

ABSTRACT

Takicey Michelle Dunston, PERCEPTION IS REALITY: THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON TEACHER EFFICACY (Under the direction of Dr. Heidi Puckett). Department of Educational Leadership, May, 2024.

This study examines how teachers at an elementary school perceive the impact of instructional coaching on their instructional efficacy. It provides a detailed examination of how coaching interventions affect teachers' attitudes regarding their teaching and classroom management abilities. Teachers involved in the study completed a pre-survey, post-survey, and participated in a semi-structured interview to assess teacher efficacy as a part of the qualitative analysis.

Analysis of the research gathered suggests that teachers perceive instructional coaching as having a positive impact on their teacher efficacy, especially regarding student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. Teachers reported having more confidence in their decision-making and more resilience when encountering problems in the classroom as a result of instructional coaching. The perception of teachers in the study emphasizes the significance of personalized, trustworthy coaching relationships and the impact of reflective practice on enhancing their pedagogical skills.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by presenting real-world evidence related to the impact of instructional coaching on improving teacher efficacy. This provides valuable advice to educational leaders on developing and implementing coaching programs that enhance teacher development and, in turn, improve student learning outcomes.

PERCEPTION IS REALITY: THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING ON TEACHER EFFICACY

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DEDICATION

I give God all the glory and praise for blessing and never leaving me throughout my life and this process.

To my husband, Greg, for loving me and encouraging me to persevere throughout my dissertation journey and life's many challenges. I love you more than words can express.

To my mother Yvonne, and grandmother, Retha, for being phenomenal women in my life and insisting that I too am a phenomenal woman. It is because of you that I am who I am today, and I am forever grateful.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teachers frequently face the challenge of adapting to the diverse learning requirements of their students, especially in regard to the regulations by federal and state legislators.

Acknowledging the constraints of conventional didactic, workshop-oriented professional development (PD), many scholars, professionals, and policymakers have adopted instructional coaching as an alternative approach (Desimone & Garet, 2015). This method entails providing targeted guidance, conducting observations, and offering feedback to implement newly acquired practices and procedures in classroom environments successfully (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Showers et al., 1987). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 2000 emphasized the need to possess high qualifications and use scientifically proven practices, which has led to an escalated requirement for providing ongoing coaching to teachers. Instructional coaching has gained endorsement among policymakers to improve pedagogy relative to ESEA. This approach involves site-based, individualized, and sustained professional development (Bean et al., 2010; Deussen et al., 2007).

The implementation of instructional coaches has been observed as supporting teachers in the execution of response-to-intervention models. These models are structured as a tiered support system for students with special needs as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. In response to that policy initiative, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have established opportunities that facilitate teacher support via customized professional development programs. Meeting students' diverse needs, implementing new curricula, maintaining classroom discipline, achieving grade-level mastery for all learners, and pursuing professional development can be an overwhelming responsibility for teachers. Upon the introduction of new initiatives, it is customary for teachers to participate in a designated number

of instructional hours aimed at facilitating the integration, execution, and evaluation of the efficacy of the novel adoption. Instructional coaching can be considered as one of the PD initiatives teachers are faced with utilizing and it is important to ensure that teachers are willing to fully participate in this opportunity.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of instructional coaching at an elementary school based on the perceptions of teachers receiving coaching support. The significance of this research lies in the opportunity to examine the influence of instructional coaching on teacher efficacy. This study explored the advantages of offering teachers continuous professional development, facilitated by instructional coaches, customized to enhance the teachers' instructional requirements. Instructional coaches encounter the task of guiding teachers to enhance their pedagogical approaches and instructional efficacy and the successful completion of this task necessitates that coaches possess expertise in the domains identified by Kowal and Steiner (2007), including pedagogy, curriculum, and interpersonal aptitude.

Implementing innovative programs may prompt school districts and administrators to seek a strategy to adhere to local and federal mandates. Neufeld and Roper (2003) have proposed the integration of coaches as a crucial component of school-based professional development that is tailored to meet the specific instructional needs of schools and aligned with the district's reform agenda as a means of fulfilling these requirements.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 has accelerated the need for school leaders to respond to the requirements of accountability, intricate standards, and high-stakes testing. As a result, instructional coaching has emerged as a highly valuable resource for school systems. Instructional coaches are responsible for implementing research-based practices in classrooms when working with adult learners, as opposed to students. This duty was informed by

a range of research methods (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Instructional coaching that is effective offered teachers customized real-time instructional assistance to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. According to Kowal and Steiner (2007), instructional coaches allocate a considerable portion of their time engaging in classroom modeling, providing constructive feedback, and conducting targeted assessments of individual teaching methodologies. In addition, they also may spend a significant amount of time collaborating with cohorts of teachers and fulfilling supplementary managerial responsibilities. Their goal focuses on accelerating teacher effectiveness, improving teacher retention, developing teacher leadership, increasing student learning, and supporting equitable outcomes for all learners (New Teacher Center, 2018, p. 1). Teachers who establish and uphold well-organized learning environments and implement effective instructional methodologies are deemed capable of providing mentorship to novice teachers (those in their initial three years of teaching) and disseminating their exemplary practices to all teachers. The provision of targeted professional development to instructional coaches, coupled with their confidence in their abilities, can yield positive outcomes for principals, teachers, and students (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

According to the Center for Comprehensive Reform and Improvement, effective coaches possess three major skill sets: pedagogical knowledge, content competence, and interpersonal skills (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). These skills are evident when coaches collaborate with teachers to address instructional practices. It is important to understand the identified qualities and how they manifest in practice as related to this study (Knight, 2017; Kowal & Steiner, 2007). The first quality that an instructional coach (IC) should possess is the capacity to effectively use questioning and classroom management strategies, as well as an understanding and experiential foundation of how students learn, to make up pedagogical knowledge (Knight, 2017). The

second quality of a successful IC includes a solid knowledge of the subject matter and the curriculum being employed, as well as the capacity to use data and differentiated instruction to drive learning, which are all components of content expertise (Knight, 2017). Finally, instructional coaches should possess the ability to demonstrate interpersonal capabilities that reflect the ability to build trust and to encourage and inspire teachers to improve their practices, leading change in an organized, assertive, positive manner (Knight, 2017). The ability to form interpersonal relationships is an essential key component of coaching others on any level.

Background of the Problem

Over the past several decades, the demands for improving student academic achievement led to an increased importance in teachers sharing and emulating best practices to improve instruction. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education promoted ESSA as a law that demonstrates a commitment to educational equity (Saultz et al., 2017). The law shifts the focus of teacher policy from ensuring that teachers meet minimum qualifications, as was the case under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to the distribution of highly effective teachers (Kurtz et al., 2020; Saultz et al., 2017). In this regard ESSA shifted from a federal emphasis on “unqualified” teachers to “ineffective” teachers, which represents a significant shift from teacher inputs (quality) to student outcomes (effectiveness; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Saultz et al., 2017). Federal and local agencies are encouraged to identify, train, and compensate coaches to assist teachers with developing assessments, interpreting student data, designing and differentiating instruction, providing feedback, and evaluating performance in 11 instances throughout the bill (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2020). Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have embraced the use of instructional coaching, while recognizing the limitations of traditional PD for teachers (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

Consequently, school and district leaders are rapidly expanding the number of teachers assuming a variety of coaching positions (Deussen et al., 2007). Other fields, specifically business and sports, have always utilized coaching as the universal practice for enhancing the professional performance of individuals and the effectiveness of their organizations (Rangeon et al., 2012). There is a growing body of evidence that suggests instructional coaching models are effective in providing support to teachers within educational settings; yet, further research, specifically at individual schools, can examine distinct impacts of coaching actions on specific instructional approaches, as well as the perceptions of those being coached related to effectiveness. Guidance, observations, and feedback facilitate the transfer of newly acquired practices and procedures into classroom settings (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Showers et al., 1987). In response, numerous coaching models have been developed to support the implementation of evidence-based practices, including those with evidence of efficacy/effectiveness from well-designed research studies for improving teacher/student outcomes across multiple domains (Cook et al., 2011; Kurtz et al., 2017).

This study was focused on instructional coaching as a method to optimize the collaboration between instructional coaches and teachers in an effort to enhance teacher efficacy at Best Elementary School (BES) in Fantastic County Public Schools (FCPS). Instructional coaches in the school district, and more specifically at BES, have evolved from their initial implementation in 2002 to the present. Initially instructional coaches were first identified as program specialists and assigned the task of supporting teachers throughout the district with creating and implementing lessons according to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCS). This title identification continued to change from curriculum and instructional coaches, teaching and learning coaches (TLC), to most recently, effective learning facilitators

(ELF). Although the title has changed over the past two decades, the purpose of instructional coaching remains the same; however, effectiveness may have varied across schools in FCPS. Even though all schools in the district receive instructional coaching support, low-performing schools continue to be identified based on student performance which displays their high need for instructional support.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the year 2015 – 2016, 54,800 traditional public schools had staff with specialist or coaching assignments. In FCPS instructional coaches have previously worked as teachers or administrators and have exhibited successful instructional techniques that have led to notable student progress and success. The implementation of coaching as a means of professional development to enhance instructional practices has increased. This is due to research findings that improving teachers' classroom practices can significantly improve student learning (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). The multifaceted role of the IC involves supporting the development of optimal teaching practices through self-evaluation, reflection, and strategy revision. Instructional coaches possess specialized knowledge in a particular subject area or a broad understanding of multiple subjects. Specific coaches possess expertise in assisting teachers in identifying evidence-based intervention tactics for students who exhibit abilities below their expected grade level. These coaches serve as Multi-Tier System Support (MTSS) providers (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). BES is equipped with a team of coaches specializing in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and MTSS. The coaches are sustained through the allocation of Title I Funds and are present daily to support teachers based on their individual areas of instructional need.

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Best Elementary School (BES) in North Carolina, specifically in the small town of Best, which is located on the southern border of Fantastic County. The community surrounding BES holds the school in high regard and the school receives substantial funding from the district. Numerous residents of the neighborhood completed their education at the same institutions where their children are presently enrolled, including BES.

In 1920, the one-room school opened in downtown Best, North Carolina. The current location of BES was built in 1991 and remains close to the local businesses in downtown Best. BES currently serves preschool through fourth-grade students; but, as a result of the growing population, a bond referendum was passed in 2021 in order to expand the current school infrastructure. This would allow for the accommodation of the increasing number of students, as well as adding fifth grade into the elementary school. Although BES is situated within a supportive community, it is a Title 1 school where 73% of students receive free or reduced-price lunches.

The student body at BES is divided into five ethnic groups: White students, who constitute the majority, followed by Hispanic, Black, Multiracial, and Native American students. The teaching staff comprises 10 novice teachers, 42 veteran teachers, and three ICs. There are also 18 instructional assistants, commonly referred to as “teachers’ aides.” Each IC assists in their respective area of expertise. A specialized instructional coach is available to assist kindergarten through fourth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. The math coach provides pedagogical assistance to kindergarten through fourth-grade teachers of mathematics. In response to changes made by the state to the intervention process for students who may require

specialized instruction, the school has designated a multi-tier instructional coach to assist teachers in developing intervention plans, determining intervention strategies, consulting with parents, and determining whether the student should be referred to the Exceptional Children's Department (EC).

In 2017, BES was classified as a low-performing school and designated as a Restart School due to students' low performance on the state-administered end-of-grade examination. The Strategic Reform Team within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and Regional Support within the Division of District and School Support Services support Restart schools. The District and Regional Support Services collaborate with school districts and schools to ensure that all students have equal access to a meaningful and sound basic education. Restart permits districts and schools to investigate equitable opportunities for the students they serve outside the North Carolina-mandated educational boundaries (NCDPI, 2023). Restart Reform's mission is:

... to support and encourage Restart Leaders in the school improvement process and the use of Restart flexibility to remove barriers to academic achievement. Through continuous improvement and innovative practices, districts and schools work collaboratively to use the Restart Model to provide equitable access to a meaningful, sound, basic education for every student. (NCDPI, 2023)

In 2022, according to the NCDPI, a school with a School Performance grade "D or F" for two or three consecutive years and a growth status of "Met or Not Met" is deemed low performing. In the years following its designation as a low-performing school, BES has demonstrated remarkable academic growth and increased proficiency levels. This necessitates a

comprehensive review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to re-evaluate the designated strategies to ensure that students meet the school, district, and state growth expectations.

To ensure that instructional strategies effectively support student development and achievement, NCDPI mandates that schools develop a comprehensive plan that must be monitored and revised at least twice monthly.

Based on research and prior experience, the ultimate purpose of providing ICs to assist teachers with their pedagogical needs is to increase their efficacy and the academic outcomes of students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to employ qualitative data collection and analysis to determine if the intentionally planned provision of instructional mentoring support resulted in an increase in instructional effectiveness based on the perceptions of teachers and the academic performance of students on the district's benchmark assessments, school-based and progress monitors.

Statement of the Problem of Practice

Most districts currently use coaching to build capacity to support instructional change at the individual and systemic levels (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). However, it is frequently observed that coaching needs to be more closely integrated with the established systems of districts and schools, leading to its potential for enhancing instructional improvement not being fully utilized (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Equipped with specific expertise in instruction and content, coaches possess the capacity to undertake the substantial task of facilitating educational transformation (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

The effectiveness of following the prescribed strategies provided by the IC was not always known. Even when the instructional strategy was implemented with fidelity, the effectiveness of the strategy based on various factors, including but not limited to student

achievement, teacher efficacy, and school transformation, may not be determined from the data available. This study gathered teachers' perspectives on the success of the instructional coaches' recommended strategies for modifying how instruction is delivered. Understanding the potential impact of the instructional coach-teacher relationship on the coaching process is crucial in establishing a productive collaborative dynamic. This study was essential in addressing how to optimize instructional coaches to impact the effectiveness of teachers' instructional delivery.

According to Kraft et al. (2018), scholarly investigations have demonstrated that individualized coaching is advantageous in enhancing the instructional practices of teachers. Furthermore, the enhancement of instructional practices has been linked to an improvement in academic achievement and student performance (Kraft et al., 2018). Instructional coaching offers teachers techniques and materials that can be utilized to enhance their pedagogical approach. Even though different coaching models establish distinct expectations and parameters for teacher and coach roles, the teacher-coach relationship necessitates that coaches possess expertise relative to the practitioners with whom they work (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). The effectiveness of instructional coaching is influenced by various factors related to its implementation, such as the efficacy of specific models and competencies, as well as the coaches' adequate professional growth and ongoing assistance (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Knight, 2009b).

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the current instructional coaching model at BES to better understand the impact of coaching on the participating teachers. Based on the results of the data collection and analysis, it was possible to identify techniques that have played a role in optimizing the approaches for utilizing the proficiency of coaches based on the teachers' experiences working with instructional coaches at BES.

Purpose of the Study

One of the strengths of instructional coaching is that it reflects foundational ideas about what makes teaching and learning effective (Desimone & Pak, 2017). This research was to determine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the instructional coaching they receive to improve instructional delivery. The intention was that the addition of ICs to the PD opportunities at BES would provide teachers another way to gain strategies and techniques that can impact their teaching efficacy and ultimately result in continued improvement in student achievement.

Curricula coaching entails a coach directing their attention toward the fundamental principles of an instructional program, to facilitate teachers' active involvement in receiving concentrated guidance on the desired content and pedagogical approaches for effective instruction (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). From the completion of this study, the methodologies and strategies implemented to support instructional delivery were discussed to determine teachers' perceptions of coaching impact and effectiveness. Instructional coaches were physically present at the school site and engaged in the development of teachers. They served as valuable resources for teachers, providing support and guidance in implementing evidence-based teaching practices. Their primary objective was to empower teachers through collaborative partnerships, to integrate instructional methods that are grounded in research into classroom practices (Knight, 2007).

This research solicited the perception of teachers on the impact of coaching on their instructional practices. The primary objective of these initiatives was to enhance the learning process and minimize disparities in academic performance among students by enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills and abilities (Casey, 2006). Through professional and personal relationship building, coaches increased their awareness and understanding of the pedagogical challenges that teachers face with the delivery of instructional practices. A cooperative alliance

was established between coaches and teachers to facilitate a constructive exchange focused on identifying customized strategies to meet the specific needs of teachers. Coaches became better at assisting instructors in enhancing the effectiveness of the lessons they teach. Upon concluding this study, BES administration gathered insights into teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching and its influence on teaching efficacy. This effort sought to verify that resources were correctly distributed and employed. Furthermore, examining the data from this research guided future decisions about instructional coaching and comparable initiatives.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study in regard to the impact of instructional coaching on teachers at BES:

1. How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of an IC's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?
4. How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?

Overview of the Inquiry

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the impact of instructional coaching on teacher effectiveness based on the teacher's perception of their experience with the coaching process. The study was conducted in four phases and data was collected via pre- and post-surveys and semi-structured interviews. Upon completion of the study, the results were shared with other administrators and district-level leaders.

In Phase 1 initial meetings were held with the ICs/collaborative inquiry partners to share

details of the study. At this meeting, the ICs were asked to participate in the study. Additionally, they applied their understanding of instructional coaching and the BES setting to help design the pre-survey that was distributed to participants. The pre-survey established a baseline prior to the implementation of the instructional coaching process. Phase 2 included sharing details of the study with the individuals selected to participate and sending them the pre-survey electronically. The results were analyzed and reviewed with the instructional coaches regarding the next steps in the process. Phase 2 also included the implementation of the standard instructional coaching process that typically takes place during a 9-week period during the school year at BES. Following completion of the coaching session, participants completed the post-survey and the results were reviewed and shared with the ICs. At this time the interview questions were created based on the results of the pre- and post-survey findings.

Finally, Phase 4 included conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants to gather additional qualitative data that can provide richer, deeper information on the perceptions of the teachers that may not have been collected via the surveys. The information from the interviews was analyzed, triangulated with the results of the survey data collection, and shared with the ICs. At this point, the results were also shared with district-level administrators as applicable.

Collaborative Inquiry Partners

This research benefited significantly from the collaborative efforts with inquiry partners, especially the ICs at BES. There are currently three instructional coaches providing instructional assistance, one in each of the following subjects: English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and Multi-Tier System Support. The selected ICs are chosen for their considerable teaching experience and their expertise in curriculum and instruction within their specific areas.

Throughout the study, these coaches were involved in multiple capacities to guarantee that the data collected and analyzed effectively addresses the established research questions. The study's outcomes gave advantageous for them, as the gathered data might offer insights into teachers' views on instructional coaching at BES, enabling them to reassess their interactions with teachers. In this study, the term “collaborative inquiry partners” is used interchangeably with “instructional coaches,” as the three ICs are collaborated in the effort to conduct the study and collect the data. The inquiry partners were first introduced to the study and their responsibilities during a Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting, which they attend regularly. In this initial gathering, they helped formulate questions for a pre-survey, that were completed by teachers before the instructional coaching cycle commenced. The drafted questions were examined in the survey to confirm that it encompassed all the topics they had discussed. Once the results of the survey were received and reviewed, the coaches were able to alter their coaching methods as they deemed appropriate.

When the coaching cycle was concluded and the post-surveys were completed, the results were shared with the coaches so they could assist in creating questions for the semi-structured interview protocol. They were asked again to vet the questions to ensure all relevant information was being collected. The final study results were shared with the coaches so that they could consider all the data that was collected and have a better understanding of the teachers' perception of instructional coaching, the importance of relationship-building, and their role in the coaching process.

Conceptual Framework

Instructional coaching has emerged as an immediate answer to the elevated expectations

imposed on teachers to enhance students' academic achievements and competencies. According to Domina et al. (2015), empirical evidence indicates a notable rise in the utilization of instructional coaching during the era of standards-based reform, with the number of coaches employed doubling over the past 15 years. Instructional coaches are tasked with undertaking diverse roles to aid teachers in fulfilling the requirements of education policymakers at both the federal and state levels. The instructional coaching theory of action offers a straight path for district and school leaders to follow. According to Boatright et al. (2012), instructional coaching is a professional development method centered on content and aims to assist teachers in achieving the objectives of instructional reform at the school or district level. This approach involves immersive and contextualized work encompassing classroom observations, demonstrations of exemplary practices, and iterative cycles involving pre- and post-conferences with practitioners (Boatright et al., 2012).

Implementing instructional coaching typically requires a delicate equilibrium between providing guidance to individual teachers and participating in comprehensive school-wide and system-wide enhancements (Cornett & Knight, 2008). The IC is responsible for offering mentoring and instructional guidance to teachers while utilizing diverse approaches to cater to distinct instructional requirements. Instructional coaches must possess the ability to discern that teachers have varying needs, and they should keep the necessary resources and competencies to assess the extent of assistance that each teacher needs (Anderson & Wallin, 2018).

This particular study directly focused on instructional coaching, so it was important to investigate instructional coaching as the overarching conceptual framework. The purpose of the study was to better understand teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching to ensure that the

coaching being offered is effective. The goal was to optimize the role of ICs in assisting teachers to achieve their predetermined objectives and aspirations to enhance teacher efficacy.

In addition, the framework provided information that assisted ICs' capacity to diagnose, offer constructive feedback, and recommend optimal practices leading to an increase in teacher effectiveness. Instructional coaching, as the conceptual framework that underlies this study, is discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Theoretical Framework

This study was qualitative in nature and necessitated the accumulation and analysis of substantial qualitative data to explore the focus of instructional coaching, teacher perception, and additionally, teacher efficacy, the theory framing the study. The collection of qualitative data from teachers at BES led to an increase in teacher efficacy by optimizing the partnership between ICs and teachers. Teacher efficacy has long been identified as being systematically associated with student achievement (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy or efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment (p. 3).

The coaching process at BES consists of building relationships, identifying the instructional challenge, developing an instructional plan, and implementing the plan until the desired results have been achieved. The theoretical framework of this study that was implemented reflected Jim Knight's Impact Cycle which focuses on the IC's ability to support the instructional needs of teachers by using a triangle approach that includes the coach's ability to assist teachers to (1) Identify, (2) Learn, and (3) Improve their instructional practices (Knight, 2017). This cycle allowed ICs to collaborate with teachers to learn more about the unique area of instruction they find to be challenging, identify goals, choose instructional strategies to meet the

identified goals, continuously monitor the progress, and problem solve until the goals have been met (Knight, 2017).

Teacher efficacy is thought to be context-specific, wherein teachers may be efficacious when teaching particular subjects to specific students in identified settings; while their level of efficacy may change if teaching another subject to a different group of students (Goddard et al., 2000). The specific level of efficacy and teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks related to teaching initially were identified as being related to student achievement, student motivation, teacher valuing of educational innovations, and classroom management skills (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). As a result, teacher self-efficacy served as an important aspect of this study and is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Definition of Key Terms

Definitions are provided for the following key terms to ensure clarity and understanding throughout the study.

Achievement gap – Achievement gaps occur when one group of students (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (i.e., larger than the margin of error; Hung et al., 2020).

Content expertise – Describes a thorough understanding of the subject area and the curriculum being used, as well as the ability to use data and differentiated instruction to drive learning (Knight, 2017).

Every Child Succeeds Act of 2015 – The purpose of this act was to provide all children with significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps (Saultz et al., 2017).

Highly qualified teacher (HQT) – Federal law defines a “highly qualified teacher” as one

who meets three criteria: (1) holds at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution; (2) holds full state teaching certification; and (3) demonstrates competence in each core academic subject in which they teach. These HQT requirements apply to every teacher who provides direct instruction in core content areas, including elementary certified teachers working at the middle level, special, alternative teachers, and teachers of English as a second language (Saultz et al., 2017).

Instructional coach – An instructional coach is an educational leader who works in a school or district to support teachers in reaching their goals (Knight, 2018).

Instructional coaching – Instructional coaches' partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met (Knight, 2018).

Interpersonal capabilities – The ability to build trust and to encourage and inspire teachers to improve their practices, leading change in an organized, assertive, positive manner (Knight, 2017).

Pedagogical knowledge – An understanding and experiential base of how students learn coupled with an ability to effectively use questioning and classroom management techniques (Knight, 2017).

Standards-based performance – Refers to the practice of making sure students learn what they were taught and achieve the expected standards (Link & Guskey, 2022).

Assumptions

In conducting this study there are some assumptions that needed to be considered. It is assumed that based on the increase in academic performance at BES as seen on the state grading system, instructional coaching has been a successful part of these results. Additionally, it is also

assumed that the teachers at BES have previously had, at minimum, a relationship with the ICs that has resulted in some benefit. This study aimed to more accurately determine the role that ICs played in the increase in academic achievement, as well as the relationships that may be created with the teachers. It was assumed that the results of the study would allow for the evaluation of the ICs' involvement and provide information as to the appropriate use of expenditures regarding curriculum and instruction support.

As described the study assumed that teachers and coaches would establish a rapport that facilitates collaboration and dialogue regarding the current level of performance and the identification of areas that require improvement through goal setting. Teachers effectively communicated their requirements and high-need areas to the IC with whom they collaborated to obtain the necessary feedback to cater to their needs. The present study presumed that teachers and coaches would exhibit professional, judicious, and ethical conduct as sincere participants in addressing the identified problem of practice.

There was also an assumption that all participants, including collaborative inquiry partners, would recognize the importance of the study and how the information from the study benefits the students at BES while improving teachers' pedagogical skills and strategies. This recognition allows for the collection and analysis of valid data leading to relevant results that can be shared within BES and with the larger educational community.

As the principal at BES, I serve as the supervisor for both the participants and the inquiry partners, and it was appropriate to assume that those involved in the study may be hesitant to participate. It was important to validate any concerns and ensure that the participants understood the ethical considerations that have been considered regarding the study. I also provided details as to how the results can benefit the students, teachers, and other staff at BES so that participants

would understand the purpose. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and that their participation or lack thereof would have no bearing on their status or performance evaluation. This study provided valuable insight into the improvement of student performance at BES, the role of the IC in this process, and the appropriate use of resources related to instructional support.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to gain information about the role played by ICs based on teacher perception at BES. Data collection and analysis were specifically focused on coaches and teachers at BES, and only the teachers who have provided their informed consent to participate before the start of the study. It was important to work closely with the ICs who were serving as inquiry partners as they worked directly with the teachers during the 9-week instructional coaching session. At BES there are currently three ICs, so it was difficult to have a large number of teachers as participants and ensure that each received the appropriate amount of attention and engagement. Providing only minimal interaction between the coaches and the participants to increase the number of participants in the study may influence the teachers' perceptions of their work with the coaches and likewise their responses to survey and interview questions. To ensure that each participant was provided adequate and typical instructional support, the number of participants was limited to allow the coaches to spend an appropriate and equal amount of time with each participant.

Teachers who were offered instructional support from coaches were identified at the PLC meetings. These individuals were selected based on standard evaluative measures, which included observation, performance reviews, and individual requests. As such, the participants in the study were limited to the teachers who were identified as those who could benefit from the

instructional support and volunteered to participate. Even though certain teachers were selected to receive instructional support, their participation in the study was not mandatory, despite being assigned to work with an IC.

While acknowledging the potential bias in the study sample resulting from the selection of specific teachers at BES, including the exclusion of newly hired teachers in the upcoming fall, the impact on the study was minimal. This study sought to collect and analyze data from ICs and teachers already acquainted with the prevailing institutional culture, as the information they are able to provide a richer, more detailed description of the role of ICs as perceived by the teachers.

Limitations

Both anticipated and unanticipated circumstances could constrain the implementation of a research study and have an impact on the results and ability to answer the research questions. However, it was important to anticipate possible study limitations and determine ways to mitigate the situations as they arise. The state of public education is such that employees are constantly being moved to other institutions, other positions, or asked to serve in other capacities. This can have an impact on the study as it is planned for the instructional coaching sessions to last for 9-weeks, and it is always possible that during those 9 -weeks an IC or participant can be moved to another school or position. For example, there are typically four ICs at BES; however, one of the coaches recently transitioned to a district-based role and that position was not filled during the academic school year. In an effort to mitigate this type of situation, it was necessary to ensure that all coaches were aware of the work with the participants in case one coach needed to take on additional teachers.

As a result of the limited population of individuals who qualify to participate in the study, it was possible that the data and results could be affected by the smaller number. However, this

qualitative study collected data via two surveys, as well as a semi-structured interview, and the collection of qualitative information resulted in additional information from each participant. So, although the data collected did not represent a large number of participants, the data was lengthy and in-depth and provided an appropriate amount of information to allow for answers to the research questions. During the semi-structured interview, it was important to allow the participants to provide as much information as they felt like contributing to ensure that a significant amount of data was collected and analyzed.

There have been a variety of changes made to the instructional practices at BES to improve teaching and learning. Considering the many variables of instructional change, instructional coaching in isolation is not known to be the source for the performance growth and proficiency composite score reflected in the school's annual report card. However, instructional coaching as an increase in school performance is the result of various variables.

Although the subject of my positionality as principal and supervisor was discussed under assumptions, it must also be covered as a limitation. If participants did not feel comfortable providing information related to their work with the ICs, their personal teaching efforts and abilities, or their relationships with students, the appropriate data would not be collected. As previously indicated, it was important to make sure the participants understood the importance of the study, results, and their participation in data collection. Participants were assured that their information, as well as their comments, remained confidential, which played a role in mitigating this issue.

Finally, this study required the coordination of many schedules, as well as plans for multiple meetings with various individuals involved in the study. Instructional coaches attended monthly PLC meetings that included the scholarly practitioner. Coaches and teachers were

required to meet as indicated by their coaching schedule. I scheduled individual meetings with the participants to conduct the semi-structured interviews. I also ensured that I was available to meet with both participants and coaches if questions or concerns were identified. When a large group of people are required to coordinate already busy schedules, it is difficult to manage. Some meetings needed to be held virtually rather than in person.

There are always situations that may occur and create limitations on the study where one cannot be adequately prepared. These can include pandemic-type illnesses, technological concerns, job changes, and individuals on leave among others. Although it was important to recognize that possible limitations may have an impact on the study and identify ways to mitigate the limitations, it was not always possible to ensure that all situations have been appropriately considered and evaluated.

Significance of the Study

With the direct focus on and lack of resources for public education, this study proved critical in determining the steps to enhance coaching, impact teachers' performance, and ultimately improve academic achievement. It was important to ensure that available resources were being used appropriately and instructional support was an area that seemed to benefit from additional funding at BES. Data gathered in this study focused on optimizing the utilization of ICs to enhance the efficacy of teacher instructional delivery. This research was of considerable importance as it aimed to provide valuable insights for stakeholders, including teachers, local and district-level administrators, and coaches, regarding the impact of instructional coaching on enhancing teacher effectiveness.

This study focused on the impact of instructional coaching based on teachers' perceptions and how it affects teacher efficacy. Data was collected that sought to provide information on the

impacts of instructional coaching, but more specifically, how teachers who are receiving the coaching perceive their experiences. This may allow for the alteration of current instructional coaching and other instructional support options in an effort to improve teacher efficacy and ultimately student achievement. Instructional coaches with significant experience in the field who are considered to be experts in their particular subject are able to share their instructional strategies and techniques, while also providing an evaluation of the participant's current style.

Knowing that most public schools are working with limited budgets, the results of this study may significantly impact how they utilize their funds in an effort to allocate resources appropriately and ensure that they are able to have the most positive impact on the greatest number of students. In considering the significance of this study, it was also important to review how equity and social justice were impacted based on the results, as well as the opportunities to provide advances in the practice of instructional coaching and support.

Advancing Equity and Social Justice

As previously described, BES is a Title 1 school and although the school enjoys positive support from the surrounding community, it is still a school with more than 70% of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. As a Title 1 school, federal funding is provided to support the inequities of the enrolled population of students and BES was fortunate to be able to use federal funding to hire instructional coaches. Many of the non-Title 1 schools do not have funding to hire ICs. Typically, district-level ICs are assigned to two schools where they are only able to provide support twice a week. Title 1 schools that have full-time ICs also receive the benefit of the additional coaching support provided by the district.

Students in this population may not have advanced educational backgrounds in their families and many will be first-generation college students if they choose to attend. As a result,

students come from varied educational backgrounds and typically need a variety of specific academic support and instruction. Instructional coaches provide their expertise from years of working with various populations to assist teachers in determining the strategies and techniques that worked best for the students in each classroom. Given that students arrive at BES with diverse educational backgrounds from their pre-elementary school experiences, it was vital to guarantee equal learning opportunities for all. Instructional Coaches play a key role in guiding teachers on both instructional strategies and classroom management practices to achieve this goal. Enhancing teaching effectiveness, particularly teacher efficacy, helped more students feel at ease in the classroom and believe that their educational requirements are being fulfilled. The goal of this study was not only to explore and communicate teachers' views on collaborating with ICs but also to further recognize and affirm the importance of having ICs available on-site to assist teachers.

Advances in Practice

Instructional coaching has been an element of instructional support within FCPS for many years, yet the availability varies across the district. This study sought to reveal the benefits that continuous instructional coaching support has on teacher effectiveness based on teacher perceptions of their experiences. Although ICs currently are available in FCPS part-time, it is possible that with a similar structure to that of the instructional coaching model at BES, there would be a greater impact on teacher effectiveness and ultimately student achievement district wide. This study collected information regarding the instructional coaching model at BES and provided district leaders with the results based on full-time coaching support in an effort to showcase benefits to both teachers and students.

Additionally, the study allowed for the opportunity to collect opinions and personal

experiences from teachers regarding instructional coaching. With the collection of this information and additional discussions with the ICs at BES, the current status of the instructional coaching plan was evaluated and realigned as necessary. The details of any applicable updates and realignments provided beneficial information to others in the district who were seeking to increase or implement an instructional coaching model.

Summary

Teachers who surpass performance expectations are frequently regarded as proficient or even advanced in instructional delivery and were called upon to disseminate their exemplary methods to teachers who could benefit from diverse instructional assistance. Schools consistently seek to equip teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development in an effort to provide innovative and effective instructional strategies and techniques. The utilization of instructional coaching to offer continuous support is one way that administrators can provide an option that may have a significant impact on the effectiveness of teachers. Instructional coaches worked with teachers individually, and teachers benefited from obtaining instructional coaching tailored to their individual teaching needs. Additionally, the feedback provided by ICs to teachers typically is characterized by a collaborative, rather than an evaluative, approach. As a result, teachers were more likely to participate in the coaching process with an open mind and a willingness to receive helpful feedback.

BES is fortunate to receive funding that was allocated for the implementation of instructional support provided to teachers; however, even though BES has experienced positive academic growth recently, it is unknown if the use of instructional coaching has played a role in this change. The purpose of this study was to collect data from teachers who are participating in instructional coaching to determine their perception of the instructional coaching process and

experience. After participating in an instructional coaching session, teachers who are participating were asked to report how they perceived working collaboratively with a coach.

Chapter 2 presented relevant research that allowed for a comparison of the results of this study and other similar studies. It was important to consider previous studies, as well as the historical background of instructional coaching to provide a valid discussion of both the literature and this study. This study examined the implementation of instructional coaching as a means of professional development by local and district administrators, with the specific objective of enhancing teacher effectiveness a review of existing scholarly works offered significant knowledge regarding the effective integration of instructional coaching methodologies to enhance teacher efficacy.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Throughout the history of education, administrators and educators have sought ways to ensure that they are providing students with the highest quality education while remaining cognizant and in compliance with state and federal standards and mandates. Over the course of several decades, there have been various federal legislative initiatives, such as Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, the Race to the Top Act of 2011, and the Reading Excellence Act of 1999 (Kurtz et al., 2020) have had an impact on public education. These initiatives have consistently highlighted the importance of providing teachers with the necessary support to implement evidence-based practices to enhance student learning outcomes and behavioral development (Kurtz et al., 2020). Therefore, it was vital to evaluate various practices to determine what can lead to the most positive outcomes in both student achievement and teacher efficacy and instructional coaching is the strategy upon which this study focused.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of instructional coaching on teacher efficacy based on teachers' perceptions. In an effort to ensure that all aspects of the study and professional development opportunities were examined, this chapter evaluated various aspects of professional development, teaching, strategies, and other relevant concepts.

According to Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), coaching has been positioned as a crucial component in facilitating educational reform and offering ongoing, integrated, and personalized professional growth opportunities. The professional development obtained through instructional coaching is tailored to meet the individual needs of the teachers who are receiving coaching assistance. Instructional coaching has emerged as a prominent option for policymakers aiming to

improve reading and literacy instruction by providing on-site, personalized, and ongoing professional development (Bean et al., 2010; Deussen et al., 2007).

The success of following the recommended strategies offered by the IC was not always understood. Even when an instructional method was implemented with fidelity, the effectiveness of the strategy was undetermined. This research collected teachers' views on the effectiveness of the strategies suggested by ICs for modifying instructional delivery methods. Understanding the possible impact of the instructional coach-teacher relationship on the coaching process was essential for building a positive collaborative dynamic. This study was important in establishing how to optimize ICs in order to improve the effectiveness of teacher instructional delivery. Based on the perspectives of teachers who have received coaching help, this study investigated the effectiveness of instructional coaching, and confirmed the appropriate allocation of resources toward instructional coaching efforts.

This chapter reviews the historical background of instructional coaching and its effort to improve teacher efficacy. Similar to teaching, instructional coaching is a professional endeavor that necessitates a combination of artistic and skillful approaches to support teachers in enhancing their pedagogical practices and effectively instructing a diverse student population that may display various levels of academic achievement. This chapter begins by examining the conceptualization of instructional coaching, and how the role and responsibilities of ICs are both specified and perceived. Self-efficacy is discussed as the theoretical framework of the study. Additionally, important institutional and educational reforms that have impacted instructional coaching over time are covered.

Most teachers are required to participate in various forms of professional development and instructional coaching could be considered to be a type of professional development. As a

result, this chapter provides relevant background information on professional development. The focus of the study was on the impact of institutional coaching; therefore, it was important to understand the various aspects of instructional coaching, including different coaching models and the building of relationships that can occur as a result. Finally, the chapter closed with a discussion on measuring effectiveness, both if it was possible to measure the impact of instructional coaching on teacher effectiveness and if instructional coaching was effective as a form of professional development.

The research undertaken in this study was sourced from a range of databases, including *Google Scholar*, *ERIC*, *JSTOR*, *EBSCO*, *Institute of Education Sciences*, and *Science Direct*. The sources cited in this study were derived from scholarly journal articles, books, and research publications published within the last two decades. Publications were utilized to substantiate and underpin the historical conceptualization and establishment of the coaching process. Whenever possible, scholarly articles and research conducted within the last 10 years were employed to examine the use and success of instructional coaching as reported in other studies.

Conceptual Framework

In order to construct this particular study, it was important to review and utilize instructional coaching models as the conceptual framework that provides the underlying structure for the study. This study used a concept that is similar to the current instructional coaching practices implemented at BES. At BES, the instructional coaching strategies identified in Knight's Impact Cycle provide a structure of instructional coaching that best complements the practices that was be applied in this study.

Building relationships is the first step in the coaching process at BES. The next step is determining the instructional issue, followed by establishing an instructional plan, and then

putting the plan into action until the intended results are achieved. Jim Knight's Impact Cycle was used as the theoretical framework for which ICs utilized when implementing two strategies. This framework focuses on the ability of the IC to support the instructional needs of teachers by utilizing a triangular approach. This approach included the IC's ability to assist teachers to (1) Identify, (2) Learn, and (3) Improve their instructional practices (Knight, 2007, p. 2). This study implemented this framework with teachers who teach various grade levels and subjects. This cycle provided ICs with the opportunity to collaborate with teachers to learn more about the specific area of instruction that teachers find challenging for their students, identify goals, select instructional strategies to meet the identified goals, continuously monitor progress, and problem-solve until the goals have been met (Knight, 2007, p. 3).

Knight (2007) suggested that teachers do not resist change so much as they resist poorly designed change initiatives. Therefore, a successful change required the design of continuous professional development programs that were contextualized, built a strong teacher knowledge base, create a community of learners, and, potentially most importantly, are focused on student achievement as the common goal (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Reeves, 2010).

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is a model developed by Jim Knight and his colleagues at the University of Kansas in the Center for Research on Learning (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Devine et al., 2013; Knight, 2007). This model is based on the partnership approach (Knight, 2007) and utilizes “knowledge transfer, knowledge development, and human interaction” (Cornett & Knight, 2008, p. 206). Instructional coaching is based on seven key principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Devine et al., 2013).

Equality indicates that the partnership is a relationship between two equal professional peers who are collaborating and adding equal value to the coaching process. Choice describes the idea of what is to be learned and how it will be learned is the ultimate decision of the teacher. This ensures that the instructional coaching process is created specifically to meet the individual needs of that teacher and focuses on driving their own development.

The principle of voice reflects the idea that each voice, opinion, and point of view is an important part of the process. Teachers were encouraged to actively and vocally participate in their coaching experience to reiterate that their participation in the process was vital. A dialogue takes place throughout the coaching experience, wherein no one imposes or dominates the conversation. Participants in the coaching process are partners and engage equally in exploration and conversation to ensure the creation of an open and authentic dialogue. Reflection was an important part of the instructional coaching process and teachers are regularly asked to reflect on ideas and changes before choosing to implement them. The goal was to become a reflective practitioner and use these skills to continue making considered choices. The ultimate focus of instructional coaching was to assist teachers with making decisions about their ideas and applying them in their classrooms, so praxis was an important principle of the instructional coaching process leading to success. Finally, reciprocity ensures that all participants benefit from the instructional coaching process, where even the coach gains knowledge and skills in addition to the teacher.

Instructional coaching is typically seen as a non-supervisory role, which can result in an increase in participation or even willingness to consider participating. “Instructional coaches do not typically have positional authority to evaluate other adults; thus, they do not work from a position of supervisory power and must use expertise and relationships to exert influence”

(Gallucci et al., 2010, p. 922). Instructional coaches must be skilled in content knowledge, leadership abilities, relationship-building, and communication (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Gallucci et al., 2010). The structure of the coaching that takes place was highly dependent upon the context and the needs of the participants, but was most successful when utilizing strategies including modeling, pre- and post-conferences, and observation (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). This cycle typically involves a pre-conference meeting to establish needs and parameters, a modeling or demonstrative session, an opportunity for the teacher to perform and the coach to observe, and a post-conference or reflection meeting to discuss the entire cycle and overall experience (Knight, 2007).

Impact Cycle

Coaching models for education also may include peer coaching, cognitive coaching, instructional coaching, content-centered coaching, and pedagogical coaching (Knight, 2018). Knight highlights essential aspects of instructional coaching prevalent in the coaching cycle, such as forming a relationship with teachers, identifying the goal, learning how to implement the strategies, and monitoring the strategy for improvement. The coaching process implemented at BES is closely aligned with the cycle of coaching identified by Knight as the Impact Cycle. Instructional coaches at BES collaborate with teachers during PLCs during which instructional planning, instructional delivery, and instructional challenges are discussed. Student data is reviewed to distinguish areas of high and low student achievement, common concept errors, and common errors of practice in student performance. The PLC collaboration that is held weekly during teacher planning hour also allows teachers to share and embrace instructional strategies. Instructional coaches meet with teachers individually when they encounter instructional challenges that require continuous coaching in the process described above. The coaching

process includes many of the components identified in the Knight's Impact Cycle including one on-one meetings, observations, modeling, and parallel teaching during small groups. For this study, instructional coaches were engaged in two of those strategies, modeling and parallel teaching during small groups.

Instructional Modeling

Modeling allows ICs to demonstrate instructional practices in a classroom while the teacher observes (Knight, 2018). Knight reported that in earlier studies, teachers who devoted themselves to improving their instructional delivery identified instructional modeling as a strategy that not only allows them to hear methods of improvement, but it also allowed them to see the strategy in implementation (Knight, 2018).

Co-teaching

Parallel teaching is a common model of co-teaching used in classrooms (Friend et al., 2010). According to Shin et al. (2016), co-teaching is beneficial for both the well-being of teachers and their capacity to manage their workloads since it divides the obligations of teaching across multiple instructors. Co-teaching is a form of teaching in heterogeneous groups (Chitiyo, 2017; Ricci & Fingon, 2018; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). It has been recognized as one approach of providing support for students while they are attending school (Ministry of Education & Culture, 2014). The term "co-teaching" refers to the practice of teaching two subjects simultaneously. According to Friend et al. (2010), effective co-teaching occurs when teachers combine their abilities in the areas of planning, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning together.

The strategies that are identified in Knight's final three phases of his instructional coaching cycle encompass a triangulated approach in which the ICs support teachers to: identify, learn, and improve (see Figure 1). This cycle of coaching allows the coach and the teacher to

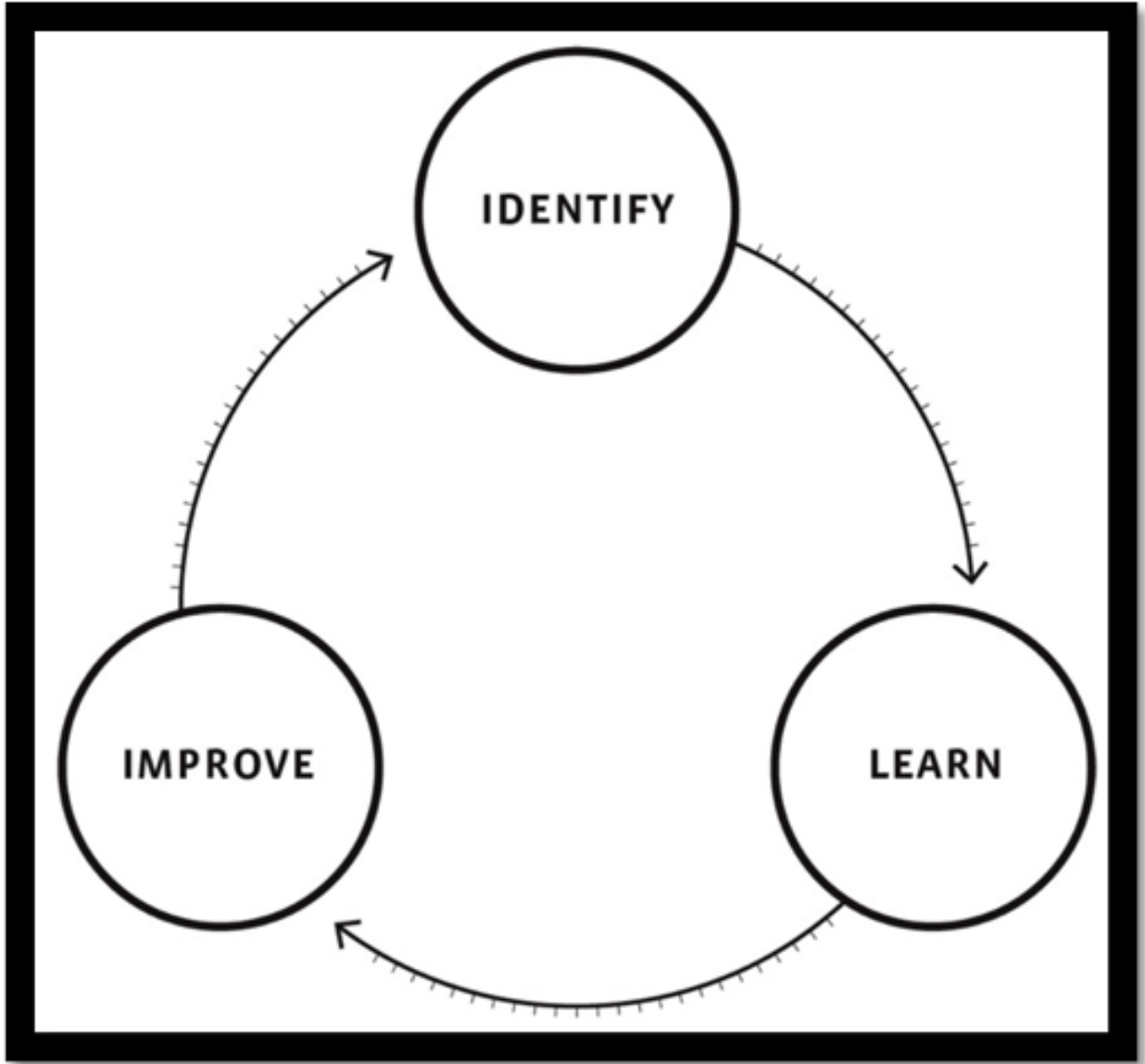


Figure 1. The Impact Cycle.

reach a shared vision and develop a plan that allows them to obtain their desired results. The process is uninterrupted as the main goal was for the instructional delivery to make continuous improvement.

Identify

When teachers seek the support of ICs to improve instructional practices and increase effectiveness, the first step requires them to conduct an observation to identify the instructional obstacles that are preventing them from being effective in their delivery (Knight, 2018).

According to Knight (2018), this stage serves as the driving force that will guide both the coach and the teacher towards the desired outcome through observation and collaboration. Goals that can support the instructional change that is needed in the learning environment must be powerful goals. In setting powerful goals, Knight (2018) suggests that the teacher and coach select powerful, easy, emotionally compelling, reachable, and student-focused (PEERS) goals.

The first step is to create a goal that is clear and easily implemented for positive change. During the second step, Knight (2018) illuminates the need for coaches to be cognizant of teachers' emotions. Next, the coach must be sensitive in appealing to the emotions of a teacher, which increases their willingness to embrace change. Unreachable goals have the potential to make teachers feel unsuccessful; therefore, goals must be specific and reachable (Knight, 2018, p. 70). All goals should be centered on student outcomes. Knight (2018) asserts that the success of students is the best indicator of the effectiveness a goal has on instructional delivery. Like other stages in the cycle, this stage is redefined based on the instructional needs of the teacher (Knight, 2018, p. 26).

Learn

The second stage in the impact cycle is the learning stage. Instructional coaches must be

knowledgeable of the instructional strategies that they suggest (Knight, 2018). Instructional coaches are more effective in addressing instructional practices when they provide teachers with an alternative strategy in which they can provide clear directions for implementing the suggested strategy. Knight (2018) asserts that instructional coaches should have a limited repertoire of strategies that they know well as opposed to having many strategies about which they know very little (p. 102).

Improve

The final phase of the Impact Cycle evaluates the strategies implemented to address the instructional needs of the teacher. The collaboration between the teacher and coach is guided by a four-step process in which Knight (2018) determines if the target goal was accomplished. The four-step process first confirms the direction for change that the teacher and coach desire. Knight (2018) finds that the next step includes a review of progress based on students' progress after the implementation of different instructional strategies have been implemented. Improvements are identified to address areas in which student progress does not meet the predetermined goals and continues to require alternative strategies, the third step of Knight's (2018) improvement phase. The coach and teacher collaborated in the last stage of the process to determine the next actions required to meet the instructional goals.

Instructional coaching has long been utilized as a strategy for providing professional development and support to educators. This particular strategy has proven successful in other locations; however, this study sought to determine the impact of instructional coaching at BES. In constructing this study, it was important to recognize that various models within instructional coaching serve to frame the research and provide guidance throughout.

Theoretical Framework

This research investigated the influence of instructional coaching on teachers as perceived by the teachers themselves, with a particular emphasis on the effect on their self-efficacy concerning their teaching abilities. Self-efficacy is defined as a belief in one's own ability to perform an action or activity necessary to achieve a goal or task (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, Bandura (1997) indicated that self-efficacy involved one's belief in their own ability to organize and execute the course of action required to attain a goal. As outlined earlier, the objective of this study was to utilize instructional coaching as a means to positively influence teacher efficacy, based on the teachers' own assessments and perceptions of their teaching competencies.

Efficacy perceptions can develop from gradually gaining skills and experience over time (Bandura, 1997), which shows that individuals form beliefs related to self-efficacy by examining information gained from their own previous experiences (Kurbanoglu, 2003). This can lead to difficulty in actually measuring self-efficacy beliefs, especially since there is a lack of this information at BES. Asking the teachers to describe their perceptions of the instructional coaching impact and their own experiences allowed for the collection of information related to self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by characteristics and prior experiences within a particular domain (Abbitt, 2011). Four main sources drive people's beliefs in themselves, including (a) mastery experience-past performance, (b) vicarious experiences-learning through others, (c) social influences-social persuasion, and (d) physiological and affective states-somatic and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences relate to actual performance of a task and are described as the most powerful source of information influencing self-efficacy (Bandura,

1997). Successful performance leads to an increase in self-efficacy but repeated failures can result in lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences have the strongest influence on self-efficacy beliefs and the strongest influence on behavior (Abbitt, 2011). Upon determining that mastery experiences have the strongest influence on self-efficacy and teacher behavior specifically, additional research considered other influences, including instructional strategies and time on task, as well as their effect on self-efficacy beliefs (Abbitt, 2011). Both domains showed an influential role in teachers' thoughts and actions regarding their success in the classroom.

There are barriers when it comes to the implementation of instructional coaching models. Teachers may be hesitant to adopt curricular or instructional innovations, especially if they are used to doing something in the way they have always done it in the past (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Research has shown that the main obstacles that can affect teachers' ability to adopt and implement curricular or instructional changes include knowledge of the subject, external factors (lack of support/supplies), and internal factors (lack of confidence; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Institutional and Educational Reforms

Instructional coaching became popular in the 1990s after innovative research on teacher support through peer coaching (Galey, 2016), and the demands for ICs have increased over time to support teachers effectively by staying knowledgeable of additional standards-based educational changes, including Common Core State Standards (CCSS; Galey, 2016). Additionally, similar to BES, Title I funds supported the hiring of ICs (Domina et al., 2015).

This trend has gained particular significance following the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 2000, which underscored the importance of highly qualified reading teachers and the implementation of evidence-based practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2002 served as a prominent demonstration of the federal government's emphasis on the provision of reading and literacy education. The Reading First initiative, a component of Title 1 Part B of the bill, is designed to provide substantial federal funding to assist elementary schools in implementing evidence-based reading curricula and progress monitoring. This initiative recommends using literacy coaches as support (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Scott et al., 2012). Instructional coaches have been employed to support teachers in implementing response-to-intervention models, which are hierarchical systems of assistance for students with special needs, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Scott et al., 2012).

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to better promote equity in education amongst all schools (Loewus, 2016). In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Bill (NCLB) emphasizing accountability in American schools. One of the NCLB legislation's goals was for all students to be competent readers with increased funding for support. Unfortunately, research showed a trend of declining scores (Irwin et al., 2022), which continued in both reading and math, specifically scores among fourth-grade students. In 2022, the NCES showed that only 36% of fourth-grade students performed at or above proficient in math, while only 33% performed at or above proficiency in reading (Irwin et al., 2022).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by Present Barack Obama in 2015 to again attempt to assist districts and schools with students who had underperforming scores. The funds were allocated to be spent on needed programs to prepare students for college and

careers. Additionally, ESSA allows local school districts autonomy with state funding, as the goal of the Act is to ensure that all children succeed, so educational stakeholders have utilized research to identify diverse elements to influence student learning (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Scott et al., 2012). It was at this point that schools were able to use these funds for instructional coaching to increase student achievement, resulting in more than double the number of ICs as on staff in the past 15 years (Domina et al., 2015).

Instructional coaching has continued to be in high demand as a technique to increase teacher support, predominantly in elementary schools (Davis et al., 2018). Elliott et al. (2019) indicated that instructional coaching embodies several factors that can enhance teacher effectiveness, from planning with the teachers, modeling lessons, conducting formal and informal observations, and providing feedback.

Professional Development

Professional development is provided to improve teaching and learning on the federal, state, and local levels. When there is a shift in education, states and districts seek methods to educate administrators and teachers so that the content is mastered well enough for implementation to occur (Joyce & Calhoun, 2019). The need to monitor newly adopted strategies remains necessary within the context of implementation. In an attempt to monitor effectiveness, many school districts put into action a coaching model to ensure efficacy.

Professional development in the field of education has been studied for many years, but always with the goal of improving student achievement through a focus on teacher learning (Avalos, 2011; Guskey, 2009; Kretlow et al., 2011; Slepko, 2008). As previously discussed, there are a variety of ways to present PD opportunities to teachers, perhaps dependent on the learning needs, skills sought, or context. Additionally, it has been noted that various types of

professional development can have differing effects on teacher learning or growth (Avalos, 2011). Instructional coaching serves as an important form of professional development and undergirds this particular study; therefore, it is necessary to review various PD opportunities to confirm that the selection of instructional coaching was correct for this context.

Professional development that is needed to address ineffective instructional practices may not exist or be available when it is needed or for the length of time that it is needed. Knight (2019) recognized that based on the spending of 50 of the largest school districts in the United States, \$8 billion was spent on professional development directed toward providing teachers with the tools needed to implement evidence-based practices. While helpful information can be gathered from one-day professional development, effective teaching methods often require more than a day of information gathering. In many countries, teachers are expected to receive continuous professional development to maintain best practices of instructional approaches aimed to maximize student achievement (Day & Sachs, 2004; Vangrieken et al., 2017; Vries et al., 2013).

At the same time, researchers (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000; Vangrieken et al., 2017) maintained that all professional development is considered significant in its attempt to cultivate improved outcomes in teaching and learning. Therefore, some school districts seek to provide one day of professional development to support teachers in an effort to remain informed of the latest theories and trends that focus on improving teaching and learning. However, in a study conducted by Al-Balushi (2021) it was determined that one-shot professional development sessions do not always produce the desired change in teaching and learning. Teachers who participated in the study viewed professional development opportunities as most relevant and suitable when they offered solutions to their everyday challenges. It was determined that the PD

in this particular study was effective because it was ongoing and presented by a teacher who was knowledgeable in the area of focus. The individual was also accessible and available to provide timely feedback (Al-Balushi, 2021).

The study conducted by Al-Balushi in 2021 is one of many in which teachers identified the positive effects of professional development and growth through collaboration and consultation received by a teacher mentor or coach on the school or district level. Joyce and Showers (2002) conducted a study on the impact of various types of professional development on teachers' learning. The study focused on teachers' utilization of the information learned during training sessions. Only 5% of teachers used the information gathered in teaching and shared professional development environments. In comparison, 95% of teachers utilized data from a workshop to improve education and to learn when 30 hours of peer coaching was added to transfer the information into practice (Joyce & Calhoun, 2019). The personal aspect of the implementation does not suggest that one-day workshops do not offer valuable information; however, it does appear that implementation becomes more practical when combined with collaborative support.

Teachers exit their undergraduate teaching programs with the most recent pedagogical and curricular examples to bring to their classrooms; however, they are only beginning their teaching careers and may not have learned the importance of classroom management strategies and behavioral techniques. This is something that is learned over time, but all beginning teachers can benefit from mentoring and guidance from someone who has previously had similar experiences. This is the ultimate goal of instructional coaching, allowing someone with experience and expertise the opportunity to share this information with someone who may be

newer to the field of education or may be seeking additional information when implementing specific skills.

Assisting individuals with the development of educational competence and a greater understanding of the teaching process can benefit those who are beginning their teaching career or those who are seeking innovative techniques (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2000). “For practicing teachers, PD is perhaps one of the most important bridges from research to classroom implementation” (Kretlow et al., 2011, p. 349). Instructional coaching can provide this bridge for such individuals.

Hargreaves (2000) described the stages through which teachers gain knowledge and experience in regard to teaching: (a) pre-professional, (b) autonomous professional, (c) collegial professional, and (d) post-professional. The descriptions provide additional details regarding the experiences and professionalism of teachers in particular stages in their careers. In the 1960s, when teachers were described as autonomous professionals, they were separated from their colleagues and taught in their own classrooms (Hargreaves, 2000). At this time induction and mentoring programs were being introduced, yet they were only seen as programs for new teachers or those needing assistance.

The mid-1980s was described as the age of the collegial professional and included an increase in pressure to collaborate as the difficulty and complexity of teaching increased (Hargreaves, 2000). This was also the time when professional communities were created to provide space for risk taking, collaboration, and inquiry. It was in the 21st century when teaching began to require the ability to work with diverse groups as a result of increased pressure and demands from various constituencies (Hargreaves, 2000). PD opportunities expanded and technological advances led to PD that aligns with goals to improve student learning (Fullan &

Hargreaves, 2000; Guskey, 2009). It was during this time that Hargreaves (2000) provided two possibilities as a result of the way PD and teacher education was headed: (1) a social movement that includes positive learning opportunities and the creation of new partnerships to advance learning for students and teacher growth, or (2) an increase in pressure and work demands that result in a breakdown in teaching and opportunities for professional development and growth are reduced or eliminated.

School districts and individual school sites offer different types of professional development opportunities. In some instances, the administration at the individual school can make decisions related to the PD that is offered based on what is necessary at the school and what they determine will be advantageous. If the context of the PD opportunity is not relevant to a particular group, it will be unlikely that the participants will leave the PD feeling as though they gained new knowledge or skills. Typical PD programs may include courses and workshops, along with in-service and coaching models, each serving different purposes, which could also include participation in professional learning communities where data is discussed, and strategies are shared with the group (Avalos, 2011). However, it can be difficult to determine what type of PD will provide the most accurate and beneficial situation where teachers are able to learn. It can be up to the school administrators to know their employees well enough to be able to make this decision and help lead the collaborative efforts (Fullan, 2006).

Instructional Coaching

The concept of instructional coaching originated from the premise that effective teachers could instinctively coach colleagues into becoming as effective as they were, thereby positively impacting student learning (Anderson & Wallin, 2018). While several divergent coaching models

exist, in general, research defines instructional coaching as a form of PD that seeks to facilitate change in teacher practice through a coaching partnership (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

According to Mangin and Dunsmore (2015), an IC 's first responsibility is to support teachers in meeting their instructional needs to enhance both teaching and learning. To satisfy teachers' instructional needs, a variety of coaching models can be used. Additionally, a body of research describes instructional coaching as a type of on-site, immediate professional development intended to help instructors offer teaching that has a beneficial influence on students' growth and development. Professional development is offered to enhance the way that teaching is delivered, but in recent years, the way that professional development is offered has changed dramatically. By sharing their knowledge and offering helpful criticism, professionals in the field of education are paving the way for more highly effective teachers (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). The academic performance of the students improved because of this paradigm shift in professional development, according to research conducted by Nguyen and Hunter in 2018. Teachers are able to receive onsite support that would assist them in identifying areas of improvement.

Because the coach and teacher work together to achieve change in instructional delivery, the results of instructional coaching as a form of professional development have been significant (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Coaching has been called the cornerstone of teacher professional development (Cordingley, 2015) and is widely recognized as a powerful strategy to enhance how students learn in classrooms. During instructional coaching, the goal setting, questioning, and data-gathering activities that are prevalent in one-on-one coaching are integrated with explanation, modeling, and feedback (Knight, 2007). These components are used by ICs to support teachers during the coaching process.

Coaching is increasingly being promoted as a viable alternative to unsuccessful traditional training approaches. There are various approaches to coaching in schools, each with its own set of goals and methods. Peer coaching, for example (Showers, 1984), allows teachers to observe and coach one another. Classroom management coaching (Sprick et al., 2006) enables coaches to support teachers in fostering safe and civil learning communities by utilizing a number of data-gathering and instructional strategies. Content-focused coaching (West & Staubb, 2003) is largely utilized by mathematics coaches to improve teacher content knowledge and lesson design. Blended coaching (Bloom et al., 2005) is a coaching strategy that integrates numerous approaches that coaches and administrators can use to coach teachers.

In 2001, No Child Left Behind was adopted and added increased responsibility for teachers, as well as school districts, with a focus on student achievement. Schools implemented instructional coaching to attempt to support and develop teachers to address the new and changing standards and lead to increased student achievement. Instructional coaches led a focus on a strong academic school culture since both teachers and students received increased support (Elliott et al., 2019). The structure of instructional coaching varies from school to school, but the overall model was designed to offer consistent support to teachers. The main priorities for coaches focus on increasing student achievement using instructional strategies backed by research while also acknowledging and appreciating the contribution of teachers and giving them a voice in their own professional development (Knight, 2007).

Instructional Coaching Impact

The trend of instructional coaching has provided a significant shift in professional development, allowing master teachers to share their expertise with other teachers to improve student performance throughout the educational process (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). This

paradigm shift in instructional leadership from outside professional development conducted by respected experts and agencies to ongoing school-based professional development has increased student academic performance (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018). Instructional coaching is quickly becoming one of the most prevalent forms of teacher professional development (Knight, 2019), both in the United States and internationally (Kho et al., 2019; Kotze et al., 2019; Netolicky, 2016; Zuilkowski & Piper, 2017). Research illustrates how many instructional coaches enter positions without a thorough understanding of coaching practice or even a clear vision of their role as a coach (Gallucci et al., 2010).

Instructional coaching continues to be utilized in various school settings with high success (Devine et al., 2013; Knight, 2007; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Kretlow et al., 2011), which indicates that the partnership approach is a professional development option that works well for teachers (Knight, 2007). Studies have shown that coaching teachers can have a positive impact on student learning (Gallucci et al., 2010); however, the ultimate goal of instructional coaching is to have a positive impact on teacher learning and efficacy. Making instructional coaching an on-going part of the PD culture within a school can lead to a lasting impact on teacher education and ultimately, student achievement.

While several divergent coaching models that function based on different structures and behaviors exist, research defines instructional coaching as a form of PD that seeks to facilitate change in teacher practice through a coaching partnership (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). The scope and selection of goals, the relationship between coach and teacher, and the degree to which coaching is seen as an evaluative measure can vary widely across models (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017).

Coaching Behaviors

As previously mentioned, after evaluation of other studies and examples of instructional coaching implementation at other schools, I was able to take the context of BES, as well as the purpose of this study into account to select five aspects of instructional coaching that I contend are the most applicable: facilitative coaching, directive coaching, dialogic coaching, student-centered coaching, and teacher-centered coaching. Unfortunately, instructional coaching does not solve all issues related to student achievement and school reform tends to interfere with the implementation of an effective instructional coaching program.

Knight (2017) indicated that the implementation differences can be related to the process of hiring coaches, qualified coaches, clear roles, leadership opportunities, and coaching praxis. In selected studies, Kraft et al. (2018) established inclusion criteria that focused, in part, on five critical features of the coaching process: (a) individualized (i.e., one-on-one coaching sessions); (b) intensive (i.e., regular coaching interactions during a given month); (c) sustained (i.e., coaching engagement that lasts an extended period of time); (d) context-specific (i.e., coaching is based on practices that occur within a teacher's classroom); and (e) focused (i.e., coaching focuses on deliberate practice of specific skills). It is important that administrators and coaches determine what type of coaching behaviors are most applicable in their respective settings and will lead to the highest possibility of success.

Facilitative Coaching

The facilitative coach operates as a sounding board for teachers, not sharing their expertise but instead listening and asking questions. The teacher does the decision-making in this approach. Facilitative coaches see collaborating teachers as equals who make most, if not all, of the decisions during coaching (Knight, 2017). The coach encourages the teacher to share their

ideas openly by listening with empathy, paraphrasing, and asking powerful questions. Knight (2017) has observed that facilitative coaches do not share their expertise or suggestions with respect to what a teacher can do to get better based on the assumption that (a) coaches already have the knowledge needed to improve, so a coach's role is to help them unpack what they already know and that (b) coaches who share their expertise with teachers may inhibit progress by keeping them from coming up with their own solutions. The facilitative coaching structure creates a learning space where the coach helps a teacher grow by building on their strengths and focusing on reflection, analysis, observation, and experimentation (Knight, 2017).

Directive Coaching

Directive coaching is the opposite of facilitative coaching. Knight (2017) identifies the directive coach's goal as helping the teacher master a certain skill or set of skills. The relationship between the coach and teacher is more like that of a master–apprentice relationship. The directive coach shares specific knowledge that may be needed to improve. Some teachers may require an instructional coaching approach in which the coach is prescriptive instead of collaborative.

The directive coach has special knowledge, and their job is to transfer that knowledge to the coach. While the relationship is respectful, it is not equal (Knight, 2017). Knight (2017) continues to identify the directive coach as an expert whose primary goal is to exercise their expertise to ensure that the teacher learns the correct way by telling teachers what to do, sometimes modelling practices, observing teachers, and providing constructive feedback to teachers until they can implement the new practice with fidelity. The directive coach's perception is that the teacher does not know or understand the practice which is the reason that they are being coached.

Peer Coaching

Collaboration and learning between colleagues are natural actions. This natural process assumes the identity of peer coaching when it becomes the purpose intended to provide guidance to improve teaching and learning outcomes. The act of peer coaching is a process in which a coach regularly observes a peer, and the coach provides support, assistance, and feedback to the peer (Hagen et al., 2017). For peer coaching, the coach and their peer work together to share ideas, support each other, teach one another, reflect on current practices, build new skills or solve problems (Hohensee & Lewis, 2019; Joyce & Showers, 1982). Scholars have pointed out that peer coaching may have the potential to improve teacher practice (Britton & Anderson, 2010; Lee & Choi, 2013; Thijs & van den Berg, 2002). Although studies have shown that peer coaching is an effective means of accomplishing ongoing and sustained instructional improvement (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Sprick et al., 2006), it is imperative to note that the success relies on teachers' resilience (Knight, 2010). Peer coaching could help teachers to address issues through a social interaction with colleagues who have experiential knowledge and similar characteristics (Dennis, 2003), ultimately helping learners achieve success (Arslan & Ilin, 2013).

Cognitive Coaching

Cognitive coaching has been described as a “nonjudgmental mediation of thinking” by Costa and Garmston (2002, p. 10), altering observable teaching behaviors when inner and invisible cognitive behaviors are rearranged. The main purpose is to foster one's potential to improve abilities of self-monitoring and self-directedness, as well as self-modification (Costa & Garmston, 2002). The cognitive coaching model is built on research findings which showed “student achievement would be higher in the classrooms of teachers who interacted more

extensively with their coaches and positively correlated with the use of personnel resources which was represented by coaches” (Shidler, 2009, p. 459). Others like Sullivan and Glanz (2013) claim that cognitive coaching is as good as supervision of instruction and has long been appearing in literature as an alternative to what has always been done by professionally trained supervisors. It is also possible that teacher isolation tends to contribute to teachers’ reluctance to explore and embrace pedagogical approaches that may challenge their previous experience (Newell-McLymont, 2015). Providing the collaboration of cognitive coaching might help eliminate a teacher’s sense of isolation and reluctance to collaborate with their peers. This coaching process could provide teachers with nurturing relationships that can offer support through ongoing feedback to improve instructional delivery.

Additionally, recent research has suggested that teacher isolation contributes significantly to teacher burnout, especially among beginning teachers (Battersby, 2019). Effective implementation of cognitive coaching could have the potential to eliminate isolation, increase collaboration, and minimize burnout. Coaches utilizing the cognitive coaching model balance their time between four components: instructing for specific content, modeling techniques and instructional practices, observing teacher practices, and dedicating consultative hours to work with teachers when children are not present in order to better facilitate reflection (Shidler, 2009). In other words, this coaching model emphasizes an approach that involves modifying teacher practices through direct instruction by coach to teacher and then application of the learning in real-time in the classroom. Other studies have also shown that cognitive coaching positively impacts student achievement (Rinaldi, 2013) and enhances teachers’ sense of efficacy (Robinson, 2011).

Transformational Coaching

Transformational coaching aims to change: (a) the teachers' behaviors, beliefs, and being (b) the schools in which the teacher works and the other teachers, students, and administrators who are in the same school and (c) the broader educational or social systems. Aguilar (2013) concluded by stating that this kind of coaching only works when the coach is engaged in a process of transforming his own behaviors, beliefs, and being, along with the teachers. This type of coaching requires extensive reflective behaviors on the part of both the teacher, as well as the IC to ensure success. Transformational coaching focuses more on the belief system and how that impacts the teacher's instructional abilities. In order to make change associated to instruction and pedagogy, there must also be an examination and attempt to make changes or transform the behaviors and beliefs. In transformation coaching, there is also the desire to make change related to the school, colleagues, and even the school system or district. Although transformational coaching may start with a focus on the behaviors and beliefs of the individual, the overall effort is to have an impact on systemic education.

Relationship Building and Collaboration

The most critical component of effective coaching is the relationship that exists between the coach and teacher. Instructional coaches frequently meet resistance from the teachers with whom they collaborate; this is a consequence of the egalitarian, isolated teaching culture that exists in many schools (Lowenhaupt et al., 2014). Some teachers also report feeling professionally intimidated by their IC peers, a topic that has been examined in recent research in terms of authority and power (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

Knight (2018) states that teachers are valued as a partner in the coaching process as opposed to a top-down approach resulting in positive impacts on the instructional outcome. As

previously described, the collaboration between instructors and coaches is based on seven principles. These concepts, as articulated by Knight (2018), foster collaboration in the partnership by encouraging teachers to become contributors to the activities and outcomes of the coaching process. It has proven difficult to lead schools successfully without building, establishing, and maintaining trust within and across the many and varied constituencies they serve (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Trust is contextual and dynamic, according to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), and it has different bases depending upon the nature of the interdependence, and thus, the level of vulnerability in the relationship. It can change over the course of a relationship as a history of fulfillment of expectations or disappointments accrues. Teachers, like students, do not learn from people that they do not trust.

Aguliar (2013) offers 10 suggestions for building trust during a period that she calls the enrollment process, the stage of ensuring that the teacher buys into coaching and remains vested in the coaching process: (a) plan and prepare; (b) cautiously gather background information; (c) establish confidentiality; (d) listen; (e) ask questions; (f) connect; (g) validate; (h) be open about who you are and what you do; (i) ask for permission to coach; and (j) keep commitments.

As previously described, instructional coaches serve as non-supervisors in their roles working with teachers. The non-evaluative nature of instructional coaching is demonstrated by providing non-judgmental feedback to teachers regarding their teaching practices to maintain an equal coach-teacher relationship (Taylor, 2008). Knight (2010) espoused that an effective instructional coaching relationship is grounded in the element of the partnership. Knowles (1990) suggests that adult learners need to feel they are participants in their learning experiences and therefore seek to be actively engaged in the learning process. Thus, adult learners search for avenues in which they can be in charge of their learning process. Thomas et al. (2015) asserted

that adult learners must feel that their opinions and experiences are valued, respected and used in ways that help them change and grow. Along these same lines, Knight (2010) argued that a partnership model which is more collaborative in nature is most effective in engaging teachers, rather than a top-down authoritarian model where teachers are merely told what to believe and practice (see Table 1).

Interpersonal capabilities are the ability to build trust and to encourage and inspire teachers to improve their practices, leading change in an organized, assertive, positive manner (Knight, 2017). Scarbrough (2011) suggests that coaches should never push their way in, but instead allow teachers to take the lead based on what they need or what is not working. “Most of the time, teachers have the answers; they just want someone to validate that they are fighting the good fight” (Scarbrough, 2011, p. 2). Coaching can help teachers make meaning through deep pedagogical interactions based on real-world applications in their unique classroom contexts (Zugelder, 2019). Instructional coaching requires insight and intuition to support teachers in creating a classroom culture that is conducive to the effective delivery of instruction.

Measuring Effectiveness

Instructional coaching, like teaching, is a profession that takes both art and expertise to help teachers understand how to effectively educate a classroom full of students with varying levels of academic performance. As it is often recognized in the profession, the purpose of instructional coaching is to provide teachers with immediate and ongoing instructional support to promote teacher effectiveness (Knight, 2018; Woulfin, 2014). However, it can be difficult to determine the effectiveness of instructional coaching as a strategy, as well as the individual coach and their impact on the teacher and their pedagogical improvement. Intuition, theory (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Showers, 1985), and some empirical evidence (Blazar & Kraft, 2015) highlight

Table 1

Top-Down Approach vs. Partnership Model

Top-Down Approach	Partnership Model
Compliance	Commitment
People outside the classroom know what students need	People inside the classroom know what students need
One size fits all	One size fits one
Constructive feedback	Dialogue
Coaches do most of the thinking	Teachers do most of the thinking
Judgmental	Non-judgmental
Teachers have lower status than coaches	Teachers have equal status with coaches
Accountable to leaders	Accountable to students

likely dimensions of coach quality: (a) the professional skills coaches bring to their work, such as content knowledge and teaching and leadership experience; (b) the tools they use in their interactions with teachers, such as providing direct feedback, modeling teaching behavior, and providing opportunities for active practice; and (c) coaches' relationships and rapport with teachers and other school and district staff. Within the past several years, some school districts have developed standards that define the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader or content expert (Diffey & Aragon, 2018). Teachers with the ability to improve the academic performance level of students across the learning spectrum often become leaders within the school setting as mentors and curriculum leaders. The benefit of having teacher leaders and content experts is the immediate support that can be provided for teachers in distress.

Overall, findings from 60 randomized controlled trials revealed pooled effect sizes of standard deviations (SD) on teacher instruction and SD on student achievement. Based on prior research, the effect of coaching on teacher instruction exceeded differences in measures of instructional quality between novice and veteran teachers (Hill et al., 2015); and the effects of coaching on student achievement are of similar or larger magnitude than estimates of the degree to which teachers improved their ability to improve student achievement during the first 5 to 10 years of teaching (Atteberry et al., 2015; Papay & Kraft, 2016).

During the standards-reform era, coaching has become such a popular policymaking tool that rates of coach employment have more than doubled, while rates of other school district employee staffing have remained mostly unchanged (Domina et al., 2015; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Measuring the effectiveness of instructional coaches remains a challenge; however, this study seeks to evaluate the impact of instructional coaching at BES, which can provide data to the district based on the experience noted by teachers at BES.

Summary

Instructional coaching has proven to be an effective way to assist teachers in improving their educational practices. Following the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2000 and No Child Left Behind in 2002, the use of instructional coaching became increasingly widespread. The fundamental goal of instructional coaching is to assist teachers in delivering teaching that will improve students' ability to demonstrate competency.

Various instructional coaching approaches can be used to assist teachers in delivering teaching to improve student performance. The instructional needs of the teacher frequently influence the manner of coaching used to fulfill the needs of the student. The instructional coaching process is a collaborative endeavor that enables teachers to embrace the support required to improve teaching and learning. Throughout the coaching process, the teacher and coach collaborate to identify the instructional needs of the teacher and strategies that can be implemented to increase effectiveness.

Although instructional coaching has been a common tool for assisting teachers in improving their pedagogical approaches to improve educational outcomes, teachers' perceptions and the impact on their self-efficacy related to their teaching abilities still need to be evaluated further. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions of the impact instructional coaching has on their instructional delivery.

Chapter 3 provides details on the study methodology, including the selected method, data collection techniques, and data analysis and evaluation. Chapter 3 also covers the limitations and delimitations of the study design, as well as assumptions related to the study design and anticipated results. Finally, the chapter included a discussion on the involvement of the

collaborative inquiry partners and how they impacted the study and the results, as well as my involvement as the scholarly practitioner.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and evaluate the impact of instructional coaching as perceived by teachers at Best Elementary School (BES), a Title 1 elementary school. In an effort to ensure that instructional coaching opportunities are being utilized fully, it was important to review the coaching model at BES and make updates or improvements as applicable. As used at BES, instructional coaching is defined as the sharing of teaching practices that help teachers reach the objectives they have set for themselves (Knight, 2017). These objectives could be related to teaching effectiveness, classroom strategies, teaching techniques, and student achievement, among others. The approach taken via this study has allowed a deeper understanding of Title 1 elementary teachers' perceptions of the impact instructional coaching has on their instructional effectiveness. This chapter provides details on the research study, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodological assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Best Elementary School (BES) seeks to ensure the academic and social-emotional success of all enrolled students. Additionally, the school is focused on meeting the needs of the teachers who are dedicated to teaching students using a variety of strategies to move students toward grade level proficiency. Teachers at BES are required to teach the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCS) for all grade levels by the end of the school calendar year. The NCSCS has been designed to ensure students are proficient in their current grade level and prepared for the next grade level. Instructional delivery is a key element used to determine student growth and achievement and some teachers benefited from additional support to become more effective in their roles. This support was provided by ICs in specific content areas.

Although coaches are available to support teachers in becoming effective in their delivery of instruction, the impact instructional coaching has on teacher effectiveness based on teacher perception at BES was unknown.

The implementation of instructional coaching was carried out district-wide in the Fantastic School District, with the appointment of an IC to each of the 45 schools. The IC's expectations were perceived as ambiguous by coaches, teachers, and administrators. A considerable number of ICs possessed extensive teaching experience; however, they faced a dearth of professional development opportunities that could have facilitated their comprehension of the nuances of their newly assigned roles. The absence of adequate professional development opportunities for novice teachers to enhance their skill development may have had a considerable influence on their job performance. Research has shown that teachers are more likely to apply rigorous differentiated supports for integrating research-based practices into their classrooms when instructional coaching is provided as a type of professional development (Aguilar, 2013; Devine et al., 2013; Gallant & Gilham, 2014; Marzano, 2012). The administration at BES sought insight into teachers' views on the effect of instructional coaching on their ability to teach effectively. This was to confirm the proper distribution and usage of resources. Additionally, analyzing the data from this study provided valuable information that aided in making informed decisions about instructional coaching and related programs moving forward.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to ensure that ICs at BES are providing teachers with effective pedagogical strategies that lead to supportive relationships between coaches and teachers and positively impact teachers' perceptions of working with coaches. In order to

successfully conduct this study through the collection and analysis of relevant data, the following questions will guide the inquiry:

1. How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of an IC's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?
4. How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?

A concise summary of the way the research questions are interconnected, as well as the aspects of the study that have provided answers to the research questions and allow for the identification of themes provided in Table 2. The chronology of research implementation in the table delineates the various phases of the study, the corresponding data collection methods employed to address each research question, and the projected timeline for each phase. In order to answer Research Question 1 (How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?), data was collected from elementary school teachers at a Title I school regarding their experiences working with ICs specifically regarding the coaches' roles and responsibilities while collaborating with teachers to improve instructional practices. During the weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings, additional context regarding the focus of this question was collected from the ICs, as inquiry partners, to gain insight from their experience working with the teachers in the classroom, specifically related to their perceived roles and responsibilities.

Research Question 2 (What are teachers' perceptions of an IC's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?) sought to provide information related

Table 2

Research Questions and Corresponding Data Sources

Research Question	Data Source
How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?	Pre-survey questions: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 Post-survey questions/Interview questions
What are teachers' perceptions of an instructional coach's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?	Pre-survey questions: 2, 3, 4, 9 Post-survey questions/Interview questions
How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?	Pre-survey questions: 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Post-survey questions/Interview questions
How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?	Pre-survey questions: 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 Post-survey questions/Interview questions

to teachers' perceptions of the instructional coach's ability to evaluate and collaborate with the teachers to recommend and implement effective instructional practices and strategies. Answering this question has provided insight into teachers' willingness to work with ICs in an effort to provide classroom support that positively impacts teachers' overall effectiveness. This question also sought to provide information on the amount of confidence teachers have in the IC's ability to successfully evaluate teaching practices while offering instructional support and building collaborative relationships.

Research Question 3 (How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?) focused on the impact of personal relationships between teachers and ICs and sought to demonstrate whether positive relationships influenced the level of cooperation between teachers and coaches based on teachers' perceptions. The information has been useful when pairing teachers and ICs in coaching situations. This question centered on individual teachers' perceptions and their personal experiences collaborating with coaches, considering the personalities of both teachers and coaches that could influence the success of building relationships. Finally, Research Question 4 (How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?) sought to determine how teachers measured the impact of instructional coaching on their classroom techniques. The response to this research question served as a metric to assess the effectiveness of instructional mentoring on the quality of teachers' instructional delivery. Analysis of the data presented how educators value instructional coaching in their classrooms. The primary objective was to assess the relationship between teachers and ICs to understand its influence on student performance and achievement.

Inquiry Design and Rationale

This study focused on exploring the lived experiences of teachers at BES working with ICs. Specifically, the study examined teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching and its effectiveness on their teaching practice. Participants completed a pre-survey before working with an IC and a post-survey at the end of the 9-week coaching cycle. Participants were also asked to participate in semi-structured interviews to collect additional information related to their experience working with the instructional coaches at BES. The data analysis led me to ascertain whether teachers view instructional coaching as a beneficial opportunity to enhance their teaching strategies and techniques, or if adjustments to the instructional coaching model at BES were necessary to improve its effectiveness. In order to conduct the qualitative study described herein, data was collected from participants via surveys and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research was the appropriate design for this study as it involves the observation of participants in their natural environments, followed by the interpretation of field notes, images, interviews, and other similar data to provide an analysis of the identified situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Results from the analysis of qualitative data prove to be richer and provide more specific details than the collection of quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, an analysis resulted in emergent themes that were utilized to determine the impact and effectiveness of instructional coaching and applied to the development of a focused, context-specific intervention if required. Participants completed pre-and post-surveys, as well as semi-structured interviews, to share their experiences and perceptions of the instructional coaching process. Both the surveys and the interviews were comprised of open-ended questions as qualitative research presents participants with the opportunity to answer open-ended questions, allowing them to freely articulate their thoughts (Crotty, 1998).

This research allowed participants to convey their perspectives on the collaborative opportunities they had when receiving assistance from the IC in a particular content area. The humanistic nature of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was maintained by presenting data in the participant's own words. Teachers' characterizations of their coaching experience in terms of their interactions documented the collaborative exchange of the coaching process. The use of this qualitative approach emphasizes the use of the participant's actual words, which serve as a tool that can reduce the possibility of doctoring and fabrication of the study's conclusions, thereby contributing to the reliability of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The information gathered during the surveys and interviews was used to voice teachers' perceptions and identify common benefits as well as non-beneficial strategies.

Ensuring that the data was collected from the participants' actual surroundings (in the classroom) played an important role in providing answers to the research questions. Qualitative research allowed for data collection in a natural setting focusing on real-life situations as they occur. The experiences evaluated in this study were collected from teacher interactions with ICs through the 9 weeks of the coaching cycle at BES.

Context of the Study

The study took place at BES in North Carolina, specifically in the small town of Best, situated on the southern border of Fantastic County. BES is part of the Fantastic County Public School District where the educational institutions are highly esteemed and receive ample support from the community and the district. The community exhibits a strong interconnectivity with the agriculture and farming industries and many members of the community completed their educational journey in the same institutions their children are currently attending. BES was constructed as a school for preschool through 4th grade in 1991 and continues to serve this

population at present. As a result of a rapidly expanding community, a bond referendum was passed in 2021 to extend the current infrastructure at BES to include 5th grade students, requiring expansion and an update of the building. Even prior to the addition of the 5th grade students, BES is labeled as a Title 1 school and 70% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The student population at BES currently includes 620 learners in grades prekindergarten to 4th grade and is made up of the following racial and ethnic groups: White, which makes up the majority, followed by Hispanic, Black, multi-racial, and Native American.

As previously discussed, BES was classified as a low-performing school beginning in 2017 and designated as a Restart school based on unsatisfactory results on the state-administered end-of-grade (EOG) assessments completed by students. Since receiving the designation as low-performing, BES has focused on improvements and exhibited significant academic progress and a rise in proficiency levels. One of the improvements included taking full advantage of the opportunities available as a Restart school. This allowed BES to function in accordance with the regulations of a charter school. Like other charter schools in North Carolina, BES is allowed to function autonomously, allocate available resources at their discretion, and establish educational programs tailored to the unique requirements of the students.

The teaching staff at BES includes a majority of individuals who are described as veteran teachers, specifically 42 of the 52 total teachers, while 10 individuals can be considered to be novice teachers. Additionally, the staff also includes 18 instructional assistants. At BES, there are currently three ICs who offer pedagogical assistance with a focus on specific subject areas, including English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. In response to modifications made by the state regarding the intervention process for students who may necessitate specialized instruction, the administration at BES has directed the third IC to focus on multi-tier instruction

to aid teachers in formulating intervention plans, discerning intervention strategies, consulting with parents, and determining whether students should be directed to the Exceptional Children's (EC) Department.

The provision of ICs to assist teachers with their pedagogical requirements was aimed at enhancing their efficacy. Through the collection and analysis of qualitative data, this study assessed whether the deliberate provision of instructional coaching support led to an improvement in instructional effectiveness as perceived by the teachers at BES.

Collaborative Inquiry Partners

The success of this study depended on collaborative partnership efforts with the current ICs at BES. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding and ensure positive outcomes from the relationship between teachers and ICs at BES. This information made it possible to establish a collaborative alliance among teachers, school-based ICs, district coaches, students, and administrators, all of whom are working toward improved academic success. The primary objective was to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the influence of instructional coaching on teacher effectiveness at BES, as perceived by teachers who received coaching support in a specific content area.

Frequently administrators serve as intermediaries in facilitating the partnership between ICs and teachers. Classroom walkthroughs and observations serve as catalysts for identifying a teacher's instructional support requirements. During the district required fidelity walkthroughs, instructional coaches obtained valuable insights into teachers' instructional practices. These brief ten-minute observations allowed coaches to provide immediate feedback on instructional delivery, while also gathering snapshot data that could be used to provide further support to the teacher. The implementation of walkthroughs enhanced the visibility of ICs making them more

readily available to provide support to teachers as needed. When ICs are able to take part in this process, they contribute to the positive impact that teachers have on their students. As a result, it was imperative that the ICs at BES participate in the described study to ensure that their experience and views are taken into account. They were involved in the study in various ways throughout as collaborative inquiry partners. The weekly PLC sessions were critical in assessing strategies, performance status, and teacher reactions to instructional adjustments implemented to address instructional focus areas. Additionally, local and district administrators possess the potential to provide significant insights regarding the coaching process and may also be consulted to serve as content experts as necessary.

The three ICs at BES were provided with the purpose and details of this study and asked to serve as collaborative inquiry partners. Moving forward, the designations of “instructional coaches” and “inquiry partners” both refer to the same individuals. The coaches possessed expertise in various instructional areas and offered critical insights that reinforced the aim and focus of this study. The individuals selected to serve as coaches were identified based on their experience and talent related to instructional strategies and techniques, classroom organization, and knowledge of the social-emotional needs of children. Based on their experience, the coaches bring an innate understanding of the competencies required to achieve the targeted performance results in each area. At BES the three ICs focused on the following academic areas: English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and multitier instruction, including intervention and EC needs.

Throughout the study, the coaches were asked to perform several tasks related specifically to the study, most of which were completed during the PLC meetings. As previously discussed, the inquiry partners were consulted during weekly PLC meetings regarding their roles

and responsibilities as ICs, as well as how they were perceived by teachers in the classroom. The ICs are also asked about their abilities to evaluate and prescribe instructional strategies to promote teacher effectiveness when applicable. During Phase 1, the coaches were asked for their assistance in creating the pre-survey based on their experience as ICs in general. They were also asked to vet the final questions on the survey prior to it being sent to the participants. In Phase 2, the coaches were provided with the results of the pre-survey which can be used in planning the 9-week coaching session. Also in Phase 2, the coaches were asked to assist with the creation of the post-survey based on their direct knowledge of the coaching session.

In Phase 3, the coaches were provided with the results of the post-survey and had the opportunity to discuss the results. The compilation of the results of the pre- and post-surveys was used to create the interview protocol and the coaches were asked to vet the questions for the protocol. Finally in Phase 4, the coaches were provided with all relevant data and analysis, including the results of the interviews, the triangulation of the survey and interview results, and recommendations for moving forward.

The study focuses on the creation and impact of collaborative relationships between the teachers and ICs, so the coaches were also able to provide insight into these details during the PLC meetings. Coaches shared information on their experiences developing cohesive working relationships with teachers, other coaches, and administrators, as well as the overall importance of maintaining the relationships built throughout the coaching process.

Finally, the ICs provided information on their experience with performance evaluation strategies and how they used these strategies with teachers.

Ethical Considerations

This particular study focused on human participants and specific requirements had to met before implementing any actions. It was necessary to provide the participants with all relevant information in regard to the study details and their participation. To participate in this study, teachers completed an informed consent form (see Appendix B). A singular consent form was used for each step of the study and all interactions with the participants, as the same individuals took part in all phases of the study; however, the details of the consent form were reviewed during each phase of the study, including storage of responses and identifiable information, survey results, and interview audio recordings and transcripts. The information on the form includes:

- Identification of the principal investigator
- The purpose of the study and potential outcomes
- How participants were selected to take part in the study
- What will be asked of participants in the study
- The potential benefits and risks of participating in the study
- A statement indicating that information obtained from the study will be kept confidential, but not anonymous
- A statement indicating that participation is completely voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- The contact information of the principal investigator for potential questions.

Participants were provided with an electronic copy of the informed consent form before completing the pre-survey at the beginning of the 9-week instructional coaching cycle. They were asked to electronically sign the consent form as part of the pre-survey if they agreed to

participate and submit it when they returned the pre-survey. Based on my positionality as their supervisor, it was important to ensure participants that their participation had no bearing on their employment at BES or within the district. Participation was voluntary; although the hope was that taking part in the study would be a positive experience for both teachers and ICs.

Participants were asked to acknowledge the consent form again when completing the post-survey following completion of the study. Additionally, the information was reiterated with the individuals who participated in the interview portion of the study, including the request to videotape the interview, to ensure that they were still familiar with all aspects of the consent form and were willing to take part in the final phase of data collection. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview transcript following completion of the interview to allow them to confirm their statements. All electronically signed consent forms are maintained in my password-protected ECU OneDrive for three years. I am the only person with access to my OneDrive and therefore the consent forms and any other collected data.

In a qualitative study, participants provide in-depth personal information in response to questions, and was possible that they may feel uncomfortable responding to questions in either the surveys or interviews. Therefore, it was important to explain to participants that their responses were confidential and that I used pseudonyms to describe their responses when collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. Again, participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences, yet they could still maintain their collaboration with an IC. Should a participant choose to exit the study, they continue working with the IC, however, their data would cease to be gathered for examination and analysis. Prior to conducting the study, it was necessary to receive appropriate permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A).

Inquiry Procedures

To address the questions posed in this study, a qualitative approach was utilized in four phases of inquiry (see Table 3). Phase 1 involved an initial meeting with the instructional coaches/collaborative inquiry partners to share details of the study. Inquiry partners also assisted with the creation of the pre-survey sent to the participants. The pre-survey was to establish a baseline before the implementation of the instructional coaching process. Phase 2 included sending the pre-survey to the participants, analyzing the results, and reviewing the results with

Table 3

Study Phases, Timeline, and Tasks

Phase	Timeline	Tasks
Phase 1	Spring 2023	Meet with instructional coaches to discuss study and their role Create pre-survey with instructional coaches Identify participants
Phase 2	Fall 2023	Send pre-survey to participants Review results of survey and share with coaches Instructional coaching intervention Discuss post-survey questions with coaches
Phase 3	Late Fall 2023	Send post-survey to participants Review and analyze results Share results with coaches Create interview questions with coaches Debrief with participants Identify interviewees
Phase 4	Late Fall 2023 – Early Spring 2024	Conduct interviews Transcribe and analyze interview results Triangulate survey and interview results Share results with coaches and discuss recommendations Share results with other administrators

the ICs. Phase 2 also included the implementation of the standard instructional coaching process. In Phase 3 the post-survey was completed by the participants and the results were reviewed. At this time the interview questions were created based on the results of the pre- and post-survey findings. Finally, Phase 4 included conducting interviews with the participants to gather additional data. The information was analyzed and shared with the ICs. At this point, the results were also shared with district-level administrators as applicable.

Phase 1

The initial stage of this study involved PLC meetings with the ICs, also serving as inquiry partners, to share the details of the study. The ICs were asked to take part in the study as inquiry partners in order to share their specific knowledge on the instructional coaching process and provide expert advice and recommendations throughout. They were assured that their participation would not impose extra burdens that could hinder their regular duties and that their expertise would enhance the quality of the study. The four phases of the study were described and their role in each phase was identified. During the PLC meetings, the coaches were asked to assist with the creation of the questions for the initial pre-survey that was provided to the participants before their experience in the 9 week instructional coaching process. Based on their experience serving as ICs and working with teachers at BES previously, the coaches were able to assist in the creation of the pre-survey (see Appendix C). The questions included in the pre-survey were important as they established the baseline regarding the teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching before they participated in the study.

Prior to reaching out to participants or collecting any research data, the details of the study were submitted to IRB for approval. Once IRB approval was obtained, Phase 1 proceeded. In order to provide the participants with all information regarding the study and their possible

participation, an email was created and sent with the pre-survey (see Appendix D). The email provided specific details of the study, including the purpose, information on their participation, and what was required of the participants, among other relevant details. The email also provided information about the pre-survey. This includes the purpose of the pre-survey, what type of questions were included, as well as information on the consent requirements. The email contained an attachment of the informed consent form and also specified that the survey's initial question asks participants to confirm they had read and understood the consent form, indicated by a positive answer to this question. Once participants had been identified, the email and link to the electronic survey was sent.

Phase 2

Phase 2 included sending the pre-survey to participants, reviewing the results, and sharing the information with the ICs. The coaches used this information to focus on their plans for implementation of the instructional coaching process that occurred over a 9-week period during Phase 2. Shortly before the completion of the 9-weeks, I met with the ICs to obtain their input on the questions that were included on the post-survey sent to the participants.

Participants and Recruitment Strategies

In Phase 2, the participants of the study were selected. These participants included teachers at BES specializing in English Language Arts (ELA) or mathematics, as well as those who could gain from multi-tier instructional coaching. Participants did not include those who were in their first year of teaching. Participants were selected based on administrative observations, IC recommendations, or self-selection. Typically, ICs work with approximately 2-3 teachers at a time. To make sure that participants received the appropriate amount of attention and coaching, each IC worked with no more than 2-3 teachers. Once the participants were

identified, additional demographic details and information related to their teaching experience was provided.

Typically, individuals are identified and approached by administrators regarding the opportunity to work with an IC. The process was explained to the identified teachers and the initial meetings between the teacher and coach were organized. Similarly, individuals chosen for participation was provided with information about the coaching opportunity as well as details concerning their involvement in the study.

Instrumentation

The pre-survey designed to collect baseline data in Phase 2 was developed after initial PLC meetings with ICs, drawing on their experience with the coaching process. The pre-survey consisted of 10 open-ended questions aimed at gathering data on teachers' views regarding the instructional coaching process and their collaboration with an IC before the study. The survey was created using Survey Monkey and was sent to identified participants via email with an explanatory email.

The information collected from this survey provided ICs with information on how to approach or structure their instructional coaching techniques or detail teachers' expectations of the process. Additionally, the results assisted with the creation of the post-survey, as well as the interview questions for Phases 3 and 4.

Procedures

Following the identification of the participants for the study, an email was sent providing the details of the study and requesting participation. Data in Phase 2 was collected via the electronic survey described in the prior instrumentation section. The survey was sent to the identified participants via email and the results were collected in Survey Monkey.

Phase 2 also included the implementation of the 9-week instructional coaching session. The ICs were allowed to proceed as they typically would and/or as they deem appropriate when working with the participants as each participant who needed individualized coaching and a singular coaching plan may not be helpful. The coaches were asked to make notes during their interactions that may be relevant for sharing during PLC meetings or provide helpful information to the other coaches in their work with the participants. Toward the conclusion of Phase 2 and the completion of the 9-week coaching cycle, the coaches' experiences were discussed during the PLC meetings and an initial conversation regarding the questions for the post-survey was conducted.

Data Analysis

Data collected in Phase 2 was analyzed to provide information to the ICs regarding teachers' perceptions of coaching and allowed them to adequately prepare for the 9-week instructional coaching process with participants. Any particularly interesting and relevant quotes from the survey responses were identified and the results of the survey were reviewed and shared with the coaches for further discussion. The coaches used the responses to guide their plans for the coaching sessions.

Summary of Phase 2

Phase 2 was an important part of the study as it included the identification of the participants, their completion of the pre-survey, the review of the pre-survey results, and the implementation of the 9-week coaching session that was under review during the study. At the conclusion of Phase 2, the information collected to that date helped inform the creation of the questions for the next phases in the study.

Phase 3

Phase 3 took place following the conclusion of the 9-week coaching session with the participants. At the end of Phase 2, the ICs met to begin discussing their experience during the 9-week session and the questions that were appropriate for the post-survey. In Phase 3 the post-survey was created and sent to the participants. The results were reviewed and shared with the coaches and the interview protocol was created. Additionally, interviewees were identified.

Participants and Recruitment Strategies

Participants in Phase 3 included teachers who took part in the instructional coaching study during the identified 9 weeks. The same individuals were asked to complete the post-survey. Additionally, participants were asked to self-select to take part in semi-structured interviews in Phase 4.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were relevant for Phase 3: the post-survey and the semi-structured interview protocol. The post-survey was created with input from the ICs toward the completion of the instructional coaching process. The post-survey was similar to the pre-survey in that it was created using Survey Monkey and sent electronically to participants. The survey included some questions that were repeated from the pre-survey so that the responses from the participants prior to instructional coaching could be compared with responses following the conclusion of the coaching sessions. The post-survey also included any additional questions that the coaches indicated as relevant to collecting information that answered the research questions and/or assist with future coaching opportunities. The post-survey remained brief to encourage participants to complete and return the survey and included approximately 6 open and closed ended questions. I

anticipated that the questions would be open-ended to ensure that participants could provide full responses and extensive details as appropriate.

Following the review of the post-survey results, the ICs were again consulted, and the semi-structured interview protocol was created. The interviews were intended to expand upon responses from the surveys, add details that were not initially covered in the surveys, and allow the participants to speak freely regarding their experiences. The interview protocol included approximately 15 questions; however, in a semi-structured interview the questions included in the protocol were created to guide the interview and ensure all applicable topics were covered. But the interviewer and the interviewee had the freedom to ask follow-up questions and expand upon responses when appropriate. The semi-structured interviews took place in Phase 4, along with the final data analysis.

Data Collection

Phase 3 began following the conclusion of the 9-week instructional coaching intervention with the participants. I met with the participants to conduct a debrief of the instructional coaching session and advise them of the post-survey. I informed them that they would receive the survey via email and asked that they complete and return the survey based on their experience with the coaching process. I also reminded them that their responses were confidential and would have no bearing on their employment status or any performance reviews.

Also, during this meeting, I introduced the semi-structured interview aspect of my study. I shared the purpose of collecting additional information via semi-structured interviews and again reassured the participants that their responses would remain confidential and would not affect their employment status or performance review. The responses to the semi-structured interview questions allowed for the collection of additional more specific information that the

participants were unable to share on the electronic post-survey. I provided additional details on the interview process and encouraged them to think about participating in the interview process. Participants indicated during the meeting that they would like to participate in the interview process, or they advised me of their interest at another time.

Once all post-surveys had been completed, the results were compiled in Survey Monkey and reviewed for further analysis related to participant responses. I requested that the participants complete the survey within the next 2-3 days allowing the data to be used to create and/or confirm the interview protocol for data collection in Phase 4.

Data Analysis

Analysis in Phase 3 involved the review of the data collected on the post-survey completed by the participants following the completion of the instructional coaching session. As for the pre-survey, the results of the post-survey were reviewed for relevant quotes and the overall results of the post-survey was compared with the results of the pre-survey. The comparison results were shared with the ICs and a discussion regarding any changes that occurred during the 9-week session was recorded in the survey data.

Summary of Phase 3

Phase 3 involved the collection of the data from the post-survey provided to the participants following the completion of the 9-week instructional coaching process. Additionally, the data collected from the post-survey was analyzed and informed the creation of the questions for the semi-structured interview protocol utilized in Phase 4. Participants were debriefed on their experience with the coaching session and the purpose of the study was reiterated. Details of the interview process were shared with the participants, and they were asked to participate in the interview phase of the study.

Phase 4

As the final phase of the study, Phase 4 included the semi-structured interview process and evaluation of the interview response data. The analysis from the interviews was compiled with the analysis of the data collected from the pre-and post-surveys to create overarching themes that provided answers to the research questions. It was important to share the results with the inquiry partners, other administrators, district-level leaders, and others who benefited from the results of this study on instructional coaching at BES.

Participants and Recruitment Strategies

The participants in Phase 4 were asked to self-select from the original group of participants who were part of the 9-week instructional coaching program. Participants from the original group were provided with the details of the interviews in Phase 3 and advised that they were not required to participate in the interview process. However, based on my current rapport with the teachers at BES I anticipated that enough participants would agree to the interview process to allow for the collection of significant data. Participants were assured that their answers would remain confidential and that they were not required to participate in the interview process. Their identities were not released, and any documentation of the results used pseudonyms for the participants.

Instrumentation

The semi-structured interview protocol was created based on the review of the results of the pre-and post-surveys, as well as consultation with the instructional coaches. We determined where additional information was required to ensure that the participants were able to share all relevant details regarding their experience with the coaching process. The protocol included 15 open-ended questions, allowing the participant to elaborate as needed. This also provided the

interviewer with the opportunity to ask additional questions or request additional details or follow-up. The interview protocol was intended to guide the interview and assist the interviewer with covering all relevant areas. The final questions included asking the participant if they have any questions that I may answer related to the study or their participation, as well as if they have any additional information, they would like to share that we did not cover in the interview.

Data Collection

Participants who self-selected to participate in the interview process were contacted to set up an interview time. I was conscious and respectful of the participant's time and ensured that the interview took place at a time that was most convenient for the participant. I also attempted to hold the interview in a place where the participant felt most comfortable. This could be in my office, the participant's classroom, or other requested location. Once the meeting time and location were confirmed, I met with the participant to conduct the interview. I reminded the participant of the purpose and details of the study, as well as the information from the informed consent form. I asked the participant to sign a copy of the consent form and then provided them with a copy of the form for their records. I reminded the participant that I would be audio-recording or video-recording the interview so that I would not miss any of the conversation and confirm that they agreed to the recording of the session. I also advised them that I would take notes during the interview to ensure that I captured all aspects of the discussion.

I offered the participant a transcribed copy of the interview following completion and they had the opportunity to review the transcription to confirm that it was correct. I anticipated conducting approximately nine interviews and once the interviews were complete, the transcriptions were compiled and reviewed for accuracy. The analysis of the interview data was

combined with the information from the surveys to create themes that aided in answering the research questions.

Another important aspect of this study was sharing the information that was collected, as well as the resulting analysis. At the end of Phase 4, following the completion of all data analysis and review of the results, I met with the ICs to share the results. I also met with additional administrators to discuss instructional coaching at BES, the research study, and future recommendations, along with any changes to be made at BES.

Data Analysis

After the interviews had been conducted, the video recordings were transcribed. I reviewed each transcription for accuracy and to familiarize myself with the data. The data was processed in several rounds of thematic analysis using steps outlined by Saldana (2021). This process assisted in the determination of emergent themes that answered the research questions guiding the study.

As I reviewed the transcriptions, I took extensive notes seeking similar tones, words, and phrases across the interviews, highlighting the relevant data. I then began to compile the highlighted information, or patterns, and create groups with related themes. The groups were evaluated, and the emergent themes were combined with the results from the survey analysis to create over-arching themes that answered the research questions.

Summary of Phase 4

As the final phase of the study, Phase 4 involved several important steps to ensure that data was collected and analyzed that answered the research questions. In Phase 4, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The resulting transcriptions were analyzed to identify themes that were compiled with the data from the pre- and post-surveys to

attempt to answer the research questions. Phase 4 also involved sharing the results of the study with various stakeholders, including the inquiry partners/instructional coaches, other administrators, and district-level leaders. The ultimate goal of this study was to ensure that we are utilizing our resources appropriately regarding instructional coaching at BES and that the teachers are perceiving their work with the coaches as a positive opportunity that can result in advancements in their instructional techniques.

Inquiry Design Rigor

Strategies that ensure the validity and reliability of this qualitative study was employed throughout to allow for credibility and authenticity of the findings and recommendations resulting from the data analysis upon study completion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the purposes of this study, I implemented several strategies. I compared the results of the data analysis across the phases to triangulate the findings to support validity and applicability. This aspect was particularly pertinent in comparing the outcomes of the pre- and post-surveys, with the insights from the interviews also being compared for triangulation purposes.

Inquiry partners, who are considered to be experts in their field, were involved in various ways throughout the study, including the creation and vetting of the survey questions and interview protocol, as well as discussion of the results in PLC meetings during the 9-week coaching process. These discussions and sharing results with the inquiry partners ensured the accuracy of the themes that emerge from the data. I provided thick descriptions of the experiences of the participants based on both the results of the surveys and the semi-structured interviews.

Throughout the study, it was important to be cognizant of any personal biases that could affect the results. Additionally, I also remained aware of the fact that as the participants'

supervisor, it was vital to reaffirm the feelings of comfort and safety and to ensure that participants were not concerned about the results of their participation in the study. Although this was a small contextual study taking place at a specific elementary school, focusing on maintaining the rigor of the study can make the results relevant at other schools and across districts.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

When conducting a research study, it is important to acknowledge the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions that may have an effect on the results of the study. The purpose of this study was to collect and review the perceptions and viewpoints of elementary educators at BES in regard to receiving instructional coaching. Alternative approaches to enhance teacher effectiveness through instructional delivery could have been explored in this study; however, instructional coaching was selected as the focus based on the current use of ICs at BES and research indicating the positive impacts of instructional coaching. The study was purposefully limited in size and scope as a result of the focus on instructional coaching at a singular elementary school, BES. The results of the study may be utilized more broadly, but this study intended to have an impact on instructional coaching and teacher efficacy at BES.

There are typically limitations that must be considered in regard to the selected methodology for a particular study. In this study, it was important to recognize limitations related to the methodology that could affect the data collection and subsequent analysis and results. One limitation concerns the number of participants. With only three instructional coaches, it was difficult to have a large number of participants and ensure that each received the appropriate amount of attention that could reflect positive results. So, it was possible that a larger number of participants could provide a more accurate analysis of the instructional coaching process and

teacher perception. Additionally, this study was not being conducted to ascertain the extent to which instructional coaching contributes to the academic achievement of students. It was assumed that all educators, regardless of their need for instructional assistance, take part in continuous professional development opportunities, and are provided with the necessary administrative support to participate in these activities. It was also assumed that the intention of this study was not to identify educators who may be receiving instructional support as lacking in effectiveness. Teachers may seek out mentoring and coaching for various reasons, not only because of a lack of teaching skills or techniques.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

The described study took place within a specific educational setting (BES) and requires appropriate recognition of my position within the setting and the effects on the study. As the principal at BES, I sought positive results from the study that showed the benefits of instructional coaching and confirmed the appropriate use of our resources. However, I had to be willing to acknowledge and accept that the results may not reflect what I was hoping to find. This result could also be positive in that we have determined ways we can improve our use of the instructional coaching method at BES and are able to discuss making relevant changes based on the study and results.

Throughout this study, it was necessary for me to constrain my pre-existing understanding of educational operations and procedures that may impede the analysis of data. Given my familiarity with the personalities of the participants and the nature of our working relationship, it was imperative that I exercise intentionality and mindfulness in refraining from invoking my preconceived notions regarding their coaching styles.

Additionally, it was important to recognize in my position as the principal at BES, I serve

as the supervisor for both the instructional coaches and the participants. It was my hope that those involved in the study would be able to see that my overall intentions for conducting the study are to improve student achievement and provide teachers with skills to assist students in accomplishing their academic goals. I focused on the positive aspects of the study and its results while ensuring the participants that nothing punitive would come from their participation or even the results of the study. As the leader at BES, I wanted to make sure that everyone recognizes their part in helping students be successful.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine and evaluate the impact of instructional coaching as perceived by teachers at Best Elementary School (BES), a Title 1 elementary school. Instructional coaching is an opportunity that is not guaranteed at all schools and BES is fortunate to be able to utilize instructional coaching after being designated as a Restart school. Instructional coaching involves sharing teaching practices that help teachers reach the objectives they have set for themselves (Knight, 2017), which describes the current focus at BES as a way to improve student achievement. The objectives could be related to teaching effectiveness, classroom strategies, teaching techniques, and student achievement, among others. By conducting this qualitative study at BES, it was hoped that the results would provide a deeper understanding of Title 1 elementary teachers' perceptions of the impact instructional coaching has on their instructional effectiveness.

The study took place in four phases over a 9-week period. Phase 1 includes working with the current ICs at BES to create a pre-survey that was completed by the participating teachers receiving instructional coaching assistance. In Phase 2, the participants completed the pre-survey and the results were reviewed and analyzed, as well as shared with the ICs. The 9-week

instructional coaching session took place during Phase 2 and the post-survey was created. The post-survey was distributed to the participants in Phase 3 and the results were again reviewed with the ICs. A debriefing meeting was held with the participants to request their participation in the semi-structured interview portion of the study. The interview protocol was created based on the results of both the pre-and post-surveys and vetted by the instructional coaches. Finally, in Phase 4, the interviews took place, the results were analyzed for emergent themes, and the themes from the interviews were triangulated with the results from the surveys. Final results and overarching themes were provided to the ICs, as well as to other administrators, district leaders, and others as applicable. It was hoped that the results of this survey show that instructional coaching is viewed as an effective way to have an impact on teacher effectiveness and efficacy.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research aimed to assess how teachers at Best Elementary School (BES) in Fantastic County, North Carolina, perceive the influence of instructional coaching on their instructional practice effectiveness. Situated in a rural part of Fantastic County, BES serves around 620 students from preschool to fourth grade. The school has worked its way up from a low-performing designation, now operating as a Restart School due to its history of underperformance. Despite eliminating the low-performing label, BES administrators continue to explore and implement effective methods to enhance the quality of instruction provided by teachers.

For the past eight years, instructional coaching has been a key strategy at BES to aid teachers in discovering and applying instructional techniques aimed at bettering student learning outcomes. Initially, the school started with a single coach who offered support across various subjects and grade levels, including math, reading, science, and social studies. Over time, the program expanded to include three specialized coaches, each focusing on specific content areas. Teachers seek out instructional coaches for diverse reasons, all aimed at enhancing their teaching methods.

The objective of this study was to explore the effect of instructional coaching on teacher effectiveness from the teachers' perspectives. Conducted over six weeks, with four weeks dedicated to direct instructional coaching tailored to meet the teachers' unique instructional needs, this study focused on analyzing teachers' perceptions of the role and impact instructional coaching has on improving their educational delivery at BES. The following research questions guided the study regarding the impact of instructional coaching on teachers at BES:

1. How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of an instructional coach's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?
4. How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?

This chapter will explain in detail the four phases of the research study, including implementation and data collection. Information on the demographics reflecting the study participants will be offered and a description of the data-analysis coding approach will be presented. The results of the study will be discussed with the intention that the study's findings will be used to improve the coaching process at Best Elementary School. It may also be possible that the results of the study will be utilized to inform administrators at other schools about teachers' perceptions of the success of the instructional coaching process and to provide insight into how they can improve the cycle to better meet instructional needs at their schools.

The ECU IRB committee authorized the study in December 2023, one day after BES released students and staff for the two-week winter vacation before their return in early January 2024. After receiving approval, letters with details on the study requesting participation and consent were sent to teachers at BES (see Appendix B). Out of those teachers, nine decided to take part in the study.

Instructional coaches with specialized knowledge in specific subject matter were selected to coach participants, taking into account the subjects taught by the teachers and their potential targets for enhancing their teaching practices. The study was conducted in four phases which included participant identification, implementation, and data collection via pre- and post-surveys and interviews.

Participant Demographics

Participant demographics related to implementation and data collection are reviewed in the following sections. The initial participants included nine teachers responsible for instructing students in grades kindergarten through four (see Table 4). There was a wide range of experience levels among them, from novice to veteran teachers. Their tenure as a licensed teacher and at BES can extend anywhere from their first year to their eighteenth year.

Twenty percent of the teacher participants are teachers of students in grades kindergarten through second grade. These teachers deliver instruction in four content areas including reading, math, social studies, and science. The remaining 80% are teachers of students in grades third and fourth grade. Out of the nine teachers, six provide students with instruction in the areas of math and science. The remaining three teachers deliver instruction in the areas of reading and social studies.

The following information provides more specific details about each participant. Participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms and each was advised that they could provide as much or as little information as they were comfortable with regarding personal details.

Lindsey

Lindsey teaches 1st grade at BES and covers all subject areas with her students. This is Lindsey's first year at BES, although this is her second year as a licensed teacher.

Kenzie

Kenzie is a 2nd grade teacher and is responsible for all subject areas in her classroom. Kenzie has been a teacher at BES prior to this year and is in her 18th year of teaching overall.

Table 4

Teacher Participant Demographics

Teacher	Grade Level	Subject Area	Experience (Years)	Visiting International	First Year at BES
Lindsey	First	All	2	No	Yes
Kenzie	Second	All	18	No	No
Allison	Second	All	2	No	No
Jennifer	Fourth	Reading	18	Yes	Yes
Akeia	First	All	7	No	Yes
Jenne	Kindergarten	All	2	No	No
Tanesha	Fourth	Math	12	Yes	Yes
Heather	Third	Math	2	No	No
Lenna	Fourth	Math	16	No	No

Allison

Allison teaches 2nd grade and is responsible for all subjects with her students. This is her second year as a licensed teacher and she has been at BES for more than one year.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a 4th grade reading teacher at BES and this is her first year at this school. Jennifer is a visiting international teacher and has been a licensed teacher for 18 years.

Akeia

Akeia is a 1st grade teacher at BES and covers all subjects with her students. This is her first year at BES and her seventh year as a licensed teacher.

Jenne

Jenne teaches Kindergarten at BES. She covers all subject areas with her students. This is Jenne's second year as a licensed teacher and she has been at BES for more than one year.

Tanesha

Tanesha is a 4th grade math teacher at BES. She is a visiting international teacher and this is her first year at BES; however, Tanesha has been a licensed teacher for 12 years.

Heather

Heather teaches 3rd grade math. She has been a licensed teacher for 2 years and this is not her first year teaching at BES.

Lenna

Lenna is a 4th grade math teacher, who has been a licensed teacher for 16 years. She has taught at BES prior to this year.

Implementation

The study was conducted in four phases. In Phase 1, participants were identified, and

consent to participate forms were collected. Participants received details on the study and how the four phases of the study would be conducted. In the second phase (Phase II) a pre-survey that consisted of 10 questions was sent to participants via email. In the third phase (Phase III), the participants received a post-survey that consisted of four closed-ended and two open-ended questions. In the final phase (Phase IV), participants completed a semi-structured interview virtually to provide additional detailed information related to their experience and perceptions.

Phase 1

At BES, instructional coaching is a standard practice of the school. A wide range of instructional requirements can be addressed with the assistance of ICs, who are ready to provide help to teachers. Teachers can request the assistance of an instructional coach, or the administration may employ the support of an IC when a teacher needs with instructional delivery including classroom management. Participation in the study was made available to all the teachers at BES during the first phase of the study. During the weekly professional learning community (PLC) meeting with ICs, two teachers expressed interest in participating in the study. To enlist the desired number of nine participants, I met with the instructional coaches and discussed teachers that may (a) have an instructional need, (b) be open to sharing their coaching experience, and (c) have between 2 and 20 years of teaching experience to participate in this study. After the teacher participants were identified, they were individually sent an email with information regarding the study and the request for them to participate. All were informed that their participation was not a requirement, but the results of the study, as well as student participation, could have benefits for them, current students, future students, and future teachers. The email also included the consent form and required a signature indicating the teacher's

commitment to participate in the study. When the signed consent forms were collected, teachers were informed of the instructional coach from whom they were to receive instructional support.

Once the paperwork was completed and final list of participants and matching instructional coaches was available, a meeting was held with the ICs to discuss their participation as the instructional coaches in the study. An IC was assigned to each participant based on the subject area that they teach, the method in which they indicated a need for support, and the grade level of the students that they teach. The instructional coaches for reading and mathematics were paired with teachers who taught in the specific subject area. With the help of the MTSS coach, teachers of students in kindergarten through second grade were partnered together. To allow the ICs adequate time for productive collaboration with the participating teachers, each of the three coaches was assigned to work with three teachers.

Domain for Instructional Coaching

A unique instructional domain that was specific to each teacher served as the focal point of the collaboration that took place between the participating teachers and one of the three ICs. Instructional assistance through the use of whole and small groups, and student involvement, were the domains that were covered (see Table 5). To discuss the areas in which they believed reflected a need for instructional support, each teacher met with their IC. During the meeting, the ICs discussed methods for assessing their instructional needs which included videotaping and peer observation conducted by their IC. Of the two strategies, the ICs recommended videotaping their teachers to allow them to view and discuss the instructional delivery together; however, the teacher decided which strategy was used. Eight of the participants decided to videotape their delivery of instruction. One of the participants decided to have the IC conduct a peer observation.

Five teachers concluded a need to receive instructional support in the area of curriculum

Table 5

Individual Instructional Coaching Domain

Teacher	Instructional Strategy	Engagement Strategy
Lindsey	X	
Kenzie	X	
Allison		X
Jennifer	X	
Akeia	X	X
Jenne		X
Tanisha	X	X
Heather	X	
Lenna	X	

delivery during whole and small group sessions. Three of the teachers identified their need for instructional support in the delivery of the curriculum and classroom management. One of the teachers received support for classroom management. The background information and experience level of the teachers may have had an impact on the selection of the identified coaching domain. Two international teachers from Jamaica are contracted to remain at BES for a period of five years with this year being their first year. Both international teachers teach fourth-grade students. Neither of the teachers has been in the field of education for less than five years. Each of the three new teachers is in their second year of teaching. The three remaining instructors are experienced educators, including one who has been a teacher within the district for 17 years and has transitioned to BES this school year. The instructional coaching teacher participants will receive will provide instructional support that is reflective of modeling and parallel teaching style.

Phase 2

A pre-survey consisting of 10 questions was emailed to each participant the first week in January. To deliver answers to the four questions that are brought up by this research, the questions were constructed to provide an answer to the research questions. All of the questions on the survey are open-ended allowing elaboration on their responses to each subject that was covered in the pre-survey.

Phase 3

After the completion of the fourth week of the study, a post-survey was emailed to each of the participants. The survey was expected to gather the participants' experience of the coaching process in which they engaged for four weeks as it relates to their instructional delivery and student performance.

Phase 4

In the final phase of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The interview protocol included 15 questions and the participants were asked to respond based on their perception of the instructional coaching process and the impact that it had on their ability to provide effective instruction. Participants had the opportunity to discuss their experiences as it relates to spending quality time collaborating with their IC, their perception of the IC's level of expertise, their knowledge of instructional strategies, and their ability to devise a plan of action. In addition, teachers were allowed to describe the impact the instructional coaching had on their instructional delivery and student performance.

Data Collection

Data collection began in January 2024 following the identification of the study participants. The participants were provided details on the study, including what would be asked of them, as well as the fact that they were not required to participate. Additionally, participants were advised that participation or lack thereof would have no bearing on their job performance or any type of employment evaluation. Participation in the study was voluntary; although, the information they would be able to provide would be extremely valuable in future situations related to instructional coaching.

Pre-Survey

Once participants indicated they would take part in the study, each was emailed the pre-survey, along with the informed consent details. The pre-survey included 10 open-ended questions and sought to collect information from the participants regarding their current experience with and perceptions of instructional coaching. The results from the pre-survey provided a baseline that was used for comparison when all data was collected and analyzed.

Post-Survey

As may happen in research studies that take place over a period of time, only six of the initial nine participants completed the post-survey and semi-structured interview process. The post-survey was similar to the pre-survey, in that it was sent to participants electronically. The survey included six questions that sought to collect information on the participant's experience with the instructional coaching process over the four weeks, including their perceptions of the process and the impact on their instructional delivery and classroom management.

Semi-structured Interviews

In an effort to collect deeper, richer data than what can be collected in an electronic survey, even with open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually with participants. As previously indicated, only six of the initial nine participants took part in the semi-structured interview portion of the study that took place during Phase 4. The interview protocol included 15 questions that were designed to lead the interview; however, it was appropriate to ask additional questions to gain clarifying information or additional details.

Heather

On January 26, 2024, Heather participated in a 23-minute virtual interview via Google Meet, during which six pages of handwritten notes were taken. During this session, she outlined the demographics of her students and stated that she conducts two 90-minute blocks of math instruction. Heather chose not to receive a copy of the interview transcript. ***Tanesha***

Tanesha was interviewed via Google Meet on January 31, 2024, for 25 minutes. A transcript of the interview was recorded by the virtual platform. In the interview, she discussed her students' demographics and the difficulties she faces while teaching two 90-minute reading sessions. She expressed her students' lack of engagement during collaborative activities for

which she would like to receive instructional support. Additionally, Tanesha sought instructional support to improve instructional delivery during whole group. At the interview's conclusion, Tanesha declined to receive a copy of the interview transcript.

Lindsey

On January 29, 2024, Lindsey participated in a virtual interview via Google Meet. The virtual platform transcribed the details of the interview. During the 33-minute interview, Lindsey described the demographics of her students. She expressed the challenges that she confronts with small group instruction. At the conclusion of the interview Lindsey declined to the offer to receive a copy of the transcript.

Jennifer

Jennifer participated in an interview via Google Meet for 24 minutes on January 26, 2024. A transcript of the interview was recorded by the virtual platform. At the beginning of interview, Jennifer identified the demographics of the students in her classroom. She shared her need for instructional coaching to improve instruction during small group learning. Her instructional day is comprised of two 90-minute blocks of reading. At the conclusion of the interview, Jennifer declined the offer to receive a copy of the transcript.

Jenne

Jenne was interviewed virtually for 31 minutes using Google Meet on January 26, 2024, with the platform recording the interview's transcript. She shared details about her students' demographics in her classroom. As a teacher responsible for various subjects, she expressed the need for assistance in enhancing student engagement during small group instruction. Jenne chose not to receive a copy of the interview transcript.

Lenna

On January 29, 2024, Lenna participated in a 27-minute virtual interview via Google Meet. Lenna started the interview with a description of the student demographics in her classroom. She expressed the obstacles presented during her two 90-minute math blocks. Instructional support is requested during direct instruction with small groups. A copy of the interview transcript was declined by Lenna.

Kenzie

Kenzie participated in a 23-minute virtual interview via Google Meet on January 30, 2024. The scholarly practitioner recorded handwritten details of the interview. At the beginning of the interview, Kenzie provided a description of the student demographics in her classroom. As a teacher of all subjects, she required support implementing strategies to improve the details of students' constructive responses. Kenzie declined the offer to receive a copy of the interview transcript.

Akeia

On January 31, 2024, Akeia participated in a 35-minute virtual interview via Google Meet. A transcript of the interview was captured via the virtual platform. Akeia described the demographics of the students in her classroom. As a teacher of all subjects, she identified the need for support delivering instruction during small group learning. Additionally, she required support with student engagement and time on task. At the conclusion of the interview, Akeia declined a copy of the interview transcript.

At the conclusion of the interview with each participant, I thanked them for participating. I then made them aware of next steps in the study process. The next steps included transcribing the data, allowing participants to review the data for accuracy, and analyzing the data. Following data analysis and review of the results with the instructional coaches, I planned to create a

summary to share with administrators based on the results of the study. I again advised that they would not be identified in any aspect of the study and their information would not be released. Each participant was provided with my contact information and encouraged to contact me with any questions related to the research study or their participation.

Data Analysis

Data collected for this research was obtained from participants through pre- and post-surveys and a semi-structured interview following the completion of their participation in the instructional coaching study. The data was analyzed by reviewing participant responses in each of the data collection instruments. After transcriptions were created with the data from each data source, coding of the participant responses from the electronic pre- and post-surveys and semi-structured interviews were analyzed seeking to identify common codes and phrases. The transcripts were hand-coded, and the resulting codes were identified. Following the identification of codes, the codes were organized into themes seeking to provide responses to each of the four research questions guiding the study.

To determine teachers' perceptions of the impact instructional coaching had on their instructional delivery and student response to the strategies used to impact their instruction, I reviewed all survey results and interview transcripts, as well as hand-recorded notes, all of which were analyzed line by line. The analysis of the survey results and interview transcripts was expected to answer the questions posed in this study.

Pre- and Post-Survey Data Analysis

The pre-survey included 10 open-ended questions, providing qualitative data for the initial analysis and a baseline for the study. The post-survey collected qualitative data from six open-ended questions and provided information regarding the conclusion of the implementation.

This information also allows for comparison with the data collected in the pre-survey to assist with determining the impact of instructional coaching at BES.

Semi-Structured Interview Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six of the original nine participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and printed so that I was able to review each one for accuracy. I also sent each participant a copy of the transcription to ensure that their statements were accurate as reported. The transcriptions were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data and allow for codes and other like phrases to be revealed. These first impression codes are “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2016, p. 4). This process provided the opportunity to decipher the interviews and determine appropriate codes, patterns, and ultimately themes. According to Saldana (2016), “a pattern is a repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrence of action/data that appears more than twice” (p. 5). These patterns or codes become more trustworthy evidence for the results of this study (Saldana, 2016) focusing on instructional coaching at BES.

Codes and Themes

The information collected from the semi-structured interviews can be combined with the data gathered from the pre- and post-survey data for comparison. The codes identified from each data collection instrument will ultimately be used to identify the overarching themes that best summarize the data. Utilizing the procedures previously described, repetitive words and phrases were identified in the survey responses and interview transcripts. A list of the words and phrases was created, and the words were further evaluated for similarities (see Table 6). Additionally,

Table 6

Initial Word List and Supplemental Codes

Repetitive Words/Phrases	Organized List	Codes
Helpful	Helpful	Support
Support	Support	Guidance
Improve delivery	Instructional goals	Listening
Direction	Guide	Positive experience
Feedback	Open dialogue	Open dialogue
Follow-through	Listened	
Solutions	Positive	
Resources	Observations	
Be available		
Answer questions	Improve instructional delivery	Instructional delivery
Knowledge	Direction	Feedback
Skills	Feedback	Resources
Input	Solutions	Strategies
Continuous feedback	Resources	Innovation
Collaboration	Lesson style	Modeling
Open dialogue	Strategies	Tailored learning
Discuss performance	What learners need	
Instructional needs	Positive influence	
Listened	Tailored learning	
Need more time	Instructional needs	
Positive	Instructional ideas	
Plan	Modeling	
Direct impact		
Instructional ideas	Follow-through	Available
Modeling	Be available	Follow-through
Observations	Inquiry partners	Continued follow-up
Inquiry partners	Positive impact	Collaboration
Years of experience	Input	Plan
Instructional goals	Collaboration	Performance discussions
Lesson style	Discuss performance	Positive impact
Strategies	Need more time	
Guide	Plan	
Experience	Direct impact	
What learners need	Continuous feedback	
Positive influence		
Lesson delivery	Answer questions	Knowledge
Positive impact	Knowledge	Skills
Tailored learning	Skills	Experience
	Years of experience	Answering questions
	Experience	

notations were made regarding the number of times each word appeared in the initial list and a graphic was created to represent the words or phrases used most frequently with regard to the questions about instructional coaching (see Figure 2). The words and phrases used by teachers to describe the roles and responsibilities of ICs were subjected to content analysis, and the findings were utilized to generate a word cloud representing the most frequently mentioned terms.

Once codes were identified and further evaluated, they were grouped. Themes were then identified for each set of codes and subsequently were utilized as further evidence when answering the research questions (see Table 7). Based on the amount of data that was collected during the study, a significant number of similar words and codes were identified. This resulted in the creation of four themes. Following is a description of each set of codes and the resulting theme.

Theme #1

Theme #1 was identified using the codes: instructional delivery, feedback, resources, strategies, innovation, modeling, and tailored learning. Following review of the data collected via the surveys and interviews, as well as the aforementioned list of codes, the first theme is: Instructional coaches provide effective and innovative instructional techniques and strategies focusing on student centered learning.

Theme #2

After further review, the following codes were grouped together: experience, skills, knowledge, and answering questions. When considering this information, along with the data from the data collection instruments, the second theme is: Instructional coaches possess the knowledge and skills gained from experience and must be willing to share this information with teachers.

provide support
role need students
instructional coach
help teachers

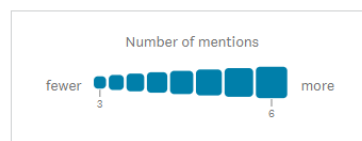


Figure 2. Instructional coaches' roles and responsibilities per participant responses.

Table 7

Research Question and Corresponding Codes & Themes

Research Question	Codes	Theme
1. How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?	Instructional delivery Feedback Resources Strategies Innovation Modeling Tailored learning	Instructional coaches provide effective and innovative instructional techniques and strategies focusing on student-centered learning.
2. What are teachers' perceptions of an instructional coach's ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies?	Experience Skills Knowledge Answering questions	Instructional coaches possess the knowledge and skills gained from experience and are willing to share this information with teachers.
3. How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?	Support Guidance Listening Positive experience Open dialogue	Instructional coaches facilitate and foster teacher growth through continuous support and encouragement.
4. How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?	Performance discussions Follow-through Continued follow-up Plan Positive impact Available	Working with instructional coaches results in a positive influence on teachers' instructional delivery development and success, while creating a positive collaborative experience.

Theme #3

Theme #3 was identified after the following codes were identified: support, guidance, listening, positive experience, and open dialogue. When evaluating the codes further, along with the data from the surveys and interviews, the third theme is: Instructional coaches facilitate and foster teacher growth through continuous support and encouragement.

Theme #4

The final set of codes included the following performance discussions, follow-through, continued follow-up, plan, positive impact, and available. The evaluation of these codes resulted in the identification of the fourth theme: Working with instructional coaches results in a positive influence on teachers' instructional delivery development and success, while creating a positive collaborative experience.

In order to acquire information regarding the way teachers viewed the impact that IC had on their efficiency, data was collected. Analysis of this data allowed for the examination of the participants' shared understanding of the influence instructional coaching has on teacher efficacy. An analysis of the data in which participants were questioned about their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of ICs, as well as their capacity to deliver a method of instruction that is effective in meeting the particular needs of the participants, could be identified was identified. This information can then be used to provide answers to the research questions guiding this study as seen in the following section.

Results

Data was collected for this study via a pre-survey, a post-survey, and a semi-structured interview. Following analysis of the data collected from each instrument, the results of the study were reviewed with regard to the four research questions. This section is organized by research

question and will review the results of the study as outlined by the four research questions. A qualitative design was used in the collection of data, which was determined to provide the deepest and richest information. The participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-survey that included open-ended questions, as well as semi-structured interviews. Because the pre-survey provided a baseline for implementation of the instructional coaching process, data collected and analyzed from the post-survey and interviews could be considered for necessary future changes to the instructional coaching process.

Analysis of Research Question 1

Research question 1 addresses the role and responsibilities of the instructional coaches, but more specifically teacher perception of the role and responsibilities. The first research question asked, How do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?. Data collected from each of the data collection tools was utilized in providing results from the study related to this topic. As indicated following data analysis, Theme #1 is relevant to this particular research question: Instructional coaches provide effective and innovative instructional techniques and strategies focusing on student-centered learning.

Teachers used words such as helpful, support, and students to describe the role and responsibilities of an instructional coach. When asked question 1 of the pre-survey: How do you see the role and responsibilities of instructional coaches?, 83% of teachers believe the IC's duty and responsibility is to support instructors in improving instructional delivery in order to improve learning outcomes. Heather stated:

An instructional coach's role should include providing support, direction, and feedback to instructors to assist them improve their instruction. A coach's responsibilities should

include follow-through and meaningful talks to provide tactics and ideas to improve the teacher's instruction.

The other 17% of instructors saw the IC's role and responsibility as providing insight into finding and executing solutions to improve teaching and learning. Additionally, both novice and veteran teachers indicated that the role and responsibility of the IC is to provide additional resources. Tiera indicated that she believed instructional coaches should “provide additional resources, knowledge, and skills to enhance the teaching and learning process.”

Participants were asked about their perception of the instructional coaches' ability to identify instructional areas in which support is required, and five out of nine teachers believed that instructional coaches could identify specific areas of instructional need and provide supportive feedback. Two teachers concluded that instructional coaches displayed the ability to discover the need for specific instructional assistance by acting as inquiry partners, in which the teacher and coach worked together to narrow focus areas.

In question five of the pre-survey participants were asked, What are your instructional goals? Participants specified a wide range of instructional goals for which they felt they needed instructional coaching assistance. They identified areas such as crafting student questions to provide insight into student understanding, developing differentiated lessons, and increasing student participation during whole group learning, developing critical thinking skills, and improving students' ability to respond in writing. Teachers replied to the eighth question of the pre-survey by describing a specific area where they thought they needed coaching assistance; six teachers stated they needed it when providing instruction to their whole class. Of these six teachers two are novice teachers and four are veteran teachers. Three participants added a desire

to receive instructional coaching during their small group lessons when instruction is directly aimed at meeting the individual needs of the students in the group.

After receiving four weeks of instructional coaching support, teachers completed an electronic post-survey consisting of six questions. The questions aimed to capture the instructional coaching experience as perceived by the teachers. Question one of the post-survey mirrored the first question of the pre-survey. Six of the nine initial participants responded to the post-survey. Teachers were asked, Did the instructional coach meet your perception of their roles and responsibilities? All six teachers confirmed that the ICs did in fact meet their expectations in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Lenna stated, “I think my coach was an incredible support from the beginning to the end of this study, she offered lots of help, resources, and ideas.”

Analysis of Research Question 2

This question sought information related to teachers’ perceptions and the ability of the instructional coaches, asking: What are teachers’ perceptions of an instructional coach’s ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies? Upon reviewing and analyzing the data collected, the following codes were identified: experience, skills, knowledge, and answering questions. These codes led to Theme #2: Instructional coaches possess the knowledge and skills gained from experience and are willing to share this information with teachers.

Questions 3 and 4 of the pre-survey sought information on the participants’ perspectives related to the ability of instructional coaches to evaluate and prescribe effective teaching methods and processes. The third question of the pre-survey inquired of ICs’ ability to offer strategies that can impact students' academic performance. The responses indicated that 100% of the teachers

perceived ICs as capable of providing strategies that can positively impact students' academic performance. Heather stated:

An instructional coach often has tools in their toolbox that others may not have (especially young or inexperienced teachers). Because of this, the coach may have suggestions or strategies that could prove very helpful to the teacher and the students.

The fourth question on the pre-survey asked participants to describe their assessment of instructional coaches' abilities to assist them in providing varied instruction to meet the unique needs of children in their classes. All participants (100%) agreed that coaches can help them create and deliver lessons tailored to diverse students' requirements. Jenne indicated that she believes “an instructional coach is equipped with knowledge and skills to help identify different kinds of learners to a group and assign instructions as needed based on prior knowledge and experiences to meet every learner's needs.” According to teacher responses, ICs can provide insight and strategies that will address the various styles of learning in a classroom. To offer support in this area, participants suggested that ICs conduct classroom observations, demonstrate a lesson, and co-teach lessons.

Post-survey question 2 provided additional information on teachers' perceptions of ICs' ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies. All six teachers responded affirmatively, indicating that their IC assisted them in identifying areas to strengthen that would improve their instructional delivery and increase instructional effectiveness.

Additionally, as requested instructional coaches provided teachers with the support needed to make learning during whole and small group more tailored to the needs of the students in the classroom. Tiera advised that it was important for the instructional coach to be available to answer questions if possible during this process.

Analysis of Research Question 3

Another important aspect of this study was related to examining relationships between teachers and instructional coaches. Research question #3 asked, How do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process?. Based on the responses from teachers, relationships are a key component of instructional coaching. Teachers expressed value in the IC allowing them to have input in the decision-making process as opposed to being mandated. They viewed the collaboration and open dialogue as an avenue in which they were able to share openly regarding their own evaluation of their performance without judgment. The responses indicated that the ICs provided a safe space for them to seek the support that they need to improve their instructional performance. In reviewing the data collected via the surveys and interviews related to this topic, the following codes were identified: support, guidance, listening, positive experience, and open dialogue. The data analysis and review of the codes led to Theme #3: Instructional coaches facilitate and foster teacher growth through continuous support and encouragement.

During the interview, question 4 asked teachers if they felt comfortable discussing their instructional needs with their IC. Out of the six teachers who participated in the interview process, all confirmed that they felt comfortable discussing their instructional needs with their ICs. One teacher noted that she trusted her IC because she is an experienced teacher of the same grade level. It was also noted that ICs listened to their teacher's concerns about their instructional practices and offered multiple ways to assist them in narrowing down their list of needs to identify one specific area that would provide the most impact on their instructional delivery.

An important aspect of the results related to the impact on the relationship between teacher and coach based on the amount of time the IC was able to dedicate to meeting the needs

of their teachers. The instructional coaches met with their teachers at least twice each week for 30 minutes to an hour to support teachers in meeting their goals. In response to interview question 5, the majority of the participants stated that the amount of time they spent collaborating with their IC was adequate in meeting their needs. However, one teacher stated that she met with her IC often, but she did not feel that the allotted time was not enough to complete the discussion.

When asked directly in interview question 7 if the IC engaged in open dialogue to learn more about the participants' instructional needs, the majority of the participants indicated that their instructional coach engaged in meaningful conversations to learn more of their instructional needs in order to create the best and most effective instructional plan to meet their goal. Tiera advised, "my IC always gives me the opportunity to express my concerns and comfort. She is always positive when I struggle to see the positive in the situation." Another teacher stated that during open dialogue with her IC she was not able to completely disclose her support needs. This was a direct result of the lack of adequate time that they had to work together, not because she felt uncomfortable with her instructional coach. She expressed a need for additional time to thoroughly explain her instructional needs.

The relationship established between IC and the teacher allowed them to work together to devise an instructional plan to meet their needs. All participants positively responded to interview question 8, noting that they worked collaboratively with their IC when devising a plan to meet their instructional needs. Heather advised, "my IC helped me to break down the big picture into small steps in order to reach my end goal."

Analysis of Research Question 4

Research question 4 sought to determine how teachers determine the effectiveness of their instructional coach. Data collected via the surveys and interviews was analyzed to identify codes and establish a theme related to this question, that asked: How do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?. The codes identified based on the data analysis include: performance discussions, follow-through, continued follow-up, plan, positive impact, and available, which led to Theme #4: Working with instructional coaches results in positive influence on teachers' instructional delivery development and success, while creating a positive collaborative experience. The data associated with this research question, as well as the theme that results from the data, contains much of the information from each of the previous research questions, as it seeks to determine the overarching perception of the teachers' perceptions.

Following completion of the implementation and the post-survey and interviews, the data was evaluated. Participants were asked, Did the instructional coaching process assist you in meeting your instructional goals? All teachers stated "yes," that they believed that their participation in the instructional coaching process assisted them in meeting their goals. Lenna stated that "the process provided support, instructional ideas, modeling, and resources." Other teachers stated that the process that included observations and continuous feedback were instrumental strategies in them meeting their goals.

Participants were also asked about their instructional needs and if they felt their participation in instructional coaching was tailored to their personal needs. Teachers identified goals in the pre-survey that included a need for support with small-group instruction, time on task, and engagement. All stated that their IC tailored the coaching process to their specific needs through conversations that allowed open dialogue to occur. The IC did not force their thoughts or

opinions on their teachers, instead, they offered suggestions and allowed the teachers to determine which strategies were most appropriate in meeting the needs of students. Heather advised:

The coaching was tailored to my needs because my coach let me decide on a goal that felt important to me. Once I decided on that goal, the coaching guided me down a path to meet that goal. It was personally designed to help me achieve the goal that was important to me.

Post-survey question 4 resulted in all participants answering in the affirmative as to the effectiveness of the strategies prescribed to them by their IC to meet the needs of students. Teachers stated that when implementing the strategies provided by their IC, their students were more engaged and appeared to have a stronger desire to reach their personal learning goals. Tiera reported that although the effectiveness of the strategies was not immediately apparent, after she and her IC revised the details of the strategies, “students began to demonstrate positive performances because of the implementation of the strategy.” Additionally, a majority of the participants believed that ICs had a beneficial influence on the way they delivered their lessons. Lindsey noted that her IC assisted her in offering several techniques to apply during her small group instruction in order to enhance engagement, on-task conduct, and response to higher-level questions. As a result of their participation in hands-on support and co-teaching lessons during both small and whole-group instruction, three of the teachers said that their IC had an impact on the education that they provided.

Finally, the following question was asked of participants: What impact did the instructional coaching have on student performance? Although this study was not collecting data on student performance related to instructional coaching, it is still reasonable that teachers would

be able to provide an opinion based on their experience and their observation of the students. Teachers indicated in their responses that they felt the instructional coaching had a direct impact on student performance. Both veteran and novice teachers advised that the strategies provided by their IC caused a positive result in their students' performance. Teachers reported that their students improved on assessments, were better able to make connections, increased on task behavior, and remained engaged. Lindsey stated:

After the help of my IC, my students have been able to show much more independence in understanding the progress monitor assessments. We have been focusing on identifying what the questions are asking rather than jumping to the answer and my students have shown much more understanding in their small group setting.

Summary

This study explored the perception of teachers on the impact instructional coaching had on the effectiveness of their instructional performance. Based on the responses provided in the pre- and post-surveys and interviews, teachers perceived the support provided through the instructional coaching process to impact the efficacy of their instructional delivery and improve student performance. Teachers viewed the roles and responsibilities of IC as being able to support them in identifying areas of instructional practices to target to improve their efficacy and indicated that ICs were able to evaluate and prescribe successful strategies to meet their instructional needs. The outcome of the study also indicated that building a relationship with the IC is meaningful during the coaching process. Teachers expressed being able to measure the effectiveness of the coaching support that they received by evaluating their students' performance.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss summaries, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of this study, as well as recommendations for future research on the impact instructional coaching has on the efficacy of teachers' instructional delivery. I will also provide details on the next steps based on the results of this study, as well as how the study impacted my educational leadership journey.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The provision of immediate, direct, and individualized instructional support to teachers has become increasingly common in recent years, and one method that has become more prevalent is instructional coaching. According to Irby (2018), coaching is a formal and regulated professional relationship in which a coach focuses on developing and strengthening specific skills in a teacher over a predetermined amount of time. Instructional coaches are responsible for cultivating connections that enable teachers to become more open and willing to seek and receive specialized assistance for their teaching that is tailored to meet their particular instructional requirements.

Over the course of several decades, there has been a consistent development in both the theory and practice of instructional coaching (Lofthouse, 2018). According to Kraft et al. (2018), teacher coaching has emerged as a potentially practical approach to the problem of increasing the amount of professional development opportunities available to educators. Teachers can improve their skills through instructional coaching, which provides essential support aimed at meeting their instructional needs. This enables them to strengthen their instructional delivery to students, thus influencing the overall performance of their students. Knight (2007) provides a list of principles identified as supporting the partnership approach to information communication which includes choice, collaboration in the relationship; voice, allowing teachers' needs and opinions to be heard; discourse, ensuring ongoing conversations and idea sharing; and reflection, before and after practice. These principles support the effectiveness of the coaching process. According to Knight (2009b), content planning, quality instruction, assessment for learning, and evaluation, and reflection framework are the four key areas of teaching practice that can positively influence

teachers' teaching methods and students' learning outcomes. These basic ideas form the basis for ICs to help teachers improve their instructional methods and increase students' academic success.

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceived impact of instructional coaching on teachers at BES specifically related to their perception of the experience working with the ICs. Prior to this study, teachers' perception of the impact instructional coaching had on their efficacy at BES was unknown. This chapter includes a summary and interpretation of the findings, a discussion of the limitations, implications of the study, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research. I will also provide reflections on my experience as the scholarly practitioner throughout the study and the impact on my abilities as an educational leader.

Summary of the Findings

This qualitative study sought to determine the perceived impact of instructional coaching on teachers at BES. Participating teachers were paired with one of three instructional coaches to provide support in areas identified by each teacher. Prior to the instructional coaching intervention, teacher participants completed a survey to determine their baseline opinions with regard to prior experience working with instructional coaches. Following an instructional coaching intervention, teacher participants completed a follow-up survey and a semi-structured interview to gain more information about their perception of instructional coaching.

Based on the analysis from the surveys and interviews with participants, it was determined that instructional coaching at Best Elementary School serves as an integral support mechanism for teachers. The perceived impact of instructional coaching denoted an overall positive outcome. Instructional coaching played a crucial role in identifying and refining teaching strategies to enhance instructional practices. This research aimed to understand how

teachers perceive the influence of support received via the coaching process on their instructional efficacy. The analysis of qualitative data obtained from teacher interviews and surveys revealed that relationships, experience, and effective communication skills are essential to improving instructional efficacy. Based on the results, instructional coaches provided valuable support to teachers by identifying areas that required development and proposing efficacious strategies to resolve those concerns. The research depicted positive insight into teachers' views on how instructional coaching affects their instructional efficacy. Further research would be beneficial when studying instructional coaching over a longer timeframe and also examining other aspects of the experience and results, including teacher performance and student academic performance.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data collected and analyzed in this study yielded several themes providing insight into the impact of instructional coaching on teachers, as well as their perception of the experience. There is a correlation between the findings of this study and the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The study discovered that providing teachers with instructional support through the instructional coaching process is an effective technique for assisting teachers in delivering instruction designed to improve student accomplishment.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked “how do teachers perceive the role and responsibilities of instructional coaching?” and attempted to assess teachers’ perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of ICs. According to Mudzimiri et al. (2014), coaches frequently transform between various roles in practice depending on a variety of factors, including how districts see the coaching position fitting into their reform initiatives and the particular needs and circumstances of the teachers. The data analysis and subsequent codes revealed through this

study suggested that teachers perceived the duties and responsibilities of ICs as providing assistance based on their instructional needs through strategies that will maximize the effectiveness of their teaching, resources, and tailored learning models. The common thread that emerged from the interviews with educators is their belief that ICs provide them with innovative methods of student-centered instruction. Research on the multidisciplinary framework of instructional coaching conducted by Kurz et al. (2017) supports this theme related to the roles and responsibilities discovered in this study.

According to teachers in the study, the primary function of an IC is to act as a foundational support system, emphasizing the necessity for ICs to possess deep knowledge in their specific coaching content area. This expertise allows ICs to effectively assist in the development of successful lesson plans and the generation of resources to support students both academically and behaviorally. Furthermore, teachers expect ICs to provide guidance that helps them meet the standards and expectations set by their school and district.

Teachers described the essential duties of an IC as collaborating closely with them to pinpoint the specific instructional areas where they require the most support. Through a collaborative approach that respects teachers' voices and insights, ICs are expected to understand teachers' needs and devise effective strategies for enhancing instructional delivery. Additionally, teachers see it as the IC's role to monitor the implementation of these strategies and, if necessary, adjust the plan to achieve desired outcomes using their professional knowledge and experience.

Moreover, teachers highlighted the importance of ICs in offering resources that supplement the existing curriculum. Despite the availability of supplementary materials across grade levels, there's a clear need for additional, customized resources to cater to the diverse needs of students. Teachers believe that it is within the IC's responsibilities to aid in procuring

these tailored resources, therefore, enriching the educational content they provide to their students.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked “what are teachers’ perceptions of an instructional coach’s ability to evaluate and prescribe effective instructional practices and strategies” and sought to investigate teachers' opinions on the ability of ICs to evaluate their instructional practices, identify their instructional needs, and prescribe instructional strategies to meet their individual needs. Teachers’ responses to survey questions and in the semi-structured interviews identified codes assisting with the answer to this question. The codes included the ICs’ skills, experience, knowledge, and ability to answer questions as key factors of an IC’s ability to evaluate and prescribe individual instructional strategies to improve teaching and learning. Observing teachers and providing direct feedback based on the observations is a crucial component of the coaching process (Conner, 2017).

Additionally, codes associated with this question led to the following theme that further confirms the importance of ICs’ abilities to assist teachers with their instructional efforts: ICs have acquired expertise and abilities through experience and are prepared to impart this knowledge to teachers. Research supporting this theme states that coaching involves collaboration through monitoring and offering feedback to integrate learning techniques and abilities into a curriculum, instructional objectives, a specified timeline, and an individual teaching approach (Joyce & Showers, 1981).

The research revealed that teachers place significant value on the deep knowledge and skills of ICs, which boosts their trust in the coaches’ capability to assess their instructional methods, pinpoint improvement areas, and propose strategies for better outcomes. During data

collection, teachers expressed their belief that the extensive teaching experience of ICs equips them with the necessary expertise to detect areas of instructional need. Beyond merely identifying these areas, teachers expressed confidence that ICs can provide a range of strategies to enhance their teaching practices and make informed recommendations based on their evaluations. This belief in the ICs' expertise played a crucial role in teachers' willingness to embrace the instructional modifications suggested by the IC.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked “how do teachers perceive the impact of building relationships on the coaching process” and focused on assessing teachers' views on how relationships affect the coaching process. Based on the data collection, the following theme provided an answer to this question: instructional coaches assist and motivate teachers to enhance their development consistently. This theme and the associated codes showcased the strength of the teachers' perceptions with regard to the significance of instructional coaching on the relationship between teachers and instructional coaches. Results indicated that building relationships is crucial in the coaching process. Knight (2010) stresses the importance of actively finding common ground with teachers and giving priority to building connections as essential elements of successful coaching. This study revealed the coaching process is indeed impacted by the relationship that exists between teacher and coach. The theme of this question is supported by research concluding that relationships are crucial for fostering open communication, and essential for navigating the coaching process (Denton et al., 2009).

A positive relationship between ICs and teachers is characterized by a high level of mutual trust and respect, which is crucial for an effective coaching process. This process thrives when there is a strong working relationship between the teacher and the IC. For instance, during

observed coaching sessions, teachers openly discussed concerns about their students' performance and their interactions with fellow team members. They received coaching support to address these issues. The willingness of teachers to share these concerns with their ICs reflects their deep trust and respect for the relationship they have built with their coaches. This accentuates the significance of relational dynamics in enhancing the effectiveness of the coaching process, aligning with research emphasizing the critical role of relationships in coaching outcomes.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asks “how do teachers measure the effectiveness of instructional coaching?”. This question sought to understand the ways that teachers evaluate the effectiveness of coaching approaches aimed at enhancing their teaching effectiveness. Based on data collection, it was determined that the theme associated with answering this question indicated that collaborating with instructional coaches positively impacts teachers' instructional delivery development and success. This, in turn, fosters a positive collaborative experience. Teachers repeatedly discussed the importance of collaboration and the opportunity to work with both the ICs and other teachers to positively impact their teaching skills and techniques.

Research supports this theme stating that the influence of instructional coaching on teacher effectiveness is often assessed using a variety of methods such as collaboration and improved student performance (Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Future research could expand on this question with additional focused questions on specific ways to evaluate the coaching approaches, while also examining a more concrete way to determine the results of the instructional coaching efforts.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks that influenced this study were Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and Jim Knight's (2007) instructional coaching model. The first theory is Bandura's which asserts that one of the primary cognitive factors that allow individuals to influence behavioral, personal, or environmental changes is their belief in their capability "to produce and control events in their lives" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). This belief emanates from four principles that include effective mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1977, 1981). This study was most impacted by each of the four principles. Vicarious experiences, in particular, allow individuals to form judgments about their own abilities by observing the performances of others. Through vicarious experiences, in which teachers and ICs engaged in co-teaching and modeling lessons, teachers were able to identify their ability to modify pedagogical approaches to improve instructional outcomes. The collaborative engagements between teachers and instructional coaches empowered teachers to feel motivated and empowered to modify their pedagogical approaches.

Bandura identifies the acts of encouragement and empowerment between individuals as verbal persuasion. During the coaching process, instructional coaches used verbal persuasion to encourage teachers to accept the necessary changes required to enhance the effectiveness of their instructional delivery. Persuaders, such as ICs, can significantly contribute to shaping an individual's self-beliefs (Zeldin & Pajares, 1997). The third principle, psychological arousal is often manifested from verbal persuasion. Bandura (1981, 1986) describes psychological (or emotional) arousal as the state in which an individual feels affirmed by others in their ability to achieve their designated goal. Psychological arousal was demonstrated in this study during the semi-structured interviews when teachers expressed feeling confident in their coaches' ability to

diagnose and prescribe an effective strategy that would improve their instructional performance and student achievement. The confidence level of teachers was apparent from the emotions they described when contemplating an action, where intense emotional reactions to pedagogical adjustments suggested the likelihood of success or failure in the outcome (Pajares, 1997). Their confidence in the coaches' ability to diagnose and prescribe strategies gave them confidence in their ability to effectively implement the identified strategies and anticipate successful outcomes.

The fourth principle of SET is effective mastery. Bandura asserted that outcome expectations are mainly based on assessments of one's ability to perform necessary behaviors, and it is only in this context that outcomes rely on performance and are influenced by beliefs in efficacy. Teachers in this study exhibited effective mastery, enabling them to visualize positive outcomes from the strategies they implemented for efficacy.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy permeated throughout the teacher participants in this study. Teachers' confidence in their instructional coaches' capacity to assist them in recognizing instructional challenges that hindered their effectiveness influenced their self-efficacy. The trust they placed in their coaches was reciprocated, leading to a belief in their ability to be effective throughout the coaching process.

Knight's impact cycle model is based on the partnership that allows the instructional team to identify, learn, and improve was founded on seven principles. These principles include equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Like SET, each principle played an intricate role in the coaching process in this study. The Impact Cycle as noted in this study reflects a partnership approach to coaching rather than a top-down approach. Knight (2009b) describes equality as the relationship between equal partners. In this study, the collaboration between teachers and coaches facilitated discussions about instructional challenges

and effective strategies as equals, with neither role taking precedence over the other. Knight emphasized that the partnership established through coaching offers choice for both teachers and coaches, which was crucial in this study. Teachers expressed feeling respected in their decision-making and appreciated the autonomy to choose what they found most suitable and beneficial during the coaching process. They did not perceive their coaches as imposing suggestions but rather encouraged to make decisions based on their needs. This element of choice motivated teachers to actively participate and engage further in the coaching process. Block (1993) states that a true partnership cannot exist without the element of choice. Having a choice in the partnership leads to each member having a voice that dictates the actions of implementation (Knight, 2009c).

Finding one's voice is essential to the coaching process, Covey (2004) wrote that "there is a deep, innate, almost inexpressible yearning with each of us to find our voice" (p. 5). In this study, educators and coaches utilized their voices to pinpoint instructional shortcomings and potential effective strategies to address them. Teachers acknowledged the crucial role of ICs in empowering them to voice their needs and desired outcomes through the coaching process. Just as with choice, the concept of voice ensures that both perspectives are equally respected and valued in the partnership. Knight suggests that voice in the partnership promotes dialogue.

Through dialogue, the teacher and coach engage in conversations that allow each to be transparent and honest without the other partner being involved in a competition. This study demonstrated that the partnership between teachers and coaches led to meaningful dialogue and significantly influenced teachers' perception of targeted communication regarding their instructional needs. Instructional coaches in this study were perceived by teachers to have a genuine interest in the perspectives of the teachers they supported. Unlike conversations that

often declare one of the partners a winner and the other a loser, dialogue does not put partners at odds with each other, instead, the communication results in a win/win situation (Bohm, 2000).

After the principle of dialogue, Knight states that the subsequent principle is reflection. Reflection permits both parties, with a focus on the teacher, to ponder over the conversation before implementing instructional adjustments. According to the findings of this study, ICs played an essential role in providing support to teachers as they deliberated on the instructional alternatives that were discussed. Instructional coaches motivated teachers to contemplate how a strategy could be molded, adjusted, or redesigned to harmonize with their instructional approach and cater to their students' requirements (Killion & Todnem, 2009). Teachers, upon reflecting on their conversation with the IC, discerned the instructional adjustments needed to enhance educational results. Once teachers reflected on different instructional approaches, they were able to discern the appearance of implementation.

Knight identifies this principle as praxis, emphasizing teachers' ability to incorporate new ideas into their teaching practices to align with their pedagogy. The encouragement and promotion of praxis were facilitated by the ICs in this study. After embracing new strategies, teachers in this study worked with their IC to figure out the practical application of these strategies to achieve their desired level of success. Teachers expressed feeling empowered by their instructional coaches to customize the strategies they adopted to enhance student success.

The last of the seven principles is reciprocity. Reciprocity according to Knight allows for both members in the partnership to experience a sense of reward through the learning process that occurs during instructional coaching. Throughout the instructional coaching process in this study, teachers received the support of their IC as they collaborated to devise instructional plans that included new strategies. Teachers reported in their post-survey and semi-structured

interviews that the instructional coaching process helped them to identify insufficient and effective instructional strategies. Teachers reported that by implementing strategies discussed with their instructional coaches, their students showed improvement toward their academic goals. These seven principles are intricately woven into Knight's Impact Cycle as each was significant in this study. Incorporating The Impact Cycle in this study ensured that teachers received ongoing instructional support from their instructional coach as they identified their instructional needs, acquired new strategies, and enhanced the instructional process through reflection. Teachers emphasized that The Impact Cycle played a crucial role during their meetings with the IC, where they discussed their instructional needs and the outcomes they aimed for through coaching. Teachers in this study stated that the ongoing cycle enabled them to modify ineffective strategies to attain their desired results.

The theoretical frameworks of Bandura and Knight played a crucial role in this study. Teachers noted a positive outcome from the practices employed during the instructional coaching process. The success derived from applying Bandura's and Knight's frameworks in coaching has motivated teachers to continue their coaching partnership with their IC for future needs.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, three primary limitations were identified that may impacted the research and results: changes in staffing, teacher openness, and my dual role as both the researcher and the school administrator at the study location. Some of these limitations were anticipated in Chapter 1, while others became more evident as the research progressed.

Initially, the plan was to include four instructional coaches in the study—three from the school level and one from the district level. However, during the second quarter, the district made several adjustments that impacted the BES instructional coaching team. Specifically, the

coach at the district level was reassigned to another school, reducing the number of ICs participating in the study below what was initially planned. This change negatively affected the total number of participants that could be involved in the study.

Another challenge encountered during the study involved somewhat limited openness from teachers during individual interviews. Eliciting comprehensive responses to open-ended questions often required asking additional questions, which is appropriate for semi-structured interviews as the researcher is allowed to expand upon the initial interview protocol to ensure questions are answered and enough information is collected. Teachers did show some hesitancy when discussing their experiences with the coaching process and its effect on their teaching abilities. As a result, additional questioning was necessary to gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of their experiences.

As mentioned, the third limitation experienced during this study resulted from my position as both the researcher and the administrator of the school where the research was conducted. This role may have influenced the teachers' willingness to provide open and transparent feedback during surveys and interviews. Even though participants self-selected to take part in the study and were repeatedly informed that they were under no obligation to participate, nor would their participation have any impact on their performance evaluations, it is possible that the situation may have still impacted their decision to participate or responses to interviews. Additionally, observations during the interviews suggested that teachers were inclined to give more positive responses, possibly to affirm that the coaching approach at BES was effectively meeting their instructional needs. In a future study, it might be beneficial to have a third party conduct the interviews to allow participants to feel more comfortable providing honest responses.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

Over the last 30 years, standards-based reform has focused on changing teacher practices to improve student achievement results (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The instructional practices of teachers require continuous reflection to determine effective methods to meeting the academic and behavioral needs of current students. Achieving such transformation is a complex undertaking that requires the coordination of teacher knowledge, skills, identity, and relationship development to achieve specific goals in evolving environments (Grossman et al., 2009). Instructional coaching provides teachers with the necessary support needed to implement the transformation that is needed to improve instructional delivery and student outcomes.

This study recognizes the efficacy of instructional coaching as a crucial mechanism for aiding teachers at Best Elementary School in meeting their unique instructional challenges. Active engagement in learning opportunities, as highlighted by Garet et al. (2001) and Loucks-Horsley et al. (1998), significantly reinforce the quality of professional development. Through partnership with ICs, teachers were able to pinpoint and address areas needing refinement, leading to improvements in their teaching approaches and student outcomes. School districts and administrators should ensure that at least one instructional coach is available to support teachers with their instructional practices. This support is especially crucial for Title 1 schools, as it can result in significant benefits. Instructional coaching allows teachers to collaborate with experienced professionals, receiving valuable recommendations and guidance. This support system also relieves teachers from the pressure of figuring everything out on their own, enhancing their effectiveness.

Indeed, having instructional coaches in schools is vital for improving student performance, especially in Title 1 schools where a majority of students enter the classroom with

significantly lower performance levels than expected. Effective instructional practices play a vital role in student success. Teachers need support in identifying instructional challenges, learning strategies to address these challenges, developing implementation plans, and making necessary modifications to improve student performance. Instructional coaches can provide the guidance and expertise needed to navigate these processes effectively, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students.

Unequivocally, providing support to instructional coaches from school administrators is pivotal. Collaborative time with administrators allows coaches to discuss their progress with teachers and seek guidance on effective strategies, relationship building, and collaboration. It's essential for administrators to prioritize regular PLC meetings with coaches. This intentional collaboration helps ensure that coaching efforts align with school goals and effectively support teacher development.

As an administrator of a Title 1 school, I utilized funds for multiple line items to secure the three positions. Funding an IC position may necessitate administrators of Title 1 schools to allocate Title 1 funds for securing such positions. Likewise, funding earmarked for professional development can be reallocated to supplement the cost of these positions. Non-Title 1 schools may have the option to utilize funds from programs like childcare and athletics to include an instructional coach to their staff. Thus, administrators should take advantage of the opportunity to reallocate permissible funds to provide teachers with onsite instructional support, thus enhancing effectiveness.

The necessity for continual evaluation of the effectiveness of instructional strategies, as suggested by the theoretical foundation of this study, is paramount. This ongoing assessment is critical for determining the impact of these strategies on educational results. In instances where

the anticipated results were not met, it necessitated a collaborative effort between the teacher and the IC to adjust or replace the initial strategy. Employing Knight's Impact Cycle Framework facilitated a structured collaboration between teachers and their ICs, enabling an open exchange of unbiased feedback while adhering to the cycle's guidelines. The findings of this study supported Knight's theory that effective communication, strong relationships, and collaborative partnerships are essential in the coaching process. Teachers felt appreciated and respected during coaching sessions as they shared their challenges and successes. Including teachers in discussions and decision-making processes was imperative for building a strong foundation for the relationship between ICs and teachers. This approach facilitated teachers' acceptance of feedback, suggestions, and strategies offered by coaches to support their instructional growth.

This study revealed that teachers employed various methods to determine the impact of instructional coaching on their teaching effectiveness, linking these evaluations to student achievements. The improved performance of students, as observed by the teachers, was attributed to the positive influence of instructional coaching. This study underscores the significance of instructional coaching in enhancing teacher efficacy and stresses the importance of administrators prioritizing the instructional coaching process. Teachers consistently require ongoing professional development to stay updated with the state and district-level demands placed upon them. However, access to professional development opportunities that effectively enhance their instructional practices may not always be readily available. As demonstrated in this study, the presence of instructional coaches is crucial in addressing the diverse instructional needs of teachers. Based on the results of this study, instructional coaching will remain a part of the educational strategy at BES and the information and data gained from the study can be shared with other schools, administrators, and district-level leaders.

Based on the outcomes of this study, other administrators should consider the following three key recommendations for enhancing instructional practices. These include ensuring the availability of ICs in all schools, fostering consistent collaboration between administrators and ICs, and implementing an evaluation mechanism to assess the coaching process's effectiveness.

First, it is essential for educational systems to ensure that every school, especially Title 1 schools with a high percentage of students facing educational challenges, has access to ICs. This support is crucial for assisting teachers in addressing the diverse needs of their students effectively. The coaching process enables teachers to receive professional development support directly within their classrooms, offering immediate feedback and guidance to refine their instructional strategies. This hands-on support aims to equip teachers with the knowledge and tools to assess and enhance their teaching methods, thereby improving student outcomes.

The second recommendation emphasizes the importance of continuous collaboration between school administrators and instructional coaches. Such collaboration allows for the examination of data trends within the school, enabling targeted support for teachers' specific instructional needs. Regular meetings between administrators and coaches are vital for exchanging information and strategizing on instructional planning based on data analysis, observations, and teacher feedback. Administrators must ensure that ICs receive the support they require to effectively meet the needs of teachers. The administrator's oversight is central in guiding the coaching process, ensuring that coaches can devise personalized plans that address the unique needs of each teacher.

Third, the introduction of a standardized evaluation tool, to be completed by teachers at the end of the coaching cycle, is recommended for all school districts. Adopting a uniform assessment method across the district will facilitate the identification of areas that are both

successful and need improvement in the coaching process. The insights gained from these evaluations can lead to adjustments that enhance the overall efficacy of the coaching program.

Furthermore, this data can be instrumental in developing a structured coaching framework that aligns with both school and district-level objectives, ensuring that coaches can effectively meet teachers' needs. Together, these recommendations aim to improve the support system for teachers, enhancing their ability to meet their students' academic and behavioral needs through effective instructional practices.

Implications of the Findings for Social Justice, Diversity, Access, and Equity

This research was conducted in a Title 1 school where a significant majority, 71%, of the students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Within the kindergarten cohort of 125 students, only a third were found to be ready for kindergarten. The teachers face the daunting task of preparing these underprepared students for the next academic year within a span of just 10 months, despite the myriad of challenges these students present, ranging from unrecognized disabilities to poor attendance to economic instability and food insecurity. Teachers are charged with the responsibility of ensuring every student is ready for the subsequent grade, regardless of their unique needs. This expectation can significantly affect outcomes, especially in the absence of adequate support. Providing teachers with instructional support can help clarify the focus required to boost student achievement. It is crucial to develop the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for deep engagement and effective collaboration with diverse student groups (Orange et al., 2019), a matter that has been of persistent policy concern in teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Horsford et al., 2011; Milner, 2003). Instructional support through coaching is instrumental in identifying and implementing improvements to teaching practices.

This need for instructional coaching extends beyond novice teachers or those new to the institution; it is a misconception to assume that past successes of a teacher will seamlessly apply to different student demographics. Instructional coaching should be accessible to all teachers, with this study demonstrating benefits across various grade levels and subjects. The occasional professional development opportunity offsite is insufficient; as confirmed by this study, teachers need continuous, immediate support from an expert who can review teaching methods, collaborate on strategies, and help devise plans tailored to their instructional needs. Therefore, instructional coaching is essential in providing the immediate assistance teachers need, enhancing their ability to meet the diverse academic and behavioral needs of their students.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study provided solid insight regarding the importance and benefits of instructional coaching specifically based on teachers' perceptions of instructional coaches and their experience working with them. Although the results of the study can be utilized in school settings, there are aspects of the study upon which it could be improved in future research. Additional studies on this topic should consider conducting research in settings where the school administrator is not the researcher. Conducting research independently of the school's administration may encourage teachers to share their experiences with instructional coaching more freely. Obtaining candid feedback from teachers will provide school and district leaders with essential insights needed to refine the coaching process and maximize its effectiveness.

Additionally, it would be beneficial for future research to involve a comparative analysis of the coaching processes at two different schools. Such a comparison would shed light on the similarities and differences in how coaching is implemented across the district. The data collected from these comparisons could be instrumental in establishing a unified coaching

framework and ensuring consistent support for teachers district-wide, irrespective of the school's Title 1 status. By standardizing effective coaching practices, the district has the potential to elevate student achievement across all schools.

Another area for future research includes incorporating an evaluation tool designed to gather teachers' perceptions of the coaching process's strengths and weaknesses. The insights gained from this assessment can inform school and district administrators about the specific needs of their teachers and how the coaching program can be adjusted to better meet these needs. Identifying aspects of the coaching process that are less effective allows for targeted improvements, enhancing the overall success of instructional coaching strategies. Finally, an additional evaluation related to student achievement and how it may be impacted by the use of instructional coaching in the classroom may also provide details on ways to improve academic success.

Implications on Role as Scholarly Practitioner

Embracing leadership opportunities with the well-being of followers in mind is a principle that has been underscored through this research study, leading to significant professional and personal growth. This development is poised to shape my approach to leadership. I have come to understand the fundamental role of relationships in leadership, particularly how they affect the outcomes of team efforts. Establishing connections based on mutual respect and appreciation for each participant's contributions is vital for effective coaching. Such relationships enable teachers to articulate the support they require for enhancing student learning. They also allow ICs to delve deeper into issues by posing thoughtful questions, thus better understanding teachers' needs.

Moreover, this study reinforced my awareness of the importance of collaboration and the substantial benefits it brings to multi-team endeavors. It highlighted the necessity of maintaining transparent and ongoing communication when executing strategies aimed at educational improvement. Instructional coaches needed to keep open lines of communication with teachers to evaluate the impact of the adopted instructional strategies. Likewise, as a scholarly practitioner, maintaining open communication with the instructional coaches was imperative to offer the necessary support for aiding teachers. Effective collaboration kept all parties aligned toward achieving a common goal.

Conducting this study has reaffirmed my commitment to bridging theory with practice, showing me the power of research in addressing real-world challenges and the potential for personal advancement through scholarly engagement. Moving forward, I am dedicated to continuing this path of growth, applying the insights gained from this research to foster positive changes within my professional environment and beyond.

Conclusions

This study set out to examine the impact of instructional coaching on classroom teachers, specifically by focusing on the teachers' perceptions of their experience working with instructional coaches. The research found that teachers perceived a significant improvement in their teaching effectiveness as a result of the support from instructional coaching. Teachers were able to implement innovative teaching techniques and strategies, leading to improved student involvement in the learning process. Instructional coaching helped teachers shift their focus from the long-term goals of the academic year to more immediate weekly educational outcomes. The teachers adhered to the guidance of instructional coaches, valuing their knowledge of grade-level standards and the curriculum.

The effectiveness of coaching was heightened when teachers felt their contributions were appreciated and taken seriously. By building a positive rapport with their instructional coach, teachers felt comfortable discussing areas for improvement that they might hesitate to bring up with their peers. This positive dynamic allowed teachers to explore instructional methods with confidence. The non-judgmental and supportive approach of instructional coaching provided teachers with the liberty to set specific, short-term objectives aimed at refining their teaching practices.

This study assisted teachers in eliminating any uncertainties or inadequacies they may have had regarding the coaching process. The study concluded that teachers at BES perceived instructional coaching as a positive force in enhancing their instructional effectiveness, particularly in a Title 1 school where teachers face diverse challenges in meeting student needs. While one-day professional development sessions are available, they fall short of addressing teachers' specific requirements. Instructional coaching, however, offers tailored onsite support aligned with teachers' instructional needs. By engaging in reflective practices during coaching, teachers pinpointed areas where they needed the guidance of an IC. This continuous insight gained through instructional coaching contributed significantly to improving teachers' instructional delivery. The presence of ICs onsite greatly contributed to teachers' sense of support throughout the coaching process. Consequently, teachers noted an enhancement in student performance as a direct result of the instructional coaching they received.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
Willis Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284**
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Takicey Dunston](#)
CC: [Heidi Puckett](#)
Date: 12/21/2023
Re: **UMCIRB 23-002400**
THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON TEACHER EFFICACY

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 12/21/2023. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

As the Principal Investigator you are explicitly responsible for the conduct of all aspects of this study and must adhere to all reporting requirements for the study. Your responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring changes to the approved research (including the UMCIRB approved consent document) are initiated only after UMCIRB review and approval except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All changes (e.g. a change in procedure, number of participants, personnel, study locations, new recruitment materials, study instruments, etc.) must be prospectively reviewed and approved by the UMCIRB before they are implemented;
2. Where informed consent has not been waived by the UMCIRB, ensuring that only valid versions of the UMCIRB approved, date-stamped informed consent document(s) are used for obtaining informed consent (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the ePIRATE study workspace);
3. Promptly reporting to the UMCIRB all unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others;

5. Submission of an amendment to extend the expected end date if the study is not expected to be completed by that date. The amendment should be submitted 30 days prior to the UMCIRB approved expected end date or as soon as the Investigator is aware that the study will not be completed by that date.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent to Participate	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Consent to Participate	Consent Forms
Participant Request Letter	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
PERCEPTION IS REALITY: THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON TEACHER EFFICACY	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Post Survey Questions	Surveys and Questionnaires
Pre-Survey Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Pre-Survey Questions	Surveys and Questionnaires
Research Interview Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PERCEPTION IS REALITY: THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ON TEACHER EFFICACY

Principal Investigator: Takicey Dunston
Institution, Department or Division: Department of Educational Leadership
Address: Ragsdale Hall, Room 210
Telephone #: 252-328-6135
Study Coordinator: Dr. Heidi Puckett (Dissertation Chair)
Telephone #: 252-328-6444

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems, and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to ensure that instructional coaches at our school are providing knowledge and skills that have a positive impact on your classroom instruction. You are being invited to take part in this research because you will be provided with instructional coaching during the 2023-2024 school year. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn about your perceptions of working with instructional coaches, the impact instructional coaching can have, and if there are changes that should be made to improve your experience working with instructional coaches.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 10-12 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

You are not required to take part in this research, even if you do choose to participate in the instructional coaching opportunities. Your decision to participate or not will not have an impact on your performance review or employment status.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at our elementary school. You will need to meet with me less than 3 times during the study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is less than 3 hours over the next 9 weeks (other than the instructional coaching meetings, which are part of your professional development participation).

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to do the following: You will be asked to complete a Pre-survey related to your perceptions and opinions on instructional coaching. Then you will work with an instructional coach over 9 weeks. After the 9 weeks, you will be asked to complete a Post-survey regarding your experience with the coaching. Additionally, I will ask that you meet with me for a debriefing meeting and an individual semi-structured interview that will take approximately 1 hour. The interview will provide you with the opportunity to expand upon your comments in the surveys and provide any additional information that you deem relevant. The interviews will be audio-recorded so that I can create accurate transcripts of our conversations. All collected data will remain confidential and any details that are shared will utilize pseudonyms. Participants will have the option of being recorded at the time of the interview. Access to the audio recording will be limited to the principal investigator. Participants will be identified by their pseudonyms. The audio will be deleted at the end of the three-year required retainment period.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. I hope that you will gain additional instructional techniques and skills and feel more positive about your classroom efforts following completion of the 9week sessions. I also hope that you will appreciate the opportunity to share information about your experiences so that we can make any necessary updates to the instructional coaching opportunities offered at our school. The information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.
- Instructional coaches at our school.
- Dissertation Chair.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The information collected will be kept on my password-protected ECU OneDrive. The OneDrive is only accessible by me. The information will be kept on file for 3 years and then discarded.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 919-410-0829, Monday thru Friday, between 9:00am – 6:00pm.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the ECU University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914, Monday thru Friday. If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914.

Is there anything else I should know?

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information and, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies. However, there still may be a chance that someone could figure out the information is about you.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person’s questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT REQUEST LETTER

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at East Carolina University seeking an EdD in Education Leadership. Over the past 10 years, our county has made instructional coaching available in every school as a means of supporting teachers. My research study focuses on teachers' perception of the impact instructional coaching has on the effectiveness of their instructional delivery.

I am interested in learning how teachers perceive the effectiveness of instructional coaching and the method of measurement used to determine its effectiveness. I am seeking participation in this study over the course of six weeks as you collaborate and work closely with an instructional coach. Throughout your nine weeks of instructional coaching, I will interview and administer surveys to gather perception data.

As your immediate superior, I assure you that your participation is completely voluntary and has no bearing on your performance evaluation. At any time during the study, you determine that you would no longer like to participate, you are welcome to withdraw.

I greatly appreciate your consideration to participate in this research study aimed at learning more about teacher perceptions on the impact instructional coaching has on teacher effectiveness.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 919-410-0829 or dunstont21@ecu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Takicey M. Dunston

APPENDIX D: PRE-SURVEY

1. What is your perception of the role and responsibilities of instructional coaches?
2. What is your perception of the instructional coaches' ability to identify instructional areas to support you?
3. What is your perception of instructional coaches' ability to provide strategies that can impact students' academic performance in your classroom?
4. What is your perception of the instructional coaches' ability to support you with differentiating instructional delivery to meet the needs of the learners in your classroom?
5. What are your instructional goals?
6. In what area(s) of instructional delivery do you feel you need support?
7. In what ways would you like instructional coaching support?
8. What instructional goals can the instructional coach support you in achieving?
9. What impact did instructional coaching have on your instructional delivery?
10. In what ways can instructional coaching be tailored to improve the impact that it has on instructional delivery?

APPENDIX E: POST-SURVEY

1. Did the instructional coach meet your perception of their roles and responsibilities?
2. Did the instructional coach identify areas of support to address your instructional needs?
3. What impact did the instructional coaching have on student performance?
4. Did the instructional strategies prove to be effective in meeting the needs of the various needs of students?
5. Did the instructional coaching process assist you in meeting your instructional goal?
6. Was the instructional coaching tailored to your instructional needs?

APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Describe your classroom demographics.
2. In what subject did you receive instructional coaching?
3. What area of instructional delivery did you require additional support from an instructional coach?
4. Did you feel comfortable discussing your instructional needs with an instructional coach?
5. Was the amount of time you collaborated with the instructional coach adequate in addressing your instructional concerns?
6. Did your coach appear knowledgeable of strategies that can be implemented to address your instructional concerns?
7. Did your instructional coach engage in open dialogue with you to learn more about your instructional needs?
8. Did your coach devise a plan to address your area of instructional needs with input from you?
9. Did your coach describe in detail coaching strategies that can be implemented to address your instructional needs?
10. Did you identify the most appropriate instructional strategy you would like your coach to demonstrate?
11. How did instructional coaching impact your instructional delivery?
12. How did the instructional coach best support your instructional needs?
13. Was the coaching support successful in improving your instructional delivery?
14. How did you measure the success of the instructional coaching support that you received?
15. Would you be open to additional instructional support provided by an instructional coach?

