PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES'

PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS

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As instructional coaches are being implemented across the country, their purpose is reviewed, as well as which types of instructional coaching tend to have the most impact on teachers' instructional growth. In this study, I explored instructional coaching and coaches' perceived effectiveness as they work with teachers. A look at the effect of non-evaluative feedback with an instructional coach, and how that helps sustain teachers' pedagogical practice, is taken into consideration as coaches' work towards developing teacher efficacy. I examined instructional coaching through the conceptual framework of professional development and change. This qualitative study included a focus group, personal narratives, and individual interviews to analyze the components of successful instructional coaching models, and how well instructional coaches feel supported as they work with teachers. Findings demonstrated that instructional coaches perceive their work with teachers to be effective and provided information on the practices and conditions that surround their work. The information gained from the study provides a resource for district leaders to evaluate a current coaching model program, or implement a new coaching model program, within their district.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

To respond to the increasing demand of developing quality teacher instruction in an effort to affect student outcomes positively, school districts are turning towards the use of instructional coaching models. Kee, Anderson, Dearing, Harris, and Shuster (2010) described coaching as offering a safe opportunity for educators to think, reflect, and ask questions about instructional practice. Instructional coaches develop close working relationships with teachers so they feel comfortable with efforts to develop instructional practice. J. Knight (2009) suggested providing quality instructional coaching as being important to developing instruction since teachers rarely implement new practices without sufficient support that includes quality feedback. Instructional coaching also offers teachers embedded professional learning as instructional coaches work, either individually or in small groups, with teachers in the context of their current teaching practice. Ball and Cohen (1999) argued professional development efforts need to occur in the context of teachers' practice in order to develop the teacher's own efficacy. Teachers who can contextualize how new instructional strategies can work in their current instructional setting are more apt to try them. Devine, Houssemand, and Meyers (2013) showed instructional coaching is an effective form of intensive and differentiated support for teachers so they may incorporate best practices into their teaching on a regular basis.

As districts seek ways to increase student achievement, instructional coaching, as a means of job embedded professional development for teachers, has increasingly been implemented. Typical professional development usually comes in the form of a day of learning in a location away from the teacher's classroom. Teachers then return to their classrooms without implementing new learning simply because they get too busy and involved in familiar

class structures. Czajka and McConnell (2016) noted instructional coaches with experience in instructional reform practices create a more positive experience for teachers who work to make adjustments to their instructional practice and are more likely to do so. While instructional coaching models vary in their structure of support, the idea behind any model is they support school reform efforts, whether that is accomplished through the development of individual teaching practices with coaches working one-on-one with teachers, or through the support of a district-wide systemic change (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014). Regardless of model structure, instructional coaches are consequential and at the forefront of these models and their effectiveness.

<div align="center">Problem Statement</div>

Instructional coaching offers teachers embedded professional learning and as school district reform efforts focus on quality instruction to improve student outcomes, there has been an increase in the number of instructional coaching roles and structured models (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The roles of instructional coaches within these various model structures, regardless of the title, are different from mentors, who simply offer advice, in that they provide modeling and feedback on instructional practices (J. Knight, 2007). A coaching model's success is reliant on the instructional coaches within the model. A look at the level of support and training coaches receive can help determine what conditions need to be in place for coaches to be effective. District leaders are likely to determine the measure of a model's success based on the type of training and support they need to provide coaches and the barriers encountered within the coaching model (Stock & Duncan, 2010). However, without examining the coaches' efforts and identifying what they need to be effective, the possibility of ineffective coaching remains.

The problem of the study was to determine what conditions needed to be in place for coaches to be effective in helping support change in the instructional practice of teachers. Rock and Page (2009) explained the purpose of coaching is to change awareness and action. Examining coaches' work as a form of embedded professional development (awareness) that changes instructional practice (action) creates a lens into an instructional coaches' purpose.

Conceptual Framework

To frame this study, it is important to view instructional coaching as a form of professional development for teacher instructional growth. In addition to professional development, there is also the theoretical frame of *change* as the process that instructional coaches use to develop and better teachers' instructional practice to increase student outcomes. Instructional coaching as a form of embedded professional development is considered an efficient method for supporting teachers in improving their instructional practice and changing the way teachers teach (J. Knight, 2007). Research suggests instructional coaches are critical in creating change through professional development (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatwright, 2010). The nature of coaching involves collaboration between coaches and teachers. Killion (2011) emphasized the importance of collaborative relationships to serve as a catalyst for changing instructional practice that can lead to increased student achievement. Therefore coaching, serving as a form of professional development with the goal of changing instructional practice, necessitated the merging of two conceptual frameworks.

There is a complex understanding of professional development and how it works to increase teacher efficacy to affect student outcomes. Caffarela and Zinn (1999) acknowledged professional development usually takes a more self-directed route and can be impeded by a multitude of factors; they found "mentoring and modeling can definitely enhance professional

development" (p. 248). In a research synthesis, Guskey and Yoon (2009) found when individuals presented ideas to teachers and helped facilitate the implementation of those ideas, the professional development effort then resulted in improvement of student learning. Furthermore, they found effective professional development requires time but it must be organized, structured, purposeful, and focused. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) noted traditional forms of professional development, such as workshop models, are often criticized as being ineffective as opposed to mentoring and coaching, which are considered reform types of professional development. Mentoring and coaching offer learning that is embedded into the teacher's regular workday to be more applicable to the teacher and therefore more apt to reform instructional practice. The rationale for using instructional coaches is rooted in research due to the nature of coaching that delivers ongoing support that provides focused instructional practice (Polginco & Bach, 2004). They discovered the type of professional development that coaches provide makes a difference in its effectiveness. Professional development directly tied to the coach working one-on-one with a teacher allows for more opportunities in which teachers actually change their instructional practice. Coaches, who lead groups through professional development, tend to have little effect on classroom instructional practice. Polginco and Bach found coaching as professional development has complexities that when accounted for, can result in the development of best practices on a large scale. These complexities can include, but are not limited to, the amount of time spent with the coach, modeling by the coach, receiving feedback from the coach, and the teacher reflecting with the coach.

Kurt Lewin's change theory (Burnes, 2009) provided the additional framework for this study as instructional coaching involves the development of teachers through the change of

his/her teaching practice. The challenge to change teacher's instructional practice through the use of instructional coaching as a form of professional development has developed from stringent accountability measures and the need to reform educational systems rapidly (Harris, 2011). Coaches can provide support to deal with change effectively so that it is not entirely overwhelming for campus leaders (Rock & Page, 2009). Lewin's interest in organizational change stemmed from his belief that change was less about achieving an objective and more about people learning about themselves, understanding their own motives, and therefore changing their behavior on their own (Burnes, 2009). Instructional coaching as a form of professional development centers on teachers working with coaches to change teachers' instructional practice. Burnes (2009) noted Lewin's (1943) three-step model for change (unfreezing-moving-refreezing) is generally regarded as a separate aspect to Lewin's work, yet Lewin regarded them as one important aspect to opening up individual change. Lewin believed individuals need the opportunity to make their own decisions without being forced to, and that they need the support of a neutral facilitator to help them understand their behaviors and motivation (Burnes, 2009). Then after learning about this, individuals could move into the three-step model. Instructional coaches serve as neutral facilitators who guide teachers to identify aspects of their practice that they are interested in developing. In most cases, teachers are the first to reach out to instructional coaches, which supports Lewin's belief that individuals should not be forced, but given the opportunity to make their own decisions (Burnes, 2009).

Instructional coaching as a form of professional development is a paradigm shift from traditional forms of professional development. Coaching is based on the premise that change can occur through a facilitative effort between coach and teacher. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) stated, "in an age of accountability and state standards, teachers no longer work in isolation . . .

not independently" (p. 191). They also noted teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to seek out support and are open to new ideas. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) acknowledged that in the pursuit of accountability, a high functioning organization relies on individual teachers that embrace learning and self-reflect on their practice. Working off Lewin's theory of change and combining it with three other change theories provided the context for the development of a model that supports the improvement of teacher practice (Ho, Watkins, & Kelly, 2001). The model is reliant on the teacher working with a facilitator who supports teacher change and development through a process of self-reflection, evidence, analysis, examination, and redesign. Coaching is a way to change capacity in an individual's thinking so they function differently in their same environment (Rock & Page, 2009). A teacher's classroom and the daily instructional routine is the environment in which teachers function. Instructional coaching can support learning and self-reflection in a way that is meaningful to a teacher. Coaches who can build a relationship with a teacher and engage them in the process of changing his/her practice is critical to ensuring the change that occurs is sustainable.

Figure 1 illustrates the concept of instructional coaches as a form of professional development, and the change theory that surrounds the work of instructional coaches.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work with teachers. This phenomenological qualitative study examined the role and purpose of instructional coaches, identified their training and preparation to be coaches, and determined what factors influence instructional coaches' effectiveness. Examining underlying support systems and systemic practices allowed for a look at influences that may or may not create barriers or open doors for instructional coaches to do

their jobs effectively. The study results, while focused on instructional coaches' perceptions of

their own effectiveness, may help determine what type of practices and conditions surround the

environment in which the coaches do their work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	CHANGE THEORY
○ Instructional Coaching as embedded professional development ○ Instructional Coaches as leaders of professional development	● Process of change ● Instructional coaches as conduits of change ● Teachers changing instructional practice

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES
- **Purpose**
- **Training and support coaches receive**
- **Coaches perceived effectiveness**

Figure 1. Conceptual framework. The conceptual framework merges the theories of professional development and change to frame the work of instructional coaches.

Research Questions

This researcher investigated the following questions focused on the perceptions of

instructional coaches. The questions considered that instructional coaches may function in

different roles within their districts. The questions addressed how coaches function in their roles

and the type of support they receive from district and campus leaders.

1. What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

2. What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

3. How are instructional coaches evaluated?

4. What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may provide additional information to current studies that examine instructional coaches and the roles and effectiveness of instructional coaches. Identifying themes and patterns from instructional coaches' perspectives would add information. In addition, district leaders, as they implement or restructure coaching programs within their districts, must have a clear understanding of the role instructional coaches play in educational reform. Furthermore, the insights gained from this study can be used to guide campus and district leaders to determine what resources they need to develop and support instructional coaches.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study included the selection of instructional coaches from an organization that incorporates participation of instructional coaches from surrounding school districts that implement instructional coaching models programs that vary in structure. Coaches from this organization were chosen because they are involved in coaching models from different districts across the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metroplex and therefore may have different experiences. The instructional coaches participate in this organization to learn from and with other coaches. This group was selected because there is a significant number of coaches represented from various districts and they seek to understand what other coaches' experience in other coaching models. A number of instructional coaches, without regard to their years of experience, were asked to answer open-ended questions about various aspects of their roles, what type of support their model provides, and their perceived effectiveness in improving teacher instructional practice. Common themes and trends were identified in their responses.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were instructional coaches that participate in responding to the open-ended questions will answer honestly and be detailed about their perspectives to the best of their ability. The confidentiality afforded to participants through this study should allow for coaches to provide honest responses, especially if some of their perceptions are negative. Responses received from instructional coaches regardless of their district should therefore accurately reflect their perceived effectiveness as coaches. In addition, an assumption was made; coaches with positive perceptions about their ability to impact instructional change, are more effective coaches.

Definition of Terms

Coaching models. The framework for how instructional coaches access teachers including how often and for what purpose (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

Coaching programs. Programs that provide instructional coaches the necessary training and support needed to work with teachers (J. Knight, 2016).

Campus and district leaders. Includes all administrators who provide instructional coaches access to teachers. This includes campus level leaders such as the principal and assistant principals and district leaders such as the superintendent and curriculum directors.

Instructional coaching. Instructional coaching is a professional development model that supports teacher learning, is on-going, and is job embedded (Heineke, 2013).

Instructional coaches. Instructional coaches are professionals that work with classroom teachers to help them improve their instructional practices (J. Knight, 2007).

Instructional practice. Instructional practice is the act of implementing instructional strategies and techniques to assist students to achieve intended instructional goals and objectives.

Instructional reform. Instructional reform refers to efforts that can increase opportunities for teachers to engage students (Huffman, 2006).

Practices. For this study, practices are referring to common guidelines and expectations that district leaders have in place for instructional coaching.

Conditions. For this study, conditions are the working environment created by the practices of a district that foster a positive culture for instructional coaches to do their work.

Professional development. Professional development or professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward, 2015).

Teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy involves a teacher's belief in their ability to influence student outcomes through quality instructional practice (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Summary

There is a vast amount of literature on various characteristics of instructional coaching that gives clarity into understanding what instructional coaching is and how it can impact positive instructional change. Instructional coaches, while known by different titles, all share the goal of improving instructional practice. Coaches may face a multitude of challenges but they offer teachers the support of a collaborative partnership. Czajka and McConnell (2016) noted that working with an instructional coach who is experienced in reforming instructional practice can reduce the time it takes to develop new practices and can lead to a more positive experience. Instructional coaches work to develop partnerships that allow for teachers to have a choice in how and what they learn (J. Knight, 2007). Through this partnership, transformational work of instructional practice becomes meaningful to the teacher. While partnerships become significant

to the teacher, it is also important to ascertain how impactful and effective coaches find their work. Investigating instructional coaches' perceptions can shed light on what practices and conditions are necessary for them to feel supported and find their work effective. Research regarding instructional coaching provides a foundation for the complexity of the role and its importance in reforming instructional practice; however, additional research on instructional coaches can provide information that uncovers what actually makes coaching effective.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study is organized into four chapters. Chapter 2 is the related literature about instructional coaching as a form of professional development, the effects and impact of coaching, and the implementation of a coaching model and the components that can make it successful. In Chapter 3, I detail the methodology of the study such as the research design, the participants, and ethical considerations, instrumentation used to gather the data, the data collection and analysis process, and the limitations of the study. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the data and a presentation of the findings. Chapter 5 includes the summary, discussion, and recommendations of the study. The study concludes with appendices and references.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Through coaching, professional development can become more meaningful and

motivating as teachers build their growth around personal and professional needs. Coaching

offers a more personalized approach to professional development as it allows for coaching to

occur in the context of a teacher's classroom (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011).

Recognizing some teachers enter into their field of practice unprepared to handle the burdens that

include responsibilities such as classroom management, differentiating student work,

communicating with parents, and balancing their workload, school leaders have worked to

support them by providing embedded professional development in the form of instructional

coaching. Building training that meets the needs of all teachers is close to impossible

(McDowell, Bedford, & DiTommaso Downs, 2014). As instructional coaching model programs

continue to develop in school districts across the country, geared towards improved teacher

practice, a focus on the coaches, their purpose, and their impact emerges. Understanding how

influential instructional coaches are to the process of instructional change is necessary to reflect

on the work coaches do.

Reflecting on instructional coaching presents coaches as agents of instructional change

that support teachers' professional growth over time. Instructional coaching model programs

serve as a framework for how coaches approach transformative work and the accessibility they

have in supporting teachers. Instructional coaches, and the time they spend with teachers, can

impact teacher practice and in turn increase student outcomes (Shidler, 2009).

In the literature review, I examined instructional coaching as a form of professional

development and instructional change. The concept of change is reviewed through literature that

highlights instructional coaches' work as they grow professionally to support change, what it takes for coaches to sustain instructional change, and the benefits of time and accessibility to instructional coaching. The impact of instructional coaching and its effectiveness is reviewed. Additionally, the literature review includes coaching model programs and their cost as opposed to traditional forms of professional development. The crux of instructional coaching, however, involves working with teachers to improve their instructional practice so student outcomes are positively affected. Instructional coaching as a form of professional development provides a partnership approach for teachers to grow in their instructional practice.

<div align="center">Professional Development</div>

Professional learning is a way to acquire new knowledge and practices that are necessary to affect student outcomes (Learning Forward, 2015). The importance of improving teacher quality to influence student outcomes has necessitated the need for a variety of teacher professional development structures (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Instructional coaching as a partnership approach to professional development builds on the premise of a collaborative effort to reach instructional goals. Killion and Hirsh (2013) acknowledged traditional professional developments are simply not adequate to support the current trends of instructional reform. They emphasized the need for districts to invest in a multitude of professional development opportunities, one that included the use of coaches to support and facilitate teacher growth and learning.

Instructional Coaching Professional Development

Opfer and Pedder (2011) examined how literature provided the characteristics of effective teacher professional development yet found instructional change was not occurring. Therefore, they chose to examine literature that demonstrated what conditions were necessary for

instructional change to occur. They found for professional development to incite change in teacher practice, teachers could not rely on traditional models of professional development, such as one-day workshops or conferences, without follow-up and support of collaborative partnerships over a sustained amount of time. Guskey (2000) noted in order for professional development to be most effective, new knowledge and skills should be acquired and it would be necessary to examine the quality of their implementation and their effect on student outcomes. Instructional coaching can allow for new skills to be implemented in an instructional setting and because of this, it is considered an effective form of professional development that garners instructional improvement. Coaching is reliant on multiple factors coming together, which includes outside factors that surround the coach and the teacher. When looking at coaching as professional development, J. Knight (2007) identified three variables that serve as predictors of successful instructional coaching programs:

1. Instructional coaches receive quality professional development to learn how to coach;

2. Instructional coaches demonstrate the skills and personality to become effective coaches; and

3. Instructional coaches work in and with school principals who are supportive of their efforts are also effective instructional leaders themselves.

These variables led to effective, embedded professional development for teachers.

Educators may argue about which factors within schools also develop better teachers. Leana (2011) conducted a study at an elementary school in which she examined how human capital and social capital contributed to instructional change. *Human capital* was identified as the years of experience and qualifications of a teacher while *social capital* looked at the focused collaborative experiences with other teachers in an effort to improve practice. She found

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teachers with high human capital got good results from students but teachers with high social capital yielded the best results when it came to student achievement. It was clear the focused collaboration with other teachers allowed for development of instructional efficacy. In a meta-study, Hattie (2009) identified the highest impact teaching practices and found teachers who worked collaboratively on a continuous basis had the most positive effect on student learning. Professional development with an instructional coach working with a teacher on a continual basis can build social capital that improves instructional practice to influence positive student outcomes.

Fisher and Burrell (2011) found the mentoring of new teachers typically involves support in the areas of classroom management and responsibilities that serve as managerial minutia. They emphasized that in order to improve teacher efficacy, learning must be continuous and must use creativity rather than using familiar techniques, such as a traditional professional development where teachers leave the classroom to receive information and return, expecting to incorporate what they have learned. Instead, teachers who focus on improving specific teaching strategies, with the ongoing support of an instructional coach in the teacher's instructional setting, see student instructional gains based on better instructional practice. This form of ongoing embedded professional development allows for a more impactful change instructionally.

Shidler (2009) found that coaching as a form of embedded professional development can increase a teacher's instructional practice if the work between the coach and teacher is content specific and allows for the coach to model for the teacher, observe the teacher, as well as reflect together with the teacher to determine progress. She found the clear focus and the continued practice of modeling, observing, and providing reflective feedback leads to impactful

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instructional change. She emphasized that time spent with a teacher was important for change to continue.

<div align="center">Change</div>

Change was examined as it applies to the improvement of instructional practice. Instructional change can intimidate teachers and cause them to perceive the change as a threat to their expertise. As teachers navigate their classroom, they develop philosophies through their experiences and may feel defensive when change is mandated (Richards & Skolits, 2009). To create change that is sustainable, Fullan (2009) noted institutions have to foster the development of lateral capacity building. Pursuing change in individuals can be more effective if the systems that surround individuals are changed as well. Fullan said, "To change organizations and systems will require leaders who get experiences in linking to other parts of a system" (p. 114). Instructional coaches face the task of changing instructional practice one teacher at a time. J. Knight (2007) found instructional coaches have a better chance of impacting change on a large scale if they focus on high-leverage practices that support teachers' greatest instructional concerns. As teachers find the change is purposeful and effective, they can lead instructional coaches to develop learning networks that help support systemic changes on campuses.

Instructional Coaches as Conduits of Change

Many of the experiences of instructional coaches include *practice,* in the colloquial sense, as coaches navigate their roles while working with teachers. Instructional coaches' ability to train teachers in a way that is transformative also develops as they become more experienced with coaching practices. Ho et al. (2001) noted prior research supports that changing a teacher's beliefs leads to instructional change. Devlin (2003) argued a teacher has to be open to embrace change and focus on strategies to improve instruction in order to actually improve the learning

environment. Coaching offers a solutions-based approach because the work occurs in the context of the teacher's classroom. Czajka and McConnell (2016) found using a collaborative model of professional development, such as instructional coaching, removes barriers that allow for teachers to overcome the challenges of changing instructional practice.

As more districts hire instructional coaches to lead quality professional development that changes and grows teachers' instructional practice through mentoring, workshops, and modeling, Chien (2013) investigated attributes and conditions for effective instructional coaching to occur. Since instructional coaches take on a multitude of roles that can lead to instructional reform, coaches can truly affect change as they support teachers within their instructional setting. Chien found numerous studies identified the following attributes as being necessary in order for a coach to be effective: ". . . an active listener, non-judgmental, possibility thinker, compassionate, inspirational, personable, intuitive, sincere, trustworthy, risk-taker, action-oriented, focused on results, knows core coaching competencies, and curious" (p. 3).

Effective instructional coaches need to be knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction but also need to learn how to coach teachers to change and develop instructional practices. Chien (2013) also pointed out that studies show teachers who participate in a traditional in-service program apply only 20% of their gained knowledge to the classroom, while teachers that use instructional coaches are more likely and willing to try new instructional strategies and change their instructional practices because coaches provide support and in-class assistance.

Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) focused on the notion that instructional coaches were generally expected to support systemic changes. The researchers found that as coaches worked with teachers, coaches ended up being more responsive to individual teacher needs often at the

expense of district or campus goals. They recommended coaches' roles needed to be framed around change that is both systemic and individual.

Sustaining Teachers' Instructional Growth

Related to instructional coaching effectiveness, making a direct link between instructional coaching and student outcomes is not simple, nor clear. Nonetheless, instructional coaching supports teachers in a way that allows them to change their instructional practice and implement strategies with fidelity. Teemant (2013) found instructional coaching led to statistically significant pedagogical transformation and showed patterns of sustainability as teachers implemented learned teaching practices repeatedly. Teemant incorporated the use of instructional coaches to work with teachers after they became very familiar with the structures of a five-standards model that includes: "Joint Productive Activity, Language and Literacy Development, Contextualization, Challenging Activities, and Instructional Conversations" (p. 575). The effectiveness of the instructional coaching was measured based on the degree of fidelity in which coached teachers achieved the five standards model (with achievement on the rubric based on regular integration of the standard). Qualitative and quantitative data showed there was teacher transformation as teachers implemented the five standards and continued using those standards a year later after continuing to work with instructional coaches. Teacher feedback further supported findings when teachers acknowledged how instructional coaching sharpened their focus on student learning.

An important factor of effective instructional coaching is the type and the quality of interaction between the instructional coach and the teacher. When video was first introduced to support teaching improvement, a clear winner emerged in the form of videotaping instruction to inform teachers of their practice. This new form of video support was known as microteaching.

Microteaching allows a teacher to teach a brief lesson while an instructional coach gives effective feedback and poses questions for reflection. Fisher and Burrell (2011) found microteaching allowed teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching styles and receive feedback in a manner that allowed teachers to reflect on their practice and make improvements. An essential part of microteaching is the feedback and reflection on one's current practice in order to improve it. Fisher and Burrell also found the consistent use of microteaching as a form of feedback and reflection offers sustainability of instructional growth. I'Anson, Rodrigues, and Wilson (2003) found microteaching also informs teachers of their assumptions about learning and instruction and enables them to change their practice.

In an effort to determine what makes instructional coaches most effective so they impact a teacher's instructional growth in a way that is sustained and impactful, the Kansas Coaching Project researchers, J. Knight et al. (2015), interviewed over 50 instructional coaches. Through those interviews, they were able to identify three actions that were most impactful in promoting and sustaining instructional growth. J. Knight et al. (2015) subsequently developed a three-step coaching cycle that involved the following components, in order, for coaching to be most effective.

1) Identify a goal, a teaching strategy, and an expectation

2) Learn, specifically, through checklists and modeling, how to use an identified teaching strategy

3) Improve practice through monitored progress and modifications when needed (p. 12)

J. Knight et al. (2015) acknowledged the three-step instructional coaching cycle is only one element of effective coaching programs. The importance of instructional coaches continuing their own professional learning, whether it is to further their knowledge on instructional

strategies or develop their understanding of how to work effectively with adult learners, is still

the key to developing strong and effective instructional coaching programs so that they impact

teachers in a sustainable way.

Instructional change is not a one-time event, but one that leads to the continued

integration of effective instructional practice to achieve positive student outcomes. Instructional

change does not happen overnight and as coaches work towards developing teachers'

instructional practice, time and accessibility play an important role.

Coaching Accessibility to Teachers

How much time a teacher spends with an instructional coach can be critical to further

developing instructional practice in a way that leads to sustainable gains in student achievement.

In the effort to change and improve teacher instructional pedagogy, time plays a factor.

According to Teemant, Wink, and Tyra (2011), "coaching research has not established which

coaching practices, with what frequency, promoting what content and teaching practices are the

most effective given limited human and financial school resources" (p. 685). Shidler (2009)

looked at the link between the numbers of hours coaches spent with teachers in a classroom

setting and the relationship with teacher efficacy in content area instruction leading to student

achievement over the course of three years in an early childhood classroom. Shidler found when

coaches spent increased amounts of time in the classroom working with teachers; this led to a

positive increase in students' recognition of letters. During the first year of coaching, the

coaching was focused on specific instructional practices and teaching methods that supported

teachers through the facilitation of effective, intentional, instructional practice thereby directly

impacting student outcomes. Over the course of year two and year three, no such relationship

was evident. During these subsequent years, there was less specific instructional focus even

though there was an increase in time spent with teachers. Shidler concluded that in order to build teacher efficacy, it is imperative that when working with teachers, instructional coaches need to focus on the intentional instruction of specific content, modeling techniques, observing teacher practice, and allowing for teacher-to-coach reflection. Inevitably, time, whether too much or too little, has many implications for the coaching partnership. For instructional change to be impactful, focused, and intentional, collaborative work with coaches is necessary. Coaching models, as the frameworks for how and when coaches have access to teachers, can therefore impact instructional coaches and their work.

<div align="center">Instructional Coaching and Its Impact</div>

Instructional coaching offers teachers embedded professional learning. As school district reform efforts focus on quality instruction to improve student outcomes, there has been an increase in the number of instructional coaching roles. Instructional coaching involves a collaborative partnership between a coach and a teacher that provides constructive feedback for the teacher. Devine et al. (2013) explained that instructional coaching is an effective form of intensive and differentiated support for teachers so they may incorporate best practices into their teaching on a regular basis. They explored areas of research that are important to construct the effectiveness of instructional coaching and then established that teacher perception, instructional practice, and student achievement were key areas that helped determine an instructional coach's overall effectiveness.

It is important to consider that instructional coaches are learners as well, and districts need to build a foundation of professional development for instructional coaches while continuing to support them so they may become effective leaders of change. Gallucci et al. (2010) used the sociocultural learning theory called Vygotsky Space, which frames learning in

terms of relationship phases both collective and individual, to determine the following

information regarding instructional coaching models.

(a) Coaches are not unproblematic conduits of reform ideas but are also learners of new content and pedagogy

(b) As coaches' conceptual development about instruction grows, their ability to coach also mature

(c) Professional development that supports coaches is best aligned around a workplace pedagogy that addresses the learning needs of multiple system actors (p. 919)

However, Galluci et al. (2010) found many of the teachers moving into instructional coaching positions were not necessarily experts prepared to support adult learners and acknowledged instructional coaches continue to be learners as well. Goddu (2012) noted adult learners need a facilitator that empowers them to be self-directed and to use personal and life experiences as frames for growth. The effectiveness of coaches depends on their ability to effectively communicate, build relationships, and lead professional development for teachers in the context of how adult learners are motivated to learn. While serving in these multiple roles, instructional coaches need initial and continual professional development, as well as organizational support, to serve as facilitators of continued professional growth. Strengthening a coach's ability to work with teachers can impact their ability to support teachers' instructional growth effectively.

There are areas of practice that have been identified as areas where coaching can impact teacher instruction the most. J. Knight (2009) listed the four best teaching practices (classroom management, content planning, instruction, and assessment for learning) that tend to have an impact on how teachers teach and how students learn, and identified them as a framework for

instructional improvement. Working with instructional coaches to develop goals in this area can support teachers' instructional gains and develop a teacher's efficacy. Developing teacher efficacy demonstrates the impactful work of instructional coaches.

Teacher Efficacy and Growth

While teacher efficacy can be difficult to define, one thing is clear; teachers that can help students positively grow in their learning over the course of a year, or even several years, are considered good and effective teachers. Fullan (2016) identified key ways to develop change in teacher effectiveness. He stated, "Teaching is not the kind of profession where staying cloistered will often result in one's achieving personal mastery or ending up having much collective impact" (p. 48). He found when teacher growth is supported through the intentional development of strong collaborative cultures along with ongoing constructive feedback; this is the best way to create instructional learning that truly affects student learning.

Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) acknowledged teachers' self-perception of classroom performance contributes to their overall efficacy. They also recognized that perceived teacher collective efficacy, the way teacher's function and perceive their effectiveness as part of a whole staff, works hand in hand with their individual perceptions. The researchers stated, "Teachers with a low sense of individual self-efficacy might perform differently in a low collective efficacy environment as opposed to a high one, and vice-versa" (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 191). They found teachers and staffs that believe they can positively influence student achievement often do.

Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) examined teachers' self-efficacy and found teachers with higher self-efficacy were more open to innovation and change and were more likely to see their work as important and impactful. They examined four professional

development treatments to determine if one was more likely to increase a teacher's sense of efficacy: both self and instructional efficacy. These four treatments, or models, include: (a) a workshop; (b) a workshop with modeling; (c) a workshop with modeling and practice; and (d) a workshop with modeling, practice, and coaching. The treatment/model, that included teachers learning information about a new instructional practice, seeing the practice modeled, allowing for teachers to model the practice in their classroom with students, and then following up with coaching, showed an increase in both teacher's general self-efficacy and instructional efficacy. This particular professional development model was the only model that followed up with coaching while the other three models did not. Increasing a teacher's self-efficacy and instructional efficacy to affect student outcomes serves a factor for utilizing instructional coaching.

Student Outcomes

Many instructional methods, such as peer coaching, have been developed with the intention of building teachers' pedagogical skills and sustaining those skills in an effort to impact student outcomes. Peer coaching, like instructional coaching, takes place when teachers observe one another in an effort to receive and give non-evaluative feedback for instructional growth in a manner that is non-threatening. The unique aspect of this type of professional development is that its design is to foster the teacher's growth in instructional practices within a classroom setting. Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, and Good (1997) explained coaching in the classroom setting provides a safe environment in which the teacher can learn new teaching strategies, instruct students through the new strategies, and then reflect on the results. This method of embedded professional development allows teachers the opportunity to refine their instructional practice and through collaborative support, develop reflective and responsive teaching practices.

Kohler et al. (1997) emphasized the importance of teachers' instructional methods being linked with a variety of student outcomes. In an earlier study, Valencia and Killion (1988) reported teachers felt coaching helped produce significant gains in developing students' writing skills and thus was one of the reasons the researchers wanted to examine student outcomes as a result of peer coaching. Kohler et al. (1997) found teachers' instructional refinements were more likely to occur when they were collaborating with a coach rather than working alone. The researchers found those refinements can be sustained and even extended over time, concluding it was important to develop feasible and effective coaching procedures for teachers to use. The main goal is to get teachers to refine their instructional practice but also to sustain the use of effective instructional strategies in order to affect student outcomes positively. Hattie and Timperley (2007) analyzed the concept of feedback as it pertains to the improvement of teaching and learning. They noted for feedback to have an effective impact, there must be a learning context in which specific feedback is actually addressed. They found targeted specific feedback has the largest effect size to impact teacher instructional growth.

Instructional coaching can help refine a teacher's instructional practice through effective feedback and continued practice, thereby positively affecting student outcomes. Improving instructional practice to influence positive student outcomes frames the work of coaches when they are working with teachers.

<div align="center">Coaching Models and Programs</div>

Coaching models serve as the frames for how instructional coaches do their work. In addition, models lay the foundation for how instructional coaches are trained to support teachers. Kaplan and Owings (2002) noted coaching models generally emphasize collaborative work that is inquiry-based and differentiated for teacher support. Coaching models offer different

<div align="center">25</div>

structures and resource support to prepare instructional coaches for access to teachers. Denton

and Hasbrouck (2009) emphasized many coaching models have been implemented before a

strong theoretical framework was ever conceived therefore leaving many teachers and district

leaders the inability to understand how coaches spend their time. They also emphasized

"because of the myriad tasks that can be associated with coaching and the variation in caseloads,

coaching can mean very different things in different schools" (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, p.

156).

Coaching Model Implementation

Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) examined the growing initiative to implement instructional

coaching models in districts across the country. They acknowledged the varied titles the

educators, called on to serve in a role of support for their colleagues, are known by and pointed

out instructional coaching is being viewed as a way to support teachers in a way that involves

high quality teaching in a multitude of instructional areas. Their study examined the following

variables: instructional coaching as professional development, the evolution of coaching, the role

of coaching becoming more popular, funding support for coaches, coaching being implemented

in schools, and defining coaching models. With the support the American Institute of Research

(AIR) and Denton and Hasbrouck's (2009) conceptual overview of four different types of

instructional coaches (problem solving, technical, reflective practice, and collegial/team

building), they found they needed to include reform coaches, another title for instructional

coaches whose purpose is to reform a district's instructional practice amongst teachers. Denton

and Hasbrouck noted while all the approaches may include observations, the focus of those

observations and the type of feedback teachers receive would vary in the context of the different

types of coaching/consulting approaches. Regardless, while coaching titles and coaching models

vary, their purpose is similarly tied to improving teacher efficacy in order to increase student

achievement. As instructional coaching models are continually implemented in districts across

the country, Denton and Hasbrouck discussed the areas of coaching that still need to be

addressed in future research and could serve as an excellent guide for future researchers

regardless of which coaching model is implemented. They acknowledged, "There is a need to

develop fully-articulated models of instructional coaching based on cohesive theories, and to

validate these models" (Denton & Hasbrouch, 2009, p. 172).

Through years of working with colleagues within the Kansas Coaching Group at the

University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and studying over 1000 instructional

coaches, J. Knight (2016) found in order for the coaches in instructional coaching programs to

have a significant impact on teacher practice, they had to address seven factors. These factors

include the following.

1. Understand the complexities of working with adults

2. Use an effective coaching cycle

3. Know effective teaching practices

4. Gather data

5. Employ effective communication strategies

6. Be effective leaders

7. Be supported by their schools and districts (p. 27)

Furthermore, J. Knight (2016) acknowledged that instructional coaches have to respect

teacher autonomy and work as a partner, or equal, in order to develop a relationship in which

teachers see themselves as driving their own success with support of a partner that is learning

from them as well. The understanding that a principal, as an instructional leader, must not only

be willing to be coached themselves but also must communicate the importance of coaching

helps create an environment where the most impact on instructional development can happen. When districts implement an instructional coaching model, consideration for how instructional coaches need to be trained and supported so as to be the most effective is as important as considering cost of implementing a model in itself.

D. S. Knight (2012) examined the cost of implementing an instructional coaching program and offered a framework for that implementation. He indicated cost projections tend to be lower than they really are and found a coaching model can cost a district 6-12 times more than traditional professional development. D. S. Knight also provided suggestions for reducing costs but notes there is little research as to how cutting costs would affect effectiveness. A key aspect of the cost effectiveness of instructional coaching models would be to look at how instructional coaches spend their salaried time (D. S. Knight, 2012). This could inform districts of how many teachers the instructional coach is supporting. He stated, "Identifying strategies that increase the number of collaborating teachers per coach will help decrease the expenditure per pupil of the coaching program" (D. S. Knight, 2012, p. 77). With this in mind, D. S. Knight offered how a program is implemented can affect costs, both positively and negatively.

Summary

The study of instructional coaching and the roles of the coaches suggest areas that support and strengthen teacher practice. The literature review addressed instructional coaching as a form of professional development, and the role of the instructional coach in developing effective instructional practices through coaches' collaborative work with teachers and how that work affects student outcomes. The literature review showed instructional coaching as a frame for instructional change and the work and training of instructional coaches, how coaching supports sustained instructional growth, and how time and accessibility to coaching support

instructional change. Gallucci et al. (2010) challenged researchers to continue to look for ways in which professional development structures can continue to support learning both for the coaches and the individuals they coach.

Additionally, the literature review considered the value of coaching models. While the literature on coaching model structures and the support they provide coaches is scarce, available literature highlighted existing coaching models and their implementation. D. S. Knight (2012) pointed out that while instructional coaching may be effective, it is still more costly than other traditional forms of professional development. More research is needed to examine the implementation of coaching model structures and how coaches spend their time within them. Instructional coaches perform many tasks within an educational setting. However, J. Knight (2007) explained administering a coaching model structure fosters collaborative partnerships, offers a continuous cycle of learning and feedback on specific instructional approaches, and supports effective instructional coaching practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes an overview of the research methodology to be used in this study. The organization of this chapter provides clarity on the research design, a visual that constructs the process of research for this study, the participants of the study, ethical considerations, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and limitations.

Research Design

This qualitative research is a phenomenological study of instructional coaches to determine instructional coaches' perceived effectiveness in changing instructional practice. In this study, I examined the coaches' perspectives to determine if they differ from coach to coach and district to district. I also examined the role of instructional coaches; identified how coaches are supported through training and preparation, and determined additional influences from districts that may create barriers or open doors that allow instructional coaches to develop and improve instructional practice. Instructional coaches were interviewed to discuss their perception of their work within the structures of their coaching model programs.

In this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

2. What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

3. How are instructional coaches evaluated?

4. What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

Creswell (2013) described a phenomenological study as "the common meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). The purpose in conducting this research as a phenomenological study was to seek to establish what

instructional coaches have in common in their shared experience of coaching teachers and perceptions of their own efficacy. Bliss (2016) explained phenomenology allows the researcher to gain insight into the phenomenon of lived experiences and has its roots in philosophy. Since the instructional coaches work in different districts, identifying key common experiences can provide a rich look into how instructional coaches view the work they do and the types of support they need. Jewell (2007) found personal interaction between coach and teacher is key in determining success. Viewing dialogues and descriptive methods can help bring clarity to understanding motives and purpose in instructional coaching.

A phenomenological approach allowed coaches to verbalize their common experiences and how they perceive their own ability to work as effective conduits of instructional change within their coaching models. The approach can also give voice to what coaches need in order to feel effective and competent at what they do. As leaders move to implement or restructure coaching models within their districts, insights gained from this study can be used to guide both campus and district leaders to determine what resources and training they need to provide in order to support instructional coaches. In addition, instructional coaches' perceived effectiveness in the work they do can lead district leaders to provide support that their model structures are not currently providing, in hopes to develop stronger instructional coaching programs that direct the type of instructional change they may be seeking. Wilder (2014) suggested that even when districts have implemented coaching models in which goals and expectations are developed, the experience of the coaches plays a central role in determining the type of professional learning they are providing teachers as the coaches themselves try to construct meaning of their own work. Figure 2 presents a visual of the design of this study.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │     RESEARCH DESIGN VISUAL       │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘

                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │     Phenomenological Study       │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘

                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │     Instructional Coaches        │
                    │        Experiences               │
                    │           (ICA)                  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
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Phase 1	Phase 2	*Coding Interviews*
Collection of Data *Focus Group Interview/Narrative* Early April	*Individual Interviews* Late April	*for Themes* May and June

Interpretation
and
Analysis of Data
June through August
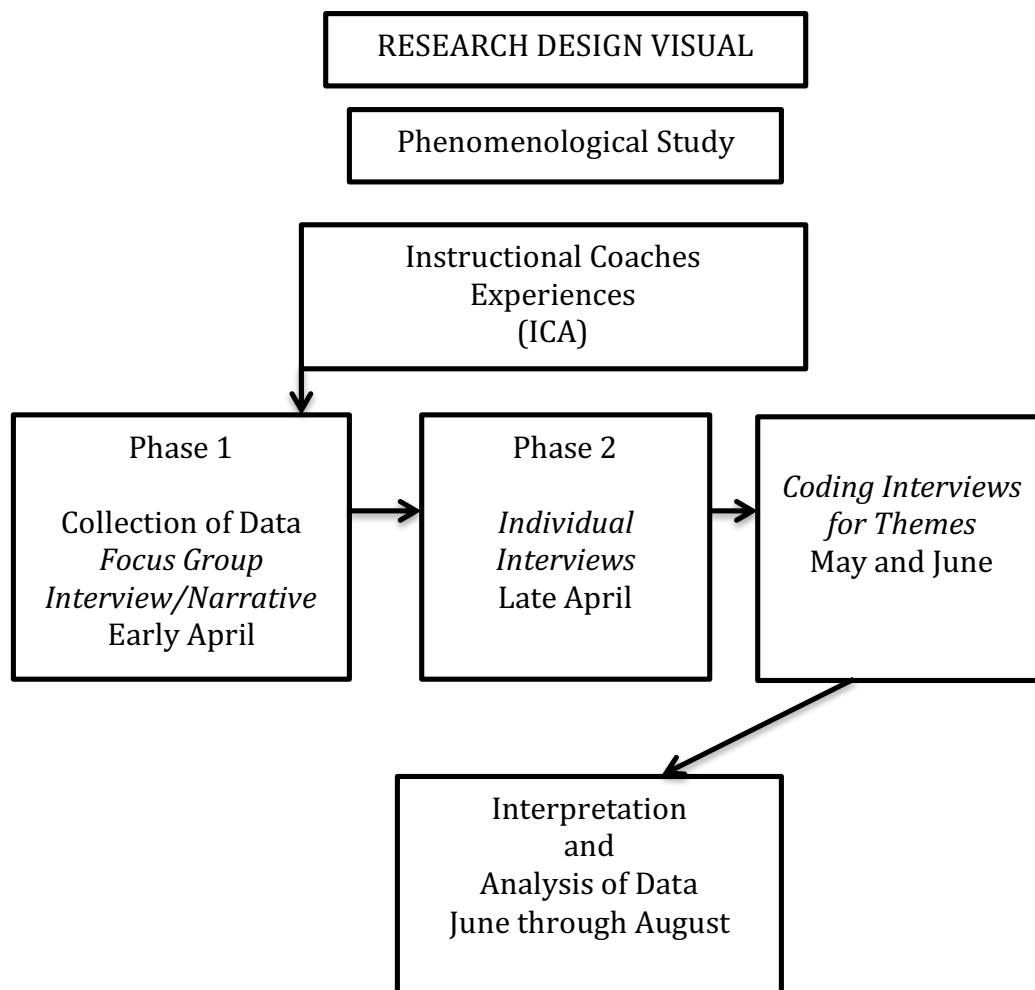
Figure 2. Phenomenological research timeline. This timeline illustrates when data was collected and analyzed.

Participants

This study involved the participation of instructional coaches selected from a local organization that I gave the pseudonym, Instructional Coaches Association (ICA), and includes members from surrounding Dallas-Fort Worth school districts who have implemented instructional coaching models. The organization offers professional development and professional support for instructional coaches *from* instructional coaches, as they view themselves as professionals with a common experience. All members of the ICA completed an information form that included their years of experience, the district in which they coach, and their email information. I used this information to select coaches who have a variety of

experience levels as instructional coaches. Coaches were also selected purposefully from different school districts so as to get a wide variety of experiences. The coaches and their districts were not identified by name, however their years of experience were provided as well as indications of their coaching title. Experienced coaches, with two or more years of experience, were asked to participate in a focus group, in a narrative interview, and individual interview so as to provide rich details of their experience.

As mentioned, I used purposeful sampling to select participants. Five coaches were selected to participate in the focus group interview. Three different coaches were selected for the narrative interview and each also participated in an individual, in-depth interview developed as a result of their narrative. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research to identify participants that offer the most information for the purpose of the study and uses groups of individuals that offer knowledge in a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002).

During the focus group, five of the instructional coaches were asked open-ended questions that ranged from their general job tasks to the types of training they have received from district leaders. Instructional coaches were also asked about their own perceived effectiveness when it comes to affecting instructional change. Three additional coaches were asked to tell a narrative story about their experience as an instructional coach. The coaches telling the narrative story were also interviewed individually. While the coaches from ICA vary in coaching titles and experience, they are all tasked with developing instructional practice among teachers.

<div align="center">Ethical Considerations</div>

Prior to conducting the research, actions were taken to ensure ethical research practices. Informed consent was secured to provide processes that protect individuals participating in the

study from any potential risks (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Informed consent was provided for all participants and they were informed their names and the names of their district were not identified. All participation was voluntary and participants could chose not to participate. Informed consent procedures for research followed the requirements provided by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board as shown in Appendix A.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

This study involved three measures: a) a one hour-long, semi-structured, in-depth, focus group interview with four instructional coaches from different school districts, b) a recorded narrative with three additional coaches, c) semi-structured, individual interviews of the coaches who participated in the recorded narratives. The three data collection sources were provided a variety of information that allowed for an extensive examination of coaches' perceptions of their effectiveness.

The three chosen data methods allowed for triangulation and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the perceived experiences of instructional coaches within their coaching models. Patton (1999) noted that triangulation is the use of multiple methods of collecting data. In addition, he noted using multiple methods of collecting data provide cross-data validity checks. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) stated, "Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources" (p. 545).

Focus Group Interview

The semi-structured, focus group interview allowed instructional coaches to discuss the phenomenon of instructional coaching. The focus group method allowed for a more in-depth look into the experiences of instructional coaches. Focus group interviews tend to evolve based

on how other participants in the group respond and provides all participants the opportunity to construct their experience according to the direction of the responses from the entire group as they interact (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). The focus group allows a researcher to examine the general beliefs about a particular phenomenon. Kitzinger (1995) noted the "processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview" (p. 300). She also noted focus groups allow the researcher to capitalize on the communication of group participants to gather data. The focus group interview is based on a prepared set of questions found in Appendix B.

Narrative

The narrative approach allows for a personal and in-depth account of an experience in the form of a story. Instructional coaches were given a prompt that allowed them to narrate their experience in their current coaching model program. Lee, Hunter and Franken (2013) noted, "through interview narratives a phenomenon can be understood' (p. 146). They described narrative story telling as a way for a subject to provide a more holistic view to the phenomenon being experienced and also identified a narrative approach as a way to capture a deeper and more complex understanding of the experience of a subject. The narrative prompt can be found in Appendix C.

Individual Interview

The interview approach allows the researcher to provide "prepared questions that are fully structured by the researcher/interviewer's concerns and initial theoretical framework" (Wengraf, 2004, p. 1). Using an interview with open-ended questioning allows participants to respond openly about their experiences. The interview also allowed instructional coaches to describe their perceived effectiveness when it comes to supporting teachers' instructional

growth. Powell, Hughes-Scholes, Smith, and Sharman (2014) identified open-ended questioning

as "questions that elicit an elaborate response without dictating what specific information is

required" (p. 283). In addition, the individual interviews allow for the researcher to gather

personal data about an experience rather than a general perception about a phenomenon

(Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). The individual interview can be found in Appendix D.

Questions and Prompt Development

The interview questions for the focus group, the narrative prompt, and the individual

interview were developed to align with the research questions. J. Knight (2016), in conjunction

with the Kansas Coaching Group, noted there are seven factors required to develop successful

coaching programs (referenced in Chapter 2). J. Knight's recommendation for successful

coaching programs is instrumental in the development of the interview questions. The questions,

while constructed to align to the four research questions, also considered the seven factors for

success to determine if these conditions are present when there is the perception of effective

coaching. In addition, Skiffington, Washburn, and Elliott (2011) determined successful coaches

also possess core competencies such as the ability to work with others and continuing to grow

and reflect on their own learning. This research was factored into the construction of the

questions as well.

Five instructional coaches with two or more years of experience in their current practice

were used to test the validity and reliability of the questions and prompt. The instructional

coaches involved are not part of the research investigation. Experts from Results Coaching

Global (n.d.), an organization that provides leadership training on effective coaching, examined

the questions and provided feedback to determine trustworthiness of the interview questions and

narrative prompt. Radhakrishna (2007) explained a process for developing and testing

instruments. This was used as a guide to determine validity and reliability of the questions, prompt, and survey statements. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted collaborating with experts or participants in a similar field of study to create research questions or review and interpret data lends to the validity of building a participant view of the study.

The instructional coaches helped develop the questions and prompt and piloted them to determine if questions prompted the intended outcome. Questions were paired with the research questions by having each instructional coach categorize the questions and statements according to the research questions. A comparison of the five coaches' categorizations led to discussions and rewriting of questions so the coaches could come to a consensus of what the question was seeking to reveal. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted collaboration with participants in a researched field in areas that involve developing research questions, among other things, provides credibility.

The responses to the focus group questions, the narratives, and the individual interviews were inputted into a web-based transcription computer application, Transcribe.com. The transcriptions were then analyzed and coded for themes.

Data Collection Process

The focus group interview and the narrative interview were conducted in April during the spring semester of 2017. The focus group interviews involved open-ended questions and probing questions were based on the experiences of the instructional coaches.

For the focus group interview, each coach was assigned a number. Each coach came from a different district identified by a letter, i.e. A, B, C. etc. I used the number and letter to identify coaches as they provided answers during the focus group and narrative interview as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Instructional Coach and District Identifiers in the Focus Group

Instructional Coaches	District
Coach 1	A
Coach 2	B
Coach 3	C
Coach 4	D
Coach 5	E

For the narrative, a letter was assigned to each coach to identify the years of experience in which they have worked as instructional coaches as shown in Table 2. While the years of experience of the coaches is not the focus of the study, the inclusion of this information can affect the outcome of the coaches' perceptions and is therefore included to identify coaches.

Table 2

Instructional Coach and Years of Experience

Instructional Coaches	Years of Experience
Coach A	3 years
Coach B	5 years
Coach C	6 years

Data Analysis Process

With this study, I sought to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work towards developing improved teacher practice. The data analysis process began by interviewing five instructional coaches from five different school districts, varied in years of experience, in a focus group interview format and three instructional

coaches from three different school districts in the narrative session that I also interviewed individually. The coaches were all interviewed at a local professional development center, a neutral location, away from their districts.

The interview questions for the focus group interview were designed to align to the four research questions. In addition, interview questions were developed with consideration of the seven factors for success that determine what conditions are present when there is the perception of effective coaching (J. Knight, 2016).

The coaches who participated in the narrative seminar were asked to respond to a broad, open-ended prompt for their narrative so as not to create a bias in any particular direction so they could choose which aspects of their experiences to share. The coaches were able to ask for clarification prior to beginning their narrative. Each coach was asked to give their narrative individually, with no other coaches present in the room. The same instructional coaches were then asked individual interview questions that aligned to the research questions that were also developed with consideration of the seven factors for success that determine what conditions are present when there is the perception of effective coaching (J. Knight, 2016). While these three coaches were asked fewer questions than the focus group, their interview questions encompassed similar topics.

The focus group interview was the longest and lasted approximately an hour and a half. The narrative ranged between 10 to 15 minutes depending on the information the instructional coaches wanted to share. The individual interviews of the three coaches ranged between 15 and 30 minutes each. Each coach signed a consent form prior to agreeing to participate. Each interview and narrative was audio-recorded and responses were transcribed. The transcriptions

were reviewed and analyzed using acceptable qualitative analysis methods (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The data collected were transcribed using a web based transcribing program. Data were coded using priori coding. The phenomenological qualitative analysis approach was used and responses were coded for recurring themes and patterns to uncover and develop the meaning of the shared experiences of instructional coaches. Phenomenology results are generally presented in a coherent narrative about the findings and an inductive method of analysis allows for the researcher to create meaning from the data by identifying themes and categories (Thomas, 2006). A priori coding was derived from the conceptual framework, protocols, as well as the research questions. As coding progressed, emerging patterns were identified. Stuckey (2015) noted, "codes are usually used to retrieve and categorize data that are similar in meaning so the researcher can quickly find and cluster the segments that relate to one another" (p. 7). Saldana (2016) identified coding as a word or short phrase that captures the essence and attributes of language data. Using Saldana's methods for coding, data were coded for repetitive patterns and consistent occurrences of emerging themes. To determine reliability, Creswell's (2013) questions regarding the quality of phenomenology were carefully used to ensure thoroughness in how the items were coded and categorized. Syed and Nelson's (2015) guidelines were also used to ensure the reliability of the coded data.

A portion of the qualitative data was shared with a former doctoral student whose own dissertation involved experience with qualitative data analysis. This individual reviewed and independently coded the data in an effort to establish trustworthiness of the study and its results (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study included the number of instructional coaches interviewed. Due to the nature of the phenomenological study, a smaller selection of instructional coaches was used; however this did not limit the scope of the analysis of themes from the limited number of perspectives. Research in the analysis of coaches' perspectives of the coaching models they work in is still rudimentary and I found no surveys about coaching perspectives that have been validated. Since the study contains self-reported data from instructional coaches, biases that can influence responses were to be considered.

Researcher bias could be a threat as I was once an instructional coach in one of the instructional coaching model programs. To overcome this limitation, I selected instructional coaches, who I do not know, from a local organization (ICA).

Another limitation included the possibility that the instructional coaches being interviewed may be in a state of flux when it comes to determining their own perceptions of effectiveness in developing improving instructional practice, especially if they have recently had a bad experience with a teacher or have struggled with a lack of support from some aspect of the coaching model. For this reason, coaches were asked to consider their experience as a whole.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work towards improving teachers' instructional practice. Research was conducted using members of the ICA, utilizing a semi-structured, individual in-depth interview of four instructional coaches with at least three years' experience in their current positions, a narrative story of three instructional coaches from different districts, and a survey of instructional coaches that chose to participate. Through the analysis of interview

data and identifying themes that emerged, instructional coaches' responses determined if there

were any differences in their perceptions of their own effectiveness from one coach to the other.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work with teachers. Participants were purposefully selected from the Instructional Coaches Association, ICA, an organization of instructional coaches from the DFW area that meets regularly throughout each school year to discuss topics and share experiences of those in instructional coaching roles. I learned of this group six months prior to conducting research and attended three meetings to observe the support it offered coaches.

I interviewed eight ICA instructional coaches with varied years of experience that worked in different districts across the DFW metroplex to examine their perceptions of effectiveness when working with teachers. In addition, I researched what type of support they need in order to feel the most effective at what they do. Four research questions guided the study. The research questions were:

1. What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

2. What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

3. How are instructional coaches evaluated?

4. What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

In this qualitative study, three data methods were used to gather information: a focus group interview of five instructional coaches, a narrative seminar, in which three coaches tell the story of their experiences in their current position, and an individual interview of the three coaches that participated in the narrative seminar.

In this chapter, I describe the analysis of the data collected and present the results of the qualitative analysis. The organization of this chapter is by research method and what the data revealed in regards to each research question.

Qualitative Analysis Results

Three data methods were chosen to collect data: a focus group interview, a narrative seminar, in which coaches told a story of their coaching experience, and an individual interview with the three coaches that participated in the narrative seminar. Qualitative analysis techniques were used to analyze participant responses beginning with a complete review of the data. The data was then coded for recurring themes (Saldana, 2016; Thomas, 2006). The data was analyzed and the themes and ideas that emerged from the collective data responses are reported.

Focus Group Analysis

The coaches participating in the focus group interview are identified in this analysis as C1, C2, C3, C4, and C5. Each coach represented had varying years of experience coaching, from 2 years up to 11 years. The coaches did not know each other personally but were familiar with each other through ICA meetings. The focus group interview lasted one and a half hours and was conducted away from their districts at a local professional development center of another school district. Interview questions were constructed to align to the four research questions and were also developed with consideration of the seven factors for success that determine what conditions are present when there is the perception of effective coaching (J. Knight, 2016). See Appendix B for the interview focus group questions.

Research Question 1 data. This section represents the interview data from the focus group in response to Research Question 1: What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

This first question pertains to the types of practices that occur within school districts to support instructional coaches in their work. These practices can include professional development for instructional coaches, how instructional coaches access teachers (including guidelines and processes for approaching teachers), and other job duties coaches are expected to perform. Interview Questions 3 through 8 offered a view into the types of practices that surround coaching work in their districts. From the focus group responses, four themes emerged:

- Lack of clarity of the role

- Type of training received by coaches

- Administrators understanding coaching and support coaches

- Multiple duties of the coach

The first theme that emerged was regarding coaches understanding their roles. All five of the coaches discussed their roles and described the lack of clarity about what they do, from their own perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of others in the district (teachers to administrators).

C4 described how teachers' understanding of the role of the coach could strengthen the work of coaches.

> Even down to the first year teachers knowing what the procedures are for coaching . . . Teachers move up into team leads, team leads move up into coaches, so if they know how to coach somebody from day one, if they know that process, then they're gonna understand it . . .

C1 described how a structure for clearly defining the role of coaches could support a better understanding to many:

> There is absolutely no structure. I think having that structure and clearly defining the role is so important . . . . So that there's maybe a flow chart that says this is how our structure flows and this is what the coaches responsibility is and this is what the other person's responsibility is. Just to make it very clear to what the coaches' job is and how they're there to help people.

C5 offered the idea of streamlining expectations that could be shared across the district and into the hands of all district personnel. "There is a real need to streamline the standards and expectations of the role of a coach and to get clear on that, both from the top, to the administrators, to the coach themselves."

The second theme that emerged regarded the type of training coaches received. Four of the five coaches had received formal coaching training such as Jim Knight's coaching training (Instructional Coaching Group, 2017) or Results Coaching Global (n.d.). C4 was the only coach that had not received formal training but met regularly with district administrators and other coaches to do book studies on coaching and added her district was sending some coaches to Jim Knight's coaching training and that she was selected to attend in the upcoming year. Coaches' revealed training varied from district to district and some sought to fill in any gaps in their learning on their own.

C3 offered a perspective on the training she received to coach teachers after she had been coaching for multiple years. "Everything for me was informal-self-taught until this last year, so into my fourth year of coaching, I was finally sent to Jim Knight's training, the week-long institute plus the coaching workshop." While C1 was one that admitted to being involved in a variety of formal trainings, she too added that much of what she has learned was self-taught. "Everything I've learned about working with adults, that kind of thing, I've reached out and found on my own. It wasn't incorporated into the coaching model."

The third theme to emerge regarded the necessity that administrators understand and support the work of coaches. The practice of including administrators in coaching training and involving administrators in coaching work was something mentioned regularly by all five

coaches. The coaches expressed the importance of administrators being informed about what

coaching is and how coaching can support their campus.

One coach offered insight into a challenge coaches' face when it comes to working with

administrators. For coaches, working with administrators can be perceived to be a breach of

confidentiality between the teacher and coach. C2 offered a view in how working with

administrators has changed as the coaching role developed in her particular district. "At first, we

moved a little differently in that we weren't allowed to speak to principals, but now that's

changed a little bit . . . but we are still not prone to go to any type of administration.

Three other coaches spoke about the importance of involving administrators to help

support them in their roles. One coach mentioned how returning from a training prompted her to

inform administrators about what coaches were doing and how the district needed to proceed,

due to the lack of knowledge administrators had about coaching. C1 described returning from a

coaching training and establishing guidelines, that did not exist, with her administrators.

> . . . the guidelines we had were basically from the trainings that we went to but none of
> our supervisors had ever had coaches training and didn't know anything about coaching
> training. So it was us coming back from those trainings and telling them what guidelines
> we were going to work under. So us coming back and telling them, we're going to be
> confidential, we're going to do this . . .

C4 added an insight that resonated with the other coaches when it comes to working with

administrators that put value in coaching, even when the value is perceived as negative.

> I think it goes back to the upper level position valuing the role that the coach plays. . . I
> guess the way principals and APs make new teachers feel about working with coaches.
> Like, it's a must if you want to stay, if you want to keep your job, you must do this, and
> so there's a negative persona around coaching.

All of the coaches agreed that there was a stigma to working with a coach since administrators

generally tend to ask coaches to support struggling teachers. C5 explained the stigma that

surrounds coaching. "I think there's a stigma associated with working with the coach as

something that there must be something wrong with me or I'm in danger of losing my job because I'm reaching out and asking for help.

All five coaches identified administrators as sometimes being a barrier for coaching, especially when administrators have not been trained on coaching. The reasons varied from administrators not wanting coaches on their campus, leaders not valuing the coach's time, and even administrators bailing out of a task when they feel the coach has it under control. C3 explained this in more detail.

> A barrier I have is administrators supporting what you're doing or an administrator bailing out once they've tagged you with the task . . . I'm the support and they're the authority . . . you have to stay in this with me. The coach/teacher relationship is definitely a partnership but it's not as much of a partnership with a coach/principal.

C2 also spoke of administrators being barriers when they generalize working with a coach as a group directive to campus staff. "I think a barrier for me has to do with principals in their support of coaches just saying, 'Teachers, we have these people. You have to be working with them as we're moving towards [our strategic plan].'"

The coaches agreed administrators have been supportive once they understand the coach's work. C3 mentioned coaches have to sell their work in order to gain the attention of administrators, both at the campus and district level. "Once I proved my value, that's when my principal really got on board and that's when my assistant principals really got on board and the district valued it in that they provided money for the position.

C1 chimed in in regard to selling her work.

> I went out . . . just being a salesman for myself and then the principals started hearing what I was doing and they started to see their teachers change and they started hearing my name . . . at first, I had to sign in on every campus when I went in and then, after the years, that's changed. The principals now pick up their phone . . .

All of the coaches agreed all administrators are important to supporting them in their

roles but can also prevent them from doing their best work. The coaches' responses revealed

that it is necessary for administrators to receive some coaching training if they are going to have

instructional coaches on their campuses.

The fourth theme that emerged from the responses regarded the multiple duties coaches

are involved in besides coaching teachers. The coaches were being utilized in multiple ways,

making them inaccessible to teachers at times. It is important to note the coaches did not

complain about their multiple duties but rather engaged in a conversation where laughter was

shared as they discussed the sheer extensiveness of duties they perform in their districts that was

common amongst all of them. All five coaches acknowledged these multiple duties prevented

them from working one-on-one coaching teachers but were part of the district practices that

surrounded their work. C1 listed the numerous duties and each coach added something and

nodded as she spoke. C1 spoke about a general list of duties.

> I know I'm gonna forget a bunch of them, so coaching teachers and running the first year
> teacher academy, it's planning, it's everything. Responsible for all our professional
> development done in our district—that falls into our department . . .

The other coaches added that they also do curriculum writing and manage assessments

for their districts as well as team with campuses for additional campus professional

developments. C3 shared that her involvement in curriculum writing is not necessarily content

in which she has an understanding. "I'm a general instructional coach with anyone on campus

who is choosing to write curriculum at the moment. I'm actually about to go into a curriculum

writing session for ASL . . . I'm not really sure how that's gonna work."

C4 explained the numerous duties she completes on her campus that do not involve

working coaching teachers.

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Oh, testing monitor, hall duty, um, let's see . . . leadership team meetings . . . running the website for the campus, running the Twitter page, Facebook page, and the Instagram page. Building the brand for the campus . . . assisting with the distribution of technology on campus. I've got to add that we also help with summer school.

The coaches continued to discuss the amount of time they have to work with teachers or in their other duties later in this analysis.

Research Question 2 data. The following section represents the interview data from the focus group in response to Research Question 2: What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

This question pertains to the impact the coaches are having on teachers' instructional practice. Interview questions 9 through 13 pertained to the coaches' work with teachers in regards to meeting their needs, affecting student outcomes, and the amount and quality of time they spent coaching teachers. The responses revealed three themes:

- Personalizing coaching to teacher needs

- Coaches perceiving their coaching to be impactful

- Time with teachers is limited due to other duties

The first theme to emerge involved coaches personalizing coaching to teacher's specific needs. All five coaches agreed that a teacher's time is valuable and approached their coaching in a way that reflected that value. Their responses repeatedly focused on teacher need and the type of support the teacher requested. C5 expressed how goals are developed during a coaching session.

Some teachers may want to walk away from this conversation with a tangible product . . . The first thing for me is that I have to identify what their goal is. So for me, my goal is that the teacher walks away feeling like they achieved their goal. I know how precious a teacher's time is and so I never want to feel like a nuisance, like I have to be another thing, and so I always want to feel like I have supported them and helped move them further along in their path.

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The coaches expressed that needs vary by teacher and a first year teacher has different

needs than an experienced teacher, so a coaching session looks different. C2 discussed the

differences in working with experienced teachers as opposed to first year teachers.

> My goal is to support them in a way they want and need because they request us if
> they're beyond their first year of teaching . . . we go in and give them whatever support
> they want. The first year teacher? It's to meet with them on a regular basis and discuss
> how their year is going and what their needs are and sometimes, they don't know their
> needs, so it's helping them see that they are capable.

The responses revealed coaches supported teachers in a variety of ways that ranged from

helping teachers with classroom management strategies to specific instructional strategies. C3

summed up the general feel of the group.

> I think a more articulate way to explain it would be to make them feel success and that is
> gonna look like different things for different teachers, depending on their needs. It could
> be a number of things, so just making them feel successful, like they've had a win.

All of the coaches said they approached coaching sessions with outcomes in

mind−mainly those of the teacher and what the teacher needs to affect those student outcomes.

They referred to student outcomes as either being directly or indirectly addressed in every

coaching session. C3 explained how coaching indirectly affects student outcomes. "Directly

focus on student outcomes maybe half the time but indirectly, all of the time because then any

conversation that we have will ultimately affect what the teacher is doing in the classroom,

which will affect student outcomes."

C2 chimed in by adding that coaches focus on teacher practice thereby affecting student

outcomes and C5 even expressed that student outcomes are at the forefront of every coaching

session because every decision a teacher makes impacts the students.

> I want to say that we're always pushing it back to and bringing it back to [students].
> How did that impact students? How did they respond? What do you think is the next
> step for this specific class, or the next level? Or anything like that.

The second recurring theme that emerged was coaches feel they are impacting teachers

through their work. Every coach felt their work was effective, however, one coach, C1,

expressed her effectiveness could be better if she had more time to work directly with teachers.

> This is gonna sound really bad . . . my first year teachers, I try to see them once every six weeks in the beginning and then from there, based on need. Being spread over 15 campuses, it's very hard to have the impact of being able to meet with them regularly.

All the coaches agreed they could determine their impact on teachers based on the

responses they get from both teachers and administrators. Coaches were asked to provide

specific examples that reflected how they determined their impact. They each shared an example

that was dear to their hearts. As they spoke, every coach smiled, nodded, and even became

teary-eyed listening to the qualitative affirmations of their work. C4 shared her evidence.

> I had this experience last week. I helped a teacher and we put together this great lesson and literally at the end of the day, she turned to me and high-fived me and said, "This is the best day in my six years of teaching. This was the best activity I've done." And you could see it on her face, you could see it on the kids' faces, they all loved it. It was like, you could just tell. You know and so you can tell because they let you know . . . You know so, it's, it's the feedback from the people around you.

As the coaches spoke of knowing when they have affected a teacher's instructional

practice, the group became more connected when they shared these experiences as if all of them

had the exact same experience. C3 spoke of a teacher in her first year that has chosen teaching

as a second career and was struggling with classroom management.

> The first tool I gave her was a stop light for technology and to tell the kids are we green, are we yellow, are we red, and she left my office, went and tried it in my classroom, came back during the passing period and said, "That made ALL the difference in the world. Thank you, thank you, thank you." Okay, well, simple strategy . . . then she came back . . . and now we've moved beyond classroom management because she's under control there and we're looking at instruction.

C3 went on to provide an example: her work was affirmed by a veteran teacher that

approached her when an administrator gave that teacher feedback on needing to improve student

talk time, while decreasing the teacher's own talk time. This opened the door to a variety of coaching opportunities.

> Not only did she try an instructional strategy but she tried a new technology strategy . . . I was with her all day long and helped her model it and at the end of the day, she was like, "That was amazing! Normally, my worst class was my best class today." And then I gave her another strategy and she came into my room and said, "I just want to tell you that yesterday was the best day of my teaching career because at the end of the day, I thought that was FUN! I had fun today and I haven't had fun in a long time."
> Affirmations such as these stories were directly from the people that the coaches coached

and they felt there was no better way to measure the impact on teachers than hearing from the teachers themselves. C1 spoke directly about administrator affirmations. "You can tell because teachers let you know or even administration will walk through and be like, 'What did you do?' You know, so it's the feedback from all the people around you."

C5 shared something she does at the end of each coaching session that allows her to assess the sense of success of a session. "Closing out and saying, 'Okay, so if our goal is this, do you feel like we accomplished that?' That's the best way for me at this point that I know of, to determine my own efficacy."

The third recurring theme was in regard to the limited time coaches have coaching teachers due to other duties. While all the coaches felt they impacted teachers in a positive way, they did share that the amount of time working with teachers is cut short by those other duties, as mentioned before.   C1 discussed how the amount of time coaching teachers has changed over the years and speculates the reason for the change.

> Like my first year here . . . I was spending like 65% of my time with teachers and then I'm not really sure if it's because our district is growing way faster. I guess my other duties as assigned have become greater.

C1 shared her guilt about giving other duties priority and discussed how she managed time now that she's spread too thin.

I went to my uppers and have showed them in a pie chart the amount of time that I'm in a meeting . . . Meetings, PD, etc. that I was responsible for. I had to be in attendance. That was already 65% of my time on that pie chart. So that only left, you know, like 35%, right, for me to be with teachers.

Each coach shared similar experiences. When asked to give an estimate of a percentage of time, they gave an average of 54% between all of them. It is important to note here that C3 and C4 are campus-based coaches, whereas the other coaches are not housed on a campus but rather centrally deployed from a district location. C4 estimated her percentage of time higher than the others at 80% because of how she prioritized her work.

I'd say 80% of my time I'm with teachers. Like I, because most of my other duties are computer duties, I take my time to do those so it's hard for me to give you a percentage because when I'm at school, I try to be present for my teachers and I take my personal time to get other stuff done . . . Like when I come home . . . I will work from home and get other stuff done.

This particular management of time varied, some said, year to year. C2 pointed out that years where major curriculum writing is involved, takes time away from teachers. "Mine's probably 70/30 this year. When we were writing curriculum, it was much less. It was 50/50."

In addition, C1 pointed out when she first started coaching, she spent more time with teachers but once her district began to grow and priorities shifted, so did her duties. C1 offered a perspective of her work on 15 different campuses in her district.

When a district cannot afford to have multiple coaches or enough coaches to cover every campus for it to be a more targeted approach . . . Let's just focus on two schools because less is more and that would be way more beneficial than having a coach spread really thin, and making very little impact, very little progress, where you could target specific campuses and make huge gains.

C5 described how much time she spends coaching teachers and what she does with the rest of her time.

One-on-one with teachers, I'd say maybe about 30% then the rest of the time is just a lot of documentation on how that went, planning future things, or putting together resources that they've asked for, things like that.

Table 3 shows the percentage of time the five coaches estimated they spent actually coaching teachers.

Table 3

Comparison of Estimated Percentage of Time Coaches Spend with Teachers

Coach	Estimated % of Time Spent With Teachers	District or Campus Based Coach
C1	35	District
C2	70	District
C3	50	Campus
C4	80	Campus
C5	35	District

The data showed the time spent coaching teachers was important to the coaches but when it came to determining how and if they have impacted teachers, their experiences were similar in that each coach could vividly describe their positive impact on teacher practice. While there was no actual quantitative measure of a true percentage of time spent, the two campus based coaches felt they had more access and time with teachers while only one of the district based coaches felt they had almost as much time with teachers as the campus based coaches.

Research Question 3 data. The following section represents the interview data from the focus group in response to Research Question 3: How are instructional coaches evaluated?

This question focused on how coaches are evaluated in their districts, whether formally or informally. Questions 14 through 16 addressed how coaches are evaluated, by whom they are

evaluated, and how often they have contact with their supervisor. From the responses, two

themes emerged.

- Need for a formal measure to assess the work of coaches

- Supervision that varied from district to district

The first theme that emerged from the responses was coaches seeking a formal measure

to assess their work. The coaches' responses were varied in this particular area. All of the

coaches revealed differences in how they are evaluated but only two indicated their evaluations

involved discussions in regard to their actual coaching of teachers. The responses uncovered

there was no formal structure for evaluating coaches and districts vary in their approach.

C1 reported she was not evaluated this past year because her supervisor had moved to

another district and she was not assigned anyone to report to while the position was being filled.

> This year, I was told I am not being evaluated because we didn't have a boss; we were
> our own boss so . . . I did great! In the years past, my evaluation had nothing to do with
> my job, in my opinion. It was if I was a good team member of the curriculum
> department, works well with the coordinator, spends money effectively. I'm like, none of
> these things have nothing to do with coaching . . . nothing to do with coaching.

C3 reported there was no formal evaluation system for her either and she regularly meets

with an associate principal on the campus in which she works. She explained she tried to

establish a protocol at these meetings where she would ask two questions that would give her

feedback on her work but disclosed they rarely got to those questions, even when they were on

the agenda. C3 reported her desire for a formal evaluation.

> I have begged the district coordinator who is over coaches, "can we get an evaluation
> system," but I'm the only coach in the district who is not also a classroom teacher and so
> I'm the only person in the district that they would technically need to develop it for.

C2, C4, and C5 explained they had more of a process for an evaluation than C1 and C3.

C4 noted her district did have a formal evaluation and explained it. "The district did come up

with a formal evaluation for us. On my current campus, I fill out my formal evaluation and send

it back and basically she [principal] just submits that."

The formal evaluation, in this case, is a self-evaluation. In addition, C4 mentioned she is

required to self-reflect every six weeks to determine how her time is spent and this reflection

goes to a district director that oversees campus coaches and principals. C5 explained how her

goals are established a little differently than C2s district.

> Our evaluation has been a pretty basic professional learning plan that people use across
> the district that essentially is something that will impact the district as a whole and that
> will impact my department and something that I just personally want to pursue so we
> develop goals around those and then I meet with my appraiser. Then I meet at the end of
> the year with my appraiser and kind of discuss things through the goals. That has been
> challenging. I'll say as an instructional coach, that same format is what teachers use
> when they're developing goals, but the role of an instructional coach, I feel is so much
> different. It is very difficult.

C5 discussed how regular meetings are held throughout the year with her supervisor but

they were not reflective of the work that coaches do. "It's an understanding that that is what we

do [talk about content] and maybe we may have an opportunity to report if we've had a really

great success. It is not coaching focused at all.

When it comes to evaluations, the coaches felt there was a need for evaluations that

reflect their work as a coach and current evaluations do not necessarily apply to coaching work.

The second theme that emerged from the responses involved the supervision of

instructional coaches. The responses revealed all of the coaches had someone they could go to

for moral support and help. The data also indicated districts varied in who oversees the

operations of instructional coaches. C3 revealed her district level supervisor does so many tasks

that even the supervisor jokes about the extensiveness of her own duties.

> I meet with my Executive Director of Leading and Learning. Ok, if you understand what
> that title means, you probably know more than she does, cause she's like, "It means I do

everything, so . . .” Seriously, that’s not a negative thing about her – that, it’s vague, purposefully.

> C1 shared she receives support from a district administrator that is not her direct supervisor.

> I think it’s just the proximity of offices but we both have to walk through the door and then split doors . . . so he can see our faces when we walk in the door. He’s way more reflective and in tune with what we’re doing but there’s still no formal [evaluation].

C2 shared a content director oversees her as she develops and works on goals. “Ours is with our director and we set our goals and we meet with them to discuss how we’re moving forward with our goals.” C5 expressed this information about working with her supervisor. “My supervisor is the director of my content. There’s, you know, all these department issues, not a huge focus in those meetings on coaching, that’s more curriculum and instruction, not really the coaching side of what we do. Of the five coaches, two of them met with content directors, one met with an executive director, one met with a campus principal, and one met with no one, as her supervisor position has been in transition.

Research Question 4 data. The following section represents the interview data from the focus group in response to Research Question 4: What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

This question identifies working conditions that need to be present for coaches to feel supported so they may perform work that is effective and purposeful. Questions 17 through 19 addressed the resources coaches need to do their jobs, current coaching job structures and procedures, as well as identifying how coaches determine if they are effective in increasing teachers’ instructional practices. The four themes that emerged from responses included:

- Initial training and ongoing training for coaches
- Time for coaches to partner with teachers

- Need for administrator support

- Feedback and accountability for coaches

The first theme that emerged was training for coaches. When asked about resources that would help these coaches do their jobs effectively, four of the five coaches mentioned training and ongoing training for coaches as the number one resource. C4 mentioned the importance of training coaches how to coach. "Training, I mean, training, seriously . . . Not knowing the procedure and the process to coach teachers has been, has done the teachers a disservice, so training is the main thing." C1 reiterated the need for ongoing training and offered a way coaches and teachers can benefit from training. "Not just initial training but ongoing training . . . if you have a group of teachers that have a specific need, you being able to go to get that training and then come back and provide it for them."

It's important to note C4 has not received any formal training, as mentioned previously, other than participating in book studies within her district and participating in the ICA support group. Her district will begin the Jim Knight training next year (her third year as a coach). C5 mentioned training might be able to help coaches in other areas.

> I think there needs to be the training that we talked about before that I think it needs to be ongoing. I still think that it would be helpful to streamline and to layout standards around what that [training] should look like.

The second theme that emerged was giving coaches time to partner with teachers. C3 discussed time with teachers was an important resource and received nods of agreement from the entire group. She made sure to indicate time had to be given to both the coaches and the teachers.

> I would also say "time" as a resource, but not just for me as a coach but for the teachers to have time to be coached. Specifically, that they aren't burdened with other duties as assigned during their conference period so they don't feel overwhelmed by me coming in and working with them.

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C1 described the short bouts of time, like before school and after school as too limited for coaching because teachers have duties and tutorials. C1 called on administrators to provide time for teachers, which in turn brought on a conversation about the need for administrator support. "If administrators really believe in PLCs and coaching and moving teachers forward, then they have to have the time to do that and the people doing it with them [coaches] have to have time to do that." C3 added further support for both time with teachers and ongoing training. "And then just back to that time part, we can't effectively do good coaching [without it]. And back to the training piece, the ongoing piece, we can't effectively do that if we don't have those things."

The third theme that emerged regarded the need for administrator support. Administrator support resonated throughout the focus group interview but with C1s call to action, the coaches were impassioned about conveying the importance of administrators supporting both the coaches and their work with teachers. C5 mentioned campus administrators who have not been part of conversations about coaching may have a distrust of coaches, as they may see coaches as administrative figureheads that are coming to check on the campus.

> I come in with a different colored badge than their campus and I don't live there, so if there's a campus culture of distrust towards admin or towards the coaching model then that just cuts me off at the knee in terms of working with teachers and that's incredibly difficult.

Coaches felt administrators could really help propel a positive perception about coaches, and being coached, if administrator's conversations with teachers were different. C2 explained how a principal can help teachers, especially first year teachers connect their goals to working with a coach in order to help them towards professional growth. "If principals would say, 'Just meet with them, talk about your goals periodically throughout the year.' I feel like that would give me more of an in with more of the teachers, you know, opportunities to meet with them . . .

C1 mentioned that coaches do not have budgets to provide teachers with additional resources and have to rely on administrators having buy-in. C1 acknowledged that not having access to budgets for materials or workdays could make things challenging, yet experience with administrator support in this area has been positive among all five coaches.

> Usually, our principals are good at providing that or funding that and usually good about funding our resources . . . If they don't agree with that, like it's nothing that we can decide on. We have to go be that salesperson and sell it to them and get it.

The fourth theme to emerge was feedback and accountability for coaches. The coaches shared the necessity for feedback, whether through self-reflection or from a supervisor evaluation. The coaches spoke of support groups that offer coaches opportunities to collaborate about the work they do. Meetings such as the ICA, or meetings with other coaches in their district, allows for instructional coaches to feel supported and more positive about their role. C4 shared how these groups can be of benefit to coaches.

> Whether it's a PLN or like this, the ICA group getting together or a support group of having additional coaches to help you to answer questions or to help you if you have a situation that you can't really figure out or whatever, just having collaboration with other individuals that know what you do is really important.

C5 agreed and added some insight as to the importance of why quality feedback could be a source of support for coaches as well.

> I would like to find some sort of way to get quality feedback on the work that I do that isn't just me walking away from a conversation and asking a teacher, "Is that what you wanted?" Something that is more authentic than that, really. And because, here's the thing, I may be a super effective coach, I may not be, but I may be. But my colleague beside me may be completely ineffective and because we share the same role, those who haven't worked specifically with me, but have worked with the other ineffective coach, they've made perceptions that that is what all coaches do. . . . It's [feedback] not upheld as a standard for coaches so there needs to be, like I said, some quality feedback and accountability.

C3 stressed formal evaluations would help her own professional growth but could also inform others of her work should she move to coach in a different district.

I would like to see some sort of evaluation system in place. Teachers have an evaluation system and principals have an evaluation system. There's nothing that's there to give me feedback on where I need to grow other than qualitative conversations so I can set my goals. But I don't know if the district, or the campus, or the state thinks I'm doing a good job . . . because we don't have a formal evaluation system. If I move to another district, that other district doesn't have anything to say whether I was doing a good job or not, in a formal capacity.

All five coaches agreed that some sort of measure and accountability helps give them credibility, not only with teachers but also with administrators.

Summary of Focus Group Responses

Further examination through a secondary analysis revealed four major themes. A secondary analysis can be used to examine new information from the data (Heaton, 2008). The themes were identified after re-examining the collective themes from the focus group responses of all the research questions. These four themes provide an overall summary of the focus response data.

- Training for coaches

- Time with teachers

- Administrator support

- Evaluation of coach's work

For the first major theme, responses indicated training for coaches. The data revealed coaches need training to clarify their roles and coaches wanted training that was ongoing. The data also revealed training varied by district.

The second major theme was time with teachers. The data revealed time with teachers was affected by multiple duties and responsibilities assigned to coaches. In addition, coaches felt their work with teachers was impactful when they had time to spend with them because they were able to personalize coaching to teacher needs.

The third major theme was administrator support. The data revealed coaches felt administrators needed to be trained on coaching. In addition, the data revealed the supervision of coaches varied from district to district and the supervisors had different roles in their districts.

The fourth major theme was the evaluation of coach's work. The data revealed coaches felt there was a need for a formal measure to assess their work and they needed quality feedback and a way to be accountable for their work. In addition, coaches evaluated their work as impactful. Figure 3 illustrates the four major themes that emerged after a secondary analysis of the collective themes of the focus group responses to all the research questions.
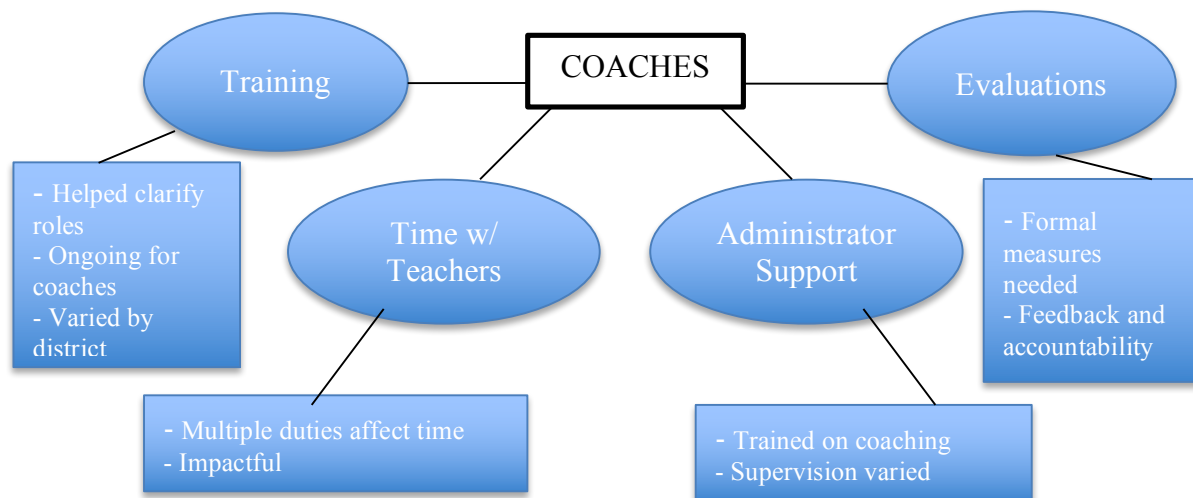
Figure 3. Summary of themes from the focus group data.

Narrative Analysis

The coaches participating in the narrative seminar are identified in this analysis as CA, CB, and CC. Each coach represented a different school district and had varying years of experience from 3 years up to 5 years. The narratives ranged between 10 to 15 minutes depending on the information the instructional coaches wanted to share. The three instructional coaches who participated in the narrative seminar represented three different districts. These coaches were asked to respond to a broad, general prompt for their narrative so as not to create a

bias in any particular direction and they could choose which aspects of their experiences to share. The researcher told the coaches they could ask for clarification of the prompt prior to beginning their narrative, however none of them did. Each coach was asked to give their narrative individually, with no other coaches present in the room. The narratives were conducted away from their districts at a local professional development center of another school district. See Appendix C for the prompt.

Research Question 1 data. This section represents the response data from the three narratives in response to Research Question 1: What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

This first question pertains to the types of practices that occur within school districts to support instructional coaches in their work. These practices can include professional development for instructional coaches, how instructional coaches access teachers (including guidelines and processes for approaching teachers), and other job duties they are expected to perform. From the narratives, three themes pertaining to practices emerged:

- Lack of clarity of the coaching role

- Changes in responsibilities

- Relationships with administrators

The first theme that emerged was a lack of clarity of the coaching role. All three coaches had varied experiences with how they began coaching in their current district. One coach began her coaching experience with limited knowledge of what the coaching role was but two of the coaches, while understanding the role of the coach, were placed into a job role in which they had limited experience, therefore they were unclear of the expectations in their new roles. CA explained how she moved from a literacy interventionist to a math instructional coach.

I started off on a campus as a reading interventionist for early literacy . . . a district position came open that was geared toward math coaching and I really wanted experience as a coach, so I decided to apply for it even though it wasn't in a content area of my expertise. As I went through my first year, my first year was really hard. I spent a lot of time being anxious because I didn't know the math and like having to study . . . and guide teachers when I was learning myself - so I did a lot of prep and studying.

CB stepped into her current role with no experience as an instructional coach and was

intrigued by the opportunity to use her experience to help other teachers. With limited

understanding, CB described her experience.

I did not really know what the role encompassed. We had a job description when we were hired but that very first year, it was something very different and very innovative in our district and so I really felt like we built the meaning and capacity of that role over time.

CC had prior experience as a coach in another district in another state but found initially,

there was quite a bit to learn about her new role since her prior experience as a coach had been as

a district based coach and this was her first experience as a campus based coach.

I moved to the [current] district as a teacher and because I had coaching experience, they interviewed me on July 30th and I started working on August 2nd as an instructional coach. So it was immediate and I had no knowledge or help so it was hit the ground running.

As the coaches went further into their narratives, they shared more about their roles. CC

shared the struggle of moving into a role that she was not familiar with. "I would say the first

few months were drowning because there were not necessarily clear expectations of what the

coaching role looks like because it's so customized to the campus." CA explained her lack of

content knowledge needed to change and she created the clarity that she needed to be successful

in her role. "Because I did not know a lot about math, I really sought out teachers who were

strong math teachers so that I could learn beside them - that was my first strategy."

CB struggled with guilt because she was involved in a new coaching model that was being introduced in her district. She shared her experience as a campus based coach in this new coaching model.

> Teachers were not very familiar with that role . . . so I really think a lot of my initial job description and the important part of my job at the beginning stages was educating teachers on what my role was. At first, I felt guilty. I was like, you know, what am I supposed to do? What does a typical day look like?

The three coaches shared that they had to make meaning of their roles as they worked. As they got more comfortable in their roles, each one of them experienced a change in responsibilities due to a variety of circumstances ranging from school rating changes to campus principal changes.

The second theme that emerged from the narratives was the change in responsibilities. Changes provided these coaches the opportunities to reflect on their work and adapt quickly. CA explained a shift in her responsibilities when one of the campuses she worked on was given a state mandate to improve.

> The problem was the second year; one of those campuses went *improvement required* and they did not meet their standards and so then my job changed drastically and I was pretty much . . . everything kind of went into this intense like, "we have to fix this problem." I was put with one team on one campus . . . the team had three first year teachers and one second year teacher . . . so it was like starting at the bottom trying to get them to perform at really high levels at a really quick pace. Yeah, it was very different than my first year. It was really intense.

CB explained how the coaching made her change who she was as an individual and that change affected how she focused on her work and shifted her responsibilities. "It's really taking the time to get to know my teachers, get to know my audience, and then really what their needs are. That took a lot of listening and I'm an action person; I like doing things."

CC had the experience of working in a new state as an instructional coach her first year but as she settled into her second year, she was faced with changes in her responsibilities due to a change in campus leadership.

> I was so excited last spring . . . I've been through the year. I know what next year looks like. I was super-excited, made the plans, and then both our principal and assistant principal retired. I was pulled off campus for the first two weeks before teachers reported . . . so they became a fast team and started creating new plans and I would hear about them as we were starting to implement them. It made for a challenging start to the year. My role got shifted somewhat but it wasn't really clear when it was getting shifted until after the fact.

Faced with the challenge of a shift in responsibilities prompted instructional coaches to reassess their roles and build a new clarity around what they needed to do. CC articulated the struggle many coaches face when in transition.

> That piece was missing in terms of no clarity around what were our campus priorities and kind of no clarity of my role in implementing things on the campus. All that excitement and momentum that I thought I had going into this year was changed. Once again, I just went back to the same thing I did the previous year.

CC focused on the successes she had in her previous year as a coach in order to feel a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

The third theme that emerged from the narrative involved the importance of coaches developing relationships with administrators. CC's experience with a new administrator brought out a focus on the roles administrators play when it comes to working with coaches. CC explained the importance of a coach having a relationship with their administrator.

> When a coach doesn't have a strong relationship with their administrator, it makes it a challenge because the administrator is what helps support that perceived authority that you have, whether you have an authority as a content expert or the teacher realizing that they need to work on something that has become a campus initiative.

CA shared how, after dealing with a shift in her role due to campus priorities, her campuses experienced the introduction of two new principals, which caused her to reflect on

building relationships with the new administrators. "I've kind of gone back to that balance [in my third year] because . . . both schools have had new administrators – learning how to work with them what they view my role as and what my part is at their schools." One coach acknowledged when administrator support was evident. CB shared an experience with administrator support. "We actually had our administrators in the room with us during the very beginning and I think that was crucial. That relationship played a part as I was on a particular campus."

The data revealed relationships between coaches and administrators affect the work that a coach does. These coaches demonstrated how the relationship can impact how a coach feels about their work and as well as how they approach their work.

Research Question 2 data. The following section represents the response data from the three narratives in response to Research Question 2: What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

This question pertains to the impact the coaches are having on teacher's instructional practice. From the narrative responses, two themes emerged:

- Coaches perceive their work with teachers as a positive experience
- Coaches experience professional growth from working with teachers

The first theme that emerged from the narratives involved the positive experiences of working with teachers. CB spoke of coaching success in general examples and how they have grown her as a coach. CA and CC shared the impact of their work with teachers.

CA shared her experience with the new team of teachers on one particular campus. That campus was faced with the task of improving instruction for student outcomes. CA described

her approach to coaching this group of teachers and the sense of pride she received from doing so.

> I kept focusing on, with that team, was the students and their performance because it was really easy for those teachers to feel beat down and stressed by the situation. I really tried. . . . We have to keep looking at data, we have to keep responding to get data, and keep making these changes. At the end of the year, it was amazing to see this team really grow . . . watching them work as a team. I can see, like, my thumbprint . . . and it's going to impact a lot of classes.

CC described work with a fourth grade team with a new set of teachers that needed support and even described what some teachers have said about her coaching help.

> I've been a part of that team the entire year, helping them write plans, helping them implement, going into classrooms . . . I picked the teams and the people I knew were struggling or had to change. I would say that if you asked some teachers, I'm like a lifeline for them. If you ask other teachers, they're like, "Oh, she's great! She brings great resources."

While the coaches were aware of the study's focus, they were not asked to specifically describe a time they worked successfully with teachers. The narrative prompt asked them to share experiences both positive and negative and yet, all three coaches described their coaching work with teachers as positive.

A second theme, which emerged, involved how coaches grow professionally as a result of working with teachers. CB shared her coaching experience through a general example and how her experience with teachers has induced her own professional growth.

> I feel like in this role, more than ever, I really feel like we are, I don't know if the right word is developed, but I feel like . . . the more interactions I have with teachers, the more confident I get. By no means am I at the end when I say my confidence has grown.

CB also shared there is more growth that awaits her but even while sharing general information about working with teachers, she focused on her growth as a coach. In addition, CA ended her narrative by acknowledging how it helped her realize how she has grown as a coach.

Really getting to know the teachers I'm working with and fitting who they are into what they need, I guess that's basically my experience. Now that I've said it out loud, I feel like I've learned a lot in three years.

CC ended her narrative and her work with teachers and the challenges with new administration helped her come to a realization about her own coaching.

I felt that I supported them in their roles. I think there's a lot of good things I've done and now that it's testing season, my Aps are definitely seeing the value of my experience from last year . . . now it's in a better place.

Research Question 3 data. The following section represents the response data from the three narratives in response to Research Question 3: How are instructional coaches evaluated?

This question focused on how coaches are evaluated in their districts, whether formally or informally. While the three coaches did not specifically discuss evaluations, indirectly, one theme emerged from their responses:

- Self-reflection as a form of evaluation

The theme that emerged from the narrative responses was coaches using self-reflection as a form of evaluation for their own professional growth. All three coaches describe reflecting on their own work in order to continue their own growth. CA described her thoughts on how she uses self-reflection in her coaching to make decisions for the following year.

This year has been about finding the balance in my coaching . . . going through that cycle and really being self-reflective. I always have to be looking at myself and thinking, "What can I do that's different or better for these teachers . . . so we can make it better for the students?" So this year has been a lot about refining my coaching and differentiating my coaching.

CB shared how she sets goals for herself based on experiences as well as conversations with administrators.

What has been exciting, I've been able to set goals for me personally as a coach and some of that is based on what I feel like I need to work on or need to improve, and some of that is also in conversations with my administrator when I was on a campus, and with my director when I was in a more wider coaching role.

CC had no choice but to self-reflect in order to get through the challenge of facing a new campus in a new state and then the change into her second year with new administrators. Campus decisions being made caused her to readjust her approach as a coach.

> I started doing my initial beginning of the year stuff for the RTI process and they're [administrators] like, "Why are you doing that?" and "You're not going to be involved in that this year." and I'm like, "okay." I just went back to the same thing I did the previous year - find the new teachers on campus.

CC had to change her approach with this new administration and gain traction where she could.

Each coach used self-reflection to gain a better understanding of their current situations to make decisions moving forward. Self-reflection can be viewed as a form of informal evaluation that supports professional growth for coaches.

Research Question 4 data. The following section represents the response data from the three narratives in response to Research Question 4: What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

This question identifies working conditions that need to be present for coaches to feel supported so that they may perform work that is effective and purposeful. The coach's narrative responses reflected their general impression of their work. From the narrative responses, three themes emerged:

- The need for clarity of the coaching role
- The impact training has on coaching
- Administrator support

The first theme that emerged from the responses was the need for clarity of the coaching role. As a teacher transitioning to instructional coaching, CB described her lack of understanding going into the role.

I did not really know what the role encompassed . . . I really felt like we built the meaning and the capacity of that role over time . . . I was like, cause you know, "What am I supposed to do? What does a typical day look like?"

As a literacy interventionist, CA had some sort of experience with coaching even though she was not being called a coach. She explained the challenge she faced moving into a coaching role that was content specific.

I was doing some coaching and then a district position came open that was geared toward math coaching, but I really wanted more experience as a coach. They happened to be looking for people who, they were looking more for instructional coaching. Like at the time, our district was looking for some of those coaching partnerships; where you're really going to be a partner and collaborate with teachers. So that's how I ended up getting the job, because I kind of fit the profile they wanted and they figured they could teach me the content.

Earlier in this analysis, CA had mentioned how much she struggled the first year as a math coach as she walked into meetings and guided teachers while she was learning their content therefore creating anxiety for her. She had a critical missing piece, the content, and she had to create clarity on her own.

CC revealed being new to the role, not as an instructional coach, but as a new coach on a campus, she was unsure of what she was supposed to do.

There were not necessarily clear expectations of what the coaching role looks like because it's so customized to the campus . . . It made it kind of a challenge to really be in a role as a coach with individual teachers and being brand new to the state and to the campus.

CC even faced the challenge of clarifying her role in her second year on the campus when new administrators took over the campus and she found herself in the same place again. "That piece was missing in terms of no clarity around what were campus priorities and kind of no clarity of my role in implementing things on the campus." CCs experience brought to light the need for coaches to have someone clarify coaching roles, duties, and expectations. That may look

different for coaches who are on campuses than coaches who are deployed from district offices or administrative buildings.

The second theme that emerged was the need for training. The data implied training that teaches coaches how to coach and incorporates how coaches navigate their buildings, approach teachers to coach, and other structural pieces are also necessary to support the work of coaches.

All three coaches mentioned the value of training in some capacity. CA mentioned the training experience that her district provided her.

> Like at the time, our district was really going towards Jim Knight's model. . . . We would use Jim Knight's reflection sheet, set a goal, and then work on that. It was really beautiful and organic how it worked.

CA continued to share the realities that she encountered in which she had to approach her coaching differently when she was faced with a campus that was state mandated to improve. She explained how this changed the way she looked at coaching and the training she received.

> I think when I first started I was idealistic and maybe naive about coaching. I was really bright-eyed and I wanted to do everything like Jim Knight does but I feel like I'm a little jaded coming out on the other side of that "improvement required" experience. It's a very beautiful thing when you work with teachers who are ready for that kind of coaching . . . going through that cycle and really being self-reflective, but the truth is, there are a lot of teachers who are in that [improvement] position and the coaching has to look a lot different.

CAs view on coaching shed light on the pressures coaches may face when working in challenging situations. She may not have realized that looking at data and continuing to make changes, as mentioned earlier in the analysis, does in fact follow that coaching cycle, which was part of her training. The intensity of the situation caused her to feel as if she changed her coaching approach, thereby making her feel that she had abandoned the coaching training she received.

CB spoke of various training her district provided and how it supported her growth and

helped her establish some clarity about her new role.

> When I speak of coaching training, we had Jim Knight's model the very first year. It really kind of set this stage. I think it built some capacity within me as far as what are some things I need to do in my role with administrators. How does that look together?

CB even spoke of a shift in the type of training coaches received in her district to support

coaching at a deeper level.

> We moved into Results Coaching and we had that training for two years. It was   kind of a different side or different piece of training. I had some trouble melding the two together . . . It becomes more defined and I'm starting to see the benefits of having both those trainings.

> CC described the training in her current district being received at a time that she learning

her new campus in a new state.

> At the same time, those first three months, I was also going through Results Coaching training and I did eight days of coaching training in two months. It was super intense and so it was almost hard to put it into practice because it was such a blur at the same time that I was learning everything else.

In CCs case, little could be done because of the timing of her hire but indicated that the timing of

training can affect its implementation.

The third theme that emerged from the responses surrounded administrator support. All

three coaches discussed how administrators support coaches, both positively and negatively. The

stories that had negative undertones came from the coaches describing either a lack of support

from the administrator or a change in administrator on a campus. The lack of support from an

administrator can come from the administrator being unaware of the coach's role and even from

being overwhelmed with the magnitude that entails leading and managing a campus. CA shared

how she felt about a change in campus principals.

> I cannot let what's going on in administration . . . affect my coaching. So what's interesting this year, principals have changed on both campuses. So both campuses are

going through a shift and learning their new administrator and me learning how to work with new administrators and how they view my role and what my part is at their school.

This coach described the challenges faced as they figure out how they fit into a new administrative regime. Administrator support can come in the form of involving administrators in coach's trainings. CB spoke of how she felt when her administrator took part in a coaching training. "We had our administrators in the room with us . . . I think that was crucial. That relationship played a part as I was on a particular campus." CB also spoke of her own professional growth being influenced by conversations with campus and district level administration.

> What I feel like I need to work on or need to improve . . . some of that is also based on conversations with my administrator when I was on a campus and with my director when I was in a more wider coaching role. So I really appreciated the opportunities to seek those types of learning . . . I think that has empowered me to continue to hone my skills.

This data revealed when administrators take part in conversations with coaches and have established a relationship, the coach feels empowered and more confident in their job. Earlier in this analysis, CC described how not having a relationship with administrators creates a challenge for coaches, especially in understanding their role on the campus.

> When a coach doesn't have a strong relationship with their administrator, it makes it a challenge . . . both of them were brand new at their roles . . . I had never met the new principal until I reported for work. It made for a challenging start to the year.

The message from three narratives revealed how administrator support can impact the work of the coach and how coaches perceive themselves. In addition, the responses indicated coaches continue to make efforts to be successful even when the administrative support is not present in the way they need it to be.

Summary of the Narrative Responses

Further examination through a secondary analysis revealed four major themes. The themes emerged after re-examining the collective themes from the narrative responses of all the research questions. These themes provide an overall summary of the narrative response data:

- Clarity of the coaching role

- Time with teachers

- Training

- Administrator support

For the first major theme, clarity of the coaching role, the data revealed training is needed for coaches to build clarity of the coaching role they are in, however that is structured. Coaches, to clarify their roles, used self-reflection.

The second major theme involved working with teachers. The data revealed coaches viewed their work with teachers as a positive and impactful experience. Furthermore, the responses revealed coaches experienced professional growth each time they worked with a teacher.

The third major theme involved the training the coaches received. The data revealed some training helped them build clarity about the coaching role but the self-reflection involved in their evaluations supported their own personal growth and served as a form of training.

The fourth major theme involved administrator support. The data revealed the relationships the coaches had with administrators influenced their work and the general support of administrators help coaches in the work they do. Figure 4 illustrates the four major themes that emerged after a secondary analysis of the collective themes of the narrative responses to all the research questions.
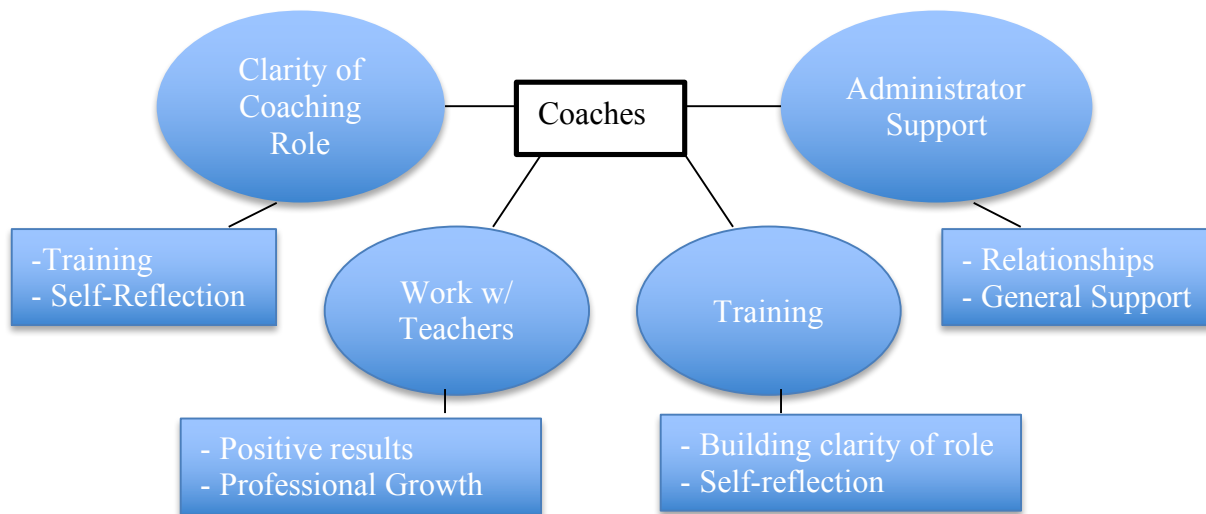
Figure 4. Summary of themes from the narrative responses data.

Individual Interviews Analysis

The coaches participating in the individual interview are also identified in this analysis as CA, CB, and CC since they are the same coaches that participated in the narratives. Each coach represented a different school district and had varying years of experience from 3 years up to 5 years. After each coach gave their narrative, they were asked eight interview questions that were constructed to align to the four research questions. These interview questions were also developed with consideration of the seven factors for success that determine what conditions are present when there is the perception of effective coaching (J. Knight, 2016). The individual interviews of the three coaches ranged between 15 and 30 minutes each. See Appendix D for the individual interview questions.

Research Question 1 data. This section represents the response data from the three individual interviews in response to Research Question 1: What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

This first question pertains to the types of practices that occur within school districts to support instructional coaches in their work. These practices can include professional development for instructional coaches, how instructional coaches access teachers (including guidelines and processes for approaching teachers), and other job duties they are expected to perform. Questions 1 and 2 pertained to this research question. From the individual interviews of the three coaches, two recurring themes emerged:

- Coaching training varies by district

- Time with teachers is valuable

The first theme that emerged from the answers to the interview questions is the type of coaching training varied by district. All three coaches shared the type of training they received. Two of the three coaches mentioned being trained in Jim Knight's coaching training where they learned about the coaching cycle and two of the three coaches mentioned participating in Results Coaching.

CA discussed the training that she received and how her district incorporates training throughout the year. "Our district sent us to the Teaching Learning Coaching Conference with Jim Knight. We also have regular coaches meetings or like, little staff developments built into those." CA shared how her district coaches' meetings offered opportunities to learn coaching strategies and practices as well. CB shared her training was different from the first year to the second year of coaching. "I received the Jim Knight model training for instructional coaching, that was my first year, and then the second year, we moved into the Results Coaching model and did that for two years."

CC did not receive any formal training until she moved into her current district and then received the Results Coaching training. She described the training opportunities she received.

I would say in my coaching role, I didn't receive a lot when I first became one [coach]. We had an outside consultant who worked with our district . . . we were a "needs improvement" district and so they did some training for coaches but it wasn't specific coaching training.

CC mentioned being a teacher facilitator, prior to becoming an instructional coach, and had been involved in several in-house trainings in her district on how to lead and work with adults. This experience involved coaching teachers however when I recognized it as coaching, CC shared her thoughts.

Really, I was, but it was just on the side. That experience definitely is what leveraged me into having that [coaching] as a full-time role in my district. Before I became a full-time coach, I was actually leading the social studies after school training for all the middle school teachers in our district.

The training varied by districts and coaches did not mention any particular training being better than another.

The second recurring theme indicated the time coaches spend coaching teachers is valuable to the coach. Two coaches specifically spoke of how their work with teachers tends to parlay into more coaching, therefore adding value to their work. CB explained that the more time she spent with teachers, whether in PLCs or one on one, the more coaching opportunities came from those sessions.

Tickets are teachers that request assistance. I noticed that I have more tickets the more experience I have and the more people get to know my role. I feel that has increased over the past three years. Occasionally, tickets will come out of PLCs. I might mention something and they might want follow up or want to know more.

CC expressed how she enjoyed working with teachers but would prefer to spend more time with them. She discussed the stigma that coach's face when it comes to getting teachers to want coaching. "That perception that you fight against if you're working with me - it's because you need help and, unfortunately, that's been reinforced by primarily working with teachers new on campus or teachers everybody knows who are struggling."

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CC explained that she wanted to spend more time working with teachers so she began to approach a different group of teachers in order to establish more coaching opportunities.

> I really started to look for opportunities that would push me into some of the best classrooms of some of the best teachers on campus. So I went and taught in some of their classrooms and they would tell others so that kind of spread.

The data showed these coaches wanted to spend time with teachers and saw value come out of the time spent in the form of developing additional coaching opportunities.

Research Question 2 data. This section represents the response data from the three individual interviews corresponding to Research Question 2: What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

This question pertains to the impact the coaches are having on teacher's instructional practice. With Questions 3 and 4, I examined how the coaches feel they are impacting teachers and which coaching practices coaches used to affect outcomes when working with teachers. Two recurring themes emerged from the interview responses:

- Impact can be quantitatively and qualitatively assessed
- Coaching training affects how coaches coach

The first recurring theme involved the measuring of coaching impact on teachers being assessed both in quantitative and qualitative ways. All three coaches spoke about recognizing changes in the classrooms of teachers that they work with as opportunities to determine if their coaching has been impactful but leaned mainly on qualitative examples. Two coaches, CA and CB described the use of quantitative measures for determining impact. CA described a more general feel for recognizing the impact of her coaching. "For me, I look at the student success and what's happening in the classrooms. Like, am I seeing those shifts and changes and then are we seeing it and how the students are performing."

CB mentioned that while most of her experiences with assessing her impact comes in the form of qualitative experiences, she has had the opportunity to see impact in the form of numerical data. She explained what that looked like.

> A couple of years ago, we looked at scores of kids that didn't pass the year before to kids that passed. But we also looked specifically at kids who passed but the next year got commended. We saw that our data showed that the teachers we had coached had a higher percentage of that.

CC shared that she can see her impact when a teacher approaches her and is excited about support her coaching provided. CC acknowledged her experiences are mainly anecdotal but discussed how a campus survey that was sent to staff allowed her to acquire quantitative evidence.

> When we did a quarterly one [survey] to measure the effectiveness of the campus and I put myself in there as a line item. I added, "Learning liaison has provided effective support for me." Those responses were usually *strongly agree* or *agree* about 70% of the time. On a campus that size, that was pretty good and that went out not to just teachers but paraprofessionals.

All three coaches found a way to assess the impact of their work. Whether qualitative or quantitative, coaches were definitely looking for ways to measure their work and their impact on instructional practice.

The second recurring theme indicated coaches use the skills and practices that they learn in coaching training. All three coaches mentioned how they have utilized the practices they learned in trainings to coach teachers. Two of the coaches specifically spoke of Jim Knight's coaching cycle as a method they used for coaching teachers. CA described the cycle when she works with teachers.

> You start with the debrief or what you're going to set your goals on. If I'm able to video or have a conversation where we might try to assess where the current reality is and really lay out a plan and then kind of taking checkpoints [to reflect]. That's what I typically try to follow.

CB also described the coaching cycle as a practice when working with teachers.

> I listen to their reality . . . help them set a goal . . . that's measurable. We start that coaching cycle. I come back and observe the classroom and then actually look for the data and present the data to the teacher and then have the teacher reflect on his or her practice.

CB added when reflection is grounded in data, it takes judgment out of the coaching and puts it in the hands of the teacher; essentially, giving teachers ownership of their own growth. CC shared how uses two practices she learned from her Results Coaching training to coach teachers. She described those practices.

> Results Coaching training was actually really helpful for me. I use the guiding questions to help teachers kind of suggest their own solutions. The other is the "assume positive intent." I mean, sometimes, people are just so ingrained or they're not in a great place - let's assume positive intent. This could be what they're asking for. They just didn't quite know how to ask for it.

The data reflected coaches using techniques and practices of their coaching training that they apply regularly when coaching teachers.

Research Question 3 data. The following section represents the response data from the three individual interviews corresponding to Research Question 3: How are instructional coaches evaluated?

This question focused on how coaches are evaluated in their districts, whether formally or informally. Using Questions 5 and 6, I examined how coaches are evaluated, by whom they are evaluated, and how they establish goals to evaluate their work. From the interview responses, two recurring themes emerged:

- Self-reflection as a form of evaluation

- Administrators influence goals

The first recurring theme in the interview responses regarded the process of self-reflection to construct goals that can be used to evaluate progress. All coaches spoke of the

process in how they are evaluated beginning with setting goals for themselves. The data

revealed coaches focused more on the process of self-reflection rather than focusing on the

formality of their evaluations. All three coaches developed goals by reflecting on the practices

from the previous year and sharing and adjusting those goals with the support of their

supervisors or administrators. CA discussed her approach to setting her coaching goals for the

year.

> So a lot of the goals that I set this year were based on data at both of my schools to see if there was a pattern . . . something I could address through coaching. The other thing I looked at was the teachers that I was working with . . . and what I wanted to improve in my coaching.

CB also shared how she uses self-reflection several times throughout the year to make

adjustments.

> When I'm at a conference or a place as I get some additional training, there's pockets throughout the year and I get excited about something. It definitely makes me refer back to my goals and reevaluate. Again, a lot of self-reflection throughout the year as I work on my goals.

CC mentioned that she reflects on the year and pulls evidence as a type of documentation of her

work to share with others if she needs to.

> If it's something that I want to remember what I did because . . . I want to have kind of documentation on that so then I can speak to what I do . . . I have an evidence folder so I constantly have a reflective conversation.

> The second recurring theme that emerged involved coaches working with administrators

and how those conversations influence goals. All three coaches shared the process of their

evaluations and shared how administrators give them feedback. CA shared her supervising

administrator looks for evidence of growth that has to be provided by the coach. "She doesn't

really ever come out to watch me coach or anything like that. It's based on goals that we set and

then we provide artifacts that show our growth or progress towards that goal."

CA continued to discuss an additional content administrators input to help her develop goals. "The math coordinator is the person that leads our team meetings, so she will give feedback and suggestions." The two other coaches had similar experiences with the involvement of administrators in their goal setting. CB explained how her content administrator supports her in the development of her yearly goals. "My director of content has that initial conversation with me. It's been a great relationship . . . she is definitely a listener but she is one that can help take my ideas . . . help me pull them down into something we can see." CC also spoke of working with an administrator to reflect on her work and develop goals. She explained how the campus plan that is established by her principal helps her identify goals.

> I look at what the campus needs are and if there's one that's been identified by the
> principal, then I know that's my piece. I can identify areas and set goals . . . for my work
> with individual teachers.

The data showed administrator feedback supports coaches in the development of their goals.

Research Question 4 data. The following section represents the response data from the three individual interviews in response to Research Question 4: What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

This question identifies working conditions that need to be present for coaches to feel supported so they may perform work that is effective and purposeful. Questions 7 and 8 pertained to coaching effectiveness and when coaches perceive themselves to be most effective. Through the interview responses, one recurring theme emerged:

● Qualitative measures mainly determined effectiveness

The recurring theme in the responses indicated that coaches rely on feelings and experiences to determine the effectiveness of their coaching. CC spoke openly about the challenges of quantifying coaching effectiveness.

I'm a person who really goes by feeling . . . I'd like there to be more quantitative as well to back it up but it's hard . . . You don't even know how your teachers do on their evaluations; that's all private. So you have to almost measure your effectiveness through how you feel about your interactions. I don't know a good answer for it.

CA spoke to the general perception of recognizing her effectiveness.

I had to learn early in this job that you have to define your successes a little differently. It's just a little more ambiguous. If I see those shifts or changes in the teacher or sometimes, it's just a conversation; like I had a really productive collaborative conversation with somebody that resulted in a change or an action. It's looking at the small moments that add up to bigger moments, I guess.

CB mentioned that coaching effectiveness is challenging to measure because it is reliant on someone else's data to determine growth.

I think it's kind of non-tangible, if that's the word . . . so definitely some areas I'd like to look at to grow but I kind of just measure it, you know. How do my teachers feel that I'm coaching? Do they feel more self-confident or are their scores better? If their effectiveness is increasing then I feel like my effectiveness as a coach increased, if that makes sense.

All three coaches described how they have looked and listened for evidence that their coaching was successful. They related these times as making them effective as a coach. CC shared a story of a first year teacher that struggled with classroom management.

I didn't know if she was going to even make it through the year . . . but with a lot of reminders and guidance [about building relationships] . . . I remember seeing her in the hallway when her students were coming in and she was talking to each one as they walked in the door. I was just like, "She's getting it." That was a real one.

CB felt she felt most effective as a coach when teachers reach out to her to be part of a group she put together that reflects on teaching practices. "They are teachers that are seeking out that group. It's not something that's forced so those teachers that seek out that growth, that's been the most exciting for me because not all of them are as reflective as others." CA said she felt most effective when she not only sees student engagement but teacher engagement as well.

"When you see everything working in the classroom. It all just kind of comes together, that's when I think it's successful."

The responses indicated when the coaches were asked specifically to share how they determined if their coaching was effective and when they felt most effective, the coaches relied on qualitative measures to convey their effectiveness.

Summary of the Individual Interview Responses

Further examination through a secondary analysis revealed three major themes. The themes emerged after re-examining the themes from the individual interview responses of all the research questions. These themes provide an overall summary of the individual interview response data:

- Time with teachers

- Training coaches receive

- Evaluations

The first major theme was time with teachers. The responses revealed time with teachers would add more coaching opportunities and multiple duties kept coaches away from working with teachers.

The second major theme was training. The responses indicated training is varied from district to district and coaches received different types of training. The responses further indicated coaching techniques have been applied to their work with teachers and is therefore valuable to the coaches.

The third major theme was evaluation of coaches. The responses revealed evaluations use self-reflection as a way to establish goals for coaching. In addition, the data revealed coaches often receive qualitative feedback about their work and administrators influenced their

coaching goals. Figure 5 illustrates three major and subset themes that emerged after a secondary analysis from the individual interview responses to all the research questions.
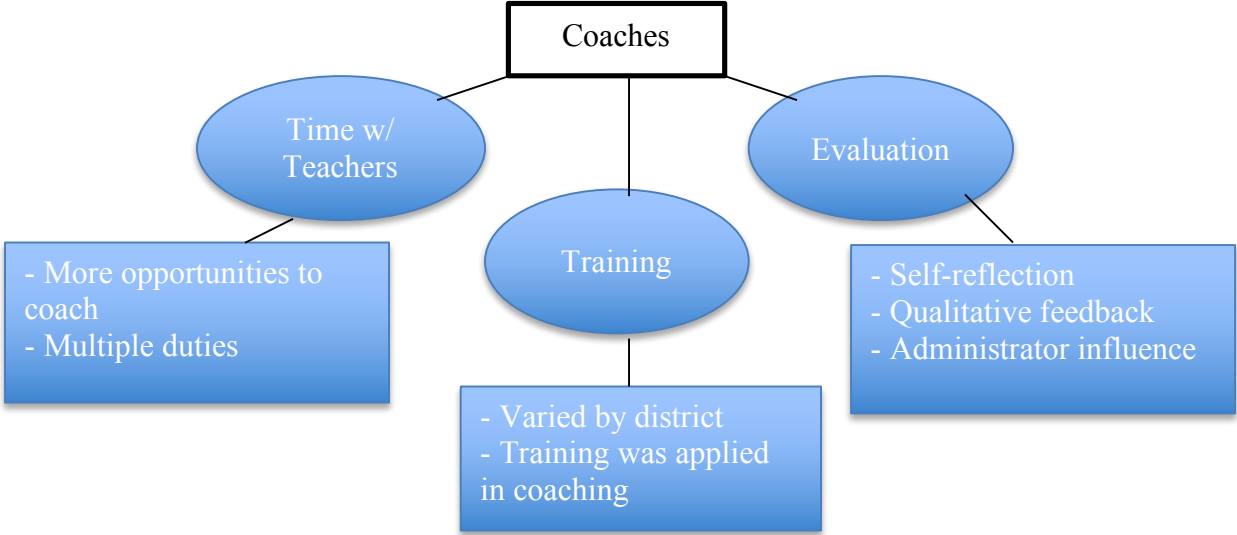
Coaches

Time w/ Teachers

Training

Evaluation

- More opportunities to coach
- Multiple duties

- Varied by district
- Training was applied in coaching

- Self-reflection
- Qualitative feedback
- Administrator influence

Figure 5. Summary of themes from individual interview data.

Summary of the Data Analysis

The data collected in this study consisted of one focus group interview with five coaches, three narrative seminars with three coaches, and face-to-face interviews with the same three coaches involved in the narrative seminars. The participants were all instructional coaches from schools and districts around the DFW metroplex. The coaches were both district and campus based instructional coaches. All interview and narrative responses were used to answer Research Questions 1-4. The responses addressed the practices that support the work of coaches, the impact coaches have on teacher's practice, the way coaches are evaluated, and the conditions that must occur for coaches to feel effective in their work. A secondary analysis of the data revealed a summary of major themes. These themes emerged from the collective themes initially revealed from the responses of the coaches in each of the data methods. Themes included information on the clarity of the coaching role through training of coaches; the

time coaches spend with teachers; the administrator support they need to receive; and the evaluation of coaches and their work.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter includes an overview of the study, a summary of the findings, and a discussion of the findings and recommendations for district leaders. This chapter also includes implications for actions, connections to the conceptual framework, recommendations for further research, and the conclusion.

Overview of the Study

In this section, I introduce the focus of the study, including the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Additionally, I review the methodology.

Problem Statement

There has been an increase in the number of instructional coaching roles and structured coaching models (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Instructional coaching is considered a reform-type of professional development that often leads to active participation from teachers to incite change, rather than teachers passively receiving information (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). A coaching model's success is reliant on the instructional coaches within these structures. Insight into the types of support coaches receive can help determine if that support is providing coaches the tools to feel effective in their coaching work. District leaders are aware of the need to provide instructional coaches with support and training but may also be unclear as to what extent (Stock & Duncan, 2010). The problem of the study was to determine what practices and conditions were needed to be present for coaches to feel effective in their work with teachers.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of how coaches perceive their own effectiveness when it comes to working with teachers. In this study, I examined district practices and conditions that influenced the work of coaches, as well as identified how coaches perceived the impact and effectiveness of their work. In addition, I examined how coaches are evaluated. Four questions were used to guide the study and participant's responses were connected to these questions to determine conclusions.

1. What practices support the work of an instructional coach?

2. What is the impact of instructional coaches' work on teacher practice?

3. How are instructional coaches evaluated?

4. What conditions must occur for instructional coaches to feel effective in their work?

Review of Methodology

This phenomenological qualitative study consisted of three data methods in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of the instructional coaches so the multiple methods of data collection provided cross-data validity checks (Patton, 1999). A focus group interview, a narrative seminar, and an individual interview were used to collect data responses from eight instructional coaches who had various levels of experience and came from different school districts. A discussion of the findings through the data analysis of the participant responses to the four research questions is in the next section.

Summary of Findings

This section is divided into four parts based on the research questions. Within those four divisions are subsections based on the themes that emerged from a secondary analysis of the collective responses of the three different research methods.

Research Question 1

Regarding the practices that support the work of an instructional coach, the responses from the focus group interview, the narrative seminars, and the individual interviews revealed the coaches felt there were four critical practices important to supporting the work of coaches. These practices include: (a) clarity of the coaching role, (b) training of coaches, (c) administrator training and support, and (d) time with teachers. However, the responses revealed the way these practices have been handled, in the districts the participants represent, were not the most conducive to high quality coaching work. The coaches spoke in depth about what was occurring in their districts and how developing these practices would provide a solid foundation for incoming coaches.

Clarity of the coaching role. The data revealed instructional coaching at its core is similar across all campuses and districts when it comes to the work done with teachers. The expectations and responsibilities, however, differ from campus to campus. Coaches' responses indicated that most coaches went into their current coaching role with little to no understanding of what was expected of them. All of them understood the concept of coaching and its purpose but failed to understand how to navigate their roles on campuses, such as how to begin working with teachers, how often, and in what capacity. Many of them expressed they had other duties assigned to them, which caused confusion as to how to proceed in their roles. When pulled away from actual coaching due to their other duties, they expressed it challenged their thinking of their coaching role. All of the coaches, in some capacity, described how they had to make meaning of their role on their own and figure out how to navigate it so they felt successful in their work.

Clarifying coaching roles must be part of campus and district practices. This may mean providing new coaches with mentors or providing them with clear guidelines that outline

coaching policies that align to district beliefs. Incorporating training that provides information on how to navigate campuses, approach teachers to coach, and other structural pieces that are important to coaching can help clarify a coach's role. In addition, including administrators and teachers in some sort of coaching training can develop an understanding of the impact of coaching and how coaches can be utilized to promote instructional growth. Training can also provide clarity to brand new coaches on what coaching is and how it can support teachers.

Training for coaches. Research has shown that instructional coaches who receive training and support have the ability to provide quality embedded professional development (J. Knight, 2007). In regards to training, the coaches' responses not only supported prior research but also revealed the importance of having training in place that helps coaches understand how to navigate the coaching role. Since all of the instructional coaches had been teachers prior to coaching, they were used to working with students rather than adults. The coaches indicated it was important for districts to offer coaching training not just on the coaching process but also on how to coach adult learners. They pointed out that their personal experiences, working with colleagues, are what mainly helped them determine how to work with teachers, rather than specifically being trained on working with adult learners.

The responses also revealed coaching training varies from district to district and does not necessarily include training on the practical aspects of working as a district or campus coach. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) explained many times coaches receive training as coaching programs are being implemented, but the training may not be effective if a variety of sources are being utilized that have conflicting views on coaching. The coaches' insight on the issue was, while districts may send coaches to formal trainings, there is still a need to connect the learning from those trainings to creating a structure of expectations within the coaching models along

with a set of practices developed from trainings that coaches can use as they move forward in their coaching roles. This set of practices can be tailored to the needs of the district and could provide direction for coaches. Furthermore, timing of a training can also affect how, and if, what has been learned by the coaches, is implemented. District leaders should consider when coaches receive training so training is purposeful. District leaders may have to make decisions on training based on the needs of the individual coaches or the needs of a particular campus.

Through the coaches' responses, I discovered that the training coaches received became part of their coaching practice when working with teachers. Coaches shared how they coached teachers and frequently mentioned using the coaching cycle (J. Knight et al., 2015). It became clear that coaches implemented what they learned in their trainings and applied it to their work with teachers. The coaches also indicated training needed to be ongoing, provided trainings were about the coaching process. This would allow them to continue to hone their skills and even develop new practices.

Administrator training and support. The data revealed the importance of having administrators trained on what coaching is and how coaching will be structured in the district. Coaches frequently spoke of administrators' lack of awareness of what coaches do and found that many times, coaches were the ones giving administrators information about coaching and coaching structures. Stock and Duncan (2010) emphasized the importance of administrators serving as mentors to instructional coaches. If administrators are not trained in understanding what coaching is, they may not be effective support for instructional coaches.

One of the seven factors of successful coaching programs is that coaches have a support system, especially in the form of an administrator that understands coaching and can speak to the value of coaching (J. Knight, 2016). Throughout the interviews and narratives, the coaches often

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spoke of ways in which administrators were barriers rather than sources of support. When it came to administrator support, coaches indicated lack of training and understanding of coaching were cited as the main barriers. Coaches also identified lack of trust from campus administrators, administrators not honoring a coach's time, as well as the changing of campus leaders as barriers to their coaching as well.

In addition, coaches mentioned the way administrators speak about coaching tends to make teachers view coaching as a negative rather than a positive. Responses revealed coaches were often hearing administrators give directives to teachers to work with coaches. While the coaches believed this to be well-intentioned, with administrators believing it was a show of support, they cited it as a factor that hurt their ability to coach, since it caused teachers to be resentful of coaches or even avoid working with coaches altogether.

Time with teachers. When it comes to a practice that coaches felt passionate about, it was having the time to work with teachers. I found coaches understood their purpose was to improve instruction, but each coach expressed a joy that was almost palpable when they shared their experiences of working with teachers. Each time a coach spoke of their work with a teacher, it was a positive experience. When specifically asked about barriers that affect their coaching work, coaches also cited the lack of time with teachers as the second barrier when it comes to supporting coaches (the first barrier being administrators).

The interviews revealed the coaches had multiple duties and many of those duties did not involve directly coaching teachers. The duties varied from managerial type duties such as hallway monitor and keeping up websites to other duties such as leading leadership team meetings and curriculum writing. I found none of the coaches complained about the duties but simply accepted them as *part of the job*. However, they did mention these duties often take

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coaches away from working with teachers. One coach even mentioned that she gets pulled quite often for professional development on school initiatives. While she understood the value of that, she said it gets in the way of her coaching and felt her coaching time with teachers is not valued. A different coach became embarrassed to tell the focus group how little she meets with teachers due to her other duties. Through the conversations, the coaches mentioned they wanted to help schools in any way so they did not mind additional duties because they felt their help added value to those involved. However, research has shown high-quality, focused, and sustained work with teachers that coaching provides produces instructional change (Desimone et al., 2002; Teemant, 2013). Therefore giving instructional coaches fewer duties and more time with teachers can support teachers' professional growth.

Coaches getting the time to work with teachers can also create opportunities to grow larger pockets of coaching. Responses indicated word of mouth from teachers that have been coached could develop into coaches reaching more teachers. At the very least, coaches can get the opportunity to begin creating deep coaching relationships with the teachers with whom they are working. The value of the coach lies mainly in their contact with teachers. Desimone et al. (2002) found professional development, such as instructional coaching, that provides teachers the opportunity to practice specific teaching strategies, actually increases the use of those strategies in the classroom, thereby affecting students in a way that could lead to student achievement. Coaches having time to work with a teacher is significant because it would provide them the opportunity to affect student outcomes.

As the coaches navigated their shared experiences, they clearly voiced practices which would support their work and later provided a bevy of information on conditions that affect the work they do. Table 4 shows the four critical practices coaches identified as necessary to do

their work effectively and the concerns that surround those practices. The coaches' response

data can provide district leaders with insight into practices that can be used as foundational

pieces for building coaching programs that support the coaches within them. In addition, the

response data can provide district leaders the tools to evaluate their current practices to determine

if those practices are hindering the impact of instructional coaches.

Table 4

Critical Practices that Relate to Current Coaching Issues

Critical Practices	Current Coaching Issues
Clarity of Coaching Role	• Coaches entering role with lack of understanding of the role and expectations • Teachers and administrators not being included
Training for Coaches	• Coaches training varied by district and was not always thorough • Timing of trainings not always purposeful • Training is not ongoing • Training lacks practical application (navigating buildings, approaching teachers, etc.)
Administrator Training and Support	• Administrators not being included in coaching training • Administrators not trusting coaches • Administrators giving directives to teachers to work with a coach
Time with Teachers	• Coaches have other responsibilities that take them away from working with teachers • Other duties taking away time for working directly with teachers • Being assigned duties that do not involve coaching or professional development • Administrators not understanding what coaches do/not valuing coach's time

Research Question 2

The second research question involved the impact of instructional coaches' work on

teachers. The response data revealed three major areas that determine the impact of the coaches'

work: (a) coaches perceived their coaching to be impactful and positive, (b) impact was mainly qualitatively assessed, and (c) coaches professional growth develops as they spend more time with teachers.

Coaches' perceptions of impact. When it comes to determining a coach's impact on a teacher, the response data revealed all of the coaches believed they were making an impact on the teachers with whom they worked. I asked coaches in the interviews how they determined if their work was impactful and all of them were able to provide specific examples such as teachers seeking help and then coming back for further coaching, administrators noticing improved teaching practices, and teachers directly telling the coaches that working with a coach made a difference in their instruction. I found that even before asking the narrative group interview questions, they shared information about coaching impact in their stories without any prompting whatsoever.

When speaking about impact, coaches shared examples about their work. Even when sharing experiences of facing challenging teachers, the coaches spoke of their experiences positively because the outcome inevitably revealed how they impacted the teacher. This finding was also supported in the narratives. Even when sharing stories about challenging situations, the coaches described their experience in a positive way. Through the responses, I was able to ascertain that each of the coaches had developed an understanding of how to work with adult learners. J. Knight (2016) said, "Coaches can know a lot about teaching, but if they don't understand the complexities of working with adults, they might prompt others to resist what they're offering" (pp. 27-28). The coaches' examples demonstrated how they approached teachers and in what ways they supported them, even if the meeting with the coach was mandated.

Impact is qualitatively assessed. While the study was qualitative, the coaches' responses revealed they mainly use qualitative data to assess their impact. Going back to the specific examples coaches shared, all of the examples were those that were assessed through conversations shared with teachers, conversations with administrators, and visual assessments by the coach of a teacher's classroom. Only three of the eight coaches spoke specifically about wanting quantifying data on their coaching impact, yet when I asked the question directly about what their goals are when they work with a teacher, they all focused on the teachers telling them that his/her needs were met, rather than seeking quantifiable data. In one particular case, a coach that worked with teachers that were part of a "needs improvement" school, and whose students failed to meet their goals for the year, still focused on the qualitative success of her work with those teachers. She shared how they stayed positive, worked together as a team, and continued to look at data. The significance of the coaches searching for positive examples of working with teachers demonstrates that coaches may continue to look for qualitative impact even when quantitative impact is not present.

Coaches' professional growth. The response data revealed coaches believed their coaching becomes better the more time they spend with teachers. Research shows the time coaches spend working with teachers can be impactful, if focused and sustained (Shidler, 2009). However, little research has been done to determine coaching proficiency of instructional coaches with experience. When asked about how often coaches met with teachers, they shared the estimation of time, within their overall coaching, to be small in comparison to other duties (see Table 3). Yet one coach specifically referenced how she gained more confidence as she continued to coach. The other coaches spoke about their professional growth indirectly by sharing general experiences from their first year to where they are now.

The responses also revealed coaches' work with teachers affected the way they coached. I asked three coaches directly about what coaching practices they use to support their work with teachers. Two of the three coaches mentioned using the coaching cycle (J. Knight, 2016). However, four of the eight coaches described the coaching cycle overall as a process they have used with teachers and one coach even spoke specifically about adjustments she had made to her coaching because of the situation on a campus. Another coach also spoke of using specific strategies she learned through Results Coaching and how she applied them. The coaches mentioning specific coaching practices are significant because this demonstrates that coaches are implementing what they have learned in training and applying it. As they become more experienced, they are also able to adapt that learning and apply it to new situations.

Coaches' perceptions shed light on how they assess their own impact. It is important to note that when coaches spoke of their impact, it always involved teachers. Coaches mentioning their one-on-one work with teachers are significant since the coaches never spoke about teacher impact through other aspects of their role, such as creating curriculum, designing professional development for teachers, or other duties in which they serve. The coaches' responses indicated that they perceived their greatest impact to be when working one-on-one with teachers, but also revealed, in another part of the study, that their time with teachers was limited by other duties. Table 5 shows coaches' perceptions and the way they determined their impact.

Research Question 3

When coaches were asked how they were evaluated, all seven coaches shared they did not consider themselves to have any formal evaluation. McKenna, Rosenfield, and Gravois (2009) reported the importance of using a formal tool to assess if instructional coaching is being implemented with fidelity in order to determine if coaching is producing intended outcomes.

Table 5

Coaches Perceptions of Coaching Impact

Coaches Perceptions	Coaching Impact
Coaching was impactful	• Provided specific example of work with teachers • Experience with teachers, even challenging ones, was positive
Impact can be qualitatively assessed	• Teachers sharing thoughts about coaching • Administrators noticing and commenting on instructional changes in teachers • Coaches visually assessing change in classes after working with a teacher
Coaches' professional growth	• More time with teachers built coaches professional growth and confidence • Coaches applied training when working with teachers

The coaches' responses revealed the following influences that supported their evaluations: self-reflection and administrators.

Self-reflection. The responses revealed self-reflection played a large part in the way coaches set goals for themselves and how they coach teachers. The eight coaches shared how they used self-reflection to set goals. When the focus group was asked what components of their work were evaluated, all five coaches said their evaluations did not involve coaching teachers. Instead, these coaches spoke about the evaluations having to do more with goals they have shared with their administrators or campus initiative goals they were expected to meet. The coaches that participated in the individual interviews said their evaluations were based on goals they set for themselves and they self-reflected on their work to establish those goals.

Administrators. When it came to asking coaches who took part in their evaluations, all eight coaches shared they worked directly with an administrator that helped them refine goals

and talk through them. While the administrators varied in title, they were similar in that they

helped influence coaching goals, mainly through conversations with the coaches as part of the

coaches' evaluation. Coaches spoke about meeting with administrators sporadically to discuss

progress. One coach shared that she did not have an administrator evaluating her this past year

so her evaluation was a self-evaluation, however that was not the norm. Research has cautioned

on the validity of self-evaluations since participants may not always accurately report their

performance (Jobe, 2003). All of the coaches spoke about the administrators as individuals they

could share ideas with and discuss progress with. Five of the seven coaches shared they were the

ones that developed their own goals but they discussed and shared the goals with their

administrators. Table 6 shows the two major influences on coaches' evaluations and the effect

they have on a coach's evaluation.

Table 6

Influences and Effects in Coaches Evaluations

Influences	Effects on Evaluation
Self-reflections	• Coaches use to set goals for the year
Administrators	• Help develop and refine goals with coaches • Monitor progress of coaches' goals

Research Question 4

As I considered conditions that needed to occur for coaches to feel effective in their

work, I asked coaches about which resources they needed as well as what they would change

about their current job to help them feel effective. The responses revealed there were four

conditions that needed to be present to allow coaches to feel the most effective in their jobs.

Coaches indicated districts need to provide (a) a culture of training for coaches and

administrators that is ongoing,(b) administrator support of coaching, (c) accountability for

coaches that includes formal evaluations, and (d) allows for coaches to have time with teachers. Research indicated districts should frame the purpose of coaches to align with the type of training the coaches receive to create a culture of work that focuses on systemic changes; if not, coaches tend to focus on individual teacher needs rather than school or district needs (Mangin & Dunsmore, 20015).

Training for coaches and administrators that is ongoing. Through the interviews, coaches indicated they wanted training that not only developed their knowledge of coaching teachers but also provided an understanding of district processes to give them more clarity of their roles. Ongoing training was important to them as well so they could continue to hone their skills and learn how to navigate the challenges of coaching. The data also revealed the training coaches received varied by district. This could have more to do with financial resources, or the experience of district leaders with a particular type of training. The data also showed coaching training does not have to be a particular type of training, such as Jim Knight or Results Coaching, so long as the training covers how to coach adult learners.

Administrators support of coaching. Administrators' support of coaching could be developed with training mentioned above. The data implied the lack of support from an administrator could come from the administrator being unaware of the coach's role and even from being overwhelmed with the magnitude of duties required in leading and managing a campus. The data also revealed the coaches were aware of challenges new administrators face. Administrators have many points of focus that requires the coach to figure out the coaching role and how it fits into the campus regime

Accountability through formal evaluations. Coaches expressed the need for accountability of their work. The data reflected coaches were seeking quality feedback on their

coaching but rarely received it through formal evaluations. Coaches expressed that evaluations cannot resemble those of the teachers they work with and furthermore, evaluations cannot only reflect checkboxes that focus on a coaches' attendance at a campus, their work on curriculum, or their ability to follow district policy. Unlike a teacher evaluation, that is created and mandated at the state level, state mandated evaluations do not occur for those in instructional coaching roles. Evaluations of coaches are left to districts to oversee and current forms of evaluations offer no definitive way to determine if a coach is effective or not. Coaches felt formal evaluations should provide them with data on their coaching abilities so they could have an evaluation to share if a coach left one district to coach in another. As for who evaluates coaches, districts varied in that regard and coaches did not seem to mind. The data showed coaches tend to work with an administrator in some capacity when it comes to an evaluation. Clearly districts that employ a culture of formal accountability for coaches can support coaches in developing goals, analyzing their work, and providing data on the effectiveness of their coaching.

Time with teachers. The data revealed *other duties as assigned* is simply part of a coach's job description and no one coach had fewer duties than another coach. Coaches indicated they felt their time with teachers was valuable and effective but expressed their wish to have more time with teachers. They mentioned being pulled away from coaching work due to other duties that became priorities. If coaches perceive other duties as priorities over working with teachers, this can explain why coaches feel pulled away from coaching work.

When estimating time spent with teachers, these coaches expressed they worked with teachers an average of half of the time. The data implied the message coaches receive, when inundated with other work, is to shift their focus off coaching teachers so they may try to get everything accomplished. Doing this may influence their sense of effectiveness as a coach since

many of them could not quantify their coaching of teachers. The sense of accomplishment they

receive from completing other duties may help them add a quantifiable measure of their purpose.

The satisfaction they get from completing other duties is significant since multiple duties can

stifle coaches' work with teachers and influence coaches perceptions about where they should

spend their time.

The conditions established in districts might provide an opportunity for effective

coaching to take place. Table 7 shows the conditions that the coaches identified as necessary for

support of their work.

Table 7

Conditions that Surround Effective Coaching

Conditions	Support to Coaches
Culture of training for coaches and administrators that is ongoing	• Provides clarity of the coaching role • Allows for coaches to hone their skills • Provides coaches and administrators a common framework
Culture of administrator support of coaching	• Develops a relationship with coaches • Administrators do not create barriers for coaching
Culture of accountability for coaches that includes formal evaluations	• Need formal evaluations to provide coaches with data of coaching work • Allow for self-reflection • Helps develop goals for coaches
Culture that allows for coaches to have time with teachers	• Maximize one-on-one time with teachers • Limits time spent on other duties

Discussion of Findings and Recommendations for District Leaders

A discussion of the findings in this section is based on the themes presented in the

Summary of Findings according to the four research questions. The discussion of the findings

also includes recommendations for district leaders. The recommendations are supported by research from the literature review.

Research Question 1

Clarity of the coaching role. The data responses indicated a lack of clarity of coaching roles. Stock and Duncan (2010) noted district leaders are more likely to base the success of a coaching model program simply on the training and support offered. Doing this does not take into consideration coaches' efforts or their understanding of their roles, therefore, allowing the possibility of ineffective coaching. While I found all of the coaches initially struggled with understanding their role, I also found they were self-sufficient in bringing clarity to their role, especially if they did not have district leadership instructing them on how to navigate their roles. District leaders could assess coaches and their understanding of the coaching role to help build trainings that create clarity for coaches. They could also work with campus leaders to inform coaches of expectations and protocols for going onto campuses and approaching teachers. Creating expectations and protocols for coaches could help build clarity and allow for less possibility of ineffective coaching.

Training for coaches. The data responses on the practice of training coaches provide district leaders with ideas of how to strengthen their current practices when it comes to training instructional coaches. As the coaches discussed the need for initial training and on-going training as a common practice that needed to be in place, it is clear district leaders need to develop an instructional philosophy of what coaching looks like in their district and then select trainings that support that philosophy. Gallucci et al. (2010) suggested coaches need a firm foundation of training in order to become effective leaders of change.

Coaches spoke openly with me about techniques they had learned in trainings they had received. J. Knight et al. (2015) discussed the three-step coaching cycle as just one element of effective coaching programs. Many coaches in this study had been trained to use the coaching cycle. They spoke about it frequently and shared how they used it with teachers. Their responses imply that training them on coaching techniques, such as the three-step coaching cycle, is a worthwhile endeavor for districts to partake in since coaches actually implement what they learn when working with teachers. Ensuring training for coaches are continuous could also allow the reinforcement of those coaching techniques. Coaches could develop proficiency in utilizing those techniques as they are implemented continually over time.

Administrator training and support. The coaches spoke of administrators as barriers to their work. Resistance from administrators may have had more to do with a lack of understanding of coaching, which could also lead to not trusting coaches. Administrators' lack of understanding of what coaching is and how it can impact a campus can cause them to make decisions that may appear unsupportive of a coach, even when that is not the intention. Coaches mentioned that administrators frequently gave directives to teachers about using coaches. When administrators give teachers directives to work with coaches, this tends to create a negative attitude about coaching amongst teachers. Administrators trained in coaching is significant because it could change the way they promote coaching to teachers and could result in more supportive conversations that build a path towards teachers being coached.

When campus administrators change roles, training them on coaching, especially if they come from another district, is necessary to bring them up to date on current district coaching practices. When an administrator does not trust a district coach coming onto the campus, it may signify that the administrator might be worried that the coach is monitoring the campus.

Districts providing proper coaching training for the administrators can remedy each of these barriers. It could be the step necessary in building relationships that foster coaching on their campuses.

Time with teachers. When it comes to the practice of coaches having time to work directly with teachers, coaches spoke of prioritizing other duties, yet wanting more time with teachers. District leaders should evaluate the time coaches spend working one-on-one with teachers versus other duties and then create structures that would allow coaches more time to work with teachers. Shidler (2009) found when coaches worked directly with teachers over time, this led to increased student achievement. Hence the reason time with teachers should be an area for district leaders to monitor.

Research Question 2

Perceptions of impact. The data responses revealed coaches felt they impacted teachers in a variety of ways. More importantly, they felt they impacted teachers in a positive way and in a way that promoted teacher growth. Coaches could articulate their impact with specific examples. District leaders should consider this data and incorporate measures to help coaches identify areas in which they create impact through their coaching. Leaders can then use these measures to determine new ways of assessing the impact of coaching in their district. D. S. Knight (2012) determined district leaders should examine how coaches spend their time to determine if the instructional coaching model is effective. Therefore, assessing the areas in which coaches believe they create the most impact can provide districts with insight into areas they may need to strengthen.

Professional growth. Coaches mentioned their own professional growth was increased each time they worked with a teacher. District leaders allowing time for coaches to work with

teachers could lead to an increase in a coach's proficiency to coach adults. Districts could

consider this information when organizing coaching evaluations and could possibly document

the percentage of time a coach works directly with a teacher. Ultimately, this could serve as part

of the evaluation data to examine if a higher percentage of time with teachers does correlate to

the higher proficiency of a coach. Chien (2013) examined personality attributes for effective

coaching. The study results could also support district leaders in creating a checklist for both

coaches and administrators to use in order to develop coaches and support their professional

growth as well.

Research Question 3

Self-reflection. The evaluation of coaches brought up two aspects of their evaluations

that I found interesting. Coaches repeatedly spoke of the role of self-reflection and

administrators as part of their evaluations. Even when there were no formal evaluations involved

the subject of self-reflection and working with an administrator was important to the evaluation

of coaches. Self-reflection was a common practice in setting goals and discussing future goals

for coaches. The responses regarding self-reflection are significant because districts that want to

develop a more formal evaluation process for coaches can include an area for self-reflection

since it seems to be a natural part of developing coaching goals. Furthermore, coaches can rate

themselves if the evaluators want to quantify a coaches' performance in a section that allows for

self-reflection of a coaches' work. However, Jobe (2003) cautioned of the use of self-reflection

in evaluations since they may not be reported accurately.

Administrators. The data revealed the role administrators played in the coaches'

evaluation process. It may have varied but was present in some form within every evaluation of

the coaches' work. Examining the data on this research question, administrators may want to

begin establishing goals with coaches. In order to do this, the administrators would have to be well versed in what coaching is and what the district or campus leaders hope to accomplish through coaching. With this in mind, coaches and administrators would be useful in helping districts develop formal coaching evaluations. This would provide an area of support to show coaches that district leaders have a vested interest in them. J. Knight (2016) explained school and district support is one of the seven factors for building successful coaching programs.

Research Question 4

Training for coaches and administrators. When it came to discussing conditions that allowed for effective coaching, I found coaches came back to districts providing a culture where training is essential. Training coaches on how to coach teachers is a valuable practice that districts can provide. In addition, a district that has a culture where coaching training is inclusive of coaches and administrators would be ideal in supporting coaches in their work. Districts providing training to both parties would support coaches in establishing relationships with administrators early on in order to lay the foundation for their work. Both coaches and administrators could learn and share the common framework that surrounds coaching practices. Inclusive training would also allow administrators to learn about coaching, learn how to support coaches, as well as learn district processes for teachers to work with coaches. Including administrators in training with coaches would be ideal, however, at the very least, districts providing administrators with their own training about coaching would help guide them in the types of conversations they can have with teachers that help construct coaching in a more positive light. J. Knight (2016) noted when administrators are able to communicate the importance of coaching, this could help support an environment where impactful coaching can occur.

Administrator support. As coaches articulated in their data, a culture where administrators are supportive of coaches was important to every coach in the study. Understanding practices and conditions that need to be in place for effective coaching to occur can support district leaders in preparing campus administrators to support the work of coaches. Learning about working with a coach on campus can become a talking point in training new administrators. Many coaches have to deal with a change in administrator at some point, so informing new administrators that coaches will be working on their campus can at least begin to bring an awareness of a critical part of a new administrator's campus structure. The multiple responsibilities of an administrator provide a primary example of why administrators need to have an understanding of the work coaches do. Administrators can begin to ensure their instructional leadership practice is inclusive of coaches, especially when it comes to developing campus goals or even working on district goals. Administrators would be more inclined to include and support coaches if there was an understanding of how coaching can impact teachers' instructional practices and what role coaches play on their campuses. Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) emphasize the importance of districts establishing a framework for how coaching occurs within a district so teachers and administrators are not left with a lack of understanding of what coaches do.

Administrator support is not limited to campus leaders but is important for district leaders as well. District leaders that work to foster a culture of administrative support for coaches would create a condition that strengthens the coaches' belief that their work is valuable. Support can come in the form of inclusive training with coaches, campus structures that do not create barriers for coaching, and providing coaches with resources, among other things.

Accountability through formal evaluations. Even though evaluations were part of Research Question 3, the coaches indicated they wanted to work in a culture where they were held accountable through formal evaluations.   Since self-reflection was an important aspect of the coaches' goal-setting; it could be beneficial to include a self-reflection section in a formal coaching evaluation. This would give coaches an opportunity to share their perspectives with evaluating administrators while allowing them to reflect on their practice. Districts should create conditions where administrators and coaches' work together to establish a formal evaluation process that involves the evaluation of a coach's coaching practice, as well as other work coaches do. This would bring accountability to coaching and support coaches in their professional growth. Huff, Preston, and Goldring (2013) found using coaching strategies to support instructional leaders could also support them in their growth and professional development. Leaders involved in the evaluation of coaches could look at this research that provides the foundation for coaching conversations. Essentially, evaluations should reflect the coaching language as well.

Time with teachers. Providing coaches the opportunity to work directly with teachers was shared as a necessary practice that district leaders should employ. As mentioned earlier, other duties that coaches take part in, while very valuable, are not necessarily at the heart of every coaching program. District leaders need to assess district and campus needs to determine how coaches are most effectively utilized. D. S. Knight (2012) determined districts spend up to six to 12 times more on implementing coaching models rather than other forms of professional development. Therefore, it would be purposeful for district leaders to examine the purpose of the implementation of coaches. If the purpose is to change teachers' instructional practice, then

it could benefit districts to create structures that allow coaches to have more direct time with teachers.

<center>Connections to Conceptual Framework</center>

The foundation of the study is represented through the conceptual framework that was presented in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1). The theoretical background of this study views coaches as a form of embedded professional development that serve as agents of instructional change. The research questions the researcher used to examine practices, impact, evaluation, and conditions of effective coaching are purposefully connected to the conceptual framework. The connections of the findings to the conceptual framework are presented in this section.

Coaches as Professional Development

Research supports the role of instructional coaching being developed as a way to provide teachers with embedded professional development in the form of feedback that is non-evaluative (Makibbin & Sprague, 1997). Early studies established instructional coaching as a more collegial approach to professional development (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Instructional coaching takes a different approach to professional learning; it provides a feedback loop that may not be present in other forms of professional development (J. Knight, 2007). Research established that schools began investing in instructional coaching to develop and train teachers on instructional strategies (Stock & Duncan, 2010). Research on coaches being prepared for their role as professional developers is minimal (Gallucci et al., 2010). The results of the current study revealed instructional coaches worked with teachers to develop instructional practices in a variety of circumstances, whether the teachers were mandated to work with the coach or teachers approached the coaches to seek support with specific needs.

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Coaches shared common practices within their districts that needed to be strengthened so that coaches may be a more effective source of embedded professional development for teachers. Through this study, coaches shared time with teachers, when provided, was productive and allowed coaches to witness a teacher's growth thereby producing proof of the teacher receiving effective professional development through the coach. The participants declared their work to be effective and gave qualitative evidence as they shared personal experiences of witnessing teacher growth, as well as evidence directly provided from teachers and administrators themselves. This information supports early research that establishes how their roles differ from other forms of professional development, especially when the coaches' responses reflected specific collegial approaches in their work with teachers.

The professional development that coaches provide must be suited for adult learners. The practice of training coaches how to coach teachers can help them prepare for the nuances of working with adult learners; especially since many coaches were teachers prior to becoming coaches who worked with students. Through the responses, coaches noted the necessity of training that supports not only their ability to coach teachers but training that helps them also to understand the expectations that surround their coaching roles. The coaches shared the feeling of not being adequately trained and requested additional ongoing training, which further supports research that indicates there is not enough information about how coaches are prepared to develop teachers.

Coaches as Agents of Change

Research has shown that instructional coaching is used as a strategy for inciting instructional change (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). For instructional coaches to have an impact on teacher instruction, certain factors contribute to coaching success. The coaching cycle allows

for coaches to support teachers working through their instructional goals in a way that leads to significant improvement in teaching (J. Knight, 2007). Teachers are more likely to implement new practices if they work with a coach to learn how to integrate those practices in their classroom setting (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

Coaching teachers to improve instructional practice requires self-reflection on the part of the teacher; asking teachers what is working and what is not and then making instructional adjustments. The coaches shared information on how they used self-reflection as their way of evaluating goals as they continue to work with teachers. The data responses showed coaches implemented knowledge gained in training to change teacher behaviors in the classroom. The implementation of coaching strategies supports research that coaches can impact teacher instruction if they utilize methods that are proven to support instructional change.

Through the study, the coaches provided specific examples of how they impacted teachers' instructional practices. The examples shared were detailed in a way that indicated a teacher started one way and after working with the coach, changed to instruct differently. The responses in this study further support that instructional coaching is used to instigate change and supports research that teachers are more likely to integrate new practices after working with a coach.

<center>Implications for Action</center>

The information shared was collective of eight coaches with a variety of experience and from different districts. The commonality of their responses indicated areas where all coaches expressed a need for improvement in their current model structures. The implications of this study provide instructional coaching program leaders with information on practices and conditions that are needed to support effective coaching. The responses shared in Chapter 4

provide insight into areas that need to be strengthened for coaches to feel supported in their roles. In addition, districts can examine their current models and find ways to implement some of the practices consistently that coaches believe support their work. Thus, district leaders who are looking to implement a new coaching model can use the information gained in this study to lay the foundation for the development of an effective coaching model structure.

The themes the data produced in Chapter 4 from the focus group interview, the narratives, and the individual interviews were condensed to create several actions that district leaders could use to examine the current practices and the conditions they have established for coaching within their districts. J. Knight (2016) said, "Instructional coaches who make an impact work in districts that create the conditions that help them be effective" (p. 31). Based on the response data, Table 8 shows several key actions district leaders can take to support effective coaching. These actions are organized by the four research questions and provide direct support for coaches and their work.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Research</div>

This study was an examination of the responses of eight instructional coaches that offered a view into their perceptions of district practices regarding coaching impact, coaches' evaluations, and the conditions coaches' work within their current roles. While their responses provided information about deficiencies in the participant's current model structures, they also revealed areas in which they were supported. It may be worthwhile for districts to consider the findings from this study in order to examine current practices.

The coaches offered qualitative measures of their perceived effectiveness. Quantitative measures could also be used to measure coaching effectiveness by looking at student performance results after a teacher has worked with an instructional coach for a period of time.

This could establish a measure of a coaches' effectiveness in building teacher efficacy to affect student outcomes. In addition, it could also provide a measure of a coaches' effectiveness over time.

The study results provided information to help drive the direction of coaching models that have yet to be established and can also support districts that may want to reevaluate their current coaching models. Table 8 serves as a framework of actions developed from the themes and could serve as an evaluation of current coaching model practices or as a guide to support the implementation of new coaching models.

Table 8

Actions for Effective Coaching

Research Question	Actions for Effective Coaching
1 – Practice	Provide: 1. Clarity of the coaching role 2. Training of coaches 3. Administrator training and support 4. Time with teachers
2 – Impact	Allow for: 1. Coaches to identify areas of impact 2. Qualitative measures 3. Time with teachers
3 - Evaluations	Allow for: 1. Self-reflection 2. Administrator involvement
4 – Conditions	Create a culture of: 1. Training for coaches and administrators that is ongoing 2. Administrator support of coaching 3. Accountability for coaches through formal evaluations 4. Allowing for time with teachers

Expansion of the Current Study

The current study may be expanded in a variety of ways. First, this study could be replicated to include more instructional coaches in school districts across the DFW metroplex that came from large or small school districts. Only two of the school districts in this study were medium school districts while the rest were large. While I believe the findings would be replicated in similar districts, as districts and their size were not necessarily the focus of the study, it would be beneficial for district leaders to see if districts that had access to particular resources, due to their size, would factor into providing additional information about coaching.

This particular study focused on coaches with two or more years of experience. This study could be replicated with only first year coaches at the end of their first year. This might limit the information regarding time with teachers but could provide further insight into coaches preparedness, the type of support first year coaches receive, and how coaches spent most of their time during their first year.

In addition, this study could be replicated to include coaches with 1-2 years of experience to coaches with 3 or more years of experience. It would be beneficial to compare the perceptions of first year coaches to coaches with 5 or more years of experience to examine their perceived effectiveness. This type of study could reveal information related to time spent working with teachers, experiences with administrators, and the evaluation process. It would be beneficial to see if first year coaches felt they needed different support than coaches that had much more contact with teachers, administrators, and a variety of evaluation processes.

Follow-up to the Current Study

An opportunity to follow-up on this current study would be to continue examining these coaches and have them identify specific factors when working with teachers, and when

performing other duties, that might influence their perceived effectiveness. Using a mixed-methods format that included a survey for coaches to complete as well as participating in an interview could be a way of examining these coaches. Questions could specifically be focused on effectiveness when working with teachers and when performing other coaching duties.

Another study resulting from the data reported by the coaches was that districts might need to consider reviewing their current policies and practices in order to determine if they are providing the conditions for effective coaching. An assessment of current policies and practice could offer district leaders information on areas needing to be strengthened.

Longitudinal Possibilities

This current study could also be extended to include a longitudinal approach to this research. A study examining instructional coaches from districts that are actively implementing the recommended actions, over the course of two years, would allow future researchers to determine if instructional coaches' perceptions changed or stayed the same. Another possibility would be to identify two school districts that would implement the key practices and conditions over time while the others continue to evolve as they have. This would allow researchers to compare the differences in instructional coaches' perceptions from the districts that have been implementing the data results versus districts that have not. Finally, another opportunity for further research would be to examine the perceptions of school district leaders and principals of districts that have coaching model structures to determine their perceptions of the effectiveness of their instructional coaches.

Conclusion

The study results revealed the common experiences of instructional coaches across districts and across years of experience. The data provided rich information to help district

leaders examine and create the types of practices and conditions that support coaches and the work they do. Ultimately, the results of the study revealed coaches perceive their work to be effective regardless of the level of support they receive or the conditions that are present. As for effectiveness, coaches do deem their work to be effective and described their effectiveness through specific examples of work with teachers that few could argue. However, the perception of effectiveness was referred to often when working with teachers; only occasionally did it refer to student outcomes. The data the coaches offered provides a rare look into the perceptions of coaches and could be used to frame future coaching programs.

Through this study, three interesting observations of the data caught my attention. The first was revealed in the narrative responses. The researcher gave the participants a very broad prompt and then was not present in the room while each told their story. Yet all three coaches' stories began with information about their training, gave specific examples of the type of training they received, and ended the narrative with an exclamation of their realization of how they have grown and developed as a coach. I did not realize the similarities in their stories until I began analyzing the data. I found this to be interesting due to the broadness of the prompt and because all of the coaches did not know each other, represented different districts, and were never present in the same room during the narratives and the individual interviews. Furthermore, these coaches' responses reflected similar themes as those shared by the focus group.

The second was the collective responses of all eight coaches. I purposefully selected coaches that represented different districts, in an effort to see if this might provide information of experiences that differed from one district to another. The data revealed regardless of the district the coaches worked in, their shared experiences were the same and had little to no variance. This in particular became evident through the narrative and interview responses in which the coaches

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had no contact with each other. In Chapter 3, I mentioned coaches were selected from five different districts (see Table 1) but again; this had no bearing on the data. In addition, I purposefully selected coaches that had varied years of experience (see Table 2), yet the coaches still shared similar experiences in their narratives and in the literature review.

The third and final observation was regardless of the coaches' experiences, they still considered themselves to be effective coaches. Collectively, coaches shared practices and conditions that were lacking in their districts. Sharing this information was significant due to the fact coaches considered their work to be effective, regardless of practices or conditions not currently present in their districts. In other words, coaches found ways, on their own, to ensure a feeling of effectiveness, whether they truly were effective or not.

There has been much research on instructional coaching and its impact on improving teacher practice. Coaching as a reform method of professional development that provides teachers with embedded support is a prevalent topic of research. However, research to examine coaches and the perceptions of their own effectiveness is still lacking. Coaches can provide districts with insight to the type of support they need in order to perform their jobs effectively. District leaders and principals should work with coaches to develop a common idea of what contributes to effective coaching as expectations of effective coaching may differ from person to person. Open conversations need to occur between all parties involved in a coaching model.

An examination of coaching model structures may also reveal important information on coaching effectiveness. Coaching models vary from district to district based on need. Some districts have coaches solely on one campus; others have coaches serving multiple campuses; and yet others have coaches on a few campuses but not on all campuses. The variety of implementation is staggering; yet many districts implement instructional coaching based on need

with little follow up to evaluate if the coaching is impacting teacher instruction. District leaders

should examine whether the instructional coaches in their coaching programs are positively

impacting teachers in the way the districts intended. Involving coaches in that examination is

key to unlocking potential that maximizes coaching effectiveness.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVED INFORMED CONSENT FORM

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR AND ADULT SUBJECTS

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Instructional Coaches Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

Student Investigator: Laura Koehler, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Education. **Supervising Investigator:** Dr. Jane Huffman

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study that involves how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work with teachers. This phenomenological qualitative study will examine the role and purpose of instructional coaches, identify their training and preparation to be coaches, and determine what factors influence instructional coaches' efficacy.

Study Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, you will be interviewed as part of a focus group or for a narrative interview that includes an individual interview. The interviews will be conducted on a date and place that works best for all participants. The interviewer will ask questions about your current role, what support your district has in place for instructional coaches, and how you feel about your role. The focus group interview will take one to one and half hours to complete. The narrative interview will take about thirty minutes and the individual interview will take forty-five minutes. With your permission, we would like to audiotape-record the interview.

Foreseeable Risks: There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, but we hope to learn more about instructional coaching and what types of support or conditions need to be present for coaches to feel the most effective when doing their job.

Compensation for Participants: None.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The records of this study will be kept private and maintained for three years. Research records will be secured and only I will have access to the records. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Laura Koehler at laurakoehler@my.unt.edu or Dr. Jane Huffman at jane.huffman@unt.edu

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Laura Koehler has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

For the Student Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

_____   _____
Signature of Student Investigator   Date

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work towards improving teachers' instructional practice. Four coaches from the ICA will be interviewed. Instructional coaches will be informed about the study and assured that personal identities, and those of their districts, will remain confidential. Participants will also be informed that the interview is being audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and can be stopped at any time. Participants will be given a number with which to identify themselves when responding so that the coaching model may be identified in the transcription process.

Questions:

1. How long have you been an instructional coach?

2. What are characteristics of an effective coach?

3. What type of support and training did you receive to become an instructional coach? Probing: Would you suggest any changes to the support and training? (RQ 1)

4. What preparation does your current coaching model program offer to prepare you to coach teachers? (RQ 1)

5. What guidelines are you given for instructional coaching? Probing: Are these guidelines adequate? If not, what needs to be changed? (RQ1)

6. What process do you go through to get to work with a teacher or teacher(s)? Probing: Are there any problems with these processes? (RQ 1)

7. What barriers do you encounter when working with teachers? (RQ 1)

8. In addition to coaching teachers, what are your other job duties? (RQ 1)

9. What are your goals when coaching a teacher? (RQ 2)

10. How often do you discuss student outcomes when coaching teachers? (RQ 2)

11. How often do you meet with teachers you coach and how long are your meetings, typically? Probing: How do you rate the efficacy of your work within the time spent? (RQ 2)

12. How do you determine you have impacted a teacher's instructional practice? Probing: What examples can you provide? (RQ 2)

13. What would you estimate is the percentage of time you work with teachers versus other duties, such as writing curriculum or planning professional development? (RQ 2)

14. How is your work as an instructional coach evaluated? Probing: What does your evaluation include? (RQ 3)

15. What components of your work are evaluated and how is that determined? (RQ 3)

16. How often do you communicate about job related issues with your supervisor? (RQ 3)

17. What resources and support do you need to do your job? (RQ 4)

18. What, if anything, would you change about your current job to help support you in your effort to be the most effective coach that you can be? (RQ 4)

19. How do you know if you are increasing teacher effectiveness? (RQ 4)

APPENDIX C

NARRATIVE PROTOCOL

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work towards improving teachers' instructional practice. The narrative session will begin by assuring that personal identities, and those of the districts, will remain confidential. An instructional coach will be selected from three different districts within the ICA. For the narrative story, coaches will be given a prompt. Upon hearing the prompt, coaches may ask clarifying questions before beginning however, the interviewer will not ask any questions during the narrative. Coaches will tell their story individually without other coaches in the room. Participants will also be informed that the session is being audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and can be stopped at any time. Coaches will be identified by a letter and tied to their years of experience (see Table 2).

Narrative Prompt: Tell the story of your experience as an instructional coach in your current district. Include from the time you were hired to where you are now. Feel free to share specific experiences, both positive and negative.

APPENDIX D

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain an understanding of how instructional coaches perceive their own effectiveness as they work towards improving teachers' instructional practice. The individual interview will be given to the three coaches who participated in the narrative interview and additional questions may be further developed as a result of the coaches' narratives. A consent form will notify participants that their personal identities, and identification of the districts, will remain confidential.

1. What type of training did you receive to prepare you to coach teachers? (RQ 1)

2. How often do you work directly coaching teachers? (RQ 1)

3. How do you determine if your work is impacting teachers? (RQ 2)

4. Which coaching practices supports your work with teachers? (RQ 2)

5. How often do you evaluate your work? Probing question: Who, if anyone else, is involved in your evaluation? (RQ 3)

6. What process do you use to develop goals for yourself? (RQ 3)

7. How do you determine your effectiveness as a coach? (RQ 4)

8. When do you feel the most effective as a coach? (RQ 4)

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