

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to my daughter Sydney Havens. Her love and constant support kept me stable, grounded, and aware of what really matters most. I hope our journey in school together has helped you understand the true value and power of education.

This work is also dedicated to my mother Colleen Harper. Her unfailing love, respect, and support for me and my daughter have been a great source of comfort. Her example of unconditional love and determination in raising four girls on her own and completing many graduate-level courses in the midst of expertly balancing work and family served as a great model for my own educational pursuits.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of classroom teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Following an instructional coaching program, teacher participants from a K-6 public school in Central California completed a survey that included questions that ranged from sharing resources and ideas to supporting teachers with understanding social and emotional factors of their students. Participants rated 12 items using a Likert-type scale. Data were analyzed using Chi Square Goodness of Fit and descriptive techniques. The results yielded differences in teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching on 9 of the 12 survey questions. Further, the analysis indicated that instructional coaching was lacking or not a current district focus in regards to building higher thinking skills, creating orderly and safe classrooms, and preparing and organizing lessons. However, all responses provided statistically significant positive support of instructional coaching overall.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) contributed to the evolution of professional development for teachers. One popular approach that has emerged is instructional coaching. According to Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, and Herman (1999), high-quality professional development should be sustained, relevant, engaging, and include standards-based practice. With this definition in mind, professional development should include activities that move beyond lectures or workshops and toward those that provide structure for ongoing support built into the learning process.

Background

In recent years, large urban school districts have created educational coaching positions to support their reform efforts in conjunction with traditional professional growth activities (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007). However, districts have not clearly delineated specific outcomes of successful coaching programs or defined educational coaching. At the beginning of the 21st century, educational coaching began progressing from peer- and content-specific to data-driven formats. Instructional coaching programs are based on a partnership approach between the coach and teacher that support an equal relationship and allow for more effective implementation of research-based instructional practices. Specifically, this approach

includes choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, reciprocity, and proven teaching practices (Knight, 2007).

In the past, curriculum implementation and educational reform made little student achievement gains as classroom teacher isolation prevailed and teacher anxiety increased concerning effectiveness, which created fear of poor external evaluation. These previous practices help explain why teachers have been reluctant to explore and grow professionally. However, instructional coaching involves a collaborative process (Knight, 2007).

During instructional coaching, the coach observes a lesson, schedules a follow up meeting, and based on mutual respect, uses data gathered during the observation to begin a dialogue. This approach does not allow for top-down feedback, which often occurs when an expert watches a novice and provides feedback until the novice gains proficiency. The major component of an instructional coaching program is responding to the challenges of individual professional change. Professional development programs still include traditional types of teacher in-services and peer coaching; however, they use a structured system to encourage teacher buy-in through presentations, conversations, and administrator referrals (Knight, 2007). The overarching goal of instructional coaching is to encourage teachers to be more responsive and receptive to change within their classrooms and schools.

Statement of Problem

Although follow-up through instructional coaching may sustain the implementation and success of new classroom teaching practices, very little research has been conducted on teachers' perceived effects of coaching.

Research Question

This study aimed to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions and opinions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching?

Hypothesis

Based on existing literature, the researcher proposed that no significant differences exist in the distribution of survey responses among teachers regarding their perceptions of instructional coaching effectiveness.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it may provide useful information for administrators, professional development coaches, and teachers to reflect on practices perceived as effective in helping teachers improve their repertoires of instructional skills, techniques, and strategies.

Limitations

This study was limited to 32 teachers who participated in an instructional coaching program from 2008 through 2013.

Delimitations

This researcher did not consider teacher ethnicity, tenure status, ability, and language proficiency of the respondents. Additionally, the researcher did not consider teacher experience or preparation.

Operational Definitions

The section defines terms specific to this study.

Instructional coaching. Instructional coaching is a partnership approach to professional development between a teacher and a coach. Instructional coaches work one-on-one with teachers to facilitate the successful adoption and implementation of educational methods that improve student success.

Peer coaching. Peer coaching is a process through which two or more professional colleagues (teacher or administrator) work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.

Cognitive coaching. Cognitive coaching is nonjudgmental, relies on trust, facilitates mutual learning, and enhances growth toward working independently with others. Fellow teachers, administrators and teachers, and administrative peers can establish cognitive coaching relationships. A cognitive coach uses powerful questions and communication skills to empower those they coach to reflect deeply on their practices.

Virtual coaching. Virtual coaching occurs when a coach interacts with a teacher as a lesson unfolds step by step—it is a promising technique that uses online

and mobile technology (termed bug in the ear) to allow a coach located outside the classroom to observe a teacher's lesson and offer discreet, feedback through an earpiece that the teacher wears.

Teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy refers to the teacher's confidence in his or her ability to promote student learning.

Summary

Chapter I outlined the emergence of educational coaching as a new reform model for professional development. The need for schools to adopt coaching to improve classroom instruction is critical, particularly with the demands of Common Core. This researcher identified the problem, developed a research question, and discussed the significance of this work regarding the influence it may have on teachers who participate in instructional coaching activities.

Chapter II reviews the current research on educational coaching and the implications for school administrators, teacher leaders, and students. Chapter III details the methodology of the study, participant demographics, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data collected. Finally, Chapter V provides conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of classroom teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Although educational coaching encompasses many definitions, its effectiveness as a professional growth model has only recently received attention at the empirical level. Over 400 scholarly articles and books have been written on the subject of coaching, and few involve experimental studies (Kretlow & Bartholemew, 2010). For this literature review, the history of educational coaching are examined to identify effective strategies. Several questions of educational coaching are answered through a variety of research and practitioner studies. Currently, four approaches to educational coaching are considered effective, research-based practices: peer coaching, cognitive coaching, instructional coaching, and virtual coaching.

History of Educational Coaching

The evolution of educational coaching began in the mid-1950s with national movements to improve academic and social equality (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Showers and Joyce (1996) stated that by the 1970s, educators realized no matter how much money was allocated to new educational reform initiatives, improvements did not make their way into classrooms. According to Glickman (1990), educators assumed that if teachers learned new strategies, they would automatically and

seamlessly implement them into their classrooms. However, during the mid-20th century, schools and organizations did not support intensive educational opportunities via summer institutes or district-led workshops (Glickman, 1990).

During the 1980s, schools began designing training programs to increase transfer of instructional skills, techniques, and strategies into the classroom (Showers, 1982). Showers reported that educational researchers have identified how people learn and apply new behaviors. She examined different types of training that were likely to improve application in the classroom based on theory and practice. Her findings revealed that the most productive design for professional development was educational coaching through modeling and feedback.

Following her solo work, researchers began designing Showers and colleagues' new paradigm that would result in much greater teacher transfer. The idea was to pair teachers with outside experts or peer support coaches. As this new design progressed, literature from supervisory practices and teacher feedback surveys influenced two levels of coaching: peer and instructional. More recently, an additional approach to educational coaching, virtual coaching, has emerged through advances in technology.

Types and Methods of Educational Coaching

Peer coaching was the first type of educational coaching reform to address instructional improvement. Showers (1982) identified peer coaching as a process that included a training routine in which teachers worked with each other through observations and nonjudgmental feedback. Ladyshevsky and Flavell (2011)

defended peer coaching as an effective method of coaching where individuals of equal status actively helped and supported each other in learning tasks. Showers and Joyce (1996) also noted that peer coaching helped nearly all participating teachers implement new instructional strategies, and this method resulted in measurable differences on student learning. They further commented on the need for periodic monitoring of strategies so teachers who participated in continual peer collaboration could evaluate, adjust, and continue to improve in the area of student achievement. The notion of teachers working cooperatively with others is well documented as an important support structure for improvement of instruction.

One methodology that compliments peer coaching is the practice of cognitive coaching. Uzat (1998) identified cognitive coaching as the process of self-questioning to improve professional skills that lead teachers to become reflective practitioners. She asserted that the role of a coach as a mediator is crucial to the improvement of instruction. Cochran and DeChesere (1995) found that cognitive coaching encourages different ways of thinking about instruction and learning and has the potential to form positive change.

Costa and Garmston (1994) agreed that cognitive coaching worked best when administrators and teachers engage in a nonjudgmental process. They described cognitive coaching as a structure that uses three types of conversation: the planning conversation, the reflective conversation, and the problem solving conversation. According to Costa and Garmston, several coaching techniques, such as paraphrasing,

rapport building, mirroring, and asking questions, allow teachers a means to self-evaluate their practices.

At the time of this literature review, instructional coaching was emerging as a popular trend in educational coaching. Instructional coaching is a teacher support structure developed through the best practices of peer and cognitive coaching. Marzano (1995) considered instructional coaching as a main component of the professional learning community (PLC).

Knight (2007) described the instructional coach as a fellow teacher who provides intensive, differentiated support for teachers so they can implement proven research-based practices. He suggested that the ideal instructional coach is someone who possesses excellent communication skills and thorough knowledge of instructional practices, demonstrates modeled lessons, performs classroom observations, and maintains the ability to share simplified explanations of classroom practices to teachers in need of improvement. Successful instructional coaches are skilled communicators and relationship builders, and they possess the capacity to listen (Knight, 2007).

Another important component of instructional coaching is the use of formal and informal data (Knight, 2007). Knight emphasized that an effective instructional coach uses data to support teacher improvement. He outlined five ideals that administrators must implement for a successful coaching program: actual time spent coaching teachers, proven research-based interventions, ongoing professional development, protection of the coaching relationship, and principal and coach

collaboration. Sprick, Knight, Reinke, and McKale (2006) also identified classroom management, content, instructional strategies, and assessment as key components that instructional coaches address to improve instruction.

Virtual coaching applies the methods of peer and instructional coaching in a new environment. Virtual coaching encompasses all of the qualities of peer and instructional coaching, but uses advanced online and mobile technologies (termed *bug-in-ear technology* [BIE]). With BIE technology, a coach can be located remotely or in the classroom to observe a teacher's lesson and offer discreet feedback (Rock, Zigmond, Gregg, & Gable, 2011). Specifically, virtual coaching offers an effective alternative to the coach being in the classroom. Since 2007, virtual coaching has been used to improve teacher performance (Rock et al., 2011). According to Rock et al., more than 800 real time bug-in-the-ear coaching sessions with 29 practicing teachers have used this cost effective way to achieve instructional improvements.

Studies on Effective Coaching Programs

In both traditional and virtual collaborative classrooms that use peer, cognitive, instructional, and virtual coaching, teachers and teacher coaches combine their strengths to work together, inform one another, and provide the best possible environments for their students. Measuring the effects of peer coaching regarding teacher and student outcomes requires multiple tools for academic performance and achievement.

Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, and Good (1997) designed a study to analyze such factors. The researchers' first goal was to examine the effects of peer coaching on

teachers' adoption and application of an instructional innovation. To achieve this aim, they introduced Rosenshine's (1978) direct instruction model, which includes the following steps:

1. Review the previous day's work and reteach if necessary.
2. Present new content material.
3. Provide guided instruction.
4. Provide continual feedback.
5. Provide opportunities for independent practice.
6. Conduct mini reviews and assessments.

Kohler et al. taught this model during an in-service that used an integrated instructional approach (IIA). The IIA required teachers to make a variety of spontaneous decisions about students' diverse and changing needs. For example, teachers ask questions related to content and provide scaffolding to bridge their understanding of a targeted concept.

Kohler et al. (1997) observed four regular elementary teachers and their students. The first of three phases included four teacher participants of various grade levels and content areas. Participants implemented the new teaching innovation (direct instruction model) acquired during a professional development workshop. The second phase included the same four teachers who designed and completed a lesson to work with an experienced peer coach. The third phase also included the same four teachers who implemented the teaching innovation alone. The researchers examined multiple dimensions of teacher performance, including effort, organization,

type of materials used, and so forth. Formal implementation of these practices was lacking in prior studies on coaching; therefore, observations were designed to measure specific outcomes (Kohler et al., 1997).

Kohler et al. (1997) reported four primary results. First, information was generated on teachers' discussions and interactions with peer coaches. The data from the discussions specified the independent variable for instructional changes within the classroom. Second, the researchers used observations and checklists to measure teachers' procedural efforts, including changes and refinements during their integrated activities. The data included only implementation efforts of procedures and refinements discussed during peer coaching. Third, the researchers measured teacher and student processes associated with various instructional activities. Fourth, the researchers discussed teachers' ongoing satisfaction and concerns with the integrated instructional approach.

The second goal of Kohler et al.'s (1997) study was to understand the wide range of processes involved in implementing a new instructional practice. Specifically, recorded measures included teachers' academic talk, student engagement, and social interactions between students, teachers, and peers. Finally, the researchers examined teachers' interactions with their peer coaches and their ongoing satisfaction with the new teaching innovation.

Kohler et al. (1997) identified four dependent variables on an ongoing basis, including organization and implementation of a mini lesson, reciprocal learning, follow-up, and closure. The teachers agreed to use the innovation (direct instruction

model) at least twice a week. The researchers created an 11-item checklist to record data that included types of procedures the teachers implemented without regard to quality. The researchers also developed an observational code based on the direct instruction model that used a 1 through 10 sampling system for the following categories: academic subject, activity grouping, instructional mode or function, teacher behaviors, student talk, and student engagement. Finally, they developed a checklist to measure coaching interactions that was designed to help teachers focus their collaboration on three areas: organization of the learning innovation, student performance, and curriculum variables.

All four teachers expanded and refined their procedures after peer coaching. For example, Teacher 1 focused on implementing closure following a learning activity. Initially, her baseline sessions implemented closure on only two of five sessions. After several peer coaching sessions that focused on this procedure, she implemented closure after every session and used a wider range of procedures to wrap up her activities. This teacher also continued using closure without the support of a peer coach during the maintenance phase.

Kohler et al. (1997) also coded a variety of teacher and student processes, including active student engagement with materials and talk during the three experimental conditions (baseline, coaching, and maintenance). The results showed a range of 13%-20% for the percentage of student talk during mini lessons. These data were compared to the initial range across all sessions (mini lesson, reciprocal learning, and closure) of 0%-63%. Student talk increased considerably during

reciprocal learning sessions (73%-76%). Finally, the results showed that student talk decreased during closure (7%-30%) across all three phases.

Kohler et al. (1997) also examined teacher satisfaction and concerns with the integrated instructional approach using a survey given once every four sessions. The results indicated considerable variation in satisfaction during the baseline (3.8-4.5 on a 1-5 scale). The overall satisfaction rating improved during the coaching sessions, and three of the four teachers indicated a high satisfaction rating during the maintenance phase. Conversely, one teacher expressed considerable concerns about the influence of her activities on student achievement. All four teachers provided written comments on the questionnaires. For example, Teacher 2 stated, "I feel more comfortable with the integrated approach as I use it more. I am still concerned about being able to have effective activities without excessive preparation time or effort" (Kohler et al., 1997, p. 247).

Kohler et al.'s (1997) results indicated more procedural changes during peer coaching than during the initial independent phase. Specifically, teachers focused on procedural areas discussed during peer coaching and all were modified and transferred in the classroom. Conversely, procedures used but not discussed showed little or no refinement. This finding is important because teachers' collegial discussions serve as the impetus for change in the classroom. These results suggest that procedural refinements can be examined and measured and, more importantly, show that change is more likely to occur and sustain over time under conditions of collaboration.

Limited research has been conducted on the effects related to how teachers affect student behavioral and academic change. Stichter, Lewis, Richter, Johnson, and Bradley (2006) analyzed the effects of an instructional variable used by teachers to influence overall student performance. The researchers assessed the interaction between the application of four opportunities to respond (OTR) strategies and students' social and academic behaviors. The four strategies included instructional talk, strategic prompts, feedback, and wait time. Additionally, the researchers assessed variations in the implementation of two different models of professional development, traditional in-service, and peer coaching.

Stichter et al. (2006) conducted the study in three phases. The researchers selected teachers and students to participate, collected baseline data, and conducted an in-service on the essentials of OTR. Participants included those from a low socioeconomic (SES) school and those from a high SES school. Participants were divided into two groups across the schools and assigned to a traditional in-service activity or an in-service plus peer coaching activity. The two groups were further divided into two additional groups with respect to direct observational data collection activities conducted within the nested study. The direct observation group was developed to form treatment integrity data and to create a comparison between the two professional development models (in-service and peer coaching). The in-service provided teachers with a handout that described each of the four strategies with instructions on how to implement them into the classroom. The 'cool tool' strategies

and timelines were instructional talk (baseline; Phase 1), strategic prompts (Phase 2), feedback (Phase 3), and wait time (Phase 4).

Researchers provided peer-coaching support to half of the teacher participants, and engaged them in post intervention data collection and social validity measures. Stichter et al. (2006) examined teacher-student interactions within various classroom contexts using a hybrid of paper and pencil recordings and computer-based assessments. The researchers also collected data through teacher interviews and descriptive checklists. Stichter et al. used descriptives to evaluate the design using a nested single subject design on a subsample of the population to examine and compare the efficacy of the OTR intervention and professional development delivery. Further, the nested study used a multiple treatment design using direct observation data to assess both the implementation and effects of peer coaching and traditional professional development on student achievement.

Stichter et al.'s (2006) results represented an examination of two types of professional development related to changes in OTR variables. Data were summarized in a descriptive manner to include changes in rates of OTR variables (instructional talk, prompting, feedback, and wait time) and student academic and behavioral measures. All measures were descriptively compared using pre and posttests while the direct observation data were collected to understand possible trends. The overall study data were summarized descriptively. Teacher and student data were compared pre-post along with direct observational data collected to yield possible trends. While all measures were descriptively compared, because of the

nature of this study and the few number of teachers involved, statistical analysis was not conducted. The study indicated favorable results for teachers who were coached with performance feedback and other valuable instructional supports.

To date, little is known empirically on high quality professional development. While research has found that high quality professional development increases student achievement, coaching as a strategy continues to be elusive. Ross (1992) questioned whether teachers benefited from coaching over those who engaged in other forms of professional development. He aimed to quantify instructional coaching to determine whether teachers implemented proven strategies they learned in workshops and whether such implementation was of higher quality. Ross (1992) examined the mediating effects of teacher efficacy and relationships between coached teachers, non-coached teachers, and student achievement. The goal of the research was to ascertain whether a difference existed in student outcomes between teachers who believed they could make a difference in student achievement (personal efficacy) and teachers who believed that their abilities to make changes in their students were limited by factors beyond their control (general efficacy).

Although no previous study has linked teacher efficacy to coaching, such a link is credible. Teachers who believe they can make a difference in student achievement are more likely to see coaching as an opportunity to learn new teaching techniques. In contrast, teachers who see student learning controlled mostly by outside forces might regard coaching as nothing but more work. Further, teachers with strong beliefs in their own effectiveness might be more willing to accept

coaching feedback and more likely to think instructional improvement is worthwhile (Ross, 1992).

Ross (1992) examined 18 history teachers from diverse educational and demographic backgrounds. Participants were coached by six teachers selected from the district because of their competence and interest in the project. A new history curriculum guideline was used to measure student achievement. Teacher participants were given three resources to meet the academic standards: the new guideline with detailed instructional materials, three half-day workshops distributed over the school year that focused on strategies to meet the cognitive skills of the history program, and contact with coaches that varied from one face-to-face and one phone contact to several of each type.

Student achievement (knowledge and cognitive skills) was measured in September and then again in May based on achievement test results that included 15 items for the Grade 7 assessment form and 20 items for the Grade 8 form. Cognitive skills were assessed using open-ended instruments. Teacher efficacy was measured in May with a 16-item self-report instrument using a 6-point Likert scale. A total score and two subscale scores (personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy) were produced. The coding was inverted on six items to ensure that high scores correlated to high efficacy on the total test and on both subscales. Internal consistency of the instrument was .78, and the two subscales were .69 and .73, respectively (Ross, 1992).

The findings showed that student achievement significantly increased from pretest to posttest. Because the pretest scores significantly predicted posttest performance [$F(1, 470) = 43.64, p < .0001$], residuals from the regression of the posttest on the pretest were used in a subsequent analysis. No variable concerned with teacher or coach demographics was significant in terms of achievement, even when the alpha level was lowered from $p < .05$ to $< .10$ in response to the small number of cases. The same was true for organizational variables (Ross, 1992).

Ross (1992) found correlations among student achievement, teacher efficacy, and coaching measures. The data showed that teacher efficacy subscales correlated positively with the total scale, but were not significantly correlated with each other. Two of the highest achievement scores were reported by two teachers who did not involve administrators in any way during curriculum deliberations. One of the lowest achievement scores was from a teacher who worked with school administration frequently. The only significant predictors of student achievement were self-reported use of a coach and personal teaching efficacy. Overall, Ross (1992) found higher student achievement from teachers who used coaches and from those with high personal efficacy.

High quality, job embedded professional development is the base upon which all instructional coaches stand. Coaching is a key component to help teachers improve student achievement and school culture. Perhaps most importantly, “A culture of coaching improves teaching and improves student learning” (Knight, 2007). Cornett and Knight (2009) explored the effectiveness of instructional

coaching on the quality of instruction following such coaching activities. Using a mixed methods study, the researchers tested instructional coaching as a means of professional development for teachers.

Fifty-one teachers participated in the study based on the following criteria: (a) no experience with a unit organizer (treatment) and (b) have not attended any professional development on unit organizers in the previous 3 years. The research took place in six middle and two high public schools with diverse student populations.

The treatment used was the unit organizer, which is a series of routines designed to help teach large amounts of information to an academically diverse classroom. The unit organizer (teaching routine) was used along with the unit organizer (device). The device used was a graphic organizer of content to be covered during the unit that related to the causes of the Civil War. When delivered with the support of professional development, the teaching routine manual was designed to provide the necessary information for a teacher to implement the device proficiently. The treatment condition was coaching support and non-coaching support. The researchers used this scientifically based teaching routine to determine whether instructional coaching increased the rate and quality of teachers' implementation of this new teaching practice (Cornett & Knight, 2009).

Cornett and Knight developed an observation instrument to determine the quality of implementation and use of the new teaching routine. Each item was scored as observed or not observed. To measure the quality of teacher implementation, the

researchers identified four instructional behaviors that teachers would need to demonstrate the unit organizer routine effectively: (a) begin the lesson with a review using the device, (b) introduce the device to orient students on the relationship to the larger unit, (c) add new information to the device as appropriate, and (d) use the device during closure and show how it relates to the larger unit theme. Daily scores were summed for a minimum score of zero and maximum score of four. Teachers were assigned to receive instructional coaching support or receive no instructional support.

Twenty-three trained research assistants were used to observe one class period of each teacher daily for one unit of study. The assistants were blind to which condition each teacher was assigned. Assistants observed 40% of the teaching period simultaneously, and their independent scoring was used to determine an interrater reliability score of 98%.

To determine whether implementation gains were maintained, participants were interviewed 8 to 12 weeks after the instructional coaching was terminated. The researchers interviewed a sample of 22 coached and 17 non-coached teachers using a semi-structured interview protocol. Seven additional questions were asked of teachers who used instructional coaching. These questions were designed to determine whether coaching was delivered with fidelity, and which elements of coaching were most helpful in implementing the teaching routine.

The results of a two-way contingency analysis revealed that professional development and observed behaviors were significantly related ($p < .001$). On

average, teachers in the workshop-only condition used the teaching routine with lower quality than did those who received coaching support (Cornett & Knight, 2009). In the interviews, more teachers who received instructional coaching reported that they continued using the new teaching practice (15 of 22) than did those who attended the workshop only (3 of 17). All teachers reported that the teaching routine was helpful for students to learn the content.

The most significant barrier to implementing the new learning routine expressed during the interviews was the length of time for planning and development of the device and unit. As these findings suggest, teachers supported by instructional coaches were more likely to use new practices and use them with higher quality and more frequency. Although the results suggested that instructional coaching is a promising approach to professional development, more research is needed.

More children with special needs are being educated than ever before in mainstream classrooms. Ideally, special educators co-teach with general education teachers on equal status and time. Scheeler, Congdon, and Stansbery (2010) examined whether changes to the nature of the “one teaching, one assisting” model could be made in instruction so both teachers team together in “real time” and engage in a highly effective instructional process.

Scheeler et al. (2010) assessed the effectiveness of peer coaching and the BIE technology on a specific teaching behavior (i.e., completion of three-term contingency; TTC) during instruction. Three-term contingency consists of a discriminative stimulus, operant response, and reinforcer or punisher and is

fundamental to the study of operant conditioning. The aim of TTC is to give students positive feedback and encouragement after a response regardless of whether it is correct.

Scheeler et al. (2010) selected participants from a pool of 12 teachers who were divided into six dyads, each with one general education teacher and one special education teacher identified by site administrators as struggling with co-teaching responsibilities. Scheeler et al. (2010) provided participants with an overview of the goals of the research as a way to understand co-teaching better. The study was conducted in the general education teachers' classroom.

The researchers measured two dependent variables: percent of TTC trials completed and ease and usefulness of feedback through BIE. Data were collected through observation, video recording, and interviews. Teachers also responded to questions on how they felt about co-teaching with the BIE. Each teacher responded positively. For example, "I really enjoyed giving feedback to (co-teacher). She responded so quickly with a smile and positive reinforcement to the student. It was great to watch and we both had a lot of fun with the process" (Scheeler et al., 2010, p. 91). Additionally, each teacher completed a questionnaire to assess his or her comfort in using the BIE to receive feedback from the peer coach. All four teachers agreed that it was an adjustment wearing the earpiece while teaching. One teacher commented that the adjustment was quick, and overall had a "great impact on my teaching."

Scheeler et al. (2010) found that immediate corrective feedback by peer coaches effectively increased teachers' completion of TTC, and this behavior was maintained and used over time and across various settings. Additionally, 7 of 10 coaching participants rated the BIE device as an efficient way to deliver corrective feedback in real time. Further, Scheeler et al. stated that this research was the first of its kind to use experienced in-service teachers and the BIE device to deliver immediate feedback to co-teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Summary

With the increasing pressure of performance standards, high-stakes testing, and NCLB, districts are scrambling to secure effective professional development to increase student achievement. Despite limitations, this review of the literature offers insight into educational coaching. Over the last 50 years, researchers, especially Showers and Joyce, have contributed important foundational work in this area. Clearly, coaching is receiving more attention in recent educational reform efforts. Many coaching models described in this review have similarities in their approaches to working with teachers.

Differences also exist between various coaching approaches. Peer coaching is a process through which two or more professional colleagues (teacher and or administrator, but usually teacher to teacher) work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace. Cognitive coaching helps teachers expand their repertoires of teaching while exploring untapped

resources within themselves. Instructional coaching offers distinct coaching responsibilities, and these coaches develop relationships with teachers through observing, analyzing data, providing resources, and strengthening the school community. Finally, virtual coaching offers teachers the support of the more traditional forms of educational coaching with the use of powerful online technologies to increase time-on-task between coaches and co-teachers. It should be mentioned that all studies cited in this research had a relatively low number of participants and that in and of itself may be an indication that empirical research on the topic of instructional coaching is in its infancy.

By studying the literature on educational coaching and new empirical studies on professional growth tools and models, positive changes are emerging in the way that educators view professional learning. Coaching is becoming the bridge to help school leaders and teachers share ideas, data, and practices. Further, educational coaching may serve as the new professional development paradigm that improves student achievement. Chapter III details the methodology of the study, participant demographics, and data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of classroom teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Knight (2007) observed that instructional coaches partner with classroom teachers in the change process. They work one-on-one with teachers to make it easier to adopt the instructional methods that can make a difference in student success. Chapter III details the methodology of the study, participant demographics, and data analysis.

Sample Population

The sample population ($n = 32$) consisted of general education teachers from an elementary school located in the central valley of California. Participants in this study were asked to identify if they had been coached. Responses from 32 of the 33 confirmed that they had participated in district or school instructional coaching within the last 5 years. Coaching support included multiple forms such as daily for a full semester to once a month tune up sessions. All participants volunteered to complete the survey in one sitting during a staff meeting held in the school library. This researcher was not an employee of the district at the time of this study.

Instrumentation

This researcher used a paper survey to collect data that consisted of 12 statements on instructional practices underscored by the program (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to select the response that best described their opinions of each statement on a 5-point Likert-type interval scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*). The survey was then submitted to the California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval, which was granted in March 2014.

Methodology

The researcher administered a paper survey to teachers who participated in the instructional coaching program; no incentives were offered. All teacher participants were volunteers. Participants received an informed consent letter, which explained the objective of the study, underscored confidentiality of responses, and requested consent to participate (see Appendix B). Questions from prospective participants regarding the study and administration of the survey were directed to this researcher before the survey was administered.

Statistical Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed using the Chi Square Goodness of Fit to determine whether significant differences existed in the distribution of responses to each survey statement. A significance level of $p < .05$ was established for the statistical analysis. Frequencies and percentages were also determined.

Summary

Chapter III provided an overview of the sample population, instrumentation, methodology, and statistical analysis. This researcher distributed the survey to participants in March 2014 to solicit their perceptions of the instructional coaching program. Chapter IV presents the findings as they relate to the objective of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of classroom teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the 32 participating K-6 teachers' responses to a survey. One survey was not accepted for analysis because the respondent was never coached. This chapter discusses the inferential and descriptive analysis of the responses to the 12 survey items.

Inferential Analysis

Elementary teachers were asked to rate their levels of agreement regarding the effectiveness of 12 specific instructional support strategies addressed by instructional coaches. Table 1 displays the computed chi-square and probability values. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set for this study. The results yielded a significant difference in the of responses for Statement 1 ($\chi^2 = 28.00, p = .001$), Statement 2 ($\chi^2 = 33.25, p = .001$), Statement 3 ($\chi^2 = 21.75, p = .001$), Statement 5 ($\chi^2 = 26.13, p = .001$), Statement 6 ($\chi^2 = 21.25, p = .001$), Statement 7 ($\chi^2 = 11.00, p = .012$), Statement 9 ($\chi^2 = 13.75, p = .003$), Statement 10 ($\chi^2 = 15.25, p = .002$), and Statement 12 ($\chi^2 = 9.88, p = .043$). No significant difference existed in the distribution of responses for Statement 4 ($\chi^2 = 6.25, p = .100$), Statement 8 ($\chi^2 = 4.25, p = .236$), and Statement 11 ($\chi^2 = 1.25, p = .741$).

Table 1

Chi Square and Probability Values

Instructional Coaching Support	Pearson Chi Square	
	Value	Significance
S1: Share resources and ideas	28.00	.001*
S2: Use content frameworks	33.25	.001*
S3: Employ direct instruction	21.75	.001*
S4: Build higher thinking skills	6.25	.100
S5: Analyze test data	26.13	.001*
S6: Use data to inform instruction	21.25	.001*
S7: Support equity and diversity	11.00	.012*
S8: Create orderly, safe classroom	4.25	.236
S9: Differentiate instruction	13.75	.003*
S10: Understand social emotional	15.25	.002*
S11: Prepare and organize lessons	1.25	.741
S12: Motivate and engage students	9.88	.043*

* $p < .05$ **Descriptive Analysis**

Frequencies and percentages for the various levels of agreement per statement were calculated. Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive analysis. For sharing resources and ideas with others (Statement 1), 72.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice.

Regarding Statement 2 (understand and use of academic content standards and/or

curriculum frameworks), 75.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice.

For Statement 3 (employ practices associated with direct instruction), 69.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice. For Statement 5 (analyze test data and evaluate student work), 75.7% of responding teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them in using this practice. Concerning use of student assessment data to inform instruction (Statement 6), 75.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice. For support equity, diversity, and access to the core curriculum in the classroom (Statement 7), 66.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice.

Concerning Statement 9 (differentiate instruction for students at different academic levels), 66.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice. Statement 10 (understand social and emotional factors that may contribute to student performance), revealed that 51.5% agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice. Finally, Statement 12 (motivate and engage students) yielded a response rate of 57.6% who either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively supported them using this practice.

Table 2

Instructional Coaching Survey Results: Frequencies and Percentages

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
S1: Share resources & ideas	(2) 6.1%	(2) 6.1%	(4) 12.1%	(18) 54.5%	(6) 18.2%
S2: Understand content standards & frameworks	(0) 0.0%	(2) 6.1%	(5) 15.2%	(22) 66.7%	(3) 9.1%
S3: Employ direct instruction	(0) 0.0%	(2) 6.1%	(7) 21.2%	(19) 57.6%	(4) 12.1%
S4: Employ higher thinking skills	(0) 0.0%	(3) 9.1%	(8) 24.2%	(13) 39.4%	(8) 24.2%
S5: Analyze & evaluate test data	(1) 3.0%	(3) 9.1%	(3) 9.1%	(17) 51.5%	(8) 24.2%
S6: Use data to inform instruction	(0) 0.0%	(2) 6.1%	(5) 15.2%	(19) 57.6%	(6) 18.2%
S7: Support equity & diversity	(0) 0.0%	(4) 12.1%	(6) 18.2%	(16) 48.5%	(6) 18.2%
S8: Create orderly, safe environment	(0) 0.0%	(6) 18.2%	(7) 21.2%	(13) 39.4%	(6) 18.2%
S9: Differentiate instruction	(0) 0.0%	(4) 12.1%	(6) 18.2%	(17) 51.5%	(5) 15.2%
S10: Understand social & emotional factors	(0) 0.0%	(2) 6.1%	(13) 39.4%	(14) 42.4%	(3) 9.1%
S11: Prepare & organize lessons	(0) 0.0%	(6) 18.2%	(7) 21.2%	(10) 30.3%	(9) 27.3%
S12: Motivate & engage students	(1) 3.0%	(5) 15.2%	(7) 21.2%	(12) 36.4%	(7) 21.2%

Based on the inferential analysis, no significant differences were found in the distribution of responses for Statements 4 (build higher thinking skills), 8 (create an orderly, safe, and efficient classroom environment for student learning), or 11 (prepare and organize lessons). However, 63.6% either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches employed practices and provided activities that help students build higher thinking and problem solving skills (Statement 4). For Statement 8, 57.6% of responding teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches effectively created orderly and safe learning environments. Finally, for Statement 11, 57.6% of responding teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coaches supported them in preparing and organizing lessons.

Summary

Chapter IV summarized the responses of 32 elementary teachers who responded to 12 statements regarding the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program on improving teaching. This researcher used a chi square analysis to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in the distribution of responses for each survey statement. The results showed significant differences in the distribution of teacher responses for nine statements (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12), and no significant differences for three statements (4, 8, and 11). Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and opinions of classroom teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching. The chi square analyses showed a significant difference in the distribution of responses for nine survey statements and no significant difference in the distribution of responses in three survey statements. Chapter V presents a summary of results, conclusions, implications, and offers recommendations for further study.

Summary

This study was conducted to determine the perceived effectiveness of instructional coaching. A survey with 12 instructional strategy statements was distributed to 33 elementary teachers. All surveys were returned; however, one survey was not accepted for analysis because the respondent was never coached. The Chi Square Goodness of Fit and descriptive techniques were used to analyze the responses. A majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that instructional coaching was effective in the following areas: share resources and ideas, use content standards and frameworks, employ direct instruction, analyze test data, use data to inform instruction, support equity and diversity, differentiate instruction, understand social emotional intelligence, and motivate and engage students.

Conclusions

Summer (2011) found that effective coaches frequently mentioned the importance of data-driven instruction in their work. Coaches who collaborate with teachers on using data effectively show the greatest improvements in student achievement. Cornett and Knight (2009) suggested that lesson modeling and planning is an effective coaching practice as long as it is frequent and the coach and teacher have a strong professional relationship. Further, Summer (2011) noted the following activities provided by instructional coaches increase student achievement: (a) helping teachers analyze lessons, (b) helping teachers use assessment data, (c) helping teachers plan lessons, (d) observing and conferencing with teachers, and (e) modeling lessons. The instructional coaching literature mentions these activities frequently as critical evidence-based practices for instructional coaching success (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Ertmer et al., 2005; Knight, 2005, 2009; Taylor, 2008). In addition, the data from this study suggest that educational coaching is well regarded by the teachers who received coaching.

Implications

This researcher suggests more attention be paid in the three areas in which teachers in this study statistically and descriptively indicated that coaching support was moderately effective. Specifically, the results showed that building higher thinking skills, creating orderly and safe classrooms, and preparing and organizing lessons might be areas where teachers need more support or the data could indicate

that these responses were not statistically significant because they were more evenly distributed than were others.

Common Core reform calls for implementing fewer, more difficult standards in terms of instruction. This reform also calls for teachers to know how to align curricula with standards and then to create effective instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process. These expectations require teacher support in the classroom.

In the past, classroom management and lesson planning was left to the charge of the pre-service mentor teacher, while the teacher candidate was placed with a support provider during the student teaching experience. Therefore, success or failure was based on the mentor's skills as modeled and reinforced in the classroom. However, a core component of learning to teach is lesson planning and classroom management. In fact, Ball and Forzani (2009) considered lesson planning to be a core task in the work of teaching. Teachers could develop and implement effective classroom management and lesson plans without clear administrative directives. However, for those districts committed to student achievement and excellence, effective classrooms should not be left to chance.

Training alone may have limited implementation effects for teachers who struggle with difficult classes. Showers (1984) suggested that minor changes in teaching practices could be achieved by the teachers themselves. However, coaching appears most effective when acquiring unique teaching patterns based on specific learning objectives.

Creating and maintaining orderly classrooms is required for teachers to be effective. Today's instructional coaches are perhaps in more demand for their abilities to model instruction and support teachers on classroom management. Common Core standards place more pressure on teachers to be effective classroom managers. Common Core standards are active meaning that students need to talk, explain, share ideas, and build on one another's thinking through discussion. Because this learning environment requires active participation to learn new concepts, student activities need to be managed for engagement, control, and safety.

Common Core standards also require high functioning teachers. Resmovits (2014) suggested that the short timeline of implementation demanded by Common Core standards require teachers to change the way they teach. However, to ensure that students are proficient on standards of cognitive thinking skills, teachers must also function at higher cognitive levels.

This study validates the work of other researchers regarding the importance of instructional coaching programs as valuable ways to address instructional strategies that help students achieve a higher level of content understanding and implied learning. As school districts face tough financial decisions, they need to invest their district resources in direct instructional support programs such as coaching. They also need to consider the net potential effects of improved student achievement that can result from more effective classroom practices.

Recommendation for Further Study

One direction for future research would be a replication of this study in which participation in instructional coaching is mandated. Future studies should also address the fact that 90% of all student outcome studies related to coaching were done with pre-service teachers (Stichter et al., 2006). Additionally, future research should address linking specific rates of implementation strategies to student outcomes. Future research could also examine differences between classroom teachers who are coached and those who are not coached. It would also be interesting to compare elementary and secondary teacher perspectives. Future studies could also examine differences in the effectiveness of the partnership approach to instructional coaching versus the traditional top-down theoretical model. Finally, future research should consider comparing the perspectives of elementary and secondary teachers concerning instructional coaching.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Teacher Survey

Indicate whether or not you have worked directly with an Instructional Coach in your district.

Yes _____ No _____

If your response was Yes, please continue. If your response was No, stop here.

Please read the following statements carefully. Circle the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that best describes your opinion regarding the effectiveness of the Instructional Coaching Program on improving teaching.

The District's Instructional Coaching support has improved my ability to:

1. Share resources and ideas with others.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Understand and use academic content standards and/or curriculum frameworks.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Employ practices associated with direct instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Employ practices and provide activities that help students build higher thinking and problem solving skills.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Analyze test data and evaluate student work.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Use student assessment data to inform instruction.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. Support equity, diversity and access to the core curriculum in the classroom.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Create an orderly, safe, and efficient classroom environment for student learning.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. Differentiate instruction for students at different academic levels.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. Understand social and emotional factors that may contribute to student performance.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. Prepare and organize lessons in the classroom.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. Motivate and engage students.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B

INFORMED TEACHER CONSENT LETTER

Dear Teacher:

March, 2014

I am a graduate student at California State University, Stanislaus and enrolled in the Master of Arts degree program in Education with a concentration in School Administration. To complete the program requirements, I am conducting research for a thesis entitled, The Perceptions of Classroom Teachers Regarding the Effectiveness of Instructional Coaching.

As a program participant, your perceptions about Instructional Coaching are important and may be useful to educators and policy makers who make decisions regarding the content and program implementation of teacher support programs, more specifically instructional coaching. The procedure involves completion of a survey that will take approximately five minutes. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be maintained for the period of one year and will be destroyed.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section asks for your confirmation of participation in the program. If you have participated in your District's Instructional Coaching program, proceed to the second section that asks you to rate the effectiveness of the program in 14 areas.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate or withdrawal will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Jamie Harper (209) 613-3346 or Dr. John Borba at (209) 667-3260. For more information about your rights as a participant, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs at CSU, Stanislaus at (209) 667-3493.

Sincerely,

Jamie Harper-Havens, Graduate Student, Master's Degree Program in School Administration, California State University, Stanislaus

By signing below, I understand that I am voluntarily participating in a survey conducted by Jamie Harper, master's degree candidate at California State University, Stanislaus. I acknowledge that I have read the above consent letter.

 Teacher Name (Printed)

 Teacher Signature

 Date