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Instructional Coaching: Perceptions of Midwest Building Principals
and Instructional Coaches

by

Mary Jean Hall

August 17, 2020

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

Instructional Coaching: Perceptions of Midwest Building Principals
and Instructional Coaches

by

Mary Jean Hall

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Lindenwood University, School of Education



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August 17, 2020

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

Instructional coaching has gained popularity with school districts to improve teachers' instructional strategies, and students' academic performance. Current research supports the use of instructional coaching for schoolwide improvements; however, researchers suggest research is needed regarding the training and support of instructional coaches. Different coaching models are in use today and research into the best coaching framework for effective instructional coaching is needed. This study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when entering the instructional coaching position, the professional development and support offered by school districts to coaches, and whether there is a need for a multidisciplinary framework for instructional coaching. Principals' perceptions of the role of instructional coaches and how school districts meet the professional needs of instructional coaches were investigated. Instructional coach surveys and interviews elicited specific responses regarding experiences prior to entering coaching, training in coaching models, and beliefs regarding specific knowledge in coaching. Principal's interviews elicited responses about the role of instructional coaches within the school district, the expertise of instructional coaches, and the needs of instructional coaches. The following thematic commonalities emerged: background, prior training, and experience; role; support; and common knowledge. The responses revealed that a common framework for instructional coaching, flexible to fit the specific needs of school districts yet structured to ensure effective practices of instructional coaches, would be a benefit to all stakeholders. The opportunities offered by school districts to support instructional coaches' practices is likely to improve teachers' instruction and students' academic performance.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In recent years, instructional coaching in education has become a tool many school systems use to improve teacher and student performance (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Husbye, Powell, Zanden, & Karalis, 2018). Such techniques used with teachers include job-embedded professional development, the building of collaborative relationships, performance feedback, and other coaching practices (Fabiano, Reddy, & Dudek, 2018). Current researchers promote the support of various coaching models for the improvement of teaching practices and student performance, but further research is still needed (Fabiano et al., 2018; Husbye et al., 2018; Ma, Xin, & Du, 2018). However, researchers agree that there are common instructional practices coaches employ to improve teacher and student performance (Connor, 2017; Kurz, Reddy, & Glover, 2017). Common aspects of successful instructional coaching include goal setting, evaluation, assessing, critiquing, planning, adjusting, demonstrating, and questioning through the coaching scopes of skill, process, and development (Kurz et al., 2017). Accordingly, instructional coaches' responsibilities in the coaching role when collaborating with teachers include, but are not limited to conducting coaching cycles, personalizing teacher learning, imparting best practices, and supporting teachers (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019; Suarez, 2017).

The growing field of instructional coaching in education warrants more study about how to train and support instructional coaches (Connor, 2017). A multidisciplinary framework of instructional coaching may offer support to district and building leaders and instructional coaches in approaching instructional coaching education from a common framework (Kurz et al., 2017). This study was conducted to gather the

perceptions of building administrators and instructional coaches regarding the necessity of a common framework from which coaches operate. Further study of coaches' and administrators' perceptions of the need for a common coaching framework may prove significant by adding information about the coaching profession and how school districts can support coaches through further education and professional development.

Background of the Study

Instructional coaching has become a popular tool used by many school districts to improve teacher performance in the academic areas of literacy, math, and technology over the past two decades, as pressure from the federal government to improve student performance on standardized tests has increased (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed to update the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Congressional Digest, 2017). The ESSA was implemented to improve advancements in educational equity, instruct students through high academic standards, provide informative statewide student assessment scores to all stakeholders, hold high expectations for improvement of low-performing schools, improve neighborhood innovation related to education, and continue to focus on high-quality preschool opportunities for young children (Congressional Digest, 2017). Under pressure from state and local governments to improve student test scores, schools sought new ways to support teachers in instructional improvements and self-efficacy via professional development, collaboration, mentoring, and leadership improvement for organizational change (Kellar & Slayton, 2016; Lochmiller, 2018; Svendsen, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The Kurz et al. (2017) Multidisciplinary Framework of Instructional Coaching (MFIC) was used to guide this study. The MFIC is a three-dimensional model of instructional coaching through the lenses of coaching actions, coaching outcomes, and coaching scopes (Kurz et al., 2017). Instructional coaching has become a valued tool for the improvement of teachers' and students' performance in the classroom, but different frameworks exist to inform coaching opportunities (Connor, 2017; Hammond & Moore, 2018). Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) identified the need to develop, refine, and investigate the efficacy of coaching models to prove that instructional coaching is an invaluable tool for use with teachers.

General education teachers are expected to effectively implement classroom instruction to boost student scores (Fabiano et al., 2018; Lupoli, 2019), and instructional coaches are the catalyst for this improvement through a variety of coaching frameworks (Showers & Joyce, 1996). However, a lack of research into the efficacy of instructional coaching models and the impact on teachers' and students' classroom performance still exists (Connor, 2017). Kurz et al. (2017) recommended the MFIC to provide a common ground from which all instructional coaches can draw expertise and implement best coaching practices. Using the MFIC, Kurz et al. (2017) explored the best coaching practices used in business, sports, and educational settings to explain the most valuable practices an instructional coach could use to boost teachers' and students' performance.

The MFIC is used to present three areas for instructional coaching focus (Kurz et al., 2017). Kurz et al. (2017) proposed the use of coaching scopes, coaching outcomes, and coaching actions to support the role of instructional coaches and each of the three

areas containing foci for coaching improvement. The coaching scopes section contains the skill, process, and development involved in coaching (Connor, 2017, Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009, Fabiano et al., 2018). The coaching outcomes section is focused on performance enhancement, environmental improvements, promotion of autonomy, enhancement of cognition, and community development of teachers and aligns with the research of Brock et al. (2016) regarding adult learners. Finally, the coaching actions include adjusting, evaluating, critiquing, demonstrating, planning, assessing, setting goals, and questioning of teachers (Fabiano et al., 2018; Hammond & Moore, 2018; Husbye et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Instructional coaches come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences; however, there is a lack of literature addressing the backgrounds and qualifications of instructional coaches and whether a common knowledge base from which instructional coaches draw experience to conduct best practices in coaching is available or necessary (Kurz et al., 2017). Brock et al. (2016) found that job coaches often are missing the requisite skills to train others. Current researchers aid in sharing the characteristics of effective school leaders, but current researchers do not clearly explain how "leadership preparation programs support the development of such leaders" (McCotter, Bulkley, & Bankowski, 2016, p. 638). Kellar and Slayton (2016) acknowledged good leadership as having "a knowledge and skill base" (p. 691) to bring positive changes to the teaching and learning cycle.

Kraft and Blazar (2017) found few coaching programs designed for educators exist, even though instructional coaches operate in the areas of K-12 math, literacy, and

technology. Some common coaching models currently in use are: differentiated coaching (Kise, 2017; Moran, 2007), cognitive coaching (Costa, Garmston, Hayes, & Ellison, 2016; Rogers, Hauserman, & Skytt, 2016), peer coaching (Matthewman, Nowlan, & Hyvonen, 2018), problem-solving coaching (Kurz et al., 2017), instructional coaching (Kurz et al., 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014), student-centered coaching (Sweeney, 2011), and technical coaching (Kurz et al., 2017).

Further study of other instructional coaching models to prepare instructional coaches for instructional leadership is valuable in improving instructional leadership (McCotter et al., 2016) and a deeper understanding of how to improve teacher efficacy and align teacher practices (Hammond & Moore, 2018) could occur with the creation of the MFIC.

Purpose of the Study

If instructional coaches are to be a catalyst for the improvement of teachers' instructional practices, then school districts must support coaches in instructional coaching professional development (Connor, 2017). School districts can support instructional coaches by providing ongoing professional development, so coaches are willing and able to identify and implement best coaching practices when collaborating with teachers (Connor, 2017). Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) noted a concern that there is insufficient training supplied to instructional coaches at the start of and during their coaching career which can lead to poor instructional coaching approaches and may even prove detrimental to classroom instruction. As stated by Kurz et al. (2017), "Desired coaching outcomes vary considerably between coaching models, as well as for specific teacher and student needs" (p. 74).

The purpose of this study was to understand further the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness for entering the coaching profession and the ongoing professional development coaches received once entering the instructional coaching profession. Additionally, the perceptions of instructional coaches and the need for a common knowledge base, or multidisciplinary framework, from which coaches can operate to improve instructional coaching practices and impact teachers' and students' classroom performance was explored. Finally, the perceptions of building principals regarding instructional coaches' roles in the school building and district and the need for instructional coaching professional development was explored.

Research questions and hypotheses.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when entering the coaching profession?
2. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding professional development in instructional coaching?
3. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding a common knowledge base for coaching?
4. What are the perceptions of building principals regarding the role of instructional coaches?

Significance of the Study

Instructional coaching training, professional development, and continuing education are effective instructional coaching practices used to improve Tier 1, or general classroom, instruction (Fabiano et al., 2018). Understanding the background, education,

and perceptions of instructional coaches concerning the need for a multidisciplinary framework offers an opportunity to apply the best coaching practices from several coaching models (Kurz et al., 2017). A lack of prior research available to deepen the understanding of the backgrounds of instructional coaches, instructional coaches' education, and perceptions of instructional coaches concerning coaching training and professional development demonstrated a significant need for this study (C. Bryant, personal communication, February 15, 2019). Further research to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their backgrounds, training, and need for the MFIC could provide opportunities for further research concerning the best instructional coaching framework used to guide instructional coaching for instructional coaches, school administrators, and researchers.

Definition of Key Terms

Adaptive Schools Seminar. Adaptive Schools Seminar is offered by the company, Thinking Collaborative, to develop the skills of people in positions of “collaborators, inquirers, and leaders” to improve a team’s capacity and opportunities for success (About adaptive schools advanced seminar, 2019, “Developing Collaborative Teams,” para. 4).

Cognitive coaching. The Cognitive coaching model is designed to help coaches focus on “producing self-directed learners and leaders” capable of continuing in lifelong learning in a complex world without holding judgment over others and being of a developmental and reflective mindset (Costa et al., 2016, p. 3).

Dialogical approach to coaching. The dialogical approach to coaching is an approach in which advocacy and inquiry are a balanced part of instructional coaching (Knight, 2018).

Differentiated coaching. Differentiated coaching is a coaching model used to focus on teacher strengths and beliefs because changing practices for teachers means changing an internal part of who the teacher is (Kise, 2017).

Directive approach to coaching. The directive approach to coaching is an approach in which advocacy is the focus of the coach and explanations, modeling, and feedback are used to teach a strategy or program to a teacher (Knight, 2018).

Facilitative approach to coaching. The facilitative approach to coaching is an approach in which inquiry, questioning, listening, and the use of conversational moves are the tools used by the coach to encourage the teacher to look within himself for the answers he already knows (Knight, 2018).

Feedback and coaching lab. The feedback and coaching lab are practices provided by the Rutherford Learning Group (2019) for administrators, instructional coaches, and other learning leaders that are school embedded to help improve the instructional leadership capacity of anyone interested in developing effective educators.

Impact cycle coaching. Impact cycle coaching is a coaching model used to focus on the identifying, learning, and improving of teacher instruction with coaches choosing the best of three different coaching approaches for the impact cycle: facilitative coaching, directive coaching, and dialogical coaching (Knight, 2018).

Instructional coaching. Instructional coaching is a coaching model in which the instructional coach provides opportunities for teachers to identify and clarify goals and

articulate objectives to develop professionally and to meet professional learning needs (Klarin, 2015; Kurz et al., 2017; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014).

Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy. Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy is a coaching model used to focus on student achievement improvement through literacy reform (University of Arkansas Little Rock, n.d.)

Peer coaching. Peer coaching is a socially based coaching model reliant upon rapport between the coach and teacher where equality and respect between the coach and teacher are evident in the learning process (Matthewman et al., 2018).

Student-centered coaching. Student-centered coaching is a coaching model focused on setting targets for student learning based on learning standards (Sweeney, 2011). Student performance measures the impact of coaching and not the teachers' feelings (Sweeney, 2011).

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. An organization with the goal that children become “avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers” and provides research-based studies and professional development for teachers (Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, 2014, “The Mission,” para. 1).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The following delimitations bounded the scope of the study:

Time frame. The data collection occurred during the Fall semester of the year 2019.

Location of the study. The survey portion of the study was conducted in a Midwest region of the United States.

Sample. The participant sample consisted of Midwest instructional coaches and building principals.

Criteria. All participants that held a job position as an instructional coach or a building administrator was considered when selecting the sample.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample demographics. The study was limited by the sample size and the perceptions of the instructional coach and building administrator participants. Participants were members of a Professional Development Collaboration group (PDC) in the Midwest.

Instrument. Data was collected from instructional coach responses to survey questions. Surveys may impact participant responses through instrument decay or other extraneous factors (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Additionally, data was collected from standardized open-ended interviews conducted with the instructional coaches and building principal participants. Standardized open-ended interviews may have limited interviewee responses because the fundamental questions remained the same and were administered in the same order from interviewee to interviewee (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Using standardized wording for the interview questions guaranteed the interviewees were kept on the topic (Jamshed, 2014).

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. Participants offered honest answers without bias.
2. The participants understood the survey and interview questions.
3. The sample study represented current Midwest instructional coaches and building principals.

Summary

Instructional coaching has continued to grow as a valuable tool to support the instructional growth of teachers in the classroom (Fabiano et al., 2018; Kurz et al., 2017), but further research into the efficacy of a variety of coaching models is still needed (Fabiano et al., 2018; Husbye et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018). Instructional coaches come to the profession with a variety of backgrounds, knowledge, and training and may lack some of the requisite skills needed to be successful in the instructional coaching profession (Brock et al., 2016; Kurz et al., 2017). Research into the background, education, and perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the need for a multidisciplinary framework of instructional coaching may provide further insight into the needs and wants of instructional coaches (Kurz et al., 2017). Further research may also inform school districts on how to better support instructional coaching and help teachers and students achieve their potential (Kurz et al., 2017).

Chapter Two is a review of the current literature regarding various instructional coaching frameworks or models used by instructional coaches. In Chapter Two, the history of instructional coaching and how it became an essential instructional tool employed by schools to improve teacher instruction is addressed. Finally, an overview of various coaching models or frameworks and a multidisciplinary coaching framework are described.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Instructional coaching is a tool used in education to improve teacher practice and student achievement through the strengthening of teachers' skills, knowledge, and efficacy (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Various research supports the use of coaching models for the improvement of teacher skills and relationship building in different contexts (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Fabiano et al., 2018). Different coaching models contain common instructional practices to improve teacher and student performances (Connor, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017). However, along with the similarities between coaching models, there are different approaches instructional coaches utilize with teachers (Knight, 2018). One commonality among coaching models is the purpose of the coaching-to foster improvement (Knight, 2018). The ability to understand the benefits of instructional coaching in education and the needs of instructional coaches in improving their craft is needed (Connor, 2017).

Restrictions in instructional coaching include a lack of knowledge of how to maintain sustained policies through professional development, lack of focus on classroom ecology, and lack of knowledge on how to improve multiple behaviors and skills of students at one time (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Reddy, Dudek, & Lekwa, 2017). The restrictions on instructional coaching prompt the need for the MFIC (Kurz et al., 2017). This study was conducted to understand the perceptions of building principals and instructional coaches regarding the need for a multidisciplinary framework for the common use of instructional coaches and the need for instructional coaching professional development. Presented in this chapter of the review of related literature are a) conceptual framework, b) history of instructional coaching, c) professional instructional

coach training, d) principals' perspectives of instructional coaching roles and professional development needs, and e) summary.

Conceptual Framework

School districts in the United States have been under pressure for many years from federal, state, and local governments to improve students' test performances (Congressional Digest, 2017; Kellar & Slayton, 2016; Lochmiller, 2018; Svendsen, 2017). Governmental entities placed pressure on schools to encourage the use of instructional coaching supportive of building teachers' self-efficacy (Kellar & Slayton, 2016; Lochmiller, 2018; Svendsen, 2017). There are many different types of job descriptions for instructional coaches and school districts of employment should provide training, professional development, and continuous support (Lucas, 2017). While instructional coaching has become a valuable tool for school districts, a lack of research concerning instructional coaching effects on teachers' and students' performance exists (Connor, 2017), and there is a need to conceptualize "a larger framework for guiding the research and development process" of instructional coaching models (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 75).

Denton and Hasbrouck (2009) agreed that aspects of instructional coaching must still be addressed. Kurz et al. (2017) studied multiple instructional coaching models and compared the best coaching practices among sports coaching, business coaching, and educational coaching. Next, Kurz et al. (2017) proposed the MFIC for the systematic improvement of instructional coaching using common practices from sports, business, and educational coaching.

Kurz et al. (2017) determined the most valuable elements from the areas of coaching in sports, business, and educational coaching to define the “coach’s actions, the scope of the coaching focus, and the desired coaching outcomes” (p. 73). Determining the coach's actions, the scope of coaching, and desired outcomes helped to operationalize the MFIC (Kurz et al., 2017) for use in an instructional setting. Coaching actions include questioning, assessing, goal setting, planning, demonstrating, critiquing, evaluating, and adjusting (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Desimone & Pak, 2017). Hammond and Moore (2018) supported the need for the following three foci in quality instructional coaching: skills, process, and development. Additionally, based on current research, instructional coaching outcomes should include: performance enhancement, environmental improvements, autonomy promotion, and cognition enhancement (Casey, 2006; Fabiano et al., 2018; Hammond & Moore, 2018) In the MFIC, Kurz et al. (2017) offered educators and schools the tools to develop instructional coaching models, improve instructional coaching models, and determine the efficacy of coaching models used based on current research.

History of Instructional Coaching

Teacher efficacy has been a constant focus of education reformers (Connor, 2017; Reddy et al., 2017) and therefore has been a consistent focus of government policymakers (Congressional Digest, 2017). The exposure of achievement gaps among certain groups of students has encouraged accountability for students' education at the local, state, and federal government levels (Congressional Digest, 2017). Standards-based reform and the need for the improvement of instructional practices in the classroom over the past few decades made instructional coaching the tool of choice in school

districts for improvement of teacher efficacy and student performance (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Desimone & Pak, 2017). There are drawbacks for school districts and instructional coaches which include difficulty justifying the instructional coach position when there is a lack of funding for schools and the challenges instructional coaches face in the coaching position (Baker, 2016; Knight, 2012; Cantrell, Madden, Rintamaa, Almasi, & Carter, 2015). Less affluent school districts may struggle with justifying the cost of an instructional coach and choose not to incorporate the position into the school (Knight, 2012). Research also suggested instructional coaching was extremely challenging because of the many roles and responsibilities associated with the position and because of administrators' and peers' expectations placed on the coach (Cantrell et al., 2015).

Some universities offer certification or accreditation in instructional coaching even though many states do not have requirements for entering the instructional coaching position (Lucas, 2017). Knight (2019a) stated, "If instructional coaches are going to make a difference in the way teachers teach, they need to have scientifically proven practices to share" (para. 10). Additionally, Knight (2019a) shared eight factors to improve instructional coaching with teachers. The following are the eight factors:

- Provide coaches time to work with teachers for the bulk of the day.
- Ensure coaches have scientifically proven practices in their repertoire of tools.
- Provide professional development to improve coaches' effectiveness.
- Protect the coaching and teacher relationship by ensuring trust.

- Ensure principals' share their vision for the school with the instructional coach.
- Hire instructional coaches with strong skills and positive attributes.
- Involve coaches in the process of creating evaluation guidelines.
- Carefully plan for the instructional coaching program and consider success factors (Knight, 2019a).

Teachers are responsible for student learning, and instructional coaching is a tool used with teachers and students to improve performances when competently implemented (Connor, 2017; Crawford, Zucker, Van Horne, & Landry, 2017). The importance of instructional coaching on systemic reform has received attention in some quarters (Kurz et al., 2017). Instructional coaching is one avenue taken to “build capacity for systemic literacy reform” (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015, p. 181) and it has made instructional coaches valuable educational leaders (DeNisco, 2015). The role of the instructional coach operates in various ways (Kurz et al., 2017). Bukowiecki, (2012) and Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) proposed the following categories to describe models for instructional coaching:

- cognitive coaching
- clinical supervision
- peer coaching
- mentoring
- formal and informal literacy coaching
- data-oriented
- student-oriented

- managerial
- individual coaching
- group coaching
- mixed model

Additionally, Knight (2018) named three common approaches to instructional coaching: facilitative, directive, and dialogical. The success of the instructional coach in implementing school reform practices and policies remains dependent upon his or her competence (Rogers et al., 2016) and “deep learning occurs when we make significant improvements in the way we go about doing something important” (Knight, 2018, p. 22). Maximizing the potential of student achievement requires an educational leader who is competent in data analysis and a strong role model for improved classroom practices where deeper learning is taking place (Brown, 2015; Potter, 2018).

Instructional coaches lacking in knowledge and skills are unable to implement school reform practices and policies successfully and would benefit from an induction or mentoring program (Goodwin & Taylor, 2019; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Morel, 2019; Pierce, 2019; Sadiq, Ramzan, & Akhtar, 2017). Coaches must be sure of their knowledge and skills to provide explicit, evidence-based feedback to teachers (Connor, 2017; Will, 2018). Additionally, coaches need training on how to identify effective classroom practices (Connor, 2017). The importance of instructional coach training and professional development must not be overlooked (Connor, 2017; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Kurz et al., 2017; TechXcellence, 2017).

Types of Coaching Models

Each coaching model has its functions and focuses for instructional leadership, for instance, a differentiated coaching model is one in which instructional coaches may choose to support teachers and students in their learning and development (Kise, 2017; Moran, 2007). There are many other instructional coaching models, which include, but are not limited to, cognitive coaching (Rogers et al., 2016), instructional coaching (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2014; Kurz et al., 2017), peer coaching (Matthewman et al., 2018), problem-solving coaching (Kurz et al., 2017), student-centered coaching (Sweeney, 2011), and technical coaching (Kurz et al., 2017). Each coaching model has its variations of "purposes, elements, and processes" (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 67).

As instructional coaching has continued to become more prevalent in schools so has the need to determine the training instructional coaches need (Lucas, 2017). Higher education courses and credentialing programs vary across the United States and the role of the instructional coach in the school of employment is generally considered for training programs (Lucas, 2017). The following sections are explanations of five popular coaching models: cognitive coaching, differentiated coaching, peer coaching, student-centered coaching, and impact cycle coaching.

Cognitive coaching. Cognitive Coaching is another coaching model used in some schools. According to Costa et al. (2016), the mission of cognitive coaching trained coaches "is to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for excellence both independently and as members of a community" (pp. 15-16) through support functions such as evaluation, consulting, collaborating, and coaching. The focus of cognitive coaching is on improving the "thought processes and self-directedness of the

teacher being coached” (Rogers et al., 2016, p. 4). Cognitive coaches guide three types of conversations: the planning conversation, the reflection conversation, and the problem-solving conversation (Costa et al., 2016; Rogers et al., 2016). Cognitive Coaching practitioners claim to develop adaptive schools, impact the “design, construction and opening of fully independent schools,” and improve teacher recruitment (Nodoushan, 2015, p. E22).

Additionally, cognitive coaches are careful listeners who paraphrase the teacher’s comments, provide time for silent reflection, and offer feedback through probing questions (Costa et al., 2016; Rogers et al., 2016). Cognitive coaches support the improvement of “knowledge, practice, level of thinking, self-reflection, self-efficacy, and confidence” of participants in cognitive coaching cycles (Rogers et al., 2016, p. 24). Cognitive coaching application, if applied consistently, can change systems in place in a school setting for the better (Nodoushan, 2015).

Differentiated coaching. In a differentiated coaching model, the coach seeks to establish and recognize the importance of school culture; coaching as a tool to develop the individual and groups of teachers; and supporting both adults and students in their learning (Moran, 2007). A differentiated coaching model adherent considers the personality and type of learner a teacher is and makes coaching decisions based on this knowledge (Kise, 2017). Also, differentiated coaching model coaches choose to support teachers in their learning and development by considering the teachers’ beliefs and meeting the needs of teachers during times of change (Kise, 2017).

Differentiation and structure in an academic setting are related to a person’s perception of their competence (Guay, Roy, & Valois, 2017). Moran (2007) noted a

coach's role is to help train school staff; design, plan, and conduct professional development for whole group and small group learning; provide resources to school staff based on research; be capable of instructing in content knowledge; guide research-based best teaching practices. When differentiated practices and appropriate structures are in place, adult learners' competence and engagement may increase (Guay et al., 2017).

Peer coaching. Peer coaching involves two or more peers discussing and sharing various experiences from educational settings and promotes the use of listening and questioning strategies for the improvement of instructional skills and practices (Ma et al., 2018; Matthewman et al., 2018). Peer coaching is a psychosocial based practice that encourages more in-depth conversations and allows for the building of trust and rapport among participants (Matthewman et al., 2018). Emotionally supportive, peer coaching helps to build a strong relationship between the coach and teacher (Johnson, Finlon, Kobak, & Izard, 2017).

Some proponents of peer coaching find it to be “an attractive alternative to traditional professional development for promoting classroom quality” because it is considered sustainable and cost-effective (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 461). There are several other advantages to using the peer coaching model such as teacher collaboration, enriched teacher reflections, and similar experience and knowledge levels of the participants to enhance learning (Ma et al., 2018; Matthewman et al., 2018). The peer coaching model effectively contributes to “active and practice-based approaches” for improved instructional practices and improved classroom environments Johnson et al., 2017, p. 462).

Student-centered coaching. Student-centered coaches focus primarily on the needs of the students and data collected before, during, and after the coaching cycle (Sweeney, 2011). The teacher sets the goal she would like to focus on, and the instructional coach partners with her to meet the goal (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Sweeney & Harris, 2017). Students' learning is at the center of goal setting, and the focus is not on "fixing" the teacher, which is different than other coaching models (Sweeney, 2011, p. 1). Setting goals for student learning helps instructional coaches and teachers target instruction and align the goals for student learning with state standards (Sweeney, 2011). In the student-centered coaching model collaboration between the coach and the classroom teacher is essential and allows for the support of teachers and their instructional practices (Sweeney & Harris, 2017).

Impact cycle coaching. This model is described as a process in which instructional coaches and teachers partner together to make a positive impact on the learning of students by following three stages during the coaching cycle: identify, learn, and improve (Knight, 2018). Knight (2013) stated, "teachers should have sufficient support to help with the implementation of new practices, often provided by instructional coaches" (p. 3). The impact cycle is used to improve communication amongst educational professionals because when trust and respect are an everyday experience between teachers and instructional coaches, teachers are more willing to discuss their classroom experiences-both successful and difficult (Rowell, Andre, & Steinmann, 2020). Instructional coaches utilizing the impact cycle process use three main coaching approaches: facilitative, directive, and dialogical (Knight, 2018).

During the impact cycle, an instructional coach may videotape lessons conducted by the teacher to provide an opportunity for deeper learning by providing a clear picture of what is happening during lessons with students (Knight, 2019b). Teachers and coaches work together to create goals that are “powerful, easy to implement, emotionally compelling for teachers, reachable (involving a measurable outcome and identified strategy teachers can use to attempt to hit their goal), and student-focused (Knight, 2019b, p. 29). The goals during the impact cycle are also referred to as PEERS (Knight, 2018). Levine (2019) noted several challenges often occur during professional learning such as “incoherence, insularity, unequal participation, congeniality, and privacy” (p. 64). The impact cycle uses PEERS; the three stages during the coaching cycle of identify, learn, and improve; and one of the three main approaches of coaching: facilitative, directive, and dialogical to strengthen professional learning and improve student achievement and well-being (Knight, 2018).

Kurz et al. (2017) recommended a broader framework, a multidisciplinary approach, for coaching. The MFIC includes clear coaching actions, outcomes, operational definitions, assessment of coaching outcomes, collection of evidence based on reliability and validity, evaluation of coaching outcomes and various coaching models, and moderators and mediators to ensure "fidelity and affective characteristics of the teacher-coach relationship" (Kurz et al., 2017, p. 75). The large variety of coaching models available to instructional coaches suggests a need for the MFIC (Connor, 2017).

Approaches to Coaching

Along with the many different models of coaching, there are various common approaches to instructional coaching such as facilitative, directive, and dialogic (Knight,

2018). The practices and approaches of the instructional coach affect the quality of the instruction in schools (“Coaching for Change,” para. 1). Culbertson (2019) stated,

Additionally, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to coaching, and the same approach for every educator in every situation will not help grow teachers-just like the same approach for every student will not help them learn (para. 10).

Some coaches are devoted specifically to one approach; however, all coaching approaches have value and the approach used is dependent upon the coachee (Knight, 2013). The following contains three approaches used by instructional coaches (Knight, 2013).

Directive and non-directive (facilitative) approaches. Directive coaching is used to guide coaches toward a planned or expected outcome of coaching encounters (Beckett-McInroy, 2015). In contrast, non-directive coaching approaches are not used to guide the coaches toward a specific outcome, but to enable coaches to come to their conclusions or solutions (Beckett-McInroy, 2015). Directive and non-directive coaches are both experienced, but directive coaches are viewed as the expert in this approach (“Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring,” para. 2; Knight, 2018). Non-directive coaches, or facilitative coaches, do not need to be the expert when coaching (“Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring,” para. 5; Knight, 2018).

Coaches are the expert and the teachers are the apprentices in the directive coaching approach (Knight, 2018). With the directive approach, instructional coaches make judgments, control the decision making, and directly share knowledge with the teacher (Beckett-McInroy, 2015; Knight, 2018). Directive coaches view teachers as needing the coaches’ expertise and directive coaches assume the skills and strategies

must be taught with fidelity in all classrooms (Knight, 2018). Beckett-McInroy (2015) explains directive coaching this way:

The problem is that we have often been in similar situations to our clients, so solutions can regularly pop into my head. What if we helped them and shared my experiences to possibly save them time and money and headaches too? Well, that's not coaching, it is mentoring (p. 56).

On the website, Vitae, the article "Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring" (2020) there are three disadvantages to directive coaching listed:

- coachees have less ownership
- coachees have less commitment to change practices
- the solution to the problem encountered may not be correct

On the website, Vitae, the article "Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring" (2020) there are four advantages to directive coaching listed:

- coachees are part of a shared experience with the instructional coaches
- coachees gain knowledge of prior experiences from coaches
- coachees are given a solution instead of coming up with their own
- coaches get to share their wisdom

Non-directive coaches believe their job is to walk alongside the teachers as the teachers gather their own solutions (Salter & Gannon, 2015). Non-directive, or facilitative, coaches are open-minded, do not share expertise, and are focused on the teacher ("Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring," 2020; Knight, 2018). Facilitative coaching is flexible and can be used in a variety of situations in which directive coaching is less helpful (Knight, 2018).

On the website, Vitae, the article “Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring” (2020) there are three disadvantages to directive coaching listed:

- coaching outcomes take longer to meet
- opportunities to share past experiences do not occur
- coachees must reach their own solutions whether they want to or not

On the website, Vitae, the article “Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring” (2020) there are five advantages to directive coaching listed:

- coaches are not required to be the expert
- coaches are open-minded
- coachees maintain ownership of solutions
- coachees are likely to maintain a commitment to the action taken
- solutions obtained by coachees are likely to be correct

A balanced approach, when coaching, between directive and non-directive approaches, is probably the best solution (“Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring,” 2020; Knight, 2018). In difficult situations, non-directive coaching is likely to be better than directive coaching (Knight, 2018). Ellinger, Hamlin, and Beattie (2008) recommend against using a directive coaching approach. Ellinger et al. (2008) found that many coaches do not adhere to a facilitative approach and instead lean heavily on an authoritarian role making it difficult to shift coachees to more effective practices. Directive and non-directive are opposite approaches in most ways (Knight, 2018).

Dialogic approach. Knight (2018) stated:

The facilitative coach focuses on inquiry, using questions, listening, and conversational moves to help a teacher become aware of answers he already has

inside himself. The directive coach focuses on advocacy, using expertise, clear explanations, modeling, and constructive feedback to teach a teacher how to use a new teaching strategy or program with fidelity. The dialogical coach balances advocacy with inquiry. (p. 12)

Wall and Palmer (2015) explained the temptation coaches' may experience to provide teachers with answers rather than provide opportunities for inquiry. In today's society, people are hurried and coaches and teachers are not any different, but the dialogical coach does not provide the answers and instead gives teachers the opportunity to think deeply and provide their own solutions (Wall & Palmer, 2015).

According to Knight (2018), dialogical coaches and facilitative coaches both provide opportunities for inquiry, questioning, and empowerment of the teacher. Unlike facilitative coaches, but like directive coaches, dialogical coaches share their expertise leaving it to the teachers to decide if they want to use the expertise to meet the goal or not (Knight, 2018). Facilitative and directive coaches have conversations with teachers, but they do not hold dialogue with teachers (Haneda, Teemant, & Sherman, 2016; Knight, 2018). In education, a dialogue is ongoing communication between the instructional coach and teacher as equal partners in sharing the work of understanding, interpreting, questioning, and rethinking an issue or problem (Haneda et al., 2016) and involves a "meeting of the minds" in which the instructional coach does not withhold ideas or tell the teacher what to do (Knight, 2018, p. 13). Adherents to dialogical coaching believe it is the coaches' job to "share their knowledge in a way that empowers teachers to critically problem-solve their own classroom circumstances" (Wall & Palmer, 2015, p. 633).

Principals' Perceptions of Instructional Coaches' Roles and Professional Development Needs

There is a need to understand the impact of the perceptions of principals on the instructional coach's role in the school setting (Selvaggi, 2016). Principals are invaluable to the development of instructional coaches' and teachers' relationships (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016) and the need for principals to explain the role and importance of the instructional coach to school faculty is requisite in facilitating communication and collaboration among instructional coaches and teachers (Walkowiak, 2016). The role of the instructional coach may vary from school to school (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016), but it is up to the principal to define the coach's role, so teachers are willing to open their classrooms to instructional coaching (Walkowiak, 2016).

Principals who hold the belief that the instructional coach influences teachers are likely to observe positive changes in instruction (Selvaggi, 2016). Instructional coaches who have principals willing to communicate the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches to the faculty are more likely to be able to create an environment of trust and strong relationships (Walkowiak, 2016). It is essential for instructional coaches and principals to determine how instructional changes will be initiated (Walkowiak, 2016). Walkowiak (2017) suggested principals and instructional coaches determine which teachers and how many teachers will enter a coaching cycle and what the focus of the coaching cycle should be. Another valuable part of the collaboration between the instructional coach and the building principal is the determination of goals such as instruction alignment to standards, assessment to inform instruction, teaching strategies for each content area, and improvement of student achievement (Selvaggi, 2016).

Finally, principals' beliefs about instructional coaches' needs for professional development and administrators' support impacts the instructional coaches' ability to improve their job performance (Selvaggi, 2016; Sweeney, 2011). For administrators, a well-informed and well-educated instructional coach "helps to create a tighter community of instructors, and this inevitably trickles down to the learners themselves" (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016, p. 59). Principals can support instructional coaches by communicating with the coach about work, goals, and professional development; attending professional development and grade-level meetings held by the instructional coach; and providing the instructional coach with materials or books to enhance the job of instructional coaching (Selvaggi, 2016 & Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Additionally, principals can encourage reluctant teachers to work with the instructional coach, identify the instructional coach as a support for teachers and parents, provide time for the instructional coach and teachers to meet individually and in groups, and provide adequate space for instructional meetings (Selvaggi, 2016; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Principals who hold the belief that instructional coaches have an impact on classroom instruction and teacher efficacy are more likely to get improvements in the school environment and classroom instruction (Selvaggi, 2016; Walkowiak, 2016).

Summary

Instructional coaching is a popular tool used to improve teacher practice and student achievement (Desimone & Pak, 2017) by using a variety of coaching models (Connor, 2017; Kurz et al., 2017). The fact there are so many different coaching models and frameworks with similar instructional practices suggests the need for a common framework for instructional coaching (Kurz et al., 2017). Popular coaching models

include cognitive coaching, peer coaching, and student-centered coaching. The MFIC introduced by Kurz et al. (2017) is a conceptual model combining the best common coaching practices from sports, business, and education. Instructional coaches can use the MFIC to conceptualize their coaching actions, the scope of coaching, and desired outcomes to improve instructional coaching practices (Kurz et al., 2017).

Teacher efficacy has been a constant focus of governmental policies as an effective strategy for the improvement of teachers' classroom instruction and prevents achievement gaps in specific populations of students (Congressional Digest, 2017). An instructional coach's success in implementing and sustaining school reform practices and policies is dependent upon his or her competence (Brown, 2015). Instructional coaches missing the necessary knowledge and skills to implement effective practices will have difficulty in sustaining positive changes in teacher efficacy and student performance (Connor, 2017).

In addition to multiple coaching models (Bukowiecki, 2012; Deussen et al., 2007), there are different methods for coaches' use with coaching models such as directive, non-directive (facilitative), and dialogic approaches (Knight, 2018). The coaching approach depends upon the coach and teacher (Knight, 2013). Instructional coaches affect the practices and quality of instruction imparted by the teacher and coaches should consider the most useful approach used in the coaching setting ("Coaching for Change," para. 1). The dialogical approach to coaching promotes advocacy and inquiry as a balanced part of instructional coaching and requires a true partnership between the coach and teacher where dialogue is of the utmost importance between partners (Knight, 2018; Wall & Palmer, 2015). The directive approach to

coaching is an approach in which advocacy is the focus of the coach and the coach is considered the expert (Beckett-McInroy, 2015; Knight, 2018). The directive approach is considered the least desirable approach by some researchers (Ellinger et al., 2008). The non-directive or facilitative approach to coaching is an approach in which inquiry, questioning, listening, and the use of conversational moves are the tools used by coaches to help teachers find their own solutions (“Approaches to Coaching and Mentoring,” 2020; Knight, 2018).

Finally, principals’ perceptions of the instructional coach’s role impact the effectiveness of the coach, the relationship of the coach with the teacher, and the trust built between the coach and teacher (Selvaggi, 2016; Sweeney, 2011; Walkowiak, 2016; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Principals willing to communicate the role and responsibility of the instructional coach (Walkowiak, 2016) impact the ability of the instructional coach to perform instructional coaching well (Selvaggi, 2016). Communication between the principal and instructional coach about the goals of the instructional coaching cycle (Selvaggi, 2016), the need for an instructional coach’s professional development (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016), and the need for tools and time to implement coaching cycles and teacher professional development (Selvaggi, 2016; Wolpert-Gawron, 2016) are valuable for instructional improvement.

In Chapter Three, an explanation of the research methods for this study is given. The problem and purpose of the study are described. Also, the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations are explained.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Instructional coaching has become a tool used by schools to promote opportunities for improving teacher efficacy, teacher performance, and student achievement in the regular classroom (Fabiano et al., 2018). Instructional coaches can promote stronger assessment strategies, lesson planning, student interaction, and classroom management through ongoing professional development and coaching cycles with teachers (Ma et al., 2018; Manzar-Abbass, Malik, Khurshid, & Ahmad, 2017). The growing emphasis on the importance of instructional coaching in education justifies the need for further research on how to train and support instructional coaches (Connor, 2017).

In this chapter, a brief explanation about why there is a need for further research regarding instructional coaches' perceptions of training and professional development is presented. The mixed design used in this study to gather the perceptions of instructional coaches and building administrators concerning instructional coach training and professional development is described. The population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations are presented.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Instructional coaching has increasingly become a popular approach to promote teacher efficacy and improve “student learning and behavior” in education (Theory Into Practice, 2017, p. 1). The increased use of coaching is apparent, but there is a lack of agreement about the responsibilities of instructional coaches and a lack of evidence supporting the value of instructional coaches in promoting teacher efficacy and improved student academic performance (Glover, 2017; Theory Into Practice, 2017). According to

Brock et al. (2016), job coaches are missing the skills needed to train others; unfortunately, instructional coaches are facing the same difficulties without a common coaching framework to inform instructional coaching practices (Kurz, et al., 2017). Strong leadership skills and a strong knowledge base are necessary when promoting research-based teaching practices and improved student academic performances (Kellar & Slayton, 2016).

There are several coaching models in use such as differentiated coaching (Kise, 2017; Moran, 2007), peer coaching (Matthewman et al., 2018), and student-centered coaching (Sweeney, 2011); however, few coaching programs exist specifically designed for instructional coaches (Kraft & Blazar, 2017). Kurz et al. (2017) recommended the MFIC. Kurz et al. (2017) studied the most common coaching practices in the areas of business, sports, and education to find the most beneficial coaching practices used to improve peoples' performances in their respective professions. The coaching practices of the MFIC could improve the instructional coach's own efficacy and thereby improve teachers' instructional performance.

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches and building principals concerning professional development for coaches and the need for a common multidisciplinary framework coaching model. The perceptions of instructional coaches concerning their preparedness, professional development, and ongoing education was addressed. In this study, the perceptions of instructional coaches about the necessity of a multidisciplinary framework to guide their role as an instructional coach was explored. Additionally, the perceptions of building administrators regarding the role of the instructional coach was explored.

Research questions and hypotheses.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when entering the coaching profession?
2. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding professional development in instructional coaching?
3. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding a common knowledge base for coaching?
4. What are the perceptions of building principals regarding the role of instructional coaches?

Research Design

Mixed-methods research was employed for this study. The triangulation design within the mixed-methods study will allow for equal attention to qualitative and quantitative data (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The survey questions were close-ended, open-ended, and Likert-type to promote consistent responses, encourage respondent participation, and gather additional information the respondent may want to add and would improve the information gathered for research (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Responses from a cross-sectional survey were intended to be collected from up to 140 PDC instructional coach members and quantitatively analyzed. However, only 31 PDC instructional coach members chose to respond. The data was recorded for frequency and percentages of responses to survey questions or statements and recorded via bar graphs.

It was intended that three instructional coaches per strata and three building administrators per strata would participate in the interviews. However, three instructional

coaches from the small and medium strata and four instructional coaches from the large strata participated. Only one principal from each of the large and medium strata participated in the interviews. Three principals from the small strata were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to enhance understanding of the perceptions of instructional coaches about their training and if there was a need for a common multidisciplinary framework for coaches. The building administrator interviews were conducted to examine how building administrators viewed instructional coaches' roles and whether there was a need for further training or a common multidisciplinary framework of instructional coaches. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The interview setting provided an opportunity for probing the interviewee further about his or her response to a statement or question during the interview (Fraenkel, et al., 2019). After the interviews were completed, the responses were coded based on topics that arose and the similarities and differences derived from the narratives provided by the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Next, the coded data was drawn together from each transcript to determine themes central to the research (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of a Professional Development Collaborative (PDC) group of school districts in the Midwest region of the United States. Approximately 59 school districts are members of the PDC. Among the 59 school districts in the Midwest region, there are approximately 140 instructional coaching members. A census of instructional coaching members of the PDC was taken through a cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional survey was appropriate for this study because information was being collected from a predetermined population at a single point in time

(Fraenkel et al., 2019). Data was collected through the Qualtrics online survey platform. Thirty-one of the instructional coach PDC members responded to the survey.

Next, three instructional coaches per strata and three building principals per strata who employed instructional coaches from PDC member districts were the intended target for interviews through a stratified sample. A stratified sample was advantageous in this type of study because the study was relatively small and stratifying participant selection increased the opportunity to be representative of the instructional coach population under study (Fraenkel, et al., 2019). The total possible number of instructional coach and principal participants brought the population under study to 149. However, only one instructional coach survey respondent stated a willingness to participate in the interview process of the 31 survey respondents. To obtain additional instructional coach participants for the interviews, emails were sent directly to instructional coach members of school districts that were members of the PDC. In this way, three instructional coaches from the small and medium strata and four instructional coaches from the large strata were interviewed.

Up to nine principals were intended to be contacted through their instructional coaches for interviews. Due to low response from the instructional coaches to provide building principals' contact information at the end of the survey, instructional coach and superintendent members of the PDC were contacted directly and asked to provide contact information for principals recommended to participate in the interviews. The stratified sample of instructional coaches and building principals consisted of PDC member schools from small (student population less than 1,200), medium (1,201-5,000 student population), and large (student population greater than 5,001) school districts. The study

employed 46 total survey and interview participants. The survey strata participants included seven respondents from the small schools, 13 respondents from medium schools, and 11 respondents from large schools. The instructional coach interview participants included three respondents from small schools, three respondents from medium schools, and four respondents from large schools. The principal interview participant strata included three respondents from small schools, one respondent from a medium school, and one respondent from a large school.

Instrumentation

Two types of instruments were used in this study, an online survey, and interviews. The survey was of original creation informed by Irwin and Stafford (2016); Kurz et al. (2017); and van der Sluis, Burden, and Huet (2017) to gather data through close-ended, open-ended, and Likert-type questions. The survey was designed to obtain instructional coaches' demographic data, types of specialized training received, and perceptions of adherence to certain coaching models through 10 short questions. Instructional coaches and building principals were selected to participate in interviews. The interviews for the instructional coaches and building principals were created by the researcher and were informed by Connor (2017), Kurz et al. (2017), and Sutton and Austin (2015). Semi-structured interviews use pre-set open-ended questions to provide consistent quality of respondents' answers and the semi-structured interviews are conducted only once with each respondent (Jamshed, 2014). Interview questions for both instructional coaches and building principals were open-ended and followed a semi-structured format. The ten interview questions for instructional coaches focused on the perceptions of instructional coaches concerning their experiences prior to and while being

an instructional coach concerning their preparedness to enter the coaching profession, professional development during their time as a coach, district support of coaches, and the need for a common knowledge base. Nine interview questions for building principals were designed to understand the perceptions of building principals about the role of instructional coaches.

Reliability. The reliability of a research method or instrument refers to “the extent to which the same results can be obtained by independent investigators” (Klenke, Wallace, & Martin, 2015, p. 39). Field testing of the instructional coaches’ survey questions, instructional coaches’ interview questions, and principals’ interview questions ensures reliability because it provides the opportunity to be certain correct conclusions can be drawn from the responses of the participants (Klenke, Wallace, & Martin, 2015). Field testing also allows for the questioning of respondents from similar professions with similar concerns and ensures correct conclusions can be drawn from responses of the participants (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The opportunity to explore concerns regarding unreliable questions based on field testing results guarantees the reliability of the questions during the actual research process (Fraenkel et al., 2019). In this study, the survey and interview questions were given to local instructional coaches and building principals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the instructional coaches and principals using preset open-ended questions to ensure consistency among participants’ responses. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual participant only one time and was based on the topic of the study (Jamshed, 2014).

Validity. The validity of an instrument means the results elicited by the instrument are credible or believable and transferable in that the results can be applied to

other contexts (Klenke et al., 2015). The survey and the interviews were field tested with local instructional coaches and building administrators to ensure clarity and understanding of the questions. Field testing the survey, and interview questions with people in similar professions and job roles provided the opportunity to ensure the usefulness and meaningfulness of the inferences made about the data collected from the survey and interviews (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Data Collection

Permission to email an online survey to instructional coaches listed on the PDC Instructional Coaches Network listserv was obtained from the PDC Executive Director (see Appendix A). Permission to conduct this study was requested from the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B). Data collection for the study began when IRB permission is received. Next, a Qualtrics survey link (see Appendix C) was emailed to the PDC Professional Learning Coordinator who forwarded the survey link included in an email of introduction to the PDC Instructional Coaches Network's 140 members (see Appendix D). The informed consent form preceded the survey (see Appendix E).

Two weeks after sending the invitation to participate in the survey, another email was sent asking instructional coaches to consider participating in a follow-up interview (see Appendix F). Instructional coaches willing to participate in an interview were asked to provide contact information and to ask their building principal to participate in an interview. If the building principal was willing to participate, then the coach was asked to provide the building principal's contact information, as well. Principals willing to

participate in the interview process received an introductory email about the study (see Appendix G).

However, there was a low response rate of instructional coaches willing to participate in the interview process. This impacted the way instructional coaches were contacted to gain enough instructional coach interview participants and building principal interview participants. To get enough participants for the instructional coach interviews, an email was sent to PDC member district schools' instructional coaches directly asking if there was interest in participating in the interview process (see Appendix H). To get enough principal participants, PDC school districts' instructional coaches and superintendents were asked to provide principals' contact email. Principals were sent an introductory email asking if they were interested in participating in the interview process (see Appendix I). Interested principals were asked to reply to the introductory email if they were willing to participate.

Once the instructional coach and building principal interviewees responded to the introductory emails, both groups were contacted again via email or by phone and a place and time to meet were mutually decided (see Appendices J and K). Additionally, the interview volunteers were presented an informed consent form through email (see Appendix L) and the form was discussed, and any questions answered prior to beginning each interview. The qualitative data were collected through face-to-face and telephone interviews with instructional coaches and building principals (see Appendices M and N). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. After transcribing, the transcription was sent back to the interviewees for member-checking (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Member-checking occurs when data collected from the interviews is categorized and interpreted

and then returned to the study participants for confirmation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member-checking improves the validity of the information provided in the qualitative research narrative (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Finally, once the interviews were completed, the responses were coded, and the data were sorted as categories emerged (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

Upon survey completion, the responses were recorded, summarized, and conclusions were drawn using measures of central tendency (Bluman, 2013). A bar graph was created to represent the demographic data from the survey. Following the completion of the survey, a stratified sample of instructional coaches and building administrators was contacted to participate in face-to-face or telephone interviews. The instructional coaches were referred to as Small District 1 Instructional Coach 1 (SIC1), Medium District 1 Instructional Coach 1 (MIC1), and so on based on the district size to sort the data during transcription. In the same way, building principals were referred to as Small District Building Principal 1 (SP1), and Medium District Building Principal 1 (MP1), and so on based on the district size to sort the data during transcription.

Ethical Considerations

Once the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board approved the study, data collection began. Personal and identifying information remained confidential and anonymous throughout the survey, interview process, data collection, data analysis, and data reporting. Informed consent forms were provided to the participants prior to beginning the survey and the interviews. The survey questions and interview questions were asked in a professional, sincere, and friendly manner without causing a negative

experience for the participant (Fraenkel et al, 2019). Interview participants were informed of the length of time the interview would take and the terms of the study were reviewed with the participants prior to administration of the survey or interviews (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Summary

Participants in this study were instructional coach and building principal members of a PDC located in the Midwest region of the United States. A mixed-methods format using an online survey and face-to-face interviews was followed. The survey responses were collected, organized, categorized, and summarized to inform research questions one, two, and three of the study. The responses to interview questions by the instructional coaches were transcribed, coded, categorized, and summarized to inform research questions one, two, and three from the study. Interview responses from building principals were transcribed, coded, categorized, and summarized to inform research question four.

Quantitative data was collected using the Qualtrics online survey platform. Bar graphs were used to show results from the online survey. Qualitative data was collected through face-to-face interviews with instructional coaches and building principals. The data was audio recorded and coded. Finally, the results of the interviews were interpreted. Chapter Four contained a description of the analysis of the data from the online survey and the interviews.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Review of Study

As a tool used by school systems to improve teacher and student performance, instructional coaching has grown in popularity (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Instructional coaches provide an extensive range of support from assessment strategies to classroom management by providing professional development and coaching cycles (Ma et al., 2018; Manzar-Abbass, Malik, Khursid, & Ahmad, 2017). Current researchers support various coaching models used by instructional coaches for teacher and student performance improvement; however, researchers also recognize the need for further research concerning instructional coaching effectiveness (Fabiano et al., 2018; Husbye, Powell, Zanden, & Karalis, 2018; Ma et al., 2018). Even though instructional coaching has increased in popularity, evidence of instructional coaching's usefulness in improving teacher and student performance and the responsibilities of instructional coaches are still in question (Glover, 2017; Theory Into Practice, 2017).

There are many coaching models available for coaches to choose from, such as differentiated coaching (Kise, 2017; Moran, 2007), peer coaching (Matthewman et al., 2018), and student-centered coaching (Sweeney, 2011). Kurz et al. (2017) studied best coaching practices from business, sport, and educational settings and suggested using the MFIC to build instructional coaching efficacy. A standard multidisciplinary coaching model could be used by coaches to operate from a standard knowledge of coaching and researchers to gather data about the efficacy of common instructional coaching knowledge and techniques.

The purpose of this study was to understand instructional coaches' perceptions regarding preparedness for entering the coaching profession and the ongoing professional development coaches received once entering the instructional coaching profession. Also, instructional coaches' perceptions regarding the need for a common knowledge base, or multidisciplinary framework, which instructional coaches could use to improve instructional coaching practices and impact teachers' and students' classroom performance were explored. Finally, the building principals' perceptions regarding instructional coaches' roles and the need for instructional coaching professional development were examined.

A mixed-methods design was used for this study. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from a survey given to instructional coaches, and interviews were conducted with instructional coaches and building principals. The survey was of original creation informed by Irwin and Stafford (2016); Kurz et al. (2017); and van der Sluis, Burden, and Huet (2017). The survey contained close-ended, open-ended, and Likert-type questions. The survey data responses were recorded, summarized, and conclusions drawn using measures of central tendency (Bluman, 2013).

Next, instructional coach participants were solicited to participate in interviews. Also, instructional coaches were asked to supply the names and contact information of their building principals interested in participating in interviews. In order to obtain enough principal participants, area PDC member school districts' superintendents and instructional coaches were asked to provide principals' contact information. The principals were contacted via email to determine interest in interview participation. The instructional coach and building principal interview prompts were created by the

researcher and were informed by Connor (2017), Kurz et al. (2017), and Sutton and Austin (2015). The comments supplied during the instructional coach and building principal interviews were studied, and common theme groups were created. The common themes were analyzed as they emerged to deepen the understanding of instructional coaches' educational and experiential backgrounds, training, roles, and thoughts on common coaching knowledge for instructional coaching.

Demographics of the Study

The population of the study consisted of a cross-sectional sample of instructional coach members of a PDC in the Midwest region of the United States. Out of approximately 140 instructional coaches in the 59 school districts who received the survey, 31 instructional coaches opted to participate. Next, 10 instructional coaches were solicited to participate in individual interviews. Four of the instructional coaches came from large school districts (5001 and greater student population), and the instructional coach identities were protected by being coded as LIC1, LIC2, LIC3, and LIC4. Three instructional coaches came from medium-sized school districts (1201-5000 student population), and the instructional coach identities were protected by being coded as MIC1, MIC2, and MIC3. An additional three instructional coaches came from small school districts (1200 and smaller student population), and the instructional coach identities were protected by being coded as SIC1, SIC2, and SIC3. Each instructional coach answered 10 questions during a 30-minute individual interview.

Finally, five building principals were solicited to participate in individual interviews. One building principal came from a large-sized school district (5001 and greater student population), and the building principal's identity was protected by being

coded as LP1. One building principal came from a medium-sized school district (1201-5000 student population), and the building principal's identity was protected by being coded as MP1. Three building principals came from small-sized school districts (1200 and smaller student population), and the building principals' identities were protected by being coded as SP1, SP2, and SP3. Each building principal answered nine questions during interviews that lasted 30 minutes each.

Research Questions

The results of the study are presented in the following manner. Research question one begins with the delivery of the instructional coaches' results for survey questions one, two, three, and four. Then, the instructional coach results for interview questions one, three, four, and five are delivered. Research question two begins with the delivery of the instructional coaches' results for survey questions five and six. Followed by instructional coach results for interview questions two, six, seven, and eight are delivered. Research question three begins with the instructional coaches' results for survey questions seven, eight, nine, and ten. Research question three concludes with instructional coach responses to interview questions nine and 10. Research question four responses are from principal interview questions one through nine.

Research question one. *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when entering the coaching profession?*

Instructional coaches survey. The survey was sent to instructional coach members of a PDC located in the Midwestern United States. The Qualtrics online survey platform was used to deliver the survey questions to the participants. Also, the survey

was used to collect demographic data about instructional coaches before entering and during their time as instructional coaches.

For the first item on the survey, *what size is your school district k-12*, instructional coaches indicated the size of the district in which they were employed. All 31 respondents chose to answer this question. Twenty-three percent of the respondents were from small school districts with a student population of *1200 students or less*, 42% of respondents were from medium-sized school districts with a student population of *1201-5000 students*, and 35% of respondents were from large school districts of *5001 students or more* (see Figure 1).

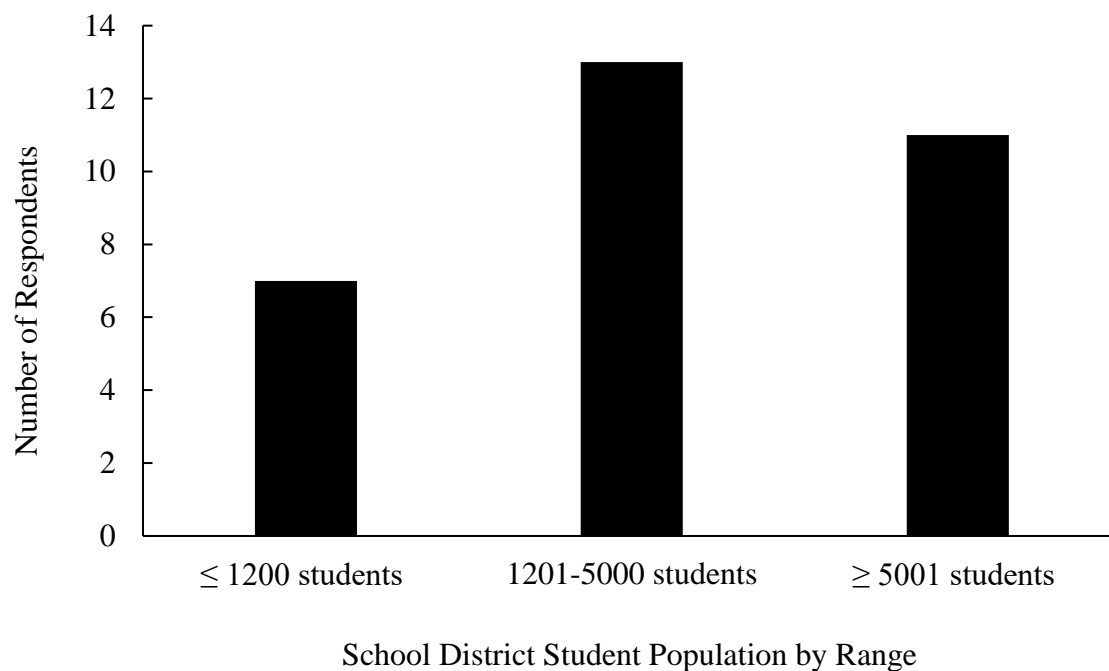


Figure 1. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 1: What size is your school district k-12?

$N = 31$.

The second item instructional coaches answered was *what was your educational experience prior to becoming an instructional coach?* Twenty-seven of the 31 total respondents answered this question. Respondents could choose any of the selections that applied to their educational experiences prior to entering instructional coaching. The selections were the following: *teacher, administrator, interventionist, and other (specify)*. If the respondent chose *other*, the respondent was asked to enter the job title. The percentages for each response to question two were as follows: 71% selected only *teacher*; 7% selected only *other*; 7% *interventionist* only; 7% *teacher and interventionist*; 4% *teacher, administrator, and interventionist*; 4% *teacher, interventionist, and other*. Respondents who chose *other* listed the following job titles as the *other* positions held in education prior to entering the instructional coaching position: *instructional specialist, instructional technology facilitator, and blended learning specialist*.

Instructional coaches answered item three of the survey, *how many years were you a teacher, if you were a teacher, before becoming an instructional coach?* Of the 31 survey respondents, 26 answered this question. None of the respondents had taught *zero years* before entering instructional coaching. Next, 15% of instructional coaches indicated they had taught between *one and five years*, 38% percent of respondents taught between *six and 10 years*, 27% taught between *11 and 15 years*, 12% taught between *16 and 20 years*, 4% taught between *21 and 25 years*, and 4% taught for *more than 26 years* before entering the instructional coaching profession (see Figure 2).

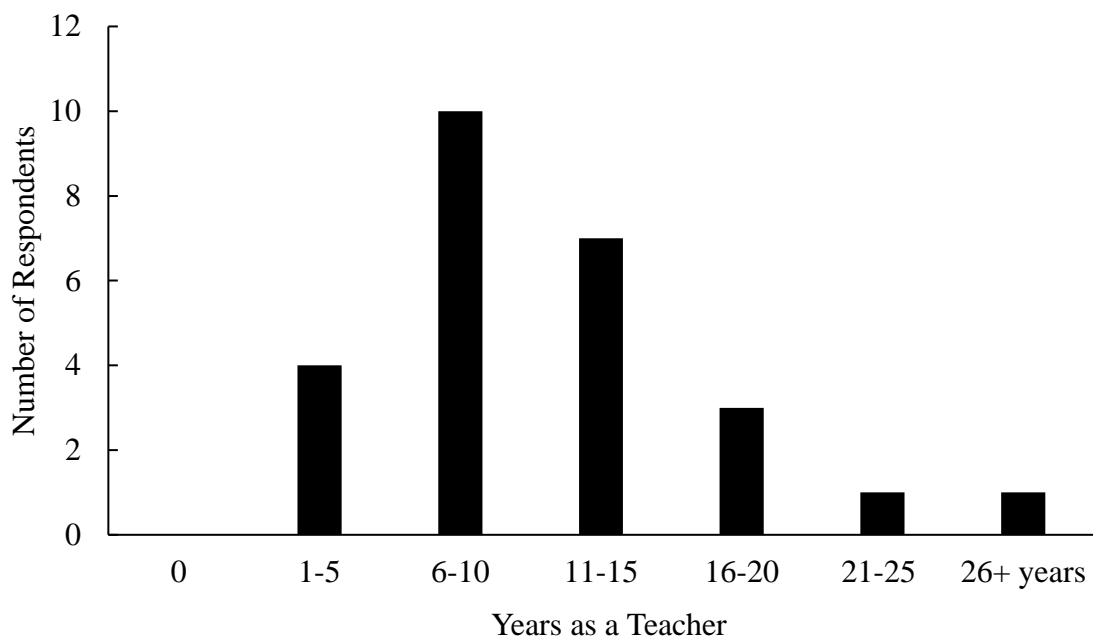


Figure 2. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 3: How many years were you a teacher, if you were a teacher, before becoming an instructional coach? $N = 26$.

On survey item four, *which instructional coaching structure best describes your school district*, 26 of the 31 respondents chose to answer the question. Twenty-one of the 26 respondents stated they were *site-based instructional coaches*. The remaining five respondents stated they were *district-based instructional coaches*.

Instructional coach interviews. An email was sent requesting instructional coaching members of a Midwest PDC to participate in a one-to-one interview voluntarily. Only one instructional coach accepted the offer to participate through the email. Midwest PDC members were contacted and asked to recommend instructional coaches willing to participate in the interview process. Each instructional coach recommended was contacted via email and asked to participate. Ten instructional coaches chose to participate in the interview process.

The first interview item instructional coaches responded to was *are you a district-based or site-based instructional coach?* Five of the instructional coaches responded that they were *district-based*. Two of the coaches who identified as *district-based* came from small-sized districts, two instructional coaches came from medium-sized districts, and one instructional coach came from a large-sized district. The other five instructional coaches responded that they were *site-based*. Three of the instructional coaches identified as *site-based* came from large-sized districts, one instructional coach came from a medium-sized district, and one instructional coach came from a small-sized district.

The third interview item instructional coaches responded to was *what personal or professional background impacted your decision to become an instructional coach?* Eleven themes emerged during the interviews. Participants SIC1 and MIC3 expressed that *content-specific training* in math was one reason they became instructional coaches. The participant designated as SIC1, along with MIC2, stated that their *administrators recommended* them for the instructional coach position. Participant SIC2 was the only respondent to express participation as a *professional development* committee member and acting chair having an impact on the decision to become an instructional coach.

Six of the instructional coaches expressed time as a *classroom teacher* impacted the decision to become an instructional coach. The participants who expressed this sentiment were SIC3, MIC2, MIC3, LIC1, LIC2, and LIC3. Next, participants SIC3, MIC3, and LIC4 noted *positive experiences* with an instructional coach impacted the decision to move to the instructional coach position. Participant LIC4 was the only respondent to express that *negative experiences* with an instructional coach impacted the

choice to become an instructional coach. A *master's degree* in literacy impacted SIC3, *dyslexia training* impacted MIC1, a building *leadership role* impacted MIC2, and acting as a *reading interventionist* and having a *master's degree* in administration impacted LIC4 to become an instructional coach (see Table 1).

Table 1

Instructional Coach Interview Item 3: What personal or professional background impacted your decision to become an instructional coach?

SIC1	X	X								
SIC2			X							
SIC3				X	X					X
MIC1							X			
MIC2		X		X				X		
MIC3	X			X	X					
LIC1				X						
LIC2				X						
LIC3				X						
LIC4					X	X			X	X
Theme	Content-Specific Training	Administrator Recommended	Professional Development	Classroom Teacher	Positive Experience	Negative Experience	Dyslexia Training	Leadership Role	Reading Interventionist	Master's Degree

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript.

N = 10.

The fourth instructional coach interview item was *what do you wish you had known before becoming an instructional coach?* Respondents SIC1 and MIC3 expressed the need to know how to *manage personalities* that are different and difficult. Respondents

SIC1 and LIC2 would like to have been trained in how to be a more *effective leader*. Additionally, respondents SIC2 and MIC1 wished they would have known how difficult it would be when *supporting teachers' needs*. Instructional coaches SIC3 and LIC2 wished they had understood the *challenge and stress* involved in working with teachers. Planning *professional development* was an area respondent MIC1 identified as important to know before becoming an instructional coach.

Respondents MIC1, LIC3, and LIC4 wished they had understood how to plan and conduct *coaching cycles*. MIC1 also stated the need to know the most effective way to set up *scheduling*. MIC2 wished the *loneliness* in an instructional coaching position had been explained. MIC3 and LIC1 stated a need to know more about the different and best *coaching models* to use before becoming an instructional coach. In addition, LIC1 said it would have been nice to know how to measure the *impact of coaching* on student learning. LIC3 indicated a need to have more *knowledge* and be *less naïve* about instructional practices occurring in the classrooms. LIC3 and LIC4 indicated it would have been nice to understand the instructional coach's *roles and responsibilities* more clearly before entering the instructional coaching position. Finally, LIC3 said that training in the best *questioning practices* to use with teachers would have been helpful (see Table 2).

Table 2

Instructional Coach Interview Item 4: What do you wish you had known before becoming an instructional coach?

SIC1	X	X											
SIC2			X										
SIC3				X									
MIC1			X		X	X	X						
MIC2								X					
MIC3	X								X				
LIC1									X	X			
LIC2		X		X									
LIC3							X				X	X	X
LIC4							X					X	
Theme	Manage Personalities	Effective Leader	Supporting Teachers	Challenge and Stress	Professional Development	Coaching Cycles	Scheduling	Loneliness	Coaching Models	Impact of Coaching	Knowledge/Less Naive	Roles and Responsibilities	Questioning Practices

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript.

N = 10.

The fifth item on the instructional coach interview instructional coaches answered was *what experiences, prior to becoming an instructional coach, helped you the most in the instructional coaching position?* Table 3 below represents the training and physical participation in learning. The last paragraph of this section includes elements important in prior learning experiences for the instructional coaches but was more an exhibition of leadership qualities than training or physical participation in learning. One instructional coach, SIC1, said *backward design* training helped in the instructional coaching position. Respondent SIC2 stated that participation in a *professional development* committee was helpful when entering the coaching position. Additionally, respondent SIC3 stated that taking *online courses* in instructional coaching and becoming *Reading Recovery* trained helped. *Adaptive Schools* training was recognized by SIC1 as valuable when preparing to enter the coaching profession. MIC1 indicated that entering the instructional coaching position with *dyslexia training* was most helpful as a new instructional coach.

Being an *A+ coordinator* was recognized by respondent SIC2 as being helpful before entering the coaching profession. LIC2 and LIC3 both acknowledged *classroom teacher* experience was most helpful to them. *Brain-based reading* strategy training was another experience MIC1 found helpful. MIC2 stated that *leading teacher teams* was helpful. LIC1 included being a part of *professional learning* teams was an essential part of prior experiences. *Curriculum writing* was an experience that helped LIC3 with the instructional coaching position. Lastly, LIC4 stated that experience as a *reading interventionist* and knowledge of the *Theory of Learning* were the most helpful prior experiences had before entering the coaching profession (see Table 3).

Not included in Table 3, but also mentioned by respondents were leadership qualities exhibited by themselves or other instructional coaches during the respondents' prior experiences such as building strong relationships and collaborating with colleagues. Two instructional coaches, SIC3 and MIC3, stated *influence from other instructional coaches* was valuable in the preparation of becoming an instructional coach. MIC2 stated that *building strong relationships* across the district was a prior experience that helped when becoming an instructional coach. LIC1 and LIC3 shared that *collaboration with colleagues* helped prepare them for the instructional coaching profession.

Table 3

Instructional Coach Interview Item 5: What experiences prior to becoming an instructional coach helped you the most in the instructional coaching position?

SIC1	X				X									
SIC2		X					X							
SIC3			X	X										
MIC1						X		X						
MIC2									X					
MIC3														
LIC1										X				
LIC2								X						
LIC3								X				X		
LIC4													X	X
Theme	Backward Design	Professional Development	Online Courses	Reading Recovery	Adaptive Schools	Dyslexia Training	A+ Coordinator	Classroom Teacher	Brain-Based Reading	Leading Teacher Teams	Professional Learning	Curriculum Writing	Reading Interventionist	Theory of Learning

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript. $N =$

10.

Research question two. *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding professional development in instructional coaching?*

Instructional coaches survey. The fifth item on the instructional coach survey, *how many years have you been an instructional coach*, was answered by 26 of the 31 participants. Seventy-three percent of participants indicated they had been instructional coaches for *zero to five years*. Another 23% of participants indicated they had been in the instructional coach position for *six to 10 years*. Four percent of participants had been an instructional coach *11-15 years*. *Sixteen to 20 years*, *21-25 years*, and *26+ years* were also choices on the survey. Zero percent of participants chose these options (see Figure 3).

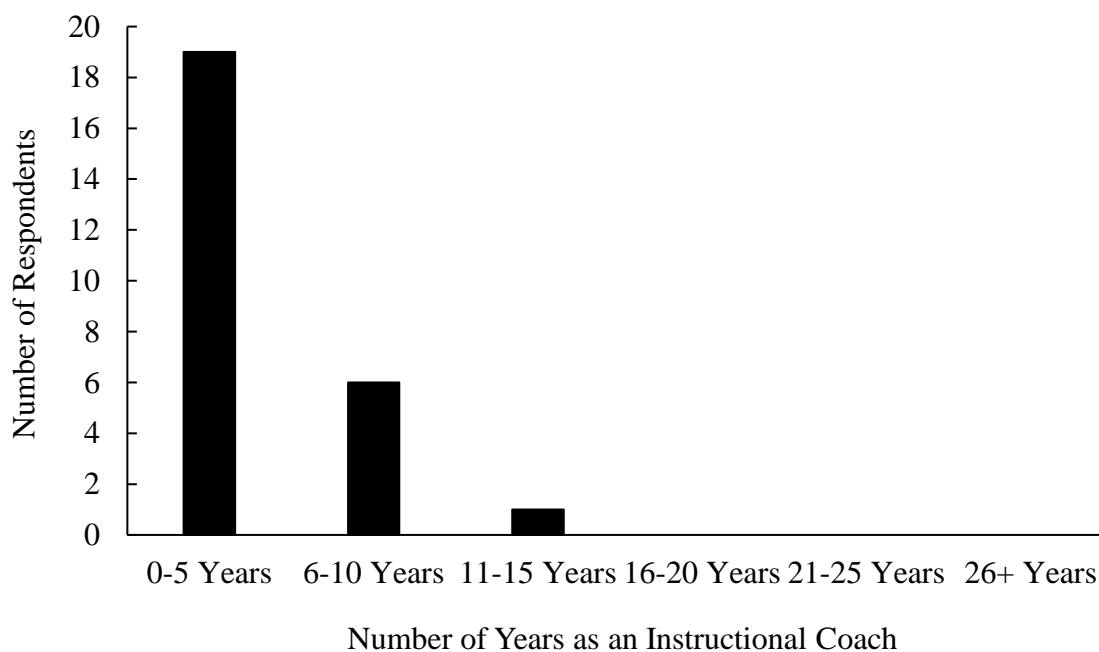


Figure 3. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 5: How many years have you been an instructional coach? $N = 26$.

The instructional coaches answered survey item six; *what specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach?* Of the 31 instructional coaches surveyed, 25 chose to answer the question. Three categorical themes emerged from the data collected. The themes were *degrees earned*, *instructional coaching model training*, and *content training* (see Figures 4, 5, and 6, respectively). Most participants had more than one category identified. Each category contained subcategories indicated by the participants' responses.

In the first category, *degrees held*, fifteen of the 25 participants identified *master's degrees* as specialized training they received to become an instructional coach. Four participants also stated they had received their *specialist degrees*. Two more participants stated they had received their *doctorate degrees* (see Figure 4).

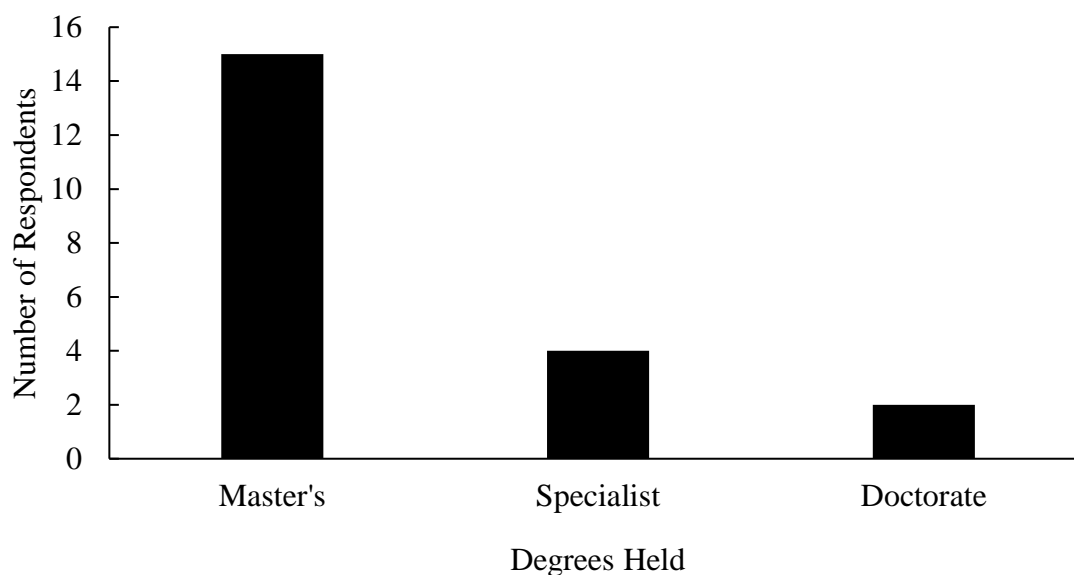


Figure 4. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 6: What specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach? $N = 25$.

The second category to emerge was *instructional coaching model training*. *Rutherford* training, also known as Feedback and Coaching Lab by Rutherford Learning Group, was identified by two participants. One participant identified *Cognitive* coaching. One participant indicated the Missouri Reading Initiative (*MRI*) training as specialized training. Finally, *district training* was indicated as specialized training received by three participants (see Figure 5).

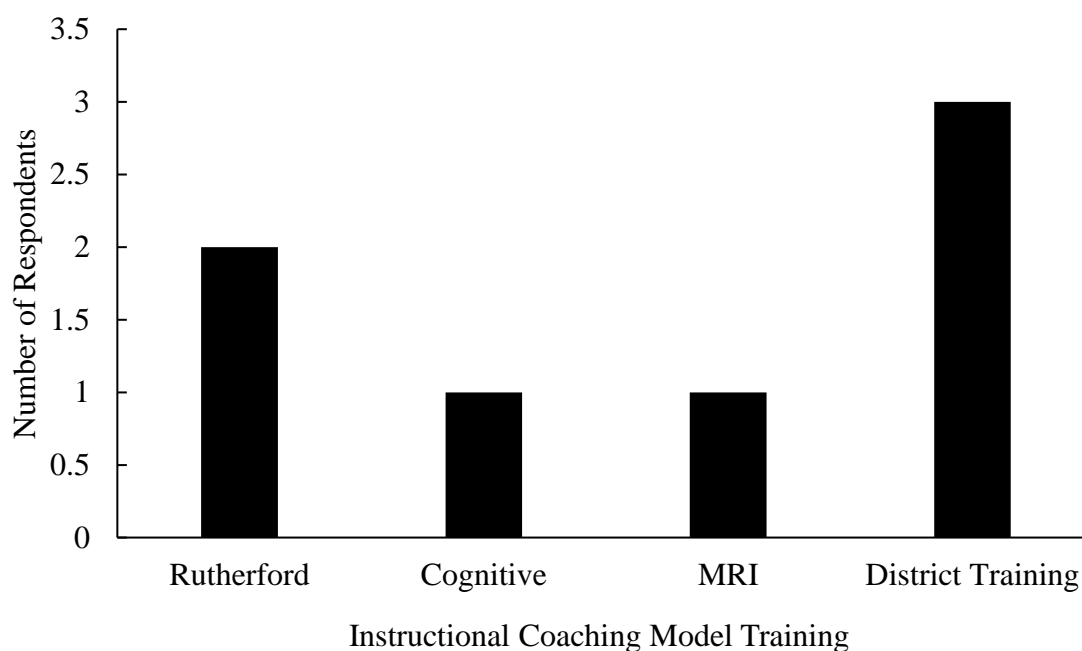


Figure 5. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 6: What specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach? $N = 25$.

The third category to emerge was *content training* (see Figure 6). Two participants indicated they received Reading Recovery (*RR*) certification. Seven participants cited Professional Development (*PD*) as a type of specialized training received. On the *job training* (two participants) and *reading specialist* certification (one participant) were cited

by respondents as specialized training received. *Online courses* were indicated as specialized training received by one other instructional coach surveyed. Four instructional coaches stated *certifications*, as in content certifications, were specialized trainings in which instructional coaches participated. Finally, three participants indicated *none* as a response; however, one of the three participants named *Rutherford training* (see Figure 5), and content training and *certifications* as specialized training received (see Figure 6).

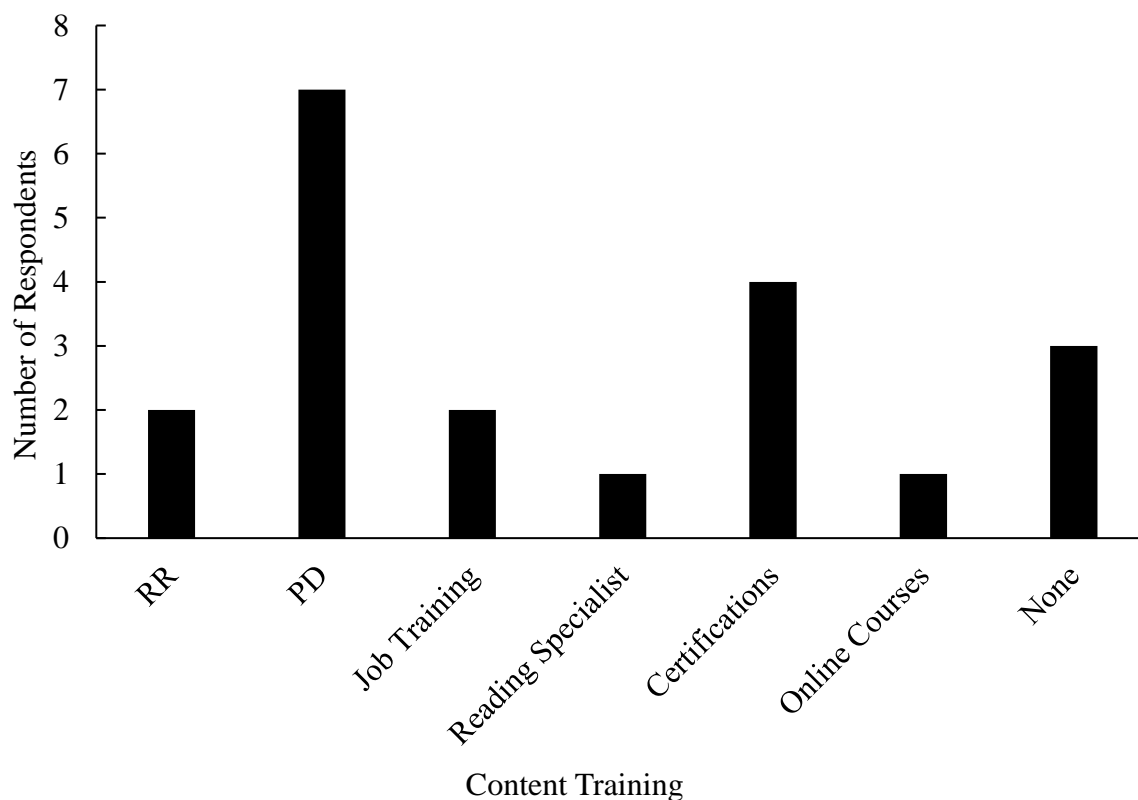


Figure 6. Instructional Coaches Survey Item 6: What specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach? $N = 25$.

Instructional coach interviews. The second instructional coach interview item was to *describe your role as an instructional coach*. Two categories emerged from instructional coach interview question 2. The first category included *direct work and contact with teachers*. The second category to emerge was to *work with people other than teachers*.

In category one, *direct work and contact with teachers*, participant LIC2 indicated one role of the instructional coach was to work on *curriculum and state standards*. Another role of a coach, as indicated by SIC1, was to help determine the *student learning outcomes*. *Providing resources* to teachers was a third role named by instructional coaches MIC2 and LIC2. One participant, MIC2, also cited providing *model instruction* for teachers as a role assumed by an instructional coach. All 10 participants surveyed cited *coaching cycles* with new teachers or seasoned teachers as a role of the coach. SIC3 and MIC3 stated that one role was new teacher orientation. Six participants (SIC3, MIC1, MIC2, LIC1, LIC2, LIC3) cited *professional development* as an instructional coaching role. Another role identified by SIC2, MIC2, LIC1, and LIC3 was helping teachers *set and carry out goals*. SIC2, MIC2, and LIC2 indicated that another role of coaching was to *gather, collect, and analyze data*. Also, SIC2 and MIC2 stated they *provide feedback* to teachers as a part of their jobs. Lastly, the facilitation of *grade-level team meetings* was acknowledged as a part of the instructional coaching role by SIC1, SIC2, SIC3, LIC1, LIC2, LIC3, AND LIC4 (see Table 4).

Table 4

Instructional Coach Interview Item 2: Describe your role as an instructional coach.

SIC1		X			X						X
SIC2					X			X	X	X	X
SIC3					X	X	X				X
MIC1					X		X				
MIC2			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
MIC3					X	X					
LIC1					X		X	X			X
LIC2	X		X		X		X		X		X
LIC3					X		X	X			X
LIC4					X						X
Themes	Curriculum & State Standards	Student Learning Outcomes	Providing Resources	Model Instruction	Coaching Cycles	New Teacher Orientation	Professional Development	Set and Carry Out Goals	Gather, Collect, Analyze Data	Provide Feedback	Grade-Level Team Meetings

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript. $N =$

10.

Category two, *work with people other than teachers*, had three subcategories emerge. MIC3 stated *collaboration with other instructional coaches as an instructional*

coach's role. MIC2 mentioned *meeting with administrators* as a role of instructional coaches. A final role of instructional coaches noted by MIC3 was *working with students 1:1 and in small groups*.

The sixth instructional coach interview item was *what, if any, formal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?* Participant SIC1 stated *none* for time participated in formal educational experiences. SIC2 and MIC1 participants said they had participated in *webinars*. SIC2 also named *book studies* as a part of the formal educational experience. SIC3 indicated participation in *conferences* as formal educational experiences. SIC3, LIC2, and LIC4 stated that earning a degree higher than a bachelor's degree as a formal experience. Participants MIC1 and MIC2 both named an *instructional coaching network* as a part of a formal experience, as well.

Additionally, MIC2, MIC3, LIC1, LIC3, and LIC4 included, as a part of their formal educational experience, training in specific coaching models. LIC1 was the only instructional coach who stated *online course(s)* were a formal experience. The final two categories were identified by LIC2. These two categories were *job shadowing* and *monthly job-alike meetings* in the school district of employment (see Table 5).

Table 5

Instructional Coach Interview Item 6: What, if any, formal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?

SIC1	X									
SIC2		X	X							
SIC3				X	X					
MIC1	X					X				
MIC2						X	X			
MIC3							X			
LIC1							X	X		
LIC2					X					
LIC3							X		X	X
LIC4					X		X			
Theme	None	Webinars	Book Studies	Conferences	Degrees Higher than Bachelor's	Instructional Coaching Network	Specific Coaching Model Training	Online Course(s)	Job Shadowing	Job-Alike Meetings

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript. $N =$

10.

The seventh instructional coach interview item was *what, if any, informal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?* Five of the 10 participants, SIC1, SIC2, SIC3, MIC3, AND LIC1, indicated participation in a *regional instructional coaching network* as an informal experience to improve their coaching technique. SIC1 named *conferences* as having an impact on coaching. Participants SIC1, SIC3, MIC1, MIC2, MIC3, LIC1, and LIC2 all indicated *personal reading and study* as an informal educational experience impacting their coaching technique. *Web-based coaching* networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, were stated as an informal experience impacting coaching technique by SIC2, MIC2, LIC1, and LIC2. MIC1 also indicated the *Missouri Reading Initiative* as another informal educational opportunity experienced.

Two instructional coaches, MIC2 and LIC2, stated another informal experience was participation in *content specific conferences*. MIC3 and LIC1 named *collaboration* with other instructional coaches as an informal experience. The following categories each received one mention each by instructional coaches as informal educational experiences: *district training* (LIC1), *coaching leadership team* (LIC1), *webinars* (LIC3), and *Jim Knight videos* (LIC3). Lastly, LIC3 and LIC4 indicated *communication* with other instructional coaches as informal educational experiences (see Table 6).

Table 6

Instructional Coach Interview Item 7: What, if any, informal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?

SIC1	X	X	X									
SIC2	X			X								
SIC3	X		X									
MIC1			X		X							
MIC2			X	X		X						
MIC3	X		X				X					
LIC1	X		X	X			X	X	X			
LIC2			X	X		X						
LIC3										X	X	X
LIC4												X
Theme	Coaching Network (Regional)	Conferences	Personal Reading and Book Studies	Web-Based Coaching	Missouri Reading Initiative	Content Specific Conferences	Collaboration	District Training	Coaching Leadership Team	Webinars	Jim Knight Videos	Communication

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript.

N = 10.

With the eighth instructional coach interview item, instructional coaches answered *in what ways does your district support your professional development as an*

instructional coach? Coaches felt supported by their districts through the provision of *funds for conferences and workshops*, as indicated by participants SIC1, SIC3, MIC1, MIC2, MIC3, and LIC3. Participants SIC2, MIC1, MIC2, and LIC1 indicated their school districts supported them with the provision of *funds for professional resources*. One instructional coach, SIC2, stated the district demonstrated support by *never asking the instructional coach to substitute teach* and by not asking the coach to perform extra duties, thereby protecting the *study and reflection time of the coach*.

Six instructional coaches, SIC2, SIC3, MIC1, MIC2, MIC3, and LIC2, stated their school district supported them by providing *time to attend PD, meetings, and trainings outside of the school district*. MIC3, LIC1, and LIC3 also indicated their districts provided *time to attend PD, meetings, and trainings within the school district*. One of each of the following subcategories received a mention by an instructional coach as a way the district supported them, *none provided* (LIC4), *prevent scheduling conflicts* (MIC3), and *learning support specialist* (LIC3) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Instructional Coach Interview Item 8: In what ways does your district support your professional development as an instructional coach?

SIC1	X								
SIC2		X	X	X	X				
SIC3	X					X			
MIC1	X	X				X			
MIC2	X	X				X			
MIC3	X					X	X		X
LIC1		X					X		
LIC2						X			
LIC3	X						X		X
LIC4								X	
Theme	Funds for Conferences & Workshops	Funds for Professional Resources	Never Ask Me to Substitute	Time for Study & Reflection (No Extra Duties)	Time to Attend PD, Meetings, Trainings (Out of District)	Time to Attend PD, Meetings, Trainings (In District)	None Provided	Prevent Scheduling Conflicts	Learning Support Specialist

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript.

N = 10.

Research Question 3: *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding a common knowledge base for instructional coaching?*

Instructional coaches survey. The seventh item from the instructional coaches

survey was *what professional development have you received to improve your instructional coaching knowledge and practices?* Two main categories emerged from the survey-*instructional coaching model professional development* and *nonspecific content and coaching professional development*. Each of these two categories had several subcategories emerge.

The first category, *instructional coaching model professional development*, had six subcategories emerge. *Rutherford*, a research and professional development consultancy, and *Cognitive Coaching* were both named by five respondents as an instructional coaching model professional development in which they participated. Two respondents identified *Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (PCL)*. Next, three respondents stated they had received training in the *Adaptive Schools* model. *Diane Sweeney's* student-centered coaching model was mentioned by one respondent. Finally, *Jim Knight's* instructional coaching program was identified by two respondents as instructional coaching training, and professional development received.

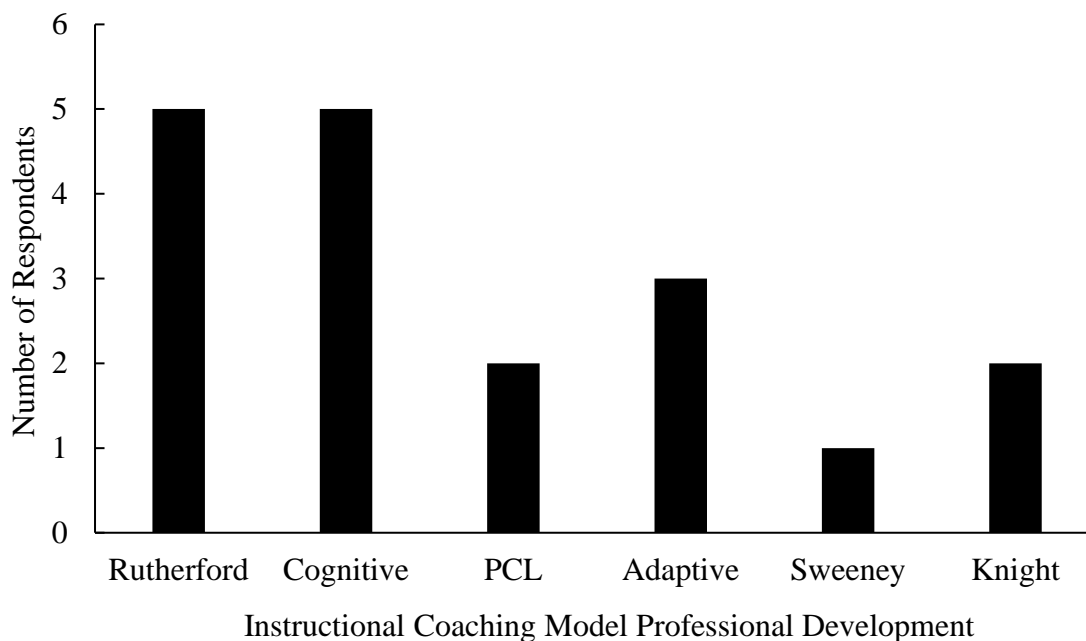
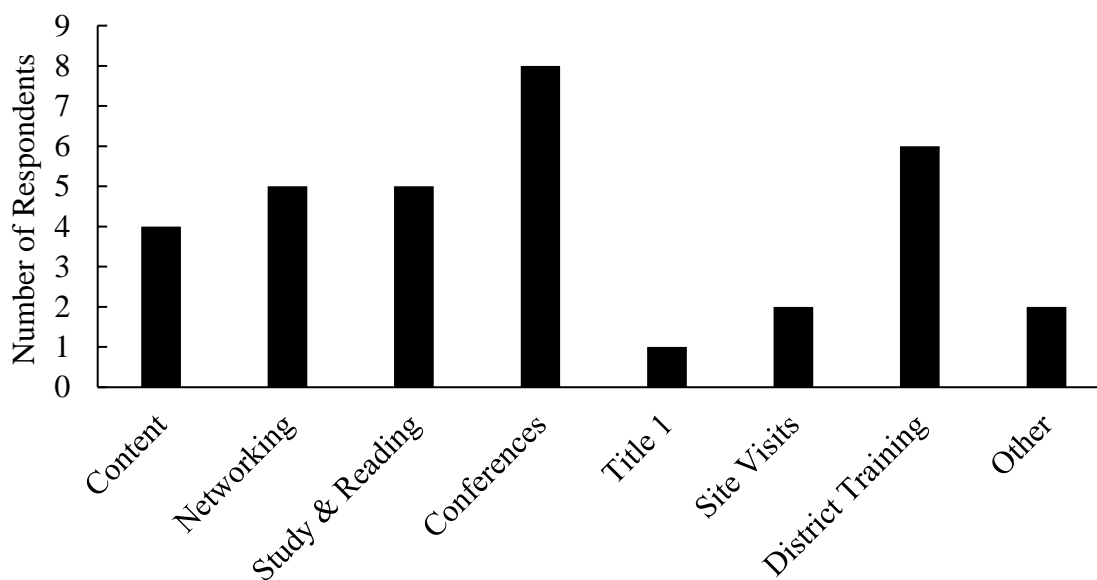


Figure 7. Instructional Coaches Survey: Item 7 – What professional development have you received to improve your instructional coaching knowledge and practices? $N = 25$.

The second category, *nonspecific content and coaching professional development*, had eight categories emerge. Four respondents noted *content* training and professional development as received to improve instructional coaching knowledge and practice. *Networking* and *study and reading* were named by five respondents as professional development participation in which they participated. Eight respondents reported participation in *conferences* as a form of professional development. *Title I* reading or math training was noted as professional development or training received by one respondent. Two respondents reported participating in *site visits* as professional development and training. *District training* was mentioned by six respondents as professional development, and training and *other* types of professional development and training were noted by two respondents.



Nonspecific Content and Coaching Professional Development

Figure 8. Instructional Coaches Survey: Item 7 – What professional development have you received to improve your instructional coaching knowledge and practice? $N = 25$.

The eighth item from the instructional coaches survey was *describe the training you have received in the coaching model(s) you have implemented?* Twenty-two of the 31 respondents chose to answer this question. One respondent stated that *district training* is one type of professional development completed. Two respondents stated that *online courses* were a part of their professional development. *Coaching labs* received the most mentions, with 15 respondents stating this as a type of professional development in which they participate. *Book studies* were named by two respondents. Finally, eight respondents stated they had received *no training* in the models they implemented.

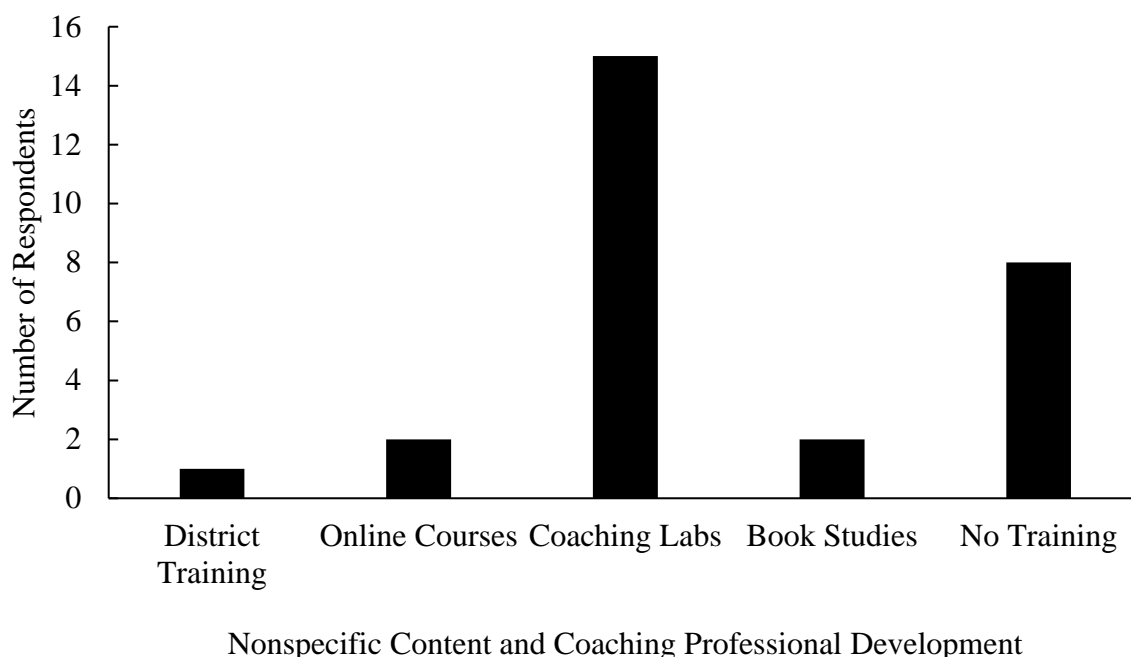


Figure 9. Instructional Coaches Survey: Item 8 – Describe the training you have received in the coaching model(s) you have implemented? $N = 22$.

The ninth item from the instructional coaches survey was *what model(s) of coaching do you adhere to as an instructional coach (include mixed approaches if applicable), such as peer coaching or cognitive coaching?* Twenty-three of the 31 respondents chose to answer this question. Five respondents indicated adherence to the *peer coaching* model. The next four categories- *Jim Knight*, *PCL*, *Differentiated Coaching*, and the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)* received one mention from respondents. Nine different respondents stated they adhere to *Cognitive Coaching* as a part of their instructional coaching practices. *Rutherford* instructional coaching, also known as *Feedback and Coaching Lab* by the Rutherford Learning Group, was indicated as a coaching model in which four respondents adhere to in practice. Two

respondents indicated adherence to *Sweeney's* Student-Centered Coaching model.

Finally, four respondents stated they *did not adhere* to a specific coaching model.

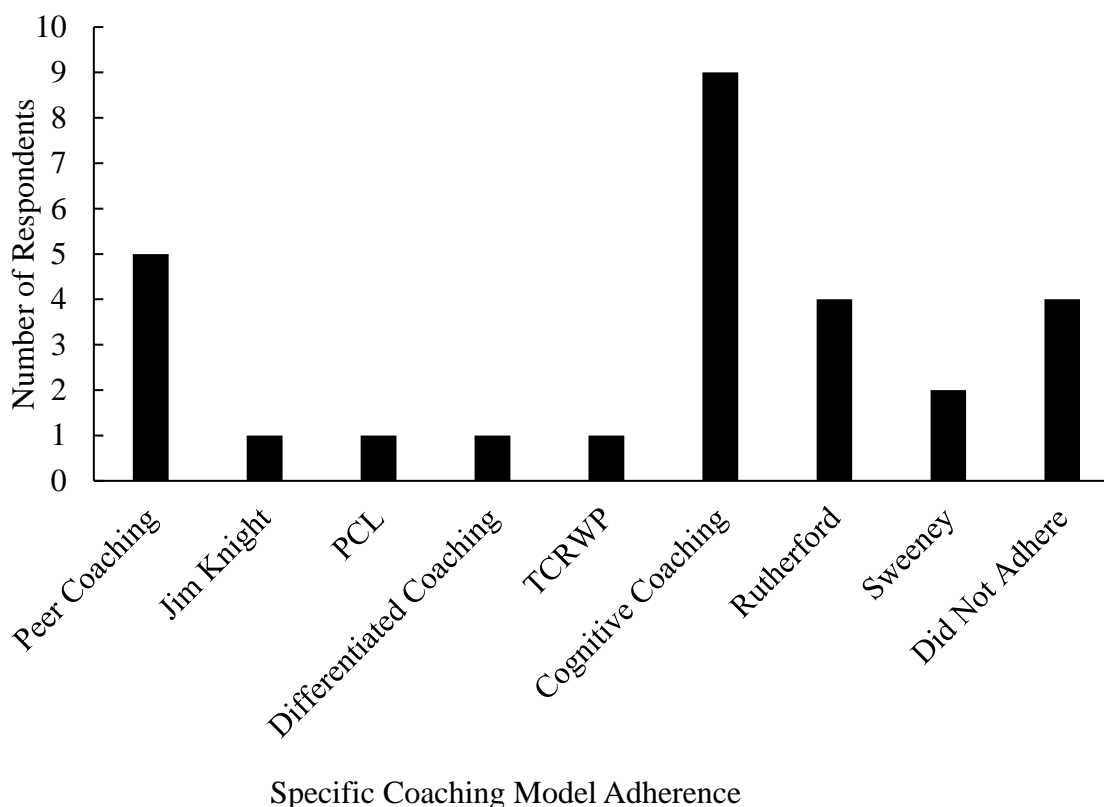


Figure 10. Instructional Coaches Survey: Item 9 – What model(s) of coaching do you adhere to as an instructional coach (include mixed approaches if applicable), such as peer coaching or cognitive coaching? $N = 23$.

The tenth item from the instructional coaches survey was *what do you believe should be included in a common knowledge base for instructional coaches?* Twenty of the 31 respondents chose to answer this question. Seven respondents stated that *building relationships* were necessary for instructional coaches' common knowledge base.

Classroom practices and procedures and strong *content knowledge* were noted by six

respondents apiece as being valuable toward a common knowledge base. Training in one or more *coaching models* was indicated by eight respondents as necessary for coaches' common knowledge base. Another item identified by instructional coaches was how to *support teachers* in the classroom. Additionally, two respondents felt a strong knowledge of *theory and pedagogy* was a necessity for coaching knowledge. Finally, training in *coaching skills* was deemed necessary by three respondents.

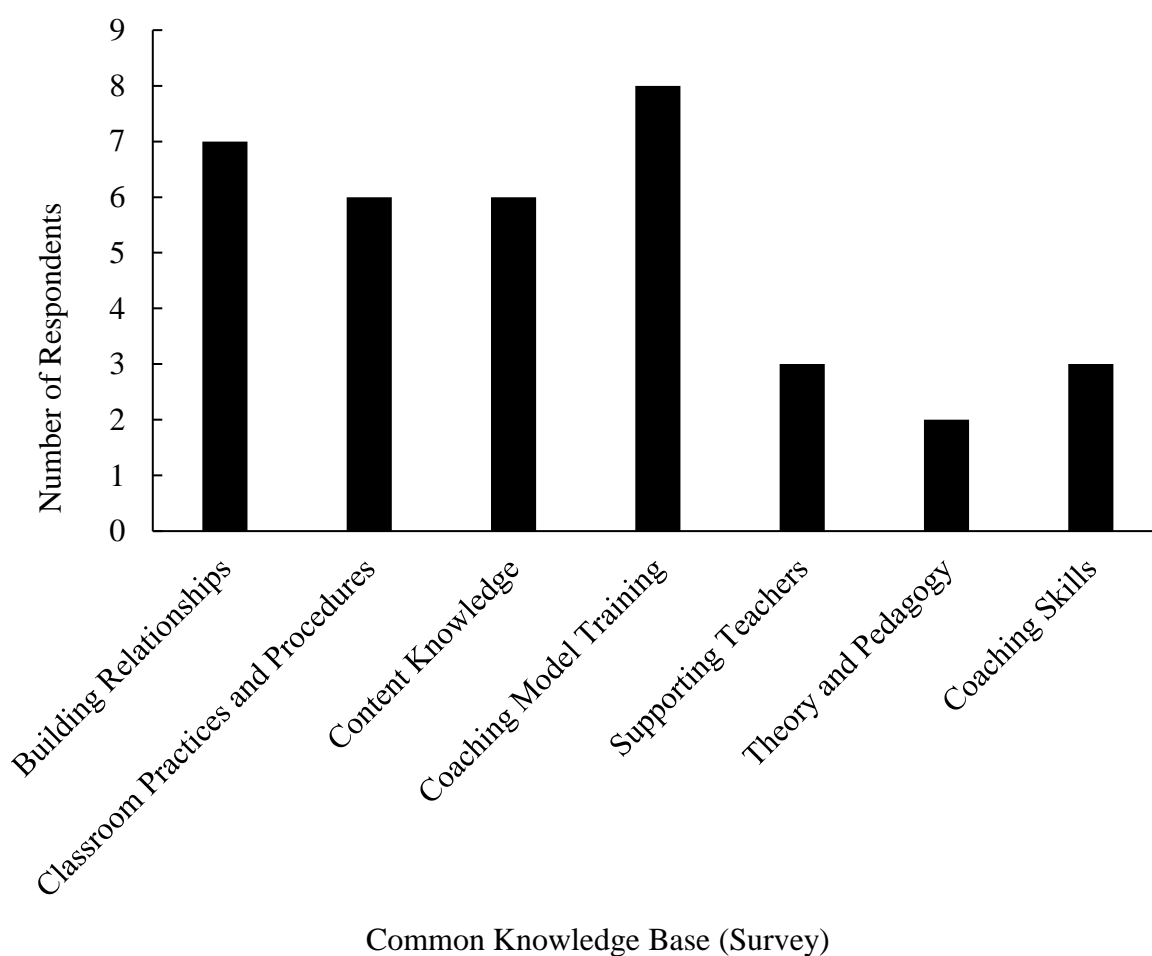


Figure 11. Instructional Coaches Survey: Item 10 – What do you believe should be included in a common knowledge base for instructional coaches? $N = 20$.

Instructional coach interviews. The ninth item of the instructional coach interview was *what common coaching knowledge do you believe is imperative to instructional coaching?* Four respondents, SIC1, SIC3, MIC3, and LIC2, believe knowing how to *support teachers* in their learning, and working with different personalities should be a part of a coach's common knowledge. Respondents SIC1 and LIC3 identified strong *questioning skills* as a necessity, also. SIC1 also stated that another common coaching knowledge necessity is the ability of the coach to be *reflective*.

Next, the ability to be *trustworthy* was identified by instructional coaches SIC2, MIC1, LIC3, and LIC4 as valuable to coaching knowledge. Six instructional coaches, SIC2, SIC3, MIC2, LIC2, LIC3, and LIC4 also identified building *relationships*, as necessary. SIC3 and LIC3 noted being a *good listener* as valuable coaching knowledge. Another common coaching knowledge indicated by instructional coaches SIC3 and MIC1 is *content knowledge*. Recognizing instructional coaches are *not evaluative* was indicated by MIC1, and the need for a *common language* among coaches was noted by MIC3. Finally, the need to know how to build teacher *capacity and efficacy* was named by instructional coaches LIC1 and LIC3.

Table 8

Instructional Coach Interview Item 9: What common coaching knowledge do you believe is imperative to instructional coaching?

SIC1	X	X	X							
SIC2				X	X					
SIC3	X				X	X	X			
MIC1				X			X	X		
MIC2					X					
MIC3	X								X	
LIC1										X
LIC2	X					X				
LIC3		X		X	X	X				X
LIC4				X	X					
Theme	Supporting Teachers	Questioning Skills	Reflective	Trustworthy	Relationships	Good Listener	Content Knowledge	Not Evaluative	Common Language	Capacity and Efficacy

Note. Themes directly identified by participants derived from the original transcript.

N = 10.

Next, instructional coaches answered the tenth interview item, *is there anything else you would like to share concerning instructional coaching?* One theme that emerged was the instructional coaches' desire to be open and supportive of teachers. SIC1 stated, "be transparent and vulnerable and modeling this will help teachers to be transparent and

vulnerable and able to question their practice.” During the interview, SIC1 reported, “you and the teacher are partners.” SIC2 echoed SIC1’s sentiment by stating, “I want teachers to know I am there for them.” Additionally, MIC2 expressed love for supporting the teacher. LIC4 echoed this statement during the interview by stating, “I believe every, every teacher deserves a coach. A good coach.”

Another theme to emerge from the interviews was the learning that comes along with being an instructional coach. Instructional coach, SIC2, shared, “This position has taught me how to be a better teacher and move kids to the next level.” SIC3 noted, “This position has opened my eyes to see the standards more clearly and to understand the progression from grade to grade.” MIC2 expressed the need to be passionate about learning and the willingness to try new strategies. MIC3 shared, “An instructional coach needs to find a team and to network. A person to lean on and ask questions and gain insight.”

A third theme to emerge from the interviews was the feelings coaches expressed about their jobs. MIC1, MIC2, SIC2, and LIC2 all stated they loved their jobs. MIC1 explained that the demands and challenges of the job were enjoyable. SIC2 said, “I could do this for the rest of my career!” “I would do it again,” stated LIC2. LIC3 reported, “It’s not for the faint of heart.” LIC2 said that with coaching, “there are easy days and harder days.”

Research question four. *What are the perceptions of building principals regarding the role of instructional coaches?*

Principal interviews. Principals answered the first item on the principal interview *is your instructional coach district-based or site-based?* SP1 indicated that instructional

coach(es) were site-based. SP2 and SP3 stated their instructional coaches were district-based. MP1 indicated this school district had both site-based and district-based instructional coaches. According to LP1, district-based instructional coaches were utilized in this district.

The second item answered by principals was *what is the role of the instructional coach(es) in your school district or building?* According to SP1, SP2, and SP3, instructional coaches conducted coaching cycles as a part of their instructional coaching role. Additionally, SP1, SP3, and MP1 indicated another responsibility of instructional coaches was to observe classroom teachers and provide teachers with feedback when the principal is and is not present. SP2 and MP1 also stated that instructional coaches should provide classroom teachers with guidance and instruction in the best regular classroom instructional strategies. SP2, SP3, MP1, and LP1 noted it was the role of the instructional coaches to provide teachers with resources and professional learning support through team planning and professional development. SP2 believed an instructional coach's role was to create formative and summative assessments with grading scales for classroom teachers to use when assessing students.

The third item principals answered was *describe the purpose of the instructional coach(es) in your building or district.* SP1, SP2, and SP3 reported that the purpose of instructional coaches was providing resources to teachers and acting as a resource to teachers. SP1 and MP1 also said the purpose of instructional coaches was to participate in coaching cycles with teachers. SP2 indicated the purpose of instructional coaches was to provide assessment alignment across grade-levels, work with teachers on curriculum and instruction, use professional development to provide teachers with instructional and

classroom management strategies, bring alignment to state standards and instruction K-12, build team efficacy, and facilitate team meetings. SP3 and LP1 explained the coach's role was to provide support and nonevaluative feedback.

The fourth item principals answered was *describe the instructional coach's expertise in educating your teachers in your district or building?* SP1 reported that the instructional coach was comfortable working in all grade levels, had expertise in certain content areas, had good pedagogy, and was a good teacher. SP2 indicated the instructional coaches brought their expertise as highly effective teachers to the instructional coaching position. SP3 stated the instructional coaches' expertise came from experience as veteran teachers and their content knowledge. MP1 indicated the instructional coaches were veteran teachers who were also instructional leaders. Some of the instructional coaches had received specialty training in dyslexia, making the coach the expert in dyslexia, according to MP1. LP1 stated the instructional coaches' expertise was building a rapport with staff.

The fifth item which principals responded to was *what knowledge appears to be common among the instructional coaches when working with teachers?* SP1 felt that the instructional coaches exhibited good teaching strategies and good pedagogy. SP1 also indicated instructional coaches were well-rounded. SP2 indicated the instructional coaches were knowledgeable about standards, classroom management, and asking questions to enhance critical thinking skills. Additionally, SP2 indicated instructional coaches were focused on instructional strategies, bringing commonality amongst teachers in management and instruction, being highly reflective, and building strong relationships. SP3 stated the instructional coaches had common instructional knowledge and a common

passion for students to come first. MP1 indicated the instructional coaches had a common knowledge of instructional strategies. LP1 reported that the instructional coaches had a common knowledge of the state standards.

The sixth item answered by principals was *what knowledge would help coaches to improve their job performance*. SP1 stated that knowledge helpful to instructional coaches should include knowing how to be collaborative, a good listener, and a strong communicator. SP1 also believed instructional coaches should have the ability to work in any grade level or subject area and network of instructional coaches with the same or similar roles for collaboration and learning. SP2 reported knowledge of how to work with difficult personalities, how to have a growth mindset, and how to conduct professional development, classes, and training in a specific coaching model would be valuable knowledge for coaches to improve their job performance. SP3 indicated a need for instructional coaches to know how to build relationships when not housed in a specific building. MP1 recommended that instructional coaches know how to hold intentional conversations and be more visible to teachers even when not housed in the same building. LP1 acknowledged a need for coaches to understand how to provide planning assistance, how to give feedback, and how to keep teachers on track and focused.

Item seven answered by principals was *describe how your district provides collaboration between coaches in your district and in other districts to enhance their learning*. SP1, SP2, SP3, and MP1 indicated instructional coaches participate in a regional coaching network with instructional coaches from other districts, and the district supported the instructional coaches by providing the time to attend. SP1 also stated

instructional coaches hold subscriptions to professional magazines paid for by the district. SP3 and MP1 stated their school districts provided funds and time for conferences and subject area trainings to support instructional coaches. LP1 stated, “I don’t know.”

The eighth item principals answered was *describe how your district provides professional development to instructional coaches*. SP1 stated that instructional coaches were encouraged to participate in professional development, and funds were provided by the district for professional development. SP2 and SP3 indicated time was provided to instructional coaches to attend regional instructional coaches’ network meetings, funds, and time to attend conferences. SP3 also stated the district was “quick to approve local and state attendance of conferences.” MP1 indicated the district’s assistant superintendent brought coaches together for instructional strategy training, how to work with teachers training, and how to present professional development training effectively. LP1 stated, “I don’t know” in answer to the eighth item.

Principals responded to the ninth item, *is there anything else you would like to share concerning instructional coaching?* SP1 and MP1 shared the feeling that the principal paves the way for teachers to accept the instructional coach and to help build trust. SP1 indicated that the principal oversees identifying teachers in need of additional help from the instructional coach and should encourage the interaction between the coach and teacher. SP2 stated that principals rely on instructional coaches to be instructional leaders when the principal is not present. SP2 also stated, “I can’t imagine my life without them.” SP3 shared that it takes time for coaches to build rapport, and trust with teachers and without the rapport and trust-building, “benefits from having an instructional

coach will be minimal.” MP1 indicated that communication skills are a top priority for instructional coaches. LP1 had no comment.

Summary

An analysis of the data collected from the 31 instructional coaches survey participants, the 10 instructional coach interview participants, and the five principal participants were provided in Chapter Four. The first five questions on the survey were used to gather demographic data from the instructional coaches. The last five questions were used to gather details about the instructional coaches’ education, training, coaching models adhered to, and beliefs regarding what common coaching knowledge coaches should have. The survey data was collected, summarized, and analyzed.

The instructional coaches interviewed were asked 10 questions to help describe their role, training, qualifications, how the school districts support professional development, and what common knowledge instructional coaches need to perform their job. The principals interviewed were asked to respond to nine items on the principal survey. The items were used to elicit responses about instructional coaches’ roles, such as what common coaching knowledge instructional coaches appear to have and need to improve their job performance. Respondents’ answers to the interview items included how the school districts supported the professional development of instructional coaches, what purpose the instructional coaches served, and the principals’ perceptions of the instructional coaches’ role. The interview responses were recorded, categorized, and summarized.

In Chapter Five, the findings and conclusions of this study are discussed. The data collected from the survey and the interviews are used to address the four research

questions. The implications for future considerations are addressed, and recommendations are made for future research.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches concerning their beliefs about their preparedness for becoming an instructional coach and their beliefs about continuing professional development and support received from the employing school district after entering the instructional coaching profession. Instructional coaches' perceptions about the need for a multidisciplinary framework for coaches to utilize when coaching was also examined. Additionally, building principals' beliefs concerning the instructional coaches' roles were explored. Finally, building principals' perceptions concerning instructional coaches' need for continued professional development was examined.

Instructional coaches are relied on to improve the instructional practices of teachers by school districts (Connor, 2017). Therefore, school districts should offer ongoing professional development for instructional coaches to identify and implement the best coaching practices (Connor, 2017). However, there were concerns noted regarding the training provided to instructional coaches at the beginning of and throughout their careers (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). According to Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), lack of training and professional development for instructional coaches might prove detrimental to classroom instruction. Kurz et al. (2017) stated, "Desired coaching outcomes vary considerably between coaching models, as well as for specific teacher and student needs" (p. 7). Therefore, a study to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches and building principals concerning the training and development of instructional coaches was conducted.

Findings

Research question 1. *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when entering the coaching profession?*

Demographic information, including prior experiences and knowledge of instructional coaches, were two categories to emerge from the instructional coach survey and the instructional coach interviews. The findings of the two categories are explained in the following sections. The *demographic information* section was a synthesis of the data gathered from the instructional coach survey questions one, two, three, and four, and the instructional coach interview question one. The second category, *prior experiences, and knowledge*, was used to explain instructional coach interview questions three, four, and five.

Demographic information. Instructional coach survey participants reported from three primary strata. The strata were designated as small-sized districts with a student population of *1200 or less*, medium-sized districts of *1201-5000* student population, and large-sized districts of *5001 or larger* student population. Most respondents came from medium-sized districts. The least respondents came from small districts. Next, 71% of survey respondents indicated their educational background prior to becoming an instructional coach was only as a *teacher*. Twenty-nine percent of survey respondents indicated they had a background in teaching and some combination of *intervention, administration, instructional specialist, instructional technology facilitator, or blended learning specialist*.

Survey respondents also shared the number of years they had been teachers before entering the instructional coaching position. The most common response of respondents

(38%) was between *six and 10 years* as the length of time spent as a teacher. Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated they had been teachers between *11 and 15 years*. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated they had been a teacher between *one and five years* prior to becoming an instructional coach. A small percentage of respondents taught between *16 and 20 years, 21 and 25 years, or more than 26 years* before becoming an instructional coach. None of the respondents indicated they had *zero years* of teaching experience.

On the survey, 21 respondents indicated they were *site-based* instructional coaches. Five of the respondents stated they were *district-based* instructional coaches. During the instructional coach interviews, five of the 10 respondents stated they were *district-based*. Of the five *district-based* respondents, two came from small school districts, two came from medium districts, and one came from a large district. Five of the 10 respondents indicated they were *site-based* instructional coaches. Three of the five *site-based* coaches came from large districts, one came from a medium-sized district, and one came from a small-sized district.

Prior experiences and knowledge. Next, instructional coaches stated the professional background experience(s) that impacted their decisions to become instructional coaches during the instructional coach interviews. Each interviewee gave at least one experience that impacted his or her decision; however, most interviewees gave more than one reason. Six of the 10 interviewees stated time as a *classroom teacher* influenced their decision. Three participants shared *positive experiences* with an instructional coach impacted their decision to become an instructional coach. Other experiences mentioned by the interviewees impacted their decision were *content-specific*

training in math, administrator recommended the position, professional development member and chair, negative experience with an instructional coach, master's degree, dyslexia training, leadership role in the building, and reading interventionist.

During the interviews, instructional coaches shared what they wished they had known prior to entering the instructional coach position. Three of the 10 instructional coaches would like to have had more knowledge about conducting *coaching cycles*. Two different instructional coaches named each of the following themes as prior knowledge they wish they had before entering the coaching profession: *managing personalities, effective leader, the difficulty of supporting teachers, dealing with challenges and stress, coaching models, and roles and responsibilities as an instructional coach*. The following categories were named by one instructional coach per category: *planning professional development, scheduling, loneliness, the impact of coaching, more knowledge and less naïve, and best questioning practices*.

Research question 2. *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding professional development in instructional coaching?*

One category discussed in this section was the instructional coach's perceived role-the instructional coach interview question two corresponded to the perceived role of instructional coaches. Experience, education, and training was the second category discussed in this section. The instructional coach survey questions five and six and instructional coach interview questions six and seven pertained to the second category. Finally, the third category, school district professional development support, emerged. Instructional coach interview question eight pertained to the school district professional development support category.

Instructional coach's role. All interviewees stated coaching cycles with new and seasoned teachers as a part of the instructional coaching role. Another coaching role most of the interview participants named was the facilitation of grade-level team meetings. Additionally, most coaches identified the providing of professional development as a part of the instructional coaching role. A few coaches stated the following were a part of the instructional coaching role:

- helping teachers set and complete goals
- gathering, collecting, and analyzing data
- providing teachers with feedback
- providing resources to teachers

Experience, education, and training. When instructional coaches were asked how many years they held the instructional coaching position, 73% of respondents stated between *zero and five years*. Twenty-three percent of participants stated they held the instructional coaching position for *six to 10 years*. A minor percentage of interviewees held their instructional coaching position for *11-15 years*. The last three categories on the survey were 16-20 years, 21-25 years, and 26+ years. None of the participants chose these last three categories.

Instructional coaches who responded to the survey then explained what specialized training was received to become an instructional coach. Three separate themes emerged: degrees earned, instructional coaching model training, and content training. Most instructional coaches, 15 of the 25 respondents who answered the question, stated a *master's degree* was held. A much smaller number of respondents, six in total, stated they held a *specialist degree* or a *doctoral degree*. The second theme,

specific coaching model training, had four main categories. Three of the 25 respondents stated they received school *district training*. Two of the 25 respondents had *Rutherford training*. *Cognitive* coaching and the Missouri Reading Initiative (*MRI*) training were named by one respondent each.

The final theme to emerge from question six of the survey, *what specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach*, was content training. Professional development (*PD*) was mentioned most often by interviewees. *Certifications* training for different content areas were a part of the content training some participants named. *Job training* and Reading Recovery (*RR*) training were each mentioned by respondents as specific content training received. Additionally, reading *specialist* training and *online courses* were named as content training received.

During the interview, instructional coaches answered interview items five and six to share the formal and informal educational experiences in which they participated as instructional coaches. The following responses emerged in response to interview item six. *Specific coaching model training* was cited most often as a type of formal training received. The coaching models respondents referred to most often were Cognitive Coaching, Feedback and Coaching Lab by Rutherford Learning Group, Student-Centered Coaching by Diane Sweeney, Impact Cycle training by Jim Knight, Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy, and Adaptive Schools training. Each of the following experiences named was mentioned by two different respondents: *webinars* and *instructional coaching network* participation. Three respondents shared that they had acquired a *degree higher than a bachelor's degree*. The following formal trainings were

each mentioned: *book studies, conferences, online courses, job shadowing, and monthly job-alike meetings.*

Question seven of the instructional coach interview pertained to informal educational experiences in which instructional coaches participated. Most coaches stated that *personal reading and book studies* were how they improved their instructional coaching technique. Some instructional coaches mentioned participation in an instructional *coaching network* and *web-based coaching* networks as informal educational experiences. A small number of instructional coaches mentioned the following as informal instructional experiences in which they participated to improve their coaching practices:

- *conferences* regarding various topics
- *Missouri Reading Initiative*
- *Content-specific conferences*
- *collaboration* with other instructional coaches
- *district training*
- *coaching leadership team* training
- *webinars*
- *Jim Knight videos* (Impact Coaching Cycle)
- *communication* with other instructional coaches.

School district professional development support. From item eight, in what ways does your district support your professional development as an instructional coach, the category of school district professional development support emerged. Instructional coaches identified two main ways school districts support their professional development:

providing *funds for conferences and workshops* and *time to attend out-of-district professional development opportunities, meetings, and trainings*. Two other ways mentioned by instructional coaches that their school districts support professional development were by providing *funds for professional resources* and *time to attend in-district professional development opportunities, meetings, and trainings*. A small number of instructional coaches also mentioned the following ways their school districts support their professional development: *never asking the coach to substitute teach*, providing *time for study and reflection* by not requiring extra duties of the instructional coach, *preventing scheduling conflicts*, and providing a *learning support specialist*. One participant stated that the school district did not support the professional development of instructional coaches.

Research question 3. *What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding a common knowledge base for coaching?*

Four categories emerged from the results of the instructional coach survey and the instructional coach interview. The categories were instructional coaching model professional development and nonspecific content and instructional coaching professional development, specific coaching model training and adherence to coaching models, common coaching knowledge recommendations, and personal feelings and thoughts about instructional coaching. Instructional coach survey item seven pertained to the instructional coaching model professional development and nonspecific content and coaching professional development category. Instructional coach survey items eight and nine pertained to the specific coaching model training and adherence to the coaching model category. Next, instructional coaches survey item 10 and instructional coaches

interview item nine pertained to the common coaching knowledge recommendations category. Finally, instructional coaches interview item 10 pertained to the personal feelings and thoughts of coaches regarding instructional coaching.

Instructional coaching model professional development and nonspecific content and instructional coaching professional development. Item seven of the instructional coach survey was used to determine what professional development the instructional coach had participated in to improve instructional coaching knowledge and practice. Two subcategories emerged from item seven: instructional coaching model professional development and nonspecific content and coaching professional development. Most respondents stated they had participated in the Feedback and Coaching Lab by *Rutherford* Learning Group training and *Cognitive* Coaching training for specific coaching model education. A smaller number of respondents were trained in the *Adaptive* Schools model. Some respondents stated they had participated in at least one of the following coaching model trainings: Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy (*PLC*), *Jim Knight* Impact Cycle training, and *Diane Sweeney* Student-Centered coaching training. In the nonspecific category, eight subcategories emerged. Most instructional coaches acknowledged coaching training came from various *conferences* they had attended. Another type of training most respondents participated in was *district training* provided by their school. A moderate number of instructional coaches stated they participated in nonspecific content training and instructional coaching professional development through *content* training opportunities, *networking*, and *study and reading*. Some respondents said they received nonspecific training or professional development in *Title I*, through *site visits*, or some *other* form of training.

Specific coaching model training and adherence to coaching models.

Instructional coach survey items eight and nine were used to determine what coaching model training instructional coaches had received and what coaching models the instructional coaches adhered to in their practices. Concerning training, most instructional coaches stated they had participated in *coaching labs*. However, a few of the respondents stated they had *no training* in a coaching model. Lastly, a small number of respondents stated they had participated in *district training*, *online courses*, or *book studies* to train in coaching models. Regarding adherence to coaching models, most respondents indicated they adhered to the *Cognitive Coaching* model. A few instructional coaches stated adherence to *peer coaching* or *Rutherford* coaching models. Two respondents stated that they adhere to Diane *Sweeney's* Student-Centered Coaching. Four respondents cited that they *did not adhere* to a specific coaching model. *Jim Knight's* Impact Cycle, Partnership in Comprehensive Literacy (*PCL*), *Differentiated Coaching*, and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (*TCRWP*) were mentioned by one respondent each as coaching models in which they adhered.

Common coaching knowledge recommendations. Instructional coaches survey item 10 and instructional coaches interview item nine was used to elicit what common coaching knowledge instructional coaches recommended to improve instructional coaching practices. The common knowledge recommendations shared between the sets of respondents were, how to *support teachers*, how to *build relationships*, and *content knowledge*. The instructional coach survey item 10 and instructional interview item nine did not share the following subcategories. Instructional coach interview item 10 respondents indicated the need for common coaching knowledge in *classroom practices*

and procedures, coaching model training, theory and pedagogy, and coaching skills. In answering the instructional coaches interview item nine, respondents named the need for common coaching knowledge in *questioning skills*, how to be *reflective*, how to be *trustworthy*, using *listening skills*, using *common coaching language*, and how to *build teacher capacity and efficacy*. One respondent mentioned the importance of the instructional coach's knowledge of addressing teachers in a *nonevaluative* manner.

Personal feelings and thoughts on instructional coaching. Instructional coaches were given the opportunity to provide any other thoughts or feelings they wanted to share about the instructional coaching position using item 10 of the instructional coach interview. Many of the interviewees shared a desire to be open and supportive of teachers. Respondents also stated that their learning increased by being in the instructional coach position. Many of the instructional coaches responded with positive feelings toward the position.

Research question 4. What are the perceptions of building principals regarding the role of instructional coaches?

Four categories emerged from the building principal interviews. The first category, perceptions of the role and purpose of the instructional coach, was addressed using building principal interview items one, two, and three. The second category, instructional coaches' common knowledge, and needed knowledge emerged from building principal interview items four, five, and six. The third category, district support of instructional coaches, emerged from building principal interview items seven and eight. The final category, parting thoughts, and feelings, emerged from building principals' responses to interview item nine.

Perceptions of the role and purpose of the instructional coach. Item one of the building principal interviews was used to determine whether the building principal knew if the instructional coach was district-based, or site-based. All principals shared which designation of district-based or site-based applied to the instructional coaches in the district. One principal stated the instructional coach was site-based. Three principals indicated instructional coaches were district-based. One principal stated that the district employed district-based and site-based instructional coaches.

Principals shared beliefs about the instructional coaches' roles when they answered item two of the building principals survey. Three principals stated that instructional coaches conducted coaching cycles as a part of their role. Three principals also named a role of instructional coaches was to observe and provide feedback to teachers whether the principal was present or not. Four principals indicated that instructional coaches had a significant role in providing teachers with resources and professional learning support. Some principals also mentioned that the role of the instructional coach was to provide classroom teachers with support in implementing instructional strategies effectively and helping to create formative and summative student assessments and grading scales for classroom teacher use.

Building principals answered item three of the interviews to explain their perceptions of the purpose of instructional coaches. Three principals stated that the instructional coach's purpose was to provide resources or be a resource to teachers. Also, principals said instructional coaches should participate in coaching cycles with teachers. Other purposes indicated by building principals were for instructional coaches to provide assessment alignment across grade-levels, support curriculum alignment between

teachers and grade levels, provide professional development in instructional and classroom management strategies, build team efficacy, and facilitate team meetings. A final purpose of instructional coaches named by building principals was to provide support and nonevaluative feedback to classroom teachers.

Instructional coaches' common knowledge and needed knowledge. Building principals were asked to describe the expertise of district and building instructional coaches in educating teachers by answering item four of the building principal interview. One principal stated that the instructional coach was comfortable in all grade-levels and had expertise in the content area addressed. Also, the instructional coach had good pedagogy, according to the principal. Two principals said the instructional coaches brought their expertise from being highly effective teachers in the classroom. Additionally, other principals stated that the instructional coaches' expertise came from veteran teaching experience and content expertise as a teacher. One principal also named the ability to build rapport with the staff was the expertise of the instructional coach.

Item five was used to determine principals' beliefs about common knowledge amongst instructional coaches when collaborating with teachers. One principal stated that the instructional coach had good pedagogy and was well-rounded in the expertise of instructional strategies and content knowledge. Three principals mentioned that the instructional coaches had good teaching and instructional strategies. Another principal noted that instructional coaches enhanced teachers' critical thinking skills, were highly reflective, and built strong relationships. Additionally, a principal noted instructional coaches brought a commonality amongst teachers in instruction and management. Two

principals indicated instructional coaches maintained a common knowledge of the state standards.

Building principals were asked to answer item six of the building principal interview and share what knowledge they believed would help improve instructional coaches' job performance. Common subcategories to emerge were the need for improved leadership skills such as collaboration, listening, communication, and relationship-building. One principal indicated training in a specific coaching model as a need for instructional coaches. Another cited need for instructional coaches was the ability to deal with difficult personalities. Principals also stated that instructional coaches needed knowledge of how various grade-levels operated, how to conduct effective professional development, how to offer planning assistance and give feedback, and how to have a growth mindset.

District support of instructional coaches. Item seven of the building principals interview was used to determine the perceptions of building principals regarding the efforts of the district to allow instructional coaches in their district and other districts to enhance the instructional coaches' learning. Four principals stated instructional coaches were provided with time to attend regional coaching network meetings. One principal stated the districts paid for subscriptions to professional magazines. Two principals explained that their school districts supported instructional coaches by providing funds and time to attend conferences. One principal did not know what the district did for instructional coaches to enhance learning.

Building principals answered item eight to determine how the district provided professional development to instructional coaches. Time and funds were mentioned the

most by building principals as a support for instructional coaches in professional development. One principal mentioned the school district was “quick to approve local and state attendance of conferences.” Another principal stated the district’s assistant superintendent met with instructional coaches to provide professional development. One principal did not know how the district supported professional development to instructional coaches.

Parting thoughts and feelings. Item nine of the building principal interview provided an opportunity for building principals to share any other thoughts or feelings about instructional coaching not previously addressed. Two principals stated the principal was an integral part in helping the school district and building to accept the instructional coach and build trust among staff. Additionally, interviewees indicated that the principal should identify teachers needing help from the instructional coach and encourage the interaction between the instructional coach and teacher. One principal said principals rely on instructional coaches to be instructional leaders. Another principal stated the need for instructional coaches to build rapport and trust with teachers to get the maximum benefits of having an instructional coach. An additional principal indicated that communication skills were of the utmost importance in the instructional coaching position.

Conclusions

Teachers often turn to different professional pathways in education rather than remaining in the regular or special classroom (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Seventy-one percent of instructional coaches surveyed indicated they were regular classroom teachers before becoming instructional coaches. Twenty-nine percent of instructional coaches

surveyed indicated they held positions in education other than a regular classroom teacher, such as an interventionist or administrator. Instructional coaching was one pathway teachers chose when moving beyond the regular classroom.

Additionally, most instructional coaches indicated that they had been teachers for either six to 10 years or 11 to 15 years before making the transition to instructional coaching. Four coaches interviewed stated they had been in the classroom for only one to five years before moving to instructional coaching. Many teachers chose the instructional coaching pathway; whether they were veterans or newer teachers, their teaching knowledge helped these coaches to become effective change agents (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016).

Instructional coaches indicated many different experiences in higher education attainment, content training, coaching model training, and professional development concerning the preparedness for entering and continuing in the instructional coaching role. There are benefits to operationalizing coaching through a multidisciplinary framework to streamline the common knowledge, professional development, and coaching practices of instructional coaches (Kurz et al., 2017). Most instructional coaches and principals indicated common knowledge among their instructional coaches or the need to strengthen areas of common knowledge amongst coaches. The following conclusions were drawn from instructional coach survey participants, instructional coach interview participants, and building principal interview participants.

Background, prior training, and experience. Instructional coaches in the Midwest region of the United States come from schools of various sizes. Most participating instructional coaches were employed by medium to large-sized school

districts. Hiring instructional coaches is expensive (Knight, 2012). School funding is most widely applied to teacher wages and benefits to help schools stay competitive when hiring qualified teaching candidates from the workforce (Baker, 2016). Inadequate funding leaves school districts' with the difficult job of balancing the school budget while trying to support teachers and students with sufficient resources such as instructional coaches (Baker, 2016; Knight, 2012).

Most instructional coaches come from a classroom teacher background, based on the instructional coach survey results. Some instructional coaches indicated they brought additional background experience from educational areas such as special education, Title I, and administration. Instructional coaches need to have specific skills and knowledge to impact the schools where they work (Goodwin & Taylor, 2019; Morel, 2019; Pierce, 2019). Most instructional coaches stated on the instructional coach survey or during the instructional coach interview that they held a master's degree or higher. Despite having degrees from higher education, teaching experience, and other educational experiences, instructional coaches expressed a need to know more before entering the position. Some instructional coaches wished they had known how to conduct coaching cycles, plan professional development, and be effective leaders before becoming instructional coaches. Some instructional coaches indicated a more heartfelt wish to have understood the loneliness, challenges, and stress of the instructional coach position.

In addition to bringing classroom experience and higher degrees in education to instructional coaching, many instructional coaches entered the field with other valuable experiences or recommendations. On the instructional coach survey, some instructional coaches indicated they received content-specific training in math. Other instructional

coaches indicated they had leadership experience. Instructional coaches are valuable instructional leaders (DeNisco, 2015). One instructional coach stated that when in the classroom, positive experiences occurred with an instructional coach. The collaborative coaching experience between the respondent and the instructional coach impacted the respondents' decision to become an instructional coach. Positive coaching interactions lead to a desire to become a better, more well-informed teacher and even instructional coach (Pierce, 2019). Instructional coaches' perceptions overall were that they bring valuable knowledge and experience to the coaching position, but there is still a need to provide more education to prospective coaches wanting to enter the instructional coaching field.

The perceptions of building principals were that teachers who became instructional coaches were usually the best classroom teachers, as indicated on the building principal interview. Teachers entering instructional coaching were perceived to have brought their knowledge of pedagogy, instructional strategies, content knowledge, standards knowledge, and classroom management ability to coaching. As educational leaders, building principals rely on instructional coaches to bring cohesiveness to the grade-level teams and build teachers' self-efficacy (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016).

Role. Instructional coaches are pivotal in improving school cultures, like teacher attitudes, practices, and efficacy, along with raising student achievement (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019; Lupoli, 2019). Accordingly, instructional coaches have many responsibilities in coaching when collaborating with teachers, such as conducting coaching cycles, personalizing teacher learning, imparting best practices, and supporting teachers (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019; Suarez, 2017). Instructional coaches survey and

interview participants and building principal interview participants identified the provision of coaching cycles as the role of the coach. Additionally, the instructional coaches and principals believed that providing professional development and facilitating grade-level team meetings was another responsibility of instructional coaches. A small number of instructional coaches and principals perceived providing feedback to teachers, training and modeling best instructional practices, providing resources to teachers, and aligning curriculum and assessment across grade-levels as parts of the role and responsibilities of instructional coaches.

Building principals supported instructional coaches when they understood the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches and shared a vision for instructional coaching to support the school's continued improvement (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). The instructional coaches named other responsibilities not mentioned by building principals. Additional responsibilities mentioned were collaborating with teachers to determine student learning outcomes, helping teachers set goals, and collecting and analyzing data. However, building principals perceived additional responsibilities not mentioned by instructional coaches. One building principal believed instructional coaches should create formative and summative assessments, with grading scales for the classroom teacher. Another principal perceived the instructional coach's role as building the grade-level team's efficacy and acting as a resource to teachers. Cantrell, Madden, Rintamaa, Almasi, and Carter (2015) explained instructional coaching as challenging for coaches because of the multiple roles and responsibilities they are expected to address, the expectations of administrators and peers with whom they work, and the difficulty of prioritizing work.

Support. Social influences, such as professional development and mentoring, positively influence the self-efficacy of instructional coaches (Cantrell et al., 2015). Most instructional coach interview respondents perceived their school districts and building principals as supporting professional development and training by providing the funding and time for attending conferences, workshops, and in and out of district meetings and trainings. Additionally, coaches stated their school districts provided support through the purchase of professional resources such as books and magazine subscriptions. Funding and time were the most popular choice for instructional coaches when discussing school district and building principal support; however, not all instructional coaches stated they received this type of support.

Principals improved the coaching culture in schools when the coach and the principal worked together to create a schedule to fit the system's needs, ranging from one-on-one coaching situations to large-group coaching situations (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). One instructional coach mentioned that it was helpful when the building principal worked to prevent scheduling conflicts. Ippolito & Bean (2019) stated, "So, when coaches are asked on a regular basis to assume responsibilities such as scoring or administering tests or serving as substitutes, their work's effectiveness is lessened" (p. 72). During the instructional coach interview, a coach expressed appreciation that the building principal understood the need for time to study and reflect on the coaching position. Therefore, the principal never scheduled the instructional coach for extra duties. Additionally, another coach's perception of receiving support from the building principal was never being asked to substitute teach no matter how short-handed the building was on substitute teachers. During the interviews, few coaches stated their

school districts and building principals supported them by protecting coaching schedules, providing time for study and reflection, and not having the instructional coach substitute when short-handed.

Freeman, Sugai, Simonsen, and Everett (2017) stated, “School reform efforts require that educators modify, adopt, and/or abandon practices. As such, professional development activities are promoted as a means of improving academic and behavioral practices at the classroom and student levels” (p. 30). Most building principals interviewed perceived instructional coaches were supported by providing funds and time for the coaches to participate in a regional coaching network for collaboration and learning purposes. One principal added that the district provided funds for the purchase of professional magazines for instructional coaches as support. Additional funding, time, and encouragement were provided to attend conferences and training for some instructional coaches, according to the interviewees’ perceptions.

Common Knowledge. There are many different types of coaching models to choose from in education, requiring a variety of different skills and knowledge levels from the instructional coach (Kurz et al., 2017). Instructional coaches were asked what knowledge should be common to instructional coaching. Some coaches responded with the need for common knowledge about how to support teachers in individual learning and how to work with a variety of personalities. Additionally, the largest number of instructional coaches perceived the need for a common knowledge amongst instructional coaches regarding relationship building and trustworthiness. A good coaching program supports the teacher by incorporating four key elements: community, relationships, accountability, and leadership (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019). Instructional coaches are

educational leaders and must exhibit integrity by maintaining ethical and moral principles to create trusting relationships as a quality of that leadership (Potter, 2018).

Instructional coaches perceived a need for shared knowledge of strong questioning skills and the coach's ability to be reflective. A small number of instructional coaches perceived a need to provide a common knowledge concerning good listening skills, content knowledge, how to speak and act in a nonevaluative manner, common coaching language, and how to build teacher capacity and efficacy. Because of the variety of coaching models available and the various coaching outcomes being sought to improve teacher instruction and student achievement effectively, common knowledge of coaching scopes, outcomes, and actions is valuable for instructional coaches (Kurz et al., 2017). The perception of instructional coaches was that common knowledge of leadership qualities, coaching scopes, and coaching outcomes is needed.

Principals perceived similar and differing needs of coaches to improve coaching performance. One principal stated that instructional coaches should exhibit strong collaboration, communication, and listening skills. Another principal noted instructional coaches must have the ability to work with difficult personalities and have a growth mindset. One principal shared that it would be advantageous for instructional coaches to have strong relationship building skills, especially when working in more than one building at a time. Principals indicated instructional coaches should have knowledge in several other areas: providing professional development, hold intentional conversations, how to provide planning assistance, and how to provide feedback.

Additionally, principals had positive, but different perceptions of common knowledge instructional coaches already had. One principal felt the instructional coach

was strong in pedagogy and had a well-rounded educational knowledge, but another principal identified common knowledge of the instructional coach as standards knowledge, classroom management, questioning skills, and how to build relationships. Another building principal indicated that the instructional coach had a passion for student learning. Most building principals had one piece of common knowledge they perceived all instructional coaches had: knowledge of the best instructional strategies. Instructional coaches and principals shared similar views about common knowledge instructional coaches already had or should have to perform instructional coaching duties effectively. The principals and coaches each held their individual beliefs about common coaching knowledge. From coach to coach, principal to principal, and coach to principal perceptions of the needs of shared knowledge amongst instructional coaches converged and diverged.

Implications for Practice

According to the instructional coach survey, most instructional coaches come from a background of classroom teaching with few experiences in other educational positions and a moderate number of years of teaching experience. A variety of instructional coaches surveyed and interviewed also indicated extremely varied experiences before becoming an instructional coach and during their time as an instructional coach. While varied experiences, knowledge, and skills are a part of the human experience, the variation in experiences, knowledge, and skills has created gaps among coaches from school district to school district within the same region. Based on the educational experiences, training, and professional development of instructional coaches before entering the instructional coaching position and the continuation of the

development of the instructional coach while coaching, it is apparent school districts would benefit from a multidisciplinary framework for instructional coaching (Kurz et al., 2017).

School districts using an instructional coaching program would benefit from expanding the leadership role for classroom teachers interested in moving into an instructional coaching role. It is necessary to provide appropriate training to instructional coaches before entering the profession (Morel, 2019). The creation of leadership pathways supports the growth of teachers interested in expanding their skills, professional growth, and preparedness for entering an instructional coaching position (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019). Other supports school districts should consider creating are induction programs and mentoring programs for all first-year and new coaches to the school district. An induction program motivates the inductee and improves their skills (Sadiq et al., 2017). With the support of induction and mentoring programs, instructional coaches' effectiveness increasingly strengthens and improves teachers' self-efficacy, use of research-based instructional practices, and students' achievement (Deussen et al., 2007; Sadiq et al., 2017; Theory Into Practice, 2017).

The principals and instructional coaches interviewed expressed the perception that the school districts supported the instructional coaches primarily by providing funds and time for professional development, trainings, workshops, or resources. However, other ways of supporting instructional coaches are available. One valuable way school districts' can support instructional coaches is to make certain of the school's readiness for instructional coaching by observing teachers and having teachers complete a reflection exercise (Lupoli, 2019). The information from teacher observations and the reflection

exercise will help the school leaders to determine where to start when trying to start a new coaching program or when trying to change teacher attitudes about a current instructional coaching program (Lupoli, 2019). School districts could also support instructional coaches by making certain a common framework for coaching, such as the MFIC is in place (Kurz et al., 2017). A correctly implemented coaching framework provides instructional coaches from the same school district with a common knowledge base (Kurz et al., 2017).

The next aspect school districts need to consider for improvement of the district's coaching program is determining clear and concise roles and responsibilities. Building principals and instructional coaches who have a shared understanding and vision for the coaching program are more likely to support the school's continual improvement (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). The instructional coach and principal interviews indicated some shared ideas about the roles and responsibilities of instructional coaches and branched out with different ideas about the expertise and needs of the instructional coaches. School districts and the building principals can support instructional coaches by:

- sharing beliefs about the instructional coaches' role
- understanding the willingness of teachers to participate in coaching cycles and receive feedback
- establishing an instructional coaching schedule that works for the teachers, instructional coaches, and the building system
- establishing consistent opportunities to meet with instructional coaches and to observe teachers
- avoiding asking coaches to substitute teach when short-handed

- avoiding asking instructional coaches to administer or score tests
- providing instructional coaches time to reflect and collaborate (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019; Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Lupoli, 2019).

Based on the instructional coach interview and survey responses, instructional coaches follow different coaching models and are skilled various areas. School districts should consider a multidisciplinary framework for instruction to provide a framework that would bring a common knowledge, understanding, and language to the instructional coaching position. Kurz et al. (2017) recommended the implementation of a three-dimensional model of instructional coaching. Based on the findings from this study and the examples of Kurz et al.'s MFIC, an instructional coaching framework would address the gaps in knowledge, skills, and instructional coaching practices (Kurz et al., (2017). School districts could use the MFIC to best determine the coaching approach for the entire district while maintaining a focus on district initiatives.

The coaching framework would include one dimension consisting of coaching scopes: skill, process, and development (Hammond & Moore, 2018). The coaching scopes forms the base of the framework from which the other two dimensions grow. The second dimension would consist of coaching outcomes: performance enhancement, environmental improvements, promotion of autonomy, enhancement of cognition, and community development (Kurz et al., 2017). Training coaches to understand the five subcategories of the second dimension would allow coaches to choose an area to focus on when collaborating with teachers in groups or as individuals. The training in this second dimension would bring a commonality among instructional coaches within the school district. The third dimension would consist of coaching actions: questioning, setting

goals, assessing, planning, demonstrating, critiquing, evaluating, and adjusting ((Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Desimone & Pak, 2017)). An understanding of the coaching actions dimension would inform school districts, building principals, and instructional coaches in determining areas for improvement in instructional coaching practices. Using this third dimension in instructional coaching would also provide opportunities for better professional development, building teacher self-efficacy, improving the school community, and increasing the teacher's critical thinking skills. Improvement in the coaching outcomes and actions could improve the chances of increasing student achievement. The use of a framework focuses on the professional development of instructional coaches in each of the three dimensions MFIC. The ability to focus on the specific dimensions could help districts determine the most valuable professional development instructional coaches need and allow them to use professional development funds in a cost-effectively.

Recommendations for Future Research

The most skilled teachers are usually the teachers who become instructional coaches, and further research into the background of these skilled teachers is needed to determine their qualifications when entering a coaching role (Deussen et al., 2007). Additional research regarding the best way to support and grow teachers into instructional coaches is also lacking (Connor, 2017). Instructional coaching is considered a valuable tool for improving teacher instructional practices and student performance (Hammond & Moore, 2018; Husbye et al., 2018). Without appropriate training of instructional coaches, it is unlikely school districts will achieve improvement of teacher

practices and student academic performance (Deussen et al., 2007; Sadiq et al., 2017; Theory Into Practice, 2017).

Providing funds and time for professional development is a crucial way school districts support instructional coaches. However, even with the provision of funds and time for professional development, instructional coaches need guidance toward improving their practice and deciding the best way to grow professionally (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019). Research regarding the best ways to support the growth of instructional coaches is needed. Many different types of professional development in various coaching models exist, and school districts must decide which model fits the needs of the school districts and their teachers (Fabiano et al., 2018; Husbye et al., 2018; Kurz et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). Additionally, some school districts are considering the addition of a coaching position to instruct the instructional coach (Will, 2020) or are searching for better ways to implement effective professional development for teachers and instructional coaches (Ippolito & Bean, 2019; TechXcellence, 2017). Future research describing the most beneficial and cost-effective way to support instructional coaches' in their learning and performance is needed. School district leaders must decide for themselves the best way to address instructional coaches' professional needs based on reliable research.

The availability of various coaching models offers differing options for instructional coaches' professional learning (Fabiano et al., 2018; Husbye et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018). Instructional coaching training is delivered in diverse ways. Instructional coaches might participate in job-embedded coaching model training or professional development (Deussen et al., 2007), specialized instructional coach training

programs located off-site, coaching certification programs offered by professional institutions (Klarin, 2015), workshops, or coaching networks (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). Instructional coach training programs may offer follow-up with the instructional coaches to ensure adherence and understanding of the new coaching model or learning; however, many professional development workshops do not. (Deussen et al., 2007). The need to make coaching model training easier to track, support, and less of a unique opportunity is essential. Further research describing the most effective way to train instructional coaches, ensure adherence to coaching models, and the coaching's effectiveness needed.

Further research into the MFIC by Kurz et al. (2017) is necessary. The MFIC combines the most compelling aspects of sports, business, and educational coaching into one three-dimensional model (Kurz et al., 2017). School districts interested in implementing this model should also consider the cost and effectiveness of the MFIC model. The school districts should also view the strengths and weaknesses of the model. For example, study of the effect the model has on the happiness of the instructional coach, the perception of teachers about the usefulness of instructional coaching, and the retention of instructional coaches would be valuable. The use of the MFIC may prove to be more cost-effective than sending instructional coaches to multiple workshops or training because professional development could be maintained, supported, and monitored within the district or a regional consortium of schools.

Summary

Instructional coaching has been around for decades to provide professional development to teachers (Deussen et al., 2007). The continued popularity of instructional coaching brought more attention to the overall effect coaching has on the improvement of

instruction delivered to students and the resulting student achievement (Connor, 2017). Also, instructional coaches enter the profession with a wide variety of experiences, knowledge, and qualifications, but often do not have the skills necessary to train others despite their skilled work as a teacher (Brock et al., 2016; Deussen et al., 2007; Kurz et al., 2017). Instructional coaching programs are few despite instructional coaches working in the content areas of elementary and secondary math, literacy, and technology (Kraft & Blazar, 2017). Appropriate support and training should be supplied to instructional coaches before entering and during their time in the instructional coaching field.

The review of literature was used to explain the history of instructional coaching as it has gained popularity in recent years to improve teacher instructional strategies and student achievement. Some more popular coaching models were defined in the review of literature to explain the similarities and differences between the models. The conceptual underpinning for the study came from Kurz et al. (2017) and the development of the MFIC, where the MFIC is a combination of research of the best coaching practices in sports, business, and education. The MFIC is viewed as a three-dimensional model of coaching scopes, coaching outcomes, and coaching actions schools should use to develop and improve coaching models, and to determine the efficacy of the models (Kurz et al., 2017).

The review of literature was used to explain the need to understand the impact building principals' perceptions have on the instructional coach's roles and responsibilities (Ippolito & Bean, 2019; Selvaggi, 2016). Principals also impact the attitudes and relationships of instructional coaches and teachers when it comes to

coaching (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). Instructional coaches and building principals who communicate and share a vision for the work to be done with teachers create a positive environment for adult learning to occur. Instructional coaches who perceive the school district and building principals as supportive improve their self-efficacy and the teachers' self-efficacy over time.

The collection of data through surveys of instructional coaches was used to determine the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding their preparedness when becoming an instructional coach, perceptions of professional development support during their time as instructional coaches, and their perceptions of the need for a common knowledge base for all instructional coaches. The survey contained close- and open-ended questions. The survey data were recorded, summarized, and conclusions were drawn using measures of central tendency (Bluman, 2013). Data were also collected from interviews conducted individually with instructional coaches and building principals. The comments from the interviews were studied, and common theme groups were created. The common themes were analyzed and used to inform the understanding of instructional coaches' backgrounds, training, roles, responsibilities, and need for a common knowledge base.

Principals and instructional coaches appear to share similar views about the roles and responsibilities of the instructional coach; there are still many differences to be examined. Principals and instructional coaches must have a similar understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and purpose of the instructional coach to overcome the differences. Also, school districts would benefit from considering ways to provide continual in-house professional development to instructional coaches. The in-house professional

development would provide continual support and a method to measure the success of instructional coaching. These steps would increase the likelihood of teachers improving their instructional practices and self-efficacy and the opportunities for students' academic improvement.

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Appendix A
Permission from PDC Professional Learning Coordinator
to Conduct an Online Survey

Cindy Bryant <cindy.bryant@gocsdmo.org>

Mon, Nov 26,
2018, 4:44 PM

to me

Hi Mary,

My apologies for not getting back to you sooner. We have about 140 coaches on our mailing list, but only about 115 of them are members of **GOCS**D. Ordinarily, we have around 45 - 60 that attend our instructional coaches meet ups. I would be delighted to share your survey with our mailing list when you're ready. I look forward to seeing the results of your study.

Best,

Cindy

Cindy Bryant

GOCS D Professional Learning Coordinator

@GOCSDMO

@MoMathgal

Appendix B

IRB Permission Form

Oct 1, 2019 11:19 AM CDT

RE:IRB-20-19: Initial - Instructional Coaching: Perceptions of Midwest Building Principals and Instructional Coaches

Dear Mary Hall,

The study, Instructional Coaching: Perceptions of Midwest Building Principals and Instructional Coaches, has been approved as Exempt - Limited IRB.

Category: Category 2. (iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

The submission was approved on October 1, 2019.

Here are the findings: Regulatory Determinations

This study has been determined to be minimal risk because the research is not obtaining data considered sensitive information or performing interventions posing harm greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

The IRB has conducted a limited IRB review as part of this approval, given the PI's collection of subject email addresses to facilitate the two phase research design. In this case, the PI is not collecting information which could be considered sensitive or that would otherwise pose risk or harm to subjects enrolled in the study. In addition, the PI will not retain email addresses as part of the research data set, as they will be used for recruitment purposes only and not as subject identifiers for the purpose of analysis. The collection of identifiable data during this study remains minimal risk.

Sincerely,

Lindenwood University (lindenwood) Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Instructional Coach Survey

1. What size is your school district k-12 (circle one)?
 1,200 students or less 1,201-5,000 students 5,001 students or more

2. What was your educational experience prior to becoming an instructional coach (circle all that apply)?
 Teacher Administrator Interventionist Other (specify)_____

3. How many years were you a teacher, if you were a teacher, before becoming an instructional coach?
 0 years 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years 26+ years

4. Which instructional coaching structure best describes your school district?
 site-based district-based

5. How many years have you been an instructional coach?
 0-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years 26+ years

6. What specialized training have you received to become an instructional coach? (List degrees and any areas of specialization).

7. What professional development have you received to improve your instructional coaching knowledge and practices?

8. Describe the training you have received in the coaching model(s) you have implemented.

9. What model(s) of coaching do you adhere to as an instructional coach (include mixed approaches if applicable), such as peer coaching or cognitive coaching?

10. What do you believe should be included in a common knowledge base for instructional coaches?

Appendix D

Participant Survey Introduction Page

Date:

Dear Instructional, Technology, Math, or Literacy Coach,

My name is Mary Hall, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I am conducting a survey to inform my research into the roles, education, and training of instructional, technology, math, and literacy coaches. If you are interested in participating, then please complete the following survey by clicking on the link below. The survey link will remain open for two weeks from today's date. Your participation is completely anonymous, and you may exit the survey at any time. Thank you for your help in completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Mary Hall

Lindenwood University Doctoral Student

████████████████████

██████████

<Qualtrics Survey Link >

Appendix E**LINDENWOOD****Survey Research Information Sheet**

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Mary Hall at Lindenwood University. We are doing this study to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches and building administrators about the roles the instructional coaches assume. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

There are no risks from participating in this project. We will not collect any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Mary Hall: 

Dr. Kathy Grover: kgrover@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window.
Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix F
Instructional Coach Interview Interest Sign-up Form

Date:

Dear Instructional Coaches,

Recently you participated in a survey. This is a follow-up email asking if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. In addition to your participation, I would like for your principal to participate, as well. If you are willing to participate, please fill out the information below and reply to this email. If your principal is also interested in participating, then please include the contact information. I appreciate your consideration in this matter.

You can return this form to me via email at [REDACTED] or if you prefer, you can call me at [REDACTED].

Instructional Coach Contact Information

Name:

Email:

Phone number:

Principal Contact Information

Name:

Email:

Phone number:

Appendix G

Principal Interview Interest Sheet

Date:

Dear Principal,

My name is Mary Hall, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I am conducting an interview with area principals to inform my research into the roles, education, and training of instructional, technology, math, and literacy coaches. Your instructional coach contacted me and stated you are interested in participating in an interview. If you continue to be interested in participating, then please respond to this email or call me at the telephone number below. When I have confirmation of your willingness to participate, I will email the interview questions and proposed date and time options for the interview. Thank you for your interest in participating in the interview.

Sincerely,

Mary Hall

Lindenwood University Doctoral Student

████████████████████

██████████

Appendix H

Instructional Coach Interview Interest Sheet #2

Date:

Dear Instructional Coach,

My name is Mary Hall, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I am conducting interviews with area instructional coaches to inform my research into the roles, education, and training of instructional, technology, math, and literacy coaches. If you are willing to participate in an interview you may contact me at the email or phone number listed below. Thank you for your interest in participating in the interview.

Sincerely,

Mary Hall

Lindenwood University Doctoral Student

████████████████████

██████████

Appendix I**Principal Interview Interest Sheet #2**

Date:

Dear Principal,

My name is Mary Hall, and I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University.

I am conducting interviews with area principals to inform my research into the roles, education, and training of instructional, technology, math, and literacy coaches. I got your contact information from either your school superintendent or instructional coach as a possible interview participant. If you are willing to participate in the interview process, please contact me at the email or phone number below.

Sincerely,

Mary Hall

Lindenwood University Doctoral Student

████████████████████

██████████

Appendix J
Instructional Coach Interview Sign-up Form

Date:

Dear Instructional Coach,

Recently you agreed to participate in a 30-45-minute interview. I am contacting you because you have been chosen to participate in the interview. If you are still interested in participating in the interview, then please complete the information below.

Below you will find a list of dates and time slots to choose for the interview at an agreed upon location. If the dates and times provided do not work, then we can agree upon another date and time.

You can return this form to me via email at [REDACTED] or if you prefer, you can call me at [REDACTED]. Feel free to choose two or three dates or times that work best for you, and then you will be contacted with a final date and time to meet.

Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Time:	Time:	Time:	Time:
Time:	Time:	Time:	Time:
Time:	Time:	Time:	Time:

Please indicate where you would like to meet for the interview: _____

Appendix K

Principal Interview Date and Time Sign-up Form

Date:

Dear Principal,

Recently your instructional coach participated in a survey and agreed to participate in an interview. The instructional coach also expressed you would be interested in participating in a follow-up 30-45 minute interview, too. I am contacting you because you have been selected to participate in the follow-up interview.

Below you will find a list of dates and time slots to choose for the interview at an agreed upon location. If the dates and times provided do not work, then we can agree upon another date and time.

You can return this form to me via email at [REDACTED] or if you prefer, you can call me at [REDACTED]. Feel free to choose two or three dates or times that work best for you, and then you will be contacted with a final date and time to meet.

Date:

Date:

Date:

Date:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Time:

Please indicate where you would like to meet for the interview: _____

Appendix L**LINDENWOOD****Research Information Sheet**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are doing this study to understand the perceptions of instructional coaches and building administrators about the roles the instructional coaches assume. During this study, you will participate in a one-to-one interview. The interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We will not collect any data which may identify you.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Mary Hall: [REDACTED]

Dr. Kathy Grover: kgrover@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix M

Instructional Coach Interview Questions

1. Are you a district-based or a site-based instructional coach?
2. Describe your role as an instructional coach.
3. What personal or professional background impacted your decision to become an instructional coach?
4. What do you wish you had known before becoming an instructional coach?
5. What experiences, prior to becoming an instructional coach, helped you the most in the instructional coaching position?
6. What, if any, formal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?
7. What, if any, informal educational experiences have you participated in to improve your coaching technique?
8. In what ways does your district support your professional development as an instructional coach?
9. What common coaching knowledge do you believe is imperative to instructional coaching?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share concerning instructional coaching?

Appendix N

Principal Interview Prompts

1. Is your instructional coach district-based or site-based?
2. What is the role of the instructional coach(es) in your school district or building?
3. Describe the purpose of instructional coach(es) in your building or district.
4. Describe the instructional coach's expertise in educating the teachers in your district or building?
5. What knowledge appears to be common among the instructional coaches when working with teachers?
6. What knowledge do you believe would help coaches to improve their job performance?
7. Describe how your district provides collaboration between coaches in your district and in other districts to enhance their learning.
8. Describe how your district provides professional development to instructional coaches.
9. Is there anything else you would like to share concerning instructional coaching?

Vita

Mary Hall completed her undergraduate studies at Missouri State University in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. After attending a Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, she decided to continue her education at Missouri State University. Mary completed the Master's in Education, Literacy program in 2016.

Mary Hall is currently a literacy coach for grades K-3 for Logan-Rogersville R-VIII School District. She taught second grade for nine years before moving to the literacy coach position. She has held the literacy coach position for three years. Mary is enthusiastic about students' and teachers' success in the classroom. She plans to continue studying adult learning and applying research-based practices within her instructional coach position.