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INSTRUCTIONAL COACH FEEDBACK: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT

By
Anna Ertenberg Coats

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

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Abstract

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This mixed methods study was conducted to investigate the impact the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and coaching style of an instructional coach has on middle grades teacher instructional practices. The results of this study can be used to inform school leaders, administrators, and instructional coaches on methods for improving instructional coaching practices. The study was conducted utilizing a survey instrument and interviews. The survey indicated the instructional coaches have a role in developing instructional practices, though the qualitative data indicated possibility of greater impact than in current practice. Interview participants identified opportunities for a greater impact, such as incorporating timely, balanced, and concrete feedback, as well as a call for increased visibility in the classrooms. Survey responses showed teachers believe instructional coaches have the requisite knowledge of content, teaching, and curriculum to effectively coach, though a weakness was in instructional coaches having the ability to effectively coach teachers teaching outside of the content area the instructional coach had previously taught in.

Keywords: instructional coaching, feedback, adult learning, instructional practices

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Multiple coaches exist in schools, including literacy coaches, exceptional children coaches, athletic coaches, and instructional coaches. An instructional coach has an essential role in “helping teachers become better teachers” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b, p. 5). The hiring of instructional coaches increased after the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed, including funding for instructional coaches and expectations of local education agencies (LEAs) in supporting instructional coaches.

Instructional coaches perform a variety of activities within a school. Instructional coaches are responsible for professional development, coaching, mentoring, and coteaching (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b, p. 5). Though these are critical roles, the quantity of time an instructional coach engages in these activities ranges from 40% to 92% (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). The lack of time can come from directives given to the instructional coaches on what tasks to complete and a comfort level of what the instructional coach wants to do (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). Ultimately, though, the focus should be to help teachers improve through the activities instructional coaches employ.

To effectively support teachers in continuous improvement, instructional coaches must have the requisite knowledge, skills, and disposition to perform their role effectively. Of these, two critical skills instructional coaches must have are building strong relationships and effectively providing feedback (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018). An instructional coach is essentially peer support who can help teachers analyze their current practices, develop goals regarding improvement methods, and provide feedback

and support to reach the goals.

With effective coaching, there is potential for increased teaching effectiveness. While interacting with teachers, there are three main styles an instructional coach may utilize: directive, facilitative, and transformational (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018). In directive coaching, an instructional coach provides detailed methods for how a teacher should improve their instruction (Aguilar, 2013). The instructional coach assumes an expert's role, while the teacher takes on a learner's role (Knight, 2018). Coaching in a directive method requires the instructional coach to hold either content or pedagogical knowledge in a skill the teacher lacks (Knight, 2018). In facilitative coaching, on the other hand, the instructional coach and the teacher are equals (Knight, 2018). The instructional coach supports the teacher in reflection and goal progress monitoring (Knight, 2018). In the final method, transformational coaching, instructional coaches use components of both directive and facilitative coaching methods (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018). The teacher and the instructional coach are a team of equals and together develop strategies for improvement (Knight, 2018). Regardless of which coaching style is employed, the literature suggests the need for a healthy relationship between the teacher and the instructional coach (Knight, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

While there is growing research on instructional coaching, there remains little professional development available for instructional coaches. Aguilar (2019) explained that instructional coaches receive little professional development on coaching, resulting from there not being a need for even a certificate in coaching. This problem is compounded by the fact that many instructional coaches are hired because they were

excellent teachers, but they may not know much about effective coaching (Russell et al., 2020), prompting even more of a need for professional development for instructional coaches.

The primary purpose of an instructional coach is to help teachers become better educators, and there are some limitations in determining the effectiveness of an instructional coach's actions. Some tools exist for instructional coach evaluation, but they either do not address the outcomes of the coaching in the classroom (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b) or their metrics unintendedly shift the focus and work of the instructional coach from teacher improvement to direct student improvement (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020). This study's design addresses these gaps by determining what aspects of an instructional coach's feedback positively and negatively impact the implementation of the feedback in a teacher's practice based on the perspectives of middle grades in-service teachers. This study also addresses the impact the collegial relationship between a teacher and their instructional coach plays in the implementation of feedback.

Theoretical Framework

The research is guided by multiple theoretical frameworks of adult learning theory. Adult learning theories assume that adults and children learn differently (Colman, 2019). These differences in adult and child learning include that adult learners have prior knowledge, whereas children do not; adults choose to learn, whereas children have no choice; and the teaching of adults can be done through less formal roles, such as mentor or coach, as opposed to a teacher's guide of facilitating learning for children (Colman, 2019). The adult learning theories framing the research include andragogy,

transformational learning, experiential learning, and self-directed learning (Colman, 2019).

Andragogy

Andragogy is the teaching of adults, whereas pedagogy typically refers to teaching students. In contrast to pedagogy, in which the student relies on a teacher, andragogy supports adult learners in a learning journey facilitated and supported by a teacher (Murray, 2018). Further, when looking through the lens of andragogy, an assumption is that adult learners have knowledge and experience rather than that all knowledge is new (Murray, 2018). Glickman et al. (2018) argued that adult learning and improving teaching go hand-in-hand because the teacher is an adult learner as well as a teacher.

The term andragogy was created by Alexander Kapp in the early 19th century and revitalized by Malcolm Knowles in the mid-20th century (Mews, 2020). Andragogy is the science behind adult learning (Mews, 2020). Glickman et al. (2018) summarized Knowles's (1980) four basic assumptions in the theory of andragogy as

1. Adults have a psychological need to be self-directing.
2. Adults bring an expansive reservoir of experience that can and should be tapped in the learning situation.
3. Adults' readiness to learn is influenced by a need to solve real-life problems often related to adult developmental tasks.
4. Adults are performance-centered in their orientation to learning—wanting to make immediate application of knowledge. (pp. 65-66)

Mews (2020) rephrased these assumptions as “most adults prefer to know why they need

to learn something; they also prefer to maintain responsibility for their own decisions and lives, to utilize their experiences, and to learn from real-life situations” (p. 68).

Additionally, adults prefer learning in ways that apply to their lives, and adults are typically intrinsically motivated to learn (Mews, 2020). Andragogy suggests that adults are motivated by seeing a direct link between learning and their own life (Murray, 2018). This application and intrinsic motivation can result from multiple things, such as interest and career advancement (Murray, 2018).

Andragogy is at the heart of this study as the teachers instructional coaches work with are adults. By the time they have entered the teaching profession, they have years of experience in school and many have studied how to teach—deepening their knowledge and expertise of working with children. Additionally, much of instructional coaching involves the need to solve real-life problems in the classroom, which is one of the assumptions of andragogy. Lastly, because teachers could immediately change their practice based on coaching, the fourth assumption of andragogy, these assumptions are related to determining how to provide feedback to teachers from instructional coaches most effectively, in part by making it timely feedback.

Transformational Learning

Transformational learning occurs when a person’s frame of reference changes. Mezirow developed this theory, noting that assumptions, expectations, and beliefs impact an adult’s world perspective (Colman, 2019, para. 8). By challenging these assumptions, beliefs, and expectations, there are opportunities for reflection and possible change in perspective (Colman, 2019). Glickman et al. (2018) suggested these challenges come from significant life events or a series of minor events. To promote this type of learning,

reflection must occur. Reflection can happen through various methods, including individual activities such as journaling, experimenting with their practice, and analyzing particular incidents; or with a colleague, such as visiting classrooms or discussing events (Cranton, 1994, as cited in Glickman et al., 2018).

Because instructional coaches challenge teachers and work with them to reflect on their practices, transformational learning is one of the adult learning theories embedded in instructional coaching. Additionally, if an instructional coach works with a teacher multiple times, this can be the series of small events that prompt change.

Transformational learning is one of the methods instructional coaches could utilize in their work with teachers; therefore, it applies to this study because it may be a preferred method by teachers for how they would like to receive coaching.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning draws on the understanding that occurs through experience. These experiences must be hands-on, with priority and focus on the learner's perspective and interaction (Colman, 2019, para. 10). While the experience is important, the reflection resulting from the experience is where the learning truly happens (Colman, 2019). There are four components to experiential learning: "active involvement, reflection upon practice, conceptualization of the experience, and use of knowledge gained from experience" (Colman, 2019, para. 10).

Because instructional coaches work with teachers as they teach in the classroom, the coach-teacher relationship is embedded in experiential learning. Teachers must be actively involved in the coaching through utilizing the knowledge gained from the experience of working with an instructional coach. Further, it is a responsibility of an

instructional coach to support the teacher in reflection on teaching practices. As this is one of the methods instructional coaches utilize to support teachers, it applies to this study because it may be a preferred method by teachers for how they would like to receive coaching.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning stemmed from andragogy. The knowledge that adults learn daily without an instructor forms its basis (Glickman et al., 2018). Colman (2019) noted that adults determine their needs, create goals, determine necessary resources, implement a change, and reflect on the impact in this method. Additionally, in self-directed learning, the learner is responsible for guiding the learning (Colman, 2019; Glickman et al., 2018). Glickman et al. (2018) noted the importance of a supervisor knowing the teacher's readiness for instruction and adapting their methods in response to this knowledge (Glickman et al., 2018).

Because some teachers have more experience to draw from, an instructional coach may spend less directive time with these particular teachers. Instead of an instructional coach taking on an expert role and providing explicit guidance, an instructional coach may instead take a peer role and support a teacher in forging their own improvement path while providing support requested by the teacher. As this is one of the methods instructional coaches could utilize in their work with teachers, it applies to this study because it may be a preferred method by teachers for how they would like to receive coaching.

Research Questions

The research explored the impact of instructional coach feedback in teaching

practice and what role the relationship between the instructional coach and teacher plays in the implementation of feedback. The questions that guided the research were

1. What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices?
2. What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?
3. What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?

Overview of the Methodology

This study utilized mixed methods. The quantitative survey portion was the first phase of the research, followed by focus groups and interviews—the qualitative portion. I chose to use mixed methods because it provides more insight into the research questions, and convergent mixed methods allow for determining if the qualitative and quantitative results “confirm or disconfirm each other” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018 p. 217).

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015) was the basis for the study's quantitative portion. The survey was distributed electronically to all K-12 classroom teachers in the district by the schools' principals in the district. Its primary purpose was to determine teacher perspectives on instructional coach feedback and how teachers utilize it in the school setting. It was cross-sectional and collected in the spring of 2021. The electronic survey has strengths in that it is rapid, low in cost, and data are readily available and convenient. A weakness, however, is that it could get overlooked in an email inbox. The survey sent to the teachers consisted of the original 17 items; however, I focused on the results of the six items that address the usefulness, accuracy, and credibility of the feedback and access to resources and responsiveness.

Interviews were conducted as a follow-up to the survey. The questions asked addressed teacher perceptions of their relationships with their instructional coach and what impact that relationship makes on their receptivity and use of instructional coach feedback. The prepared questions addressed feedback, including determining the teachers' optimal vision of feedback. Using the mixed methods process, I collected more in-depth data that provided insight into what it takes for instructional coach feedback to be effectively implemented in classrooms to improve instruction.

Key Definitions

Feedback

“Information provided by an evaluator regarding a teacher’s performance related to a set of standards that supports professional growth and the capacity to impact student success” (Tepper & Flynn, 2018, p. 4).

Instructional Coaching

“Instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met” (Knight, 2018, p. 3).

Instructional Practices

The actions and activities a teacher utilizes in the classroom to provide instruction to their students.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to deepen the body of knowledge on the impact of coach-teacher relationships on adaptations of instructional practices. It will be important for school leaders, administrators, and instructional coaches as they may better

understand the role relationships play in implementing instructional coach feedback. The new knowledge may inform determinations on what professional development will be offered for instructional coaches to improve their methods and thus their impact on instructional practices. Further, the allocation of instructional coach time can be revisited to support instructional coaches in prioritizing and structuring their efforts. Identifying the impact instructional coach feedback has on instructional practices may also support administrators, and school leaders create partnerships between the instructional coach and teacher that will yield positive results in implementing improved instructional practices. One outcome will be teacher perspectives on the impact instructional coach feedback makes, from low impact to high impact. This was followed by determining what role the interpersonal relationship between the instructional coach and teacher has on the teacher's implementation of instructional coach feedback. These two outcomes can inform leaders on the impact an instructional coach makes and inform instructional coaches on how strong of an emphasis they should put on relationship building.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in this study work in schools with instructional coaches, but they may not have received feedback specifically from that instructional coach. There also may be a misunderstanding of what the instructional coach's role is in a school. Further, due to the principals' visions for the instructional coach's role, a school with an instructional coach who does not give feedback could skew the data.

An additional limitation is that I am considered an instructional coach in the district, though I am specialized in a subject area and support multiple schools. Because of my role, I have relationships with the instructional coaches whom this study is about

and with the teachers who participated in the study. My role, however, is a peer-to-peer role in which I have no evaluation responsibilities or supervisory power over the participants.

The population was all teachers who teach sixth through eighth grade in a rural school district in eastern North Carolina. As a result, the data may not be able to be generalized to other districts or educational systems. While all teachers were asked to participate, the data from this sample represent only those who chose to participate in the survey. Though there are six schools in the district, each with an instructional coach, neither all sites nor all instructional coaches being represented can be assumed. The participants for the interviews were selected from those who volunteered to participate in the survey. This sample population may not represent the overall population of the district.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, followed by references. The first chapter includes an introduction, a statement of the problem, an overview of the theoretical framework, the research questions, a summary of the methodology, key definitions, the purpose and significance of the study, and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the related literature, delving into the research on instructional coaching. Chapter 3 is a detailed description of the methodology used for the completion of the study, outlining the qualitative and quantitative methods utilized within the study. Chapter 4 is a detailed presentation of the results, organized by research question. For each research question, the survey items and interview questions are presented with their results and an analysis of the results, along with summaries of the

overall findings for each research question. Chapter 5 outlines the outcomes of this study, including suggestions for improving the study, suggestions for further research, and recommendations informed by the findings in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) included funding for hiring instructional coaches and expectations that each state supports LEAs in creating opportunities for career paths that include instructional coaching. While various reasons justify an instructional coach's role, an instructional coach's focus and the focus of their work with teachers should be on student needs and methods for teachers supporting students in meeting goals (Ippolito & Bean, 2019). The term “coaching” is one that has many emotions, opinions, and perspectives that come along with it (Rowley, 2006). To coach someone “is to help him or her acquire and refine the knowledge and skills required for enhanced performance in that field” (Rowley, 2006, p. 109). Consistency is a critical component of instructional coaching, if instructional coaching is going to support teachers in their ambitious goals of creating quality instruction for their students (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019).

Instructional Coaching Roles and Responsibilities

Multiple definitions of instructional coaching exist. Knight (2018) defined instructional coaching this way: “Instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met” (p. 3). Wang (2017) summarized the responsibilities as “modifying teacher practices through direct instruction by coach to teacher and then application of learning in real-time in the classroom” (p. 24). Each of these roles supports a school in becoming more successful. The instructional coach's four typical responsibilities are to help teachers analyze the current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies, and provide instructional support (Knight, 2018). These

responsibilities are in place to address the needs beginning teachers have, which can be categorized into four common types: technical advice, feedback and emotional support, encouragement, and peer dialogue (Rowley, 2006).

Multiple forms of coaches exist in schools, including literacy coaches, exceptional children coaches, athletic coaches, and instructional coaches, to name a few. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), 36.9% of all public schools had general instructional coaches, 41.3% had reading coaches, 27.6% had math coaches, and 9.8% had science coaches. With these percentages, it is essential to know what an instructional coach's role is.

Analyzing Current Reality

Instructional coaches support teachers by providing them with an additional perspective of what is happening in the classroom through observation, collaboratively analyzing student work, and providing results of conversations with students. Knight (2018) summarizes this as analyzing current reality. An instructional coach can provide added insights and different perspectives on the teacher's viewpoint of the classroom (Knight, 2018). There are multiple methods for accomplishing this task, including observation, student work analysis, and conversation with the students (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018).

Observation. Instructional coaches observe teachers for various reasons, including teacher requests, principal requests, and a method to set and check on the progress of goals. Aguilar (2013) suggested that observations take place in a variety of contexts. These observations should include a clear focus, the use of data collection tools, and a debrief session (Knight, 2019). Knight (2018) suggested that both the instructional

coach and the teacher have the opportunity to view the lesson; the instructional coach viewing through observation, and the teacher through video recording. Ultimately, the observation's purpose is to provide opportunities for feedback and set goals (Knight, 2018).

Observation data can be qualitative or quantitative in nature. Glickman et al. (2018) suggest categorical instruments, performance indicator instruments, visual diagramming, and space utilization as potential quantitative instruments for observing in a classroom. Glickman et al. suggested verbatim, detached open-ended narrative, participant open-ended observation, and focused questionnaire observations as qualitative measures.

Before observation, the instructional coach and the teacher should set a purpose. Setting a purpose for the observation ensures the instructional coach is looking for the items in which the teacher wants support (Aguilar, 2013; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016; Knight, 2018). Weisling and Gardiner (2018) not only recommended setting a purpose but also determining a data-collection protocol. Knight (2018) explained that the data collection method should match the protocol's intention's focus and provide multiple forms for collecting data. The instructional coach and teacher should ensure the protocol aligns with the goal, but a protocol results in documented data for further discussion (Knight, 2018). If the teacher has not set a goal before the observation, the coach-teacher team can use the observation data to generate a goal (Knight, 2018).

Analysis of Student Work. Instructional coaches and teachers work together to analyze student work. This student work can include benchmark assessment data, paper-

pencil assessments, formal data, informal data (Walkowiak, 2016). Aguilar (2013) suggested the instructional coach's role in data analysis is to help a teacher reflect on possible classroom changes based on the data found. Knight (2018) noted that looking at actual student work samples provides the team information on student strengths and weaknesses. By analyzing student work together, the instructional coach adds perspective to the teacher (Knight, 2018). From these strengths and weaknesses, the team sets instructional goals (Knight, 2018).

Conversation With Students. Discussing the classroom environment, climate, and experiences with students provides additional insight into a teacher's evaluation of their classroom. Students, the primary consumers of a teacher's efforts, are rarely consulted about their view of a teacher's efforts (Knight, 2018). Knight (2018) suggested consulting with students through informal conversations, interviews, writing prompts, or exit tickets to fully understand how instruction progresses. Aguilar (2013) offered similar activities and noted that this method helps assess areas such as the culture or climate within a classroom--perceptions students have.

Setting Goals

Setting goals together provides an endpoint that the teacher and instructional coach can use to generate an actionable plan that produces desired results. Johnson et al. (2016) likened a teacher-coach relationship to establishing goals in a doctor-patient relationship because they need to agree on goals and the process to achieve the goals. Knight (2018) noted the importance of setting goals, stating, "when there is no goal there is a real danger that coaching will have no lasting impact" (p 65). Pierce (2019) explained that goal setting establishes a tone that the teacher's needs are at the forefront of the

coaching relationship. Pierce warned against setting a goal for teachers; instead, the instructional coach and teacher should establish it together. By setting the goal together, there is the opportunity for teacher buy-in rather than doing it for complacency (Knight, 2018; Walkowiak, 2016). While there are many methods for setting goals, Aguilar (2013) suggested writing SMARTE goals: strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, time-bound, and equitable. Knight (2018) similarly offered a goal set to an acronym, a PEERS goal: powerful, easy, emotionally compelling, reachable, and student-focused. A third, related opinion on goals comes from Walkowiak (2016), noting that goals should be narrow, focused on easing conversation, deepening understanding of the goals, and manageable.

Identifying and Explaining Teaching Strategies

After determining a goal, the next step in an instructional coach's responsibility is to identify and explain teaching strategies to help the teacher meet the goal. Knight (2018) wrote that to have the most effective teachers, school professionals must ensure that teachers have various options and the opportunity to turn down or say no to a suggestion. Engaging teachers is possible by providing teachers with more than one possible method to address a goal and choosing the specifics about implementation (Knight, 2018). Knight (2018) suggested creating an instructional playbook where teachers have a list of possible strategies followed by page-long explanations of each. In addition to the examples, he suggested including checklists to detail what a given strategy looks like when utilized (Knight, 2018).

Providing Support

An instructional coach supports the teacher by using various methods as they

work together to achieve a goal. Aguilar (2013) generalized that most educators who have not worked with an instructional coach believe an instructional coach's role is to observe and give feedback, help plan lessons, or provide sympathy. These are components of an instructional coach's position but not the entirety of it (Aguilar, 2013). Beyond this limited view, instructional coaches help teachers reflect, collect data, and modify their instruction to meet the teacher-established goals (Knight, 2018).

Instructional Coach Evaluation

Though other evaluation methods exist, the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards evaluation tool is the primary instrument for evaluating North Carolina instructional coaches. While evaluation is standard in teacher performance, few studies have looked into instructional coach evaluation (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020).

Many school professionals, including instructional coaches, are evaluated using the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards evaluation tool. This tool is for licensed educators whose role is to directly interact with teachers to help them become better (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b). Their roles may be district- or building-based and include working with individual teachers or teams of teachers; however, they do not have direct responsibility for students (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b). Though the State of North Carolina created this tool for implementation, an LEA may develop an alternative evaluation if it is properly vetted and has similar standards (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b).

Though the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards evaluation tool is the standard set by North Carolina, other tools are in development. Saclarides and

Lubienski (2020) created an Evaluation Tool (ET) for implementation in a district. In studying the effects of this evaluation tool, they determined two trends resulting from the tool's use: The coaching cycles became longer than they should, and the instructional coaches took over the work the teachers should be doing (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020). The longer coaching cycles occurred because the ET called for this, though without the instrument, the instructional coaches would have done shorter, more frequent cycles (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020). Saclarides and Lubienski wrote the instructional coaches took over the work because the ET student data would be directly tied to the instructional coach, rather than just the teacher, making the instructional coach step in. The instructional coaches involved in the study indicated they did the work for the teachers instead of with the teachers because they wanted to ensure good results (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020). A limitation this produced was that the teachers no longer felt they could replicate work they were supposed to be learning to do if they had had the opportunity to be more involved in the process (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020).

Though the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards evaluation tool and the ET are two evaluation tools, Saclarides and Lubienski (2020) offered other suggestions. These suggestions include administrative observations, teacher surveys, student data, and coach self-study. Ultimately, though, instructional coaching's purpose is to improve instruction and thus student learning. When the primary performance indicator is student performance, instructional coaches may begin to focus their work on student improvement rather than teacher improvement (Saclarides & Lubienski, 2020, p. 51)

Qualities of an Instructional Coach

The role of an instructional coach is complex: one that needs knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be carried out effectively. It is crucial that district leaders identify these characteristics in those they intend to hire into a coaching role and continually support instructional coaches in further developing these traits (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017, p. 326). The knowledge, skills, and dispositions an instructional coach needs apply to their work with teachers and their work with administrators, creating a united front between the three groups (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017, p. 326).

Knowledge

Knowledge refers to the information the instructional coach possesses, whether about adult learning theories, teaching strategies, or content areas. Knight (2016) explained that one subset of knowledge a successful instructional coach has is the complexities of working with adult learners. Because adults prefer to have control over decisions made for them, they take feedback more personally and want to have their goals as the focus of their work; instructional coaches must know how to work with adults' characteristics (Knight, 2016).

Because of their role in supporting teachers with teaching practices, instructional coaches must have a solid understanding of teaching strategies (Knight, 2016). Though the instructional coach should know teaching strategies, they should not dictate a teaching skill to use; instead, they should help teachers determine the background of the need and together determine what strategy is needed to improve that area (Pierce, 2019). Strategies do not need to be extensive and in-depth; instead, they can be simple (Pierce, 2019). In addition to understanding the teaching strategy, the instructional coach must be willing to teach the teacher how to utilize it (Pierce, 2019).

Skills

Instructional coaching skills encompass the activities a coach must perform proficiently to support a teacher effectively. These skills include implementing coaching and feedback cycles, working with observational data, communicating, and leading (Knight, 2016). It is by effectively utilizing a combination of these skills that an instructional coach can deliver feedback to the teacher for instructional improvement (Knight, 2016).

Instructional coaches must be able to implement coaching and feedback cycles effectively. Coaching cycles hold teachers and instructional coaches accountable for their work together (Knight, 2016). Coaching cycles consist of three components: planning, teaching, and reflection (Suarez, 2018). In planning, the teacher and the instructional coach work to build strengths in teacher-selected goals (Suarez, 2018). In teaching, an instructional coach can model a lesson, coteach with the teacher, or observe the class while focused on the goal (Suarez, 2018). In the final component, reflection, the instructional coach and the teacher reflect on the lesson and revise the goals (Suarez, 2018). In a study about the productivity of feedback cycles, Christman et al. (2016) determined that multiple feedback cycles allowed teachers to reflect on their practices numerous times and receive valuable feedback from an outside perspective.

An additional skill instructional coaches must have is working with observational data. Instructional coaches must have skills in gathering data as one method to support teachers in achieving their goals (Knight, 2016). They must be able to collect, interpret, and share their observational data (Knight, 2016). Observational data serve various purposes, including generating a count of behaviors, determining if a performance is

happening or not, creating a picture of the classroom, and getting a view from the inside-out (Glickman et al., 2018).

Instructional coaches can collect observation data qualitatively or quantitatively to support teachers in attaining their goals. When using quantitative observations, the data categories must be clear and understood both by the instructional coach and the teacher (Glickman et al., 2018). If done correctly, the teacher and instructional coach can use the qualitative data for statistical work (Glickman et al., 2018). On the other hand, qualitative data involve descriptions of what is seen (Glickman et al., 2018). There is less focus on the observation when completing a qualitative observation; instead, it paints the classroom's overall picture (Glickman et al., 2018).

Instructional coaches must have communication skills to effectively build relationships that move the teaching profession forward (Knight, 2016). Knight (2016) wrote, “Effective coaches usually are good listeners, ask good questions, build emotional connections, find common ground, build trust, and redirect destructive interactions” (p. 30). Pierce (2019) suggested instructional coaches can achieve this through questioning, listening, and paraphrasing skills. In terms of language, Toll (2019) noted that the choice of words can make an impact, including that language such as the addition of *-ee* to a role or the term “coach” creates a power difference. Toll also noted that pronouns matter—“we” when only referring to the teacher can be condescending.

Instructional coaches must have leadership skills (Knight, 2016). Knight (2016) explained those with these leadership skills are

deeply respectful and responsive to teachers with whom they collaborate,
adjusting their approach depending on the personality and needs of each teacher

and his/her students. Second, they must be assertive and disciplined, leading change in an organized, ambitious, forceful manner. (p. 31).

Related to these leadership skills, instructional coaches must, in turn, be reflective practitioners and have a deep understanding of their skills and beliefs and the characteristics of their coworkers (DeWalt & Mayberry, 2019). Building this knowledge helps coaches build relationships with their colleagues to lead them (Dewalt & Mayberry, 2019).

Dispositions

Dispositions are the inherent ways an instructional coach behaves—behaviors that may impact the receptiveness of a teacher to an instructional coach’s feedback. A study on instructional coaching by Kho et al. (2019) determined themes that led to establishing four qualities characteristic of instructional coaches: being understanding, being appreciative, being flexible, and having patience. Kho et al. described these qualities as innate dispositions that successful coaches embodied. These dispositions impact the teacher perceptions of an instructional coach’s interactions and thus shape an instructional coach's role in a building (Kho et al., 2019).

Providing Feedback

In working with teachers, a component of an instructional coach’s role is to provide feedback after observing teaching. This feedback can serve a variety of purposes, including “reinforcing success, correcting errors, helping to unravel misconceptions, suggesting specific improvements, giving improvement advice for the future, praising, punishing or rewarding” (Hattie & Clarke, 2019, p. 5). In coaching, there are three types of feedback: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation (Stone & Heen, 2015, as cited in

Knight, 2018). Appreciation feedback expresses gratitude, coaching feedback provides suggestions, and evaluation feedback provides a comparison between the teacher and a standard (Knight, 2018). Each type of feedback can help teachers bridge the gap between their current actions and achieving their goals (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). In structuring feedback, it is important to remember that criticism almost always has a negative impact on humans, leading the feedback to do more harm than good (Crane, 2017). To counter this impact, progress feedback, indicating things going well, should be included with any feedback with areas for improvement (Crane, 2017). Feedback should be delivered soon after an observation, as late feedback loses its relevance and its context (Crane, 2017).

Types of Coaching

The partnership between an instructional coach and a teacher can take on multiple forms, depending on the needs and development of the teacher. Aguilar (2013) and Knight (2018) wrote about three types of coaching. Both Aguilar (2013) and Knight (2018) described facilitative and directive coaching. The third style is similar for both, though Aguilar (2013) titled it transformational coaching, whereas Knight (2018) deemed it dialogical coaching. In terms of a continuum, directive coaching is on one end because the instructional coach makes most of the decisions and the teacher follows (Aguilar, 2013; Glickman et al., 2018; Knight, 2018). In contrast, the instructional coach's role in transformational or dialogical coaching is to work as an equal partner with the teacher in improving instruction (Aguilar, 2013; Glickman et al., 2018; Knight, 2018).

Directive Coaching

In directive coaching, the dynamic between the instructional coach and teacher is an expert-learner relationship in which the instructional coach's purpose is to help a

teacher learn a skill. In most instances, the goal of directive coaching is to change a teacher's actions (Knight, 2018). Directive coaching is a master-apprentice relationship where the instructional coach imparts their knowledge to a teacher (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018).

Instructional coaches use directive coaching techniques effectively in a variety of situations. The most common appropriate uses are when a new directive is in place, when working with a beginning teacher, or when an instructional coach assumes the teacher does not have the skill they are trying to teach (Aguilar, 2013; Glickman et al., 2018; Knight, 2018). These situations allow directive coaching as it is appropriate for the instructional coach to be seen as an expert and direct teacher behavior (Knight, 2018). The type of teacher who may most enjoy being a part of directive coaching activities is the one who likes to do rather than talk about doing (Aguilar, 2013).

While there are times this directive approach is appropriate, there are possible roadblocks to using it. One potential issue is an instructional coach can lose credibility as an expert if they prescribe strategies to use and the results are not favorable (Glickman et al., 2018). Another issue is when an instructional coach uses directive coaching to all (Glickman et al., 2018). Coworkers can perceive directive coaching as manipulation when used as a method for all (Glickman et al., 2018). A final consideration for this type of coaching is that the feedback needs to remain constructive or developmental rather than destructive feedback that shuts down the communication between the instructional coach and the teacher (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016). With preparation and awareness of this approach's possible negative consequences, instructional coaches can avoid each of these roadblocks (Glickman et al., 2018).

Facilitative Coaching

Facilitative coaching is a method of coaching whereby the instructional coach supports a teacher in change through reflection and experimentation. While the instructional coach may be an expert in an area, rather than imparting that knowledge to a teacher, the instructional coach tries to support activities for the teacher to discover the content on their own (Aguilar, 2013). In facilitative coaching, the teacher is responsible for making most decisions, with guidance and support from the instructional coach (Knight, 2018). Aguilar (2013) related this to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in which the instructional coach first supports the teacher in trying something new while progressively taking away the scaffolds previously provided, gradually releasing responsibility to the teacher.

In a facilitative coaching relationship, the teacher and the instructional coach are considered equals. Because the teacher already knows teaching methods, the instructional coach's role is to help the teacher build upon their skills and support the teacher in reflection (Aguilar, 2013). Knight (2018) suggested in these instances the instructional coach should not share their expertise because it may keep the teacher from determining their path.

A variety of contexts fit facilitative coaching's purpose. These include when the teacher is at a high developmental level, when there is a shared level of expertise between the instructional coach and the teacher, when there is shared investment in the outcomes, and when both the instructional coach and the teacher are working to solve a problem (Glickman et al., 2018). With this method, the teacher must have a strong background in the content and pedagogy (Glickman et al., 2018). Since the teacher already holds the

content knowledge, facilitative coaching tends to have a longer success rate when implementing change (Knight, 2018). Additionally, due to the equality in power and knowledge, facilitative coaching conversations allow for deep consideration of all sides of a problem, leading to seeing all components of possible opportunities (Glickman et al., 2018).

Three possible issues in the facilitative coaching model are that a teacher could believe the instructional coach is manipulating them, that a teacher feels that they are being directed rather than a collaborator, and when a teacher is unwilling to share their feelings within the conversation (Glickman et al., 2018). Instructional coaches can mitigate these problems through relationship building and continuous dialogue (Knight, 2018). Dialogue supports building shared meaning between the two participants and makes action possible (Crane, 2017).

Dialogical or Transformational Coaching

Depending on the author, dialogical or transformational coaching are interchangeable terms for a coaching style that combines coaching strategies and elevates teaching methods. This coaching style utilizes techniques that support a teacher in generating their answer to a question rather than being provided with a solution (Knight, 2018). Though Aguilar (2013) and Knight (2018) used different terms for this coaching style, both described an approach that incorporates directive and facilitative coaching, improves upon it through inquiry and conversation, and digs deeper into quality instruction. In this coaching style, the instructional coach and the teacher are a team of equals who grapple with the best methods for achieving quality goals in the classroom (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018).

In dialogical coaching, the shared expertise between the instructional coach and the teacher has the potential for elevating the outcomes of their work together. Like facilitative coaching, a teacher must have a significant understanding of both content and pedagogy for this form of coaching to be effective (Glickman et al., 2018). Unlike facilitative coaching, in which the instructional coach is discouraged from sharing their expertise, the instructional coach is encouraged to share their expertise and ideas (Knight, 2018). One of the most significant benefits of this coaching style is that the results tend to be long-lasting (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018). There is a level of mutual respect between the two parties, and the shared expertise supports them in ultimately finding the most beneficial path for instruction (Knight, 2018).

While there are many benefits to this style of coaching, there are some possible limitations to it. A concern about using this coaching style is that there may be a perception that instead of providing support, the instructional coach is manipulating the teacher into performing the way the instructional coach would like (Glickman et al., 2018). Another problem is when an instructional coach cannot remain nonjudgmental and unbiased (Glickman et al., 2018). When in a deep coaching session, the teacher should be the one making the decisions about how to proceed, and depending on their perception of the instructional coach, this can impact the teacher's progress (Glickman et al., 2018). This issue can be moot by building trust and healthy relationships (Glickman et al., 2018).

Building Relationships

Many instructional coaches' tasks cannot be successful without a strong relationship between the instructional coach and the teacher. Authentic coach-teacher

relationships support teachers in feeling “valued, cared about, and trusted” (Dewalt & Mayberry, 2019, p. 58). The coach should build personal and professional relationships with the teacher (Graham & Ferriter, 2010; Walkowiak, 2016). Relationships can be created through building trust, listening, questioning, clarifying expectations, keeping commitments, and asking for permission.

Building Trust

A key component of building a quality relationship is building trust. “There is no coaching without trust” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 40). If a teacher does not trust the instructional coach's intentions and work, the teacher will not be receptive to the coaching, not follow through with the ideas, or grow from the relationship (Aguilar, 2013). It can be intimidating for a teacher to have an instructional coach in their classroom, but trust can ease the intimidation (Walkowiak, 2016). Aguilar (2013) listed 10 steps for building trust during this time of starting a coaching relationship:

- plan and prepare
- cautiously gather background information
- establish confidentiality
- listen
- ask questions
- connect
- validate
- be open about who you are and what you do
- ask for permission to coach
- keep commitments

Knight (2018) identified five elements necessary for building trust: demonstrating trustworthy character, striving to be reliable, competence, warmth, and an attitude of stewardship. Neither of these lists is exhaustive; however, they incorporate components of building a trusting relationship to help a teacher grow and succeed.

Listening

Listening is one component of building a trusting relationship. Listening requires genuinely hearing and understanding what the teacher is trying to say (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016; Knight, 2018). It also “demonstrates respect and builds mutual trust by demonstrating your willingness to be sensitive and empathetic” (Crane, 2017, p. 85). By actively listening and responding by paraphrasing, the instructional coach can internalize the conversation, assure the teacher they are being heard, and clarify what the teacher said (Aguilar, 2013). Knight (2018) suggested that effective listening requires the instructional coach to commit to listening, make sure the teacher is the speaker, pause and affirm before responding, and not interrupt. Three listening methods are quiet listening, intentional listening, and collecting stories (Aguilar, 2013).

Questioning

While listening is necessary to have the teacher heard in the relationship, the strategic use of questioning can move the conversation forward. One purpose of questioning is to get clarity (Knight, 2018). In asking clarifying questions, an instructional coach can get “details, specifics, clarification, or examples” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 58). The instructional coach can also ask questions that prompt the teacher to tell more by asking questions such as Knight's (2018) AWE question: And What Else? This open-ended question allows the teacher to continue to delve into the topic they are speaking

about to uncover more information, both by the teacher and the instructional coach (Knight, 2018), and to show value in the teacher's perspective (Pierce, 2019). By asking a single question at a time, the instructional coach can have the teacher respond thoughtfully to the question, thus gaining a better understanding (Knight, 2018).

Clarifying Expectations

Defining both the instructional coach's and the teacher's expectations should be determined at the beginning of the relationship and throughout their work together. This continuous revisiting of expectations can create a stronger relationship and more productive dialogue (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016). Questions Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2016) suggested discussing are, "Will the feedback you share be formative or summative? Formal or informal? Solicited or unsolicited? Immediate or delayed? What feels most important to the involved individuals about the process as well as the goals?" (p. 106). Discussing these questions' answers provides both the teacher and the instructional coach with clear expectations for their work (Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano, 2016).

Keeping Commitments

Listed as one of Aguilar's (2013) 10 methods for building trust, an instructional coach must keep their commitments to teachers. Before committing to a teacher, the instructional coach must determine that it is realistic—that the instructional coach is not taking on more than is possible in a given time frame (Aguilar, 2013). After scheduling a coaching appointment, the instructional coach should keep the commitment (Crane, 2017). If something else comes up, an instructional coach should determine another time for the coaching before agreeing to the new commitment (Crane, 2017). DeWalt and

Mayberry (2019) explained that by making instructional coaches create a schedule with flexibility for adjustment, instructional coaches were less likely to be asked to complete other tasks during scheduled coaching activities. They expressed that it emphasized the importance of an instructional coach's role and was a method for building trust through keeping commitments.

Asking for Permission

Asking permission to give feedback and other coaching moves affords the teacher some control in the relationship. An instructional coach should ask the teacher for permission to observe and give feedback (Aguilar, 2013; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016; Knight, 2018). This step is one of the most important in the feedback process (Crane, 2017). By an instructional coach asking permission to share feedback, the instructional coach provides the teacher the opportunity to be in the right setting for receiving feedback (Aguilar, 2013; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016; Knight, 2018). Asking permission also allows the teacher to determine a time and place to receive feedback without being preoccupied (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016). Asking for permission also sets the tone for the conversation, a tone of respect for the teacher's needs at that moment (Crane, 2017).

Coach vs. Administrator

The instructional coach and the school administrator hold leadership roles in the building; some are shared, some overlap, and some are distinct. Because of the differences in relationships with teachers, these roles need to be clearly defined and maintained (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016). Ippolito and Bean (2019) expressed that “ideally, supervision and coaching work should be clearly separated, with

the principal supervising and the coach supporting” (p. 72).

North Carolina Definitions

In North Carolina, instructional coaches fall under the category of teacher leadership specialists when evaluated, and the rubric informs practices instructional coaches should undertake. In the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b) evaluation tool, leadership specialists are defined as “district-or building-based professionals who help teachers become better teachers. Theirs is a support role involving direct interaction with teachers to improve student learning and achievement” (p. 5). The standards note teacher leadership specialists provide support, but this support does not bleed into evaluation or supervision.

Just as the evaluation rubric provides information for instructional coaching roles, it helps define an administrator's role. In the North Carolina Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2105a), Standard IV states a principal is responsible for the fair and equitable evaluation of staff members and that this evaluation’s purpose is to improve employee performance. Relatedly, North Carolina General Statute 115C-288 defines one of the roles of an administrator as “to evaluate licensed employees and develop mandatory improvement plans” (Powers and Duties of Principal, 2006, p. 2).

In North Carolina, the only license specifically for instructional coaching is a middle grades literacy coach license. This license is only for those who have completed the North Carolina Teacher Academy Middle School Literacy Coach Training Program (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2020). According to the North Carolina Teacher

Academy website, in 2006, the academy provided training and support for 100 coaches from the state's lowest-performing middle schools (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2020). The following year, 100 more educators received coaching training; and in the third year, training was only for those hired due to attrition (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2020). In 2009, the funding was cut for the program (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2020). While the program was operating, however, there were requirements of a memorandum of understanding and a commitment on the part of the school improvement team to hold responsibility for the instructional coach's impact (North Carolina Teacher Academy, 2020).

Shared Responsibilities

Some activities instructional coaches participate in are nearly identical to the activities administrators undertake. Instructional coaches and administrators share the roles of developing relationships, observing teachers, analyzing data, providing resources, mentoring teachers, and strengthening the building's community (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Though both roles are responsible for developing relationships, an administrator is a superior to the teacher, whereas the instructional coach is more closely related to a peer relationship with the teacher (Hall & Simeral, 2008). The instructional coach and the administrator observe in classrooms, though the purposes and feedback styles may differ (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016; Hall & Simeral, 2008).

Overlapping Responsibilities

Activities that instructional coaches and administrators are responsible for but have different focuses or implementation are considered overlapping responsibilities. Some overlapping duties between the instructional coach and the administrator are

leadership, goal setting, professional development, and communication with teachers (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Both the instructional coach and the administrators are leaders in the building; however, the administrator's role is typically to stand ahead of the group and lead them toward a common goal, whereas an instructional coach leads from within the group (Hall & Simeral, 2008). In terms of goal setting, the administrator's goal setting with a teacher is directive, whereas an instructional coach's goal setting with the teacher is collaborative (Hall & Simeral, 2008). This is similar to the role of communicating with teachers—when a teacher speaks with an instructional coach, it is a teacher-to-peer conversation (Hall & Simeral, 2008). In contrast, when communicating with an administrator, it is a teacher-to-supervisor conversation (Hall & Simeral, 2008). An administrator determines what professional development is needed and assures it is provided to the school (Hall & Simeral, 2008). After the administrative decision, the instructional coach is sometimes responsible for coordinating or providing professional development (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

Distinct Responsibilities

Some activities the instructional coaches and administrators engage in are distinctly different from each other. An instructional coach's and an administrator's roles differ in their relationship with the teacher, their administrative duties, the type of feedback they give, and their role in a teacher's lessons (Hall & Simeral, 2008). In terms of relationships, an instructional coach is a teacher's peer who does not hold authority over the teacher, whereas an administrator is a superior (Hall & Simeral, 2008). This difference in a relationship impacts a teacher's view of the suggestions and the perceptions of the repercussions of their work (Hall & Simeral, 2008). An administrator

holds administrative responsibilities, whereas an instructional coach does not (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

Both roles provide feedback to teachers; however, the type and the effects of feedback are different. An instructional coach's feedback to the teacher is formative—a teacher uses it to grow and improve, whereas an administrator's feedback is summative—a judgment of the teacher's work (Hall & Simeral, 2008). A teacher's lessons are impacted by an instructional coach's impact, and the instructional coach may model or coteach lessons with the teacher (Hall & Simeral, 2008). On the other hand, an administrator evaluates the lessons and provides feedback on effectiveness (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Teachers must not perceive instructional coaches as evaluators because teachers may then be less likely to ask for support from an instructional coach (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017)

Limitations to Instructional Coaching

While there are limitations to instructional coaching, it is crucial to identify them and move forward for improvement. Woulfin and Rigby (2017) acknowledged this and recommended working through the limitations to building connections for successful coaching conditions. Some limitations to instructional coaching are time use, role definitions, teacher load, professional development, and the differences in roles between a school-hired and a district-hired coach.

Time

An instructional coach's impact is related to the expectations administrators and other supervisors have on them. The quantity of time spent with teachers is not the only factor; it is the activity done with the teacher as well (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). In some

places, guidance on instructional coach time use is explicitly stated, such as in Malaysia where 60% of their time should be on coaching activities, 20% on providing training and working in professional learning communities (PLCs), 15% on reports of what they have done, and 5% on other activities (Kho et al. 2019). The district, state, and school can have an influence over the instructional coach's time use (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). Not impacting the time use is instructional coach education and experience (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019).

In the study completed by Kane and Rosenquist (2019), they determined that because of the instructional coaches' funding sources, instructional coaches had to pick up additional roles and responsibilities within the building to ensure they fit under the obligations of the funding source. These additional responsibilities included teaching responsibilities, assessment coordination, and shared positions. DeWalt and Mayberry (2019) echoed this sentiment, explaining that instructional coaches hold various other duties, including substituting and creating assessments. They believed that as a result, instructional coaches did not have the time to work with all teachers; therefore, they spent the majority of their time with new or struggling teachers. Their district required instructional coaches to begin keeping logs of who they worked with and the types of activities they were engaged in and then analyzed the data to support the instructional coaches in protecting their coaching time. It is important that instructional coach time is utilized effectively through planning and policies in such a way that the time instructional coaches spend with teachers is maximized (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Role Definition

One inconsistency in instructional coaching is an unclear definition of the role an

instructional coach is supposed to play in a school. A clear understanding of the position increases an employee's effectiveness (Kho et al., 2019). The instructional coach and the school administrator should work together to define explicitly and express the roles of an instructional coach in the building (Walkowiak, 2016). This communication should repeatedly occur throughout the year to ensure the teachers know more about how to interact with the instructional coach and so the instructional coach can focus on the goals (Walkowiak, 2016). When it is a district-hired coach, Woulfin and Rigby (2017) noted this role definition as one necessary component of successful coaching, that administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches should each have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Instructional coaches fall into four categories of roles when working with teachers: facilitator, instructor, collaborator, and empowerer (Wang, 2017).

A study completed by Kane and Rosenquist (2019) determined that district-hired coaches spent more of their time engaged in impactful activities. They determined the district set goals to improve student achievement and expect instructional coaches to meet with teachers to make this happen based on qualitative data. This study also indicated that the expectations from the district to the instructional coach were clear. One possible reason for this was the relationship between the instructional coaches and the district leader supervising coaches.

In addition to clear role guidance from the district, those in Kane and Rosenquist's (2019) study indicated that providing cognitive coaching professional development clarified the district's expectations. The professional development aligned to the roles the district leaders expected the instructional coaches to hold.

Principal expectations can take away from the instructional coach's time with

teachers, particularly if there is a high level of trust between the administrator and the instructional coach (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). At times, this was also because the administrator had hired the instructional coach, so they knew the instructional coach's capabilities (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). The principal's expectations can come less formally than they did from the district, providing less directive for the instructional coach (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019).

If the role is not defined well, instructional coaches can find themselves falling into one of Rowley's (2006) traps: the workroom coaching trap, the evaluation trap, the interpretation trap, the time trap, or the confidentiality trap. The workroom coaching trap is one in which the instructional coach does not observe the teacher in their practice, rather they rely on the teacher's perspective of their own teaching effectiveness (Boswell, 2006). This counters Knight's (2018) research on observing in classrooms to get a clear picture of reality. The evaluation trap exists when any party does not understand the difference between supervision, evaluation, and observation, or when an instructional coach steps out of their role of observing into one of the other two (Boswell, 2006). In the interpretation trap, an instructional coach makes their own interpretations of a situation rather than listening to the teacher's perspective (Boswell, 2006). The time trap is one where time is not created for all components of official coaching cycles to occur, and the confidentiality trap is one in which an instructional coach forgets the confidential nature of the data and conversations collected with a teacher (Boswell, 2006). Each of these traps has the potential to be avoided with a clear definition of the role an instructional coach holds.

Teacher Load

The more teachers an instructional coach is expected to interact with, the less quality time the coach will have to spend with each of those teachers. In Kane and Rosenquist's (2019) study, district-level coaches, expected to work with all math teachers at multiple middle schools, could only see those teachers about once a week. Because of the infrequency of the instructional coach visits and the number of teachers, the instructional coaches perceived that it was hard to build consistency and ongoing relationships (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). Moody (2019) suggested creating a tiered system of instructional coaching as a solution to this problem. He suggested prioritizing the teachers by need, in a flexible manner, needing intensive support, flexible support, or facilitative support as a method for reaching all teachers. Ippolito and Bean (2019) created a similar suggestion because of the worry that instructional coaches who spend the majority of their time with struggling teachers will deter strong teachers from asking for help, and the instructional coach becomes a remediator rather than an instructional coach. Instructional coaches are additional professionals who can provide feedback to teachers (Ippolito & Bean, 2019), and “teachers who receive regular classroom feedback are also most satisfied with teaching” (Silva & Contreras, 2011, as cited in Glickman et al., 2018, p. 267; Saphier, 2011).

To provide more coaching for teachers in the buildings, Ippolito and Bean (2019) suggested administrators and instructional coaches work together to develop time for individual teacher coaching and small and large group coaching.

Professional Development

Instructional coaches not only provide professional development for teachers, but

they need professional development geared toward their roles and responsibilities as well. This professional development could be formal or informal supervision and professional learning, all of which should align with district and school goals (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Though they should receive this training, there is little professional development centered around coaching because there is no formal license to maintain with different professional development credentials than a teacher (Aguilar, 2019). This lack of professional development results in instructional coaches ultimately becoming school employees with the least job-specific training (Aguilar, 2019). This counters Knight's (2018) assertion that instructional coaches should always seek improvement in their skills, knowledge, and effectiveness. Ippolito and Bean (2019) wrote professional learning can occur independently, through reading research and attending conferences, but school districts should create networks for instructional coaches to hold informal discussions to collaborate and troubleshoot problems they are encountering. Ippolito and Bean (2019) offered suggestions of self-study and collaborative inquiry of supporting teachers. Will (2017) similarly suggested the need for collaboration and added a call for intentionality because there is typically only one instructional coach per building. Moody (2019) suggested using an instructional coach PLC to build a community of continuous learning.

Will (2017) suggested conducting book studies, analyzing data, and giving each other feedback regarding their coaching videos during these collaborative times. Aguilar (2019) noted instructional coaches need training specifically in coaching skills, which include "listening, facilitating conversations, managing their judgments and emotions, planning for coaching conversations and responding to the emotions of teachers" (p. 28).

Aguilar added that because of the role of providing professional development, instructional coaches need training effectively training adults.

In a study completed by Kane and Rosenquist (2019), the group of instructional coaches who engaged in the most impactful activities with teachers were also the instructional coaches who cited cognitive coaching professional development as a source of expectations for their coaching roles.

District vs. School Hired Coaches

In a study completed by Kane and Rosenquist (2019), in 1 year, on average, 92% of district-hired coaches spent their time engaged in activities that could make a significant impact on instruction. School-hired coaches spent 40% of their time in the same activities (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). These activities included modeling instruction, leading job-embedded professional development for teachers, observing teachers, and coteaching with teachers (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). The following year, district-hired coaches spent approximately 75% of their time on impactful activities, while school-hired coaches spent 43% of their time on these activities. In this second year of the study, there was a third group: district-hired, school-based coaches who spent, on average, 66% of their time on possible impactful activities.

Kane and Rosenquist (2018) identified limitations for both district-hired and school-hired coaches. A limitation of district-hired coaches is that they visit schools less frequently and therefore may have a harder time building relationships with the teachers and the administrators in the building (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). This problem was improved when instructional coaches remained in the position for more than 1 year; however, there were still limitations to this method (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). Many

school-hired coaches hold multiple responsibilities in the building, some of which include student-facing roles, limiting their access to support teacher improvement (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the teacher-reported implementation of instructional coach feedback to determine what role the instructional coach's style, knowledge, skills, and dispositions play in instructional practice. Findings provide an opportunity for supporting instructional coaches in their professional growth, which in turn, could afford professional development opportunities. The following section outlines the methods for the research study. This chapter includes the research questions, design, setting for the study, the overall and sample populations, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, validity, limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research:

1. What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices?
2. What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?
3. What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?

Setting

This study took place in a K-12 rural eastern North Carolina school district. The district has 28 schools, consisting of five high schools, six middle schools, 16 elementary schools, and one alternative school. The district currently has approximately 21,000 students, of which 10,000 are elementary students, 4,500 are middle school students, and 6,500 are high school students. The district is staffed by approximately 1,200 certified

teachers, 90 administrators, and 1,010 other staff members for approximately 2,300 employees. Each school has an instructional coach assigned to the site, for a total of 28 school-based instructional coaches.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was all certified teachers, Grades 6-8, which amounts to approximately 250 teachers. For the quantitative portion of the study, the survey was sent to all teachers through Qualtrics, aiming for a convenience sample of at least 25 participants. Thirty-five teachers responded to the entire survey. Other surveys were started, but the respondents stopped the survey after the first item; therefore, their results are not included.

For the qualitative portion of the study, I interviewed nine teachers of the 10 teachers who indicated interest. The respondents were each assigned a number based on the order in which they indicated interest, and I used a random number generator to select nine of them. I contacted each of the selected participants to set up a Zoom interview session. I made repeated attempts to set up an interview with one participant and I received no response, so the volunteer not initially chosen was contacted and participated instead. These nine teachers were a subset of the sample population who responded to the survey.

Research Design

The research was conducted utilizing convergent mixed methods, which allows for determining if the qualitative and quantitative results “confirm or disconfirm each other” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 217). After collecting both types of data, the information was linked to gain information that could not be gathered through one of

these methods alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative portion of the study was completed first, followed by the qualitative portion, to have the qualitative data deepen the quantitative portion's results.

To complete the quantitative portion, teachers completed the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey, which is copied in Appendix A (Cherasaro et al., 2015). All items were administered; however, a focus was placed on Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 14. These items focus on the usefulness, accuracy, and credibility of the feedback, access to resources, and responsiveness of the instructional coach. While the survey was initially designed to determine the effectiveness of any evaluator, instructions were given to specifically focus on the feedback given by the school's instructional coach. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Responses to the questions were each rated on a 5-point scale. It was administered through Qualtrics and sent to teachers through their principals.

The original survey had validity analyzed. Face validity was established using a seven-member advisory panel comprised of "expert survey developers, state leaders, and district leaders with oversight for educator evaluation systems" (Cherasaro et al., 2015, p. C-1). This advisory panel addressed questions about clarity and application of the questions and the directions and options for responses (Cherasaro et al., 2015). To further establish validity, Cherasaro et al. (2015) utilized a sample of teachers to conduct cognitive interviews.

Reliability was established using classical test theory, Rasch analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis using the data from 190 of 196 teachers who completed the final survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015). Five categories were studied: usefulness, accuracy,

credibility, access to resources, and responsiveness, each of which had consistency across the questions, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.826-0.939 (Cherasaro et al., 2015). The Cronbach's alpha generates a value representing how closely associated responses to a set of questions are (Urdan, 2017). If the responses to a group of questions within a similar topic are closely related, Cronbach's alpha will be a higher number, with the highest value possible being 1.0 (Urdan, 2017). Generally, a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70 is considered reliable (Urdan, 2017). The Cronbach's alpha for usefulness was 0.929, for accuracy it was 0.849, for credibility it was 0.939, for access to resources it was 0.824, and for responsiveness it was 0.917 (Cherasaro et al., 2015).

As another method to ensure the reliability of the questions, the group used confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis "tests how well a hypothesized organizational structure fits a set of data" (Urdan, 2017, p. 220). The factor loading range for usefulness was 0.23 to 0.84, with modifications made to the item with a score of 0.23 (Cherasaro et al., 2015). The factor loading range for accuracy was 0.56 to 0.74 (Cherasaro et al., 2015). For credibility, the factor range was 0.59 to 0.86 (Regional Educational Laboratory Central, 2015). For access to resources, the factor loading range was 0.37 to 0.66, and the factor loading range for responsiveness was 0.57 to 0.79 (Cherasaro et al., 2015).

The qualitative portion of the study utilized nine individual interviews. In the email the teachers received from the principals, there was a link to volunteer to participate in interviews. Nine interviews were conducted with participants who completed the survey. The interview participants were chosen by assigning them numbers based on what order they indicated interest. Then, a random number generator provided

numbers to select which participants to contact. One chosen participant did not respond to requests to set up a time for the interview, so the remaining volunteer participated in that participant's place. These interviews were completed and recorded through Zoom.

During each interview, I gave a basic overview of the process, followed by introducing myself. I presented an opening question followed by the content questions (Appendix B). While listening to the responses to the content questions, I utilized probes, such as "tell me more," "can you provide more detail?" and "can you explain further?" When the question portion was complete, I gave closing instructions.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I held many roles in this study. First, I input the survey into Qualtrics, got it approved by the assistant superintendent, and sent it to the principals for dissemination. Second, I reviewed the data and set up the interviews for the study's qualitative portion. I completed each of the nine interviews. Finally, after facilitating the qualitative portion of the study, I transcribed the interviews, coded the data, and looked for trends.

Quantitative Methods

Instrumentation

The study's quantitative portion utilized the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015). It was developed to collect data about teacher perceptions of the feedback they received and their self-reported instructional responses to that feedback (Cherasaro et al., 2015). The survey allows others to adapt and administer the survey for their use. It focuses on the "relationships among five characteristics: usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, responsiveness, and

teacher performance” (Cherasaro et al., 2015, p. B-1).

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey provided insight into Research Question, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” and Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” Because the survey includes items about the usefulness, accuracy, and responsiveness to feedback, the data provided insight into Research Question 1. Its focus on usefulness, responsiveness, and teacher performance informed Research Question 3.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

After proposal approval, I sought permission from the district to conduct the study by filling out the proper form and submitting it to the assistant superintendent. After district approval, I sent the survey to each school's principal, requesting they forward the survey to the appropriate teachers at their site (Appendix C). The email included a link to indicate interest in participating in an interview.

I utilized Qualtrics to analyze the data and generate descriptive statistics for each question following the survey deadline. Descriptive statistics apply only to the members of the sample population and are used to describe the characteristics of the sample (Urdan, 2017). This includes the percentages of how participants responded to the survey. This includes grouping two adjacent responses together, such as agree and strongly agree, to make a larger category. In addition to looking at the responses to each question, I looked at the percentage across a category, determining how teachers felt overall about a category.

Because some demographic information was collected, I looked for trends either

in a subject area, grade level, or other demographic. This analysis also includes missing data, frequencies of responses and demographics, and means of the results as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). I reviewed all the items, paying particular attention to the six items most closely related to the research questions: Items 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 14.

While some demographic information was collected, due to the number of teachers in the district, it would be difficult to identify which teacher responded to the survey. This ensured the anonymity of participants. Further, the results of the survey are housed on my password-protected computer for which I am the only person with the password.

Qualitative Methods

Instrumentation

The qualitative portion of the study followed the quantitative portion as a means to triangulate the data. Triangulating the data will support determining if there is a convergence of responses between the qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 217). By converging the data from the survey and interviews, validity can be added to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 217). Due to health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, I utilized Zoom as a platform to conduct the interviews as well as a method to record the interview. I used probes such as “can you provide more detail,” “can you explain that further,” and “tell me more” to further the dialogue.

Following the interviews, I transcribed the conversations and coded the transcription. I did not set predetermined codes.

The interviews provided insight into each of my three research questions, with a focus on Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the

development of instructional practices,” and Research Question 2, “What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?” Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice,” will also be addressed in the qualitative portion, however, to a lesser degree. Because the interview questions specifically ask about the relationship between the instructional coach and the teacher, Research Question 2 is addressed. More detail was able to be gathered about the impact of the feedback.

Considerations for protecting the privacy of the participants included both anonymity and confidentiality. In transcribing the sessions, I used numbers to identify the participants and kept that list confidential. In the interviews, I assured the participants that I would not include anything that reflected their identity, including if they spoke about a particular person with whom they work that may provide insight into where they work or if they mentioned which subject area they teach. I kept all the data, including the Zoom recordings, transcriptions, and coding data on my password-protected computer for which I am the only one with the password.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

After choosing participants for the interviews, I invited the participants to scheduled Zoom meetings. I informed the participants that the session would be recorded, and after gaining verbal consent, I began the recording. I asked questions from the generated question bank (Appendix B), using probes to have participants expand on their answers. After finishing the recordings, I transcribed the conversations in Microsoft Word. After transcription, I had participants verify the transcriptions of the recordings. I

saved the data from these interviews on my personal, password-protected computer, which I only use. I will keep the data for 3 years, at which point I will properly destroy the data and identifying information.

Chapter 4: Results

This mixed methods study was conducted to understand practicing coaches' impacts on teacher instructional practices. The first three chapters of this study provided information on the roles of instructional coaches, a review of the literature on instructional coaches, and a description of the methods utilized to conduct the research. This chapter contains a description of the data, an explanation of the data analysis, and findings regarding each research question individually. Qualitative and quantitative data are reported regarding their relationship to the research questions.

Overview

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to answer research questions related to the impact of instructional coaching feedback on instructional practices. The research questions guiding this study were

1. What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices?
2. What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?
3. What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices?” Knight (2018) explained that multiple roles exist for an instructional coach and that within these roles, the ultimate responsibility is for an instructional coach to assist in improving instruction. This research question aimed to determine details about what impacts instructional coaches make in practice.

Quantitative Data

The results from the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015) included 35 responses from middle grades (6-8) educators. Regarding Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” I focused on the responses to two items on the survey. The results of these items are found in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Responses to Survey Item About Quality Feedback

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. My instructional coach’s feedback...					
...included specific suggestions to improve my content/subject knowledge.	20%	11%	20%	29%	20%
...included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	20%	11%	14%	23%	31%
...included recommendations for finding resources or professional development to improve my teaching.	14%	17%	23%	23%	23%

Note: $N = 35$.

The data in Table 1 represent the responses of 35 teachers. Of these responses, 49% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the feedback has suggestions to improve content or subject knowledge, 54% agreed or strongly agreed that it included

strategies to improve teaching, and 46% agreed or strongly agreed that it had recommendations for finding resources. In each question, 14-23% of the responses were neither agree nor disagree. These responses show that while instructional coaches include strategies to improve content knowledge, strategies to improve teaching, or recommendations for finding resources, it only occurs in approximately half of the feedback opportunities. In each of the three coaching styles, directive, facilitative, and dialogical, an instructional coach is expected to provide suggestions for improvement, with the only difference being how these suggestions are presented (Knight 2018). Without suggesting strategies, an instructional coach misses an opportunity to impact instructional improvement. Seeing as feedback is typically given in response to an action an instructional coach has observed, these suggestions fit in each model of adult learning theory because they would be rooted in that teacher's practices.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2015b) stated instructional coaches have an essential role in "helping teachers become better teachers" (p. 5). This survey item addresses this statement, as the feedback should prompt action for a teacher to improve. Relatedly, at the heart of adult learning theory is the practical application of new learning (Colman, 2019). Multiple methods can inform teaching practice development, including professional development and seeking further advice, each of which was addressed in the survey. The results from survey items regarding the steps taken toward changing instruction can be found in Table 2.

Table 2*Responses to Survey Item About Steps Taken After Receiving Feedback*

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Because of the feedback I received from my instructional coach...					
...I tried new instructional strategies in my classroom.	11%	11%	20%	34%	23%
...I tried new classroom management strategies in my classroom.	9%	23%	29%	29%	11%
...I sought professional development opportunities (formal or informal).	11%	17%	17%	40%	14%
...I sought advice from an instructional leader (for example, peer, coach or mentor, administrator).	9%	11%	20%	34%	26%
...I changed the way I planned instruction.	20%	11%	23%	29%	17%

Note: N = 35.

The data in Table 2 represent the responses of 35 teachers. Of these responses, 57% agreed or strongly agreed that they tried new instructional strategies after receiving feedback from their instructional coach, 40% agreed or strongly agreed that they tried new classroom management strategies after receiving feedback from their instructional coach, 54% agreed or strongly agreed that they sought out professional development activities after receiving feedback from their instructional coach, 60% agreed or strongly

agreed that they sought advice from an instructional leader to address the feedback they received, and 46% agreed or strongly agreed that they changed the way they planned instruction after receiving feedback from their instructional coach. As a main role of the instructional coach is to help teachers become better teachers (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b), the feedback should be occurring in feedback cycles (Knight, 2016) to improve instruction. Each of these strategies is a method that could be employed to develop and improve instructional practices.

Qualitative Data

To extend beyond feedback, qualitative data were utilized to further investigate the role instructional coaches play in developing instructional practices. Two major components of instructional practices are assessment and instruction. Interview participants were asked questions regarding these topics. Themes were identified within the responses from the nine interview participants.

Interview Question 4. Nine participants were asked to answer, “How would you describe the impact that coach feedback has had on your instruction?” This question was asked to inform Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” and Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” In response to this question, multiple participants indicated it had no impact on their instruction, while most others said it had minimal impact on their instruction. Themes that emerged in their responses were positive, managerial, and that feedback lacked content specifics.

Multiple participants indicated the feedback had no impact on instruction, as evidenced by Participant 3’s response, “None whatsoever.” Participant 5 said, “there

hasn't been any because I've not gone to her for instructional needs because I don't know that she could really meet them." While some of these participants indicated they received feedback from their coach, the feedback had no impact on their instructional practices.

A theme that emerged from the participant responses was positive. Participant 2 said,

It puts me into a positive mindset. So I wouldn't say a lot of it has to do with the content itself or like, not you know you should this instead of doing this, it's more, I think, just positive.

Participant 9 had a similar response, explaining, "It's been nice, I mean, it makes, it makes me feel good. All the feedback is always good...there's nothing ever to build on." Participant 9 continued that an effect of this positive feedback is that "my feedback has always been great, which is nice, however, it doesn't help me to grow." While there was a positive theme within these, the impact on instruction is minimal.

Managerial was another theme in the participant responses to this question. This came from participants indicating that feedback impacted the management of their classroom rather than their content instruction. For example, Participant 4 said, "For certain things like classroom management, it's been super helpful to put into practice the, some of the ideas she's given me." Participant 4 went on to say, "Definitely, like, classroom management wise, like in tips for how to build relationships with students and those kind of things, her feedback, I've definitely implemented that. And it's definitely positively had an effect on my classroom."

A final theme that permeated the responses was the impact of a disconnect

between the content background of the instructional coach and the content area the teacher taught. Participant 1 explained, “I don’t really feel like it’s had that much impact on me and my personal instruction, and I think part of this has to do with the fact that my coach this year, she’s not really a [my subject] person.” She went on to explain the difference between what she experienced in department meetings with her instructional coach and when she had the opportunity to watch the instructional coach interact with the department in which she had content experience, saying,

Listening to her feedback to people who are like minded as her, it was a much different experience than when she gave feedback to my department...her feedback for me was more generic, and so it was hard for me to take that feedback and apply it in a specific concrete way because there wasn’t like a “oh, you can use this specific resource or this specific strategy to work with your content area.”

Participant 6 responded, “Instruction as in my actual curriculum? None.” While there was some impact on instruction, in terms of assisting in ways regarding content delivery, these participants noted it was minimal.

Interview Question 5. In addition to asking about the impact instructional coach feedback had on participant instruction, the nine participants were asked, “How would you describe the impact that coach feedback has had on your assessment?” as assessment is an instructional practice. The responses to this question were used to inform Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” and Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” The responses fell into two main categories, either minimal impact or school-initiated impact.

Two thirds of interview participants provided short answers, indicating either minimal or no impact on their assessment. Participant 5 noted, “I haven’t had any.” Participant 4 responded, “I don’t think I’ve ever really talked to her about that, like, assessment-related things before...I don’t think it’s really had much of an impact because that’s not been something we’ve discussed.” Participants noted there was little feedback on assessment practices, resulting in little impact on assessment.

In responses that indicated the feedback had an impact, a theme was that the impact was school-initiated. Participant 1 explained the work her team does in PLCs, a school expectation, and that the instructional coach “had a meeting earlier this year about doing common assessments” within her department. Though they had this meeting, Participant 1 said,

I really, I still haven’t gotten on board with, with doing that sort of assessment through SchoolNet. I understand the value of it, you know, I think SchoolNet provides a lot of really great information for me as a teacher, like standards based, and I can look at, you know, males, females, different subgroups, I think that’s great, but for me I felt like those common assessments for me, it was giving an assessment just to check a box off.

Participant 3 also noted the work done on assessments in her PLC, and said, “We had to give and show her feedback and all that, so, but that’s not, that’s not her initiating it, it’s the school initiating it.”

Interview Question 6. While some of the nine participants indicated they had received little or no feedback, it was important to ask them what they would like for feedback to look like, hence the question, “What would optimal feedback look like?” The

responses to this question were used to inform Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” and Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” Themes that arose within the type of feedback they would like to see were balanced, concrete, timely, and individualized.

The theme that occurred most frequently was balanced. Most participants indicated they wanted feedback that included both positives and opportunities for improvement. Participant 1 reflected on a time she enjoyed feedback, explaining,

I had a coach early on that did like a glow-on grow-on sort of format, and that was helpful for me because you got a positive and then you also got like the constructive with it, so it wasn't just one sided...because if it's all positives, that's great, but I don't really know what to work on and then if it's all negative it's kind of like, oh gosh, I guess I don't do anything right.

Participant 2 noted the same need for a balanced set of feedback, looking for her instructional coach to tell her

what looks good, and just some things that I can improve upon...to talk it out and think about and brainstorm new ideas to be able to reach out to those students, or to figure out how to better teach that subject.

Participant 5 similarly noted that she sees optimal feedback as the instructional coach “giving positives and negatives.” Participant 9 detailed what this could look like:

I'd like to get a positive and then I'd like to get something I can grow on. You know, it doesn't necessarily have to be mean or negative, but something, you know, like ‘hey, I notice this, do you need help with this? Is it something we

could work on? Or was it just something you didn't have time to fit in? ...maybe it was something we thought about and we just have already talked about it previously and pushed it to the side, or maybe it was something we never even crossed our mind, so you know, but just something to throw out there, to again, like expand the conversation, expand our thinking.

Most participants noted something similar, indicating the desire for balanced, both positive and constructive, feedback in their classroom.

Another common theme was concrete feedback. Many participants indicated they would like specific examples in optimal feedback. Within the theme of concrete, there were two subthemes, content-related and non-content-related. Participant 3 was a proponent of content-specific, concrete feedback, explaining an instructional coach should have

some type of training on all the subjects in order to give great feedback to that person, especially for lessons in regards to that, so you can't just go and tell somebody, tell ELA the same thing you're going to tell math, because it's not going to work.

Participant 4 explained it as the need to give "tangible action steps." She said, "Sometimes I feel like when I'm given feedback and there's no action steps I'm kind of like ok, what do I do with this?" Participant 8 described her experience with good feedback as, "It's all been here, let's try this, so like the feedback's always been 'here's an idea and then an example' so it's not like here let me just give you this idea and you run with it."

Another common theme in the responses was timely. Participant 1 defined timely

as “if my coach were to observe me on a Tuesday, I think it would be fair for me to see some sort of feedback...by Friday of that week while it’s still fresh in both of our minds.” Participant 7 explained that with timely, it should “be more regularly cadenced” while looking for “receiving more feedback...a cadence of feedback throughout the year that has a little bit more structure and potentially ties to the other things we’re doing for professional development.”

A final theme in the responses was individualized feedback. Most participants described feedback that came after an instructional coach’s visit to the classroom, specific to what was seen at that time. Participant 1 would like to see feedback after a classroom visit, “whether it’s written or verbal or like a sit-down conference.” Participant 2 said she would like “after even just a walk-through observation, being able to have the time to sit down and talk about what was happening.” Participant 6 explained she prefers some of the methods of her current instructional coach, saying, “I’ve seen her more in my classroom...she makes herself visible, which I appreciate as a teacher.”

Summary of Findings

Overall, regarding Research Question 1, “What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices,” in this sample, it is inconclusive whether the instructional coaches play a role in the development of instructional practices. The quantitative and qualitative data did not align. More than half of the survey participants indicated coaches provided ideas of strategies and that they tried new strategies as a result of the instructional coach; however, those interviewed indicated little impact on instruction and assessment. Themes that arose in the qualitative data included no impact, positive impact, and for managerial purposes. Participants in the interviews indicated

there was potential for an impact, generating the themes that instructional coaches should provide balanced, concrete, and timely input, which would make a bigger impact. Further, the interview participants indicated specifics about how feedback could be improved, such as with a balance of positive and constructive feedback.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was, “What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?” Both qualitative and quantitative data were utilized to investigate this question. This research question addressed the necessary knowledge of working with adults and pedagogical knowledge Knight (2016) identified and the rationales for choosing strategies and implementation methods Pierce (2019) identified as necessary for an effective instructional coach. It is a combination of these knowledge packets, skills, and dispositions that instructional coaches need to effectively impact teacher instructional practice.

Quantitative Data

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015) has a question in which respondents indicate their level of agreement with statements about their instructional coach’s knowledge. The survey results are in Table 3.

Table 3*Responses to Survey Item About Instructional Coach Knowledge*

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. In my opinion, my coach had sufficient...					
...knowledge of my content/subject to effectively evaluate me.	11%	11%	14%	31%	31%
...knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.	14%	6%	14%	40%	26%
...knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.	9%	0%	17%	37%	37%
...understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.	11%	9%	14%	29%	37%

Note: $N = 35$.

The data in Table 3 show that of the 43 respondents, 62% agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coach had sufficient knowledge of their content area to evaluate them, 66% agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coach had an adequate understanding of how students learn to evaluate them, 74% agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coach had sufficient knowledge of effective teaching practices to evaluate them, and 66% agreed or strongly agreed that their instructional coach had an adequate understanding of the curriculum to evaluate them. In terms of knowledge, instructional coaches have an acceptable amount of knowledge of learning

theories, teaching strategies, and content areas to support the teachers in incorporating effective teaching practices. The component not asked about was if the instructional coaches had sufficient knowledge of adult learning theories to support the teachers, which could provide valuable insight into the perspective of the teachers and it aligns with the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Qualitative Data

A more significant focus was placed on the qualitative data for this question. In the interviews, participants were asked questions such as, “How would you like to be coached,” “How would you rate the effectiveness of your coach,” and “What makes a strong and effective coach?” These questions, along with all questions asked, can be found in Appendix B.

Interview Question 1. Nine participants were asked their initial reactions to their relationships with their instructional coach, through the question, “What is your relationship like with your coach?” This question was asked to inform Research Question 2, “What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?” Building relationships is a key skill in instructional coaching (Knight, 2018). Overall, participants noted an overall positive relationship dynamic. Themes emerging from participant responses were positive, supportive, and personal. These themes are organized through a continuum of potential impact on teacher instructional practice, starting with the most commonly expressed theme.

In regard to a positive theme, the majority of participants indicated the perception of positive relationships. Of these, a few explicitly used the term positive to describe their

relationship, such as Participant 1 who replied, “I think I have a, an interesting relationship with my coach. It’s positive.” Though not all used the term positive, others described feelings that indicated a positive relationship. For example, Participant 4 said, “So I think my relationship is great with my coach. She, I feel like she does a really good job of making me like, feel heard, if that makes sense.” A positive relationship can come as a result of a supportive instructional coach. Though positive and support are closely related, the theme support extends beyond just the interactions and impacts instructional practices.

Another theme noted is a supportive relationship from their instructional coach. Participant 8 expressed this as, “It’s great because I go to her for anything,” reflecting both the positive and supportive themes. Participant 8 continued to explain the support as follows:

I can go to her and get, like, I can fuss and complain, and either just vent or get an understanding. Because I’m like, I don’t understand the dynamics. So it’s been, she’s been like one of my lifesavers this year because it’s been pretty rough. But, and I haven’t had anybody else that I would go to about the school, so, it’s helped in the sense that I can go to her before I go to my principal. Because I don’t want to take, you know, there’s some things I just don’t want to add to my principal’s burden.

Participant 4 noted, “I feel like she’s created a space where I really feel comfortable going to her to get feedback and ask for help when I need it.” Both of these are examples of supportive relationships in an instructional environment. Instructional environments provide opportunities to build personal relationships.

The majority of participants who noted either a positive or supportive relationship also indicated that they had a personal relationship with their instructional coach.

Participant 5 responded, “It’s gotten to be more friendly, like personal friendly, over the past year.” Participant 9 expressed a similar sentiment but expanded it as, “We have a pretty, pretty good relationship. A pretty friendly relationship. I feel like we are on more of a, a same level relationship more than we are where I would go to her for advice.”

Participant 7 explained,

It has been a really good mix of professional and personal with the instructional coach, but I would say that it’s not a deep relationship when it comes to the workplace. It’s very much check the box to get certain things done.

Participant 3 indicated, “the relationship is more personal than professional, I would say.”

In each of these instances, a personal relationship was built between the instructional coach and teacher, no matter the level of professional engagement.

Interview Question 2. Beyond just describing their relationships with their instructional coaches, the nine participants were asked how their relationships were built with their instructional coach, through the question, “How was your relationship built?” This question was asked to inform Research Question 2, “What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?” Three themes emerged equally: teacher initiated, coach initiated, and prior experience with each other. A fourth theme, principal initiated, also arose, though less frequently.

A theme noted in participant responses was teacher initiated. Some participants indicated they initiated their relationship with their instructional coach. Participant 2

explained, “I just showed up at her office one day when she first got here because I was here before she was here.” She went on to further explain, “I just started showing up in her room and talking to her.” After the coach was introduced to her as the instructional coach, Participant 3 said, “I try to get to know them”; so after introductions, she made it a point to get to know her coach. Though the teacher sought out the instructional coach in these interactions, a relationship was built, nonetheless.

Another theme noted was coach initiated. Some participants expressed that the instructional coach was the one who encouraged the relationship building. Participant 4 expressed this as follows:

She just checked in on me a bunch my first year and took time to just come talk to me not only about like things happening in the classroom but also like in my life outside of, you know, school.

In another situation, Participant 7 explained a “unique” relationship foundation with their instructional coach because they were not only a new teacher, but the instructional coach had been teaching their classes prior to their arrival at the school. They explained, “By that situation I got to know her a little better than had I been a first year starting alone.”

Prior experience was a third theme that emerged in the interviews. Participant 1 noted that in her district, “A lot of people know a lot of people, so we had that kind of background.” Participant 5 noted this and a common subject area in her response, saying, “Probably over just a common subject area. Just happen, both of us teaching math and similar, I guess in similar social circles—knowing this person and that person.”

Participant 6 had a different prior experience with her instructional coach. Her instructional coach had been a teacher at the school she attended as a middle schooler,

noting, “I knew who she was, I knew how she was as a teacher.”

A minor theme was principal-initiated relationships. Participant 8 noted, “I’m really bad with essential questions. I don’t always remember to hit them. I forget so she (the principal) was like, well, you know, [our instructional coach] can help you come up with those. So that’s kind of how it started.” Though this was initiated by the principal, the relationship flourished. She further explained, “That’s kind of how it started. And so we just got together and let’s try this or that. She’s just really easy to talk to.” Within this response, Participant 8 also noted coaching strategies the instructional coach used, saying, “She’s just really easy to talk to.” She expanded on this, saying, “She listens, and I think that’s the biggest thing” and further noted, “There’s no judgment there.”

Interview Question 7. Participants were asked, “How would you like to be coached?” This question was asked of the nine participants to provide insight into all three research questions. The theme that showed through in most responses was that participants want active relationships with their instructional coaches. Nearly all participants noted they would like their instructional coach to visit their classroom frequently, and as a result of these visits, the teachers indicated they would like feedback and resources from their instructional coach.

Most participants wanted their instructional coach to be visible in their classroom, many noting they would like to have their instructional coach do walk-throughs and short observations. Participant 4 summarized this as,

I think definitely walk-throughs is something that I appreciate, because it not only makes me feel more comfortable with having someone watching me like teach, if that makes sense, but I feel like that’s the most authentic way to like, see what’s

going on in my classroom. Because I can talk about problems, but I feel like a lot of times, like my instructional coach points out something that I hadn't even thought about.

Participant 5 gave a similar response, noting, "I want a coach that comes in and sees positive and gives positive feedback." Participant 9 expressed interest in instructional coaches being more present in the classroom, saying, "I would love for coaches to be able to be in the classroom. In 13 years, I have never been able to have a coach actually sit in my classroom and observe."

In wanting instructional coaches to be present in classrooms, some participants noted they would like feedback from the visits. Participant 8 expressed interest in "honest feedback...so long as that relationship is built in the beginning." Participant 3 said she would like an instructional coach to "at least come in and be a fly on the wall and say 'hey, I notice this, but try this next time.'"

Some participants noted they would like the instructional coach to provide resources. For example, Participant 1 said they would like their instructional coach to keep "almost like a bank of information that I can pull from...like consolidate the resources that are out there for me so I'm not sifting through dozens of websites." Participant 4 said, "I want a coach that is willing to say 'hey, I can do this for you' and they provide resources."

Interview Question 8. Participants were asked, "How would you rate the effectiveness of your coach?" This question had the nine participants rate their instructional coach on their own scale, and most ranked their instructional coach above average. One common theme that arose was that they ranked their instructional coach

based on knowledge of what the instructional coach did for others or for the school as a whole, not how the instructional coach supported them. A second theme was that they believed their instructional coach could be more effective if not pulled into other roles.

The theme that instructional coaches do a lot for others arose in responses from multiple participants. Participant 1 said, “That’s a really tough question for me because I don’t truly know all the things that my coach does.” She explained, “I know that she’s doing things at the school but I’m just not personally impacted by a lot of it so I don’t know how effective it is.” Participant 3 gave two ratings, one based on what she sees her instructional coach do for others and one for the effectiveness she sees in her work with the instructional coach. She said, “Effectiveness from what I see from other people, like, see because when I see her working with others, I would say she’s about an 8. But for me it is more, I would say 1 or 2.” Participant 4 took some of the responsibility for the instructional coach not having the highest score, saying,

On a 1 to 10 scale, I would say probably like an 8, just because I feel like she does go above and beyond to try to like meet our needs. But thinking about some of the conversations that I haven’t had with her that might have helped me, and this is on me, not necessarily on her, but like me saying hey, this is what I need kind of things, I haven’t done that.

Within these responses, participants noted that their instructional coach does fulfill many responsibilities; these responsibilities just do not always impact them as much as they could.

A secondary theme that arose was that the instructional coaches are pulled into a variety of roles, and in filling those roles, their effectiveness as an instructional coach is

impacted. Participant 5 expressed this as, “I don’t know that I’ve been able to use her as an instructional coach this year...I think her role may have shifted into more MTSS this year. That’s taken away from her help with us.” Participant 7 said,

I guess I’d have to back up and understand the objectives of that role to understand if that person is living out the objectives or not because it seems as though there is a significant amount of administrative work in that role that has to be done, and perhaps if that’s the case, it’s less of a coaching role than it is an administration role.

Participant 9 gave her instructional coach a D, and said,

I think that part of it is not all their fault. I think part, most, a lot, part of that is the way they’re being used in their job. Had they had more time to be in the classroom and to see what they could work on, to see what they could fix, they could increase that grade.

Within each of these responses, the participants noted that they felt their instructional coaches were competent at their job and their effectiveness could be increased if they did not have other roles and responsibilities they had to fill.

Interview Question 9. In a previous response, Participant 4 explained that a part of her rating of her instructional coach was because she had not gone to her instructional coach to ask for the help she needed. This plays an important role in the coaching relationship: the teacher being open to asking for the support they need. For this reason, I asked the nine participants the question, “To what extent did you discuss your preferences for coaching with your coach? No participants said they had. Two said it was because they did not have to because the instructional coach figured it out on their own:

Participant 8 said, “She probably asked me but we kind of hit it off”; and Participant 6 said, “She kind of came in and already got it.” The other participants provided a short answer, that they had not.

Summary of Findings

Overall, regarding Research Question 2, “What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice,” the data show that teachers believe their instructional coaches have the requisite knowledge but the instructional coach is involved in other places in the school so not as visible or helpful as they would like. Themes indicating this included positive, supportive, and personal relationships between the instructional coach and the teacher. These relationships were built because of teacher, coach, or principal initiation. Themes that emerged regarding how teachers wanted to be coached included active relationships and frequent visits. When asked about the effectiveness of the instructional coach, though, themes were that the instructional coach supported the school, not the teacher, sometimes in non-coaching roles. Those responding in the survey indicated the knowledge was there, but the participants indicated their instructional coach needed to be more present to be more effective.

Research Question 3

The third research question in this study was, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” Quantitative data were collected to answer this question using the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015), while interviews informed the qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015) included items about the information in the feedback that teachers received as well as the outcomes resulting from the feedback. Results from the survey are found in Tables 4-6.

The survey had two items regarding the frequency of feedback received from instructional coaches, both in conversation and writing. The results of this question are found in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency of Receiving Feedback

Type of feedback	Never	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times	Five times	More than five times
Feedback conversation	23%	17%	6%	6%	3%	3%	43%
Written feedback	23%	26%	11%	3%	9%	6%	23%

Note: $N = 35$.

As seen in Table 4, 23% of survey participants did not participate in a feedback conversation with their instructional coach, and 23% of participants did not receive written feedback from their instructional coach throughout the current school year. On the other end of the range, 43% had more than five feedback conversations with their instructional coach, and 23% received written feedback more than five times. It is important to note the year in which this survey was administered had a variety of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including limited contact among people in the school buildings, which could have impacted these values.

Question 5 on the survey asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement with statements about what the content of their instructional coach's feedback included. The results of this question are found in Table 5.

Table 5

Responses to Survey Item About Feedback Content

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. My instructional coach's feedback...					
...included specific improvement suggestions.	23%	9%	17%	20%	31%
...included specific suggestions to improve my content/subject knowledge.	20%	11%	20%	29%	20%
...included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	20%	11%	14%	23%	31%
...included recommendations for finding resources of professional development to improve my teaching.	14%	17%	23%	23%	23%
...was provided as frequently as I needed it.	23%	11%	9%	23%	34%
...was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.	23%	6%	14%	23%	34%

Note: N = 35.

As seen in Table 5, of the 35 survey responses, a majority or more of the responses indicated that the feedback provided information that could be used to improve instruction as the result of specific feedback. Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano

(2016) identified the importance of feedback containing constructive recommendations. While this is indicative that the feedback received incorporated suggestions that could be utilized by the teacher receiving the feedback, this potentially impactful feedback is only occurring half the time. Further, 57% of respondents indicated that the feedback was as frequent and timely as needed. Though more than half of the respondents believed the feedback was as frequent and timely as needed, 34% did not believe it was as frequent as they needed, and 29% did not receive it in time to inform their practice. This means that though the feedback included potentially useful strategies and recommendations, it was not always timely enough to be utilized.

The final survey question regarding feedback asked to what extent the feedback the teacher received from their instructional coach improved their instruction. Of the 35 responses, 49% of respondents noted that the feedback impacted their instruction a lot, whereas 31% indicated it did not impact their instruction at all. This relates to the item about what impact the feedback had, whether it be in instructional practices, classroom management, or instructional planning.

Based on these survey items and results, approximately half of the feedback provided has a strong impact on instructional practice, in part because approximately half the time the feedback included suggestions for improvement. These instructional practices can be implemented immediately or by finding professional development to support the teacher in implementing something new.

Qualitative Data

To gather more information on the impact that instructional coach feedback has on instructional practice, questions regarding this topic were asked during the nine

interviews. The questions included gathering information about the feedback in general and the characteristics of a strong and effective coach.

Interview Question 3. After discussing the relationship with their instructional coach, all nine participants were asked about the feedback they had received from their instructional coach, first through the question, “How would you describe the feedback you have received from your coach?” This question was asked to inform Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?” The predominant theme that emerged was little feedback, followed by positive feedback, while written, group, and vague each emerged as themes.

The most common theme in responses to this question was little feedback. The majority of participants expressed this. Participant 1 expressed this as, “I haven’t really received that much feedback from my instructional coach.” Participant 3 said this as well but expanded it: “I have not received much feedback. I don’t see her in my classroom much.” Upon reflection, Participant 5 noted, “What’s kind of weird, I don’t know that I’ve gotten much feedback this year...I don’t know that I’ve gotten any feedback that I could use to adapt my instruction.” Participant 7 expressed a similar sentiment, saying, “I have not received much feedback when it comes to instruction delivery.” Participant 9 said that individually, there’s been “little to none. I just, honestly, that’s how it’s been.” These participants did not expand much on these responses, as they had received little feedback from their instructional coach.

Those who indicated they had received feedback noted a positive theme within their responses. Participant 2 simply said, “It’s been very positive.” Similarly, Participant 6 said, “She has been very positive with my feedback...she’s very blunt with me about

things I need to change, but also very positive about it.” Participant 8 noted, “It’s always positive and I like constructive criticism, so it’s been positive.” Each of these participants had positive experiences receiving feedback from their instructional coaches.

Another theme that arose within the responses was written feedback. A few participants noted their feedback had been written. For example, Participant 2 said, “She has usually left me notes or talked to me about what she has seen.” Participant 4 said her feedback came after a walk-through, as “a lot of times [my coach] will come in and do just like a walk-through and leave like a note or send an email afterwards.” She expanded on this, saying it is “usually like written feedback, which I appreciate because I can go back and, you know, look at that a bunch of times, versus having a quick conversation.” Not only was the feedback given, but it was also something the participants could return to in the future.

A fourth theme emerging from the participant responses was group feedback. While some participants initially indicated receiving little or no feedback, some decided they had received feedback in a group. For example, Participant 1 initially noted she had received little feedback, but then said any feedback she had received “wasn’t necessarily direct feedback on my personal instruction but kind of as a department as a whole.” Participant 9 explained,

There’s been some group feedback, it hasn’t been very individualized. There has been some group feedback like at the end of the PLCs, or after observing a content area PLC, but it hasn’t been a whole lot of individualized feedback.

Those noting group feedback typically responded with it after an initial response of little or no feedback.

A final theme emerging from the interview responses was that feedback was vague. While noted by only Participant 4, she said, “When it comes to feedback, I think I like feedback a lot, and so sometimes it’s a little bit vague.” She went on to say, “It may come from the fact that I teach [one subject area] and by instructional coach’s background is not in my subject area, so I think that might be a part of it.” This vagueness in feedback could have implications on the use of the feedback in the future.

Interview Question 10. The final interview question asked was, “What makes a strong and effective coach?” This was asked in an effort to inform all three research questions. Themes in the nine responses were strong relationships, approachability, and presence. By finding out the teacher perspectives of what makes a strong and effective coach, coaches have the potential to modify their practices.

The theme of strong relationships arose in participant responses. Participant 8 said a strong coach is one who has “that interpersonal relationship, the willingness to, you know, search out for people.” Participant 9 noted a strong relationship as the main thing an instructional coach needs, saying, “I think the first thing is going to be relationships. They need to have strong relationships with people in their building because the people have to be comfortable coming and asking for help.” A minor theme found within the responses about strong relationships was approachability. Participant 2 said, “A strong and effective coach is one I could go to. Someone who is positive.” Participant 3 specifically mentioned, “someone who listens. And not listens by the words of I hear you...but actively listening.” The theme of approachability relates to the theme of strong relationships.

A third theme in the responses was presence. Many participants mentioned the

need for instructional coaches to be present and visible in the classrooms. Participant 1 said, “I love to see my coach like on my hall, in my classroom, come on down. I have an open door policy and I think that that really helps to earn the respect and the appreciation of other teachers.” She continued the effects that this presence can have, saying,

It’s very difficult for me to like respect your role if I don’t ever see you and you don’t know what I do in my room. But for an effective coach, I’d like to see them in my classroom once a week or once every 2 weeks.

Participant 2 also noted a strong coach is “within the classroom, who is seen in the school, who is doing observations, and who is able to provide feedback from that observation.” Participant 7 would not only like a strong and effective coach to be in the classroom but to “dig a little bit deeper into what’s going on in the classroom.”

Summary of Findings

Overall, regarding Research Question 3, “What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice,” the results between the quantitative data and qualitative data again did not align. The survey data indicated teachers get feedback and it impacts instruction a lot. On the other hand, the interview participants indicated their instructional coach had little impact on instruction, with themes such as a need for approachability, strong relationships, and presence needing to occur before the feedback can have an impact. Current practice of the instructional coaches, as indicated by the interview participants, had themes such as little feedback, a need for written feedback, and the approach of group feedback.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the impact that the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and coaching style have on teacher instructional practices. The hiring of instructional coaches became more common after the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed, as this act included funding for instructional coaches and an expectation for LEAs to utilize this role. Instructional coaches hold a variety of roles within a school, including facilitating professional development, coaching, mentoring, and coteaching (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015b, p. 5). Effective coaching can result in improving teacher effectiveness; however, there has traditionally been little professional development available for instructional coaches (Aguilar, 2019). This role is not prioritized to receive professional development because no certificate is needed to assume this position (Aguilar, 2019). The lack of professional development causes further issues because many instructional coaches were hired because they were excellent teachers, but they may not know much about effective coaching (Russell et al., 2020). The purpose of this study was to deepen the body of knowledge on the impact coach-teacher relationships have on modifications of instructional practice. This was done in an effort to inform school leaders, administrators, and instructional coaches on methods to improve instructional coach practices, potentially through identifying professional development needs.

Summary of the Study

The research questions that guided the study were

1. What role do instructional coaches play in the development of instructional practices?

2. What effect do the coaching style, knowledge, skill, and disposition between a teacher and their instructional coach have on teacher instructional practice?
3. What impact does instructional coach feedback have on instructional practice?

This study utilized a rural K-12 school district in eastern North Carolina, with approximately 1,200 certified teachers. The principals at each school were sent information about the mixed methods study as well as a request to disseminate the information to the teachers at their sites. Thirty-five teachers responded to the survey. Ten teachers responded to the request for an interview, of which nine interviews occurred. The data from the survey and interviews were analyzed. Common themes were identified and through these themes, and suggestions for further research and recommendations for the district were created.

Interpretations

The purpose of the study was to determine what impact the instructional coach has on the instructional practices of a teacher. Knight (2018) wrote that to have the most effective teachers, school professionals must ensure that teachers have a variety of options and the autonomy to turn down or say no to a suggestion. The survey data indicated instructional coaches do play a role in developing instructional practices. They support the acquisition of teachers developing instructional practices through building content knowledge, providing strategies for improving teaching, and suggesting resources that may support a teacher; however, these practices were not consistent among all instructional coaches referenced in the study. Approximately 50% of the survey respondents indicated instructional coach feedback had suggestions to improve content knowledge, strategies to improve teaching, or resource support. The interviews indicated

a need for improvement though, with most participants indicating their instructional coach had little impact on their instruction and assessment. Some interview participants noted the low impact on their instruction was their own fault for not seeking out their instructional coach's input. The interview responses did not confirm the results of the survey data. In the survey, 49% of respondents indicated feedback improved their instruction a lot, whereas most interviewees suggested feedback and coaching did not impact their instruction or assessment. Survey respondents noted that the feedback led them to try new strategies and seek advice from others. In contrast to the survey, interviewees were not asked if they had received feedback, nor were they asked to explicitly state what actions they took after interactions with their instructional coach. One possibility for these data could be that the teachers interviewed were not priorities for the instructional coaches to meet with, and therefore they did not get the focus of the instructional coach's time and attention.

In terms of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions an instructional coach must have, a common theme in the interview participant responses was that instructional coaches should build relationships with their teachers. Quality relationships support teachers in feeling "valued, cared about, and trusted" (Dewalt & Mayberry, 2019, p. 58). Relationships can be built through increasing visibility, as noted in an interview in which the teacher said they felt more comfortable with an instructional coach who is visible within the school and classroom. Based on multiple interviews, teachers would appreciate if the instructional coach consistently came into their classrooms and as a result provided not only positive feedback but feedback for improvement. Themes that arose when teachers responded to interview questions about optimal feedback were balanced,

concrete, timely, and individualized. By building instructional coach capacity in these areas there is an opportunity for a greater impact on instruction. Based on the survey data, teachers felt the instructional coaches providing feedback had enough content knowledge, knowledge of students, and knowledge of teaching practices to support them, with over 60% of respondents agreeing that their instructional coach had enough content knowledge, knowledge of students, knowledge of teaching practices, and knowledge of curriculum to support them.

Though survey data showed instructional coaches had the requisite knowledge, interview data implied it did not go into practice. A theme in the interviews was that instructional coaches could be more effective if not pulled into other roles in the building. Interview participants noted there is a lack of clarity on specifics of an instructional coach's responsibilities at their site: because either they have few interactions, or they see them working on seemingly administrative tasks. This aligns with Aguilar's (2013) research, in which she generalized that most educators who have not worked with an instructional coach believe an instructional coach's role is to observe and give feedback, to help plan lessons, or to provide sympathy—each a component of the role but not all of it. Instructional coaches should help teachers reflect, collect data, and modify their instruction to meet their goals (Knight, 2018). Interview Participant 1 said, "I have seen the role done so differently at different schools," while Participant 6 noted she has worked with three instructional coaches, all of whom did the job in very different ways. Without clarity in the role, it is difficult for teachers to identify the supports instructional coaches can provide and seek instructional coach feedback to support teacher needs and goals.

The feedback instructional coaches provide, as noted above, was more positively rated than the role of an instructional coach in general, based on survey data. Teachers indicated the feedback coaches provided led to changed teacher behaviors or encouraged them to seek out new methods or a mentor. These data could imply the instructional coaches and administrators should refine the role of an instructional coach to one with a focus on opportunities for observation and feedback.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

The adult learning theories of andragogy, transformational learning, experiential learning, and self-directed learning guided the research. Each of these theories addresses the idea that adults learn differently than children. The differences in methods between adults and children are that adults have prior knowledge, whereas children do not; adults choose to learn, whereas children have no choice; and the teaching of adults can be through less formal roles, such as mentor or coach as opposed to a teacher's role of facilitating learning for children (Colman, 2019).

Themes that arose in the interviews reflected these adult learning theories. Themes of content specific, concrete, individualized, and timely feedback are indicative of their preference to learn in ways that apply to their lives and that they are intrinsically motivated to learn (Mews, 2020). Further, these themes reflect the performance-centered orientation to learning that teachers would like (Glickman et al., 2018).

Instructional coaches should address teachers as transformational learners at times too, utilizing the theme of individualized as a method to promote reflection, as Glickman et al. (2018) noted as important for transformational learning. Transformational learning requires reflection (Glickman et al., 2018), which is vital in the themes of support, visits,

and feedback found in the interviews.

The theme of a desire for classroom visits and the theme of teacher-initiated relationships reflect experiential and transformational learning. At the heart of experiential learning is hands-on experience, with priority and focus placed on the learner's perspective and interaction (Colman, 2019). By visiting classrooms and providing opportunities for teachers to reflect, instructional coaches are able to embed experiential learning. Additionally, these visits allow the instructional coach to gain more knowledge about the teacher, which would allow them to determine the teacher's readiness for instruction and modify their methods in response to this knowledge, as Glickman et al. (2018) suggested supervisors do for self-directed learners.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is that each participant in the study works in a school with an instructional coach; however, they may not have received feedback from the instructional coach at their site. The clarity of the role of an instructional coach, whether perceived by the teacher or informed by administrative decision, could have skewed the data. An additional limitation is that I am considered an instructional coach in the district, though I specialize in a single subject area and support multiple schools. As a result of my role, I have relationships with the instructional coaches featured in this study and with some of the teachers who participated in the survey and interviews. This role, however, is a peer-to-peer role and has no evaluation responsibilities or supervisory power over the participants. To ensure the teachers did not include the relationship with me in considering their responses to the survey, the survey included an introductory section that explained that "coach" and "evaluator" describe their site-based instructional coach,

which I am not. In the interviews, I introduced myself as the facilitator and used the language “instructional coach” rather than my title in each of the questions regarding the instructional coach to establish myself as separate from the classification being discussed. I assured them the results would be held confidential, so as not to get back to their supervisors, coaches, or peers.

Suggestions for Improving This Study

If this study were to be performed again, it would be important to get a wider range of interview participants, particularly some who worked more closely with their instructional coaches than those in this study. By generating a larger pool of participants, decisions could be made about which demographics to ensure are represented in the interviews. The frequency of working directly and indirectly with the instructional coach should be a piece of the data collected in the interviews. By collecting this additional demographic data as well as data on content area and years of teaching experience, determinations could be made about how an instructional coach spends their time, and if experience level, of the instructional coach or teacher, impacts the frequency and content of instructional coach-teacher interactions.

An additional suggestion for improving this study would be to group participants based on evaluation data—those who rank in each of the three levels based on performance data: exceeding growth, meeting growth, and not meeting growth. By doing this, the interview data would be able to note if there were differences based on data-based teacher ability level, and this could confirm or disconfirm the participant’s opinion that they were not worked with because there were other teachers in the building who had more need than they did.

While the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey (Cherasaro et al., 2015) was a quality tool for this research, this study could have been improved by creating an instrument for which specific aspects of instructional coaching are rated. By incorporating questions about the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions research outlines for instructional coaches, a greater focus could be placed on areas beyond the knowledge, skills, and dispositions surrounding feedback alone.

Suggestions for Future Research

Multiple opportunities for further research exist, as improving instructional coaching should be a continuous process, just as improving teaching should be a continuous practice. One opportunity for further research is to determine which formal components of the instructional coach's role were explicitly linked to instructional coaching practice. These components could include determining what portion of an instructional coach's time is spent on each of the following: analyzing current reality, setting goals, identifying and explaining teaching strategies, and providing support. The questions asked in this study allowed for these topics to be discussed but were not explicitly asked of the participants, therefore no assumptions can be made surrounding this topic. By asking participants which components they took part in as well as their input on the efficacy of each, an instructional coach's role could be refined and therefore more impactful.

A primary role of an instructional coach is to identify and explain teaching strategies (Knight, 2018). This can be done through multiple methods as well as implementation strategies (Knight, 2018). While many teachers did not have feedback conversations or receive written feedback, it is positive that nearly a quarter of the

respondents had more than five feedback conversations and a third of the respondents received written feedback. Studies could be done to determine whether feedback conversations or written feedback is a more effective method for inciting instructional improvement. Additionally, the study could use the themes balanced, concrete, timely and individualized, as identified as themes in this study, to determine if these components are present in instructional coach written feedback. These themes, too, could be studied among a larger sample of teachers to see if the sample from this study represents a broader population in terms of the components of feedback teachers would like to receive.

An additional area that could be more explicitly studied is components of the coaching styles that are incorporated in schools. This could be paired with determining if they matched the coaching style needed by the teacher. With three primary methods for coaching, directive, facilitative, and transformational, and a variety of adult learning theories, it would be beneficial to determine how effectively instructional coaches match their method to a teacher's needs. In this study, participants were asked if they had discussed how they would like to be coached with their instructional coach, and each teacher said they had not. This is an opportunity to determine the match between coaching style and coaching preference. This could be extended into identifying methods instructional coaches use to effectively support the teacher.

A final recommendation for further research would be to conduct interviews with the instructional coaches to determine what their perception of their impact on instruction is and compare this to the perceptions of teachers in the same schools. It is possible that the instructional coaches believe their actions are making an impact on instruction and

assessment when there is little impact, or conversely that they believe they are making no impact when teachers identify a significant impact. By studying the instructional coach perceptions of the impact on instruction in conjunction with teacher perceptions, the work could be aligned to support instructional coaches in becoming as effective at impacting instruction as possible.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, I would outline seven suggestions for the district: complete an assessment of the time usage of instructional coaches at present, clearly define and communicate the role of an instructional coach, train instructional coaches in the three types of coaching, train coaches on effective feedback, build capacity for coaching outside of an instructional coach's content background, outline coteaching responsibilities, and complete a needs assessment of teachers. These recommendations stem from research in the literature review and the theoretical frameworks through the new lens of this study. By implementing these steps, opportunities for improved impact arise.

Suggestion 1: Determine Instructional Coach Time Usage

The first suggestion is for the district to complete an assessment of how instructional coaches currently spend their time. This could be as simple as a sketch of what tasks an instructional coach undertakes and how much time is spent on each of these tasks. This could be compiled as how instructional coaches spend their time over the course of a day, week, or month, because not all days and weeks are the same. These data will paint a clear picture of reality for the district as to how instructional coaches are using their time.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2015b) noted that leadership specialists, the category in which an instructional coach falls, should be spending their time in providing professional development, coaching, mentoring, and coteaching. While these are the suggested activities, Kane and Rosenquist (2019) found that instructional coaches spend 40% to 92% of their time in these responsibilities, which is a broad range of time. In the interviews within this study, two primary themes arose: Instructional coaches do more for others than for those interviewed, and an instructional coach could be more effective if not pulled into other roles. Together, the previous research and this study provide a justification for the district diving into the time usage of instructional coaches. Further, by determining what roles the instructional coaches engage in at their schools, there is also an opportunity to determine what drives an instructional coach to participate in responsibilities that are not explicitly instructional coaching tasks.

Suggestion 2: Define Coach Role

After determining what instructional coaches do in practice, the next suggestion is to clearly define the role of the instructional coach for all parties involved: the teachers, the instructional coach, and the administration. Within this study, multiple interview participants indicated that they could not easily rate their instructional coach's effectiveness because they did not have a clear understanding of their instructional coach's role. Not only would this task clarify the role for others, but a clear understanding of the position increases an employee's effectiveness (Kho et al., 2019). This is supported by Walkowiak's (2016) research, in which it was determined that the instructional coach and administrator should define explicitly and express the role of an

instructional coach repeatedly throughout the year. This would also support the teachers knowing more about how to interact with the instructional coach and the instructional coach having the opportunity to work on the defined goals (Walkowiak, 2016). This role definition should be generated from an amalgamation of ideas from the research, instructional coach, teachers, administrators, and district leadership. By determining what responsibilities instructional coaches should undertake as well as a percentage of time they should spend on each of these responsibilities, the teams can be set up for supporting each other and filling the needs determined at all levels.

Along with this role definition, there should be a method for holding instructional coaches accountable for this work. Whether it be that there is a method for recording what has been completed or having formal paperwork, along with the role definition should be an accountability measure for the time spent on given tasks. The quantity of time spent with the teachers should not be the only consideration, however, as there should be quality activities that impact teaching and learning being done with the teacher during their time together (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). With the clear definition of the role, an outline of the time can be incorporated, and that, in conjunction with documentation of time, can help both the instructional coach and the instructional coach's supervisor ensure the instructional coach is utilizing their time for the most effective purposes.

Within this definition of a coaching role, it is imperative the delineation between instructional coach and administrator is defined. While there are some shared responsibilities, some overlapping, and some distinct responsibilities, it should be evident the "supervision and coaching work should be clearly separated, with the principal

supervising and the coach supporting” (Ippolito & Bean, 2019, p. 72). Additionally, it should be determined whether the instructional coach is considered a district-hired or school-hired coach, as Kane and Rosenquist (2019) found that district-hired coaches spent more of their time engaged in impactful activities than school-hired coaches. Kane and Rosenquist’s (2019) study also indicated a third type of instructional coach, one that is district-hired, and school-based, which fell between district-hired and school-hired coaches on percentage of time spent engaged in impactful activities.

Suggestion 3: Train Instructional Coaches in the Three Types of Coaching

After defining the role and communicating this role with all parties, it is imperative that the instructional coaches receive the requisite professional development to carry out the responsibilities effectively. Typically, there is very little professional development on instructional coaching, particularly since there is not currently a required certificate for taking on the role (Aguilar. 2019). One area in which professional development should be provided is the three types of coaching: directive, facilitative, and transformational (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2018). These methods align with adult learning theories, in that they meet the learner where they are, have a spectrum of how direct the guidance is—from the instructional coach teaching the teacher to the teacher guiding the learning, and provide an opportunity for the teacher to find the benefit in participating in instructional coaching.

Beyond this professional development addressing adult learning theories so that the instructional coach can have a better understanding of the teachers they work with, the adult learning theories should be applied to the professional development afforded to instructional coaches. It should solve real-life problems and be performance-centered, as

in andragogy. The professional development should change the instructional coach's frame of reference, as in transformational learning; and it should draw on the understanding that occurs through experience, as in experiential learning. If an instructional coach shows evidence that they have mastered the knowledge they would gain in a given professional development opportunity, they should be considered self-directed learners and be afforded opportunities to gain new knowledge in the types of coaching from a method they determine would fit best.

The professional development on the types of instructional coaching should include methods for encouraging the teacher to participate. In the interviews, no participants indicated they had a conversation with the instructional coach about how they would like to be coached. While this may be because instructional coaches generated their methods based on observation rather than conversation, clear communication about the process builds a more effective relationship. Knight (2018) noted that the most effective teachers have the autonomy to say no to a suggestion, and this concept should be applied to teacher participation in a coaching relationship.

An additional component of this training should be methods for building relationships between the instructional coach and the teacher. Both professional and personal relationships should be built with the teacher (Graham & Ferriter, 2010; Walkowiak, 2016). Building trust, listening, questioning, clarifying expectations, keeping commitments, and asking permission are each a component of building relationships that instructional coaches should be aware of as they learn to incorporate the three methods of coaching in their interactions with teachers.

Suggestion 4: Build Capacity for Coaching Outside of Coach's Content Area

The structure of the instructional coaching program in the district is that instructional coaches are assigned to a school. Each instructional coach has one or two content areas as their strength. In the interviews, a theme was that instructional coach input was less valuable when they were coaching a teacher in an area in which they did not share content background. This did not align with data from the surveys, as most responded that the instructional coach had enough content knowledge to work with the teacher. With the difference in data, it would be valuable to equip instructional coaches with content knowledge and teaching methods for content beyond the instructional coach's background. This could come from studying the standards of the other subject areas, attending professional development in multiple academic areas, and observing master teachers in the content area outside of the instructional coach's background. Beyond this, if necessary, instructional coaches should be able to support at other schools if the content knowledge is necessary to support a given teacher. Inherently, middle school instructional coaches and teachers typically have their background in a given content area, and providing methods for supporting all content areas would benefit the district.

An additional method for building capacity for coaching outside of an instructional coach's content area is to develop an instructional playbook as a coaching team. Knight (2018) suggested creating an instructional playbook where teachers have a list of possible strategies followed by page-long explanations of each as well as a checklist about what a given strategy looks like. By having a team of instructional coaches working together to create this playbook and continually going back to it to add,

refine, or remove strategies, the instructional coaching team can discuss methods in which the playbook would work in different content areas, thus building their capacity for coaching in a different area.

Suggestion 5: Provide Training on Giving Feedback

Based on this research and within the literature review, a key component of an instructional coach's responsibility is to provide effective feedback to teachers. Feedback helps teachers bridge the gap between their current actions and achieving their goals (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). In structuring the feedback, it is important to balance criticism with things that are going well, so as to not have a negative impact on the teachers (Crane, 2017). In this study, many survey participants indicated they believed the instructional coach had the knowledge to give them feedback, and approximately half indicated they received feedback from their instructional coach. Within the interviews, few indicated they received feedback, and even fewer indicated the feedback given had an impact on their instruction or assessment. When asked about what optimal feedback looked like, though, they were quick to come in with responses. Themes about feedback were for it to be balanced, concrete, timely, and individualized. They wanted this type of feedback after an instructional coach spent time in their classroom, for which most participants also indicated they welcomed the additional observations from instructional coaches.

Professional development for this could include instructional coaches observing together and generating feedback together after a discussion about what the feedback should be. It could include methods for leaving feedback—whether on paper, electronically, or verbally. Instructional coaches also need to be trained in finding the

area that would have the biggest impact on instruction if improved. The instructional coach should then be able to create these suggestions along with feedback on aspects of the observation going well, to create balanced feedback for the teacher. Timely feedback could be a component of the definition of the instructional coach's role and time usage, as noted in the second suggestion. In the outline for how an instructional coach should utilize time within their working hours, there should be a component dedicated to curating feedback from observations within each day. This would provide the opportunity to allow instructional coaches to have feedback conversations or provide written feedback within a few hours of each observation.

This feedback could incorporate the component of Suggestion 4, in which the instructional coach team creates an instructional playbook to refer to. The feedback can include strategies for teaching, which can be simple rather than extensive and in-depth (Pierce, 2019). By suggesting simple, easy-to-implement strategies to impact instruction, instructional coaches are more likely to have an impact on instruction than when they do not include these suggestions for improvement.

Suggestion 6: Outline Coteaching Responsibilities

A key component of instructional coaching is coteaching, which was not mentioned in any of the interviews. This could be because of the questions not lending themselves to a discussion about coteaching, or it could be because coteaching does not occur. If it is determined that coteaching was not discussed because it is not happening, instructional coaches should be trained in effectively coteaching with a teacher. This training should contain components of the adult learning theories, in which different teachers would be in different learning methods, and instructional coaches should match

this. Included in this training should be methods for working with the students in such a way that the teacher's authority and expertise are honored, and they are able to maintain their role as an expert in the room.

Suggestion 7: Complete a Needs Assessment for Teachers

The final suggestion is to complete a needs assessment for teachers. In the interviews, many teachers indicated they believed instructional coaches should do things like pull resources for them. While identifying resources for teachers can be a part of an instructional coach's role, without supporting strategies for finding resources or working with the teacher to effectively implement them, it is not entirely the instructional coach's role to provide the tools for teaching. Others indicated that their instructional coaches are doing a lot in regard to multi-tiered systems of support, which is taking the instructional coaches away from the classrooms. With either of these responsibilities, the impact does not necessarily transfer into the classroom instruction effectively, and a needs assessment should be completed to determine what areas of need teachers have and methods for getting these needs addressed.

Conclusion

The role of an instructional coach can have an impact on instructional practices if utilizing the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a successful instructional coach. In this study, the data from the survey and the interviews did not correlate with each other, which should be further investigated. The data did show that with an increase in coach-teacher interactions, instructional coach feedback, instructional coach training, and reflection, instructional practices could have an even more substantial role in impacting teacher instructional practices. Participants were able to note areas for

improvement for their instructional coach; and with further research and training in these areas, a greater impact could be made. It is imperative that district leadership examine the suggestions made to determine how to get the most positive impact on instruction as a direct result of instructional coaching.

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Appendix A

Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey



Tools

November 2015

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey

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Overview

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey is a tool for administrators to gather information on teachers' perceptions of the feedback they receive from their evaluator and on teachers' self-reported responses to that feedback. This report contains the survey questions and information about how the survey was developed and how it can be used.

U.S. Department of EducationArne Duncan, *Secretary***Institute of Education Sciences**Ruth Neild, *Deputy Director for Policy and Research**Delegated Duties of the Director***National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance**Joy Lesnick, *Acting Commissioner*Amy Johnson, *Action Editor*Sandra Garcia, *Project Officer*

REL 2016–100

The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) conducts unbiased large-scale evaluations of education programs and practices supported by federal funds; provides research-based technical assistance to educators and policymakers; and supports the synthesis and the widespread dissemination of the results of research and evaluation throughout the United States.

November 2015

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This report is available on the Regional Educational Laboratory website at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Summary

Regional Educational Laboratory Central, together with members of the Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance, developed the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey to help administrators gather information from teachers about their perceptions of evaluator feedback and teachers' self-reported responses to that feedback. Evaluator feedback is defined as feedback on teaching performance that teachers receive from a designated evaluator as part of a formal district evaluation process.

District and state administrators can use this survey to systematically collect information on teacher perceptions on five key characteristics of evaluator feedback:

- Usefulness.
- Accuracy.
- Credibility.
- Access to resources.
- Responsiveness.

Administrators can also use the information gathered from the survey to better understand teacher perceptions of new evaluator feedback protocols.

This report presents the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey along with information about how it was developed, how it can be used, and its reliability and validity.

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Introduction

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey is designed to gather information from teachers about their perceptions of evaluator feedback and teachers' self-reported responses to that feedback. District and state administrators can use this survey to systematically collect information on teacher perceptions on five key characteristics of evaluator feedback:

- Usefulness.
- Accuracy.
- Credibility.
- Access to resources.
- Responsiveness.

The survey (provided in appendix A) takes 10–15 minutes to complete.

Why and how was this survey developed?

As of 2014, 45 states have requested Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility waivers that include plans to improve the utility of their teacher evaluation systems by providing targeted and ongoing feedback that informs teachers about their practice (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). While only five of seven states in the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central Region requested a flexibility waiver (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Wyoming¹), all are developing or implementing new teacher evaluation systems that focus on teacher development. As these systems have been developed, state and district administrators have expressed a growing interest in learning more about the quality and usefulness of the feedback provided to teachers.

In response to needs identified by members of the Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance, REL Central conducted a study during the 2014/15 school year to examine relationships among feedback characteristics (perceived utility and accuracy of evaluator feedback and credibility of the person providing the feedback), access to resources related to the feedback, teacher response to feedback, and teacher performance. The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey was developed to collect information for that study.² The theoretical framework and literature used to develop the survey are in appendix B.

The survey was designed using an iterative process that included researchers and practitioners involved in the Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance. Early iterations of the survey focused on question development and cognitive pretesting, and later refinements focused on increasing the reliability of the data and enhancing the format of the instrument (see appendix C for additional details).

Researchers examined the reliability and validity of the survey using a variety of statistical techniques (classical test theory, Rasch analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis; see appendix C for a more complete explanation). These analyses provided evidence for the reliability and validity of the questions and the categories of usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, and responsiveness to inform state and district leaders about teachers' perceptions of evaluator feedback. The analysis also provided evidence of reliability of questions related to the importance of feedback characteristics.

As new teacher evaluation systems that focus on teacher development have been developed, state and district administrators have expressed a growing interest in learning more about the quality and usefulness of the feedback provided to teachers

Why administer this survey?

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey is a tool for district and state leaders and administrators to learn more about teachers' perceptions of the feedback they received as a part of their evaluation system. District and state leaders can use the results of this survey to inform decisions regarding feedback in teacher evaluation systems. For example, low ratings of feedback accuracy or evaluator credibility may suggest areas for improvement or topics for which additional training for evaluators could be provided. Teacher perceptions of the utility of feedback may suggest changes to evaluation policies and procedures such as timeliness and frequency and a focus on the types of feedback that teachers identify as most important. In addition, the survey can provide information about how teachers use the feedback that they receive, allowing administrators to consider ways to tailor professional development and provide resources for teachers to maximize professional growth.

The survey is not recommended for use in high-stakes decisionmaking, such as personnel or program funding decisions. The survey is intended only to gather teachers' perceptions to identify ways to support evaluators in providing feedback. When making high-stakes decisions, multiple data sources should be used that include more observational data and artifacts rather than perceptual data.

The survey questions

The questions in the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey ask respondents for information in five sections: background information, five feedback characteristics (usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, and responsiveness), importance of feedback characteristics, belief about instructional improvement, and teacher demographics (table 1). It asks teachers to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements on a five-point scale and to indicate how important various aspects of evaluator feedback are to them.

How to administer and adapt this survey

You can adjust the survey to fit your specific needs and can distribute the survey to teachers in a pencil-and-paper format or using online software of your choosing. The survey takes approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. You should administer the survey as close to the end of the school year as possible, because teachers are asked to reflect on the feedback that they received throughout the entire school year. If possible, teacher responses should be collected anonymously so that teachers will respond more honestly, without concern that their administrator might see their individual responses. The survey should also be administered only to classroom teachers because the survey asks about changes in classroom management, instructional practice, and content or subject knowledge. The survey questions are not relevant to teachers who work with students individually or who work only with other teachers to provide support.

You are free to adapt any part of the survey for your own use. For example, you may be interested in collecting data for only a subset of the categories targeted by the survey. If you decide to use a subset of the questions within a category or to adapt the language of the questions or response options for your own use, you are encouraged to establish reliability and validity for the revisions (see appendix C for statistical techniques that you could use to do so).

The survey can provide information about how teachers use the feedback that they receive, allowing administrators to consider ways to tailor professional development and provide resources for teachers to maximize professional growth

Table 1. Questions in the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey, by section

Section	Description	Question number
Background information	Definition of designated evaluator	1
	Designated teacher evaluator in the current school year	2
	Frequency of feedback conversation with designated evaluator	3
	Frequency of written feedback from designated evaluator	4
Feedback characteristics (includes five categories of questions)	Usefulness: perceived usefulness of evaluator's feedback	5 (a–g)
	Accuracy: perceived accuracy of evaluator's feedback	6 (a–d)
	Credibility: perceived credibility of evaluator	7 (a–e)
	Access to resources: perceived access to professional development and other resources needed to respond to evaluator feedback	8 (a–d)
	Responsiveness: actions teacher took in response to evaluator feedback	9 (a–e)
Importance of feedback characteristics	Importance of the following characteristics when deciding how to respond to the feedback:	
	• Perceiving the feedback as useful.	10 (a–i)
	• Having confidence in the accuracy of the evaluation feedback.	11 (a–b)
	• Perceiving the evaluator as credible.	12 (a–e)
Belief about instructional improvement	• Having access to relevant resources.	13 (a–d)
	Belief about whether evaluator feedback improved teacher's instruction	14
Teacher demographics	Number of years teaching	15
	Grade level or levels currently teaching	16
	Subject area or areas currently teaching	17

Source: Authors' compilation based on the survey in appendix A.

How to analyze survey results

There are four steps involved in analyzing the data collected using the Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey.

Step 1. Examining response rates

This step involves reviewing the collected data to see whether there are any significant gaps. For example, if only 50 percent of the surveyed teachers respond to a given question, the responses for that question may not be useful or representative of the group. You may also consider why data are missing; the fact that teachers did not respond to a question may be as revealing as the responses themselves.

Step 2. Determining what questions will be answered using the data

Table 2 lists basic research questions that can be answered by the survey data, and the analysis needed for each question.

When analyzing responses to questions in the five categories in the feedback characteristics section, you may choose to look at aggregate responses to individual questions or at all questions in the category as a whole. However, responses to the groups of questions in the importance of feedback characteristics section should be examined by individual question only.³

Table 2. Sample research questions that could be answered using the data, along with possible analysis methods to answer them and sample findings

Research question	Possible analysis method	Sample question	Sample finding (examples, not the result of any analysis that was conducted)
How did teachers respond in aggregate to an individual question?	Percentage or median response to individual questions	How did all teachers respond to the question "My evaluator's feedback included specific performance suggestions"?	46 of 50 teachers (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the evaluator's feedback included specific performance suggestions
How did teachers respond in aggregate to each of the categories?	Aggregate percentage or median response across an entire category	How did all teachers respond to all the questions in the usefulness category?	26 of 50 teachers (52%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful feedback
How did subgroups of teachers respond in aggregate to an individual question?	Responses to a question by groups of teachers using background or teacher demographic questions	How did grade 6 teachers respond to the question "My evaluator's feedback included specific performance suggestions"?	10 of 15 grade 6 teachers (67%) agreed or strongly agreed that the evaluator's feedback included specific performance suggestions
How did subgroups of teachers respond in aggregate to all the questions in a category?	Responses for a category disaggregated by background question or teacher demographic	How did grade 6 teachers respond to all the questions in the usefulness category?	12 of 15 grade 6 teachers (80%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received useful feedback

Source: Authors' compilation.

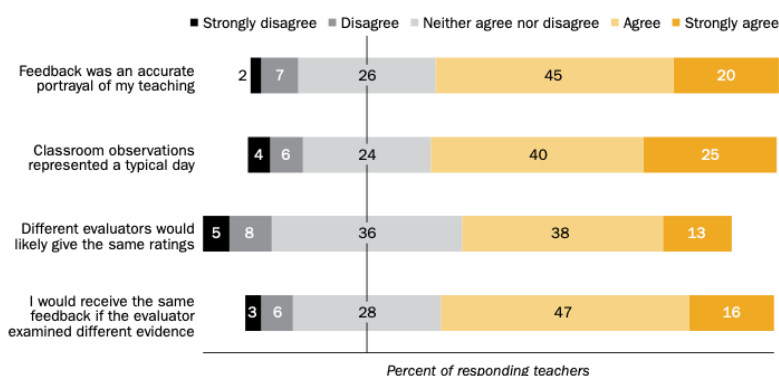
Step 3. Producing reports based on the questions that were answered

If the survey is administered online, you could use the results to create reports with graphs that display results across a category, by individual question, or by teacher subgroup. If the survey is administered in a paper-and-pencil format, you could input the responses into a spreadsheet and use formulas to calculate the percentage of responding teachers or the median.

An analysis using sample data of percentage of teachers responding for individual questions is presented in figure 1, and an analysis using sample data of percentage of responding teachers by category is presented in figure 2.

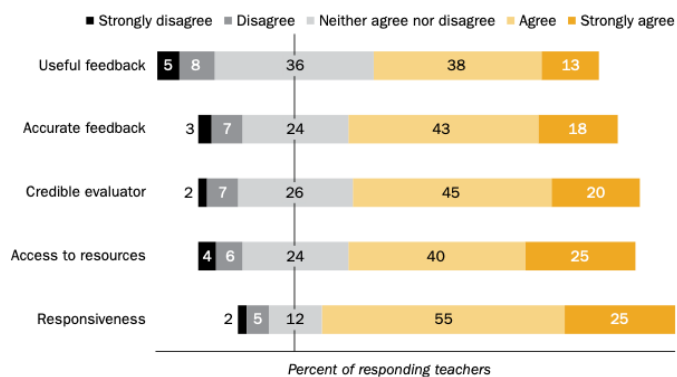
Step 4. Interpreting the results

This step involves investigating patterns in the data to answer the research questions identified in step 2. For example, you may want to know whether the feedback that was provided to teachers was useful to them. To determine this, you might examine the findings from figure 2 and discover that almost half the responding teachers did not agree that the feedback was useful: 36 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. At this point, it might be helpful to re-examine the data and look at the individual questions within a category. Each question asks about a different component of the category, so looking at the response to individual questions could allow you to more precisely determine respondents' needs. It also might be useful to collect additional data to help interpret the findings—for example, through follow-up interviews or focus groups—to provide context for the survey results.

Figure 1. Sample analysis of responses to accuracy questions

Note: The vertical bar represents the median point of the neutral response category.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Figure 2. Sample analysis of responses by category

Note: The vertical bar represents the median point of the neutral response category.

Source: Authors' compilation.

In this example, examining the individual questions within the category might have revealed that the feedback was not useful because it did not provide suggestions, strategies, or resources and was not timely. Given those results, you might focus additional evaluator training on providing feedback with specific suggestions for strategies or professional development or consider how to address barriers to the frequency and timeliness of feedback.

A variety of responses are available to address the needs revealed by the data analysis (table 3).

Table 3. How to respond to needs in different feedback characteristic categories

Feedback characteristic categories	Possible responses to needs in this category
Usefulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing additional training for evaluators. • Implementing system changes to increase timeliness of feedback. • Increasing the amount and frequency of feedback provided. • Including recommendations. • Implementing a school- or district-wide instructional practice.
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing additional training for evaluators. • Providing training to improve inter-rater reliability. • Increasing the number of observations. • Modifying or improving evaluation tools or rubrics. • Implementing a school- or district-wide instructional practice.
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing additional training for evaluators. • Using subject matter experts as evaluators. • Using peer evaluators. • Implementing a school- or district-wide instructional practice. • Increasing the number of observations.
Access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing or improving available district professional development resources. • Scheduling changes to allow for job-embedded professional development. • Implementing peer or mentor coaching models. • Establishing partnerships with local education agencies or postsecondary institutions. • Using evaluation data to determine the focus of professional development.
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing peer or mentor coaching models. • Including action steps as a component of feedback. • Increasing the number of observations. • Taking personnel actions. • Implementing peer or mentor coaching models.

Source: Authors' compilation.

* * *

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey is a tool that administrators can use to gather data to inform decisionmaking regarding feedback in teacher evaluation systems. The survey (provided in appendix A) collects teacher perceptions on five key aspects of evaluator feedback: usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, and responsiveness. The survey was developed based on the current literature on performance feedback (see appendix B) and was reviewed and tested for evidence of reliability and validity (see appendix C).

Appendix A. The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey

The purpose of this survey is to understand your thoughts on the usefulness and accuracy of your evaluator feedback. The survey asks questions about your experiences with the feedback you received as part of your district's teacher evaluation system. As you answer the questions, please consider only feedback that you received from your designated evaluator in your district during the current school year. Your designated evaluator is the person who is responsible for providing your performance rating at the end of the school year.

1. I have read and understand these instructions.
 - ☐ Yes

2. As part of the district's teacher evaluation system, who was your designated evaluator in the current school year? (Select only one. If you have more than one evaluator please pick one and refer to that evaluator as you respond to the remaining questions.)
 - ☐ My principal
 - ☐ My assistant principal
 - ☐ A peer
 - ☐ My department chair
 - ☐ My coach
 - ☐ Other (please describe): _____

3. How often did you have a feedback conversation with your designated evaluator throughout the current school year? Feedback conversations are defined as any conversation with your evaluator in which he or she provided feedback specific to observations, walkthroughs, or artifacts collected as part of your evaluation.
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Once
 - ☐ Twice
 - ☐ Three times
 - ☐ Four times
 - ☐ Five times
 - ☐ More than five times

4. How often did you receive written feedback from your designated evaluator throughout the current school year? Written feedback includes feedback specific to observations, walkthroughs, or artifacts collected as part of your evaluation that was given to you in written form (either on paper or electronically).
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Once
 - ☐ Twice
 - ☐ Three times
 - ☐ Four times
 - ☐ Five times
 - ☐ More than five times

For the following questions please keep in mind the feedback that you received throughout the current school year from your designated evaluator.

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. My evaluator's feedback...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
... included specific improvement suggestions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... included specific suggestions to improve my content/subject knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... included specific classroom management strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... included recommendations for finding resources or professional development to improve my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... was provided as frequently as I needed it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The feedback I received was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The classroom observations or walkthroughs that informed the feedback I received represented a typical day in my classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The evaluation system is accurate enough that different evaluators reviewing the same evidence would likely give the same ratings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would receive the same feedback if my evaluator examined different evidence (e.g., if they observed additional lessons or reviewed additional evidence).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. In my opinion, my evaluator had sufficient ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
... knowledge of my content/subject to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... understanding of the established teacher evaluation system to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had access to an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/mentor, administrator) who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback (e.g., collaborative or individual planning time).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Because of the feedback I received from my evaluator ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
... I tried new instructional strategies in my classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I tried new classroom management strategies in my classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I sought professional development opportunities (formal or informal).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I sought advice from an instructional leader (for example, peer, coach or mentor, administrator).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... I changed the way I plan instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Receiving ...

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
... specific improvement suggestions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... recommended next steps for finding professional development to improve your teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feedback within an appropriate timeframe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feedback as frequently as you needed it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feedback with specific suggestions to improve your content or subject knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... specific instructional strategies that you could use to improve your teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... specific classroom management strategies that you could use to improve your teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feedback that was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... feedback from classroom observations or walkthroughs that represented a typical day in my classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Having confidence that I would receive the same feedback ...

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
... from a different evaluator if they reviewed the same evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... if my evaluator had examined different evidence (e.g., if they observed additional lessons or reviewed additional evidence).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Having confidence that my evaluator had sufficient ...

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
... knowledge of my content/subject to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... understanding of the established teacher evaluation system to effectively evaluate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following?

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
Having access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having access to an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/mentor, administrator) who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback (e.g., collaborative or individual planning time).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For the following question please keep in mind the feedback that you received throughout the current school year from your designated evaluator.

14. To what extent did the feedback you received from your designated evaluator improve your instruction?

- ☐ Not at all
☐ A little
☐ A lot

15. Including this year, please indicate how many years of teaching experience you have.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20 |

16. Please indicate the grade level that you teach currently (select one or more).

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early childhood | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 |

17. Please indicate the subject and students that you teach currently (select one or more).

- ☐ Language arts
☐ Math
☐ Science
☐ Social studies
☐ Noncore subjects (physical education, art, technology)
☐ English learner students
☐ Students in special education
☐ Intervention
☐ Other: _____

Appendix B. Related literature

The Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey was developed as part of Regional Educational Laboratory Central's study on teachers' reports of their experiences with feedback and how these perceptions influence their use of feedback and their performance. Specifically, the study examines relationships among five feedback characteristics: usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, responsiveness, and teacher performance. The survey was developed because no single survey instrument existed to assess all the feedback characteristics and categories of interest.

Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor's (1979) mediation theory, used to guide development of the survey, describes a process through which feedback influences performance. The model suggests that performance is influenced by the use of feedback, which depends on the recipient's initial perception of the feedback, acceptance of the feedback, desire to respond to the feedback, intended response to the feedback, and external constraints. Initial perception of feedback "is concerned with how accurate the recipient perceives the feedback from any given source" (Ilgen et al., 1979, p. 353). This initial perception of feedback can be influenced by the source providing the feedback and by the timeliness and frequency of feedback. Once a recipient has formed an initial perception of the feedback, acceptance becomes an issue. Acceptance of feedback "refers to the recipient's belief that the feedback is an accurate portrayal of his or her performance" (Ilgen et al., 1979, p. 356). The acceptance of feedback can be influenced by the perception of the credibility of the source and the specificity of the feedback (especially when feedback is negative). The final stages of Ilgen et al.'s (1979) model are the desire to respond and intended response, described as a person's willingness or motivation to respond. In the model, Ilgen et al. (1979) also explain that external constraints, such as lack of resources or skills necessary to implement feedback, may influence the recipient's response.

Building on the Ilgen et al. (1979) model, recent studies have examined models of performance feedback to describe the relationship among variables that Ilgen et al. identified as important in the use of feedback to improve performance. Specifically, studies examine the relationship among the following feedback characteristics: usefulness of feedback, accuracy of feedback, credibility of the person providing feedback, and the effects of external constraints that may influence teacher response to feedback, such as access to resources related to feedback. Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, and McKee-Ryan (2004) studied relationships between supervisor feedback and loan officers' performance, and Tuytens and Devos (2011) studied relationships between supervisor feedback and teacher pursuit of professional learning in secondary schools. As predicted by Ilgen et al. (1979), both studies found that differences in feedback characteristics relate to an individual's responsiveness to the feedback and ultimately to future performance. Details of the findings from Kinicki et al. (2004) and Tuytens and Devos (2011), as well as emerging literature on the three feedback characteristics (usefulness, accuracy, and credibility) and access to learning opportunities as they relate to using feedback to improve performance, are described in detail below.

Usefulness of feedback

Usefulness of feedback depends on both the specificity of feedback and the timeliness and frequency of feedback. Kinicki et al. (2004) included the variable "feedback-rich environment" in their model of performance feedback. This variable included frequency of

feedback, specificity of feedback, and proportion of positive and negative feedback. They found that a feedback-rich environment was positively related to the perceived accuracy of feedback. Similarly, Tuytens and Devos (2011) found that the specificity and utility of feedback that a teacher had received during a supervisory evaluation conference had a direct relationship to that teacher's professional learning activities. Although neither of these studies prescribes an optimal level of specificity or frequency, both suggest that perceptions about the specificity and frequency influence the use of feedback.

Specific corrective feedback, which includes particular suggestions, directions, or examples of how to use an instructional strategy more appropriately and effectively, has been found to result in improved teaching performance compared with general feedback (such as "good" or "right"; Hemmeter, Snyder, Kinder, & Artman, 2011; Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004). In a recent and ongoing study of the effects of feedback for teachers in elementary school, teachers who were provided with specific feedback on their observed instructional practices had significantly greater instructional academic rigor, accountable talk, and higher student achievement than teachers who were provided with only student data as feedback (Supovitz, 2012). In addition to feedback on individual instructional strategies, specific feedback to increase content or subject knowledge and to improve classroom management strategies could theoretically lead to higher student achievement. Research on teacher quality and effective teaching suggests that subject matter knowledge (especially in math and science) influences student achievement (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Monk & King, 1994; Johnson, 2000) and that implementing certain behavior management strategies can also lead to higher student engagement and achievement (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008).

Timeliness of feedback may also be related to more effective use of feedback. Scheeler et al. (2004) identified and reviewed the results of 10 studies examining the effects of different feedback characteristics on teacher performance in pre-service teachers. The most consistent finding across the studies was that timeliness of feedback had a positive impact on teacher responsiveness.

Accuracy of feedback

Accuracy of feedback is the extent to which the person receiving feedback believes that the feedback accurately represents his or her performance. Kinicki et al. (2004) found that feedback that tends to be more specific, frequent, and positive was perceived as more accurate. Furthermore, perceived accuracy mediated the effect of these feedback features on intent to respond and performance (Kinicki et al., 2004).

Credibility of the person providing feedback

Credibility of the person providing feedback is the extent to which the person receiving feedback believes that the person providing the feedback is qualified to do so. Kinicki et al. (2004) found that perceived credibility of the source is related to both perceived accuracy and intent to respond. Additionally, participants who received more specific, frequent, and positive feedback perceived the source as more credible (Kinicki et al., 2004). Similarly, Tuytens and Devos (2011) found that teachers' perceived credibility of their principals as supervisors related to how they decided to use the feedback from their principals. Another important component of credibility is that the evaluator understands the evaluation

standards and has the ability to use the standards in feedback conversations (Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012).

Access to resources

Theoretical and empirical research on teacher learning and professional growth also addresses the role of feedback. In particular, studies suggest that the use of a language of instruction, or a model of effective teaching and its decomposition, are seen as important to the development of expertise in teaching (Grossman et al., 2009). Increases in teachers' knowledge and skills and changes in their practice may be related to their access to resources that are aligned to their content area and specific needs, which may include allowing teachers to observe expert teachers, allowing teachers to engage in conversations with colleagues such as a coach or mentors about strategies, and helping teachers plan for implementation of new teaching approaches (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Parise & Spillane, 2010).

Appendix C. Survey development methods

The survey was developed using an iterative process that included such survey development methods as expert review, cognitive interviews, and statistical modeling (Presser et al., 2004; Rothgeb, 2008). The original survey questions were formulated based on previous research (see appendix B) as well as unpublished surveys that the study team had implemented in evaluations of various teacher evaluation systems. The questions were reviewed and revised based on feedback from an advisory panel and teachers. The survey was then administered to 196 teachers, and the results were used to examine its reliability and validity. The stages of development are described in figure C1.

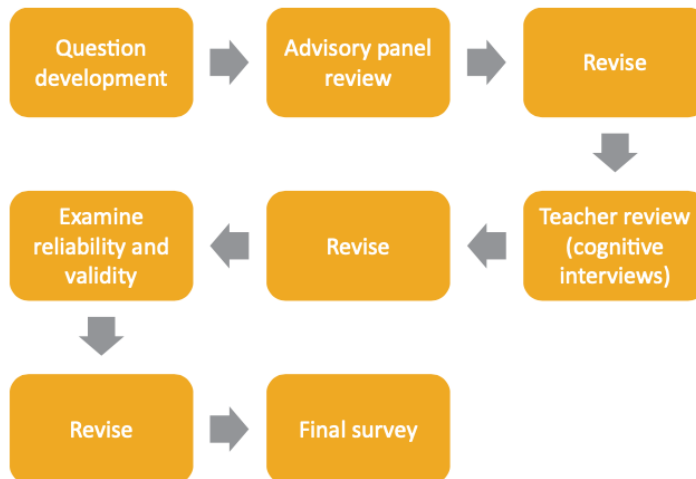
Advisory team review

To determine whether the survey was relevant to teacher evaluation systems in different contexts and whether the survey had face validity, the study team conducted a webinar with an advisory panel in which the panel responded to questions about the clarity and applicability of the questions and the appropriateness of the directions and response options. The advisory panel comprised seven members, including expert survey developers, state leaders, and district leaders with oversight for educator evaluation systems. Based on this review, the study team revised the directions, question stems, question wording, and response options on several questions for clarification and to increase ease in responding.

Cognitive interviews

To determine whether the survey questions were clear and would be uniformly interpreted by teachers, the study team conducted cognitive interviews with a sample of teachers. Nine

Figure C1. Survey development process



Source: Authors' illustration.

teachers responded to the survey and were interviewed by the study team using a structured interview protocol. Based on feedback from teachers, the study team made minor adjustments to the language of three questions.

Reliability and validity analysis

Following the cognitive interviews, the revised survey was administered to 196 teachers, 190 of whom completed the full survey. Survey reliability and validity were examined using classical test theory,⁴ Rasch analysis,⁵ and confirmatory factor analysis.⁶ Analyses were conducted on the questions related to usefulness, accuracy, credibility, access to resources, and responsiveness. These categories showed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.827–0.939. Confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the questions in these categories represent five distinct, though interrelated, categories (tables C1 and C2). Because the survey was developed as part of another study that is interested in analyzing descriptive statistics rather than testing a model for the importance and belief questions (10–14), Cronbach's alpha was examined for all items in those questions. The importance of feedback questions are numbered in question sets because they share the same question prompts. The prompts were used to make the survey easier to take. The importance of feedback questions showed high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.931.

Rasch analysis was conducted on the category questions to examine whether respondents used the questions and the question response options as intended. Results indicated that the category questions successfully placed respondents along a continuum represented by the relevant category. However, Andrich threshold values⁷ and probability curves suggested that respondents had difficulty distinguishing between the response options “somewhat disagree” and “somewhat agree.” This finding was observed across all questions. Based on these findings, researchers decided to collapse these response options into a “neither agree nor disagree” option and form a five-point scale by recoding the survey data. All subsequent

Table C1. Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey factor loadings

Category	Factor loading range
Usefulness	0.23 ^a –0.84
Accuracy	0.56–0.74
Credibility	0.59–0.86
Access to resources	0.37–0.66
Responsiveness	0.57–0.79

a. The item with the loading of 0.23 was revised; the remaining loadings ranged from 0.52 to 0.84.

Source: Authors' analysis based on pilot survey data.

Table C2. Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey factor standardized correlations

Category	Usefulness	Accuracy	Credibility	Resources
Accuracy	0.58			
Credibility	0.61	0.74		
Access to resources	0.72	0.66	0.65	
Responsiveness	0.59	0.023	0.31	0.56

Source: Authors' analysis based on pilot survey data.

reliability and validity analyses used this five-point response scale, and the scale was incorporated into the final survey.

The category minimum and maximum scores, mean, standard deviation, and reliability, after the two middle response options (somewhat disagree and somewhat agree) were combined to form a five-point response scale are presented in table C3. The table shows all categories to have an acceptable internal reliability, with respondents scoring along the full range of the response scale, except for responsiveness.

A confirmatory factor analysis using robust maximum likelihood estimation was also conducted to examine the structure of the survey. A measurement model was estimated where each scale question was an indicator of only its relevant category. Model fit indices suggested the model fit the data reasonably well. Factor loadings suggested the usefulness scale question “My evaluator’s feedback was provided within an appropriate timeframe” be omitted or reworded. This question was reworded to “My evaluator’s feedback was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.”

Table C3. Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey scale descriptive statistics and reliabilities, by category

Category	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Usefulness	188	1.00	5.00	3.41	0.91	.929
Accuracy	187	1.00	5.00	3.65	0.84	.849
Credibility	187	1.00	5.00	3.75	0.94	.939
Access to resources	186	1.00	5.00	3.25	0.87	.824
Responsiveness	188	1.40	5.00	3.72	0.80	.917

Source: Authors' analysis based on pilot survey data.

Notes

1. The two states in the region that did not request a waiver were Nebraska and North Dakota.
2. Information about this study can be found at <http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=333>. When the study report is published, it will be available at <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
3. Because of the way the survey was developed and tested, the responses to questions in the importance of feedback characteristics section are not expected to correlate with one another, so summing them would not lead to a meaningful index.
4. Classical test theory examines reliability by focusing on how closely related a set of questions is.
5. Rasch analysis allows for the examination of additional qualities of the information obtained from the survey, including how well questions fit in the survey and how respondents are using the response scale.
6. Confirmatory factor analysis helps examine whether the survey measures the categories that it is intended to measure.
7. Pairwise measures of transition between response categories on the latent scale.

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Appendix B
Interview Template

Purpose

As a student at Gardner-Webb University, I have set up this interview under the supervision of Dr. Prince Bull. You are invited to participate. I am conducting a research study to explore teacher perception of instructional coach feedback as well as the impact the interpersonal relationship between the instructional coach and teacher has on implementation of feedback. This study will provide more information on the perceived influence of instructional coach feedback and what factors make instructional coach feedback more effective.

Procedure:

If you participate in this interview, you will be one of six to eight teachers interviewed on your perspectives. The interview will be conducted over the Zoom platform and the session will be recorded for later transcription. There will be a facilitator asking questions and supporting the discussion. If you volunteer to participate you will be asked some question related to your work with your school's instructional coach. Your responses will help us better understand the role of instructional coach feedback on teacher practice. Your participation is voluntary.

Confidentiality:

Your data will be anonymous and analyzed by Anna Coats. Your individual data will not be linked to you or the results. Your identity will not be disclosed.

Script

Thank you for joining me for this interview. The purpose of this meeting is to explore teacher perception of instructional coach feedback as well as the impact the interpersonal relationship between the instructional coach and teacher has on

implementation of feedback. Your responses will provide more information on the perceived influence of instructional coach feedback and what factors make instructional coach feedback more effective.

I am Anna Coats and will be the facilitator in today's conversation. This meeting is safe and confidential. You may answer each question, or choose not to, and there is no correct answer, just your opinion. You may not only respond to my prompt but to the responses of the other participants as well.

This session will be anonymous—your name and the names you may mention will be removed and your identity will not be used.

Please be mindful that this session should be considered confidential. You may choose which questions to respond to, and your responses will be transcribed by me.

Let's start with an introduction, please share your name and something you enjoy doing.

Questions:

- What is your relationship like with your coach?
- How was this relationship built?
- How would you describe the feedback you have received from your coach?
- How would you describe the impact coach feedback has had on your instruction?
- How would you describe the impact coach feedback has had on your assessment?
- What would optimal feedback look like?
- How would you like to be coached?
- How would you rate the effectiveness of your coach?
- To what extent did you discuss your preferences for coaching with your coach?
- What makes a strong and effective coach?

Closing Instructions:

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please remember, you will remain anonymous and your answers are confidential.

Appendix C

Letter to Principals

Date

Dear Principals,

My name is Anna Coats, and I am a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Prince Bull in the Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction program at Gardner-Webb University. I am conducting a research study to explore the impact that instructional coach feedback has on instructional practices as well as the impact the interpersonal relationship between the instructional coach and teacher has on implementation of feedback. This study will provide more information on the perceived influence of instructional coach feedback and what factors make instructional coach feedback more effective.

I am recruiting individuals that meet these criteria:

- K-12 teacher within the selected district.
- Core content area teacher (English language arts, math, science or social studies)

A teacher cannot be in this study if they are outside of the district or do not teach a core content area. The activities include an electronic survey as well as an opportunity to participate in an interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary.

The privacy of all participants will be maintained throughout the study. All identifiable information will be removed from data sources and only I will have access to it. I will be responsible for the secure storage of the data.

Please forward this survey to all teachers who meet the criteria. There are two links: one to the survey, and one to a form that will collect contact information for those interested in participating in the interviews.

I may be contacted at 919.701.9522 or by email at acoats1@gardner-webb.edu if you or your teachers have any questions.

Thank you!

Anna Coats