching mindsets (Bean & Ippolito, 2016). Successful IC relies on the critical understanding that instructional coaches do not evaluate teachers or provide teachers' evaluation information (Knight, 2018). Campus administrators must understand instructional coaches' roles and responsibilities and communicate their vision for coaching to the entire school. (Ippolito & Bean, 2019).

Instructional coaches thrive in schools where people trust each other, beginning with the relationship between the campus administrator and the instructional coach (Knight, 2017). Campus administrators' beliefs and behaviors significantly affect teachers' relationships with their instructional coach (Hammond & Moore, 2018). Campus administrators must include instructional coaches and teachers in constructing a theory of action to support continual improvement and be willing to build and refine the school's IC model with a leadership team structure (Donaldson & Woulfin, 2018). Working in partnership with a team allows campus administrators to model the overall IC program (Saltzman, 2016).

Campus administrators can effectively build an IC culture by working with instructional coaches to create schedules that allow them to engage in one-on-one, small-group, and large-group IC activities to address individual and system needs (Berger et al., 2016). Campus administrators must be sensitive to IC's multi-dimensionality, and pivot toward a common understanding of coaching and the work coaches do (Marsh et al., 2017). Campus administrators must be careful not to assign instructional coaches to non-

coaching roles and responsibilities often, as this may send a message that IC is not a priority (Dinham, 2016). Collaborating in planning and PL experiences and encouraging coaches to post their schedules allow campus administrators to demonstrate their connectivity to the IC program and enables teachers to connect with instructional coaches (Saltzman, 2016).

Campus administrators need to reassure teachers that their work with Instructional coaches is confidential and not part of formal evaluations (Knight, 2018). Campus administrators should meet regularly with instructional coaches and frequently observe teachers understand how PD is changing classroom instruction (Knight, 2016). Campus administrators should avoid asking instructional coaches to report on individual teachers but should strategically observe teachers and teams make sense of how IC is influencing classrooms (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). Campus administrators could miss out on improving learning for all teachers if they do not clarify that IC is for everyone in the school and that coaching conversations with teachers are confidential (Dinham, 2016).

To build confidence among teachers in the instructional coach, school districts and campus administrators can facilitate PL for instructional coaches and establish an IC network that gives all instructional coaches a district opportunity to meet and discuss common dilemmas and brainstorm solutions (Spelman et al., 2016). Campus administrators need to recognize the need for instructional coaches to continue learning and supporting them by providing the necessary time and resources (Lochmiller, 2018). Simultaneously, it is just as crucial for campus administrators to receive the same growth opportunity as not all campus administrators possess the requisite skills and knowledge to

fill this pivotal role (Neumerski et al., 2018). Districts must recognize the need to support campus administrators as they take on new roles (Goldring et al., 2018). Campus administrators must understand that instructional coaches view them as critical to supporting their success and fostering a broader coaching culture (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). Instructional coaches want campus administrators who not only understand the value of IC but who support it as a priority for improving student learning in their school (Wang, 2017).

Benefits of Instructional Coaching

IC programs uniquely positioning instructional coaches to help teachers improve their practice and serve in leadership and capacity-building roles have a longstanding theory of action that holds up to rigorous evaluations (Dinham, 2016). IC can influence the way teachers teach positively, students learn, and the way campus administrators lead (Rathmell et al., 2019). IC is linked to social capital development in schools, although the exact mechanisms behind the process are unclear (Dinham).

IC plays a role in building student engagement by influencing what teachers do and, therefore, what students experience (Knight, 2019). IC is an effective and valued strategy in preparing staff to work in new ways and implementing a school-wide pedagogy (Rathmell et al., 2019). By implementing more personalized support to teachers, IC can enhance the classroom instruction students receive, thus ensuring that more students are taught by effective teachers and benefit from a high-quality education (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

IC allows educators to practice and gain confidence in using new instruction methods (Spelman et al., 2016). IC also creates a rich dialogue between instructional coaches and teachers to improve instruction quality through PD, collaboration, and reflection on continuous improvement (Hegedus et al., 2016). According to Peterson-Ahmad (2018), IC creates opportunities for constructing and transforming beliefs and practices grounded in research. This transformation solidifies and deepens understanding and skills used to teach, improves early instructional practices, and evaluates effects on student outcomes (Peterson-Ahmad, 2018).

Research has indicated that IC is valuable in increasing teachers' awareness and knowledge of best practices (Kyriakides et al., 2017). IC also builds teachers' knowledge base of current best practices while supporting them to adopt and implement new instructional practices (Tanner et al., 2017). Instructional coaches can build will, skill, knowledge, and capacity and create relationships in which teachers and campus administrators feel cared for and become capable of accessing and implementing new knowledge (Russell, 2017). IC allows teachers to apply their learning more deeply, frequently, and consistently while supporting them to improve their capacity and apply their knowledge to their work with both students and peers (Papay et al., 2020). Overall, instructional coaches provide opportunities and support for teachers' reflection on both the content learned and the learning process (Neumerski et al., 2018).

Challenges in Instructional Coaching

Despite the many benefits of IC, some challenges can hinder the services. Instructional coaches' role in system infrastructure can mean that organizational factors,

including top-down hierarchies and competing reform interests, impede their work (Wang, 2017). Research provides various position descriptions, rationales for IC, types of IC interventions, and approaches to teacher development, leading to no uniform set of instructional coaches' expectations (Knight, 2017). The unclarity of an instructional coaches' role leads to a chaotic path to the goal and limits teacher buy-in to the program (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2017).

Campus administrators' inability to provide an effective IC climate may limit coaches' and teachers' opportunities to engage in meaningful IC experiences (Hughes et al., 2017). Instructional coaches are often placed in the middle of potential conflicts between policy and practice and lack support and understanding from misinformed leaders to help them bridge gaps and overcome teacher resistance (Mitchell, 2019). Teachers are reluctant to change when they do not believe a change is needed, view past change as unsuccessful, perceive change as a threat, or feel change undermines their expertise (Woulfin, 2020). Instructional coaches must combat the fear of change and guide an entire school toward success by building relationships and trust and creating purpose where it may not exist (Woulfin & Jones, 2018). According to Gibbons and Cobb (2017), the instructional coach's goal is to provide embedded PD that promotes culture change, uses data to drive practice, encourages learning and reciprocal accountability, and supports collective leadership across the school.

Summary and Conclusions

School districts across the country implement IC programs to meet federal reforms and explore the benefits of the instructional coach's role. A role for an

instructional coach is to perform a wide range of daily assignments to bring about improvement and change (Johnson, 2016). According to Killion and Harrison (2017, campus administrators must focus on hiring effective instructional coaches who are flexible to the needs of individual teachers and able to drive the building or district level goals.

Effective IC in school buildings exists as a partnership model. Partnerships exist when there is equity of ideas and decisions between campus administrators and instructional coaches (Knight, 2018). Although there are clear-cut boundaries between the campus administrator and instructional coach's roles, the partners must respect each other's positions and work together for the same goal (Peterson-Ahmad, 2018). The campus administrator -instructional coach partnership must include clarity, communication, and collaboration for optimal success (Schafte, 2020).

IC is only as effective as the campus administrator makes it. According to Knight (2017), the campus administrator must genuinely believe that the instructional coach can make a difference and publicly make it known to the staff. If the campus administrator believes that the IC will make a difference, the teachers will too. Campus administrators must be guardians to ensure that the instructional coach can do a coach's work (Knight, 2017). Protecting the instructional coach's time from performing non-coaching activities is essential to view IC as important. According to Johnson (2016), campus administrators require a clear understanding of the opportunities and factors associated with IC.

A qualitative study was needed to examine the perspectives of campus administrators' understanding of IC to explore the gap in practice of lack of

organizational knowledge that often lead to the coach's barriers such as job assignments, workloads, and the inability to develop productive relationships with campus administrators and teachers. Chapter 3 outlined the qualitative methodology for this study, aiming to address the research gap related to many school administrators lacking background and experience in effectively using instructional coaches. This chapter reviewed the purpose of the research and the questions it aims to answer. Chapter 3 discussed the role of the researcher and the participants involved in the study. The chapter discussed the instrumentation and concluded by explaining the procedures for recruitment and data collection.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about assigning and aligning research-based practices with job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. In this section, I explain how the research was designed and describe my role as the researcher. A discussion of the setting, population, and participant selection helps provide a clear understanding of the methodology. I share the type of coding and analysis used and explain the software used to determine patterns and phenomena. Further, I explain the strategies used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to prove trustworthiness. A description of ethical procedures used throughout the study concludes this section of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

Using a basic qualitative design provided understanding of how campus administrators view the purpose of IC and their roles in creating effective programs in their buildings. Basic qualitative research was used to gain insight and explore the participants' experiences and perspectives in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research design supported the research questions because it required the building administrators to describe their perceptions of IC and reflect on their roles.

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: What are campus administrators' perceptions of their role in implementing an IC program that promotes research-based practices aligned with instructional coaches' job responsibilities?

An IC program's success or failure strongly depends on the campus administrator's support and participation (Knight, 2018). The research questions helped gain insight into the campus administrator's understanding of the instructional coach's role and research-based strategies that need to be implemented to build vital programs. The questions also revealed the participants' thoughts about the role that they play in implementing and sustaining the IC programs in their buildings.

Examining the participants' perceptions established the appropriateness of conducting basic qualitative research for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Ravitch and Carl (2016), basic qualitative research supports gaining perspectives on a person's experiences, creating their world's perspectives, and their meanings. I collected basic qualitative data through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study due to interviews being used for data collection. Conversely, both narrative and ethnographic research explain an individual's perspective. However, narrative research focuses on individual stories and settings of the participant's culture, and ethnography focuses on the culture and unique characteristics of a group over a significant period (Creswell, 2018), which were not the focus of this study. Quantitative research was not appropriate for this study because it focuses on quantifying data collection and analysis rather than exploring building administrators' perceptions (Goertzen, 2017). After all considerations, a basic qualitative study was the best choice for this study.

Role of the Researcher

A basic qualitative researcher's role is to access participants' thoughts and feelings while safeguarding both the participant and the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2018) explained that the researcher's role is critical because of collecting pertinent data and implementing the analysis of these data. The researcher must conduct credible research to ensure the study's dependability and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2018).

I explored metro-area elementary campus administrators' perceptions of their understanding of IC programs and their challenges with implementing best practices when assigning instructional coach job responsibilities. I presently serve as a 1st-year elementary campus administrator at a Title I school. Before becoming a campus administrator, I worked as a Title I instructional coach at another Title I school in a different school district. My duties included being an instructional specialist, data specialist, professional developer, and teacher mentor.

I was aware of my biases due to past experiences as an instructional coach and committed myself to disregarding personal experiences to examine and understand the participants' position. As a present assistant campus administrator and former instructional coach, I challenged my beliefs to ensure that preconceived ideas did not become part of the research. The use of journaling and member checking addressed research bias in this study. I had no personal relationships with any of the participants. Although all participants worked in the same school district, no participants worked directly with or over me. The participants' familiarity was a result of district-level

training and meetings, and all participants actively volunteered without incentives to participate in the study.

As the researcher, I sought to explore my participants' perspectives to gain insight into their understanding of IC and their role in implementing successful school programs. I worked to safeguard the identity of my participants and secured the data obtained from interviews. As the researcher, I understood that it was my responsibility to eliminate bias and beliefs to maintain this study's credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness.

Methodology

This basic qualitative research explored elementary building administrators' perspectives about IC using a semistructured interviewing process. Conducting interviews helped in better understanding the participants' opinions, behaviors, and experiences (Ravich & Carl, 2016). This section includes information about the participants, the instruments used in collecting data, and the procedures used to collect the data.

Participant Selection

The participants in this basic qualitative study included eight elementary campus administrators with 2 or more years of experience. According to Creswell (2018), basic qualitative studies should have five to 25 participants. As a current administrator in the district, I only interviewed participants who did not supervise, work for, or work alongside me in any manner. The only connection between me and the participants was the district in which we worked. Each campus administrator worked at different elementary schools within the same school district. I used convenience sampling to select

participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that convenience sampling depends on a researcher selecting a specific sample due to participants being conveniently available to participate to gain insight into a particular phenomenon.

Participants met certain criteria to participate in this basic qualitative study. The participants must have (a) been employed full time as an elementary building administrator and (b) have been employed in the position for at least 2 years. Using emails from the school's website, I contacted campus administrators to ask if they were currently employed full time and the number of years that they had been a building administrator. After verifying qualifications, I asked the participant if they would like to participate in the study. I invited campus administrators who met the criteria to participate in the study and sent a consent form.

All elementary campus administrators in the district received invitations to participate in the study. Once approval was received from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I emailed campus administrators a letter about the study and reminded them about the two criteria. Once all qualifications were clear, I scheduled interviews. My interview questions aligned with the research questions, and I journaled to notate any issues with the questions or sequencing questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Instrumentation

I used semistructured open-ended interview questions as a data collection method. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed to develop themes. Interviews are often used in qualitative studies to understand a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), research questions guide semistructured

interviews; however, they are not exact in their wording. Bodgan and Biklen (2007) explained that qualitative designs are best suited when research questions are open ended and focus on how participants derived their perspectives. Aligning the interview questions with the research questions helped in determining the campus administrators' understanding of IC and their ability to established research-based responsibilities.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Procedures for Recruitment

After receiving approval from Walden University's IRB, I sent emails to the district superintendent through the Department of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability. As the researcher, I explained the research and requested permission to conduct the study. Upon permission, I sent an email to all elementary school campus administrators in the district with instructional coaches, explained the research, and invited them to participate in the interview process. Campus administrators who responded yes to the email received a formal letter of invitation and a consent form stating that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I encouraged participants to respond within a week and sent follow-up emails until eight to 10 campus administrators agreed to interviews.

An interview was scheduled with each participant, and the participants chose neutral locations other than their homes. Before each interview, I gave the participant a consent form to ensure that they understood their rights as research participants and the interview protocol with example interview questions. Before beginning interviews, I

tested recording devices to ensure working status and used the voice recording iPhone application as a backup recording.

Participation

Interviews began with a brief overview of the study's purpose and the research questions, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time. I took notes in a research journal during and after the interview to help create an ongoing and structured record of reflections, questions, and ideas (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants received a copy of the interview protocol with example interview questions included. I transcribed audio recordings using Google Doc Voice Typing and uploaded the transcripts into NVivo software for analysis and coding (Saldana, 2016).

The interview was semistructured using open-ended questions that were aligned to the research questions but were not exact in their wording (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The questions determined the understanding of IC and the role that the campus administrators played in their IC programs. Other probing questions were used if clarification or further explanation to a response was needed. At the end of the study, all participants received a summary of the study's results to determine their data's accuracy, and an opportunity for a brief exit interview to discuss results was extended.

Data Collection

Participants who met the selection criteria provided data for this study by participating in a semistructured interview process. Campus administrators who consented to be interviewed were provided with the details for the interviews. Before the 1-hour interviews began, participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the

study at any time. I informed participants that no identifying information was used in this study to protect their confidentiality. This protection was provided to elicit open and honest responses.

All interviews were recorded, and field notes were taken to maintain credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Recordings from each interview were transcribed and prepared for coding. A summary of the interview transcriptions was shared with participants to ensure that responses were transcribed correctly before coding and provided a high level of trustworthiness.

Data Analysis Plan

This basic qualitative research included data analysis that focused on making sense of the data found to answer the research questions aligned to the framework and related to the literature (Yin, 2014). Interview transcripts and journal notes provided information pertinent to conducting a thematic analysis using a six-phase process (Braun et al., 2019). According to Braun et al. (2019), steps included in this detailed process include (a) becoming familiar with data through multiple readings of the transcripts and notes; (b) determining codes by chunking data into smaller sections; (c) generating themes from determined codes; (d) reviewing themes to determine relationships; and (e) defining themes.

In the initial phase, the goal was to become intimately familiar with the data; therefore, transcripts and journal notes were read a minimum of two times (Braun et al., 2019). Notes taken during readings were used in the second phase of determining codes. Open coding was used to break the data into distinct sections to look for specific words or

phrases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The second round of coding went line by line to enhance the data's details and compose a master-coding list to conduct axial coding to group codes and find relationships (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The third phase allowed for generating themes based on discovered topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning continually (Saldana, 2016). In Phase 4, potential themes were reviewed to ensure validity (Braun et al., 2019). Once themes were verified in phase 5, the themes were named and summarized, and specific examples were provided. In the final phase, a description of the findings was provided to answer the research questions aligned to the framework and literature (Braun et al., 2019).

The use of semistructured open-ended questions during interviewing allowed campus administrators to discuss their IC perceptions honestly. Each campus administrator shared their perspectives on their role in the IC program's success in their building. The open coding process's use added to the study's validity and credibility (Saldana, 2016).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Threats to Validity

According to Polit and Beck (2014), a study's trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the study's quality. Ensuring that all participants met the qualifications to participate in the interviewing process and ensuring that the environment allowed the participants to answer openly and honestly contributed to trustworthiness. This basic qualitative research used specific criteria to determine whether the research findings could be trusted (Korstjens & Moser,

2018). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used within this study to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility was one of the most important criteria of this study, as it depended on confidence in the study's truth (Polit & Beck, 2014). This study established credibility by encouraging participants to answer interview questions without bias. In the same manner, I did not inflict bias based on my experience as an instructional coach, or as a current administrator. Coding for similar trends, themes, and patterns and member checking helped to ensure an explicit understanding of the meaning of the participants' answers without any bias from me (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Ensuring credibility was paramount to the success of this study.

Transferability

To ensure transferability in this study, a deep description of the research questions and setting allows readers to transfer aspects of the outcomes to other contexts or settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In describing the setting in detail and providing excerpts from the interview transcripts as support for each theme, I sought to help the reader transfer the data to new research with other respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ensuring participants' qualifications and vast experiences and providing a thorough description of the interview sessions ensured this study's transferability.

Dependability

According to Polit and Beck (2014), research dependability provides consistency and reliability through well-documented procedures, allowing others to follow, audit, and

critique the research process. Interview data, member checks, peer debriefing, and journaling ensured the strength of dependability in this research. Interview transcripts were used to determine accurate data collection from study participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Peer briefing allowed confirmation of interpretations and coding of data and ensured accuracy in categories' development (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Journaling allowed an opportunity to audit reflections, decisions, questions, and detailed accounts of how the study was conducted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Continuing to analyze data to reach saturation solidified this qualitative research's dependability (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Confirmability

All biases and assumptions related to IC and the roles campus administrators play were clearly stated to provide transparency and ensured this study's conformability in the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Establishing confirmability through peer-debriefing and reflective journal writing helped the reader understand how data and interpretations of the findings were derived (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Conducting an audit of the interview transcript also provided confirmability in this research. Upon completion of the full dissertation, a 1 to 2-page, audience-appropriate summary of the results was shared with all study participants to ensure confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

To adhere to and abide by all research guidelines and ethical considerations, the use of Walden University's Research Ethics Approval Checklist helped to anticipate and manage possible ethical concerns. No contact with participants was made or data collected before IRB approval to ensure that all participants were protected from harm,

received informed consent, guaranteed confidentiality, and ensured professional honesty. Upon research approval, participants were continuously informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without consequences to prevent any psychological harm to participants (Saldana, 2016).

Information related to the study and its purpose was provided to the participants to read and helped to guide their decision to participate thoroughly. All participants were provided with a properly constructed informed consent form containing possible benefits and risks to participants, the study's process, the right to stop participating in the study without consequences, limits of confidentiality, and the contact information of the researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The information provided in the informed consent increased adherence to ethical standards and decreased the risk of harm to participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

One-on-one interviews were conducted in an agreed-upon location with a warm and inviting setting. At the beginning of the interview, the research protocol was reviewed to help the participant understand what will occur during the interview duration (Saldana, 2016). A reminder of the right to withdraw any time without consequence was given again to ensure the participant is voluntarily willing to participate.

Participants were made aware of the protection of confidentiality. No names of participants or school identities were shared in this research. Participants were assigned a number code to be used in place of their names to protect their identities. Once the participant was assigned the database provided number, their name and information were no longer used, and the participant was no longer identifiable (Saldana, 2016). All

transcripts were saved in NVivo, printed, and stored in a secure location accessible only by me. All data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years, and all findings were presented in aggregated form with no personal identifiers (Saldana, 2016).

Summary

This basic qualitative study explored the campus administrator's challenges in aligning research-based best practices with the instructional coaches' job responsibilities in a metro-area southeastern state school district. This chapter included details related to the research design and rationale, my role as the researcher, and the methodology of selecting participants and instrumentation. Exploration of recruitment procedures, interview participation, and data collection methods were reviewed in chapter 3. Interviews assisted with gaining a better understanding of the participant’s perceptions of IC. Chapter 3 gave a thorough explanation of ensuring trustworthiness and implementation of ethical procedures and steps taken to ensure credibility and dependability. Chapter 4 presents and reports the data and results to support and address the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

In this basic qualitative study, I aimed to gain understanding of the perspectives of elementary school administrators on their impact on the success of IC programs in their schools by assigning and aligning their job responsibilities. According to Kane and Rosenquist (2019), the role of an instructional coach can often be inconsistent, and directives given to coaches vary among administrators. To address the gap in the literature and practice, I investigated administrators' perceptions of aligning research-based practices with instructional coaches' job responsibilities. The research question guiding this study was the following: What are administrators' perceptions on the challenges to implementing best practices in assigning duties to instructional coaches? Chapter 4 includes the setting of the study, data collection and analysis methods, results, and a description of evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The study took place in a southeastern state with eight elementary school administrators, within an urban school district of 40 elementary schools serving approximately 28,000 students. Each interview took place virtually via Zoom in an environment chosen by the participant. Interview times were communicated through email, and a Zoom invite was attached. An invitation email was sent to all elementary school administrators in the district to their district email addresses from my Walden University email address. Ten elementary administrators agreed to participate, but two retracted their offer. One administrator explained that she was too overwhelmed with her current work obligations. Another administrator shared that she had to go out on

emergency family medical leave and would not be able to participate. The eight administrators who agreed to participate in the study were sent consent forms electronically, and all eight responded "I consent" via email.

A total of eight elementary school administrators agreed to participate in the research study. Participants (P1–P8) had been administrators for periods ranging from 3–10 years. However, their years in education ranged from 9–32 years. All participants had obtained a specialist degree, while two held a doctorate. Of the eight participants, three were male and five were female. All but two participants had experience as instructional coaches. Demographic information is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Participant	Gender	Highest degree	Years in education	Years as an administrator	Instructional coaching experience
P1	Male	Specialist degree	23 years	7 years	Yes
P2	Male	Specialist degree	13 years	4 years	No
P3	Female	Specialist degree	12 years	3 years	No
P4	Male	Specialist degree	20 years	3 years	Yes
P5	Female	Doctoral degree	32 years	7 years	Yes
P6	Female	Specialist degree	16 years	7 years	Yes
P7	Female	Doctoral degree	17 years	3 years	Yes
P8	Female	Specialist degree	20 years	4 years	Yes

Data Collection

A total of eight elementary school administrators from the same school district participated in one Zoom video conference semistructured interview with open-ended questions. The interviews lasted approximately 30–40 minutes, and the data collection process took approximately 3 weeks. Each interview was audio recorded using the Zoom recording device and was backed up using the Voice Memos app on my iPad. The

interviews began with a review of the study's purpose and the research question. Each participant was reminded of their right to conclude the interview at any time without consequence.

Table 2

Interview Location, Frequency, and Duration

Participant	Location	Frequency	Duration
P1	Zoom meeting	Single interview	30 minutes
P2	Zoom meeting	Single interview	30 minutes
P3	Zoom meeting	Single interview	30 minutes
P4	Zoom meeting	Single interview	35 minutes
P5	Zoom meeting	Single interview	45 minutes
P6	Zoom meeting	Single interview	45 minutes
P7	Zoom meeting	Single interview	40 minutes
P8	Zoom meeting	Single interview	30 minutes

Interviews began with a background question asking participants about their work experience and educational background, followed by questions aligned with the research question (see Appendix C). Research notes were taken and kept in a research journal during and after the interview. After each interview, I thanked the participant for taking time out of their busy schedule to participate and explained that I would share a one- to two-page summary of the results at the end of the study for them to review the accuracy of their data and email any questions or concerns they might have concerning the findings. According to Candela (2019), member checking is commonly used in qualitative research to maintain validity.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed using Sonix transcription software, and data were organized using a highlighting technique. A printed copy of each transcript was kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Data Analysis

After transcribing each interview, I followed the five-step thematic analysis process. According to Braun et al. (2019), the steps of this process include (a) becoming familiar with the data by reading and rereading the transcripts, (b) determining codes by reducing the data into smaller chunks, (c) generating themes, (d) reviewing themes, and (e) defining themes.

Step 1: Becoming Familiar With Data

According to Braun et al. (2019), in order to understand the data, transcripts and journal notes should be actively read. Step 1 required me to read all transcripts and accompanying journal notes at least twice to become familiar with the data. While reading the transcripts, I took notes in the margins to record key concepts or phrases relevant to the administrator's perceptions of their role in implementing a coaching program that promotes research-based practices. Rereading and coding helped me become familiar with the data and determine which parts were significant to the research question before taking Step 2.

Step 2: Determining Codes

In the second step, I determined codes from the data by reducing the data into smaller chunks (Braun et al., 2019). During the third reading of transcripts, I applied open coding to the raw data by highlighting repeated words or phrases and assigning a code word or phrase to the highlighted text. Code words and phrases were then circled to help differentiate them from original margin notes. A list of codes was then created within the text. The codes are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

First Coding Cycle

Interview question	Open code
2	Guide teachers, model, facilitate, teach best practices, work hand-in-hand with teachers and administration, assist, support, fill in the gaps, provide research, improve pedagogy, mentor, provide feedback, create next steps, provide instructional support, support classroom management, support instructional planning, help teachers navigate, using data to guide instruction, content mastery, guide, provide expertise, establish strengths and weaknesses, improve raw talent, provide foundational skills
3	Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) scores, assessment data, survey for needs, parent and student feedback, teacher needs, differentiation, diagnostic assessments, teacher assessments for understanding, supplementary information, test-out process, walkthroughs, observations, teacher ranking, build schedules, weekly meetings, needs assessment, develop teacher plans, teacher input, professional development, modeling, teacher support, district support, plan with the leadership team, goal-oriented, tier teachers, progress monitor, use data to drive coaching process, meet with leadership monthly, revamp plan if needed, observe, collaborate, tier teachers, coaching cycle, plan, identify weak areas based on data, decide ultimate goal for the year, identify features that need support to reach the goal
4	Support teachers; make copies; differentiate instruction; support teachers; encourage teachers; research-driven; liaison among teachers, administration, and district; support system; go-to person; an extension of administration; a buffer between administration and teachers; advocate for teachers; support instruction and planning; data-driven; provide feedback; model; strategize; advocate and support teachers; lead; navigate; mentor; build relationships; observe; provide feedback; collect and analyze data
5	Leadership, instructional, research best practices, model, observe, budget, transportation, textbooks, testing, lunch duty, discipline, teacher meetings, observe, data, tracking trends from data, Title I paperwork, parent meetings, observe, monitor lesson plans, build leaders, build capacity, lead, professional development, instructional support, instructional programs, technology, modeling lessons, instructional planning, data, resources, Title I facilitator, requisitions, parent meetings, observations, data, professional development, instructional strategies based on data, lead initiatives, liaison, textbooks
6	No, most tasks are not grounded in instruction; Yes, promotes positive learning culture throughout the building; Yes, support teacher progress, student progress, data-driven; Yes, growth in teachers being coached; Yes, teacher and student improvement; Yes, building trust, better communication; Yes, accountability and teacher improvement
7	Mentor, preparing them for next steps in their careers, bounce ideas off of each other, transparent, team, open-door policy, work together, solution-focused, productive, work together to help one another, communicate, respectful, work together, open communication, brainstorm, family-oriented, team player, trusting, candid, focused on student achievement, respectful

Interview question	Open code
8	Time, human resources, teacher resistance, time, district initiatives, paperwork, federal guidelines, time restraints, too many tasks, human resources, time, human resources, personnel capability, time, task, teacher needs, time, teacher buy-in, work-ethic, task, time
9	Hiring the right people, assessing what we are doing, authentic to needs, meeting consistently, following district and state curriculum, ensuring understanding, differentiate based on needs, challenging environment, allowing for mistakes, communication, professional development, time to practice, following up, student growth, progress monitoring, feedback for improvement, meeting regularly, student achievement, collaboration, observations with feedback, data analysis, growth in teachers, data, monitoring, grounded in standards, relevant and engaging, flexible, reflective, propelling instruction
10	Data, results, student achievement, growth, teacher retention, teacher growth, student growth, assessment data, growth over time, data achievement, teacher and student feedback, data, test scores
11	Do not overwhelm instructional coaches, get out of the way and let them do their jobs, cultivate instructional coaches, provide resources and support from administration, do not burn them out, be intentional, instructional coaches are not valued and are unappreciated, overworked, provide total support from administration, understand that coaching is important and needed, safeguard instructional coaching, provide support from administration, a need for a district-level support system for instructional coaches

The charts' codes were developed from words or phrases that participants continuously repeated. These codes were highlighted to determine a new category. The results were reviewed and highlighted into smaller chunks and used in Step 3 to determine themes.

Step 3: Generating Themes

In step 3, I searched for relationships among the open codes. When I found similarities, I highlighted those codes with the same color to create a new category. Consistent marginal notes were made as a reminder to stay focused on the ideas that added meaning to the research question (Miles & Huberman, 2019). Table 4 identifies the four axial categories with the patterns that emerged.

Table 4

Second Coding Cycle

Codes	Category	Themes
Coaching cycle Data collection Data analysis Instructional planning Access resources Communication Professional development Observation Feedback Mentoring Testing accountability	Roles	Support
Trust Confidentiality Advocate Liaison Parent support Connections Climate	Relationship	Building relationships
Progress monitoring Accountability Follow up Feedback Data Communication	Monitoring	Developing and managing
Time Human resources Teacher resistance District mandates Numerous tasks	Barriers	Challenges

Similar phrasing during the data coding led to the four themes identified in the chart. Participants consistently agreed that the overall job of the instructional coach was to support the teacher and, in most cases, the functioning of the building. It was also a consensus that for coaches to provide support effectively, they must first build trusting relationships with teachers and administrators. Once relationships are established, the administrator and coach must work together to develop and manage the program as a team. The program must align with the mission and vision of the school. Even with a

well-developed plan, participants agreed that there are always challenges that may cause a revision of the program.

Results

Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory served as the framework for this study. According to Varpio et al. (2020), a study's conceptual framework will answer why the research is essential and what contradictions the findings will make to what is already known. Through analyzing the dimensions of the conceptual framework and data collected from the interviews, four themes emerged and are discussed in the results. The research question guiding this study was the following:

RQ1: What are administrators' perceptions on the challenges to implementing best practices in assigning duties to instructional coaches?

Theme 1: Supporter

All eight administrators agreed that the main role of the instructional coach was to support teachers. Each participant believed that support included (a) facilitating learning, (b) supporting classroom instruction, and (c) collecting and analyzing data. As it relates to support, it was the belief of P1 that support also included contributing to the daily functions of the building and total educational program. Some of the tasks mentioned were working with the budget, transportation, textbooks, testing, discipline, and other duties. The aforementioned tasks were believed by P1 to prepare instructional coaches for their next career endeavor while supporting the school's functions.

Facilitating Learning

The participants discussed how instructional coaches facilitate learning by helping teachers improve their instructional skills through PD opportunities, collaborative planning sessions, and working with smaller learning communities. Several participants, P1, P3, P4, and P5, discussed how they differentiated PD according to the needs of the teachers. Teacher needs were based on a need assessment completed by teachers themselves. Teachers were then allotted time to practice the learned skills, and instructional coaches were observed to give immediate feedback. Other participants, P2, P6, P7, and P8, mentioned that instructional coaches in their buildings provided PD based on a school-wide focus. In his school, P2 had coaches focus on project-based learning as a school-wide focus. However, in her school, P6 had coaches focus on content mastery, and P7 and P8 focused on guided reading and writing, as indicated by their data. These participants believed that their data showed that instruction would benefit more by focusing on an overall goal. Teacher evaluation scores and student data were the driving force behind what PD instructional coaches provided for teachers at P1's school. It was stated by P1 that "If the instruction was a weak point for a particular teacher, that is what the instructional coach focused on, but if classroom management were weak for another teacher, that would be the focus for the instructional coach." Instructional coaches in the buildings of each participant helped to facilitate learning by providing PD for teachers, locating and providing resources, and using data to drive instruction.

Supporting Classroom Instruction

The participants believed that supporting classroom instruction was the most important support provided by instructional coaches. To explain classroom support in their schools, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7 all discussed the process of tiering teachers to establish coaching needs and devising a coaching cycle with the teacher in a one-on-one setting to provide the support based on the teacher's individual goals and needs. After a few weeks of modeling, coteaching, observing, and providing feedback, the focus area would be assessed, and both teacher and instructional coach would decide if more work is needed or if a new instructional goal could be set. It was mentioned by P4 that "teachers were encouraged to record lessons to view later to assess their actions during the lesson and the student's actions." The instructional coach then allowed the teacher to critique the lesson and list strengths and weaknesses. For teachers, watching the recorded lesson allowed them to see areas of growth for themselves actively. The use of the gradual release model by instructional coaches was discussed by P5. The coach would model the expected instruction during a gradual release while the teacher observed. Next, the teacher and the coach would coteach a lesson, with the coach giving the teacher support in practicing the expected instructional strategy. Finally, the teacher would teach independently. The coach would provide immediate feedback on strengths and weaknesses, and the two would later meet to discuss suggestions. Providing immediate feedback allowed the teacher to adjust instruction and improve overall lesson effectiveness (Knight, 2018).

Collecting and Analyzing Data

All participants agreed that the instructional coach collecting and analyzing data supported the overall educational program. Participants believed that every decision regarding instruction should be data-driven. Teachers created a professional goal at P6's school, and the instructional coach supported the teacher through achieving their goal. In the interview, P6 stated, "Instructional coaches guided teachers in analyzing their data to determine where they were, and what they needed to do to get better." Each goal-oriented conversation between the instructional coach and teacher was solely based on data results to determine if instructional practices were working or not and the next steps to move on or remediate. It was explained by P1 and P2 that their instructional coaches guided teachers through the process of keeping data records to determine if their instructional strategies were improving student performance on assessments. If the student data improved, the instructional coach concluded that the teacher's effectiveness was also improving. All participants expressed the use of data to determine areas of support for specific teachers. Instructional coaches were expected to improve teacher effectiveness by focusing on the need suggested by the data.

Theme 2: Building Relationships

For Theme 2, all eight (100%) participants deemed relationship building a vital part of their IC program. Each participant thought it was important for the instructional coach to have an open relationship with teachers, but it was just as important to build a relationship with the administration. In regard to relationship building, P1 explained that a part of the relationship he builds with the instructional coach is one of growth. This

participant believed that it is important to model, guide, and provide practice with tasks that prepare the coaches to grow in their careers. He stated, "the relationship I built with them is one to show them how to present themselves to their colleagues as leaders." It was also mentioned by P3 that a coaching type relationship between her and the instructional coach, where the instructional coach is a part of a building-level leadership academy. She stated, "the coach will shadow me and have days where she will become the assistant principal in charge." While support was deemed the most important job of the instructional coach, there was a unanimous agreement that without trusting relationships between instructional coaches and teachers, support of any kind would not exist.

While P1 and P3 built career goal relationships with their instructional coaches, all participants agreed that instructional coaches must establish a relationship of trust with teachers. Each participant allowed autonomy for the instructional coach to establish a transparent relationship with teachers. Instructional coaches knew that their interactions and conversations with teachers were confidential and created an understanding that they were there to serve as support, not to evaluate. All participants also agreed that they must have a trusting relationship with the instructional coach. Administrators know that although there is confidentiality between the instructional coach and the teacher, the instructional coach will keep them abreast of the tone of the building and ensure that the best interest of the students is always at the forefront. During interviews, the participants believed that instructional coaches should liaise between the administration and teachers and between the district and the school. It was mentioned by P2 that the instructional

coach is the "lifeline" to let administrators know what is needed to support instruction throughout the building. During her response, P3 explained that the instructional coach ensures that the school is abreast of new district mandates and current pedagogy.

Every participant believed that the instructional coach was the number one advocate for the teachers. It was explained by P5 that the instructional coach in her building "comes for battle" to fight for the teachers' requests, such as new software and technology and additional time to complete certain mandated tasks. Although it was believed that administration had a good relationship with teachers, P7 stated that her teachers would go to the instructional coach before coming to administration because they know that the instructional coach gives 100% of her efforts to get them what they need. All participants believed they had established an excellent relationship with their instructional coaches because they are transparent, goal-oriented, empathetic, sympathetic, collaborative, and kindred.

Theme 3: Developing and Managing

For Theme 3, five out of eight participants mentioned a strategic method for developing their IC programs. Five of the eight participants disclosed that their programs begin with observing every teacher in the building and coming back as a leadership team to tier each teacher using an ability rubric, scoring them on a scale of one to four. Teachers scoring on the lower two tiers were given an intentional coaching cycle, and all other teachers were given support where needed. The process allowed the administration and the instructional coach to have more laser focus and allowed the instructional coach to be more intentional with their support. The participants mentioned that continuous

collaboration between administration and instructional coach is key to shifting the program to where it needed to be. One participant who was an assistant principal, stated that her instructional coach often felt like collaboration and communication were excellent between the two of them, but almost nonexistent with the principal, which hindered the program. It was mentioned by P3 and P6 that they conducted a needs assessment at the beginning of the year to allow teachers to express their support needs and help differentiate PL opportunities. While P1, P2, and P8 also used observations to guide their IC programs, decisions for coaching came mostly from formal teacher evaluations and student data.

All eight participants (100%) agreed that data analysis should guide the IC program. Data sources included summative assessments as well as formative assessments. Formative assessments gave insight into where to focus on instructional support. The assessment data either showed that the program was working or told the administrators and instructional coaches that they needed to go back to the drawing board to revamp the program. All participants agreed that they knew the program was effective when teacher performance improved and student data showed progress. Also, responses from teachers at the end of the school year depicted the effectiveness of the coaching program.

Theme 4: Challenges

Overwhelmingly, all participants proclaimed that time was the biggest challenge for the IC program in their buildings. It was stated by P5 that time restraints for ensuring projects or tasks are completed on time were sometimes almost impossible. The lack of

time was shared by P6 as he mentioned that there are not enough hours in a day to complete the number of tasks that instructional coaches often face. Additional responsibilities assigned by campus administrators may include testing, scheduling, and arrival, dismissal, and lunch monitoring. During the interview, P7 shared that "Time is a barrier we cannot get past." Campus administrators often understand a few research-based best practices of instructional coaches, however standard day-to-day operation of the building dictates the assignment of additional duties. While time was the number one challenge, six of the eight participants also thought human resources were another huge challenge. In her school, P8 mentioned that "With only two instructional coaches in the building, it is impossible to cater to every teachers' needs." It was also mentioned by P4 that a lack of staffing related to administrators needing the help of instructional coaches to help with administrative duties such as creating schedules and distributing textbooks. It was mentioned by P4, P7, and P8 that they do their best not to take the instructional coach away from instructional tasks, but they are frequently needed to help keep the building functioning daily. Other factors that caused challenges in the IC program, according to P1, P2, and P3 are instructional coaches' work ethic, strengths and weaknesses, personality conflicts, and teacher buy-in. All participants believed that the success of instructional coaches, as it relates to teacher effectiveness, closely relies on their administrator's expectations of their roles and responsibilities and total support from administrators. Administrators must make certain that they play an active role in creating a partnership with the coach to ensure improvement and success in the coaching program (Knight, 2017).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Polit and Beck (2014) explained that trustworthiness in a study refers to confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the study's quality. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to ensure trustworthiness in this basic qualitative study, the criteria of (Korstiens & Moore, 2018).

Credibility

Ravitch and Carl (2016) proclaim that the researcher must establish credibility using at least two validation strategies to ensure data accuracy. Credibility issues for qualitative inquiry depend on rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data; a researcher who is trained, qualified, has a good record; and has philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Bailey, 2017). Credibility was established by providing a secure interviewing environment that encouraged participants to answer interview questions free of bias and maintaining a research journal. The journal kept a record of my reflections, notes taken during the interview process, and decisions and questions that may have come up during the process. Member-checking ensured the participant's responses were accurate by allowing the opportunities to make changes. Member-checking seeks the respondent’s validation by providing the participant with data and interpretations to confirm credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability suggests that findings from one study can be applied to other settings or groups of people and offer valuable lessons to other similar settings (Daniel, 2019). Transferability in the study was established by ensuring that participants obtained

all qualifications and past experiences and providing a thorough description of the interview sessions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Excerpts from the interview transcripts supported each theme, which helps transfer data to new research (Korstiens & Moore, 2018). Research notes were also taken and kept in a secure research journal during and after the interviewing process. This study establishes transferability by providing details about the participant's demographic information, their experiences, expert knowledge of participants, and their knowledge of IC (Forero et al., 2018).

Dependability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), dependability in a study can be accomplished by using purposeful sampling to ensure that participants are the appropriate people to respond to the intent of the research. Actions such as collecting rich data, such as interviews, written reflections and recordings, intensive participation between researcher and participants, and provision of thick description increase the study's dependability. Collecting rich data enables the readers to generalize, visualize, and connect the narrative experiences with their connections (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Dependability was achieved by comparing and coding interview transcripts and journaling as a reflection method (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Having both transcription and audio recording strengthened the descriptive validity of this study by helping to indicate the tone of voice, which could have been omitted from the transcript (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Individual transcripts were also shared with all eight participants for member checking to ensure accuracy and allow for any additions or changes to responses. All

participants were given one week to respond to the transcripts to make changes. No participant wished to make any changes to their interview responses.

Confirmability

Confirmability can be established by describing the data and findings so that others can confirm their accuracy (Nassaji, 2020). The data in this research was analyzed and broken down into themes. The themes provided a clear understanding of the findings to the reader. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), confirmability also requires research findings to be unbiased. Confirmability occurred through reflective journaling to help recognize my own biases and assumptions related to IC the roles administrators play in implementing an effective program. I explained that I served as an instructional coach for five years and am currently in my second year as an administrator; however, I was mindful of recording the result of each interview without bias.

Trustworthiness was established in this study using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These characteristics ensured that the research could be trusted, duplicated, was conducted by a qualified researcher, and facts were checked for validity. Continuous analysis of the data to reach saturation solidified this qualitative research's trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about challenges in following research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. Using semi-structured, face-to-face interviews via

Zoom, I used a basic qualitative design to seek a deeper understanding of the participant's perspectives on their roles in the success of the IC program. Four themes emerged through thematic data analysis that aligned with Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory. The themes that emerged from the analysis of data were (a) support, (b) building relationships, (c) developing and managing, and (d) challenges. These themes allowed me to answer the research question:

RQ1: What are administrators' perceptions on the challenges to implementing best practices in assigning duties to instructional coaches?

This study showed that all eight participants believed that the main role of an instructional coach was to support teachers. The participants explained that instructional coaches supported teachers by providing (a) facilitating learning, (b) supporting classroom instruction, and (c) collecting and analyzing data. The participants listed tasks such as modeling, co-teaching, providing PD, and observing and providing feedback as the fundamental task of the instructional coach in supporting teachers.

While support for teachers was established as the main role of the instructional coach, many of the participants believed that the coach should support the functioning of the entire building by creating trust relationships with both teachers and administrators. All eight participants understood that their relationship with their instructional coach needed to be one of a partnership to ensure that the program would run smoothly. The partnership aligned with Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory using equality principles where both the coach and the administrator share ideas and make instructional decisions together. Participants also agreed that the instructional coaches must build

relationships with teachers that promote trust, buy-in, and data ownership. There was a consensus among participants that without these trusting relationships, support would not exist.

Once supportive relationships were established, all participants believed that they must work together with the instructional coach to build a program designed around their vision and goal for the school. Of the eight participants, five discussed strategic methods of developing and monitoring their IC programs, with the instructional coach playing the leading role. All participants agreed that having a process in place to develop the IC program created better focus and created intentionality in their support for the teachers.

All participants agreed that no matter how well their programs were, there were always challenges in implementing an effective program. Time was unanimously agreed upon as the number one challenge for administrators conducting IC programs in their schools. Participants believed there were not enough hours in a day to complete tasks that were put upon by both them and instructional coaches in their schools. The participants all agreed that due to a lack of staffing, they often have to pull their coaches from instructional tasks to assist with the daily functioning of the building.

In Chapter 4, I used thematic analysis of data to present the study results. Participants shared their perspectives of their roles in implementing effective coaching programs by answering questions during a semi-structured, one-on-one interview. In Chapter 5, the interpretation of the finding, limitations, and recommendations. Implications for positive impact on social change as an outcome of this study are also included.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about challenges in following research-based practices in assigning job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district.

Data from this qualitative study were gathered through semistructured interviews with eight elementary campus administrators to examine their perceptions of what makes an effective IC program. Using a qualitative design allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant and helped me make meaning of the participants' experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

This study was important because few researchers had specifically researched the perspectives of campus administrators in relation to their influence on the IC programs in their buildings. The purpose of this qualitative study was to fill the gap in practice found in the literature on elementary school campus administrators' perceptions about assigning and aligning research-based practices with job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at a metro-area southeastern state school district. (Knight, 2010) on IC practices in their schools. The research question that guided my research was the following:

RQ1: What are administrators' perceptions on the challenges to implementing best practices in assigning duties to instructional coaches?

Overall, the participants in this study shared their perspectives on their understanding of IC and the important aspects that assure the program's effectiveness. The participants stated that the four most important aspects of their IC programs were (a)

providing support, (b) building relationships, (c) developing and managing the program, and (d) overcoming challenges that occur during the implementation of the program. All administrators ensured that their instructional coaches provided support for teachers by facilitating learning, supporting classroom instruction, and collecting and analyzing data. Coaches facilitated instruction by providing PL opportunities for teachers to improve their instruction. Participants allowed coaches to support classroom instruction by modeling, coteaching, observing, and providing immediate feedback as an intentional plan to improve instructional practices. In addition, instructional coaches collected and analyzed data to guide all instructional decisions.

All participants described the importance of building relationships between administrators and coaches and between coaches and teachers. Each participant gave examples of how they established trusting relationships. The participants also discussed the methods for developing and managing the IC programs and the steps that they took to ensure the program's effectiveness. Finally, the participants identified time as the number one challenge in implementing their IC programs, followed by the shortage of faculty and staff, lack of teacher buy-in, and administrators' expectations for the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coach.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study was grounded in the context of the conceptual framework of the partnership principles theory. In this basic qualitative study, my interpretation of the findings was based on eight virtual semistructured interviews, the literature review in

chapter 2, and the conceptual framework of Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory. The context of the literature determined the outcomes of this study.

The themes that emerged from thematic analysis are presented in this section. All 11 interview questions answered the research question. Excerpts from the interview transcripts were presented to support four themes: supporter as instructional coaches' main role, building relationships, developing and managing the program, and challenges.

Theme 1: Supporter as Instructional Coaches' Main Role

All participants believed that the main role of the instructional coach was to support teachers. This support came from facilitating learning, providing classroom support, and collecting and analyzing data. One participant believed that support included contributing to the daily functions of the building and the total educational program. Noninstructional support mentioned by participants included working with the budget, transportation, textbooks, testing, and discipline.

Theme 2: Building Relationships

Relationship building was deemed important by all participants. Each participant agreed that it was important for instructional coaches not only to build relationships with teachers, but also to build relationships with their administrators. All participants believed that the dynamics of all relationships developed in their buildings were anchored in trust. Participants allowed their instructional coaches to be transparent with teachers to establish trusting relationships. Just as instructional coaches were expected to establish trusting relationships with teachers, participants charged themselves with establishing the same trusting relationships with their instructional coaches.

Theme 3: Developing and Managing the Program

The majority of the participants implemented a strategic plan for developing their IC program. Processes included observing all teachers, tiering teachers, and developing individualized coaching cycles based on teachers' needs. Participants agreed that this process allowed administrators and instructional coaches to have more of a laser focus on reaching individual goals and to provide intentional support. All participants stated that data from both formative and summative assessments and formal and informal observations should guide the IC program. Participants knew that their IC programs were effective when teacher performance improved and student data showed progress.

Theme 4: Challenges

Every participant proclaimed that time was the greatest challenge when trying to follow research-based practices to align the job responsibilities of the instructional coaches. Many participants believed that there were not enough hours in a day to complete the number of tasks that instructional coaches are tasked with completing while ensuring that the daily functioning of the building is adequately handled. Participants also agreed that a staff shortage also impacted the job responsibilities of the instructional coaches in their buildings. The coach-to-teacher ratio made it impossible to cater to every teacher's needs. Along with time and lack of staff, participants noted instructional coaches' work ethic, individual strengths and weaknesses, personality conflicts, and teacher buy-in as challenges that administrators face when implementing IC programs in their schools.

Discussion

The participants implemented instructional leadership practices to support the IC programs in their buildings. Participants implemented IC programs through (a) support as instructional coaches' main role, (b) building relationships, (c) developing and managing the program, and (d) overcoming challenges. The findings of this study showed the need for administrators to establish school goals, provide adequate time for instructional coaches to coach, and anchor the program by providing support for coaches so that they can provide support for teachers.

All participants agreed that the main role of the instructional coach was to support teachers. Instructional coaches can help teachers improve their practice, influence the way that teachers teach positively, and navigate the way that campus administrators lead (Rathmell et al., 2019). When implemented correctly, IC plays a role in building student engagement through influence on what teachers do and what students experience (Knight, 2019). The findings show that instructional coaches implemented support through facilitating learning, supporting classroom instruction, and collecting and analyzing data.

The findings also confirmed that building relationships is critical to implementing an effective IC program. According to Russell (2017), instructional coaches can build will, skill, knowledge, and capacity, and they can create relationships where both teachers and campus administrators feel cared for. Participants found that their IC programs thrived when people trusted each other, beginning with the trust between themselves and the instructional coach (Knight, 2017). The findings also showed that the best relationships were built through being transparent, goal oriented, collaborative, and

kindred. According to Hammond and Moore (2018), campus administrators' beliefs and behaviors significantly affect teachers' relationships with their instructional coach.

Additionally, the development and managing of the IC program is vital in the success of the program. A shared understanding and common language about the desired change and work specific to all stakeholders are critical to the success of an IC program (Fullam & Quinn, 2016). Findings showed that programs with a strategic method for development yielded the most success. Instructional coaches must work in concert with the campus administrator to develop a shared understanding of effective research-based instructional practices (Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019). Participants shared that establishing and implementing a well-developed process, guided by data, allowed both administrators and instructional coaches to have more of a laser focus on instruction, and be more intentional with their support.

The findings ultimately showed lack of time, task overload, and a shortage of staff as the most pronounced challenges faced by administrators when implementing an IC program. According to Knight (2018), instructional coaches must master collaborating, communicating, encouraging, listening, reflecting, implementing, and continuous learning. While instructional coaches juggled all of these duties, the findings showed that administrators also needed them to help with administrative duties such as creating schedules, distributing textbooks, and helping with testing. Campus administrators must have a deep understanding of IC and play an active role in creating a partnership with the coach to ensure the success of the coaching program (Knight, 2017). According to Knight (2018), instructional coaches can find themselves completing many complex tasks such

as meeting with teachers, modeling in classrooms, observing, gathering classroom data, building relationships, preparing materials, facilitating teams, attending meetings, completing paperwork, and conducting hallway and lunchroom duties. Campus administrators must effectively build an IC culture, working to protect coaching time by working with instructional coaches to create schedules that allow them to engage in coaching activities to address individual and system needs (Berger et al., 2016). All participants believed that the success of instructional coaches relies on their administrators' expectations of their roles and responsibilities. Campus administrators' inability to provide an effective IC climate may limit coaches' and teachers' opportunities to engage in meaningful IC experiences (Hughes et al., 2017).

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to trustworthiness that existed during the collection and analysis of data for the study was the lack of actual principals participating in the study. All participants were assistant principals in their schools. While these assistant principals were also administrators of their school, the perceptions could have yielded different perspectives on the IC program in the building.

Recommendations

This basic qualitative study examined the administrators' perspective on their influence on the effectiveness of the IC program in their building. The findings from this study led to other topics for future research opportunities. Recommendations for follow-up to this study would include insight into district-level leaders' perspectives on their influence on implementing effective IC programs in schools. District-level leaders,

campus administrators, and instructional coaches could use the findings of my study to help create a universal language for developing IC programs to explicitly spell out the roles and responsibilities of both campus administrators and instructional coaches.

It is also a recommendation that district-level leaders use the findings of this study to provide PD for campus administrators. PD should help campus administrators navigate challenges such as time management and hiring practices to ensure that they hire enough qualified staff to implement successful IC programs.

Implications

This study may promote social change by shedding light on the impact of the influence of administrators on the success of IC programs in their buildings. This study may increase campus administrators' understanding of maximizing the instructional coaches' abilities; their time must be spent on improving instruction (Kane & Resenquist, 2018). The results of this study can also contribute to social change by increasing teacher retention and decreasing the teacher shortage that has worsened due to the national pandemic. An increased understanding of instructional coaches' ability to improve teacher effectiveness (Knight, 2018) may lead to a social change in school districts, establishing explicit and specific roles for both administrators and instructional coaches, as well as providing explicit PD for campus administrators to ensure that they implement effective IC programs in their building. The “Great Teacher Resignation” could be directly impacted by successful implementation of strategies and support to campus administrators to support instructional coaches' role to provide teachers with best instructional practices.

This basic qualitative study was significant because it allowed campus administrators to express their perspectives on their influence on IC. Conducting semistructured interviews helped in better understanding the participants' opinions, behaviors, and experiences (Ravich & Carl, 2016). The findings from this study may provide more insight into the most effective roles assigned to instructional coaches to help improve teaching practices and increase student performance. Findings from this study may promote a social understanding of the ultimate goal of IC, which is to improve student success (Bean & Ippolito, 2016).

Conclusion

This basic qualitative study explored campus administrators' challenges in aligning research-based practices with the instructional coaches' job responsibilities in their elementary school buildings. This study was guided by Knight's (2010) partnership principles theory to show that when used appropriately, instructional coaches help teachers achieve professional success by providing support and guidance through the learning process (Knight, 2018). My study provides new knowledge on campus administrators' perspectives on their influence on IC in their buildings. The data provided in this research may provide district leaders, campus administrators, and instructional coaches with a clearer understanding of the roles of instructional coaches. This study also exposes the importance of a common language for the processes and procedures of implementing effective programs in schools. Having a clear understanding of how they influence the success of the IC program can help campus administrators navigate challenges that will arise during implementation.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Invitation to participate in the research project titled:

"Campus Administrators' Perceptions of Their Impact on the Success of Instructional Coaching Programs in Urban Elementary Schools"

Dear (Building Administrator),

I am conducting interviews in the Clayton County Public Schools district as part of a research study to increase my understanding of how elementary administrators perceive their impact on the success of the instructional coaching programs in their schools. I am seeking elementary school administrator with at least two years of experience to participate in the study to gain first-hand information from their perspective. The interview takes around 30-40 minutes. I am trying to capture the thoughts and perspectives of participants as it relates to what they believe instructional coaching to be, and how they implement a program in their building. The identity of participants and all responses to the questions will be kept confidential.

Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. There is no compensation for participating in this study. While there is no benefit to the participants in this study, results may help practitioners and the public better understand administrators' perceptions of instructional coaching. Participants interested in the study should respond to this email, for more information letting them know the process of the research, and the

rights of participants during the process. For more information please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks! (interviewer)

Appendix B: Letter the Department of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability

July 22, 2021

Dear Dr. Tappler,

I completed my initial Oral Defense Presentation on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. The next step is to submit my Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, which means I am quickly approaching the end of by doctoral journey.

As a result, I am writing to request permission to conduct a basic qualitative study among at least 8 elementary school administrators in the district. The study's topic is one that is relevant to our district's professional development goals concerning curriculum and instruction and teacher retention, as well as being an area of personal interest for me. I am conducting qualitative research that will explore elementary school campus administrators' perceptions in aligning research-based practices with job responsibilities of the instructional coaches at elementary schools in the district. The goal of the study is to examine campus administrator's perceptions of their influence on the success of instructional coaching programs in urban elementary schools.

In order to gain insight on the perceptions of principals, with regard to the role they play in devising and implementing a successful instructional program in their schools, semi-structured interviews will be conducted via Zoom or Google Classroom. The study will involve both principals and assistant principals from different schools across the district.

I will initially communicate with the potential participants using the district email roster for the district.

Participation in the study is strictly voluntary and there will be no incentives or compensation given to participate. The interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used to keep the names of interviewees confidential. There will not be any identifying information concerning the specific schools or administrators. Results from the study will be coded and summarize for dissertation completion and publication. I would be willing to present the study's results to district stakeholders through a PowerPoint presentation. If you have any questions about the study, I would be happy to answer them.

You can contact me at (404) XXX-XXX (personal cell phone). I can also be reached at my university email. You are also welcome to contact my doctoral study advisor, Dr. Rob Flanders, by email at his university email for additional information regarding the study.

I would greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide so that I can complete this final step in accomplishing my goal of obtaining my doctorate degree, and I look forward to further communication if you are willing to grant me permission to conduct the study in our district.

Sincerely,

Sakinah S. Burroughs
Doctoral Candidate, Walden University
Address City, State, Zipcode

Appendix C: Interview Questions

- What is your educational background?
- What does the term instructional coaching mean to you?
- What is your process for putting together an instructional coaching program for your school?
- What do you believe is the role of an instructional coach?
- What types of job responsibilities have you assigned to your instructional coach?
- Do you believe that the tasks you assign your instructional coach positively improves instructional practices of the teachers and administrators in you school? Explain.
- How would you describe your relationship with your instructional coach?
- What are barriers that you believe administrators are faced with when deciding which tasks to assign to instructional coaches?
- How do you ensure quality in the instructional coaching program in your building, and how do you define quality?
- What factors indicate to you that an instructional coaching program has been effective?
- Would you like to include any additional information that you feel would be relevant to this study?