

2017

Perceptions of Administrators, Teachers, and Coaches on Instructional Coaching: Implications for Instructional Practices

Tosha Latrece Quattlebaum
Walden University

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Tosha Latrece Quattlebaum

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Review Committee

Dr. Katherine Norman, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Joanna Karet, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Scott Mertes, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2017

Abstract

Perceptions of Administrators, Teachers, and Coaches on Instructional Coaching:

Implications for Instructional Practices

by

Tosha Latrece Quattlebaum

MA, Lesley University, 2010

BA, University of South Carolina, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2017

Abstract

Instructional coaching is designed to positively impact instructional practices, yet not enough is known about whether administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches have similar perceptions about this approach. The purpose of the case study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact instructional coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by instructional coaches. Guided by Knowles' theory of andragogy, the research questions were designed to explore the relationship between collective and individual actions of adult learners when acquiring information and learning new concepts. The case study involved a purposeful sample consisting of 3 instructional coaches, along with their administrators and teachers who work within the same school district. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. Qualitative analysis techniques involved categorizing the data to determine themes regarding the phenomenon of instructional coaching. Identified themes included the following: assistance, receptiveness, instructional benefits, and non-evaluative role. Professional development training sessions were developed to increase administrators' awareness concerning the roles and barriers associated with instructional coaching. Implications for positive social change include increasing educators' understandings of collaborative partnerships among administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches. Such understandings may result in the use of professional learning communities to establish or maintain shared goals for improving classroom instruction and increasing student achievement.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my daughter Tyrecia and my mother Patricia. Since Tyrecia entered this world, she has been the reason why I strive to accomplish my goals and dare to make my dreams reality. I am truly blessed to have her as my greatest motivator and constant cheerleader. My mother has always supported my academic endeavors and fostered in me a confidence that ultimately leads me to believe I can accomplish anything that I put my mind to achieving.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge several pertinent individuals. I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Katherine Norman, for her ceaseless support and encouragement, especially when I felt as if my doctoral journey was becoming hopeless and needed to end. I would like to thank my committee member, Dr. Joanna Karet, whose well-timed feedback allowed me to realize there was an emerging light at the end of my tunnel. I would like to thank Dr. Mary Ellen Batiuk for asking the questions that indicated clarity and alignment were still out of reach. I also would like to thank Dr. Scott Mertes for providing another perspective in ensuring my work promotes social change. You all were instrumental in me remaining focused and determined to complete this work.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends. Both the Livingston and Quattlebaum clans for providing never-ending love, support, and encouragement that I certainly needed in order to believe in myself. Thanks Micki for the numerous venting sessions. Your constant support and advice allowed me to regroup and continue to write numerous times.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Administrators use instructional coaching to improve professional development, teacher efficacy, and student achievement in various elementary and middle school settings. In schools across the United States spanning from elementary to high school, instructional coaching is seen as a method of ensuring that effective teaching occurs in the content areas of reading, math, and science (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Spelman, Bell, Thomas, & Briody, 2016). Instructional coaching is frequently used as a professional development strategy to increase teacher efficacy (Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015). Instructional coaching is a process that involves classroom teachers and specialists assuming a role in which they provide support and guidance to their colleagues (Mangin, 2014). Numerous titles are used synonymously to describe this challenging role, such as literacy coach, reading coach, math coach, instructional coach, or instructional facilitator (Ferguson, 2013; Stefaniak, 2017).

The roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches extend beyond the realm of planning and presenting professional development to teachers. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) found that, in addition to focusing on mentoring and working with teachers, instructional coaches take on roles that include reform efforts, such as implementing policies, managing curriculum, promoting fidelity of curriculum and assessment, and providing formative feedback to teachers. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) identified instructional coaching as an integral component in school reform initiatives. The reforms associated with capacity building, teamwork, pedagogy, and systematic transformation

are compatible with the strategies of good or effective instructional coaches (Matsumura & Wang, 2014; Stefaniak, 2017). Instructional coaches have become a prevalent means of increasing the effectiveness of teachers, and have been deeply involved in reform processes in numerous school districts throughout the United States (Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2012).

The professional development provided to classroom teachers through instructional coaching has been recognized as an effective means of improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Mudzimiri, Burroughs, Luebeck, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014). Instructional coaching is used to provide support and resources to teachers in order to broaden instructional repertoires and increase student engagement (Mudzimiri et al., 2014; Spelman et al., 2016). Additionally, instructional coaching provides job-embedded, individualized, and sustained professional development to teachers, which has resulted in coaching becoming a popular model in schools across the United States and throughout the world (Barlow, Burroughs, Harmon, Sutton, & Yopp, 2014). The effectiveness of professional development has been shown to decrease when its delivery is isolated from teachers' classrooms, and when it cannot be directly linked or applied to everyday instructional concerns (Mudzimiri et al., 2014).

District personnel of Unified School District (pseudonym), a predominately rural consolidated school district in South Carolina that served as my study site, changed the manner in which instructional coaches were assigned to elementary and middle level schools. Unified School District consists of 18 elementary schools, two elementary/middle schools, nine middle schools, seven high schools, and three charter

schools. Prior to the 2012-2013 school year, instructional coaches visited schools on a rotating basis to work with teachers and administrators. Instead of curriculum personnel assigning one instructional coach to provide instructional resources to several schools, Unified School District's Division of Instruction and Accountability introduced the concept of having instructional coaches that were school-based or assigned to only one school. As a result, instructional coaches were assigned to some schools where teachers and administrators had never worked with an instructional coach. The instructional coaches' duties include assisting teachers and administrators in obtaining instructional resources that address individual school needs and ultimately benefit student achievement. Information I gathered in this research study regarding the perceptions of instructional coaching, the impact of coaches on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches will be beneficial to Unified School District.

Definition of the Problem

Unified School District's instructional coaches are responsible for working closely with administrators and curriculum personnel to provide teachers with various professional development opportunities and curriculum resources. The school-based instructional coaches serve as daily resources for teachers and principals by providing support for the implementation of the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards, and district wide initiatives that mandate teachers use pacing guides and curriculum support documents. In order to ensure consistency and fidelity with regard to the district's initiatives, the instructional coaches facilitate district-wide monthly professional development opportunities.

The professional development involves the modeling of research-based instructional strategies that involve teachers assuming the role of student and observer, and assisting teachers in understanding the varied uses of formative and summative assessments in planning instruction. The instructional coaches also plan and present professional development opportunities to address the specific needs of their individual schools, such as utilizing data to revise or implement programs to address low performing subgroups within the student population. In addition, the job description for Unified School District's instructional coaches, which was provided to me by the district's Division of Instruction and Accountability, requires coaches to observe classes to engage teachers in reflection, provide standard-based materials and research-based curriculum resources, and facilitate demonstration and co-teaching lessons. However, administrators, teachers, and coaches may have differing perceptions about the role and instructional impact of an instructional coach. These differing perceptions may affect the roles instructional coaches are assigned to assume, as well as receptiveness and barriers that instructional coaches encounter when working with teachers and administrators.

Rationale

In spite of the numerous benefits associated with instructional coaching and the roles instructional coaches assume, little research exists that explores the phenomenon of instructional coaching and its barriers from the perspective of principals, teachers, and instructional coaches (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014). The role and duties that a coach fulfills is dependent upon a school district's philosophy regarding instructional coaching, the mindset of curriculum personnel who developed the position, and the

mindset of administrators who collaborate with instructional coaches (Bukowiecki, 2012). In fact, coaches and administrators, through clear protocols, must share the vision and goals of district personnel for instructional coaching to be effective (Stefaniak, 2017). In addition to being given time to lay the foundation of their coaching work, coaches must view themselves and be viewed by others as leaders who are instrumental in setting goals and the direction for curriculum programs, redesigning organizational structures within schools, and supporting teachers and administrators in providing quality instruction to all students (Mangin, 2014; Range, Pijanowski, Duncan, Scherz, & Hvidston, 2014). Instructional coaches who use their expertise regarding instructional practices and knowledge concerning school-wide and district-wide strategies become key participants in leadership teams that achieve success with school reform initiatives (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Instructional coaches in Unified School District are encountering significant barriers when attempting to facilitate coaching in their schools. Barriers related to varied job assignments and workloads, and resistance experienced from teachers, are concerns for several instructional coaches. In personal communications with me, instructional coaches have expressed uncertainty regarding their duties or job assignments aligning with their intended role in regard to improving teachers' instructional practices. Instructional coaches have reported experiences in which administrators seem unsure of what job assignments or tasks they should perform. A novice instructional coach, assigned to a school with an administrator who was not familiar with instructional

coaching, shared how her essential job assignments included making copies for teachers and serving as a substitute teacher when coverage was needed. A veteran instructional coach shared how teachers were reluctant to interact with her and to have her conduct classroom observations. Teachers have voiced concerns about being evaluated twice in one day when their instructional coach and principal visited classrooms on the same day.

Instructional coaching encourages collaboration as a means to promote professional growth for teachers to improve student achievement. Yet, some instructional coaches encounter barriers when attempting to collaborate with administrators and teachers. Some teachers are not receptive when it comes to planning or teaching with instructional coaches (Range et al., 2014). However, instructional coaching can improve teachers' instructional practices, teacher efficacy, and organizational self-efficacy, which are correlated to increasing student achievement (Matsumura, Garnier, & Spybrook, 2013).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The vagueness of job descriptions for instructional coaches and their heavy workloads may limit their impact on both teacher practice and student performance (Stefaniak, 2017). Heavy workloads of instructional coaches minimize the benefits teachers receive from the collaboration that occurs between coaches and teachers in one-on-one and group settings (Range et al., 2014; Stefaniak, 2017). In addition, when district personnel fill instructional coaching positions before job descriptions are well-defined, confusion about the role and focus of instructional coaches results (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Coaches have indicated that poorly defined roles and responsibilities cause their

duties to include quasi-administrative or clerical work instead of focusing on improving instruction (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, and Stover (2011) noted some administrators mistakenly view coaches as other types of administrators, rather than as support for teachers and providers of teacher professional development.

Teacher resistance to instructional coaches may be attributed to problems associated with the implementation of coaching. Due to increased curricular demands associated with high-stakes testing, several administrators mandate professional development initiatives where presenters and developers are placed in the role of experts to address lacking teachers (Matsumura & Wang, 2014; Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker 2011). Dynamics where instructional coaches are presented as experts may cause teachers to feel resentful, which can lead to teacher resistance (Range et al, 2014). Professional development opportunities where an “external” expert is not aware of teachers' pre-existing knowledge, skills, or even individual needs often fail to meet the andragogy tenet that adult learners thrive when they are self-directing (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Teachers express frustration and disapproval toward professional developers who disregard their expertise and deliver one-size-fits-all solutions (Knight et al., 2015; Lane & Hayes, 2015).

Matsumura and Wang (2014) cited findings that support one-to-one classroom coaching as a priority of the duties associated with instructional coaches, even when they are taking on site-specific activities at the direction of their principals. Although coaching is recognized as a key component in curriculum reform initiatives at state and federal levels, research to support coaching as an effective strategy for improving instruction and

learning remains relatively small (Howley, Dudek, Rittenberg, Larson, 2014; Teemant, Leland, Berghoff, 2014).

Empirical research designed to better understand and clarify the roles and responsibilities of coaches is limited (Calo et al., 2015). Even though current researchers have explored the work of instructional coaches at the elementary and middle/secondary levels, little research exists concerning the roles and perspectives of coaches (Calo et al., 2015). The lack of an evidence base for instructional coaching may be a contributing factor to some of the problems coaches face with regard to role confusion, teacher resistance, and limited administrative support (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). In fact, Barlow et al. (2014) found that the concept of coaching is still novel enough that the role of an instructional coach is not easily agreed upon by educators. Little research exists that explores the phenomenon of instructional coaching and its barriers from the perspective of teachers (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014). It is essential that curriculum personnel within Unified School District gain insight on the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. The insight will allow for the planning and implementation of initiatives that can assist teachers and administrators in further understanding the role of an instructional coach and the collaborative partnerships associated with instructional coaching in order to positively impact classroom instruction and increase student achievement.

Definitions

The following are operational definitions for terms that I use throughout this study:

Coaching conversation: The primary method used by coaches to provide assistance to teachers to refine instructional practices or strategies after the observation of a lesson (Trach, 2014).

Collaborative learning: Learning that emphasizes social and intellectual engagement, and mutual responsibility, that is included in instructional approaches involving joint and active efforts (Turklich, Grieve, & Cozens, 2014).

Instructional coaches: Teaching professionals whose job requires working collaboratively with classroom teachers to improve their instructional practices in order to increase student learning (Ferguson, 2013).

Instructional coaching: Content-based mentoring used to provide teachers with specific resources to alter their instructional practices and beliefs (Smith, 2012).

Teacher resistance: Teachers' refusal to allow individuals to gain entry into their classrooms or establish collaborative relationships where instructional coaches are viewed as change agents (Hartman, 2013).

Significance

This study to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches resulted in recommendations that will contribute to the effectiveness of instructional coaches. My recommendations will help Unified School

District's Division of Instruction and Accountability with further defining the role of coaches, and with improving communication with administrators and teachers concerning instructional coaching. Furthermore, the recommendations will allow the curriculum personnel of Unified School District's Division of Instruction and Accountability to clarify the roles of instructional coaches with regard to positively impacting instructional practices. The recommendations will provide administrators with different viewpoints on how particular job assignments or assigned duties may influence how teachers view and receive the support of instructional coaches.

Research Questions

School districts are responsible for determining the effectiveness of programs and initiatives intended to promote professional growth in their teachers and to increase student achievement. Therefore, a study to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches is beneficial. The research study included investigation of teachers', principals', and instructional coaches' perceptions to determine how their views influence the manner in which instructional coaches are received and used in schools.

I designed the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What perceptions do participants have regarding the impact of instructional coaching on instructional practices?
2. What perceptions do participants have regarding how instructional coaches assist administrators and teachers in improving instructional practices?

3. What perceptions do participants have regarding barriers faced by instructional coaches when they are attempting to improve instructional practices?

Review of the Literature

In the following section, I provide a review of the literature pertaining to the study's topic and explain the theoretical framework. Specifically, I present findings from the literature that show the effects of perceptions and barriers concerning instructional coaching, as well as how instructional coaching has been proven to positively impact instructional practices. The majority of this research was published between 2012 and 2017. However, I have included older references to present findings that are particularly relevant to the field of study. This area of study has had limited research and is greatly in need of further research given the continuous nature of the problem (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Marsh et al., 2012). The following are some of the key terms that I used to guide the literature search: *adult learning, instructional coaching, professional development, teacher resistance, teacher efficacy, instructional practices, and student achievement*. In order to conduct my searches, I accessed a variety of databases through Walden University's online library, including Education Research Complete, SAGE Journals Online, and ERIC (Educational Resource Informational Center).

Theoretical Framework

I used the sociocultural theory of andragogy as the theoretical framework for the study. The andragogy theory, which was advanced by Knowles initially in the 1970s,

emphasizes life experiences as being integral for adults to learn new concepts (Knowles et al., 2011). Andragogy emphasizes adult learners' processes of understanding the structure of learning experiences (Knowles et al., 2011). The andragogical learning theory focuses on providing procedures and resources that learners can use in acquiring information and skills (Knowles et al., 2011). Andragogy supports adult learners by providing them with learning opportunities that include discussion and reflection with others, and the practice of new ideas with immediate feedback and modeling from an expert (Lockwood, McCombs, & Marsh, 2010).

The andragogy theory is grounded on the premise that learners acquire knowledge by doing. In fact, adult learners are characterized as self-directed and autonomous, which is attributed to teachers assuming the role of a facilitator of learning experiences instead of merely a presenter of content (Henschke, 2011). Adults engage in learning opportunities when they are allowed to assume an active role and participate in their learning, and when the new content or knowledge being presented relates to current personal experiences (Kretlow and Bartholomew, 2010). Andragogy emphasizes the learner's self-concept as an integral component in the learning process, and views adults as self-directing when learning (Knowles et al., 2011).

Adult learners, who possess an extensive range of experiences when encountering learning situations, are distinctly different from young learners. As a result, educators who facilitate "new" learning for adult learners should draw upon their experiences to promote reflection and social interaction (Knowles et al., 2011). Adults are mainly motivated by intrinsic motivators, such as being respected by peers and achieving

personal goals, when exploring opportunities to be self-actualizing and to improve the quality of their lives (Knowles et al., 2011). In fact, adult learners must have their life experiences validated, which aids in them feeling respected by their peers (Knowles et al., 2011).

Andragogy theory supports the learning that occurs when teachers, principals, and instructional coaches engage in professional development or collaborative activities. The theory also supports the learning and reflection that should take place in order for administrators, teachers, and coaches to understand the role of instructional coaches and the barriers they encounter.

Professional Development

The practices and strategies associated with the role of instructional coaches include continuing the professional growth for teachers that initially started as part of teacher preparation programs. Instructional coaching has become a more common method of providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities that target increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Main, Pendergust, & Virtue, 2015; Wood et al., 2016). Ongoing professional development that is connected to school initiatives and focused on building strong collaborative relationships among teachers makes a difference in increasing teacher efficacy and student achievement (Yoo, 2016). Professional development that does not include the collaborative element found within a teacher and coach team or partnership is ill advised when attempting to improve the practices and instructional strategies of teachers (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Althaus (2015) cited findings that support the use of professional development that is focused on

preparing teachers in becoming experts in their content or subject matter. Instructional coaches are seen as a way to provide on-site professional development to assist teachers in making changes in their instructional practices (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Research has shown that professional development is an integral factor in promoting higher achievement (Althausser, 2015). Coaches work continuously with teachers to expand or develop their skills and knowledge, and provide them with necessary learning experiences to ensure they stay abreast of educational trends and research (Mangin, 2014).

Instructional coaches can facilitate the exploration of new instructional resources, strategies, and practices in teachers' classrooms. Instructional coaching allows teachers to engage in learning opportunities that promote sharing, collective inquiry, and reflection, which ensures teachers are involved in the decision-making processes needed to determine what should be learned (Knowles et al., 2011). Instructional coaching is a collaborative process designed to provide support and motivation to teachers in improving teaching skills so that they are better able to serve the students they teach (Smith, 2012). Instead of merely learning new instructional strategies in isolation, instructional coaching provides the means for teachers to apply learned strategies in the presence of a coach who can provide support through questions or feedback, and can encourage reflection (Spelman, Bell, Thomas, & Briody, 2016). These practices show teachers that they are respected as adult learners who are self-directing and self-actualizing (Russell, 2015).

Mentoring

Mentoring is generally viewed as an approach to serving the needs of beginning or new-to-the-school teachers. In fact, the title of mentor is characterized as a distinct role for coaches, given their clients' unique status as novices needing specific knowledge about the stages of teacher development, and their desire to improve instructional skills (Russell, 2015). Mentoring involves the sharing of insights and experiences (Crossley & Silverman, 2016). Mentors and mentees develop a relationship that is regarded as trusting, reciprocal, and interdependent, which permits both participants to benefit from personal growth (Crossley & Silverman, 2016). In addition, mentors and mentees possess a set of predefined beliefs about their roles within a mentoring relationship (Fullick, Smith-Jentsch, Yarbrough, & Scielzo, 2012). Mentoring relationships lead mentees to think critically about decision-making processes, instructional practices, and belief systems (Callahan, 2016). Mentors provide mentees with methods to reflect on their personal experiences and think critically about components of teachers' professional practices that ultimately lead to improved self-efficacy and motivation (Cramer, 2016).

Researchers have noted the following as the most successful areas of mentoring: improving the instructional skill set of teachers, consulting with teachers about effective types of curriculum that engage student learners, providing ideas on how teachers can scaffold instruction to ensure all students achieve high levels of achievement, modeling examples of instruction for increasing student engage, and including analysis of formative and summative data to make informed instructional decisions (Callahan, 2016). Mentoring is provided by educators who possess a vocational skill set that allows them to

listen, communicate, and advocate for mentees (Delaney, 2012). The most extensive mentoring occurs before and after the delivery of a lesson when mentees are engaged in co-planning of instructional activities, have participated in debriefing conversation to facilitate reflective coaching, and have analyzed samples of student work (Delaney, 2012; Callahan, 2016). The most beneficial mentor-mentee relationships involve experiences that extend beyond typical daily routines (Delaney, 2012). Numerous commonalities exist between the concepts of mentoring and instructional coaching.

Instructional coaching and mentoring are not necessarily synonymous terms or concepts, but they are interrelated. Coaches often serve as mentors to classroom teachers. Instructional coaching expands upon the concept of mentoring by providing modeling and feedback rounds that may or may not be typical of all mentoring relationships (Knight, Elford, & Hock, 2015). Mentoring is a collaborative process that involves the mentor coaching and consulting the mentee through reflective activities and meaningful growth conversations (Cramer, 2016). Instructional coaches serve as mentors for teachers of varying content areas and levels of expertise to improve instructional practices. Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody (2015) referred to instructional coaches as mentors who intuitively understand the challenges faced by classroom teachers and are willing to nurture partnerships with teachers to improve achievement. These partnerships provide support to teachers with understanding and implementing research-based instructional practices in their classrooms (Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015).

Teacher Resistance

Although instructional coaching is used to provide job-embedded professional

development for teachers, coaches are not always readily welcomed. In fact, instructional coaches face various levels of resistance when trying to establish effective coaching relationships. Coaches often deal with misconceptions held by administrators. Some administrators mistakenly view instructional coaches as other types of administrators, rather than support for teachers and providers of teacher professional development (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014). Teacher resistance may stem from problems associated with school climate or morale, as well as how information is being shared between administration and teachers (Range et al., 2014).

Teachers may resist establishing a coaching relationship due to their views concerning control and privacy (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014). In fact, teachers' attempts to reestablish a sense of personal power could be interpreted as resistance (Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014). Teachers who engage in reflective practices and are willing to improve upon their instructional strategies are more likely to seek assistance from an instructional coach (Russell, 2015). In fact, studies have shown that when comparing novice to veteran teachers, novice teachers are more receptive to coaching initiatives (Russell, 2015).

Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) found that increasing pressure for districts to make significant academic gains has resulted in top-down decision making, which often removes teachers from decision making processes. This practice of top-down decision making increases teacher frustration and cynicism concerning curriculum initiatives and professional development (Matsumura & Wang, 2014). When teachers feel their insight and views are not valued, resistance may result. Adults possess a

psychological need to be viewed and treated by others in a manner that acknowledges that that are capable of self-direction (Knowles et al., 2011). Andragogy views adult learners as directed and emphasizes self-concept as an integral component in the learning process.

Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement

The roles of an instructional coach are recognized as effective means for improving educational practices (Sandstead, 2016). In fact, instructional coaching has become a highly accepted means of increasing teacher effectiveness (Knight, 2012). Qualitative methods (observations, interviews, and coaching logs) support teachers using reflective inquiry that is associated with instructional coaching to increase student achievement (Ermeling & Tatsui, 2015). Positive results have been cited due to coaches assisting teachers to inquire and reflect on their own instructional practices (Sandstead, 2016). Coburn and Woulfin (2012) cited new evidence to support coaching being influential on teachers' classroom practices. In fact, when attempting to change challenging aspects of instruction, the influence of instructional coaching is extensive (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Coaching is viewed as a framework that facilitates systematic reform and a means to support the individual learning needs of teachers, as well as a way to build collective capacity (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

Few studies have examined the effects of coaching concerning student achievement. In fact, the little research that exists seems inconclusive (Marsh et al., 2012). A study focused on elementary school instructional coaches found substantial, positive effects of coaching on student achievement that increased over time (Biancarosa

et al., 2010). Research focused on Florida middle school instructional coaches found small but significant improvements in average annual reading gains when cohorts were analyzed (Lockwood, McCombs, & Marsh, 2010). Studies have found that student achievement is positively correlated with the frequency of positive interactions between teachers and coaches (Stefaniak, 2017; Wise & Zwiers, 2013).

Implications

The sharing of findings from the study will allow stakeholders such as the superintendent, academic officers, and curriculum personnel of Unified School District to determine how perceptions held by teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches are affecting the effectiveness of instructional coaching. The study's findings may be used by curriculum personnel to further explore instructional coaches' duties and plan professional development activities to clarify the role of instructional coaches in positively impacting instructional practices. Since a PowerPoint presentation is an appropriate means of presenting the study's findings, I will present one at an Instructional Services Department (ISD) meeting.

Summary

A targeted district (Unified School District) is dealing with administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches having differing perceptions about what a coach is supposed to do and the barriers faced by coaches when trying to positively impact instructional practices. Evidence of Unified School District's problem was presented to explain a local need for a research study. In addition, a review of literature was provided to clarify a context of the problem and to identify a gap in practice pertaining to coaching

being viewed as an effective intervention for positively impacting instructional practices.

The methodology to be used in the study is presented in Section 2.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Instructional coaching is identified by many school districts as an effective method to increase knowledge and skills within their faculties concerning student achievement. Instructional coaches provide ongoing professional development and exposure to new ideas, as well as feedback to promote reflective problem-solving for teachers to improve student learning. It is necessary for instructional coaches to engage in professional interactions in order to work collaboratively with principals and teachers. The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches regarding the impact coaches have on instructional practices and barriers encountered by coaches.

In this section, I present a comprehensive account of the study's case study research design and an explanation to support its selection. Also included in this section are a description of the study's participants, data collection methods, and data analysis processes.

Research Design

Case study is a common qualitative research approach that involves a researcher focusing on small groups or individuals within a group (Creswell, 2012; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). In case studies, the small groups or individuals of focus are referred to as a bounded system or case because the boundaries of the case increase the focus on the subjects being studied (Merriam, 2009). Case studies are helpful in providing an in-depth description and analysis of a phenomenon within a bounded system

(Merriam, 2009). In case studies, the researcher relies on participant interviews, as well as observation and the review of documents (Creswell, 2012).

Quantitative research methods are effective in measuring variables and obtaining results that can be generalized from a sample to a population (Creswell, 2009). However, a quantitative approach would not allow me to consider participant views, insights, and values when determining what factors or perceptions contribute to the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Instead, I needed a research design with which I could examine a phenomenon within its real-life context, and that did not restrict the views of participants. A longitudinal study could be used to investigate perceptions and attitudes of individuals. However, longitudinal studies usually take 10 to 30 years to complete (Lodico et al., 2010). Therefore, a longitudinal study would not provide information in a timely manner so that the current phenomenon of instructional coaching and the barriers encountered by coaches could be explored and addressed. I conducted a case study in order to gain timely insight to the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

My research design allowed me to ask participants about their beliefs, attitudes, views, and perceptions. I conducted interviews using semi-structured open-ended questions. I also used an online questionnaire that presented open-ended and closed questions. The case study design allowed me to explore the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What perceptions do participants have regarding the impact of instructional coaching on instructional practices?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do participants have regarding how instructional coaches assist administrators and teachers in improving instructional practices?

Research Question 3: What perceptions do participants have regarding barriers faced by instructional coaches when they are attempting to improve instructional practices?

The overall purpose of the case study was to gain insight on perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, coaches positively impacting the improvement of instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

Sampling Methodology

My goal was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. I thus limited the selection of participants to administrators, teachers, and school-based instructional coaches working within Unified School District. Since collecting data to make generalizations from a sample to a population is not my intention, I used purposeful sampling in selecting the study's sample. Purposeful sampling, the most common form of nonprobability sampling, involves a researcher selecting a sample or information-rich case from which to discover, understand, or gain insight (Merriam, 2009). The use of purposeful sampling allowed me to select key participants including instructional coaches, principals, and teachers. The participants' perceptions provided information regarding varied personal

experiences, so that I could gain insight concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

Sample Size

Sample sizes of qualitative studies are relatively small and have a limited number of sites (Lodico et al., 2010). This study's sample size was based on my goal of obtaining participation from at least one-third of each targeted population of potential participants, which entailed three principals, three school-based instructional coaches or curriculum support staff, and approximately 81 teachers from three identified sites. Two instructional coaches, two principals, and 29 teachers agreed to participate. The small sample aligns with criteria associated with a case study (Lodico et al., 2010). Additionally, the number of participants for each targeted population is in compliance with the guidelines of Walden University's Institutional Review Board for Ethical Standards in Research (IRB).

Selection Criteria

Qualitative studies allow researchers to explore participants' views or perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of issues and concepts (Creswell, 2012). I recruited the study's participants from the three middle schools within Unified School District who currently utilize school-based instructional coaches or curriculum support staff to provide instructional support to their faculties. The chief officer of administration provided the names of the designated middle schools, as well as the names of the principals assigned to the campuses. In order to be considered for selection, individuals were required to (a) be a current employee of Unified School District, and (b) work as an instructional coach, teacher, or principal at one of the identified middle schools.

I used purposeful sampling, which allows for the selection of key participants, to gain the participation of instructional coaches, principals, and teachers. Purposeful sampling is based on the notion that a sample of participants must be identified in order for the researcher to have the strongest potential for learning (Merriam, 2009). Given my focus on gaining insight concerning the phenomenon of instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches, I determined that this method of sampling and selecting participants was most appropriate. I obtained information regarding the phenomenon of instructional coaching from the key participants.

Gaining Access to Participants

I submitted an application to Walden University's IRB to present processes concerning the selection of participants, maintenance of confidentiality, and data collection procedures. After gaining approval from Walden University's IRB (08-25-16-0296615), I contacted Unified School District's chief officer of administration, who granted me permission to access the schools and provided me with the names of the designated administrators or principals. Permission must be gained prior to conducting interviews and administering a questionnaire (Creswell, 2009). Through my Walden University email account, I contacted each principal to obtain the name and email address of their school-based instructional coach or curriculum support person, as well as the names and email addresses of their teachers. I also communicated with the principals to schedule separate faculty meetings in order to introduce myself, provide an explanation of the study's purpose, and explain the concept of informed consent. At the faculty

meetings, I distributed a hard copy of the consent forms so that the potential participants could refer to them for specifics concerning the study. I also explained how individual participation was not contingent upon the decision of any supervisor or colleague at their school. This explanation was key in ensuring teachers did not feel pressured to participate based on the decisions of their immediate supervisor or principal and instructional coach.

After each school's faculty meeting, I sent potential participants electronic invitations through their district email accounts. Invitations included directions for participants to provide consent and an explanation of how the interviews would involve open-ended questions. Additionally, the invitations included an explanation of how I would schedule the interviews at a location and time of their convenience. I set up interviews outside of the interviewees' scheduled workday.

Invitations for participants who are teachers included an explanation of how they would answer open-ended and closed questions presented through an online questionnaire. The invitations included directions for participants to follow in regard to informed consent procedures. I used implied consent procedures in order to adhere to Walden University's IRB guidelines, ensure anonymity for the teachers, and make certain that participants did not feel pressured or feared negative influences on working relationships with their principal, instructional coach, or district personnel. The invitations included an embedded hyperlink for participants to access the questionnaire at their convenience outside of their scheduled workday. Additionally, the invitation presented details about the deadline for participants to answer the open-ended and closed questions prior to the link becoming inactive.

Ethical Considerations

Walden University's IRB application and approval process ensured that the study's design and my actions complied with ethical and legal regulations. No research was conducted prior to receiving approval from Walden University's IRB. I used informed consent forms to notify potential participants of their rights, as well as to ensure the rights of participants were protected. The informed consent forms included the following: (a) descriptions of the study's purpose, the level and type of involvement for participants, and potential risks to the participants, (b) a guarantee of confidentiality to the participants, and (c) an assurance that the participants could withdraw from the study at any time. I distributed and thoroughly explained informed consent forms to the study's potential participants through separate faculty meetings on the three different campuses. However, I did not ask potential participants to indicate their interest (verbally, with gestures, or in written form) during the faculty meetings. Instead, I provided potential participants the means to indicate their consent through electronic invitations. All electronic invitations included an expression of gratitude to potential participants for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend the faculty meeting and to consider participating in the study, whether they ultimately provided consent or decided not to participate.

I have not used the names of the participants and schools in reporting the study's findings. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant involved in an interview to ensure participants' confidentiality (see Merriam, 2009). I conducted each interview at a time and a location of convenience for the participants, such as an office or conference

room before or after school hours (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). I immediately transcribed each interview, and participants received a copy via an email attachment to review for accuracy (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). I asked participants to indicate agreement or disagreement and provide necessary corrections.

I used implied consent procedures to ensure participants who completed the online questionnaire were able to submit anonymous responses. I established anonymity in order to address the possibility of participants feeling pressured or fearing their decision would negatively affect their relationships with their principal and instructional coach, as well as their relationships with district personnel. The use of implied consent procedures allowed the participants to be candid in their responses to the questionnaire items. I did not record the participants' names or contact information within the research records. I have locked audio recordings and transcripts in a filing cabinet at my house, while electronic data is being stored through password protect files for 5 years. After 5 years, I will shred, delete, and destroy electronic versions of records and hard copies of notes (Merriam, 2009).

Establishment of a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

When collecting data, it is essential that a researcher take intentional steps to ensure that the safety and confidentiality of human participants are ensured, while developing a rapport established upon trust (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). I made sure that I communicated all procedures encompassed by my research study with apparent clarity to each participant. As a result, I was able to establish a trusting, working relationship with the participants. Prior to collecting any data, I took the time to explore

my personal experiences with the concept of instructional coaching and its perceived barriers. By doing so, I attempted to increase my awareness of personal bias, assumptions, and viewpoints (Merriam, 2009). I also wanted to be intentional in my methods to establish neutrality or objectivity.

When conducting face-to-face interviews, I made conscious efforts to maintain objectivity. I was sure to remain neutral with my tone of voice and facial gestures, even if I disagreed with the idea being presented by an interviewee (see Merriam, 2009). The manner in which I scheduled interviews was also indicative of my attempts to establish an encouraging rapport with the participants. I allowed the participants to determine a location that was most comforting and a time that was most convenient considering their busy schedules. However, establishing trusting relationships extends beyond conducting interviews. A researcher should make certain that confidentiality of participants is a critical component in all aspects of the study. Therefore, I shared with the participants how their involvement would remain confidential and that I would take measures to safeguard their responses. I communicated with participants how documents would be secured for a designated period of time and then appropriately destroyed.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities instead of the step-by-step processes associated with quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). In order to answer the study's research questions and gain insight on instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches, I used qualitative methods to collect data and conduct ongoing analysis. Data

collection methods included interviews and an online questionnaire. I used interviews to collect data, which involved field notes being taken during and afterwards.

In order to prevent discrepancies when transcribing, I also took notes regarding participant's responses during the interviews. As I transcribed the interviews, I made additional notations pertaining to the study's purpose that I then I coded and sorted.

Consequently, I was able to identify emerging themes. I also coded and sorted data from the online questionnaire by emerging themes.

As a result of my research's design, I was able to obtain numerous pieces of data. I obtained data from interviews of principals and school-based instructional coaches, as well as the online questionnaire responses from teachers. Interviews were the initial method for collecting data. The interviews involved the administration of semi-structured open-ended questions (Appendix E, Appendix F), which allowed for a deeper probe into the perceptions of principals and school-based instructional coaches. The use of open-ended questions provides an opportunity for participants to respond without being influenced by a researcher's perspective (Creswell, 2008). I used probes when attempting to gain needed clarification or to encourage participants to provide responses that are more detailed.

In an office or conference room of their choice, I conducted separate face-to-face interviews with two principals and two school-based instructional coaches. I also audio recorded interviews that I conducted. Prior to the interviews, I tested the audio recording devices. I used my iPhone as a back-up recording device. I took field notes within 24

hours of each interview to ensure that I had adequate time for effective reflection (Merriam, 2009). I conducted interviews within a time frame of 20-25 minutes.

I also collected data through the use of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was comprised of open-ended and closed questions (Appendix G) and was administered through the use of SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. The use of an online questionnaire ensures confidentiality concerning the participants' responses (Creswell, 2012). The online questionnaire was deemed appropriate in ensuring anonymity of the teachers' participation and responses based on guidelines approved by Walden University's IRB. I sent the online questionnaire to the faculties of the designated three middle schools within United School District, which included a target population of approximately 81 potential participants who are teachers. Twenty-nine teachers, approximately one-third of the targeted population, completed the questionnaire. Participants completed online questionnaires within a period of 5-30 minutes. After the link to the questionnaire became inactive, I copied and pasted the participants' responses into word documents.

Collecting data from interviews and questionnaires by means of an inductive process, which involves obtaining bits of information from various sources, contributed to the study's descriptive analysis (Merriam, 2009). I presented questions through the individual interviews and online questionnaire that allowed participants to share their experiences, beliefs, and knowledge concerning instructional coaching. The questions facilitated the collection of data to determine the participants' current understanding of

instructional coaching and its impact, as well as their views regarding the interactions, benefits, and barriers associated with the role of coaches.

I used member checking to establish credibility of findings concerning data obtained from interviews. Member checking allows a researcher to share the analysis of data with participants to provide them with the opportunity to provide feedback to ensure an accurate representation of an investigated phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Member checking helps a researcher in establishing or maintaining rapport and trust with participants and reduces bias (Creswell, 2009). In order to ensure internal validity, I summarized and shared my interpretations with the participants for verification. I asked participants to adhere to the deadline of a week for reviewing and editing transcripts. The participants did not request any editing or revisions.

Data Analysis Results

The analysis of data involved me chunking information, such as phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, based on meanings or significances. Therefore, creating transcripts of the interviews was my initial step in analyzing the collected data. I accomplished this step with Microsoft Word documents. I sorted field notes and transcripts to construct relevant categories to aid in the recognition of emerging themes. As the researcher, I analyzed, labeled, and grouped the collected data into categories for the identification of themes. I based categories on interview and questionnaire responses, as well as the field notes that I took during and after the interviews. The labeling of data involved me color-coding the chunks by topics or categories. As suggested by Creswell (2009), evaluations involved comparing incidents to incidents, categories to categories,

and incidents to categories. I organized and categorized the data based on similarities and differences noted within the margins of transcripts and field notes. I highlighted significant phrases and words to identify emerging themes and relationships. I continued to review the information, make notes, and highlight reoccurring words and phrases, until I was able to narrow categories into themes.

I used coding to further organize and manage the identified themes. Coding is the assignment of some type of shorthand designation for collected data that assists a researcher in retrieving specific pieces of information (Merriam, 2009). I organized the information from each type of interview, principal and instructional coach, and questionnaire responses into separate systems to aid in analyzing and coding data. I reviewed transcripts and questionnaire responses several times and coded the data based on identified themes. I referred to the study's research questions in order to code the data, which assisted in me determining the emergence of similar or parallel patterns and themes within and among the organized systems. The emerging patterns allowed me to pattern match. Pattern matching is a desirable technique for case study analysis, which consists of identifying patterns that serve as evidence to validate explanations (Yin, 2009). In order to focus the codes associated with the participants' views or perceptions, I then combined the themes, which are somewhat descriptive in nature. I re-examined and analyzed the multiple sources of data until no themes emerged, which indicated saturation and increased the credibility of findings (Merriam, 2009).

I presented questions through the interviews and the questionnaire that aligned with the study's three research questions, which guided the analysis of data to gain

insight on the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, coaches positively impacting the improvement of instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. The first research question related to participants' perceptions concerning instructional coaching impacting instructional practices. The second research question related to participants' perceptions regarding instructional coaches assisting administrators and teachers in improving instructional practices. The third research question related to participants' perceptions regarding barriers faced by instructional coaches when they are attempting to improve instructional practices. The aforementioned research questions provided the foundation of this research study.

The reporting of findings included visual images and a narrative discussion. A narrative discussion entails a written journey of the findings from the analysis of data in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). I received consent from four out of the six potential participants for interviews. Twenty-nine of the 81 potential participants completed the online questionnaire. I assigned and used pseudonyms in place of the interviewees' real names. The participants that I interviewed had the following statistical data concerning educational experience: Mean 17.5, Median 18, and Range 16. The information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Population Demographic Data: Years in Education and Position

Participant	Years in Education	Position

Ms. Augustine	9	Instructional Coach
Mrs. Kramer	16	Principal
Mrs. Robinson	20	Instructional Coach
Mrs. Jonas	25	Principal

Interview Questions: Principals

Interview Question 1. Interview Question 1 asked participants to provide their educational experience in terms of years. Mrs. Jonas shared that she has been in the field of education for twenty-five years, which included two years as an assistant principal and eight years as a principal. Mrs. Kramer shared that she has been in the field of education for sixteen years, which included three years as an assistant principal and seven years as a principal.

Interview Question 2. Interview Question 2 asked participants to describe what the term instructional coaching means. The identified themes included working alongside teachers, assisting teachers, instructional strategies, and improving school programs. Assisting teachers referred to struggling teachers being helped and resources being provided. Instructional strategies referred to practices and skills being developed or strengthened. Improving school programs referred to instructional coaching providing a resource “to assist with the instructional programs of schools” and improving “overall programs.” Both principals referred to instructional coaching involving someone “working alongside teachers to provide resources.” Mrs. Kramer stated, “Instructional coaching involves someone who can assist teachers with curriculum.” Mrs. Jonas stated,

“Instructional coaching involves supporting struggling teachers by working on and developing instructional strategies.”

Interview Question 3. Interview Question 3 asked participants do they believe instructional coaching impacts or improves instructional practices of teachers and administrators. The identified themes included improving crafts and ongoing processes. Improving crafts referred to increasing the instructional skills and knowledge base of teachers and administrators. Ongoing processes referred to the shift in mindsets and the manner in which coaches work to make improvements. Both principals agreed that instructional coaching positively impacts or improves instructional practices. Mrs. Kramer stated, “Instructional coaching allows teachers to be supported as they make attempts to step out and try new things.” Mrs. Jonas reported, “Instructional coaching allows models to be provided for teachers who need to see what effective practices look like in action.”

Interview Question 4. Interview Question 4 asked participants to describe the role of an instructional coach. The identified themes included supportive and encouraging, model of effective teaching, and improving instruction. Supportive and encouraging referred to the ways instructional coaches work with teachers and administrators in a variety roles to provide assistance. Model of effective teaching referred to how instructional coaches share resources and instructional strategies with teachers. Improved instruction referred to how instructional coaches assist teachers. Mrs. Kramer stated, “The role is to be a support for the teachers.” Mrs. Jonas stated, “The role is to be a model of effective teaching.” Mrs. Jonas stated, “An instructional coach works

with all education professionals- teachers, administrators, and when appropriate aides.” Mrs. Kramer stated, “The role of an instructional coach is to provide continuous help.” She went on to explain by stating, ‘An instructional coach should be a “problem solver, who is also able to help others solve their own problems.” Both principals cited “implementation of curriculum” and “designing assessments” as results of an instructional coach’s role.

Interview Question 5. Interview Question 5 asked participants to describe typical tasks assigned to their instructional coach. The identified themes included model lessons, provide feedback, and analyze data. Model lessons referred to instructional coaches working with teachers to plan and implement new ideas or strategies. Provide feedback referred to coaching conversations or reflective discussions that occur after model lessons or observations. Analyzing data referred to the instructional coaches being assigned to analyze data to determine appropriate alignment between standards and strategies, as well as aligning assessments to standards. Mrs. Jonas stated, “Model lessons and reflective feedback help teachers to understand that teaching is not an isolated act.” She explained by adding, “My coach worked hard to establish a safe environment, where teachers are comfortable to receive help through modeling lessons, looking at their teaching practices, and giving feedback.” Mrs. Kramer shared how her instructional coach has been “instrumental in her teachers understanding the alignment piece, which is hard for some folks.” She explained by stating, “More experienced teachers have benefited from the coach helping them to make sense of standard-based instruction and assessment.”

Interview Question 6. Interview Question 6 asked participants to describe instructional benefits that were gained from their instructional coach collaborating with their teachers. The identified themes included strengthening teachers and impacting student achievement. Strengthening teachers referred to the numerous ways instructional coaches are beneficial. Impacting student achievement referred to the manner in which benefits are noted. Mrs. Jonas stated, “My instructional coach is a go to person, in being available to help struggling teachers and new teachers develop their craft and get more comfortable with certain strategies. My coach has helped me by doing classroom observations and then sharing what I need to know if things aren’t cutting it.” She added, “However, it is important to be aware of keeping the line between the roles of evaluator and coach very clear, in order to not have teachers perceive her as an administrator.” Mrs. Kramer shared how teachers “classroom practices have been strengthened” as a result of her instructional coach’s work. She believes her instructional coach impacted student achievement and shared how the work included “achieving some great things with students.” Mrs. Kramer cited the school being “recognized as a Palmetto Silver Award recipient for closing achievement gaps” as evidence.

Interview Question 7. Interview Question 7 asked participants to share barriers that they believed instructional coaches face when attempting to improve instructional practices. The identified themes included challenging mindsets and receptiveness. Challenging mindsets referred to teachers not being open to instructional growth and the role of an instructional coach. Receptiveness referred to the beliefs teacher possess concerning visitors entering their classrooms. Mrs. Jonas shared how “some seasoned

teachers think they already got this and are not receptive as they should be in us trying to help them grow.” Mrs. Jonas stated, “Teachers believe anyone who conducts classroom observations is an evaluator.” Mrs. Kramer stated, “Teachers believe anyone coming in from outside of their classrooms is there to evaluate them and point out to them what they are doing wrong.” She provided clarification by stating, “Teachers must understand that coaches are only there to enhance their instructional practices.”

Interview Question 8. Interview Question 8 asked participants to provide any additional relevant information. The identified themes included scheduling and time constraints. Scheduling referred to conflicts with common planning time. Time constraints referred to varied duties assigned to instructional coaches. Mrs. Jonas stated, “Time is a crucial component for instructional coaching.” She elaborated by stating, “Schedules of instructional coaches and teachers need to align to ensure adequate time for co-planning, conducting sufficient classroom observations, and facilitating debriefing sessions.” Mrs. Kramer stated, “All schools would benefit from having an instructional coach assigned specifically to their school.” She cited the conflicts that exist due to the “numerous duties of administrators”, such as “addressing personnel issues and parental concerns, and assuming the role of instructional leader” as evidence to support her statement. Mrs. Kramer stated, “Having that extra person to help with the instructional program of the school is a great benefit, and it truly enhances student achievement.”

Interview Questions: Instructional Coaches

Interview Question 1. Interview Question 1 asked participants to provide their educational experience in terms of years. Ms. Augustine shared that she has been in the

field of education for nine years, which includes four years in an elementary school. Mrs. Robinson shared that she has been in the field of education for twenty years, which includes being a director of a preschool.

Interview Question 2. Interview Question 2 asked participants to describe what the term instructional coaching means. The identified themes included mentoring and facilitating. Mentoring referred to actions associated with instructional coaching. Facilitating referred to the various settings related to instructional coaching. Ms. Augustine stated, “Instructional coaching means mentoring or leading by example instead of just telling people.” She elaborated by stating, “Instructional coaching is achieved through modeling.” She also stated, “I am going to model in how I speak to you and have conversation.” Mrs. Robinson stated, “Instructional coaching means facilitating learning.” She elaborated by stating, “Facilitating extends beyond traditional settings to include any kind of learning to prepare students to live a better life.”

Interview Question 3. Interview Question 3 asked participants to describe the role of an instructional coach. The identified themes included supporter, role model, and non-evaluative. Supporter referred to building upon strengths. Role model referred to examples provided through the roles of instructional coaches. Non-evaluative referred to how teachers should view instructional coaches. Both instructional coaches agreed that role entailed being role models. Mrs. Robinson stated, “The role is one of supporter, by the ways or modalities that are used to help teachers find their strengths.” Ms. Augustine stated, “The role should not be an evaluative position.” She elaborated by adding, “The role should involve “mentoring teachers.”

Interview Question 4. Interview Question 4 asked participants to describe a typical day as an instructional coach. The identified themes included classroom observations and debriefing. Classroom observations referred to priority tasks carried out by instructional coaches. Debriefing referred to feedback provided to teachers and meetings held with teachers. Ms. Augustine stated, “I start with teacher observations. Then, I lead teacher-debriefing sessions with all those teachers I have met throughout the day.” She elaborated by stating, “So, as soon as I leave their classrooms, I go back to my office space and communicated exactly what I have seen. I like to use a template that outlines their praises and polishes.” She also shared how she meets “formal requests through set appointments and regularly scheduled co-planning sessions.” Mrs. Robinson shared her day “generally involves classroom observations, conferences with teachers, and sharing resources.” She elaborated by sharing how her work “extended beyond classroom observation and requests when meeting systematic needs”, such as planning a community theatrical production that presented the history of the town and school.

Interview Question 5. Interview Question 5 asked participants do they believe instructional coaching impacts or improves instructional practices of teachers and administrators. The identified themes included being part of a system and being viewed as support. Being part of a system referred to the role of an instructional coach within the school and faculty. Being viewed as support referred to the influence or effects of instructional coaches. Both instructional coaches agreed that their positions and instructional coaching positively impact instructional practices. Ms. Augustine stated, “I absolutely believe my role is positive and positively impacts everyone around me.” She

elaborated by stating, “I am part of a system and when I do my job well, the entire system works well.” She also stated, “Administrators lean on me to be that teacher support, to be their eyes and ears when their tasks become so much that they can’t be as supportive as they want.” Mrs. Robinson stated, “Instructional coaching becomes influential when it is done right and when the players can see you as a helper, as opposed to a scolder or any other patronizing role.” She added, “In order for coaches to be effective in improving practices, coaches must establish integrity in acknowledging what is possible, what’s more realistic about the challenges that stand between their teachers and the perfect lesson or instructional day.”

Interview Question 6. Interview Question 6 asked participants to share barriers faced when attempting to improve instructional practices. The identified themes included worrying, frustration, and resistant mindsets. Worrying and frustration referred to internal barriers faced by instructional coaches when attempting to make improvements. Resistant mindsets referred to the receptiveness encountered when instructional coaches are attempting to improve instructional practices. Ms. Augustine stated, “I find the use of tact is one of the biggest barriers with me. Just because something needs to be said does not mean it needs to be said the way I am thinking it.” She explained how “being mindful of using tact when providing encouragement” helps her to address the barrier. Ms. Augustine elaborated by stating, “I remind myself that I can burn a bridge just as quickly as I can build it with my words.” She also expressed frustration as a barrier by stating, “So, another of the biggest barriers is not only using tact but also the frustration of change not happening fast enough as I would like it to happen.” Mrs. Robinson stated,

“The biggest barrier is resistant mindsets, especially when teachers feel that the presence of a coach is patronizing them.” She stated, “Some teachers have the mindset that a coach is better or knows more than them.” Mrs. Robinson shared how she addresses resistant mindsets by taking measures through her actions to ensure “everybody sits to the table and everybody has a piece of the truth or solution.”

Interview Question 7. Interview Question 7 asked participants to provide any additional relevant information. The identified themes included collaboration and respect. Collaboration referred to the relationships and interactions within a faculty. Respect referred to the manner in which an instructional coach should approach their work. Ms. Augustine stated, “A true instructional coach thrives with effective administrative support and open-minded teachers.” She elaborated by stating, “My current school setting is a blessing for effective coaching.” Ms. Augustine reported, “Keeping a positive attitude is necessary in being what is needed for my teachers and administration.” Ms. Robinson shared how an instructional coach should be respectful to teachers. She stated, “Coaches need to remember to wear their wisdom humbly.”

Questionnaires: Teachers

Question 1. Question 1 asked participants to indicate their educational experience in terms of years. Nine participants responded that their experience is within the 0 to 4 years range. Seven participants responded that their experience is within the 5 to 9 years range. Eight participants responded that their experience is within the 10 to 14 years range. Two participants responded that their experience is within the 15 to 19 years

range. Three participants responded that their experience is within the 20 and beyond range.

Question 2. Question 2 asked participants to describe the role of an instructional coach. The identified themes included cheerleader and assistance. Cheerleader referred to the role being one that provides encouragement, support, and not being an evaluator. Assistance referred to the role being associated with teachers receiving help in obtaining resources and improving instructional strategies and practices. Participants shared how the role involves an instructional coaching working “closely with teachers” and “provide resources.” Participants shared how an instructional coach can “encourage, inspire, and help educators” and “gather, organize, and implement curriculum.” Participants shared how the role involves “finding effective research-based instructional strategies to promote learning for students.” One participant shared how the role of an instructional coach is “to be a bridge between administration and teachers.”

Question 3. Question 3 asked participants to describe what the term instructional coaching means. The identified themes included modeling and supporting. Modeling referred to professional development, showing research-based strategies, and improving the delivery of instruction. Supporting referred to instructional coaching providing a resource. Participants shared how instructional coaching provides an individual “to provide extra guidance”, “assist with instructional needs”, and “create innovative strategies for teachers.” Participants shared how instructional coaching provides “a live resource” or someone who provides support through “modeling”, “assisting”, and “helping teachers to understand.” A participant shared, “Instructional coaching means to

coach teachers to be better teachers just like athletic coaches coach their players.”

Another participant shared, “Instructional coaching means providing a person that has expertise in guiding instructional tools to enhance academic engagement.”

Question 4. Question 4 asked participants whether or not instructional coaching impacts or improves instructional practices of teachers and administrators. All twenty-nine participants indicated that they think instructional coaching improves instructional practices of teachers. However, one participant reported, “It has a positive impact on teachers, but no help to an administrator.” Participants shared that instructional coaching improves the instructional practices and strategies of teachers and administrators. Participants indicated the importance of “teachers being receptive” for instructional coaching to lead to improvement in teachers and administrators. A participant shared, “Instructional coaching can be effective if all participants can understand its purpose.”

Question 5. Question 5 asked participants to indicate how often they work with their instructional coach. Seven participants indicated rarely. Sixteen participants indicated sometimes. Five participants indicated usually. One participant indicated almost always.

Question 6. Question 6 asked participants to describe instructional benefits gained from working with your instructional coach. The identified themes included resources, planning, and strategies. Resources referred to the ways coaches helped or assisted teachers in exploring new ideas. Planning referred to collaborative work between teachers and coaches to create lessons and projects. Strategies referred to the variety ways instructional coaches attempt to improve instruction. Participants shared how their

instructional coach “plan lessons and projects” and “provide suggestions.” Participants shared how strategies were shared that could be described as “valuable” and “different.” Two participants specifically shared how their instructional coach “helped in planning STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) lessons.”

Question 7. Question 7 asked participants to describe ways your instructional coach assists administrators and teachers in improving instructional practices. The identified themes included observations, model lessons, feedback, and planning. Observations referred to instructional coaches visiting classrooms to observe the delivery of instruction. Model lessons referred to instructional coaches working one-on-one with teachers. Feedback referred to how instructional coaches provide guidance or suggestions. Planning referred to instructional coaches working to organize programs and plan projects. Participants shared how their instructional coach “observes lessons” and “presents model lessons.” Participants shared their how instructional coaches “leave comments” or “share information about instruction they observe.” A participant shared how feedback involved “informal evaluations that show immediate feedback that the teachers need- just as students need immediate feedback.” Participants shared how their instructional coaches “lead professional development.” Two participants shared how instructional coaches serve as a “being a bridge between teachers and administrators” concerning information being shared when planning school-wide programs. One participant shared how planning involved “preparation for standardized tests.” Participants shared how “planning lessons” also included the “review of assessments.” Two participants shared information that indicated they were unsure. One shared feeling

“pretty isolated from everyone”, and the other shared “I don’t even know who our instructional coach is at my school.”

Question 8. Question 8 asked participants to share barriers they believe instructional coaches face when attempting to improve instructional practices. The identified themes included scheduling and teacher receptiveness. Scheduling referred to time constraints related to common or collaborative planning. Teacher receptiveness referred to the unwillingness and reluctance of teachers to accept instructional support or assistance. Participants shared “not enough time” and “time constraints” as barriers. Participants shared barriers that included “balancing the needs of all teachers” and “juggling their schedules to help so many teachers may present challenges and for instructional coaches.” Concerning teacher receptiveness, participants shared several explanations and examples to present barriers. Participants shared barriers that involved the “unwillingness of teachers” and “teachers being reluctant when trying new strategies or implementing new curriculum.” Participants shared “teachers being hesitant to let an outsider in their classrooms” and “teachers feeling threatened when approached by an outsider” as examples of teacher receptiveness.

Question 9. Question 9 asked participants to provide any additional relevant information. The identified themes included beneficial and non-evaluative. Beneficial referred to how teachers viewed instructional coaches and the various ways they provide assistance. Non-evaluative referred to beliefs concerning the manner in which coaches conduct classroom observations and provide feedback. Participants shared how instructional coaches are “helpful” and “beneficial.” Participants shared how their

instructional coach “works closely with teachers to provide resources” and “provides instructional feedback.” A participant shared “A sticky note with positive feedback allows teachers to feel they are needed instead of being looked down upon.” A participant shared “Being able to go to my instructional coach and knowing that they will have or find an answer to my question makes me appreciate them even more.” A participant shared, “I believe instructional coaches are a vital part of the educational environment.” Regarding the role of instructional coaches being non-evaluative, participants provided suggestions. A participant shared, “This position should not be coupled with another title.” Another participant shared “They can evaluate, but it should be on the teacher’s terms of what they are looking to change specifically in their classroom.”

This study proved to be beneficial in providing Unified School District with an enhanced understanding of perceptions concerning the role, impact or influence, and barriers of instructional coaches. Questions presented through the interviews and questionnaire aligned with the three research questions, which addressed the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, coaches positively impacting the improvement of instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. Through a professional development/training curriculum the school district will provide the means for administrators to become more knowledgeable about instructional coaching, as well as the collaborative partnerships it encompasses, in order to meet the identified needs of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches.

Emerging Themes

The following four major themes emerged from this study: assistance, receptiveness, instructional benefits, and non-evaluative role. For each theme, a more in-depth discussion is provided below.

Theme 1: Assistance. Assistance referred to the numerous and varied methods used by instructional coaches to deliver support and guidance. Participants involved in interviews and who completed the questionnaire reported numerous examples of instructional coaches providing assistance. The majority of participants shared that model lessons are viewed as “being integral for instructional coaching.” A participant shared, “Model lessons provide a way to help teachers engage students in learning and retaining information.” Another participant shared, “Assistance from an instructional coach “helps teachers grow professionally.” Participants reported that coaches demonstrated instructional strategies or modeled expectations through their actions, that “they walked their talk”. Participants shared how “classroom observations and providing immediate feedback” were common tasks for coaches when attempting to help teachers improve instruction. A participant shared how the aforementioned tasks “assist teachers with employing effective instructional techniques.”

Participants shared that instructional coaches are involved in various forms of planning. The majority of participants shared that coaches “planned lessons and activities to share new ideas or strategies.” Participants reported that their coaches “planned classroom and school-wide projects.” Participants noted specific instructional strategies, such as “differentiation strategies and practices that were shared through plans devised by

coaches.” Participants also shared how coaches “located and provided instructional resources for administrators and teachers.” A participant shared how instructional coaches “plan and deliver preparation for standardized tests.” Another participant shared, “My coach will try to get everyone on the same page, so there is less confusion when working on problem areas.”

Theme 2: Receptiveness. Receptiveness referred to the approachability of administrators and teachers when working with instructional coaches. Participants reported time constraints and conflicting schedules as challenges that prevent the collaboration among administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers. A participant shared, “Coaches may not have enough time to help teachers.” Participants provided examples of conflicting schedules, such as “coaches not being free when teachers are planning.” Participants shared “not having enough time to help all the teachers in their different content areas” as a barrier for teacher receptiveness. A participant shared time constraints in relation to an instructional coach “being split to be a coach and an administrator.” Another participant shared, “It may be hard to manage time and schedules when an instructional coach is put in a position where he/she is a part-time instructional coach and part-time something else.” A participant shared, “Time constraints-meeting with an instructional coach is just one more item to add to the To Do List.” Another participant shared how “not having adequate time to develop relationships with teachers” as a challenge when addressing teacher receptiveness.

Participants shared that the unwillingness of some teachers hinder instructional coaches when they are trying to convey information or share resources. Participants

shared how instructional coaches may “receive cold receptions from teachers and even are rebuffed.” Participants reported that instructional coaches deal with challenges, such as “having a difficult time getting through to teachers” and “teachers being set in a way of teaching their content” when they are attempting to build collaborative partnerships. Participants shared how “teachers are reluctant to try new things” or that “some teachers are stuck in tradition and do not want to think outside of the box.” One participant provided an explanation by sharing, “Resistance comes from teachers in that they see them as someone who is looking for someone who is looking for something wrong and will run to the office with it.” Another participant shared how instructional coaches “are seen as another administrator (observing and critiquing lessons) so it makes the teachers a little more hesitant to allow them in.”

Participants cited the role of administrators as a contributing factor in teacher receptiveness. A participant shared “Sometime administrators are not committed to the implementation of new practices and are not motivated to implement instructional practices.” A participant shared how instructional coaches experience “teacher push back, when they not being able to do the job they were assigned because they are pulled to perform duties not related to their job.” Another participant shared that instructional coaches “need to be released from being part of the school’s administration.” One participant shared, “I believe coaches are not easily accepted into schools because a lot of people do not understand their purpose. This makes it difficult for coaches to have a huge impact on the school as a whole.”

Theme 3: Instructional benefits. Instructional benefits referred to the resources and services associated with instructional coaches in relation to improving instruction. Participants shared that instructional coaches are very beneficial. A participant shared, “Sometimes teachers need a sounding board or to see an unfamiliar strategy carried out, so they know how it should/can look. An instructional coach can provide that for teachers.” Participants believe an instructional coach is a vital part of an educational environment. Participants shared how “having an instructional coach available for new teachers” is a necessity. A participant shared, “Having an instructional coach available prevents new teachers from becoming overwhelming and leaving the profession.” A participant shared, “It is always good for teachers to get the chance to brainstorm with another educator to improve how student instruction is provided.” A participant shared, “Instructional coaches can provide teachers with advice on how best to present information to certain classes, which can help with student engagement and decrease behavior problems.” Another participant shared, “Instructional coaches positively impact the work of classroom teachers and principals.”

In providing examples of the numerous benefits associated with instructional coaches, participants presented challenges. A participant shared, “If the teachers are receptive, I believe coaching has a positive impact.” A participant shared, “Instructional coaches can positively impact and improve instructional practices, if the teacher or administrator is willing to implement the instructional practices within a school or classroom.” A participant shared, “I do believe instructional coaches can positively impact and improve instructional practices of teachers and administrators, if the teachers

and administrators seek help from them.” Another participant shared, “Instructional coaches are beneficial when collaborations are effective.”

Theme 4: Non-evaluative role. Non-evaluative role referred to the manner in which instructional coaches should work with teachers and how administrators and teachers should view them. Participants reported that instructional coaches should assume a non-evaluative role. Participants shared that instructional coaches should not be viewed as an administrator when conducting classroom observations. A participant shared, “Instructional coaches are seen as another administrator (observing and critiquing lessons).” Participants shared how instructional coaches experience challenges when “teachers assume they are in their classrooms to judge.” Another participant shared, “Teachers and administrators need to have more knowledge of what instructional coaches are aiming to do in their schools.”

Participants shared how the position of instructional coach should not be split with another title or position, such as “coach and administrator” or “part-time instructional coach and part-time something else.” Participants shared how instructional coaches are “not able to do the job they were assigned because they are pulled to perform other duties not related to their job.” Participants described instructional coaches as individuals responsible for “professional development to improve “classroom and systematic instructional practices.” A participant shared, “My coach leads professional development that is carried out through one-on-one or faculty meetings.” Another participant shared, “I’ve seen the instructional coach lead faculty meetings to provide

different ways of teaching.” Participants shared that instructional coaching means “supporting” and “mentoring” but not evaluating.

Conclusion

The use of a qualitative research study design, a case study, allowed the researcher to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. The researcher interviewed principals and instructional coaches, as well as surveyed teachers, within three middle schools in a South Carolina school district. The findings of the study were reported in narrative form and through a visual. The study allowed the researcher to gain insight concerning perceptions regarding the role, impact or influence, and barriers of instructional coaches. The following section presents the details of the professional development/training project. The project was designed to recommend support for instructional coaches that would ensure their role is clearly understood in order to ensure collaborative partnerships are fostered and identified barriers are addressed. Establishing clarity with the associated roles of instructional coaches may lead to increased awareness regarding tasks or duties assigned to instructional coaches. Increased clarity may also lead to more collaborative partnerships that involve the administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches establishing shared goals when attempting to design and implement systematic changes for improving classroom instruction and increasing student achievement.

This study involves initiatives that could potentially lead to improvements regarding the manner in which Unified School District’s department of Instruction and

Accountability addresses the barriers or misconceptions regarding the position and role of instructional coaches. Therefore, the increased awareness and understanding may lead to collaborative partnerships and professional learning communities being used to improve classroom instruction and increase student learning. The implementation of the project is presented in Section 3.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. By conducting a case study, I was able to collect qualitative data using semi-structured interviews with administrators and instructional coaches, and a questionnaire that presented open-ended questions to teachers. Qualitative data collection results in findings being obtained from observations, interviews, and questionnaires (Creswell, 2012). A case study allows the researcher to explore participants' beliefs, attitudes, or perceptions concerning a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Further, this design was appropriate for the collection of qualitative data that I was able to later organize into themes that provide beneficial insight concerning a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). My use of a case study resulted in the identification of themes related to instructional coaching, its impact on instructional practices, and perceived barriers. The themes identified from the data collected included: assistance, receptiveness, instructional benefits, and non-evaluative role. The themes that emerged indicated a need for increasing educators' understandings of instructional coaching and their awareness of its perceived barriers in order to promote collaborative partnerships among administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers. As a result, I designed a professional development/training curriculum project.

I reviewed literature pertaining to the effectiveness of professional development (PD) for adult learners to inform the design of my proposed PD plan that includes

multiple sessions, which span over a time frame of three days. This section includes the project's implementation and evaluation process, which is supported by a scholarly rationale and a plan that addresses potential resources, barriers, and a timeline. In addition, I offer an explanation of how the project will promote social change.

Rationale

My research findings led me to develop a PD project that will be delivered through training sessions with a content focus pertaining to administrators increasing their understanding of instructional coaching and the roles of instructional coaches. The focus of the PD project aligns with current initiatives being implemented within Unified School District's to increase administrators' understandings of how to effectively serve as instructional leaders in order to build capacity within their schools' faculties. My overall goal in this PD project is to increase understandings in order to form collaborative partnerships and to foster cooperative environments within schools when systematic initiatives are being implemented to improve classroom instruction and increase student achievement. Therefore, the intent of the PD project's collaborative and reflective exercises is encouraging administrators to participate in structured sessions to explore pertinent literature, engage in discussions, evaluate methods for job-embedded professional development, and develop or revise master schedules to facilitate common planning and professional learning communities (PLCs) meetings to address receptiveness and barriers encountered by instructional coaches.

In order to increase understandings regarding the collaborative partnerships among educators promoted through instructional coaching, it is essential that perceptions

concerning instructional coaching, coaches' impact on instructional practices, and barriers are identified and addressed. It is also just as crucial for me, in the role of the researcher, to report the research findings to a variety of stakeholders in order to explore additional resources that might be used to improve instructional practices. Meeting with integral curriculum and instruction stakeholders will present me with the opportunity to influence the manner in which the role of instructional coaches is further clarified and barriers associated with instructional coaching are addressed. I plan to use the meeting as a means to expand administrators' knowledge when collaborating with coaches to improve the instructional practices of classroom teachers. Additionally, I plan to publish the study's findings in a professional journal to influence the work of individuals who may decide to build upon the study's findings or further explore research pertaining to instructional coaching in regard to fostering collaborative relationships among educators to positively affect the professional growth of teachers and student achievement.

Review of the Literature

In the following section, I provide a review of the literature regarding to the development of the PD project. I used the following keywords to guide the review of peer-reviewed scholarly articles: *adult learning, professional development, professional learning communities, and instructional coaching*. I accessed a variety of databases via Walden University's online library, including Education Research Complete, SAGE Journals Online, Educational Resource Informational Center (ERIC), and ProQuest. The searches resulted in articles and research studies that emphasized the benefits associated with instructional coaching and professional development training for educators.

Adult Learning

Adult learning is the process of adults acquiring new knowledge and skills, based on the notion that the learners need to be actively involved in the learning (Knowles et al., 2011). Adult learners need to know the basis of the information they are gaining and assume responsibility for decisions related to their professional learning (Knowles et al., 2011). The andragogy theory, which addresses the attributes of adult learning, promotes learning through collaborative participation (Lockwood et al., 2010). Additionally, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of social interactions for adult learners when acquiring new information.

In order to increase their competence with newly acquired skills, adult learners must be presented with numerous opportunities to share their personal knowledge and experiences with others (Henschke, 2011; Hill, 2014; Perterson & Ray, 2013). Adult learners, specifically educators, require new information to be applicable to their daily tasks, such as collaborating with colleagues (Akiba, 2012; Townsend, 2015). Educators, who are adult learners, are encouraged to pursue continued growth in regard to their knowledge, understanding, and expertise (Petrie & McGee, 2012). Adult learners need to be presented with real-life scenarios that allow them to problem solve while providing input and expressing personal opinions when exploring cause and effect relationships (Ambler, 2016; Owen, Pogodzinski, & Hill, 2016). Therefore, educators should receive training that is relevant to their work, which increases the likelihood of them implementing what is learned (Stewart, 2014). Adult learners who are educators are more

likely to be positive when responding to training opportunities that encompass authentic experiences (Akiba, 2012).

My PD project's training sessions will allow administrators to explore the study's findings and review pertinent literature while determining the relevance of the information in relation to their role as an instructional leader of their receptive schools. The PD project's activities will allow the administrators to determine how the information is applicable in fostering collaborating partnerships among themselves and their faculties. The administrators will engage in collaborative activities, such as the analysis of literature or documents through a "jigsaw" protocol. The collaborative activities will allow them to share connections discovered between their newfound knowledge and personal experiences pertaining to instructional coaching, as well as the roles assigned to their instructional coach or curriculum support personnel. The collaborative activities will allow them to explore and discuss possible cause-effect relationships pertaining to resistance or barriers experienced by instructional coaches. Collaboration among adult learners aids in promoting dialogue that leads to identification of and solutions to problems (D'Ardenne et al., 2013). Researchers have determined that dialogue and reflection are influential factors in increasing efficacy of adult learners (Bayar, 2014; Drago-Sevenson & Blum-DeStefano, 2013).

Instructional Coaching and Professional Development

Instructional coaches assume numerous roles that involve administrators and teachers receiving assistance. The day-to-day work assignments of coaches can vary across schools and districts (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). However, instructional coaching

activities typically include modeling instructional strategies, conducting observations, and providing reflective feedback (Mangin, 2014). Coaches also facilitate discussions concerning student work and analysis of data to problem solve (Mangin, 2014).

In addition, instructional coaches work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ultimately affect student learning (Mangin, 2014; Sutton, Burroughs, & Yopp, 2011). Instructional coaches also collaborate with principals and other school leaders to provide assistance. Regardless of their numerous assignments, the most prominent role of an instructional coach is to support instruction (Mudzimiri, et al., 2014). Instructional coaches support instruction by providing ongoing job-embedded professional development opportunities (Mudzimiri, et al., 2014). Instructional coaches use a variety of professional development methods to promote the implementation of systematic, school-wide interventions (Main, Pendergust, & Virtue, 2015; Stefaniak, 2017).

Increasing levels of expertise that improve the overall effectiveness of a system are intended outcomes of professional development approaches (Colin, Van der Heijden, & Lewis, 2012). In order to produce sustainable results, professional development opportunities must facilitate active and collaborative participation (Desimone & Garet, 2015). Those designing professional development presentations should consider the time needed for participants to internalize new information within supportive environments (Desimone, Smith, & Phillips, 2013). Professional learning opportunities need to be presented within environments that are supportive and favorable for the participants (Zhao, 2013), and professional development participants need to be able interact and collaborate in an environment where trust has been established (Knowlton, Fogelman,

Reichsman, & de Oliveria (2015). It is important for participants to be able to build relationships and engage in critical discussions (Parker, Kram, & Hall, 2012).

A crucial characteristic of effective professional development learning opportunities is participants learning as a team, while applying the concepts being learned (Sicat et al., 2014). Professional learning opportunities that facilitate on-the-job training for educators include traditional or formal workshops, informal school meetings or collaborative meetings, peer coaching, and debriefing sessions (Jewett & MacPhee, 2012; Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016). When delivering professional training sessions for educators, facilitators should consider the influence beliefs and assumptions have on instructional practices (Farrell & Ives, 2015). The convictions and assumptions of educators, whether held consciously or subconsciously, determine their instructional practices. The instructional practices of educators impact student achievement (Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney, & Beltyukova, 2012).

Professional development for educators is integral to designing initiatives for increasing teacher efficacy, effectiveness of instruction, and student achievement (Petrie & McGee, 2012), and numerous school districts use professional development to improve instructional practices (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015; Porche, Pallente, & Snow, 2012). Instructional coaching has become an increasingly popular, viable model for delivering school-embedded professional development to increase teacher efficacy (Power et al., 2016). The overall objective of professional development opportunities is encouraging changes in educators' thinking processes and instructional practices, which

is essential for increased student achievement (Fine, Zygouis-Coe, Senokossoff, & Fang, 2011; Lumpe et al., 2012).

The project's training sessions involve reflective activities that emphasize the importance of collaborative partnerships or PLCs being developed to address instructional concerns and barriers encountered by instructional coaches. Administrators will explore pertinent literature to evaluate various instructional methods or processes for job-embedded PD that can be facilitated by instructional coaches or curriculum support personnel. The success of professional learning experiences depends on participants being receptive or open to assistance (Gray, Kruse, & Tarter, 2015; Hadar & Brody, 2013). In fact, presenters of effective PD must be able to assume a role that allows them to work collaboratively with schools' leaders or administrators to plan, assess, and implement change initiatives (Gray et al., 2015). The role of administrators is noted as being influential in determining the success of PLCs (Hallum, Smith, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015). Administrators can be key in influencing the establishment of trust factors that are essential for collaborative partnerships or PLCs (Hallum et al., 2015). Administrators, teachers, and team leaders who understand how the development of trust promotes and affects collaborative relationships are better prepared to foster and maintain it (Hallum et al., 2015).

Therefore, the project's training sessions include activities that involve administrators revising or creating master schedules that address the need for common planning times for teachers and instructional coaches, as well as planning structured or scheduled times for PLCs meetings to take place. The common planning times and PLCs

will allow for collaborative discussions and problem solving in order to identify and resolve school-based instructional concerns. The PD project focuses on increasing the understanding and knowledge base of administrators concerning instructional coaching and its roles, as well as barriers encountered by instructional coaches, so that they can provide and maintain support for shared goals and systematic initiatives designed to increase student achievement. Mutual collaboration among educators encourages active engagement in the development of shared goals that support student learning (Clary, Stysliger, & Oglan, 2012).

Project Description

This project will include the design and implementation of a presentation to Unified School District's curriculum and instruction stakeholders (Appendix A) and a professional development training workshop (Appendix A) for the district's administrators. The purpose of the presentation is to inform curriculum personnel of the research findings, more specifically the participants' insights concerning instructional coaching and its barriers. Presenting the insight gained from the participants will help the curriculum and instruction stakeholders to understand what support coaches and administrators need to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Additionally, the presentation will include an overview of a suggested professional development plan that focuses on training administrators. The presentation of the study's findings and benefits of instructional coaching to improve instructional practices is supported by scholarly literature. The presentation and potential professional development training will

increase the understanding of educators concerning the impact of instructional coaching and its barriers when attempting to foster collaborative environments within schools.

The professional development plan for administrators will be suggested to the district's curriculum and instruction stakeholders as a means of providing assistance to instructional coaches and administrators in order to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching. The plan will incorporate suggested topics that are supported by the study's findings and will be further developed by the professional development committee, which includes Unified School District's content interventionists, during a March or April planning meeting. The professional development will address the participants' insight concerning the barriers associated with instructional coaching. The study's findings support delivering professional development in order to increase the awareness and understanding of educators concerning instructional coaching. Current research supports providing on-going or job-embedded professional development (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013; Matsko & Hammerness, 2013). The following research question will guide the development of the professional development plan: What impact do participants perceive instructional coaching has on improving instructional practices?

Implementation

Upon gaining approval from the chief officer of instruction, implementation of the project will begin. A meeting with the district's curriculum and instruction stakeholders will be scheduled and held. The district's curriculum and instructions stakeholders, who are responsible for program implementation, include the following: the district's superintendent, chief officer of instruction, chief officer of administration, director of

accountability and assessment, executive directors (from each grade band-elementary, middle level, and secondary), and content interventionists. At the meeting, I will share the study findings through a PowerPoint presentation on the insight gained pertaining to instructional coaching, its impact on instructional practices, and its identified barriers.

Key objectives will include the following:

- Present pertinent information regarding the study's data analysis.
- Discuss potential professional development training plan for administrators.
- Discuss potential barriers and means for troubleshooting.
- Promote collaborative partnerships and PLCs with shared goals for improving classroom instructions and increasing student learning.

Due to the information gained from the literature review and my current role as a content interventionist, I will request to take the role of leader for the professional development committee. The professional development committee is comprised of content interventionists from all grade bands-elementary, middle level, and secondary, who report to the chief officer of instruction. My leadership role will allow me to be actively involved in the discussions and decision processes that are necessary in developing an appropriate professional development workshop. The professional development will lead to establishing a means of disseminating the study's findings and essential information to administrators concerning the use of instructional coaching to promote collaborative partnerships and PLCs.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Unified School District currently utilizes their ISD to approve and develop professional development opportunities. Members of ISD meet regularly to ensure administrators and teachers receive pertinent and on-going professional development training. The ISD uses content interventionists to plan and conduct training sessions for administrators and teachers. The professional development can be offered to administrators during one of the spring curriculum training days that usually taking place in May or June of each school year. Content interventionists will facilitate or present the training at a facility or school within the district and would not require any additional expenses. The training would be yet another opportunity to deliver instructional support to increase the capacity of administrators in supporting their faculties, which includes teachers and instructional coaches. The support or commitment of ISD would aid in increasing the effectiveness of instructional coaching and addressing identified barriers, which also relates to the collaborative work of instructional coaches and content interventionists.

Potential Barriers

The areas of focus for the spring curriculum professional development training may already be finalized. Therefore, there may be a need to postpone the professional development until scheduled curriculum training days that occur during the month of August. Additionally, the ISD may decide that the information gained from the study's data analysis could be shared with administrators without requiring them to attending a professional development workshop. If that occurs, the possibility of working with the

district's technology department could be explored to have administrators participate in professional development through webinars to facilitate the collaborative activities and discussions. Additionally, the professional development could be adjusted and delivered through a Schoology portal to allow collaborative activities and discussions to occur through blog posts and submissions.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The implementation of this project is scheduled to occur during the 2016-2017 school year. The following is an outline of potential milestones:

1. March 2017: Contact the chief officer of instruction's secretary to schedule a meeting to present the study's findings and project.
2. March/April 2017: Gain approval from the chief officer of instruction.
3. March/April 2017: Present the study's findings to the district's curriculum and instruction stakeholders.
4. April/May: Professional development committee further develops the professional development training plan for administrators.
5. May 2017: Conduct the professional development training workshop for administrators.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will present the study's findings through a PowerPoint presentation to the chief officer of instruction. Even though a professional development committee will collaborate to develop a professional development workshop, I will volunteer to assume the role of leader in order to facilitate the coordination and implementation of the project,

as well as to share the pertinent information related to the study's findings with administrators. Ideally, I will be the individual responsible for gaining permission and leading the professional development committee to conduct the training workshop. I will report to the chief officer of instruction to provide progress reports and gain input concerning the development of the professional development training workshop. The purpose of the project is to increase the knowledge of administrators pertaining to instructional coaching, its impact of instructional practices, and identified barriers. Therefore, discussions could result in a future study to determine if Unified School District could benefit from a quantitative study to examine the effectiveness of coaching cycles conducted by content interventionists. Thus, expanding my role as a practitioner, scholar, and agent of change.

Project Evaluation Plan

At the conclusion of each session, participants will complete the Professional Development Training Evaluation (Appendix A). The form is comprised of four questions on a Likert scale, a prompt to elicit suggestions, and open-ended questions to allow the participants to reflect on experiences and information gained from each session. Additionally, participants will be prompted to determine next steps to be carried out at their schools that actively involve their faculties. Administrators and their faculties will create a Professional Learning Community Action Plan (Appendix A) that supports the development of collaborative partnerships and PLCs to address instructional concerns. The action plan will lead to discussions and strategic planning concerning shared goals or

objectives, progress monitoring, and scheduled meetings. The action plan will provide the means for barriers to be identified and resolved prior to completion dates being recorded.

Formative data will be collected through the review of Professional Development Training Evaluations. The content interventionists, who will deliver or present the professional development training, will meet after each session is completed. During the meetings, they will review and analyze the data gained from the evaluations to determine the need for revisions regarding scheduled activities that are included in the Professional Development Training Plan. Additionally, formative data will be collected through the review of Professional Learning Community Action Plans. Executive directors, who are immediate supervisors of administrators, will progress monitor and discuss the completion of objectives noted in schools' action plans throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Summative data will be collected from the information noted in schools' action plans in regard to measuring successes throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Formative and summative data will be shared with the members of ISD to determine the need for additional support concerning administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers collaborating to address instructional concerns. The review and analysis of the formative and summative data may influence the planning and delivery of additional professional development training sessions for the 2017-2018 school year.

Project Implications

Coaching roles are increasingly recognized as an effective means for improving instructional practices (Mangin, 2014). In fact, research indicates initiatives of instructional coaches are correlated with improvements in instructional practices

(Mangin, 2014) and increased student achievement as measured by standardized assessments (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Mangin, 2014). The research study was conducted to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. The PD project allowed me to address the need of educators, with an initial focus on administrators, to expand their understanding of instructional coaching, its impact on instructional practices, and identified barriers.

The PD project's inclusion of professional development training sessions can lead to an increase in awareness and understanding of the benefits associated with instructional coaching. The findings that support the project's development can lead to the manner in which other PD training sessions are conducted within Unified School District being positively impacted. In addition, the PD project's action plan addresses to need for increasing awareness and altering or shifting the mindsets of educators concerning collaborative partnerships and environments within schools. The collaboration can promote the development of collaborative partnerships and PLCs with shared goals that can lead to increasing professional growth for teachers and student learning throughout Unified School District.

Conclusion

Districts across the United States are exploring the benefits associated with the concept of instructional coaching and the roles of coaches. The common expectation is that the daily assignments of an instructional coach should lead to positive influences

upon the instruction delivered in classrooms (Mudzimiri et al., 2014). Instructional coaches have become common fixtures within school districts as a model of job-embedded professional development to improve instructional practices of teachers and student learning (Ferguson, 2013). I have described suggested professional development and goals that will need to be achieved in order to provide training to the administrators of Unified School District. A literature review was presented as a rationale for the suggested professional development. This paper contributes to the literature on perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching and its perceived barriers. The numerous possibilities for future research on the concept of instructional coaching are presented in section 4

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Determining the effectiveness of methods used to increase the efficacy of educators and student achievement is a challenging task for schools on the local and national level. I developed this study as a means to explore the perceptions of educators regarding their understanding of instructional coaching. The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. I used a case study to examine the perceptions and beliefs of educators concerning the effectiveness of instructional coaching. I collected data using the semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. Findings from the study indicated the need to increase administrators' understanding of instructional coaching, its impact of instructional practices, and identified barriers. In this section, I present my reflections concerning strengths and limitations of the professional development project, discuss my growth as a scholar, address this study's implications for social change, and offer recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths of this project entail past and current concerns, voiced by instructional coaches, being addressed in its development. The project study includes initiatives that allow curriculum personnel to provide support concerning additional training for administrators, coaches, teachers, and other school leaders to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Through face-to-face interviews with principals and coaches, and

questionnaires completed by teachers, I was able to gain insight regarding perceptions concerning the value or benefits of coaches and the barriers that impede them from effectively improving instructional practices to increase student achievement. The project presents strategic next steps to further clarify the concept of instructional coaching and the role of coaches, and address the barriers that hinder the necessary collaborative partnerships among administrators, coaches, and teachers. The next steps involve increasing the understanding of curriculum and instruction personnel, and providing professional development to administrators that promotes establishing shared goals through collaborative partnerships and PLCs within their schools.

A limitation of the project is that follow-up training sessions may need to be planned and implemented to encourage necessary collaboration at schools. Another limitation is that the project's initial focus is on providing professional development training to administrators in order to build capacity. This may cause members of the professional development committee to believe only administrators can disseminate information to their faculties, which may lead them to believe instructional coaches and teachers do not need to attend professional development training sessions. Although I do not anticipate the professional development project being denied, the greatest limitation could involve not gaining approval to implement the professional development training as planned.

Recommendations for Alternate Approaches

In this project study, I addressed the problem of administrators, coaches, and teachers having differing perceptions about the role and impact of instructional coaches.

Differing perceptions may hinder the necessary collaboration associated with effective instructional coaching and its benefits. In this project study, I have emphasized the benefits of collaboration among educators. The professional development plan is focused on increasing the understanding of administrators to foster collaboration through the use of instructional coaching in order to address instructional barriers or concerns. An alternate plan could involve instructional coaches and teachers receiving professional development during the same time frame as administrators. The alternate plan could extend the training to include collaborative activities involving the participation of administrators, coaches, and teachers. The collaborative training could promote the building of trusting relationships among administrators, coaches, and teachers that lead to the development of shared goals in increasing the effectiveness of instructional coaching. A limitation of this alternative approach could involve teachers not feeling comfortable enough to be receptive of receiving training in the company of instructional coaches and administrators.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Prior to starting my doctoral journey, the term scholar held no significant or personal connections concerning my experiences as a life-long learner. Even though I considered myself to be an avid reader, I used literature to merely support my opinions. It was not until I started conducting reviews of scholarly literature that I began to realize I would have to increase my critical thinking skills to be able to discern the significance of information or findings that may differ from the personal views or beliefs I possess. I now understand the term scholar encompasses the numerous responsibilities attributed to

me as a researcher. I have learned that I must always think critically as I read peer-reviewed articles and analyze findings from research studies. By doing so, I am able to disseminate knowledge I have gained and avoid merely providing biased summaries. As I have embraced and implemented my new thought processes to make informed decisions, I have positively influenced colleagues to make research-based decisions. My critical thinking skills were initially tested as I explored literature that presented the dynamics of administrators, coaches, and teachers in relation to instructional coaching.

The project study's focus on instructional coaching and its impact on instructional practices resulted from personal interests and challenges that emerged from my initial years as an instructional coach. It was frustrating to witness and hear confusion about the roles assumed by instructional coaches. It bothered me that educators' knowledge of instructional coaching and its effectiveness seemed to differ as coaches shared their assigned tasks and experiences. Conducting reviews of literature allowed me to see that the barriers associated with instructional coaching extended beyond my district's coaches. Reviewing scholarly literature also allowed me to examine research findings in order to determine a rationale for the study's problem that was also supported by the experiences of the district's instructional coaches. As the project developed into a case study, which involved interviews and a questionnaire that led data analysis to determine a possible solution, I began to note evidence of my growth as a leader.

My growth as a leader became evident as I became well versed concerning the concept of instructional coaching, its impact on instructional coaches, and barriers. I was able to answer questions and defend decisions pertaining to the development of the

project study. I was able to interact with administrators, coaches, and teachers to explain the study's purpose and potential implications for them to decide whether or not they should be participants. Further, I was able to self-evaluate to make pertinent decisions in order to ensure I maintained a neutral composure for conducting interviews. I was also able to craft a systematic approach to determine themes to present significant findings. Most importantly, I will assume the role of leader to facilitate the work of the professional development committee in devising professional development for administrators and possibly coaches and teachers.

Reflection on the Importance of Work

The participants selected for the study indicate the study's relevance. The semi-structured interviews and questionnaire allowed the participants to share their views and beliefs concerning instructional coaching, coaches impact on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. There is very little research concerning the roles and perspectives of instructional coaches (Kissel et al., 2011). The project's findings will contribute to the research concerning instructional coaching and address a gap in practice pertaining to collaborative partnerships and the use of PLCs to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching.

Further, the study's findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge required to address the problem of educators not understanding the concept of instructional coaching and the role of instructional coaches in promoting collaboration and establishing shared goals to effectively improve instructional practices and increase student achievement. I designed the project's professional development training

workshop to share the insight gained concerning the role of instructional coaches and the barriers they face in increasing the efficacy of educators. The goal of the professional development is to build the capacity of administrators in supporting the growth of instructional coaches and teachers concerning the collaborative partnerships being used to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The study's findings are based on the experiences of middle school administrators, coaches, and teachers with instructional coaching in a targeted school district. This study promotes increasing the knowledge of educators concerning instructional coaching and its benefits, as well as addressing the barriers coaches encounter when attempting to improve instructional practices. The findings of the study show the need to foster collaborative partnerships and establish shared goals among administrators, coaches, and teachers to increase the effectiveness of instructional coaching. The collaborative partnerships could lead to the development of structured professional learning communities whose goals include improving classroom instructional practices and increasing student achievement in schools and districts.

School leaders in the area of instruction and curriculum could expand upon this project by further developing the knowledge and expertise of instructional coaches. In spite of the number of research studies conducted to explore the phenomenon of instructional coaching (Barlow et al., 2014; Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), there are still numerous areas that need to be investigated. Even though I have explored the perceptions of administrators, coaches, and teachers of one

school district, further research could explore the perceptions of educators from different districts. Additional research could be conducted to determine specific benefits concerning the instructional improvements that occur as a result of the roles or work associated with instructional coaches. The aforementioned suggestions could lead to the impact of instructional coaching on increasing student achievement being further explored. Instructional coaching is viewed as a common approach to increase the effectiveness of educators. However, there is little data to support its effectiveness by providing the specific details concerning the positive impacts (Neumerski, 2012).

Conclusion

The purpose of this project study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches. The project study promoted collaboration among administrators, coaches, and teachers in order to develop partnerships for establishing shared goals in improving classroom instruction and increasing student learning. The purpose of the professional development workshop is to allow educators to expand their knowledge of instructional coaching, and to provide continuous support to administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers in improving instructional practices and increasing student learning.

In this section, I presented reflections concerning the project's strengths, limitations, and implications, and offered recommendations. I also included an analysis of what I learned as a scholar and leader. Even though I have reached the end of my doctoral journey, my efforts to be a change agent who strives to incite growth in others will

continue. I will continue to disseminate information concerning the concept of instructional coaching, the roles of coaches, and the barriers that need to be addressed to increase effectiveness.

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Appendix A: The Professional Development Project

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to address the concerns and barriers that were shared by administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers who participated in my research study. The project is designed to increase the knowledge or understanding of administrators in order to allow them to serve as instructional leaders concerning the development or expansion of collaborative partnerships that are associated with instructional coaching. As a result, administrators will be able to facilitate their faculties' work regarding the use of PLCs in improving classroom instruction and student achievement.

Goals

The goals of the project include the following:

- Assist administrators in better understanding the concept of instructional coaching
- Assist administrators in better understanding the roles and collaborative partnerships associated with the work of instructional coaches
- Assist administrators in addressing barriers encountered by instructional coaches
- Assist administrators in promoting and developing PLCs through the creation of an action plan that involves collaborative partnerships among their faculties

Materials

PowerPoint Presentation

Articles

Chart Paper

Markers

Sticky Notes

Pens

Professional Development Training Evaluation

Professional Learning Community Action Plan

Evaluation Plan

Formative data will be collected through the review of Professional Development Training Evaluations. The content interventionists, who will deliver or present the professional development training, will meet after each session is completed. During the meetings, they will review and analyze the data gained from the evaluations to determine the need for revisions regarding scheduled activities that are included in the Professional Development Training Plan. Additionally, formative data will be collected through the review of Professional Learning Community Action Plans. Executive Directors, who are immediate supervisors of administrators, will progress monitor and discuss completion of objectives noted in the plans throughout the 2017-2018 school year. Summative data will be collected from the information noted in the action plans to measure successes throughout the 2017-2018 school year.

PowerPoint Presentation

Perceptions of Instructional Coaching: Implications for Instructional Practices

T. LeRoux, Quantico
PowerPoint Presentation
Winter 2013

Instructional Coaching

- Within schools across the United States, spanning from elementary to high school, instructional coaching is seen as an approach or method to ensure high quality or effective teaching occurs in the content areas of reading, math, and science (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).



Instructional Coaching

- Instructional coaching is frequently viewed and used as a professional development strategy to increase teacher efficacy (Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody, 2015).
- Even though current research explores the work of instructional coaches at the elementary and middle/secondary levels, little research exists concerning the roles and perspectives of coaches (Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011).

Instructional Coaching

- Barriers that are related to varied job assignments and workloads, as well as resistance experienced from teachers, are concerns for several instructional coaches.

Problem

- Instructional coaching is designed to positively impact instructional practices, yet not enough is known about whether administrators, teachers, and coaches have similar perceptions concerning this approach or method.

Purpose

- The focus of the case study is to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

Purpose

- The social impact of this issue may involve creating positive social change by increasing awareness regarding the roles and benefits associated with instructional coaching, as well as providing school and district leaders with data to make informed decisions about increasing the effectiveness of instructional coaching.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

- The sociocultural theory of andragogy provides the framework for the study.
- The andragogy theory, which was advanced by Knowles initially in the 1970s, emphasizes life experiences as being integral for adults to learn new concepts (Knowles et al., 2011).
- Andragogy supports adult learners being provided with learning opportunities that include discussion and reflection with others, as well as the practicing of new ideas with immediate feedback and observing modeling from an expert (Lockwood, McCombs, & Marsh, 2010).

Review of Literature

Professional Development

- ▶ Instructional coaching has become a more common method or popular way of providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities that target increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Toumaki, Lyublinskaya, & Carolan, 2011; Yopp et al., 2011).

Review of Literature

Mentoring

- ▶ Instructional coaches serve as mentors for teachers of varying content areas, as well as levels of expertise, to improve instructional practices.
- ▶ Thomas, Bell, Spelman, & Briody (2015) referred to instructional coaches as mentors who intuitively understand the challenges faced by classroom teachers and are willing to nurture partnerships with teachers to improve achievement.

Review of Literature

Teacher Resistance

- ▶ Instructional coaches face various levels of resistance when trying to establish effective coaching relationships.
- ▶ Some administrators mistakenly view instructional coaches as other types of administrators, rather than support for teachers and providers of teacher professional development (Mustanti & Pence, 2010).
- ▶ Teacher resistance may stem from problems associated with school climate or morale, as well as how information is being shared between administration and teachers (Knight, 2009).

Review of Literature

Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement

- ▶ Instructional coaching has become a highly accepted means of increasing teacher effectiveness (Yopp et al., 2011).
- ▶ Lesniok, Jiang, Spote, Sartan, & Hart (2010) cited qualitative methods (observations, interviews, and coaching logs) that support teachers using reflective inquiry that is associated with instructional coaching to increase student achievement.

Research Design

- ▶ The selected research design for the study is a case study.
- ▶ This design allows the researcher to gain insight in a timely manner pertaining to the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

Research Questions

- ▶ Research Question 1: What impact do participants perceive instructional coaching has on improving instructional practices?
- ▶ Research Question 2: What perceptions do participants have regarding how instructional coaches assist administrators and teachers in improving instructional practices?
- ▶ Research Question 3: What perceptions do participants have regarding barriers faced by instructional coaches when they are attempting to improve instructional practices?

Participants and Sample Size

- ▶ Purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of key participants, which included three instructional coaches, as well as their administrators and teachers, at three middle schools.

Data Collection

1. After gaining IRB approval and permission to gain access to the schools, principals were contacted via email.
2. Faculty rosters and email addresses of instructional coaches and teachers were obtained.
3. An overview of the study and its purpose was provided at separate faculty meetings.
4. During the faculty meetings, a hard copy of the consent form for future reference concerning the specifics of the study was provided.
5. A copy of the informed consent forms were emailed to potential participants so that they could discreetly indicate their decision to participate.
6. Data collection methods included interviews and a questionnaire.
7. Interviews involved the administration of semi-structured open-ended questions to principals and instructional coaches, within an estimated time frame of 45 minutes.

Data Collection

- The instructional coaches and their administrators were interviewed separately at their respective schools or a location of their choice.
- The interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate the creation of transcripts.
- Pseudonyms were used for participants involved in interviews to ensure confidentiality.
- The questionnaire, which included open-ended and closed questions, was administered through the use of an online survey tool (SurveyMonkey).
- The questionnaire was completed by teachers, within an estimated time frame of 15-20 minutes.
- Questionnaire items did not solicit any personal information from participants.
- Implied consent was utilized to ensure all questionnaire responses remained anonymous.

Data Analysis

- Ongoing analysis was conducted as data was collected.
- Each audio tape was transcribed verbatim.
- Transcripts were read in their entirety and color coded for the identification of categories or themes.
- Questionnaire responses were read and color coded for the identification of categories or themes.
- Data within categories were compared. Comparisons involved comparing incidents to incidents, categories to categories, and incidents to categories.
- Determined patterns from text were labeled and described as possible meanings that respondents have in common.
- The multiple sources of data were re-examined and analyzed until no new themes emerged, which indicates saturation and increases the credibility of findings (Hornum, 2009).
- Member checking was used to establish credibility of findings concerning the study's interviews.

Findings- Interviews of Instructional Coaches

Interview Question	Response
How do you define instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn

Findings- Interviews of Principals

Interview Question	Response
How do you define instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn

Findings- Questionnaire of Teachers

Question	Response
How do you define instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn

Findings- Questionnaire of Teachers

Question	Response
How do you define instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn
What are the most important components of instructional coaching?	Modeling, feedback, and reflection
How do you think about the role of instructional coaching?	Helping teachers learn

Emerging Themes

- The following four major themes emerged from the study:
 - 1) providing assistance
 - 2) teacher receptiveness
 - 3) instructional coaches are beneficial
 - 4) non-evaluative

Emerging Theme: Providing Assistance

- model lessons are viewed as being integral for instructional coaching
- coaches demonstrate instructional strategies or model expectations through their actions
- classroom observations and providing immediate feedback are common tasks for coaches
- coaches are involved in various forms of planning- lessons and activities to share new ideas or strategies; classroom and school-wide projects; specific instructional strategies and practices
- coaches locate and provide instructional resources for administrators and teachers

Emerging Theme: Teacher Receptiveness

- ▶ time constraints and conflicting schedules are challenges that prevent teacher-coach collaboration
- ▶ unwillingness of some teachers hinder coaches when they are try to convey information or share resources
- ▶ coaches have a difficult time "getting through to teachers who have a set way of teaching their content"
- ▶ teachers are reluctant to try new things

Emerging Theme: Instructional Coaches are Beneficial

- ▶ having an instructional coach available for new teachers is a necessity
- ▶ an instructional coach is a vital part of an educational environment
- ▶ having an instructional coach prevents teachers from feeling overwhelmed or leaving the profession

Emerging Theme: Non-evaluative

- ▶ instructional coaches should assume a non-evaluative role
- ▶ coaches should not be viewed as an administrator when conducting classroom observations instructional coaching means supporting and mentoring but not evaluating
- ▶ instructional coaches are individual responsible for professional development to improve classroom and systematic instructional practices

Implications: Next Steps

- ▶ Sharing the study's findings through a PowerPoint presentation on the insight gained pertaining to instructional coaching, its impact on instructional practices, and its identified barriers. Key objectives will include the following:
 - 1) Presenting pertinent information regarding the study's data analysis.
 - 2) Discussing a potential professional development training plan for administrators.
 - 3) Discussing potential barriers and means for troubleshooting.

Implications: Next Steps

Potential Professional Development Training Sessions

Session 1:

- ▶ Review of literature pertaining to instructional coaching (benefits and barriers)
- ▶ Discussions pertaining to literature (reflective and jigsaw activities)
- ▶ Presentation of study's findings

Session 2:

- ▶ Revisiting roles of instructional coaches
- ▶ Discussions pertaining to literature (reflective and jigsaw activities)
- ▶ Determining possible solutions to address identified barriers

Implications: Next Steps

Potential Professional Development Training Sessions

Session 3:

- ▶ Revisiting job-embedded professional development
- ▶ Determining means to identify areas of instructional concerns
- ▶ Reviewing master schedules to determine times (during and after school hours) for common planning and meetings for Professional Learning Communities
- ▶ Developing a schedule for school-based professional development sessions

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Professional Development Workshop Sessions

Essential Questions

How can we systemically implement instructional initiatives without overwhelming principals, teachers, and students?

What supports or resources are needed to meet instructional expectations?

Session 1			
Time/Location	Content	Process	Who
(10')	<u>Welcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish norms ▪ Review outcomes and essential questions 		
(90')	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the study's findings (presentation and discussions) 		
(10')	Break		
(60')	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of literature pertaining to instructional coaching (benefits and barriers-jigsaw activities) 		
(10')	Break		
(60')	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in discussions pertaining to literature (reflective activities) 		
(10')	<u>Closure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation form 		
Session 2			
Time/Location	Content	Process	Who
(10')	<u>Welcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish norms ▪ Review outcomes and essential questions 		
(60')	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of literature pertaining to roles of instructional coaches (reflective activities) 		
(10')	Break		
(60')	<u>Outcome</u>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in discussions pertaining to literature (reflective and jigsaw activities) 		
(10 ²)	Break		
(60 ²)	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine possible solutions to address identified barriers 		
(10 ²)	<u>Closure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation form 		
Session 3			
Time/Location	Content	Process	Who
(10 ²)	<u>Welcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish norms Review outcomes and essential questions 		
(60 ²)	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of literature pertaining to job-embedded professional development (reflective activities) 		
(10 ²)	Break		
(60 ²)	<u>Outcome</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine methods or processes to identify areas of instructional concerns (collaborative activities) 		
(10 ²)	Break		
(60 ²)	<u>Outcomes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review master schedules to determine times (during and after school hours) for common planning and meetings for Professional Learning Communities Develop a schedule for school-based professional development sessions (collaborative activities) Create a Professional Learning Community Action Plan 		
(10 ²)	<u>Closure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation form 		

Professional Development Training Evaluation (Sessions 1-3)

Title of Session:				
Date:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
The session was well planned and organized.				
The facilitator seemed knowledgeable of the topic and information presented.				
The information shared during the session further my understanding of the topic and content presented.				
The information shared during the session was relevant to my professional needs.				

Please provide suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the presentation.

What will you take back to your campus to implement with your faculty? What are your immediate next steps?

Professional Learning Community Action Plan

What is our objective? <i>What are we seeking to achieve?</i>	What tasks are needed to achieve our objective? <i>How will deadlines be determined?</i>	How will we progress monitor? <i>How will we measure success? What data will be collected?</i>	When and where will we meet? <i>How often will scheduled meetings occur?</i>	Barriers to address/Completion noted
Objective:				

Appendix B: Sample Letter to Chief Officer of Administration

July 11, 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

I will complete my initial Oral Defense Presentation this week. The next step is to submit my Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, which means I am quickly approaching the end of my doctoral journey.

As a result, I am writing to you to request permission to conduct my project study within three of your middle schools. The study's topic is one that relevant to our district's professional development goals concerning curriculum and instruction, as well as being an area of personal interest for me. I am developing a research study that would examine the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and coaches concerning instructional coaching and its barriers. The goal of the study is to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

In order to gain insight on the perceptions of teachers, principals, and instructional coaches, with regard to the role of instructional coaches and barriers encountered by coaches, a case study will be conducted. The case study will involve the principals, teachers, and school-based instructional coaches. The principals and instructional coaches will be interviewed and the teachers will complete a brief online survey. Since the principals have the names and email addresses for their faculties, I will initially communicate with the potential participants through the building principals.

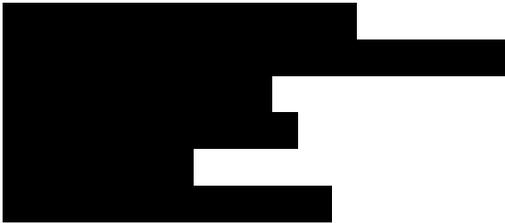
Participation in the study is strictly voluntary. The interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes and the survey should be completed within 15-20 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used to keep the names of interviewees confidentially. The teacher responses to the online survey will remain anonymous and confidential. There will not be any identifying information concerning the specific schools, principals, or teachers in the study's report. The study's results will be presented as a project study and may be published and/or presented at professional meetings. 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 [REDACTED] (personal cell phone). I can also be reached at [REDACTED]. You are also welcome to contact my doctoral study advisor, [REDACTED], by email at [REDACTED] for additional information regarding the study.

Please contact me via email if you are willing to grant me permission to conduct the study in our district. The attachment should be used to provide permission. The highlighted areas should be changed to provide the appropriate date and email signature.

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.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes or dates.

Appendix C: Sample Letter to Executive Director

July 15, 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

I will complete my initial Oral Defense Presentation this week. The next step is to submit my Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, which means I am quickly approaching the end of my doctoral journey.

As a result, I am writing to you to request permission to conduct my project study within three of your middle schools. The study's topic is one that is relevant to our district's professional development goals concerning curriculum and instruction, as well as being an area of personal interest for me. I am developing a research study that would examine the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and coaches concerning instructional coaching and its barriers. The goal of the study is to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches concerning instructional coaching, the impact coaches have on instructional practices, and barriers encountered by coaches.

In order to gain insight on the perceptions of teachers, principals, and instructional coaches, with regard to the role of instructional coaches and barriers encountered by coaches, a case study will be conducted. The case study will involve the principals, teachers, and school-based instructional coaches. The principals and instructional coaches will be interviewed and the teachers will complete a brief online survey. Since the principals have the names and email addresses for their faculties, I will initially communicate with the potential participants through the building principals.

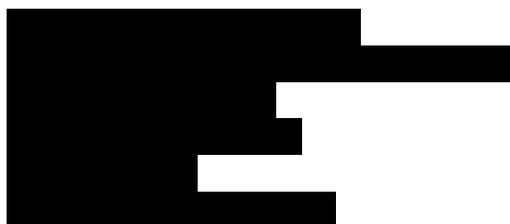
Participation in the study is strictly voluntary. The interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes and the survey should be completed within 15-20 minutes. Pseudonyms will be used to keep the names of interviewees confidential. The teacher responses to the online survey will remain anonymous and confidential. There will not be any identifying information concerning the specific schools, principals, or teachers in the study's report. The study's results will be presented as a project study and may be published and/or presented at professional meetings. 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 [REDACTED] (personal cell phone). I can also be reached at [REDACTED]. You are also welcome to contact my doctoral study advisor, [REDACTED], by email at [REDACTED] for additional information regarding the study.

Please contact me via email if you are willing to grant me permission to conduct the study in our district. The attachment should be used to provide permission. The highlighted areas should be changed to provide the appropriate date and email signature.

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.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes or dates.

Appendix D: Sample Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

August 8, 2016

As the Executive Director of Middle Schools, I give my permission for you to conduct the study entitled Administrators', Teachers', and Coaches' Perceptions of Instructional Coaching: Implications for Instructional Practices.

You will have full access to the designated school staff as needed for your study. You have permission to contact school staff directly to solicit participants and collect data.

As part of this study, you may invite members of designated schools to participate in this study, whose names and contact email can be provided to you as needed. Their participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. I understand the schools and participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time if circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,



Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden)

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Principal

Interview Questions

1. What is your educational experience? (i.e. years)
2. What does the term instructional coaching mean to you?
3. Do you believe instructional coaching positively impacts or improves instructional practices of teachers and administrators? If so, how?
4. What do you believe is the role of an instructional coach?
5. What type of tasks or jobs have you assigned to your instructional coach?
6. Describe instructional benefits that have been gained from your instructional coach collaborating with your teachers.
7. What are barriers that you believe instructional coaches face when attempting to improve instructional practices?
8. Would you like to provide additional information you believe to be relevant?

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Instructional Coach

Interview Questions

1. What is your educational experience? (i.e. years)
2. What does the term instructional coaching mean to you?
3. What do you believe is the role of an instructional coach?
4. Describe your typical day as an instructional coach. What kind of tasks do you complete?
5. Do you believe your role positively impacts or improves the instructional practices of teachers and administrators? If so, how?
6. What barriers do you face when attempting to improve instructional practices?
7. Would you like to provide additional information you believe to be relevant?

Appendix G: Questionnaire for Teachers

Questionnaire Items

1. What is your educational experience?
 - A. 0-4 years
 - B. 5-9 years
 - C. 10-14 years
 - D. 15-19 years
 - E. 20+ years
2. What do you believe is the role of an instructional coach?
3. What does the term instructional coaching mean to you?
4. Do you believe instructional coaching positively impacts or improves the instructional practices of teachers and administrators?
5. How often do you work with your school's instructional coach?
 - A. Rarely
 - B. Sometimes
 - C. Usually
 - D. Almost Always
6. Describe instructional benefits you have gained from working with your school's instructional coach.
7. Describe ways that your school's instructional coach assists your administrators and other teachers in improving instructional practices.
8. What are barriers that you believe instructional coaches face when attempting to improve instructional practices?
9. Would you like to provide additional information that you believe to be relevant?