12-2018

How Do Instructional Coaches Support the Adult Development of Teachers

Amanda Carol Linn
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

How Do Instructional Coaches Support the Adult Development of Teachers

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning

by

Amanda C. Linn
University of Central Arkansas
Bachelor of Science in Education, 1991
Arkansas Tech University
Master of Education in Teaching, Learning and Leadership, 2002

December 2018
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

_____
Kit Kacirek, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

_____   _____
Kenda Grover, Ed.D.   Michael Miller, Ed.D.
Committee Member   Committee Member

Abstract

This case study focused on five Instructional Coaches working in public high schools. The intent of this study was to determine how these coaches support the adult development of teachers. Three themes emerged from this study: 1) ambiguity regarding the role of Instructional Coaches impacts the performance of Coaches and the adult learners they support, 2) Instructional Coaches struggle to balance the work of supporting adult learners with tasks unrelated to supporting adult learners, and 3) preparation and ongoing professional development for Instructional Coaches is inconsistent in content and frequency.

Acknowledgements

I extend my sincere thanks to the friends and acquaintances who supported me throughout the writing process with encouragement (you'll get there!) and those who regularly inquired about my progress (how's the dissertation coming?). I also offer thanks to those who said, "I thought you were already finished" and/or relayed the story of their brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin, college roommate, co-worker, etc. who never finished their dissertation and are totally okay with it. I will forever treasure your texts, emails, Facebook messages and "thumbs up" emoji. I appreciate Dr. Kenda Grover and Dr. Michael Miller for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee. I am particularly thankful to my chair, Dr. Kit Kacirek for encouragement and patience throughout the process and her wisdom for knowing when to drop the hammer and insist I *get this thing done*. I offer additional thanks to Dr. Grover and Dr. Kacirek for the experience of being in the Adult and Lifelong Learning doctoral program. My twentysomething self never saw my middle-aged self pursing a doctorate much less one in Adult and Lifelong Learning, however I am certain I have found my calling for the second half of my career. Finishing this journey would have been impossible without the mentorship of Gloria Frazier and Marie Parker. My gratitude goes beyond the dissertation process. They have helped me be the leader I am today. I am fortunate to have parents who, in my fifty years on earth, have never wavered in their support. Lloyd and Jean Linn love their child and believe she can do anything, even when she doesn't. My wife, Barbara, treated the experience of my graduate school and the dissertation process as she has most everything in our nearly 30 years together. Stepping in to pick up the slack and be the enforcer when I needed one. She kept the house clean and went to the grocery store when I was too busy to help. She turned off the television and told

me to *go write* when I just wanted to sit on the couch. She is a brilliant teacher, fantastic friend, and the best person I know.

I dedicate this dissertation to teachers. So many of my fondest memories involve time spent with teachers. Magical people who spent their days with me and many other children and teenagers. Inspiring colleagues I worked with in my seventeen years as a high school teacher. The talented and compassionate teacher leaders I am honored to know through my current work in leadership development. Hundreds of teachers have made my life better by letting me know them. In closing, I would like to recognize two special teachers-

Lloyd Linn. Having your dad as one of your teachers is an interesting experience. I could fill pages about the times he embarrassed me, frustrated me, or was afraid to give me too much praise lest other students think I was getting special treatment. I know it was challenging for him as well to have his head strong, opinionated, moody teenage daughter as a student. As an adult, I now understand how much he cared about all of his students- regardless of their academic ability, socio-economic status, etc. He believed all students could achieve and supported them every step of the way. He also modeled what it means as an adult to love your work. Being in his classes inspired me as a high school teacher and continues to inform how I approach my current work with adult learners.

Paula Cummins. I met Paula in 1999 at a teacher leadership institute. At the time I had no idea meeting her would change the course of not only my career, but also my life. Regretfully, Paula passed away before she could see how her encouragement of a young teacher from a rural school district would pay off. Now, as leader of the same institute I attended in 1999, I like to think I am carrying on her work as best I am able. I often think *what would Paula do*? She referred to her dissertation as her "big book report". Throughout this process, I have proudly done the same.

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

Many factors contribute to a student's academic performance. Non-school factors including individual student characteristics and home environment influence student achievement. Among school related factors, a teacher is estimated to have more impact than services, facilities and leadership (Rand, 2012). Kumashiro (2014) states:

> When people think about education, they picture a classroom where a teacher stands in front of students. When you then talk about the problems in education, all eyes turn to the teachers – they aren't working hard enough, or they're too greedy, or they're not accountable. (p. 2)

When describing accountability for learning, Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit and Pittenger (2014) said "Genuine accountability must both raise the bar of expectations for learning—for children, adults, and the system as a whole—and trigger the intelligent investments and change strategies that make it possible to achieve these expectations" (p. 5). Professional capacity is one the three pillars Darling-Hammond, et al propose as a *new paradigm* for accountability.

Figure 1.1 *Key elements of an accountability system*
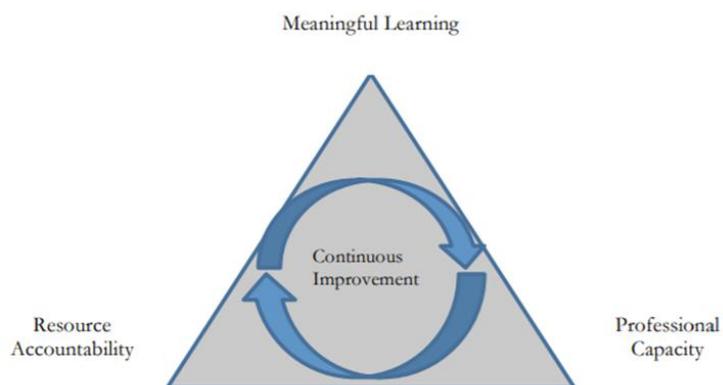
 Source: Darling-Hammond, et al (2014) Accountability for college and career readiness: Developing a new paradigm.

Building professional capacity cannot rest solely on individual educators. Schools, districts and state agencies must take collective responsibility for acquiring and using the best available knowledge about curriculum, teaching, assessment and student support (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2014). Schools need to be places where students and adults learn, however, sustaining adult learning is not a focus in many schools. Creating an environment that supports and sustains adult learning requires leadership that understands teachers need a *learning practice* as well as a *teaching practice* (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman & Hensley, 2012). Acknowledging that teachers are adult learners should lead to the logical conclusion that their professional development is a form of adult education focused on teacher needs in the context of their work (Lawler & King, 2003).

Professional Development

Until the early 1970s, most learning opportunities for educators consisted of university courses and were referred to as "in-service education". When school based learning opportunities were added to university course offerings, the term "staff development" was invented. Presently, the phrases "professional development" or "professional learning" are commonly used to describe a variety of practices involving educators (Joyce & Calhoun, 2011). Joyce and Calhoun (2011) state "professional development comes into being through deliberate actions by the organization- usually the district or school, sometimes the state or province- to generate learning by educators, to make the school a learning laboratory for teachers and administrators" (p. 9). Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017) describe professional development as "externally provided and job-embedded activities that increase teachers' knowledge and help them change their instructional practice in ways that support student learning" (p.2). The length of professional development ranges from less than an hour to multiyear advanced degree programs.

Development activities may be delivered in person or online, led by educators within the school/district or provided by outside consultants during the school day or outside of normal school hours. Teachers may participate individually or as part of a group. Specific professional development activities include action research, case discussions, coaching, critical friends groups, data teams/assessment development, examining student work, lesson study, mentoring and professional learning communities (Brown-Easton, 2008; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Using data from 2011-2012 National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey, Rotermund, DeRoche, and Ottem (2017) report teacher professional development focused most frequently on the teacher's content area and the use of computers for instruction. Other focus areas included reading instruction, teaching students with disabilities, student discipline and classroom management. After reviewing 30 years of literature related to professional development, Darling-Hammond, et al (2017) concluded that effective professional development is "content focused, incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory, supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts, uses models and modeling of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers opportunities for feedback and reflection and is of sustained duration" (p. 4).

Professional Learning as Adult Learning

Professional learning should intersect with consideration of how adults learn, develop and transform in general (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). All learning has the potential to bring about change, but not necessarily transformation. Mezirow (2000) theorized learners have three possible processes of learning: knowledge is transmitted to them, they engage in knowledge transactions via experience or they have a transformative experience. Eleanor Drago-Severson (2012) asserts that in adult learning and professional development, *informational learning* (learning focused on increasing skill or mastery of subject matter or specialized content) is often

given priority over *transformational learning* (learning focused on increasing cognitive,

affective, interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities). When educators think about students, the

complex, developmental nature of learning is easily accepted. When considering their own

learning, these facets are easily overlooked (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman & Hensley, 2012).

Instructional Coaching

In *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional

development in education* Elmore (2002) suggested the practice of school improvement is about

changing three things fundamentally and simultaneously: (1) the values and beliefs of people in

schools about what is worth doing and what is possible to do; (2) the structural conditions under

which the work is done; and (3) the ways in which people learn to do the work. These three

aspects of fundamental and simultaneous change primarily target classroom teachers within the

school system. The work of changing practice *fundamentally and simultaneously* challenges

individuals working in a variety of capacities within the school to assume new roles in order for

educational reform efforts to succeed (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

According to Knight (2009), one of the most promising approaches for advancing

professional learning in schools is coaching. York, Barr and Duke (2004) describe Instructional

Coaches as educators who have demonstrated a high degree of proficiency in content and skill

related to teaching and learning. They are respected by their colleagues and administrators and

"demonstrate or are viewed as having the potential to develop leadership knowledge, skills and

dispositions" (p. 289).

Problem Statement

Research supports the need for formal instructional leaders such as principals and

superintendents to provide necessary resources (time, money and people) to create

conditions that support continuous adult development for teachers (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Mitgang and Maeroff, 2008; Waters and Cameron, 2007). Informal leaders such as Instructional Coaches are essential to carrying out the actual work of supporting teachers to improve their performance (Liberman & Friedrich, 2010; Spillane, 2005). When examining available research related to Instructional Coaching, studies involving Coaches working in elementary schools outnumber those focused on Coaches in high school settings (Blamey, Meyer & Walpole, 2008; Gross, 2010). The majority of studies at both levels focus on coaching in relation to student achievement with little regard for understanding the experience of the Instructional Coach as support for adult learners and the Coaches themselves as learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand how individuals employed as Instructional Coaches in Arkansas public high schools supported the professional development of teachers.

Research Questions

Three questions guided this study.

1. How do Instructional Coaches perceive their role within the school?

2. How are Instructional Coaches prepared and supported to be successful in their role?

Overview of Research Design

The following steps were used to carry out this study:

1. Prior to the collection of data, related literature was reviewed to study previous research in the areas of professional development, instructional coaching & school improvement.

2. After approval to proceed with the study was granted by members of the dissertation committee, necessary permissions from the IRB to conduct the interviews was granted.

3. The interview questions were vetted using pilot interviews with two former high school Instructional Coaches.

4. Potential research subjects were contacted via email by the researcher. Subjects agreeing to be part of the study were contacted via a second email to arrange dates and times for interview by the researcher.

5. The researcher conducted semi-structured, in depth interviews with five subjects. All subjects were interviewed at their present place of employment.

6. Following the transcription of the five interviews by a transcription service, the researcher began analysis of the information.

Context of the Research

This research investigated the experiences of five individuals working as Instructional Coaches in high school settings. A qualitative approach, specifically case study, was used to clarify the work of Instructional Coaches and their perceived impact on school culture. Chapter three of this study provides a profile of each Instructional Coach, the sampling strategy for the study, and the context in which they work. Primary data collection occurred via extensive individual interviews with five Instructional Coaches using an interview protocol that is located in Appendix A.

Prior to interviews with research subjects, the interview questions were vetted during two pilot interviews using former Instructional Coaches. Each interview subject was assigned a number and identified by a pseudonym to insure anonymity. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by an individual other than the researcher. The only delimitation of this study was that only Instructional Coaches working at the high school level in Arkansas public schools were considered for the research sample. The limitations of this study were:

1. The research subjects were not randomly selected, therefore it cannot be assumed the results of the study apply to a larger population.

2. Some of the research subjects have served as Teacher Learning Coaches for the Arkansas Leadership Academy's Teacher Leadership Institute and/or have participated in training related to supporting adult learning provided by the Academy including training provided by the researcher.

3. The results of this study may not represent the experience of all Instructional Coaches working at the high school level in Arkansas public schools.

Rationale and Significance

This study originates from my interest in Instructional Coaching as a strategy for supporting adult learners at the school level and the potential for the position of Instructional Coach as a leadership role at the school and district levels. Sharing the experiences of Instructional Coaches working at the high school level could augment the available literature on Instructional Coaching and support adult development of teachers at the high school level. Potential practical applications include better understanding of the job responsibilities of Instructional Coaches connected to quality adult development and the preparation and ongoing professional learning necessary for Instructional Coaches to develop and maintain necessary

skills and dispositions related to the craft of Coaching. Beyond the school level, this research could support the creation of leadership opportunities for classroom teachers beyond traditional leadership roles such as Principal and Assistant Principal.

Research Framework

Social constructivism is an interpretive framework whereby individuals seek to understand their world and develop their own particular meanings that correspond to their experience. Rather than starting with a theory, researchers generate a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2013). The framework of social constructivism was applied in this study through asking questions that were broad and open ended, allowing the subjects to describe fully their experiences as an Instructional Coach. Listening carefully to the subjects and reviewing the interview transcripts allowed the researcher to interpret the findings, revealing information resulting in significant insight for the study.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative methodology, for reasons of credibility, it is important the researcher make clear their role. Adler & Adler (1994) describe the range of these roles as being one of complete membership within the group being studied (insider) to total stranger (outsider). In this study, I seem to fall somewhere in between participant and observer. I was a classroom teacher at the secondary level for 17 years. During this time, I experienced a wide range of professional development in terms of relevance and quality. The primary focus of professional development was student performance with little or no regard for adult learning needs. Any differentiation in professional development was based on the subject a teacher taught. No differentiation was offered for demonstrated prior knowledge or variation in skill and ability. As an "informal" teacher leader (meaning time spent leading professional learning was in addition to classroom

responsibilities and uncompensated) I collaborated with other teachers in the name of professional learning, but did not function as a coach nor was I coached at my school. Professional development opportunities outside the school district related to developing teacher leadership provided mentoring but no sustained support via coaching. Presently I work in leadership development as an adult educator. I am responsible for the design and facilitation of learning for adults, specifically teachers and school administrators.

Researcher Assumptions

Having worked with Instructional Coaches in and outside their schools, I had the following assumptions prior to this study:

1. Having the skills and disposition to work with adult learners is not the primary consideration of school districts when hiring individuals to be Instructional Coaches. This assumption is based on observations of Instructional Coaches working with adult learners and informal conversations with Coaches and the people receiving their services. While some Coaches understand and respect adult learners as having unique needs requiring differentiated support, others seem focused solely on student achievement rather than supporting adult learners that will then teach students.

2. Some individuals are motivated to pursue the position of Instructional Coach because they see it as a more esteemed position than classroom teacher, the position comes with a small increase in salary and/or they see the position as a stepping stone to becoming a building Principal. This assumption is a result of speaking with individuals aspiring to become Instructional Coaches.

3. Because the job descriptions created for Instructional Coaches by leaders at the district level are often vague and list an inordinate number of responsibilities, how

Instructional Coaches spend their time is fragmented and sometimes not related to

supporting adult development. This assumption is informed by reviewing numerous

job descriptions of Instructional Coaches and comparing the job descriptions to what

Instructional Coaches say they actually do in the span of a day, week, month and

school year.

4. Instructional Coaches are responsible for supporting the learning of adults; however,

there is little or no systemic plan for supporting the ongoing learning needs of the

Coaches. This assumption is based on conversations with Instructional Coaches and a

review of professional learning offered by the state department of education, the

education cooperatives and individual school districts.

Definition of Key Terminology

Instructional Coach (IC): a full-time professional developer, on-site in schools,

collaborating with teachers to support their implementation of research-based classroom

interventions to improve student learning (Knight, 2008).

Adult learner: certified and classified school employees- Instructional Coaches,

classroom teachers and paraprofessionals working directly with students.

Organization of the Dissertation

This study focused on the role of Instructional Coaches in supporting adult development

at the high school level in Arkansas public schools. Chapter 1 establishes the connection between

the problem informing the purpose of the study and the questions guiding the research. A brief

description of the methodology employed and the rationale and significance for the study is

given along with relevant information about the role of the researcher and the researcher's

assumptions prior to the study. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terminology used

throughout the document. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to the attributes and roles and responsibilities of Instructional Coaches, relationships coaches must have with the principal and school staff and the professional development of Instructional Coaches. Chapter 3 outlines the design of the study and method of research. The population and method for selecting the research sample is presented and the collection, management and analysis of data is described. Findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. These findings are derived from analysis of individual interviews with Instructional Coaches. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study including recommendations for action.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to understand how Instructional Coaches in Arkansas public high schools supported professional development of teachers. Additionally, the research was interested in understanding how Instructional Coaches influenced school culture. As part of this study, literature was reviewed throughout the data collection, data analysis and synthesis phases of the study. This review focuses on the role of Instructional Coaches in supporting the adult development of teachers and the professional development of Instructional Coaches. These areas provide a conceptual framework for the study and an outline of analyzing the findings.

Instructional Coaches

In their book, Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools, Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston (1994) presented the process of "peer coaching" as a way of differentiating support to meet the learning needs of teachers. In the years since, schools and districts have continued to develop formal and informal leadership roles for teachers (Harrison & Killion, 2007). One of the formal leadership roles is the Instructional Coach. For the purpose of this literature review, an Instructional Coach is described as a full-time professional developer, on-site in schools, collaborating with teachers to support their implementation of research-based classroom interventions to improve student learning (Knight, 2008). Some school districts employ Instructional Coaches to improve instructional capacity district wide while others focus coaching efforts only on low-performing schools (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Coaches may work with teachers individually or in groups using various models of coaching including cognitive coaching, clinical supervision, mentoring or a combination of approaches. Coaches are often categorized in specific areas such as literacy, mathematics and data (Deussen, Coskie, Robinson,

& Autio, 2007). Steiner and Kowal (2007) describe coaching opportunities as "extremely varied" given the tendency by school leaders to create coaching positions that meet local needs using available resources. According to Taylor (2008), Instructional Coaches do not typically evaluate other adults. In contrast, Duessen et al., (2007) report that in some situations, coaches have evaluation responsibilities.

Attributes of Instructional Coaches

As interest in coaching as a way to support improvement in teacher performance has increased, school and district leaders have moved forward with varying levels of understanding and consideration of factors found to increase coaching success (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Instructional Coaches are often recruited from the ranks of teachers recognized as being successful in their classrooms (Burkins & Ritchie 2007). These teachers are known for having understanding of how children learn, expertise in the content area they are coaching and a large repertoire of instructional strategies (Steiner & Kowal, 2007; Heineke & Polnick, 2013). Just as great athletes don't always make great team coaches (Robinson, Egawa, Riddle Buly & Coskie, 2005) success as a classroom teacher does not guarantee success as an Instructional Coach. Success as a coach requires additional competencies beyond content and pedagogical expertise (Burkins & Ritchie, 2007). Instructional Coaches require strong interpersonal skills, tact, patience, empathy, good communication skills, and ability to form trusting relationships with others (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Poglinco & Back, 2004). According to Jim Knight (2011), successful coaches understand the complexities of working with adults and have a personality that helps them encourage and inspire teachers to improve their practices. Neufeld and Roper (2003) and Burkins and Ritchie (2007) highlight the need for coaches to understand how to adapt their coaching practice to fit the needs of adults who are skeptical about or threatened by making

changes to their teaching practice. Killion (2018) declares that coaches must themselves be *learners*. They must be reflective about improving their own work as they support others.

Roles and Responsibilities of Instructional Coaches

Even though the use of Instructional Coaches has become more prevalent nationwide, there is no standard model for coaching or uniform description of a coach (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). According to Berg & Bosch (2013), frustration with the lack of clarity regarding the role and associated responsibilities of the job are common. Knight (2018) supports Berg & Bosch adding that role ambiguity causes anxiety for coaches, leading to wasted time prompting districts to question the value of coaches. Deussen et. al., (2007) speculated confusion related to the role and responsibilities of Instructional Coaches resulted from the rush to implement the role before appropriate theoretical models or well-defined job descriptions were in place. Role ambiguity results in coaches' questioning their purpose- thinking they should be going more but they don't know what to do. At the district level, role ambiguity causes leaders to question the allocation of resources for Instructional Coaches (Knight, 2018).

When the coach's role is not articulated, Killion (2018), observed "(coaches) get pulled in a million different directions because they are capable people who say yes to virtually anything that is asked of them". Making photocopies, putting up bulletin boards, updating the marquee in front of the school, inventorying textbooks, writing grants and subbing for classroom teachers are not uncommon tasks for Instructional Coaches (Aguilar, 2013; Killion, 2018). Responsibilities such as administering school-wide assessments, overseeing the school's reading intervention program, coordinating school-wide motivational programs, maintaining the school testing data base, implementing home-school programs, etc. while related to teaching and learning, take time away from coaching (Heineke and Polnick, 2013). Knight (20110 observed

that, without agreement on roles, coaches are so often off task that some coaches "spend less

than 25% of their time, often less than 10% ... on coaching" (p.99). Killion and Harrison (2017)

encourage schools to identify the goals of their coaching program then identify four or five

priority roles that align with the goals. These roles become a lens for reflecting on the coach's

work and monitoring impact. In suggesting roles schools may consider, they clarify

misconceptions about the role, keeping the focus on how the coach can build the capacity of the

teacher. Examples of roles include:

- Data coach- Instead of managing the data, the coach teaches others how to manage and

    effectively use the data to strengthen teaching and learning. Coaches support teachers to

    use multiple forms of data emphasizing observations, formative assessments, etc. rather

    than summative assessments.

- Resource provider- Collecting resources for teachers can help coaches build initial

    relationships with teachers; however, coaches should strive to build the capacity of

    teachers for finding and analyzing resources to find the most appropriate for their needs.

- Mentor- Provides an opportunity for coaches to support new or new to the school

    professionals socially, emotionally and psychologically in addition to supporting

    professional development.

- Curriculum specialist- Guides teachers to use curricula that are aligned with the proper

    standards and frameworks.

- Instructional specialist- Supports teachers to design learning that is adapted to the needs

    of students.

- Classroom supporter- Models effective teaching, new strategies and classroom management practices. Co-teaching is another way to provide support in the classroom. Coaches may also observe the teacher then engage in reflective conversation.

- Learning facilitator- Coaches build the capacity of others by facilitating learning in informal and formal situations with individuals or teacher teams. (Harrison & Killian, 2007)

Types of Activities Instructional Coaches Perform

Individualized support honors the unique strengths each teacher brings to the learning environment by not assuming that one-size-fits-all professional development will meet the needs of all teachers (Wang, 2017). Kraft, Blazar and Hogan (2018) describe the coaching process as one on one sessions occurring at least every couple of weeks. Teachers receive coaching on specific classroom practices and skills. In addition to skills related to teaching and learning, coaches may help teachers develop leadership skills with which they can support the work of their colleagues (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Coaches also work alongside groups of teachers, helping teachers reflect on practice, make sense of academic standards, align curricular plans to state assessments, and use student data to improve instruction (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010). Coaches provide small group professional development sessions and provide organizational support for teachers to learn from one another. These supports include organizing peer observations, coordinating professional development and sharing teacher-made resources (Deussen, et. al 2007; Neufeld & Roper, 2003).

Instructional Coaches are also responsible for modeling skills related to planning and facilitating adult learning. These include organizational skills such as setting agendas, establishing and clarifying goals and planning professional development. Coaches establish a

safe environment for teachers to improve their practice without fear of negative criticism by modeling best practice in facilitation and group development (Berg et. al, 2013; Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Coaches use a variety of communication skills such as paraphrasing in addition to skill in questioning and protocols that structure safe discussions about student learning. They may also build capacity by helping teacher teams to learn and use these skills (Foltus, 2015).

The day in the life of a coach usually involves dividing time between the teacher and school wide improvement efforts (Knight, 2008). Coaches are often seen as a bridge between administration and staff, often acting as mediator between district mandated reform efforts and classroom practice (Killion, 2018; Galluci et al., 2007). Instructional Coaches provide system wide impact by building teacher capacity to implement reforms in curriculum and instruction (Hopkins, Spillane; Jakopovic, & Heaton, 2013).

The Relationship Between Instructional Coach and Principal

Successful coaching is a result of an interdependent relationship between the principal and coaches (Foltos, 2015). Regardless of the content knowledge and coaching skill an Instructional Coach possesses, they cannot do their work effectively without job-specific support from the principal (Neufeld & Roper, 2003). Lack of principal support is one of the most common obstacles to coaching (Richard, 2003; Heineke & Pollack, 2013; Aguilar, 2013). Principals may be reluctant or unwilling to give support out of fear that the coach will undermine their own authority (Danielson, 2007). Principal support for coaching exists when the principal and coach share a common vision for shared leadership and work together to create a plan for how coaching is implemented in the school (Berg et. al., 2013; Foltus, 2015). Rather than making assumptions about the coaches work, the principal and the coach must take time in the beginning to establish shared expectations of how the coach supports the school's focus on

student achievement, differentiate the role and responsibility of the coach from the principal and clarify the coaches' schedule (Sweeny, 2011). The principal must clearly explain to teachers why a coach was hired, the responsibilities of the coach and the expectations for how teacher will work with the coach. When these things are vague or not addressed, the impact of the coach will be compromised (Aguilar, 2013; Heineke & Pollack, 2013). Once the role of the coach is explained, the principal should continue to recognize publically the coach's work. The principal must also honor the coaches' roles and not assign their time to other needs within the school (Neufeld & Roper, 2013). In order for coaching to contribute to a school culture that values adult learning, principals and coaches should collaborate to develop a schedule that provides adequate time for coaches to work with teachers within the school day (Neufled & Roper, 2003; Steckel, 2009; Heineke & Pollack, 2013). Foltus (2015) states "The resources required for successful coaching vary widely from school to school, but time is the one commodity that is always in short supply" (p.50). Principals can find time for coaching by using rule-making authority and waivers, differentiating staffing assignments and collaborating with community partners to create programs for students to attend while teachers collaborate (Killion & Hirsch, 2013). The principal must establish expectations and effective systems of communication with the Instructional Coach. Communication should be frequent and can be electronic in the form of email, text, or face-to-face meetings support keeping the principal and Instructional Coach on the same page (Knight, 2011). The principal and coach must establish communication systems with the school staff in order to sustain and expand coaching (Foltus, 2015). Knight (2011) encourages principals and Instructional Coaches to make defining confidentiality as part of establishing expectations for communication. Principals and coaches must clarify what they will and will not talk about. Communication between principal and coach can't play a role in teacher

evaluation, but it is important for principals to understand how the coach is supporting teachers (Foltus, 2015; Heineke & Pollack, 2013).

The Relationship Between Instructional Coach and School Staff

In order for the Instructional Coach to be effective, they must cultivate and nurture positive relationships with teachers (Aguilar, 2013; Hall & Simmeral, 2008; Killion, Harrison, Bryan & Clifton 2012; Knight, 2011; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003;). Hall and Simeral (2008) suggest volunteering in a teacher's classroom or eating lunch with teachers as ways to build rapport with teachers early in the coaching relationship. Effective coaches understand teachers are more likely to respond to someone they trust and use interpersonal skills to gain and maintain trust (Hall & Simmeral, 2008; Killion et. al., 2012). Part of maintaining trust is the understanding that the teacher-coach relationship in non-evaluative. Heineke and Polnick (2013) state "Teachers need to feel free to open up and share with the coach their own weaknesses and learning needs without being fearful that everything they say or do will go straight back to the principal or another administrator" (p.50). Often teachers have seen many programs, initiatives and projects that have resulted in little or no change. Coaches are likely to face resistance if teachers perceive the coach has been sent to change them, identify shortcomings or document behavior to exit them (Center for Collaborative Education, n.d.; Kraft & Gilmore, 2016). Instructional Coaches lack the authority to force teachers to engage in coaching (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Killion et. al., 2012). Giving teachers a voice and choice empowers and respects the voice of teachers (Knight, 2007). When the teacher is supported to identify their needs then choose the appropriate focus of coaching and services provided by the coach, teachers are less likely to be resistant (Killion et al., 2012). For coaching to be effective, both teacher and coach must define their roles in order to understand their responsibilities

(Aguilar, 2013; Foltus, 2015). Killion et al., (2012) advise creating an agreement between the coach and the teacher can reduce teacher anxiety about the coaching relationship. The agreements are created collaboratively with individuals or groups of teachers to describe outcomes of the work and what the coach and teacher(s) need from each other to be successful.

Professional Development for Instructional Coaches

It takes a whole new skill set for coaches, who are typically former classroom teachers, to work with adult learners (Will, 2017). Heineke and Polnick (2013) report, "teachers have been moved from the classroom into the very challenging job of instructional coach with little or no preparation" (p.48). In a 2010 study of instructional coaches, Stock and Duncan found instructional coaches were asked to "lead individuals who are reluctant to change yet the coaches have had little mentoring or advance preparation in the field of leadership" (p.67). Coaches often find themselves working in isolation with few professional learning opportunities. In this situation, coaches must seek out their own learning or may neglect their own professional learning (Burkins and Richie, 2007). Coaches require professional development of their own to tailor their skills to the needs of the teachers with which they work. Coaches need to be more than just one-step ahead of the people they are coaching (Neufeld and Roper, 2003).

The capacity of Instructional Coaches to support change and improve the practice of teachers requires both on-the-job learning and external training (Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010). Coaches need ongoing professional learning to "sharpen their craft and fuel their continued growth" (Foltus, 2015, p.50). Successful performance as a coach requires a system of on-going support rather than a series of one-time trainings (Knight, 2006; Marsh et al., 2005; Shanklin, 2007). Learning opportunities for coaches should follow common guidelines for effective professional learning (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Collaboration with other coaches, both

in person and as a member of online professional learning communities is cited as one of the most beneficial means of learning as well as a popular choice among coaches (Steiner and Kowal, 2007; Foltus, 2015; Danielson, 2007). A "grow your own" approach is used by many districts to develop and sustain high quality coaches (Neufeld and Roper, 2003). When districts provide ongoing development for coaches, focus should be on differentiating learning opportunities for experienced coaches as well as focused orientation program for new coaches (Foltus, 2015; Neufeld and Roper, 2003).

Summary

This literature review synthesized descriptions of the role of the Instructional Coach and the responsibilities of the Instructional Coaching position. The relationships between coach and teacher and coach and administrator were defined and the significance of each was discussed. Finally rationale and recommendations for continued learning by Instructional Coaches was presented. This information will provide rich support for interpreting subject interviews, documents related to Instructional Coaching and researcher observations. The literature, combined with analysis of the data, will inform researcher recommendations for the recruitment, preparation and support of Instructional Coaches as they support the adult development of teachers.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to understand how Instructional Coaches in Arkansas public high schools support the professional development of teachers. The focus of this chapter is the research rationale and the research methodology for carrying out the study. The information presented in this chapter includes the rationale for a qualitative research approach, description of the research sample, data collection and analysis methods and issues of trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations of the study. A summary of the information concludes this chapter.

Rationale for Research Design

Merriam (2009) states goals of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning making and describe how people interpret what they experience. A key concern of qualitative research is to "understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's" (p.14). In Qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher can adapt their collection and analysis immediately to a variety of circumstances, expanding understanding via verbal processes of clarifying, summarizing, and nonverbal observation of subjects (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers engage in an inductive-deductive logic process requiring complex reasoning skills as they organize data into patterns, categories and themes (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, qualitative research methodology was appropriate because the research questions required in-depth understanding of the complexity of the experience of individuals working as Instructional Coaches at the high school level. Survey research could have been used to ascertain how Instructional Coaches perform their

job; however, I wanted to understand the nuances of their work and not limit their responses to measurement date. Given my use of a social constructivist framework, qualitative methods were deemed most appropriate.

Case Study

Yin (2014) describes case study as "a study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world context" (p. 237). A *case* may vary from an individual, to an event, to a group of people, with each case being "a bounded integrated system with working parts" (Glesne, 2011, p. 22). The case study method is appropriate for answering questions like *how* or *why* in situations when the researcher has little or no possibility of controlling the events (Yin, 2014). Given the questions guiding this research began with how and what, case study was a logical choice. This study was a collective or multiple case study, described by Creswell (2013) as when one issue or concern is studied through the examination of more than one case. Involving five Instructional Coaches from unique contexts in this study generated rich evidence that would not have likely resulted from studying only the experience of one coach.

Research Sample

Creswell (20013) suggests that 4 to 5 subjects in a single study provide ample opportunity to identify case themes and analyze those themes across cases. Criteria for the sample used in this study were the subjects should be employed as an Instructional Coach at the time of the interview and the Instructional Coach should be working in a high school setting. After the researcher's initial contact with individuals working as Instructional Coaches at the high school level resulted in only two subjects willing to be interviewed, a snowball sampling method was used to identify and recruit the other subjects. At the time of the interviews, all

subjects were employed as full time Instructional Coaches in central Arkansas public high schools.

Data Collection

Case study is not limited to a single source of data. Figure 3.1 lists six common sources of evidence that can be used in any combination based on what is available and relevant to the study. According to Yin (2012), the most common methods for collecting case study evidence are direct observations, open-ended interviews and archival records.

Figure 3.1 *Six Common Sources of Evidence*
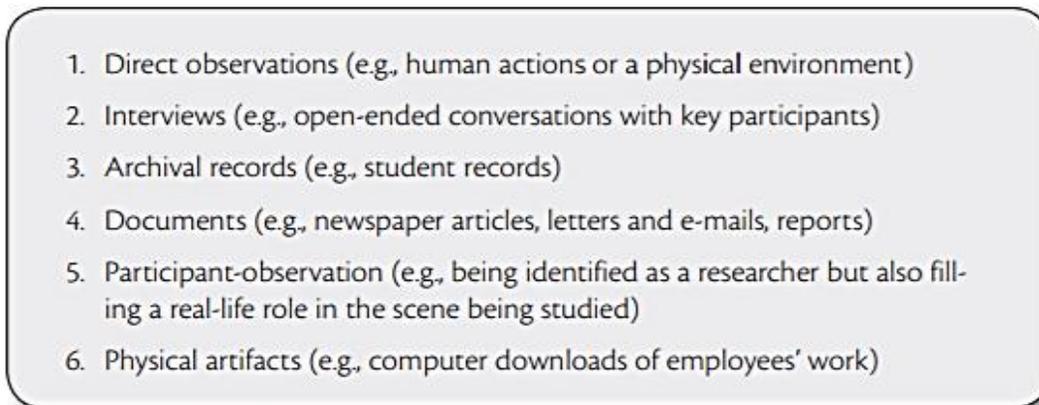
1. Direct observations (e.g., human actions or a physical environment)
2. Interviews (e.g., open-ended conversations with key participants)
3. Archival records (e.g., student records)
4. Documents (e.g., newspaper articles, letters and e-mails, reports)
5. Participant-observation (e.g., being identified as a researcher but also filling a real-life role in the scene being studied)
6. Physical artifacts (e.g., computer downloads of employees' work)

Source: *Applications of Case Study Research* (Yin, 2012).

For this study, direct observations, interviews and documents were used. Following approval from the dissertation committee and University of Arkansas' Institutional Review Board (IRB), Instructional Coaches were contacted via email to schedule individual interviews. A protocol of ten interview questions was created from the three research questions guiding the study. Data were collected during a semi-structured interview process. The semi-structured process allowed subjects to offer additional details and share personal examples adding depth to the data. The semi- structured process also allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions as needed. Interviews were conducted in-person at the coaches' school site and captured with audio

recordings. The recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. In addition to the interviews, researcher observations were made at each interview site and Instructional Coach job descriptions were collected.

Data Analysis

Merriam states (2009, p. 202), "making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning". Data analysis for this study began with thematic coding. Thematic coding involves identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea and sorting them into categories (Gibbs, 2010). The transcript of each interview was reviewed three times using a hybrid of pre-set codes determined by the research questions and open coding to collect data that emerged as significant but did not fit in one of the pre-set codes. Each review of the transcripts resulted in codes being revised (expanded and collapsed) to further refine the data. Electronic files were created in Microsoft Word to collect and organize the coded interview segments. A mini analysis of the coded data was completed at the end of the final coding process for each transcript resulting in four categories. The coded interviews were reviewed again, noting specific words and phrases fitting into each category. Finally, themes were constructed using the process of analytical coding- "coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning" (Richards, 2005, p. 94).

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the worth of a research study is connected to trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves establishing the findings of the study to be credible and transferrable to other contexts. Trustworthiness was established in this study by using multiple data sources to produce a rich, comprehensive and well-developed understanding of the

experience of instructional coaches- a practice known as triangulation. In case studies, triangulation consists of multiple forms of evidence "which converge on the phenomenon under investigation" (Farquhar & Michaels, 2016, p. 326).

Member checking was also used to ensure validity. Member checking involves sharing emerging themes from preliminary analysis of interviews with some of the interview subjects (Merriam, 2009). Using member checks assures what the interview subjects said is not misinterpreted by the researcher. Additionally, member checking helps the researcher identify personal bias and misunderstanding (Maxwell, 2005). An audit trail was constructed during the course of the study. The audit trail included detailed description of the steps taken from the start of the study to the final report of the findings. Artifacts selected for inclusion in the audit trail were summaries of notes, themes, definitions and relationships used to determine categories, process notes related to interview processes and interview design and other related documents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of the audit trail was to aid other researchers in easily locating from the data the course of themes and inferences made by the researcher.

Pilot Study

A pilot study may assume the format of a mini version of a larger study as well as the pre-testing of a research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview protocol (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Conducting a pilot prior to engaging in the study can assist the researcher in refining and developing research instruments and procedures, frame and reframe specific questions and asses the degrees of observer bias (Sampson, 2004). The semi-structured interview protocol was tested in January of 2015 with two individuals who previously worked at the high school level as Instructional Coaches before taking other positions within their school districts. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded using the

protocol designed for the study. Based on my analysis and reflection following the interview, I determined the interview protocol was appropriate for the study.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to understand the experience of individuals employed as instructional coaches in Arkansas secondary schools. Data was collected through interviews, observation and analysis of documents. This chapter detailed the design of the study, selection of subjects, acquisition of data and interpretation of data.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this case study was to understand how Instructional Coaches in Arkansas public high schools supported the professional development of teachers. Additionally, the researcher was interested in how Instructional Coaches influenced school culture. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from individual interviews with five Instructional Coaches. From the research questions:

1. How do Instructional Coaches perceive their role within the school?

2. How are Instructional Coaches prepared and supported to be successful in
   their role?

A list of nine semi-structured questions was developed to guide the interview. Using semi-structured questions provided the subjects opportunity to give detail and share personal examples while giving the researcher flexibility to ask follow-up questions in order to better understand the experience of the subject.

1. As an Instructional Coach, what are your current job responsibilities (formal or
   informal)?

2. What was your job prior to becoming an Instructional Coach?

3. Why did you decide to pursue the job of Instructional Coach?

4. What formal preparation did you receive to be an Instructional Coach?

5. How have you continued to develop your skills as an Instructional Coach? Were these
   learning experiences provided by your school district or did you pursue them
   independently?

6. What has been most surprising about the job of Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

7. What is most rewarding about being an Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

8. What are the challenges of being an Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

9. What other information would you like to share about your experience as an Instructional Coach?

Subject Profiles

Gary (S1). Gary has a total of 15 years in education. Six of those as a classroom teacher and nine as an Instructional Coach. All of his experience has been in the same school. Education is a second career for Gary having worked previously for seven years in manufacturing. When his district added Instructional Coaching positions at the high school level, Gary's principal encouraged him to apply for the job.

Jackie (S2). For Jackie, education is also a second career. Prior to obtaining a teaching license, she worked in retail sales and the hospitality industry. She has a total of 13 years in education. Seven as a classroom teacher and six as an Instructional Coach. She has been an Instructional Coach in her current school for 4 years after spending the first two years of her Instructional Coaching experience at a middle school in the same district. Her district math specialist recruited Jackie to be an Instructional Coach due to Jackie's rate of success with struggling math students.

Ned (S3). Ned has been an Instructional Coach for 2 years. Prior to becoming an Instructional Coach, he was a classroom teacher in the same district but at a different high school. He has 5 years of experience as an educator. In addition to being a teacher, Ned is in the

military reserves. Ned applied to be an Instructional Coach because he considers the position a "stepping stone" to becoming an assistant principal.

   Linda (S4). Of all the subjects, Linda has worked the longest in the education field- 22 years. She has been an Instructional Coach for 7 years in the same district, but split over three different time periods and two different schools. Linda became a coach because she was concerned about what kind of learning opportunities students were receiving.

   Cathy (S5). Cathy has nine years of experience in education, two of those as an Instructional Coach in the same school where she previously worked as a classroom teacher. Based on her success with students, Cathy was encouraged by her principal and a fellow coach to apply for an Instructional Coaching position.

Interviews

   Each subject was interviewed at his or her school and each interview lasted approximately one hour. The school setting was selected as a courtesy to the subject and out of respect for their time. The choice to interview subjects in their school setting was also made to increase the comfort level of the subject and increase the probability of gathering rich information (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Upon completion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to provide accurate raw data. Responses by individual subject to each interview question were analyzed to identify key words, phrases and concepts. Table 4.1 illustrates how I began coding the responses. The interview question is given in the left column. Interview responses related to potential themes are noted in the middle left column. The corresponding line from the subject's interview transcript is noted in the third column and researcher observations of significant words or phrases appear in the far right column.

Table 4.1

Response Coding for S1

Question	Interview subject	Line	Words or phrases
As an Instructional Coach, what are your current job responsibilities (formal or informal)?	Formally, my job is to observe teachers, model for teachers	19	Observe teachers Model for teachers
	Informally, I do all duties as assigned.	20	
	This ranges from working on our school improvement plan, to making copies for teachers or whoever needs it, to handing out and inventorying technology,	20-22	Working on school improvement plan Making copies for teachers Handing out/inventorying technology
	teaching a class when I have a teacher out.	22	Subbing for absent teachers
What was your job prior to becoming an Instructional Coach?	I was a Math classroom teacher.	24	Math classroom teacher
Why did you decide to pursue the job of Instructional Coach?	My principal asked me if I would like to do that position. I like to try new things and learn new things	28-29	Principal Learn new things

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Question	Interview subject	Line	Words or phrases
What preparation did you receive for the job of Instructional Coach?	None.	70	No (preparation)
	The first year I started, through the district, we did Jim Knight Instructional Coaching training. At that time, that's what we were called. Then, the next year, I think we did Classroom Management – helping teachers with classroom management, another kind of coaching program. And then, finally, we did Diane Sweeney Student Centered Coaching. We've had training, kind of, throughout. I did, however, get through the first three years of my (Instructional Facilitator/Coach) career, I worked with Dr. Linda Griffith at UCA. She works specifically with Math coaches on how to build Math capacity, not just for the teachers, but to help them build with the students. So, not much before. It has definitely been trial by fire.	70-77	Coaching training Training in helping teachers with classroom management

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Question	Interview subject	Line	Words or phrases
How have you continued to develop your skills as an Instructional Coach?	I read everything I can get my hands on about my job, about the teacher's jobs, about instruction, about curriculum. If there is a PD, I try to go to it.	79-80	Read (to learn more) Attend professional dev.
	I have lots of opportunities within my district to do PD other than in my building. They like for me to come to the district office and do PD. So, I get to expand my skills and I always get to practice.	82-84	Lead professional dev. To expand skills
	I'm always reading and I'm always trying to adjust my view to make sure it is where it's supposed to be. My view changes depending on what I've read or what changes and I always try to stay informed so that I know what is coming and I'm ready for what is coming and I can prepare and I can have my teachers ready. I just do a lot of reading, mostly; I kind of do my own teaching.	84-88	Takes responsibility for own professional learning

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Question	Interview subject	Line	Words or phrases
What has been most surprising about the job of Instructional Coach at the high school level?	Coaches were just put into the position, kind of trial by fire. So, I think I sat in my office and wandered around the building for about two months and then, all of a sudden, there was this big huge "fire." I was like, well, if you had told me about this when I wasn't doing anything in August, I could have had this done and this wouldn't have been a fire. That was the most surprising thing to me, even now, is the lack of plan	98-102	Lack of plan for role of Instructional coach
	I've learned what PD we have to have, what is required, what we do at the beginning of the year. The principal and myself and some others have worked really hard to build systems in place so that we were ready for anything. I wasn't as surprised sometimes as I used to be when I first started, but there's always something that comes out of left field.	103-106	Coach learned what to expect. Collaborated with others to create systems Still things coming "out of left field"
What is most rewarding about being an Instructional Coach at the high school level?	I think watching my teachers grow. It's really hard sometimes to get high school teachers to be flexible, to try things that are new and watching them be okay with trying new things and them allowing me to just come in and take over and them not being upset about it, I think that's been the most rewarding to me. They've really learned to be flexible and stay calm and not to be so rigid, I think.	112	Teachers grow H.S teachers to be flexible

Table 4.1 (cont.)

Question	Interview subject	Line	Words or phrases
What are the challenges of being an Instructional Coach at the high school level?	Other duties as assigned. I walk in the door and if I plan to do an observation first thing, chances are I won't get that observation done because if anybody sees me come into the building, I'm trapped.	120-122	Other duties as assigned-having plans to do work directly related to coaching then being pulled away for other tasks
	in the past few years I've tried to turn loose of the control so that they can be okay by themselves, because I can't be the one person everybody comes to all the time. It's my job to build their capacity to be that person.	122-125	Build capacity of teachers to be self-supporting
What other information would you like to share about your experience as an Instructional Coach?	I enjoy the job. I enjoy teaching. As an Instructional Facilitator, you really never do the same things over and over.	129-131	Enjoy the job- I enjoy teaching Variety in the job. It doesn't get stagnant- always changing
	I can always learn, which I like to learn.	134-135	Like being a learner
	I get to watch some wonderful men and women grow in their teaching and become better teachers, and I get to watch the kids benefit from that.	135-138	Enjoy watching teachers become better teachers
	If I had a choice again, I don't think I would have changed any choice I made about doing this position or being in this position		Would still choose to be a coach

Patterns identified in the initial coding of each interview resulted in four categories.

Table 4.2

Role and job responsibilities

Interview Subject	Related Responses	Audit Trail
S1	Formally, my job is to observe teachers, model for teachers Informally, I do all duties as assigned.	19-20
S2	My top responsibility is meeting with teachers, working on lessons, modeling lessons, being a thinking partner for teachers. My second priority would be data collection, getting reports done, giving teachers professional development on how to implement pre- and post-testing in their classrooms in an effective way.	4-15
S2	There's no clear vision for the work of the coaches. There are so many things that are disjointed as far as how the administration works, and I mean our upper echelon. In the building, there is a very clear idea of what my role is.	349-350 353
S3	Formal job responsibilities are working with the Math teachers in order to improve overall instruction in the school. Teacher planning, data analysis, co-teach, small group interventions with students, technology training, data processing.	5-20
S3	Struggle with finding relationship balance with teachers- being too "warm and fuzzy" vs "barking down their necks".	240-243
S4	My number one priority is to work with teachers to improve instruction. We do that through modeling, through data collections and through collaboration. Also works with students alongside the teacher.	4-9
S4	Lack of leadership above you makes the job a lot harder. If they don't understand what you do it makes it hard. Leaders, especially at the district level, who don't really understand what you do or what you are trying to accomplish, and it can be quite a challenge.	260-269
S5	Guide in planning instruction, data analysis, finding resources for teachers, helping new teachers with classroom management.	9-23
S5	Sometimes we're put in a position where we're almost told go to our teachers and be an Administrator and do something disciplinary.	102-104

Table 4.3

Job expectations

Interview Subject	Related Responses	Audit Trail
S1	Other duties as assigned: working on school improvement plan, making copies, handing out and inventorying technology, subbing for absent teachers. Having plans to do work directly related to coaching then being pulled away for other tasks.	20-22 120-122
S2	There's not as much time and thought put in to building capacity in teachers. Everything has to be done yesterday. There's no time for teachers to really spend time becoming experts, and what we say makes a good educator.	212-224
S3	I feel like I'm being beat to death by the district and the state department of education. Absolutely beaten and choked. It is suffocating how many exams we have.	166-167
S3	Working with adults, I would like to see a system that better understood what the teachers are doing. It's not just, hey, I need you to spend 15 minutes on this data. There are 15 people who need you to spend 15 minutes on data. It doesn't work that way.	253-256
S5	Get stuck doing a lot of paperwork but would rather do it than pass it on to the teachers to do.	24-25
	It's a lot more paperwork than I thought that I just see as an obstacle that I have to get through to get to my teachers. I have to overcome those paperwork and reporting obstacles and meetings and things like that, so that I can clear out time to try to get to the meetings with my teachers or to try to go out to a classroom and co-teach or observe it or help them plan a lesson.	222-227
S5	Must remind administrators of importance of coach staying in a coaching relationship with teachers rather than be an evaluator.	106-110
	I can't be there doing classroom walk-throughs like an Administrator and writing them up. That is not my job and I don't have that Administrator licensure and I don't want that job.	
S5	Frustration with the expectation from leadership about student test preparation rather than focus on helping teachers improve.	203-215
S5		

Table 4.5

Job preparation

Interview Subject	Related Responses	Audit Trail
S1	Principal asked if he would like to be the Instructional Coach- had no specific preparation prior to job. Coaches were just put into the position, kind of trial by fire.	28 70 98
S2	District approached her about being a facilitator. No specific preparation for the job. I was in the job for about two years before I received any formal training from the district or the state.	45 63-64
	Did her own training by researching, purchasing resources with her own money, subscribed to podcasts, did a Google search on top coaching books. Used Personal Learning Network to learn from other coaches.	64-82
	I really wish that I would have had more training and more experience on how to have a conversation with an adult, without being their supervisor.	266-268
S3	Took the coach job as a stepping stone for administrator job.	29
	Went to a level one coaching workshop offered by the school district. Other than that, self taught.	65-67
S4	Went into coaching to understand what was happening with middle school students when they got to high school. Motivation to apply was totally about students. Didn't receive any training at first. Stayed in the job two years then quit. I felt like I was thrown into this job. No one said, "do this"; they just kind of left me out there to the wind. I was really struggling because I was having a hard time getting through to the adults in the building. It was really frustrating and not a lot of support there, so I ended up leaving.	22-30 45-49
S5	Was hesitant to apply- didn't think she was qualified. Other facilitator encouraged her to apply because they would work together and based on her observation of subject in the classroom. Principal also encouraged her to apply.	43-50
	Not a lot of preparation. Some preparation from Master's degree program in Teacher Leadership, but it was a mixed bag. Focused mostly on working with students rather than adults.	116-120

Table 4.6

Professional development

Interview Subject	Related Responses	Audit Trail
S1	First three years on job, different PD focus each year. Not sustained. No follow up. Takes responsibility for learning by reading resources or finding workshops to attend. I just do a lot of reading, mostly; I kind of do my own teaching. Is asked by the district to do PD for others. No district guided plan for coach development.	70-77
S2	Was not aware of coaching PD from district at first. District was providing PD, but not focused or sustained. Looks at more state level opportunities now. District facilitator meetings don't focus on how to work with adults. At meetings they look at testing data and are told by district level people what to tell the teachers. Not a lot of focus on helping teachers grow. Meetings are negative. Facilitators feel there's nothing they can do in their buildings and have no urge to try.	85 109 349-356
S3	Does his own learning by reading, searching the internet for resources. Learning from other facilitators with more experience. Also learns from younger teachers who bring in skills and resources. Coaches meetings are focused just on students with only a little discussion about what to do to help teachers. Tell the teachers to do something- nothing with how to help teachers. No focused, sustained PD.	82 92-99 112-117
S4	Attends monthly coaching sessions with district trainer. Picky about what PD to attend because so much of it is worthless. Would rather be with teachers and students. It is hard to find stuff that is adult driven. A lot of the stuff is student or content driven. It's hard to find things that are leadership, adult driven.	106-113
S5	Our district has coaches meetings, so, we do things like read books, We look at things and share experiences. Considers fellow Instructional Facilitator as unofficial mentor because she has more experience. Seeks things out on her own when she doesn't get offered opportunities. Resources are few and far between.	160-165
	Feels like districts are struggling to decide if they will keep coaches. Districts not devoting time to training coaches. Would like to see more formal training by the district, but district doesn't seem sold on the need for coaches. Feels like every year the district debates if the job is worth it.	170-172

From these four categories, three major themes emerged. They are presented with supporting details gleaned from the interviews. Direct quotations from the subjects are used where appropriate. Pseudonyms are used in place of each subject's real name.

1. Ambiguity regarding the role of Instructional Coaches impacts the performance of Coaches and the adult learners they support.

2. Instructional Coaches struggle to balance the work of supporting adult learners with tasks unrelated to supporting adult learners.

3. Preparation and ongoing professional development for Instructional Coaches is inconsistent in content and frequency.

Theme One: *Ambiguity regarding the role of Instructional Coaches impacts the performance of Coaches and the adult learners they support.*

Analysis of interviews revealed the primary finding of this study to be the negative impact of ambiguity regarding the role of the Instructional Coach. The manner in which all participants described their work and how they continue to develop their abilities as an Instructional Coach often demonstrated limited understanding of the role for themselves, their supervisors and the adult learners they were responsible for supporting. The manner in which each Coach described their work divided into two categories: formal role and functional role.

Formal Role

All subjects described working with teachers via tasks such as observing teachers, modeling lessons, co-teaching, assisting with the planning of instruction, data analysis, providing resources and providing training in the use of new resources. These tasks are in line with job responsibilities given in the job descriptions posted by the school districts as well as the skills given in the four domains of the Arkansas Teacher Excellence Support System (TESS) rubric for

Instructional Specialists. Linda stated: "In a nutshell, my number one priority is to work with teachers to improve instruction. We do that through modeling, through data collection and through collaboration". Ned was more detailed:

> Formal job responsibilities are working with the Math teachers in order to improve overall instruction in the school, so working with them to help them a) plan better, b) analyze data, c) act on that data and either co-teach with them to give the kids an extra voice or if there is a strategy they're interested in learning, training them on that or suggest new strategies. In addition, formally, I'm supposed to be doing pull-outs or push-ins, whichever it is, working with individual groups of students identified by the data.

Jackie described some roles and responsibilities not mentioned by Linda or Ned:

> My top responsibility is meeting with teachers, working with classroom teachers. I believe that the largest impact comes from the classroom teacher. So, working on lessons, modeling lessons, creating lessons and sometimes that means having teachers bring things in, looking at what entry points they have in the lesson, seeing if it is differentiated for all students and just helping, being more of a thinking partner for teachers to be able to implement a lot of things in their classroom.

Cathy stated about teachers:

> Our primary goal is for them to work with the students and we work with them. On a glorious day, we get to go into the classroom and get to see students and that is the best day ever. It doesn't get to happen very much, but that is the most awesome thing in the world.

Functional Role

The subjects shared a variety of other tasks from their daily work. These range from the general *all duties as assigned* and *extra duties assigned* by the principal to more specific tasks like making copies for teachers, filling in for absent teachers, working on the school improvement plan, equipment inventory, completing paperwork for the Arkansas Department of Education, collecting data and generating reports, and other clerical work. Two of the subjects, Linda and Ned, mentioned working with students as part of their role. Both described working during the instructional day with small groups of students or individual students identified as needing academic assistance based on summative assessment data.

Gary stated:

> I do all duties as assigned. This ranges from working on our school improvement plan, to making copies for teachers or whoever needs it, to handing out and inventorying technology, teaching a class when I have a teacher out.

Cathy mentioned paperwork specifically: "we do get stuck doing some paperwork kind of things, unfortunately. Somebody has to do it and we would rather to do that than our teachers have to do it". Jackie and Linda reported working with after school programs, student intervention teams, Saturday tutoring sessions and other responsibilities related to student support. Both clarified these responsibilities were not requirements of being an Instructional Coach, but things they enjoyed doing to help students.

Coach and Teacher

All Coaches shared the challenge of protecting their role to be one of support rather than an evaluative or disciplinary role. Getting teachers to try new things or improve existing practices was more challenging when there was ambiguity about the role of the Coach. The challenge of role ambiguity was not limited to direct relationships between teacher and Coach. All Coaches described being asked to carry out tasks that fall under the supervision and evaluative duties of an administrator:

> I have very little luck with forcing teachers to get anything done. I've really had to work hard in building relationships with teachers and definitely building trust with teachers so that I can walk into their classroom at any moment and they won't think anything is wrong. (Gary)

> Sometimes we're put in a position where we're almost told to go to our teachers and be an administrator and do something disciplinary. We have to remind people that we are here in a coaching capacity and we need to have a productive relationship with that person… I'm supposed to be there to work with them and I need them to respect that relationship and I need that relationship to be fruitful, so I can't be there doing classroom walk-throughs like an administrator and writing them up. (Cathy)

> It took a little bit for some of them to get to know me, because some of them were expecting me to follow in the footsteps of the coaches who were there before or they

were expecting me to come in and say, do this or gotcha. And I was like, no, that's not my style. We are here to build as a group and we are going to work as a team. It took a long time to get that point across. (Linda)

Relationships with adult learners

All Coaches spoke of building relationships with adult learners as crucial to their work. Coaches built relationships by being transparent with teachers regarding the work, being patient with struggling teachers and with teachers who were hesitant to implement changes in their classroom practice. Coaches spoke with high levels of empathy when describing working with teachers. Ned stated, "Personally I need to be a little less warm and fuzzy with them (teachers) but I don't need to be a drill sergeant. They've got enough people barking down their backs".

> A lot of times when I am dealing with struggling teachers, I try to remind myself that if they were able to do whatever it is that they were needing to do, they probably would have already done it, so they probably don't know how to do it for whatever reason or are choosing not to do it. Something is going on there that is keeping them from getting the job done. (Linda)

Cathy and Jackie both spoke about being respectful. Cathy from the angle of including teachers as decision makers:

> I think that respecting them as your colleagues, I think that really getting their buy-in and helping it be a consensus in the meetings. There are certain things that we do not have options about in our jobs, but there are a lot of things, when we have to get to a certain goal, there are decisions that can be made about how we get there. So, bringing them in on the decision making end of things, instead of dictating to them how they're going to do something. Bringing them in and respecting their opinions, has really, not only made it easier for us to do our jobs with them, but I think it's made them better at their jobs. I don't ever want them to not be as confident as they can be. Whereas, I feel like some people just like to give them the stuff and just hold the power back, we really take the approach of we want to allow them grow as much and do as much for themselves as they can, with us helping them. We really try to build capacity in them, take things to them, to get them to work as a team, learn from each other and learn from us. (Cathy)

Jackie mentioned respect for a teacher's classroom and their individuality:

> Being a partner with them, being open to knowing that I don't know everything about what they may come to me about, being open to doing my own research so that I can become an expert in areas that they have questions about. Understanding that everyone's

classroom is a little different work environment and it's a teacher's personality and you can't have the same cookie-cutter fixes for everyone, just like you can't have the same thing for students. So, I think that I have been open and willing to learn whenever something came up so that I could help my teachers learn. (Jackie)

Gary offered examples of the benefits of building relationships:

Anytime I want to try something new or want them to try something new, after building all of that trust, they just do and they'll come back and say, "Oh, that was great." They always tell me one way or the other and it is a real honest dialogue. It's building the team and the relationships and the trust that works best for me.

Ned spoke about looking at all aspects of adult behavior: "I try to listen to the teachers. I try to actually understand the full blown range of communication, everything from the non-verbal to verbal and pick up on the cues of what the actual issue is".

All coaches made some reference to supporting *teacher growth* in instruction, content knowledge, classroom management, etc.:

From day one of when teachers come in and start planning with the department, introducing them and setting them up with another teacher, then checking on them and helping them plan lessons and working more in-depth. That's been really fun and really exciting, because of seeing them grow year after year. (Cathy)

Watching my teachers grow is so great. It's really hard sometimes to get high school teachers to be flexible, to try things that are new and watching them be okay with trying new things and them allowing me to just come in and take over and them not being upset about it, I think that's been the most rewarding to me. They've really learned to be flexible and stay calm and not to be so rigid, I think. (Gary)

Maybe the most rewarding thing when it comes to adults is that adults, versus kids, a lot of times, have different motivations. When you have adults and they come in and go, you mean we all have to give the same semester exam; I just don't know how that is going to work. You can kind of feel the uneasiness there. They don't really feel confident in their teaching abilities. By the end of the semester, they're going, Gosh, I can't believe we weren't doing this years ago. I can't believe I didn't think of this a long time ago. I've spent all these hours of grading and lesson planning and I come here and it is all done. It is not for everybody at first, but when they finally realize that working together is a lot better than being out there on your own, it is a good feeling. (Linda)

Jackie described the reward of coaching as: "When you change or you help improve or grow a teacher's thought process of how they are looking at lessons or how they're looking at their classroom and how it's designed".

Building and District Level Leadership

Two of the five subjects spoke about the understanding of the coaches' role by building and district level leadership as a challenge. Linda stated:

> If you are an Instructional Coach in a building or a district and you don't have strong leadership above you, like a principal or a district-level person, it makes your job a lot harder. If you have a principal or people at the district level who support you and they understand what you are trying to do, it makes life a lot easier and things go a lot smoother. So, sometimes you run into leaders, especially at the district level, who don't really understand what you do or what you are trying to accomplish, and it can be quite a challenge.

> We know that you can't be great and implement 8 different things at one time, but that thought process kind of gets lost the further up the chain you go. There's no clear vision for the work of the coaches. There are so many things that are disjointed as far as how the administration works, and I mean our upper echelon. (Jackie)

Theme Two: *Participants struggle to balance the work of supporting adult learners with tasks unrelated to supporting adult learners.*

Other Duties as Assigned

All Coaches reported being pulled away from working with teachers by situations within the school not related to coaching. Interruptions perceived as the result of poor planning on the part of district level administration were considered a challenge.

> When I first started, we didn't know what we were doing; we were just put into the position, kind of trial by fire. So, I think I sat in my office and wandered around the building for about two months and then, all of a sudden, there was this big huge "fire." I was like, well, if you had told me about this when I wasn't doing anything in August, I could have had this done and this wouldn't have been a fire. That was the most surprising thing to me, even now, is the lack of plan that I experience. (Gary)

Ned stated: "I got into the educational system and was absolutely shocked and somehow continue to be surprised at times and appalled by how it runs and how it functions". Jackie expressed similar frustration: There's no clear vision for the work of the coaches. There are so many things that are disjointed as far as how the administration works, and I mean our upper echelon".

All of the Coaches described incidents where they were given short notice to complete paperwork or other clerical tasks to meet district or state compliance deadlines. Frustration expressed by Gary, "You get an email that says I need this right now and I just wonder, when did you get it and why am I just getting it now?" All Coaches cited excess paperwork and compliance related tasks as taking time away from the work of supporting teachers.

> Every day I might do 10 little things but then 15 more come in. I don't think I knew how scattered it would be. I thought I would just work with my teachers and work with my kids, do some extra resources and then maybe do a little paperwork. It's a lot more paperwork than I thought… I have to overcome those paperwork and reporting obstacles and meetings and things like that, so that I can clear out time to try and get to the meetings with my teachers or to try to get out to a classroom and co-teach or observe or help them plan a lesson. (Cathy)

Coaches spoke at length about the difficulty and frustration of dealing with policies created by people who are detached from the actual classroom. Cathy and Jackie both described part of their job as protecting teachers. Jackie stated, "I try to be a filter for our teachers… we know that you can't be great and implement eight different things at one time, but that thought process gets lost the further up the chain you go".

> There's just so much stuff coming down the educational pipeline on paperwork, school improvement and this and that and the new testing and the new this, that if you are a classroom teacher and you're having to dive through all of that, it's going to take you away from your students and your lesson planning and you're not going to be very effective. I can't imagine doing all of that on top of what all is put on a classroom teacher every day. I see my job as, I have to keep all of that stuff that is coming down away from them and filter it in such a way that very little is added to their job, because

they already have the most important job in the school and they're already overloaded with it, and that is handling our children, our precious cargo. (Cathy)

Ned addressed the need for a better understanding from district and state leadership of what teachers are being asked to do-, "It's not just hey, I need you to spend 15 minutes on this data, there are 15 people who need you to spend 15 minutes on data".

Gary and Cathy spoke specifically about the importance of building the capacity of teachers to support their own learning as a way to offset the time taken from coaches by other duties.

In the past few years I've tried to turn loose of the control so that they can be okay by themselves, because I can't be the one person everybody comes to all the time. It's my job to build their capacity to be that person. That's the most challenging, is getting them to turn loose of me being what runs them, and they run themselves because they know how. (Gary)

Building the capacity of our teams has been so important. A lot of times, we can get their collaboration meeting started, and let them go from there. The groundwork we've put in with them working on that has paid off because they're able to have those conversations themselves without us dictating that as much. They take things and run with it and we just kind of monitor it from the side and then check on them. If there is something that needs guided, we go in, but they can do a whole lot by themselves. (Cathy)

Theme Three: *Preparation and ongoing professional development for Instructional Coaches is inconsistent in content and frequency.*

Professional Development

All subjects reported having no formal experience working with adult learners prior to assuming the position of Instructional Coach. Linda, Gary and Jackie shared similar frustrations about lack of training when they first became coaches. Linda, "I felt like I was thrown into this job. No one said do this, they just kind of left me out there to the wind". Gary, "Coaches were just put into the position, kind of trial by fire. So, I think I sat in my office and wandered around

the building for about two months…". Jackie, "I was in the job for about two years before I received any formal training from the district or the state".

Once they were on the job, all subjects reported that professional learning provided to them consisted mainly of one time workshops with different authors of books on coaching. All of the Coaches reported using personal time and money to attend trainings and purchase resources to support their understanding of how to work with adult learners. Overall, professional learning was described as being inconsistent in both content and frequency (little or no follow up). All subjects reported attending district level coaches meetings. Most of the activity in these meetings consisted of group discussion, book study, sharing resources, looking at student assessments and disaggregating student test data. While there was a range of activity reported, most all of it focused on student learning.

> It's (coaches meetings) almost like an awkward in between of there's a discussion about student performance, then an acknowledgement of this is what we work with teachers on. We get the teachers to work on the students with this and that but the how piece is probably not as meaty as it could be. (Ned)

> When we go to our facilitator meetings there is a lot of oh, look at this page in this book and tell your teachers to do it like this, that sort of thing. There's not a lot of focus on how we work with teachers and how to help our teachers grow. (Jackie)

Cathy theorized the lack of formal training for Instructional Coaches in her district is related to the district's commitment to the job position- "I would like to see (formal training) but I know our district especially is not sold (on coaches). I feel like every year they debate whether the job is really worth it".

Job Qualifications and Responsibilities

The job descriptions for the position of Instructional Coach were compared (Table 4.7 and 4.8). In both tables, the far left column lists job qualification/requirements or job responsibilities. On both lists, similar statements from individual job descriptions were combined

where appropriate. The other four columns in the table show which job descriptions listed which

job qualification/requirement or job responsibility.

Table 4.7

Job requirements/qualifications listed for Instructional Coaches

Job requirements/ Qualifications listed	Job description 1	Job description 2	Job description 3	Job description 4
Valid AR teaching certificate	X	X	X	X
Master's degree in education	X	X		
Years of teaching experience	3	5	3	4
Prior experience planning and presenting professional development	X			X
Experience with instruction of adult learners				X
Prior experience using student data to guide instruction	X		X	X
Evidence of strong oral and written communication skills	X			X
Time management				X
Collaboration skills				X
Interpersonal skills				X
Knowledge of AR content standards			X	X
Knowledge of research effective/research based instructional practice			X	X
Knowledge of research based assessment			X	X
Knowledge of pedagogy				X
Willing to increase knowledge and skills through attending trainings.			X	

Table 4.8

Job responsibilities listed for Instructional Coaches

Responsibilities listed	Job description 1	Job description 2	Job description 3	Job description 4
Utilizes coaching strategies (modeling, guidance, and collaboration/reflection)	X	X	X	X
Disaggregates and uses student, school and district data to guide instruction	X	X	X	X
Assist teachers in using current and upcoming technologies for student learning.	X		X	X
Builds instructional leadership capacity of teachers	X	X	X	X
Plans and delivers professional development at the school and district level.	X	X	X	X
Attends identified training, implements new learning, and serves as a liaison between the schools and the district	X			X
Assists teachers in planning instruction		X	X	
Have in-depth knowledge of content (reading, math, etc.)		X	X	X
Serve as resource to parents/ support parental involvement		X		
Maintains confidentiality			X	
Performs other related duties as assigned.	X	X	X	

Researcher Observations

The researcher captured observations during and immediately following each interview. Each interview occurred in the Instructional Coaches' *office*. These spaces varied from a classroom converted into a communal office/student tutoring area/storage area for textbooks, etc. (Cathy) to a long narrow space between two classrooms originally intended to be storage space for textbooks, now housing the coach, discarded teaching resources and part of the wiring for the building's computer network (Ned). Even the coaches with space resembling what might be generally considered an office space, shared the space with other staff (Jackie, Linda) or gave space to storage of items not specifically related to the role of coaching such as snacks for the after school program (Gary). None of the coaches reported having space dedicated exclusively to working with adult learners.

In the course of the interview process, Ned and Jackie consistently exhibited body language and tone of voice indicating high levels of frustration, particularly when describing interactions with the "state department" (Arkansas Department of Education). Cathy and Linda demonstrated high levels of empathy for teachers in expression and tone of voice when discussing their efforts to do some of the reporting work required of teachers (Cathy) and being patient with adult learners (Linda). All coaches became animated with a positive tone of voice when describing the satisfaction they get from supporting teachers and seeing teachers "grow".

Summary

This chapter presented three findings resulting from analysis of the data. The first finding of this study is that ambiguity regarding the role of Instructional Coaches had an impact on the preparation and performance of all participants. All coaches described observing teachers, modeling lessons, co-teaching, assisting with the planning of instruction, data analysis, providing

resources and providing training in the use of new resources. These actions align with the job responsibilities listed on the four job descriptions. There was little evidence of a system for support focused on building the capacity of teachers to plan instruction, analyze data, procure resources, etc. Both job requirements/qualifications and job responsibilities listed disaggregating data and using data to guide instruction for the coach, but nothing about the coach building capacity of the teachers to work with data. The coaches were eager to help teachers, but lack of clarity for the formal duties of coaching resulted in a fractured approach to support. Among job requirements/qualifications, only one job description was explicit about experience with instruction of adult learners. Role ambiguity also challenged coaches to remain in a non-evaluative or disciplinary role with teachers. All coaches reported being asked to perform the supervisory or evaluative duties of an administrator. The lack of a system for support created situations where the coaches were working diligently, but the impact of their work was not focused. Their role being seen as similar to an administrator rather than a support jeopardized the coach- teacher relationship. Teachers were less likely to admit they needed assistance or try a new teaching strategy for fear they were being evaluated.

The second finding was that all participants were asked to perform duties unrelated to supporting adult learners. These tasks included tutoring students, substituting for absent teachers, doing inventory, working on the school improvement plan, and excessive clerical duties such as filling out reports. Coaches reported the clerical work to be especially disruptive to coaching responsibilities when asked to complete a compliance document or some other report with short notice. Job responsibilities from all four descriptions included the phrase *performs other duties as assigned*. Only one description operationalized the phrase with *as related to job*.

The third finding relates to the coaches preparation and ongoing professional learning. With the exception of a valid Arkansas teaching license and between three and five years of teaching experience, there was limited consistency across the four job requirements/qualifications and job responsibilities of the Instructional Coach. All coaches reported having no formal training for working with adult learners prior to becoming an Instructional Coach. Only one job description specifically mentioned experience working with adult learners as a requirement/qualification and only two job descriptions mention prior experience planning and presenting professional development. All job descriptions listed planning and delivering professional development at the school and district level as a job responsibility. Coaches described opportunities for professional learning as generally one time workshops or meetings with little or no follow up. All coaches reported attending district wide coaches meetings, however the content of these meetings mostly focused on tasks related to students such as data disaggregation and looking at student work rather than how to support teachers. One of the coaches theorized the haphazard approach to professional learning for coaches was due to low levels of buy-in by the district for the Instructional Coach position. Only two of the job descriptions listed *attending training* as a job responsibility. Given the job requirements/qualifications, when someone is hired to be an Instructional Coach, there is no evidence of how the coach will obtain and continually develop the knowledge and skills listed as job responsibilities.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this case study was to understand how Instructional Coaches in Arkansas public high schools supported professional development of teachers. The conclusions and recommendations in this chapter address three areas: (a) ambiguity regarding the role and responsibilities of Instructional Coaches; (b) inconsistency in the preparation and ongoing professional learning for Instructional Coaches; and (c) lack of infrastructure (policies, procedures, staffing, time, people, funding) for Instructional Coaches to be pro-active in managing their own development over time.

Ambiguity Regarding the Role and Responsibilities of Instructional Coaches

Initially Instructional Coaches were part of the nationwide strategy to transform student-learning results and to increase the use of research based teaching practices. Instructional Coaches continue to be part of the effort to bring about transformational change in schools. Wide varieties of district and national Instructional Coaching models have generated myriad roles and responsibilities for Instructional Coaches. The most common roles that have evolved for Instructional Coaches are school based staff developer, classroom interventionist and general mentor to teachers (Knight, 2008; Harrison & Killion, 2007). It is time to revisit what has been learned about Instructional Coaching and adult learning to determine how to be more strategic and effective to support Instructional Coaches as they support adult learning in their schools. According to Berg & Bosch (2013), frustration with the lack of clarity regarding the role and associated responsibilities of the job are common. Instructional Coaches are frustrated with the abundance of unassigned tasks given to them so the support of teachers suffers dramatically. Instructional Coaches struggle with prioritizing tasks when their role is so undefined.

The Instructional Coach and school staff often lack a shared understanding of the role and responsibilities of the IC. Where little or no active discussion exists between principals and Instructional Coaches regarding how the Instructional Coaches time is spent, administrative and operational tasks requested by the principal, district administration and others are not always related to the work of supporting adult development. Adult learners have a varying rate of accepting change. Changes in teacher performance occur over time. Heineke and Polnick (2013) state Instructional Coaches may struggle with how to maintain positive relationships with teachers while asking them to make significant changes in teaching practice. If Instructional Coaches are to support this change, their time must be flexible in order to differentiate supporting adult learning needs. Having an excess of administrative and organizational tasks diverts time from necessary relationship building, strategies, and skills to support adult learning. When the role, responsibility and function of the Coach is not defined, Instructional Coaches ability to identify and advocate for internal and external services that support adult development is diminished or non-existent. Knight (2018) states that role ambiguity causes anxiety for coaches, leading to wasted time, prompting districts to question the value of coaches.

Inconsistency in Ongoing Professional Learning for Instructional Coaches

Many Instructional Coaches come directly from the classroom into the role of coaching and have limited experience in designing/modifying and leading change efforts affecting all adult learners. There is a widely held assumption that hiring teachers who have been successful with students to be Instructional Coaches assures the person will be successful as an Instructional Coach (Poglinco, et al., 2003). Another assumption is that teachers who have become content area specialists have the necessary skills and disposition to coach teachers (King, et al, 2008). Shared vision among district administration, principals and Instructional Coaches for ongoing

education, training and development of Instructional Coaches is rare. The absence of shared

vision results in actions that are not strategic and most often resemble a collection of experiences

with little or no differentiated learning for Instructional Coaches. The experiences may be

sporadic consisting of one off events, focus on isolated issues, vendor driven presentations, etc.

Rarely is there any linkage between the adult development of Instructional Coaches and the

professional learning plan for school staff (grade level teams, individual growth plans, etc.).

Absence of comprehensive strategic professional learning plans diminishes opportunity for

leveraging high performance for all adult learners.

Lack of Infrastructure for Instructional Coaches to Manage their Own Learning

Given the limited number of Instructional Coaches in a school and/or district, it is

important to create and nurture ways for Instructional Coaches to learn from each other that

transcend present boundaries and barriers. Face to face networking is limited by

misunderstanding and misuse of Coaches' time resulting in the hesitancy of principals to approve

time away from the building for visiting other Instructional Coaches and attending meetings and

conferences where large numbers of Instructional Coaches are in attendance. Some Instructional

Coaches seek out networking opportunities via digital tools such as Twitter. This form of

networking usually takes place after hours or on weekends, not as part of the Instructional Coach

workday. Within school districts, the level of function among Instructional Coaches may vary

greatly from high performing to novice. Instructional Coaches at all levels of function need

access to networks. Activating and sustaining the desire to learn, while a focus for students is

often lost when considering the support needs of adult learners. Differentiation of and within

networks is critical. Most of the differentiation for what Instructional Coaches want to learn and

how they learn is initiated by the Instructional Coaches themselves. Continuous learning requires

access to emerging knowledge and experiences. Instructional Coaches need to be highly skilled in accessing diverse networks for their own learning and also help other adult learners access networks that may be job embedded or global.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered for district level administrators, building level administrators and Instructional Coaches.

Addressing Ambiguity in the Role and Responsibilities of Instructional Coaches

1. Determine performance criteria for hiring entry level Instructional Coaches who are continuous learners and skilled facilitative teachers with a passion for supporting adult learners.

2. The coaches role, responsibilities and function must be co-created and evaluated with the principal and district leaders responsible for professional development.

3. Instructional Coaches and the principal must reach consensus regarding key functions of the coach in direct relation to the needs of adult learners to support targeted student learning needs.

4. Given the current emphasis on s*tudent centered learning*, Instructional Coaches use of time must be tied to supporting the development of skills and the application of professional knowledge by adult learners to work with students rather than the Coach working directly with students. Instructional Coaches must be able to answer the question: How does my action support the development of the adult learner to support student learning?

5. Principals must engage all staff members in dialogue regarding how teachers working with an IC can receive needed support to improve performance with the intent of creating and maintaining a learning culture that supports individual and group continuous development.

6. There must be ongoing discussion to refine the role, responsibilities and functions of the Instructional Coach to primarily lead and manage adult development with staff, principal and district administration.

7. Principals and Instructional Coaches need to establish boundaries for any assigned tasks not directly related to instructional coaching.

8. Instructional Coaches need to ensure teacher voice and experience is entered into district level dialogue about teaching and learning.

9. Instructional Coaches need to advocate for newly refined roles and responsibilities of Instructional Coaches within the school and district.

Inconsistency in the Ongoing Professional Learning for Instructional Coaches

1. Instructional Coaches must collaborate with district administrators to insure the mission and vision of the school's plan for adult development aligns with the district's mission and vision for adult development to impact student performance.

2. Because Instructional Coaches must lead and manage adult learning systems that encompass design, implementation and monitoring of adult performance progress, the professional learning for Instructional Coaches must include a variety of resources and tools to support developmental stages of adult learning.

3. There must be a comprehensive strategic learning plan to lead and manage continuous development of knowledge and skills of Instructional Coaches. Authoring this plan will

vary depending on the size of the school district. Districts with staff appointed to supervise Instructional Coaches should create a core set of strategies that is then differentiated to meet the individual or group learning needs of Instructional Coaches at their school site(s).

Lack of Infrastructure for Instructional Coaches to Manage their Own Learning

1. The principal and the Instructional Coach need to agree on the resources available to support the work of the Instructional Coach.

2. Instructional Coaches should be actively involved with district development of curriculum, strategies and resource materials.

3. Formal networks (communities of practice and professional learning communities of Instructional Coaches) as well as informal networks should be acknowledged and supported as legitimate, valuable sources of continuous development by principals and district level supervisors.

4. Face to face networks as well as digital networks (blogs, You Tube, etc.) should be given importance equal to other forms of professional learning for continuous learning for Instructional Coaches.

5. Face to face and digital networks should have individuals serving as brokers to connect Instructional Coaches to resources and to other Instructional Coaches. These brokers could come from the ranks of the Instructional Coaches or they could be personnel from other organizations and agencies such as educational professional organizations, educational cooperatives or state departments of education.

Epilogue

Findings from a 2016 study by the Learning Policy Institute estimate more than 200,000 teachers leave the profession each year. Nearly two out of three leave for reasons other than retirement. Turnover rates are higher in the South, 50% higher for schools with more low-income students and 70% higher for teachers serving in schools with higher concentrations of students of color. Shortages persist in mathematics, science, special education, English language development and foreign languages. Frequently mentioned reasons for leaving the profession included inadequate preparation, lack of support for new teachers and challenging working conditions (Carver- Thomas & Darling-Hammond). What impact might an Instructional Coach who was selected based on his/her interest in supporting adult development then given proper initial training in coaching and supported to continue development in skills and dispositions related to working with adults have on reversing these reasons? What if decision makers throughout the educational *system*- national, state and local level- made *focusing on teachers as learners* a priority rather than seeing teachers as merely the carrier of information and ring leader of activities for students or worse? What if decision makers created opportunities beyond the role of Instructional Coach for teachers to support the development of other teachers, recognizing those opportunities as legitimate forms of adult development? Better yet, what if decision makers supported professional learning practices for teachers modeled on best practice in adult learning rather than offer substandard, one-shot, one-size-fits-all support?

Ellie Drago Severson (2012) states, "I am all about the kids- that's what initially brought me to (adult learning) and continues to energize me. And, because I am all about the kids, I am also all about the adults and supporting their growth and development. The two, I have learned are profoundly intertwined" (p. 6). Until the commitment is made to support adult learners as

leaders claim to support student learners, local, state, and national stakeholders must be satisfied with inconsistent and unsustainable improvement in learning systems. Schools should be places where *everyone* feels safe and supported to engage in the complex process of learning. Just as teachers are expected to provide support for students, the opportunity exists for teachers to have similar support from Instructional Coaches

References

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 377-392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Aguilar, E. (2013). *The art of coaching.* San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Bean, R. M., Draper, J. A., Hall, V., Vandermolen, J., & Zigmond, N. (2010). Coaches and coaching in reading first schools: A reality check. *Elementary School Journal*, 111(1), 87-114.

Berg, J. H., Bosch, C. A., & Souvanna, P. (2013). Critical Conditions: What teacher leaders need to be effective in schools? *Journal of Staff Development, 34*, 26-29.

Blamey, K. L., Meyer, C. K., & Walpole, S. (2008). Middle and high school literacy coaches: A national survey. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(4), 310-323.

Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* National Academies Press, 2102 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington DC 20055.

Breidenstein, A., Fahey, K., Glickman, C., & Hensley, F. (2012). *Leading for Professional Learning: A Guide for Instructional Leaders*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Brown-Easton, L. (2008). Powerful designs for professional learning (2nd ed.). Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Burkins, J. & Ritchie, S. (2007). Coaches coaching coaches. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* [On-line], *3*(1), 32-47.

Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Center for Collaborative Education. *The Role of the Coach at CCE*. Boston Center for Collaborative Education, n.d. www.ccebos.org/coaching_intro.doc

Cranton, P., & Carusetta, E. (2004). Perspectives on authenticity in teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly, 55*(1), 5-22.

Costa, A. L. & Garmston R. J (1997). *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools*. Norwood, MA. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Danielson, C. (2007). The Many faces of leadership. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 14-19.

Darling-Hammond, L., Wilhoit, G., & Pittenger, L. (2014). Accountability for college and career readiness: Developing a new paradigm. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(6).

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Denzin, N.K., (1978). *Sociological methods.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Deussen, T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). *Coach can mean many things: Five categories of literacy coaches in reading first.* (REL Northwest No. 005). Washington DC: US Department of Education.

Elmore, R. F. (2002). *Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: The imperative for professional development in education* Albert Shanker Institute, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

Farquhar, J. & Michels, N. (2016). Triangulation without tears in *Marketing Challenges in a Turbulent Business Environment*. pp.325-330 M. Groza and C. Ragland (eds). Heidleberg. Springer.

Feger, S., Woleck, K., & Hickman, P. (2004). How to develop a coaching eye. *Journal of Staff Development 25*(2), 14–18

Foltos, L. (2015). Principals boost coaching's impact. *Journal of staff development, 36*(1), 48-51.

Gallucci, C., DeVoogt Van Lare, M., Yoon, I., & Boatright, B. (2010). Instructional coaching: building theory about the role and organizational support for professional learning. *American educational research journal, 47*(4), 919-963.

Gibbs, G. R., (2010). *Coding part 2: Thematic coding*. [Web Video]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_YXR9kp1_o

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction, fourth ed*. New York: Pearson.

Gross, P.A. (2010). Not another trend: Secondary literacy coaching. *The Clearing House*, 83, 133-137.

Hall, P., & Simeral, A. (2008). *Building Teachers' Capacity for Success: A collaborative approach for coaches and school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hancock, D.R., & Algozzine, B. (2011). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harrison, C., & Killion, J. (2007). Ten Roles for Teacher Leaders. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 74-77.

Heineke, S., & Polnick, B. (2013). Pave the way for coaches. *Journal of staff development, 34*(3), 48-51.

Hopkins, M., Spillane, J. P., Jakopovic, P., & Heaton, R. M. (2013). Infrastructure redesign and instructional reform in mathematics: Formal structure and teacher leadership. *Elementary School Journal*, 114(2), 200-224.

Joyce, B., & Calhoun, E., (2011). *Models of Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin.

Killion, J., Harrison, C., Bryan, C., & Clifton, H. (2012). *Coaching matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Killion, J. & Harrison, C. (2017) *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches.* 2nd ed. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Killion, J. & Hirsh S. (2013). Investments in professional learning must change. *Journal of staff development*, *34(4),* 10-28.

King, D., Neuman, M., Pelchat, J., Potochnik, T., Rao, S., Thompson, J. (2008) *Professional development strategies that improve instruction: Instructional Coaching*. Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Providence, RI.

Knight, J. (2006). Instructional Coaching. *The school administrator, 63*(4), 36-40.

Knight, J. (2008). *Instructional Coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin press.

Knight, J. (2011). *Unmistakable impact: A partnership approach for dramatically improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin press.

Knight, J., & Killion, J. (2018). Instructional Coaching. *An Interview with Joellen Killion.* Retrieved September 20, 2018, from www.instructionalcoaching.com

Knight, J., & Nieuwerburgh, C. (2012). Instructional coaching: a focus on practice. *Coaching: An international journal of theory, research and practice, 5*(2), 100-112.

Kraft, M. A. & Gilmour, A. (2016). Can principals promote teacher development as evaluators? A case study of principals' views and experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52(5),* 711-753.

Kraft MA, Blazar D, Hogan D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research.* 88(4), 547-588.

Kumashiro, K. (2014). Re-framing the "Bad Teachers" in the United States and Beyond, Multicultural Education Review,6:1, 1-20

Lawler, P. A. (2003). Teachers as adult learners: A new perspective. In K. P. King & P. A. Lawler (Eds.), New Perspectives on Designing and Implementing Professional Development of Adults (pp. 15-22). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Lieberman, A., & Friedrich, L. (2010). *How teachers become leaders: Learning from practice and research.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Marsh, J. A., Kerr, K. A., Ikemoto, G. S., Darilek, H., Suttorp, M., Zimmer, R. W., & Barney, H. (2005). The role of districts in fostering instructional improvement. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, T., (2005). School leadership that works: From research to results. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maxwell, J.A., (2005). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation.* John Wiley & Sons.

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. & Associates. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mitganag, L., & Maeroff, G. (2008). Becoming a leader: Preparing school principals for today's schools. New York: Wallace Foundation.

Mraz, M., Algozzine, B., & Watson, P. (2008). Perceptions and expectations of roles and responsibilities of literacy coaching. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *47(3),* 141–157.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity— Promises and practicalities. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Neumerski, C. (2012). Rethinking Instructional Leadership, a Review: What Do We Know About Principal, Teacher, and Coach Instructional Leadership, and Where Should We Go From Here? *Educational Administration Quarterly 49(2),* 310-347.

Poglinco, S. M., Bach, A. J., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders, M., & Supovitz, J. A. (2003). *The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's choice schools*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Poglinco, S. M., & Bach, A. J. (2004). The heart of the matter: Coaching as a vehicle for professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *85*, 398-400.

Richard, A. (2003). *Making our own road: The emergence of school-based staff developers in America's public schools.* New York, NY: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Richards, L. (2005). *Handling qualitative data*. London: Sage.

Robinson, L., Egawa, K., Riddle Buly, M., & Coskie, T. (2005). FAQs about literacy coaching. *Voices from the Middle, 13*(1), 66-67.

Rotermund, S., DeRoche, J., & Ottem, R. (2017). Teacher professional development by selected teacher and school characteristics: 2011–12. National Center for Education Statistics

Sampson, H. (2004), Navigating the waves: The usefulness of a pilot in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 4, 383-402.

Severson, E. D. (2012). *Helping Educators Grow: Strategies and Practices for Leadership and Development.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Education Press.

Shanklin, N. L. (2007). What supports do literacy coaches need from administrators in order to succeed? Denver, CO: Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse

Spillane, J. (2001). *Distributed leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Steckel, B. (2009). Fulfilling the promise of literacy coaches in urban schools: What does it take to make an impact? *The Reading Teacher, 63*(1), 14-23.

Steiner, L. and Kowal, J. (2007). Instructional Coaching. Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

Stock, M., & Duncan, H. (2010). Mentoring as a Professional Development Strategy for Instructional Coaches: Who Mentors the Mentors? . *Planning and Changing, 41*(1), 57-79.

Sweeny, D. (2011). *Student centered coaching: A guide for k-8 coaches and principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.

Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012. https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP693z1-2012-09.html.

Taylor, J. E. (2008). Instructional coaching: The state of the art. In M. M. Mangin & S. R. Stoelinga (Eds.), Effective teacher leadership: Using research to inform and reform (pp. 10–35). New York: Teachers College Press.

Theeboom, T., Beersma, B., & van Vianen, A. E. M. (2013). Does coaching work? A metaanalysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 9(1), 1-18

van Teijlingen, E., & Hundley, V. (2001). The importance of pilot studies. *Social research update*, (35), 1-4

Vanderburg, M., & Stephens, D. (2010). The impact of literacy coaches: What teachers value and how teachers change. *Elementary School Journal*, *111*, 141-163.

Wang, S. (2017). Teacher centered coaching: An instructional model. *Mid-Western educational researcher, 29*(1), 20-39.

Waters, T., & Cameron, G. (2007). The balanced leadership framework: Connecting vision with action. Denver, CO: MCREL.

Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad (Technical Report). Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

Will, M. (2017). Instructional Coaches Earn Their Own Training: Teacher leaders supported in working with adult learners. *Education Week*, *36*(29), 16–18.

Yin, R. K., (2014). *Case study research: design and methods (*5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K., (2012). *Applications of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of educational research*, *74*(3), 255-316.

Appendix A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview number _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: Amanda Linn

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to record our conversation today. For your information, only I, my dissertation advisor and the person transcribing the interview will be privy to the recording. The recording will be destroyed after it is transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about adult learning experiences. My research focuses on the experience of individuals employed as Instructional Coaches in Arkansas high schools. By participating in this interview, you will help me better understand the role of Instructional Coach in secondary level schools.

Interview Questions:

1. As an Instructional Coach, what are your current job responsibilities (formal or

   informal)?

2. What was your job prior to becoming an Instructional Coach?

3. Why did you decide to pursue the job of Instructional Coach?

4. What criteria does your school district use when selecting Instructional Coaches?

5. What formal preparation did you receive to be an Instructional Coach?

6. Prior to becoming an Instructional Coach, what in your informal learning experiences have contributed to your performance as an Instructional Coach?

7. Of your formal preparation, what specifically related to supporting adult development?

8. What informal learning prepared you to work with adult learners? When and how did this learning occur?

9. How have you continued to develop your skills as an Instructional Coach? Were these learning experiences provided by your school district or did you pursue them independently?

10. What resources (books, journals, digital, other) do you consult in support of your work as an Instructional Coach?

11. What has been most surprising about the job of Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

12. What is most rewarding about being an Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

13. What are the challenges of being an Instructional Coach at the secondary level?

14. What other information would you like to share about your experience as an Instructional Coach?

Closing

Thank you for your time. As I analyze the information you've shared with me today, I may have follow up questions or need to clarify something from our discussion, is it okay for me to contact you with questions? What way would you prefer to be contacted? If you should have any questions about our interview, please contact me via phone at ___or via email ___.