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Instructional Coach Leadership:
Perceptions of Purpose, Practices, and Supports in Coaching for Educational Equity

By
Michelle Wise

Claremont Graduate University
2021

Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Michelle Wise as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

Instructional Coach Leadership: Perceptions of Purpose, Practices, and Supports in Coaching for Educational Equity

**By
Michelle Wise**

Claremont Graduate University: 2021

There has been increased investment in instructional coach positions in public school districts in recent years. Instructional coaches are put into positions of leadership with great variation in their leadership skills, training, and support. The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived experiences of instructional coaches, including their leadership roles and tasks, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity for students.

This study used a non-experimental, qualitative phenomenological research design. Twenty seasoned instructional coaches were interviewed. Qualitative interviewing was ideal to understand their lived experiences and perceptions of their experiences. Five themes emerged:

1. Instructional coaches are agents of change for the sake of students.
2. Instructional coaches do much more than coach.
3. Instructional coaches lead with influence by leveraging relationships.
4. Instructional coaches must attend to perception and politics daily.
5. Instructional coaches need support from their administrators.

Instructional coaches recognize their service is to teachers, but they know the end result of that service is to improve outcomes for students. They see their work as critical to the implementation of district and school plans, goals, and initiatives, and ultimately critical to student achievement. To impact change, they work tirelessly to support the differentiated needs

of teachers to improve learning environments for students. Educational equity matters to coaches, for they want no student to have limited opportunities or outcomes, particularly students from historically underserved groups. Ultimately, instructional coaches recognize the moral purpose of their work, improving student outcomes and educational equity.

Instructional coaches are “go-to” staff members. Most coaches spend the bulk of their time in “other duties as assigned.” Those duties keep their schools progressing, as coaches fill the gaps in work that would potentially go left undone if not for the coach. They are dependable, hard workers who see the value of doing the “other duties as assigned” in service to teachers and as a benefit to students.

Instructional coaches come to the work of coaching as established teacher leaders who often get instant credibility from their teacher peers due to their experience. But instructional coaches know that instant credibility has limits. They know they must develop and constantly maintain positive, trusting relationships with teachers. They recognize that such relationships are foundational to their leadership success. Instructional coaches know they cannot tell people what to do and expect results. Rather, they leverage relationships and use influence as their main leadership method.

Instructional coaches are a minority group amongst their peers. This creates issues of perception around, “What do coaches do?” and “How do they spend their time?” Instructional coaches are well aware of these perceptions and are mindful to attend to the perception of their peers at all times. They are keen to be visible on their campuses, be helpful to everyone at all times, and maintain positive relationships so as not to lose credibility and influence.

Instructional coaches need collaborative relationships with their administrators for the purpose of effectively implementing district and school change initiatives that lead to positive

student outcomes. Coaches recognize they are not administrators and cannot lead change in the same way as an administrator. But with collaborative relationships with administrators, they can be a powerful team. They are grateful when they receive administrative support and seek it as their main need for ongoing success in the coaching role.

This study is important because it demonstrates that instructional coaches can be linchpins of change in their schools and districts. While coaches are focused on supporting teachers and growing teacher efficacy, they are ultimately focused on student achievement outcomes and educational equity as the moral purpose of their work. This study also demonstrates that coaching time need not be purely focused on coaching tasks; rather, time in non-coaching tasks is highly beneficial to coaches' work. Time spent in "other duties as assigned" is a political investment in relationships and influence that can constantly be leveraged to make meaningful change for the benefit of students. Ultimately, instructional coaches are quite keen about the politics of their positions and this study redefines the notion that coaches experience a lot of negative tension in their roles. Rather, they have a matter-of-fact knowledge of politics and perception as a reality they reckon with daily. Their astute understanding of the politics of their role is an asset and indicative of their leadership knowledge and skills. Instructional coaches are influential teacher leaders, and they are needed in our schools.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the two most patient and loving people in my life. Thank you to my husband, Steve, and to my daughter, Mary, for believing in me and supporting me. Thank you for supporting me over many weekends, months, years in my journey to achieve my goals for my education and my career. You let me be me. I love you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

California's budget for public education was bleak for many years. In addition to a poor economy during the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the funding system for California's schools was not resulting in equitable funding across the state's school districts. The system, which had been in use for nearly four decades, included a complicated algorithm based on a unique revenue limit multiplied by average daily student attendance ("LCFF Frequently Asked Questions," 2018). The funding formula was difficult for the public, school boards, educators, and legislators to understand. In addition, there were over sixty categorical funding programs (Smith et al., 2013) with funds meant to target the needs of specific demographic groups of students ("LCFF Frequently Asked Questions," 2018). The categorical program rules were mandated by state policy, and school districts had little local control over the methods for program implementation.

California's school funding formula with over sixty categorical funding programs (Smith et al., 2013) was not resulting in the closing of student achievement performance gaps, particularly for historically underserved groups of students, socio-economically disadvantaged students, students of color, foster youth, students learning English as a second language, and students with disabilities. The categorical program roadblocks to student achievement included: spending rules that limited districts' options for innovative programs and resources that would best benefit student achievement, lack of local control over solutions to increase student achievement, and inconsistent funding streams (Smith et al., 2013). Overall, categorical funding was considered too specific, too narrow (Weston, 2011), not allowing for districts to craft unified, systematic approaches to making significant positive change for the students it was meant to serve.

On July 1, 2013, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into state law the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which overhauled the public school funding formula in an effort to improve equity and access for students (“Local Control Funding Formula Guide,” 2017). In addition, a related compliance requirement for proper use of the LCFF funds was mandated for public school districts across the state. That compliance requirement manifested as the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). The initial LCAP development occurred in California public school districts in the spring of 2014, and the first year of implementation for the plans was the 2014-15 school year (“Local Control Funding Formula’s First Year,” 2014).

The new funding formula and related plans offered districts the opportunity to have increased funding to provide extra service to historically underserved student groups in an effort to meet their needs and close achievement gaps. Because research supports a teacher as the main factor in a student’s academic achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011), many districts invested in the development of teacher capacity (“Local Control Funding Formula’s First Year,” 2014). This is evident in past and present LCAP plans with a focus on and investment in teacher professional learning. A popular method for offering teacher professional learning has been with the hiring of instructional coaches, teachers who work in full-time or part-time roles to teach and facilitate the professional learning opportunities of their peers within a school or district. Across the United States, instructional coaching is one of the fastest growing methods for offering teacher professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). While some districts have invested in instructional coaching for many years, for many school districts LCFF/LCAP provided the first opportunity to invest in this method for providing professional learning for teachers.

In addition to changes to California’s funding formula for public schools, education in the United States has been in the midst of a major shift. With the implementation of Common Core

State Standards (CCSS) which began in 2009 and the move to 21st Century learning environments, teachers have been learning and implementing new, rigorous curriculum, CCSS. Along with new standards, teachers methods have had to evolve to ensure all students have learning opportunities which allow them to collaborate, network, and build new knowledge within a community of learners in order to be competitive in school, and later, in the workforce ("SBE-adopted ELA/ELD Framework," 2015). However, public education in the country has historically not treated all students equitably and has not ensured such learning environments for all students, and thus, achievement gaps exist for historically underserved groups of students. California chose to lead the charge of equity for all students. As stated in the California State Board of Education adopted English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework (2015),

The state of California recognizes its deep responsibility to ensure that each and every student receives a world class 21st century education, one that supports the achievement of their highest potential. In order to accomplish this goal, it is important to continuously strive for equity in all classrooms, schools, and districts. It is equally important to acknowledge that inequities exist in current educational systems. (p. 881)

To develop equitable schools and classrooms, public education needs leaders who will lead for change and equity. Despite federal policies focused on educational opportunity and closing the achievement gap, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), equity in the country's public schools has not been realized. Equitable opportunities and outcomes for students can be achieved (Chenoweth, 2007), and producing such outcomes exists in schools with educators focused on equity. However, many schools fail to achieve equity in opportunity and outcomes, and thus fail to close achievement

gaps, because the educators blame students for perceived deficiencies based on stereotypes of race, culture, and circumstance (Lindsey et al., 2007). It takes leadership and support to develop teachers and practices that result in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.

With changes to student and teacher roles come shifts in the professional learning opportunities teachers need. Professional learning can no longer be the traditional professional development of one-size-fits-all, one-time workshops that have little impact on changing the instructional practices of teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). To offer teachers opportunities for authentic learning that mimics the environments to be offered to students (Hopkins, 2003), teachers need 21st Century learning opportunities that include collaboration and shared learning. Instructional coaches are in the best position to be the facilitators of collaborative, shared professional learning (Fullan & Knight, 2011) for teacher professional development and thus, equitable outcomes for all students. Instructional coaches can have a profound impact on building and sustaining equitable learning environments and outcomes for all students. However, for an instructional coach to coach teacher peers for equity, an instructional coach must have a vision for the role of coach as a leader of change, be committed to equity in schools, and have ongoing support to be successful.

Statement of the Problem

Across the country, there has been increased investment in instructional coaching with the number of instructional coach positions doubling between 2000 and 2015 (Domina et al., 2015). The number of school districts using instructional coaches has grown significantly (Knight, 2017), and coaching is one of the costliest professional development initiatives of the last three decades ("Coaching for Impact," 2016). Across California LCFF investment in instructional coaches is found within LCAPs. The models of implementation for instructional

coaching vary greatly across California's school districts. Within the various models, instructional coaches are put into positions of leadership with great variation in their leadership knowledge, skills, training, and support. Further, the degree to which implemented coaching models focus on instructional coaches' leadership for educational equity is unknown. Overwhelmingly, the training and supports needed to prepare instructional coaches to lead for equity are also unknown.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the perceived experiences of instructional coaches, including their leadership roles and tasks, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity. The study asked instructional coaches their perceptions of the purpose of their work as instructional coaches. This study also asked instructional coaches to share about the daily work they do, in what roles they serve, and the challenges they face. Their leadership roles and responsibilities as coaches, as well as the leadership practices they use, were also examined. Further, they were asked about the support and professional learning opportunities they have received to prepare them to lead district equity reform initiatives. It further asked them to identify the support and professional learning opportunities they need to be most prepared to conduct instructional coaching for educational equity.

Importance of the Study

Educational equity must be the moral imperative of all public educators. Unequal learning environments, opportunities, and outcomes have persisted far too long in public schools across the United States. Prior to the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of*

Education, schools were segregated by race and ethnicity, and they were unequal in resources and student outcomes. The inequities negatively impacted the academic achievement of black and Hispanic students, student groups that are also overwhelmingly socio-economically disadvantaged in the United States. Though achievement gaps have narrowed in recent decades, they still persist. Evidence of this is seen in multiple data points. The black-white achievement gap and Hispanic-white achievement gap is evident in the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in both reading and math across all sampled age groups, ages 9, 13, and 17 tested since the 1970s (Stanford Center for Educational Policy Analysis, n.d.). The same trend is seen in high school graduation rates with improvement in the achievement gap but still a persistent gap in black-white and Hispanic-white graduation rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). There is also a vast gap in the high school graduation rates of foster youth, students learning English as a second language, and students with disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; National Foster Youth Institute, n.d.; United States Department of Education, n.d.).

Of all staff and resources in schools, it is teachers that matter most for student achievement (Oppor, 2019). Knowing that teachers are the main change-makers in students' lives at school means the system of support for teachers must be focused on educational equity. Principals can support teacher development and lead for educational equity, but principals are usually alone in their work at a school. It is beneficial to both principals and teachers to have partners in the work of leadership for educational equity. Instructional coaches are well positioned to be the partners and change agents, the linchpins (Knight, 2011a) between federal, state, and local equity initiatives and teachers in the classroom.

Instructional leadership is powerful with informal leadership from teachers when they

lead professional development sessions, collaborative meetings, and inquiry sessions for their teacher peers (Hopkins, 2003). Teachers learn best from other teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fullan, 2011; Hopkins, 2003). Instructional coaches are teachers who have the opportunity to be the teachers of their peers by the nature of the position for which they were hired. This puts instructional coaches in the leadership position of change agent, and they are well positioned for this work, as they have the power of peer relationships with fellow teachers, different than the supervisory role of a principal on a school campus.

With the current increase in instructional coaching positions across the country (Knight, 2017) it is imperative to understand the leadership roles and tasks of coaches, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity opportunities and outcomes for students. Currently, not enough is known in the literature about how instructional coaches lead. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature and inform the work of public educators, leaders, and policymakers.

Key Terms

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

The Common Core State Standards in California are, “educational standards [that] describe what students should know and be able to do in each subject in each grade” (“What are the Common Core Standards?,” 2016). The CCSS for English language arts and mathematics were adopted in California in 2010.

Educational Equity

Per Bitters (1997), educational equity is the “educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to: 1) eliminate barriers in education based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status, and 2) provide equal

educational opportunities to ensure that historically underserved or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for performance expected of all children and youth” (p. 7).

Additionally, per Bitters (1997), “equity strategies are planned, systemic, and focus on the core of the teaching and learning process (curriculum, instruction, and school environment/culture)... activities promote equality of achievement results for each student and between diverse groups of students” (pp. 7-8).

Instructional Coach

Teachers who work in full-time or part-time roles to teach and facilitate the professional learning opportunities of their peers within a school or district.

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

As stated on the California Department of Education website, LCAP is a “...three-year plan that describes the goals, actions, services, and expenditures to support positive student outcomes that address state and local priorities...provides an opportunity for [districts] to share their stories of how, what, and why programs and services are selected to meet their local needs” (“Local Control and Accountability Plan,” 2017).

Leadership

Leadership in this study will be defined as Fullan’s (2001) leadership model from *Leading in a Culture of Change* which has five key elements: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making.

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

LCFF was established in California in the 2013–14 school year to replace the previous (forty-year-old) kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) finance system. LCFF provides base funding for public school districts and charters, as well as supplemental and concentration grant

funding intended to address the educational equity needs of socio-economically disadvantaged students, English learner students, foster youth, and homeless youth ("Local Control Funding Formula Overview," 2017).

Professional Development

"Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments," 2009, p.49).

Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)

Teachers who work in full-time or part-time roles to teach and facilitate the professional learning opportunities of their peers within a school or district.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* applied to the work of instructional coaching. Fullan's (2001) Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change encompasses five key elements he calls the five capacities of a leader: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. An instructional coach is an instructional leader on a school campus and must develop these five capacities. Paramount is moral purpose. Regarding moral purpose, Fullan (2001) states, "In education, an important end is to make a difference in the lives of students" (p.13). Moral purpose guides the work of the organization, and a leader must cultivate it with strategic work. In public schools in the United States, the moral purpose of public schooling manifests in equity initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels. Thus, the moral purpose of instructional coaching is evident—improving student outcomes and educational equity.

The instructional coach as a leader must stay focused on the moral purpose of educational equity while engaging in the coaching of teachers. The teacher is the main change agent in student achievement in schools (Fullan & Knight, 2011), and the coach is supporting the teacher's learning. The instructional coach has the opportunity to make a great impact on the teacher, and thus, the student when strategically working with moral purpose and with an understanding of leading change. The coach is already in the role of relationship building with teachers, as well as knowledge creation and sharing. Fullan's (2001) last element is coherence making, and that is realized in the coach's work with assisting teachers in connecting the big picture reform initiatives with the daily work of a teacher by staying focused on student achievement outcomes. Staying focused on student outcomes helps instructional coaches and teachers make sense of the messiness of the work of change.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study:

1. How do instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work?

2. How do instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter?
3. How do instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use?
4. How do instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change?

Limitations

There were limitations to this study. The study included a small sample size from one county in southern California. Though the selected county was representative of the student population diversity across the state, the study was regional. Another limitation of the study was that the reported experiences of the participants cannot always be generalized. Lastly, participant self-reporting was limited to their personal perceptions of their experiences, values, and beliefs.

Assumptions

A key assumption and potential problem for the study was the concept of educational equity. The researcher assumed that instructional coaches had developed their own level of personal leadership for educational equity, applied it in their instructional coaching work, and valued the development of teachers to provide educational equity in opportunities and outcomes for students. Another assumption was that participants participated honestly in interviews.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

This study supports teachers, instructional coaches, and school and district administrators in identifying the necessary program elements needed when writing and implementing an instructional coaching plan for staff professional learning. For districts already in the midst of implementation of an instructional coaching program, the results of this study can guide a program review process to identify strengths and gaps in current programs, and thus, assist in

identifying elements to add to current programs to ensure teacher support in the development of educational equity learning environments and outcomes for all students.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Teacher professional learning in the United States has been described as very flawed (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) with little inclusion of teacher collaboration time or opportunities for teachers to work with peer mentors. Additionally, professional development activities are often disconnected from systemic reform efforts of a school or district. Recommendations to improve teacher professional learning are that the learning opportunities should be focused on student achievement outcomes, connected to school reform initiatives, and ongoing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Teacher collaboration needs to be a part of professional learning, with opportunities for teachers to have mentors and/or coaches and work in collaborative teams (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fullan, 2011; Timperley, 2008).

Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) build on the idea of collaborative professional learning with the concept of professional capital. Human capital, an individual's skills and talents, is complemented and improved with social capital, people working together on common tasks. Thus, teachers who are committed to their work, learn together, and are well networked are poised to increase their teaching ability and bring a substantial improvement to their school systems (Katz et al., 2009). However, such networked, collaborative learning communities in and of themselves do not change teacher instructional practice or result in increased student achievement, often because of cultural norms of politeness or fear of challenging the status quo (Timperley, 2008). Collaborative teacher groups must have instructional leadership, which can be both formal and informal. An external "expert" can be essential to teacher learning of content or skills and pushing collaborative teacher groups beyond norms of politeness and fear of change (Bradley-Levine, 2012; Timperley, 2008). Principals, instructional coaches, and other teacher

leaders can facilitate change within school communities.

A clear learning focus, collaborative inquiry, and instructional leadership create the conditions for changed practice in schools (Hopkins, 2003). Instructional leadership is powerful with informal leadership, with teachers leading training sessions and facilitating study sessions (Hopkins, 2003). Ultimately, teachers learn best from other teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fullan, 2011; Hopkins, 2003). Instructional coaches are teachers who have the opportunity to be the teachers of their peers, and ultimately, to be agents of change. They are well positioned for this work, as they have the power of peer relationships with fellow teachers, different than the supervisory role of a principal on a school campus.

Within a school district, district administrators are often a closed group, each school site is often a closed group of teachers, and principals are often isolated individuals not really connected to any group (Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Thus, districts with instructional coaches have a unique opportunity for building network bridges for collaboration within their organizations. Instructional coaches can serve as system leaders (Fullan & Knight, 2011) who lead with the reform vision of the district administrative team, collaborate with principals, and support teachers in the ongoing development of educational equity in instructional opportunities and outcomes for students.

Roles and Tasks of Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches' roles and tasks vary greatly across organizations and are highly dependent upon the school districts in which they work. A school or district's reform initiatives drive the coaches' foci and work tasks (Mangin, 2009). Additionally, many models of instructional coaching exist (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). District leaders must decide on one or more models of instructional coaching to implement to best address the local needs, policies, and

reform initiatives (Blachowicz et al., 2005). Yet, within one school district instructional coaching can manifest differently from school to school (Walpole, et al., 2010), and even within a school, the expectations of an instructional coaching role can vary between principals, teachers, and coaches (Ippolito, 2010). Fullan and Knight (2011) note the main way to waste the work of instructional coaches is by having unclear goals for their work. Coaches need to understand clearly the reform initiatives they are supporting and the tasks of their work with teachers.

A main focus of instructional coaching exists throughout the literature. Instructional coaches are teachers who educate their teacher peers. The main work of an instructional coach is providing individualized support for teacher professional development (Knight, 2004). This work begins with the development of a relationship between coach and teacher. The coach is to develop a trusting and confidential relationship with the teacher (Knight, 2009), listen to the teacher's individualized needs and goals (Knight, 2011a, 2011b), and then develop the plan of support with the teacher. Knight (2011a, 2011b) sums up these ideas with a "partnership approach" to instructional coaching; he describes the coach and teacher as equal peers who engage in open and honest dialogue and reflection with the goal of improving teacher performance and thus, student achievement outcomes.

Another key role for instructional coaches is to support grade level or department teams of teachers (Knight, 2004; Walpole et al., 2010). In such small group settings, instructional coaches provide teachers with professional learning opportunities focused on content and pedagogy. They also assist teachers in analyzing and reflecting upon student performance data to drive instruction. Just as in the one-on-one teacher-coach setting, the small group setting also requires relationships built on trust, confidentiality, and open communication.

Because instructional coaching models and roles vary greatly across districts, coaches can

often be pulled in multiple task directions beyond offering one-on-one or grade level/department team support to teachers (Chval et al., 2010). Sometimes instructional coaches are pulled from their main work and pushed into roles that fill the gaps in schools. An example of this is when a coach must step in to be a substitute teacher in a classroom because there is a shortage of substitute teachers on a given day. Instructional coaches can also be used for quasi-administrative tasks in which they are serving as an assistant to the school principal with expectations upon them to conduct student discipline and other administrative or clerical tasks. Fullan and Knight (2011) describe the use of coaches in this manner as a method for wasting their talents.

Just as others can put expectations upon the instructional coach to conduct job tasks outside of the role of coach, so too can instructional coaches put such expectations upon themselves. Chval et al. (2010) describe instructional coaches who exhibit difficulty with role transition from classroom teacher to coach; the coaches continue to support student learning by teaching students within the classrooms of the teachers they are to support. Instructional coaches need training in their roles to move forward with transitioning to the new job tasks and responsibilities. They also need training in boundary setting, so they know how to respond to others who expect them to work outside their prescribed roles (Chval et al., 2010).

Impact of Instructional Coaching on Student Achievement

The literature on instructional coaching continues to evolve. The early literature points to descriptions of peer coaching for teacher support. The goals of peer coaching efforts in the early years of the 1950s through the 1970s were not linked to system reform goals (Showers & Joyce, 1996), and there was little to no study of peer coaching's impact on teacher or student learning. In the 1980s research evolved to demonstrate instructional coaching having an impact on teacher

learning, implementation of learned instructional methods, and retention of learned methods over time (Baker & Showers, 1984; Showers, 1982; Showers, 1984). During the 1990s and NCLB era of the early 2000s, there were many descriptions of instructional coaching and the activities coaches should engage in. However, there was little focus on instructional coaching for impact on student learning as evidenced by student achievement outcomes. Researchers began to write of the need for investigating evidence of instructional coaching's impact on student learning, and some student outcomes-based studies emerged toward the end of the NCLB era.

Studies focused on the impact of instructional coaching on student achievement outcomes have some overlapping findings. Length of time in service as an instructional coach matters (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Being a novice instructional coach may have a limited impact on students' academic growth. Campbell and Malkus (2011) identified that first-year instructional coaches had little to no impact on increasing student performance, but the impact began to be evidenced in the second year of coaching. Further, the longer coaches stay in the role and gain expertise in the role, the greater impact on student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010).

Time also matters in terms of coaches' time spent in one-on-one coaching activities with teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Mohler et al., 2009). When coaches spend between twenty to thirty percent of their time directly coaching teachers in one-on-one coaching events, student achievement increases. One could assume that student achievement could increase more if coaches spent even more time involved in direct one-on-one coaching of teachers.

In addition to time spent coaching, the activities and priorities coaches focus on matter. There is a benefit for students when instructional coaches focus on developing teacher capacity with content knowledge (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Mohler et al., 2009) and assessment of

student learning (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011) in one-on-one coaching activities. Thus, when designing instructional coaching programs or conducting coaching activities, focusing on student learning outcomes is paramount. Teachers need support in developing a full understanding of what content students are to learn and how to assess student learning of the content taught.

Instructional Coaches as Leaders and Change Agents

Instructional coaches are well positioned to be systems leaders who can create positive change in schools (Timperley, 2008). However, for coaching to be most beneficial it must be part of a larger, systematic effort to improve teaching and student learning outcomes. Coaches can be the linchpins to connecting school or district reform initiatives to the classroom and moving those initiatives from idea to reality (Knight, 2011a). Fullan and Knight (2011) espouse teachers as the most significant factor in impacting student achievement, principals are the second, and instructional coaches are third. Teacher peer culture in schools can create innovation and energy, and the work to be done to improve schools is teacher capacity building, collaborative learning, networking across schools, sharing student achievement data openly, and sharing pedagogical practices openly. Because instructional coaches have peer relationships with teachers, teachers are more apt to receive messages of change initiatives and implement such changes when they learn of them from coaches (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). The work of instructional coaches can be easily squandered if not connected to systemic reform initiatives or if the coaching role is thought of simplistically (Knight, 2007a).

Instructional coaches serving in the role of leader and change agent creates tension for instructional coaches (Ippolito, 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013, 2015). One cause of tension for coaches is balancing their teacher peer relationships with school and district policy initiatives.

The possibility of creating unequal relationships by disrupting the perceived balance of power in their relationships with teachers is unsettling for coaches (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013). Beyond the stress of creating unequal power relationships, coaches also struggle with how their coaching role is often framed as supporting individual teacher's professional learning needs and goals (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). The needs and goals of an individual teacher may not be aligned with the school or district reform initiative the coach is expected to address with the teacher. This creates fear and doubts in coaches about their role in leading change initiatives (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Thus, instructional coach professional learning and ongoing support are beneficial to prepare them as leaders of change.

Instructional Coaching for Educational Equity

In *Coaching for Equity*, Lee (2002) calls for educational equity to be both the goal of and approach to instructional coaching. Yet, there are few studies with a key focus on instructional coaching for the purpose of creating educational equity with equitable student opportunities or outcomes. Further, research in the area of professional development for teachers of diverse learners is not well examined (Wei et al., 2010). There are a few studies examining the impact of instructional coaching on teachers of diverse groups of learners, including historically underserved student ethnic groups, socio-economically disadvantaged students, and students learning English as a second language (Teemant et al., 2011; Teemant, 2014; Teemant et al., 2014), and there are some commonalities in the findings.

Coaching teachers on specific pedagogical protocols of instructional practice can make a positive impact on the achievement of diverse groups of learners (Teemant, 2014). However, deeply held teacher attitudes and beliefs are difficult to change. Though teachers can learn and apply specific instructional practices per a protocol, methods that are rigorous, or challenging to

students, are difficult to achieve even with the support of a coach (Teemant et al., 2011; Teemant, 2014). Perhaps this is because professional development, including instructional coaching, needs to get at the root of developing teacher beliefs and attitudes about student achievement (Fishman et al., 2003). A similarity is found in instructional coaching for Critical Stance (Teemant et al., 2014), in which teachers have difficulty achieving the highest level of implementation of Critical Stance because the highest level requires deep transformation of their beliefs.

What is unknown is how much instructional coaching time would have to be applied to shift teacher beliefs about student achievement and sustain the implementation of learned instructional practices. There is some research indicating that type of coaching activity, not necessarily coaching time, is the key to shifting teacher beliefs of teaching and learning. Guiding teachers in their reading and study of professional literature, research and theory, has been identified as a specific instructional coaching method for altering teacher beliefs (Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010) about how students learn and the teaching methods that could be applied to improve student outcomes.

Professional Learning and Ongoing Support for Instructional Coaches

Failing to provide and plan for the professional learning of instructional coaches is a definite way to waste their talents (Fullan & Knight, 2011). They need initial training and ongoing professional learning to be successful in their work (Knight, 2009; Shanklin, 2007). The true measure of success in the work of instructional coaching is a positive impact on student achievement outcomes, and the professional learning of coaches has been linked to positive gains in student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011).

What do instructional coaches need to learn in their own professional development? The

list is long and connected to the many facets of coaching work. They need to know their content, be it literacy, math, science, and so on. Time invested in their content expertise is beneficial (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Coaches also need professional development about instructional pedagogy (Kowal & Steiner, 2007) so they can effectively model multiple instructional methods in teachers' classrooms. They need to know how to coach their teacher peers (Chval et al., 2010; Kowal & Steiner, 2007), including knowledge of adult learning theory (Chval et al., 2010). And, to effectively be a leader of school reform initiatives, they need professional development on their role as leaders, methods for leadership, and strategies for managing conflict (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Chval et al., 2010).

Identifying “what” coaches need to learn is one-half of understanding their professional learning needs. It is also important to understand the “how” of instructional coach professional learning. According to Knight (2004), instructional coaches learn how to do their work in a variety of ways. They learn by collaborating with other coaches and watching them engage in acts of coaching. Coaches learn with opportunities to expand knowledge by attending professional conferences and by reading professional research on teaching, learning, and coaching. However, more research is needed to further understand the professional learning needs of instructional coaches and identify the most effective methods for preparing and supporting coaches with ongoing learning opportunities (Ippolito, 2010; Kowal & Steiner, 2007).

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology used for this study. The research design is described, including information about the study sample. Information about the data collection process and anticipated analyses follow. The study's limitations are also acknowledged.

Research Design

This study used a non-experimental, qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenological research was used to describe and understand the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2014). Demographic data was collected from participants to understand and describe the characteristics of the instructional coach sample group. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches. Interviews were conducted in one-on-one sessions of thirty-to-sixty minutes in length. Interviews were audio-recorded. The purpose of qualitative interviewing was to understand the instructional coaches' lived experiences and perceptions of their experiences (Seidman, 2006), to document their stories (Patton, 2002). The collected stories were analyzed for common themes of their experiences and perceptions.

Positionality

The researcher was a school district administrator in a public school district located in the sample southern California county when the study was conducted. Her job responsibilities included the management of instructional coaches and implementation of professional development activities for instructional coaches, school administrators, and teachers. The results of the study informed the researcher's public school district work. The opportunity for the application of the study findings impacted the researcher's motivation to conduct the study.

Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study:

1. How do instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work?
2. How do instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter?
3. How do instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use?
4. How do instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, and need to be leaders of change?

Subjects, Settings, and Selection Criteria

Criterion sampling was used to carefully select the participants for the study (Patton, 2002). Participants were to meet intentionally chosen criteria to support the researcher to understand the shared phenomenon; this was purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). The participants in this study met the following criteria:

1. Participants worked in ABC County. ABC County was selected because its K-12 public school student enrollment demographic profile was similar to the K-12 public school student demographic profile of California per Table 1 (DataQuest, 2013). While ABC County was very similar to the state in terms of racial/ethnic demographics, it was particularly similar in two main categories, English Learner students and students receiving free or reduced-price school meals. The free and reduced-price school meal criteria is an identification of socio-economically disadvantaged. These two categories, English Learner students and socio-economically disadvantaged students are of great significance in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). A school district's student enrollment in these two

categories determines LCFF supplemental and concentration grant funding, which is additional funding for the purpose of addressing educational equity. A third student demographic category is considered for LCFF supplemental and concentration grant funding; it is the category of foster youth. However, statewide and in ABC County foster youth make-up one percent of the student enrollment (EdData, 2018), and due to the low percentage, the foster youth category was not considered as part of this study. Table 1 shows the student demographic comparison and similarity of ABC County with California.

Table 1

California and ABC County Student Enrollment Demographics, 2016-17

	African American %	Asian %	Hispanic or Latino %	White not Hispanic %	English Learners %	Free & Reduced-Price Meals %
ABC County	6.2	3.1	63.3	21.4	20.2	63.2
State	5.6	9.0	54.2	23.6	21.4	58.1

2. Participants worked in a public school district in ABC County. Additionally, the school district met percentages equal to or above the county percentages for student enrollment demographics in two categories: English Learner students and students receiving free or reduced-price school meals. These two categories are of great significance to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) per reason previously noted. Per Table 2, there were twelve public school districts with student enrollment demographics that met the criteria (DataQuest, 2013). District J was

the researcher's district of employment, and sampling was not included from District J to limit bias in the study.

Table 2

Student Enrollment Demographics by District in ABC County, 2016-17

School District	English Learners %	Free & Reduced Price Meals %
District A	37.2	76.3
District B	49.9	92.9
District C	21.1	63.2
District D	24.0	66.7
District E	32.7	75.0
District F	21.5	81.7
District G	22.5	68.1
District H	33.3	83.4
District I	49.7	84.4
District J	21.6	72.6
District K	21.6	77.1
District L	20.6	81.9
ABC County	20.2	63.2

3. The participants were employed in public school districts that cited and funded instructional coaching positions or like-kind positions in the 2017-18 LCAP of each respective district. The LCAPs described instructional coaching or stated that instructional coach positions were funded. Additionally, an instructional coaching position may have been noted in the LCAP as “teacher on special assignment” (TOSA) or “professional development specialist” with the work of instructional coaching described in the LCAP. As noted in Table 3, two districts did not have instructional coaching noted

in the 2017-18 LCAPs. Thus, those two districts were excluded from the criteria which left nine school districts included in the sampling criteria.

Table 3

School District List: Instructional Coaching in 2017-18 LCAP

School District	Instructional Coaching in LCAP
District A	Yes
District B	Yes
District C	No
District D	Yes
District E	Yes
District F	Yes
District G	Yes
District H	Yes
District I	No
District K	Yes
District L	Yes

4. Research participants self-identified as employed as part-time or full-time teachers serving in an instructional coaching position or like-kind position.
5. Research participants self-identified as having served more than one year in an instructional coaching or like-kind position.
6. Research participants self-identified as instructional coaches of teachers who teach any grade in the kindergarten through grade twelve span of grades.
7. Research participants self-identified as instructional coaches in the following content areas: English language arts, English language development, mathematics, social studies/history, science, and/or instructional technology.

Human Subject Considerations

The researcher obtained permission from the Claremont Graduate University Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the study. The study presented with minimal risk to participants. Participants' names were kept confidential, and pseudonyms were used to protect their confidentiality. The interviewees were able to stop the interview at any time and were informed of their right to do so before an interview began. The researcher created a comfortable and safe environment for each interviewee. Further, the researcher was not employed in the same school district as the participants, and thus, had no supervisory or evaluative relationship with the participants.

Steps for Participation

A list of participant email addresses was compiled from the public-access school district websites of the nine included school districts. School district website searches included searching staff directory information for staff members identified as instructional coaches, teachers on special assignment (TOSAs), or professional development specialists.

The researcher emailed potential participants a description of the study, a letter of consent for research participation, and a digital demographic questionnaire. For participants who agreed to participate and complete the digital demographic questionnaire, a brief phone call of approximately ten minutes in length was offered to the participant to clarify information about the study, explain the letter of consent, and schedule the date, time, and location for the interview. A follow-up email was sent to potential participants within one week.

Participants' Demographic Information

Prior to conducting participant interviews, a demographic questionnaire administered via Qualtrics was given to each participant to ensure the participants met the criteria for inclusion in

the study and to collect information about participants. The demographic questionnaire provided the researcher with information about the participants' job assignments, length of time in job assignments, education, credentials, leadership experiences, and brief information about instructional coach responsibilities. A summary of this information is found in Table 4, Figures 2-10, and Table 5.

Table 4

Participants' Demographic Information

Participant/ Pseudonym	Degree(s)	Credential(s)	Years of Teaching Service Prior to Coaching	Years of Service as Instructional Coach
A1: Addison	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	12	6
A2: Bennie	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	14	7
A3: Chris	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	12	6
A4: Danny	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	16	5
A5: Erin	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	10	4
A6: Finn	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	9	9
A7: Gene	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub. Admin.	18	3
A8: Hunter	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	13	21
A9: Indy	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	9	7

Table 4 (continued).

A10: Jaden	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	7	7
A11: Kacy	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	27	6
A12: Lee	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	9	5.5
A13: Marin	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	17	4
A14: Nel	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	8	11
A15: Olly	Bachelor's	Multiple Sub.	13	7
A16: Paris	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Single Sub.	24	4
A17: Quinn	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	7	4
A18: Reagan	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	25	5
A19: Shae	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	16.5	5
A20: Taylor	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	20	6

All participants in the study identified as being in a full-time position of support for teachers. Eleven identified with job titles of instructional coaches and nine identified with job titles of teachers on special assignment (TOSA) focused on the professional development of teaching staff. This is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Participants' Job Titles

All participants in the study had earned a bachelor's degree, and all but one had a master's degree, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Participants' College Degrees

The average number of teaching years experience prior to becoming an instructional coach or TOSA was fourteen years, and the average number of years with instructional coaching experience was six and one-half years. This is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Participants' Years of Experience

Fifteen participants held a multiple subject teaching credential, six held a single subject teaching credential, and seven held an administrative services credential. Teaching credential information is represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Participants' Professional Credentials

In terms of leadership experience prior to becoming an instructional coach or TOSA, all participants held school site and district leadership positions. The range of leadership experiences was two to seven, as shown in Figure 6, with an average amount of five leadership experiences across all participants.

Figure 6

Participants' Leadership Experiences Prior to Instructional Coaching

In relation to their leadership experiences, all participants reported having familiarity with their school district’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Eight participants reported they were “very familiar” with it and twelve participants reported they were “mostly familiar” with the LCAP. None of the participants reported in the categories of “somewhat familiar” or “not at all familiar” regarding the LCAP. This is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Participants’ Familiarity with Local Control and Accountability Plan

Additionally, eighteen participants reported having knowledge of how their instructional coach or TOSA positions were funded and were able to identify the funding source(s). Only two participants reported they did not know how their positions were funded. The information is represented in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Participants' Knowledge of How Position is Funded

Participants reported the content areas in which they support teachers. Eighteen participants were supporting teachers across multiple content areas, and two participants were supporting teachers in only one content area. On average, participants were supporting teachers across five content areas. Content area support is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Participants' Content Support Areas

In addition to content area support, participants reported the grade level spans in which they supported teachers. The majority of participants supported teachers who taught the elementary grade levels, grades kindergarten through grade six. There were also participants who supported middle school grades six through eight, as well as high school grades nine through twelve. Grade level span support is represented in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Participants' Grade Level Spans of Teacher Support

Participants were asked to rank in order of importance the most important outcome of their work as instructional coaches or TOSAs. As a group, building relationships with teachers was ranked first, followed by developing teacher beliefs and skills, then improving student achievement. Ranked last was closing achievement gaps for historically underserved populations of students.

Table 5

Participants' Rankings of Most Important Outcome of Their Work

Outcome	Rank
Build positive relationships with teachers	1
Close achievement gaps for historically underserved populations	4
Develop teacher beliefs and skills	2
Improve student achievement	3

Interview Instrumentation

The instrumentation was a semi-structured interview protocol. The instrument was designed based on themes from the review of the literature. The interview instrument contained five broad questions. There were also probing questions noted on the instrument. The relationship between the research questions, themes from the review of the literature, and interview questions is shown in Table 6. The interview instrument is found in Appendix F.

Table 6

Relationship of Research Questions to Interview Instrument Questions

Research Questions	Instructional Coaching Themes	Interview Questions	Research Cited
How do instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter?	1 Theme 1. Roles and tasks of instructional coaches:	1. Describe the roles and tasks of your daily work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	1 Theme 1: Blachowicz et al., 2005; Chval et al., 2010; Fullan and Knight 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2004; Knight 2011a, 2011b; Mangin, 2009; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Walpole et al., 2010
	1a. Clearly defined roles and job tasks	1a. How have your job roles and tasks been explained to you?	
	1b. Daily work alignment with defined roles and tasks	1b. How does your actual daily work align with the roles and tasks as they were explained to you? Explain.	
	1c. Self put upon roles and tasks	1c. Are there any extra job roles or tasks you put upon yourself? Explain.	

Table 6 (continued).

1 Theme 2. Impact of instructional coaching on student achievement and equity:		1 Theme 2: Baker & Showers, 1984; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011; Fishman et al., 2003; Fullan, 2001; Lee, 2002; Mohler et al., 2009; Showers, 1982; Showers, 1984; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Teemant et al., 2011; Teemant, 2014; Teemant et al., 2014; Vandenburg & Stephens, 2010; Wei, et al., 2010
1d. Individualized support for teachers	1d., e. How do you spend your time directly supporting teachers? (demographic questionnaire)	
1e. Grade level/team support for teachers		
1f. Time spent with teachers engaged in coaching	1f. Approximately how much weekly time do you spend with teachers directly engaged in instructional coaching? (demographic questionnaire)	
1g. Developing teacher capacity in: content knowledge, assessment of student learning, and pedagogical practices	1g. Describe the main focus of your direct instructional coaching--teacher capacity building in content, pedagogy, and/or assessment of student learning? (demographic questionnaire)	
1h. Shaping teacher beliefs and attitudes	1h. Do you focus in your work on changing teacher beliefs and attitudes, and if so, what methods or approach do you typically use?	

Table 6 (continued).

How do instructional coaches describe the supports, they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change?	2. Professional learning and ongoing support for instructional coaches:	2. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you have received, if any, in your role as an instructional coach.	Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Chval et al., 2010; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2004, 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Shanklin, 2007
	2a. What: content, pedagogy, adult learning theory, coaching methods, leadership methods	2a. What topics have you been offered for professional learning on instructional coaching?	
	2b. How: collaborating with other coaches, professional reading, conferences	2b. How has the professional learning been provided to you (e.g. professional reading, conferences, consultants, mentoring)?	
	2c. Ongoing support	2c. Have you been offered ongoing support? If so, what does that look like (from whom, how often, what topics, etc.)?	

Table 6 (continued).

	3. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you need to continue your work as an instructional coach.	Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Chval et al., 2010; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2004, 2009; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Shanklin, 2007
3a. Professional learning topics	3a. Describe the specific topics you would like to receive in professional development in your instructional coaching role.	
3b. Professional learning methods	3b. Describe how you would like to receive that professional learning (e.g. conferences, consultants, mentoring, etc.).	
3c., d. Ongoing Support	3c. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as instructional coach. 3d. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as a leader.	

Table 6 (continued).

How do instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use?	4. Instructional coaches as leaders and change agents	4. Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.	Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Knight, 2007a; Knight, 2011a; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013, 2015; Timperley, 2008
	4a. Comfort leading change initiatives	4a. How comfortable are you with leadership work in your role as instructional coach? Explain.	
	4b. Leadership role messaging	4b. Was your work as an instructional coach described to you as a leadership role? If so, how was it messaged to you?	
	4c. Leadership role preparation	4c. Were you prepared for a role as a leader? If so, how (e.g. professional development, other leadership roles, etc.)?	
	4d. Relationships with teachers	4d. How do you develop and maintain relationships with teachers in your role as a leader?	
	4e. Tension in role	4e. How have you experienced tension, if at all, in your role as a leader?	

Table 6 (continued).

How do instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work?	5. Purpose of instructional coaching	5. Describe the purpose of your work as an instructional coach. 5a. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to your district's goals? 5b. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to educational equity? 5c. How does your role as an instructional coach fit with your own beliefs or goals for educational equity? 5d. Do you believe your work as an instructional coach has moral purpose? Explain.	Fullan, 2001
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Data Collection

The demographic questionnaire was emailed to participants with use of Qualtrics during January, 2020. The link to the questionnaire was embedded in the text of the email. The first item of the digital questionnaire included the Informed Consent form.

The interviews occurred from February, 2020 through April, 2020. Each interview was audio-recorded with a digital recorder device and saved as a digital file on a password protected computer. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher took notes during the interviews, and the researcher bracketed observations of non-verbal communication during the interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). All interview notes and digital files were stored in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher had access to the notes and digital files.

Data Analysis

The researcher used a multi-step process to analyze the data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher first organized the data for analysis by transcribing the interviews. The researcher conducted an initial reading of the transcripts of each participant to get an overview of the data. Then a second reading was conducted for significant statements (Creswell, 2014) and open coding was employed. The Atlas.ti program was used for coding and classification of data. The coded data was organized into categories with consideration of the themes that emerged in the literature review and the corresponding interview questions. The researcher then interpreted and described the data.

Validity

Multiple validity strategies were employed in the study (Creswell, 2014). The researcher was transparent about her bias by stating her positionality within the study and with participants. Further, the researcher engaged a peer debriefer to review and ask questions about the study. The researcher also used rich description in explaining the findings of the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

The findings of the study are provided in this chapter. The findings are organized around the research questions and the corresponding five themes that emerged from the interview data:

1. Instructional coaches are agents of change for the sake of students.
2. Instructional coaches do much more than coach.
3. Instructional coaches lead with influence by leveraging relationships.
4. Instructional coaches must attend to perception and politics daily.
5. Instructional coaches need support from their administrators.

The five themes are explained in detail through the presentation of the findings, and each theme discussion is organized by the interview instrument questions. This provides an examination of the participants' perceptions of purpose, practices, and supports in coaching for educational equity. There are charts containing frequency counts of the codes, and there are also narrative descriptions and quotes in support of the codes to convey the participants' experiences.

Rich descriptions of participants' responses are provided to capture "the meanings and essences" (Moustakas, 1994) of their experiences and perceptions of purpose, practices, and supports in coaching for educational equity.

Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study and were foundational to the interview questions asked of participants:

1. How do instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work?
2. How do instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter?
3. How do instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use?

4. How do instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change?

Overview of Thematic Findings

The findings are grouped into five thematic categories that emerged from the data that demonstrated instructional coaches' perceptions of purpose, practices, and supports in coaching for educational equity. The five themes are noted in Figure 11. They span across the research questions to capture the essence of the work and leadership practices of instructional coaches. The order of the themes as 1 through 5 is not based on frequency or quantity, rather the order corresponds with the order of the research questions, which is explained later in this chapter.

Figure 11

Thematic Findings

Theme 1: Instructional Coaches are Agents of Change for the Sake of Students

Instructional coaches recognize their service is to teachers, but they know the end result of that service is to improve outcomes for students. Coaches have a global perspective about the work of a school district. They have knowledge of district and school plans, goals, and

initiatives, and they see their work as critical to the implementation of those plans, and ultimately critical to student achievement. Thus, they know that schools must ensure all students have access to high-quality learning environments and that no student should have their learning needs left unmet. To achieve change they work tirelessly to figure out the differentiated needs of teaching staff and determine the most effective methods for supporting each and every teacher as an individual.

Educational equity matters to coaches, for they want no student to have limited opportunities or outcomes, particularly students from historically underserved groups. Ultimately, instructional coaches recognize the moral purpose of their work, improving student outcomes and educational equity, thereby making a positive difference in students' lives. Danny summed up the core purpose of instructional coach work, "It is to ensure our teachers are being the best that they can be so that our kids are getting the best that they can get."

Theme 1 emerged in data from Interview Question 1 as shown in Table 7 and data from Interview Question 5 as shown in Table 8.

Table 7

Summary of Codes: Work Tasks and Challenges (Theme 1)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	Implement school/district initiatives	76
	Develop teacher practices and beliefs	18
	Collaborate with administration	18

Implement School/District Initiatives

Participants indicated their role in the implementation of school and/or district initiatives. Most participants were well versed in the student achievement goals of their schools and their districts, and they explained their roles in the implementation. They overwhelmingly exhibited a leadership perspective about supporting school and/or district initiatives, particularly in relation to student achievement. Indy explained,

So our biggest, I guess I could say, initiative for our district this year has been guided reading under the umbrella of balanced literacy and reading foundational skills. So that's where the bulk of my PD [professional development] time is spent covering.

Paris described the coaching role in district initiative implementation, "So essentially we're the middle person that kind of smooths out district expectations and then apply some to the site."

These sentiments were complimented by Danny.

It's to support teachers, but it's also to support the district, and the district initiatives, and focus. Almost like being a conduit between what the district administrators are wanting to see, and how the teachers are going to implement that, and supporting them in doing that.

The implementation of school and/or district initiatives was also noted as a challenge by participants. Though participants shared that initiative implementation is one of the main tasks of their work, their challenge is in getting it done. Implementation is difficult work. It is leadership work. Not all staff will want to make a change to implement new instructional methods or curriculum. Not all staff believe all students can achieve. Danny described the tension of implementing initiatives.

Or maybe even when we're doing a training and the tension is, "Well, the district says we have to do this." And so we become this "district". And we're not...Hey, hold on. We're

just teachers. Don't shoot the messenger. We're just trying to...So we get caught in the middle I would say because we do have directors that say, "Yes, this is the direction we'd like you to go," and then we're trying to convey that message to teachers. And so we get seen as one of them sometimes where we'll be deciding with that group of administrators and trying to impose something, especially when it's a required training, which we don't do too often. But when it's a required training, there's a lot of tension in the room because the teachers don't want to be there.

Develop Teacher Practices and Beliefs

In connection to coaches' challenges with the implementation of initiatives, participants reported a challenge in developing teacher practices and beliefs. For the teachers who do not want professional development or coaching, there is little expectation of developing their instructional methods or beliefs about teaching, learning, and student achievement. And even for the teachers who do participate in professional learning opportunities with coaches, changing their beliefs and practices takes ongoing, steady, and persistent work between the teacher and coach. And overall, coaches expressed concern about the negative impact on students when teacher practice stalls. This sentiment was captured by Danny.

It's not a will thing. It's a skill thing. This teacher just doesn't have the skill set to be effective, and has been a teacher in our district, has been there almost 15 years, and the skill set hasn't changed. It's not like it got worse, it's just never been there. It's a perceptual thing. I don't know how to address that. My stress comes from the effect that it has on students. I just got overwhelmed with feeling unable to effectively strengthen the skill set so that the kids don't suffer. That's where the support is needed.

Collaborate with Administration

Participants shared they collaborate with site administrators regarding the implementation of school initiatives, student achievement, and professional learning plans. Bennie stated, “I’m part of the leadership team. I work very closely with my principal and vice principal just to make decisions for the school and plan things.” Quinn also described a collaborative working relationship with the site administrator, “Well, he’s worried about running the school. He trusts us. He trusts me enough to do my job. So I can question anything. Okay, he actually...I consult a lot. He’ll ask me, ‘What do you think about this?’”

Table 8

Summary of Codes: Purpose of Work (Theme 1)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
5. Describe the purpose of your work as an instructional coach.	Educational equity for students	78
	Student achievement	48
	Moral purpose	28
	Support students	28
	Increase teacher capacity/efficacy	24
	Support the school/district	4
	Support administrators	2

Educational Equity for Students

Overwhelmingly, participants knew they are often the main advocates for each and every student they serve, particularly students from historically underserved populations. They felt strongly about helping each and every student succeed. Indy said, “All deserve it. All kids deserve best first instruction.” Their work with teachers is constantly focused on improving student achievement by developing teacher beliefs and practices to focus on educational equity to provide all types of learners with a chance for success. Reagan explained the purpose of the work.

I see my purpose as being to support the teachers, to support the students. Everything that we do, no matter whose role it is on campus, is for students. Whatever I can do to help the teachers build those relationships and teach well with their kids, help them meet the kids’ needs, that’s my purpose.

Kacy explained how instructional coach work is equity work.

I think everything we do relates to educational equity or at least it should. Because if I’m showing you a new instructional strategy, it’s a strategy that should help all kids...We’re not coaches for just some. We’re coaches for all teachers, all kids.

Nel shared, “Anything that I do, I also focus on being an advocate for the English learners and students with special needs...Students outside the box that may need that extra support.”

Student Achievement

Of further significance in the findings and connected to educational equity, participants expressed knowing their work has an impact on student achievement, and thus they take their work seriously. They link their work with teachers to student achievement and know the significance of improving teacher practices to ensure all learners have a chance at academic

success. Marin explained the connection to improving teaching practice to then improve student outcomes.

So textbook definition would be to raise student achievement through increasing teacher efficacy. My personal little addition to that would be changing teachers' hearts and minds. I want every teacher to go home everyday smiling, knowing that their kids achieved everything they could and it was all because of them. That's what I want.

Hunter expressed a similar belief.

My overarching goal is to bring collective efficacy around collective student achievement. The core of that is a mindset that all students can learn and that we can give them feedback on their learning to help make them self-directed learners.

Kacy summed it up, "The bottom line is student achievement. That's the ultimate purpose. And the only way we can directly affect that is through the teachers, through the teachers' work."

Moral Purpose

A probing question for interview question five was asking participants if they believe their work as an instructional coach has moral purpose, meaning does their work improve student outcomes and educational equity. All participants responded with an affirmative answer. Erin stated, "I would say, yes, thankfully. Honestly, if it didn't, I would not be in this role anymore." Chris said, "So yeah, there is moral purpose. If our mission is learning for all, then it means all." All participants believed their work has a moral purpose. Lee explained the moral purpose of coaching work in detail.

I took this job because I thought I would have a larger impact on students because I would be able to support their teachers. I feel that the more teachers I can support that have similar beliefs to what I have then more students are going to be having better

experiences from that. I believe that happens. I believe that teachers are growing. They are recognizing that they're in a profession through my work. They're recognizing that they're professionals, and they are acting more like professionals rather than employees. Just basic employees, they're not that. It's not a job. It's a profession, and they are growing as professionals, and students are benefiting from it.

Support Students

Participants also shared how their work supports students beyond academics. Many mentioned supporting students with social-emotional learning, relationship building, and college and career development. Sometimes their support of students is direct coach-to-student and other times it is indirect coach-to-teacher-to-student. Paris shared about supporting teachers so they can be the best of themselves to support students.

So those are kind of the big things, but every day they know they can count on me, and so if I help push them to their purpose, then our students' needs are being met, and that's the goal. All kids are our kids every single day. That's what we do.

Quinn explained a main purpose of coaching is foundationally supporting students' needs for a welcoming school environment.

But, I would say, to create a safe, positive school culture where students are engaged, all stakeholders are engaged, family, teachers, all staff, everybody. We're all working through the same common goal.

Chris expanded on the purpose of supporting students' college and career development.

Okay, how can our school be better for the students that we serve, for the community. Which means I'm in the loop with what's happening to our CTE programs. I'm in the loop with what's happening to our a-g [requirements].

Increase Teacher Capacity/Efficacy

All participants expressed a main focus of their work is to increase teacher capacity and improve their efficacy. But they also expressed the need to do so for the outcome of improving student achievement. Bennie elaborated in detail.

The purpose of my work, I feel like the purpose is to help teachers be their best selves, which will in turn help students. That's the goal. So, I really just try to be that support for them to help them grow with their pedagogy, but also just personally as well. Help them with their craft of teaching, but also their content knowledge. And just by doing that hopefully, I mean I think that's a good thing about teachers, and I tell them this sometimes too, a teacher has students for one year. I get to work with these teachers every single year. So, that's a continuation. Every deposit I make with them with relationships or anything, they learn new techniques. We can just continue to build on that. I don't just have a year to do that. I have a long time to do that. So I feel like just to help support them to be a good teacher, which will in turn help students learn more.

Support the School/District

A couple of participants stated the purpose of their work is to support the school and/or district initiatives as change leaders. They felt their work was under the umbrella of service to the school and/or district. Gene captured it, "My purpose is to shape public perception of public education. I truly believe that. I want all of our stakeholders to value our school and value what it is that we give to our kids."

Support Administrators

A couple of participants reported the purpose of their work as a coach is to support administrators in their work with leading the school and implementing change for the benefit of

students. Lee explained that student success is the main purpose of instructional coaching, but sometimes coaching or supporting administrators is part of that purpose.

Really, student success is my number one ultimate purpose. I really want students to be successful and sometimes that comes through defining culture at the site. Sometimes it comes through helping teachers improve their practice. Sometimes it comes through helping administrators be better leaders.

Theme 2: Instructional Coaches Do Much More than Coach

Instructional coaches are “go-to” staff members by teachers and administrators. They often serve their districts and school sites in a quasi-administrative role. Even if their job description mainly describes the basic tasks of an instructional coach, most coaches spend the bulk of their time in “other duties as assigned.” Those duties keep the district and/or school site progressing, as coaches fill the gaps in work that would potentially go left undone if not for the coach. They also overwhelmingly are critical personnel in the roll-out of new district and school initiatives, particularly as the folks who prepare for and train the staff about the new initiative. Most engage in these tasks with a reliable presence for getting the job done. They are dependable, hard workers who see the value of doing the “other duties as assigned” in service to teachers and ultimately as a benefit to students. Finn captured it in one statement, “Coaching teachers is always a priority, but it almost gets secondary sometimes with all the other hats.”

Theme 2 emerged in data from Interview Question 1 as shown in Table 9 and data from Interview Question 4 as shown in Table 10.

Table 9*Summary of Codes: Work Tasks and Challenges (Theme 2)*

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	Administrative tasks and other duties as assigned	120
	Offer group professional development/training	39
	Time to coach	35
	Support teachers with a variety of needs	31
	Common coaching tasks (lesson demonstration, co-plan, co-teach)	30
	Assessment coordination	28
	Teacher team facilitation/participation	26
	Coach other staff, not just teachers	15
	Preparation and analysis of data reports	15
	Be available to staff	13

Administrative Tasks and Other Duties as Assigned

Overwhelmingly, participants discussed being assigned multiple tasks that are not direct instructional coaching tasks. Direct instructional coaching tasks are tasks in alignment with the definition of instructional coaching as defined in the key terms section. Thus, direct instructional coaching tasks include teaching and facilitating the professional learning opportunities of teachers, including preparation for those activities. Thus, administrative tasks and other duties as assigned include tasks not directly correlated to the professional learning of teachers. Examples

of such tasks include: meetings, committee participation, coordinating district-wide events, grant writing, recess duty, and handling student discipline issues. Shae provided specific examples of multiple meetings and tasks.

Last year, I would say I was in meetings probably six to seven days a month. Two for the leadership, one or two for testing, one or two for coaching, and one or two for miscellaneous initiatives like MTSS [Multi-tiered systems of support] or AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination] or something.

Finn also provided numerous examples.

I do a lot of district things. Probably a big hat is even though we're site-based coaches, we do a lot of district stuff. And that might be our professional learning networks, where we're developing the assessments for the district, and we're disaggregating data to see what the needs are district-wide. I also serve on a lot of our literacy committees.

Additionally, Finn shared, "I would say clerical kind of tasks. I do our monthly flyers that go home, just the events on campus. I do a weekly bulletin for our teachers of things that are going on on campus." Gene spoke to this issue as well, "I also am very good at writing, so when the superintendent emails us and says, 'Write this award application, write this grant application,' that's usually me. Ninety percent of that stuff is usually me."

Overwhelmingly, participants discussed being assigned multiple non-coaching tasks that impact much of their work time. As Shae stated, "I was at an elementary school, and I was hired to be the coach, but there were many duties that seemed to supersede coach." Bennie noted, "Some coaches don't do a lot of one-on-one coaching cycles. They're more of a quasi-vice principal. They do parking lot duty. They do the weekly news bulletin." Addison also added to the sentiment of being a quasi-administrator, "Because I do play sometimes that admin role, not

because I want to, it's just sometimes they need the help so I just step up and I am at the site.”

Offer Group Professional Development/Training

Group professional development is a common structure for teacher professional development. As noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) group professional development as a one-size-fits-all is not the most effective way to change teacher practice. However, with the implementation of new school or district initiatives, including new curricula, group professional development is often offered to teachers. It is often instructional coaches who are facilitating the group professional development sessions. This was expressed by the participants and captured well by Marin.

We've developed a huge range of custom day-long trainings on Google in progression.

We train on specific content, we train on pedagogy, we train on...goodness gracious, social-emotional learning, various programs related to all of those things.

This was reiterated by Erin, “My first two years, my administrator had me do all this staff-wide professional development for pretty much every meeting, developing it and presenting it to staff.”

Time to Coach

In connection to participants reporting the multitude of non-coaching tasks in their schedules, their time to do pure instructional coaching tasks is limited. Their time is often filled up with non-coaching tasks, as described by Participant Danny.

The other challenge is time. Time is a huge barrier. Because we're pulled to meetings all the time, and volun-told to attend different workshops. At the district level, the meetings are with site administrators. So, it really does shrink the amount of time available to actually get into the classrooms and be the support, and give the feedback that teachers

really want.

There is also limited time in teachers' daily contractual schedules for meeting with coaches. Meeting with teachers before school, after school, during lunchtimes, and prep time is difficult. Teachers are busy people, and instructional coaches have difficulty scheduling time to do the actual work of instructional coaching. Bennie described limited teacher time for coaching, "They don't have release time, they don't have prep time. So, that to me was the biggest challenge was just finding time to meet with them."

Support Teachers with a Variety of Needs

Participants expressed supporting teachers with a variety of needs beyond professional learning, such as listening when teachers need to vent, answering questions to clarify an administrator's expectations, and researching multiple topics for teachers. They reported enjoyment and humility with supporting teachers. Most expressed a desire to make teachers' work lives easier and better. They also saw the value in investing the time to help teachers to develop their positive relationships and credibility with teachers. That time and relationship investment pays off for them at other times when needing support with the implementation of school or district initiatives or seeking participants for professional learning opportunities. Bennie captured this.

I view it as whatever the teacher needs, any barriers I can remove, any way I can help them, I want to be there for them. So that could be even from running them a set of copies to releasing them to go to the bathroom to finding them resources, whatever, modeling lessons, anything they need is my philosophy. I want to be able to give it to them.

Paris also expanded on relationships with peers.

They all have my cell phone. I get texts 24/7 literally, asking for whatever kind of advice they need. So certainly is not limited to academic concerns and teaching concerns. I get all kinds of questions all the time. I'm frequently asked to sit in if they have a concern about meeting alone with a parent or if they're concerned about meeting with a peer. So I'll help negotiate conversations that may be difficult.

This sentiment of supporting teachers with just about anything was consistent. Olly summed it up, "When I say teacher support, I mean, I'm willing to do anything that will support a teacher."

Common Coaching Tasks

Direct instructional coaching tasks are tasks in alignment with the definition of instructional coaching as defined in the key terms section. Thus, direct instructional coaching tasks include teaching and facilitating the professional learning opportunities of teachers, such as providing teachers with lesson demonstrations, co-planning sessions to plan instructional lessons together, and/or co-teaching of instructional lessons. This work done sequentially with one teacher is known as a coaching cycle. Bennie shared about coaching cycles.

Currently my role is to coach teachers, so I do a lot of one-on-one coaching cycles.

Before our closure, I had seven teachers in a cycle, which consisted of an hour a week meeting, a planning meeting, and then one or two visits in the classroom.

Common coaching tasks are important for developing teacher beliefs, attitudes, and practices, as explained by Shae.

So, she was very resistant, but when she saw me model a few times, and then we co-taught for days in math, she was able to make a shift in her methodology and her thinking about what it looks like for children to collaborate.

Assessment Coordination

Many of the participants in the study were also assessment coordinators for their school sites as part of their coaching assignment. Assessment coordination included the scheduling and implementation of district and state assessments, and for some it included administering the assessments. This was explained by Taylor.

Back then it was CELDT [California English Language Development Test], now ELPAC [English Language Proficiency Assessments for California]. DIBELS [Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills] was something else that our district does. I was in charge of coordinating all of that.

Addison also explained the responsibilities of assessment coordination, “So all of us instructional coaches at the elementary level, we basically are the administrators of the CAASPP [California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress] testing.”

Teacher Team Facilitation/Participation

Many schools implement teacher team facilitation time in which grade level or department teams meet to plan instruction, share instructional methods, and discuss student achievement data. Most participants reported their participation in the teacher teams as either facilitators or members who offer instructional method resources, strategies, and data analysis support to teachers. Paris explained working with teacher teams.

I’m there for all of their PLC [professional learning community] collaboration. I move from grade level to grade level as they collaborate and all of the agendas are shared with me. So I have a handle on what’s happening with every grade level.

Many coaches take the lead on the teacher team work, as described by Erin, “Since our district moved to PLC three years ago, I’ve kind of taken the lead on guiding our staff through PLC and

developing their PLCs.”

Coach Other Staff, Not Just Teachers

Participants shared they provide professional development and support to staff beyond the teaching staff, such as administrators, school counselors, and classified staff. Because they are often viewed as the main professional developers for their schools or districts, they are often tasked with preparing professional learning opportunities for instructional support staff, such as principals, assistant principals, and instructional aides. This was stated by Lee, “I support teachers and administrators in multiple facets, including data collection, coaching, technical support, any kind of needs that they have.”

Hunter explained coaching site administrators on the facilitation of teacher team meetings.

And it’s a gradual release model, so we facilitate the first meeting after the foundation training. Then we co-teach, co-coach the second meeting looking at student work. And then the administrator takes over the third meeting, modeling as an instructional leader.

Preparation and Analysis of Data Reports

In connection with assessment coordination and teacher team facilitation noted earlier, the preparation and analysis of data reports was reported as a facet of instructional coach work. To support teachers and administrators, participants reported they would often prepare the student assessment data reports to share with staff. They also reported supporting staff with data analysis and interpretation of student achievement results. Indy captured this, “And then I also do all of the data analysis around literacy for our district. And I do the data analysis training for teachers, principals, whoever needs this information as we do our benchmarks.” Finn noted working with data is a large part of the job, “So, this year, that has been a huge part of my job is just data analysis and then responding to the data.”

Be Available to Staff

Participants reported that one main task of instructional coaching work is to simply be available to staff. Being available means being visible and helping others to solve problems. Kacy summed it up, “Because you’re expected to be out and be available, be available, be available.” Gene added detail to that sentiment.

It’s on-demand support, really. If somebody is having a question or concern about the program...it’s usually when somebody is contacting me, it’s specifically about program requirements, unit planning, lesson design, and things like that. But also, I take care of any fire that’s happening on campus.

Table 10

Summary of Codes: Leadership Practices (Theme 2)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
4. Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.	Helpful tasks	27
	Offer help with needed instructional strategies	5

Helpful Tasks

Participants reported that helping teachers with multiple tasks is key to developing relationships and credibility with teachers. The tasks were not necessarily professional development tasks; rather, the tasks could be any type of support, such as covering a class if a teacher needs to use the restroom, making worksheet copies, or assisting with a disruptive student. Marin best captured this sentiment, “Teachers should never be working longer or harder

than me. And if there's an area where I can pick up the slack of a teacher and free them up to do their job, which is being with kids, then I need to do that." Lee stated, "Simple fixes. Going in and getting their computer system working. Putting out fires for them."

Offer Help with Needed Instructional Strategies

Previously mentioned was the concept of helpful tasks, meaning any type of task for which a teacher needed assistance. This is different from offering help with needed instructional strategies, which is specific to the work of instructional coaching by developing teacher efficacy. Hunter described being helpful with quick instructional strategy ideas that a teacher team could easily implement.

I might have, in my bag of tricks, something that I could offer to a team that I couldn't be in that group. My directions were a good source. Offer a strategy, an instructional strategy, that particular need that they identify as a barrier for learning.

Reagan shared a collaborative approach.

I wouldn't even call it leadership maybe, I feel like it's just much more collaborative.

What have they tried, what's working, what's not working, what resources are available?

And maybe how to just sometimes just tweak things to make it more working within what their style is.

Theme 3: Instructional Coaches Lead with Influence by Leveraging Relationships

Instructional coaches come to the work of coaching with teacher leadership experience, as former department or grade level chairs, union leaders, and school and district committee members. They also enter instructional coaching with vast teaching experience over many years, grade levels, and subjects taught. Thus, they enter coaching as established teacher leaders who can often get instant credibility from their teacher peers due to their experience and knowledge.

But instructional coaches know that instant credibility only goes so far. They know they must immediately develop and constantly maintain positive, trusting relationships with teachers. They recognize that such relationships are foundational to their leadership success.

Instructional coaches are extremely perceptive and constantly reflective about their peer relationships and leadership work. They know they cannot tell people what to do and expect results. Rather, they rely on influence as their main leadership method. They are keen about being equal members of the teachers' union, yet they have a global perspective about the work to be done to increase outcomes for students. To make change, they know that an authoritarian approach will not work with their peers. So, they use their influence to make change. Marin described the coach's use of influence.

We say we don't have power, but we have influence. We have absolutely no supervisory authority over anyone, including ourselves. And it's a challenge, but it's also the fun part of the job, is figuring out how to get people to get excited about something.

Theme 3 emerged in data from Interview Question 1 as shown in Table 11 and data from Interview Question 4 as shown in Table 12.

Table 11

Summary of Codes: Work Tasks and Challenges (Theme 3)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	Develop teacher beliefs and attitudes	52
	Develop relationships	16

Develop Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

The participants knew their roles in and abilities to shape teacher beliefs and attitudes about teaching, learning, and student achievement. Most explained confidence in their abilities to do so but acknowledged the work is difficult. They saw this as one of the main purposes of their work and employ multiple strategies in the work, as described by Indy.

It's building relationships first. That's my biggest piece, is I have to build relationships with the teachers first, and then it's about, let's look at the hardcore evidence. I realize you've been teaching for thirty years, but you have a class this year, this is what the data is saying and these kids need this support, so how are we going to build that into your systems?

Paris captured the perseverance of instructional coaches with their strategies and fortitude for developing teacher beliefs and attitudes.

Changing hearts and minds of grownups is a difficult thing. So that's one of the reasons that we work on trust and collaboration and having difficult conversations, and we talk about strong back, soft front and speaking truth to bullshit but being kind, and that's really important.

Develop Relationships

Relationship development is critical to the work of an instructional coach, however, participants reported that relationship development and maintenance is big work. This is connected to politics and perception. When a coach is new in their role, it takes time to develop relationships, trust, and credibility with staff. That can take years, and it is difficult for a coach to make an impact on teacher beliefs, attitudes, and practice without a positive and trusting relationship. And once a positive relationship is established, it takes ongoing work to maintain it.

Nel described the struggle of building relationships with staff as a new coach to a school site.

The biggest challenge, I think, for any coach is building the relationship. I learned the hard way. When I left, I was at my first site for six years. By the time I left, I had such a good relationship with the staff they never questioned me, but I forgot my first year how rough it was. When I changed to my new school I was going on thinking, “Okay, I got this down.” Then, I was just taken back a little bit by resistance. I’m like, “Oh, man. I’m going to have to do this all over again?”

Table 12

Summary of Codes: Leadership Practices (Theme 3)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
4. Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.	Relationship development	46
	Influence, not directives	33
	Put teacher needs first	26
	Trust and confidentiality	25
	Listen and seek to understand	20
	Question and seek teacher input	15
	Respect and honor teachers	11
	Intermediary between teachers and administrators	5
	Motivate and encourage	4

Relationship Development

Participants overwhelmingly expressed the importance of relationships in their work as instructional coaches, as leaders. It was noted repeatedly as the key element to their work, and how relationships with teachers must be established first thing when one becomes a coach. Participants shared the numerous methods for developing positive relationships, and they expressed the importance of their ongoing work to maintain positive relationships. Marin captured how relationships are the most important element of leadership in coaching.

If you literally sat in a room and we were outside, assembly line-style, and you walked in and said, “What is the one thing that your entire job depends on? Give one word,” every single one of us [coaches] would say relationships. Every single one. That’s the work because everything we do depends on relationships.

Erin described a key method for developing relationships.

I am learning the best way to develop relationships is to get to know teachers personally and take the time to connect with them, to ask them questions about life, and showing them like, “Hey, I care about you as a person. I’m not just here to guide your instruction or to get you to feel like I’m telling you what to do,” because they know I’m not, or to....It’s not just about the instruction, but building your relationships happen when connecting with them personally.

Gene was direct about the importance of positive relationships between instructional coaches and teachers, “and you have to build that before anyone is going to be receptive” to the work of an instructional coach.

Influence, Not Directives

Participants shared their learning that the best way to lead for change is to influence

others rather than give directives. They understood that most teachers will not follow directives and that giving directives was damaging to their relationships. Thus, directives are not effective for making change on school campuses. Thus, with the connection to the aforementioned importance of relationships, participants shared they are able to make change through leveraging their positive relationships with teachers and influencing change through multiple methods. Marin acknowledged the power of influence.

We say we don't have power, but we have influence. We have absolutely no supervisory authority over anyone, including ourselves. And it's a challenge but it's also the fun part of the job, is figuring out how to get people to get excited about something.

Danny explained how influence is much more effective than telling people what to do.

When I'm asking teachers to do something, I usually frame it as a consideration rather than a directive. Because even though I have the leeway to do that, I don't. Because to me, that blurs the line. I tend to get a lot better buy-in and acceptance when I approach it that way, rather than, "This is what you need to do."

Gene explained how to influence a whole staff or team of people with the use of others' shared talents and people skills.

Now, I'm also strategic, in that I know what I'm good at, and I know what I'm not good at. I am good at paperwork, and less good at interpersonal skills. Sometimes I come off as sarcastic, or brainy, or a know-it-all. Sometimes that's called abrasive. But I also am friends with people who have those skills. So it's always important to have a team of people that's involved in change. To know I can reach this person, and you can reach this person.

Lee summed up the leadership work of an instructional coach, "The leadership practices. Well,

like I said, influence. Influence is definitely our main role.”

Put Teacher Needs First

Though instructional coaches are leaders of school and district initiatives, they also know that teachers’ needs must be met before working on initiative implementation. Thus, they listen to teachers, determine teachers’ needs, and then support teachers accordingly. The investment of time in this work supports coaches later as they are working as leaders to make change. The commitment to teachers is evident in the words of Paris, “They all have my cell phone. I get texts 24/7 literally, asking for whatever kinds of advice that they need. So certainly is not limited to academic concerns and teaching concerns. I get all kinds of questions all the time.” Reagan said, “Well, I like to approach the situations with what do the teachers need? What’s going well? Sometimes, they can’t articulate where they want help, so I’ll ask them, ‘What part of your day causes you the most frustration?’ And pinpoint it that way.” Marin best summed up the care for teachers and their needs sharing, “I just never expected to love and worry about my teachers as much as I did about my kids!”

Trust and Confidentiality

Developing trust and maintaining confidentiality with teachers is key to developing and sustaining positive relationships with teachers. It is important that coaches are not viewed as “tattletales” to administrators. Teachers need to feel safe with instructional coaches as they work on their professional growth, and trust and confidentiality are crucial to that process. Jaden shared, “So I try to have those personal relationships upon which I can build strategic relationships. There’s a lot of distrust in our district and when people trust you, you are much more effective.” Trust between instructional coaches and teachers must be maintained at all times. Paris explained this, “So I work really hard to preserve that trust and to be very careful

with that because it's easy for things to go sideways and it's hard to get it back when it does."

Chris explained the work of developing and maintaining trust is the responsibility of the coach, "Just because you have a good rapport doesn't mean that's the end-all, be-all. I mean, you have to be more than that, you have to have the trust factor behind you."

Listen and Seek to Understand

The participants are good listeners. They expressed the value in listening to teachers for any topic the teachers want to discuss, whether personal or professional. The investment in listening time serves multiple purposes. While the listening time develops positive and trusting relationships, it most importantly helps coaches understand teachers' perspectives, fears, and needs. With that information, instructional coaches are then better prepared to help teachers by targeting their needs and learning styles. Addison described listening for when a teacher expresses not knowing how to support students to best learn a concept.

Again, the way I approach them is just really trying to understand, what is it that their root process is? If that even makes sense. Like, if they'll say something, I really try to listen and figure out okay, I think I know why you feel that they can't get it. Because there is something there that you don't feel like you have the capacity to do.

Lee summed it up, "We use listening a lot. That's probably our greatest strength, is that we are trained listeners."

Question and Seek Teacher Input

Participants are good at listening, as aforementioned. They are also good at questioning. They question to seek teacher input on school and district initiatives, feedback about professional learning sessions, and teacher professional needs. The insight they gain from teachers informs their leadership work as coaches. Erin shared, "But by posing questions, and asking leading

questions, and getting teachers to take ownership in seeing it themselves, I'm learning the process is a lot more effective." Nel stated a similar sentiment, "It's to get the buy-in by going through, 'Hey, what do you think? Here's my idea. What do you think? How can I help?'"

Respect and Honor Teachers

Participants recognize the value in respecting teachers' knowledge, skills, and perspectives. They actively honor teachers' strengths, skills, and good intentions. Chris captured it best, "I'm always going to assume best intentions. Perhaps something might be a little bit misguided somewhere along the way. I'm going to assume that they're teachers because they want to help the students."

Intermediary Between Teachers and Administrators

An important leadership role for some participants based on the climate of their school was to be an intermediary between the teachers and the site administrator. They expressed teachers feeling more comfortable speaking directly to an instructional coach rather than speaking directly to the principal. Thus, the coach is relied upon to convey staff messages to the principal and protect the confidentiality of the teachers. This was the case for Nel.

I work with the principal, kind of making sure there's a good....Her vision is shared with the teachers so they understand it in teacher language. Sometimes they don't understand, and they don't want to ask the principal or they feel uncomfortable, so they ask me.

Motivate and Encourage

A couple of participants expressed the benefit of motivating and encouraging teachers as a key leadership strategy. This helps develop their positive relationships with teachers. Nel said, "Trying to motivate and empower them, it goes a lot longer and farther."

Theme 4: Instructional Coaches Attend to Perception and Politics Constantly

Instructional coaches are members of their local teachers' union. However, they are a minority group amongst their peers, because they are not assigned to a classroom and roster of students as are most teachers. Because there are often a limited number of coaches in a district, most teachers are unaware of the full extent of instructional coaching work. This creates issues of perception around, "What do coaches do?" and "How do they spend their time?" Instructional coaches are often perceived as administrators, and that is a challenge for them because it can create a division between teachers and coaches.

Instructional coaches are well aware of these perceptions, and they are mindful to attend to the perception of their peers at all times. They are keen on being visible on their campuses, being helpful to everyone at all times, and maintaining positive relationships. They know they cannot spend too much time in their offices, or else they run the risk of criticism from peers and thus, losing credibility and influence. Losing credibility and influence would most likely limit their ability to make change with teachers which can ultimately have a negative impact on student achievement outcomes. Participant Lee explained the issue of perception and politics.

I mean it was described as I would be a leader in the sense of supporting teachers. It was not described as I would be an administrator, because I'm not an administrator. I think that people when they first meet you, when they first hear about it, they think you're an administrator. I tell them, "No, I'm not an administrator and even if I was, who cares?

I'm here to support you." That's my number one job. They don't believe you at first.

Nobody does. Why would they? You know, the union is very protective, but guess what?

I'm in the union. So they're protective over me too. So they have to be protecting both of us. So really it's just colleague on colleague conversations.

Theme 4 emerged in data from Interview Question 1 as shown in Table 13 and data from Interview Question 4 as shown in Table 14.

Table 13

Summary of Codes: Work Tasks and Challenges (Theme 4)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	Perception and politics	52
	Viewed as administrators	27
	No authority	37

Perception and Politics

Overwhelmingly, participants reported that perception and politics are the most constant aspect of their work. They had encountered many teachers who asked them “what they do” in their role as instructional coach. They had also dealt with teachers suspicious of the work or intentions of the coach, worried the coach is spying on them for administration or trying to change them. They expressed that perception and politics are what they must attend to constantly, as they were aware their jobs are regularly scrutinized by others. Jaden described perception and politics.

So sometimes I’ve been sent to meetings that are a PLC and have been asked, “Are you here to spy on us?” And it’s, “No, I’ve been sent here as a support. I’m happy to support whatever you’re doing.” So it makes it very uncomfortable.

Quinn also described a teacher who was worried about being spied on.

And so I had a teacher; so I'm taking notes like I do, and she sends me an email and says, "What did you do with those notes?" I mean, I had told her, "This is just for us." "What did you do with those notes?" She started thinking that I was going to save them, maybe use them against her. Like it was evaluative. "Can I have those notes?" All of that kind of thing.

Viewed as Administrators

Another challenge expressed by participants was related to perception and politics but was mentioned often enough to be its own category. The participants shared they are often viewed by teachers as administrators or quasi-administrators. They are not viewed as teachers once they become instructional coaches; thus, instead of being put into their own category, many lump them into the administrator category. Teachers see the coaches implementing school and district initiatives, supporting district messages, and focusing on student achievement, and that is viewed as administrator work. This impacts teacher trust of coaches, and so coaches expressed the need to develop and maintain positive relationships and credibility with teachers constantly. Marin stated, "There's a part of teachers who go, 'Well, you're one of them.' And it's just this weird space." Danny described it as well.

I think the greatest stressor has come from the perception that I'm an administrator. I even had our union representative call me out on that during a full staff meeting. I had to address that right then and there. Because that person eluded to the fact that I was an administrator in that position. I had to address that point, that I wasn't, and it's beyond my pay grade, and don't ever do that to me again. Because I take that very seriously.

No Authority

Some participants expressed frustration with not having the authority that administrators

have for making change, particularly with teachers who do not want to participate in professional development or implement new instructional methods. Nel stated, “I am not the principal. I don’t have authority. I’m not an administrator, so I have no administrative authority over people, but I’m trying to get people to do things.” However, as Nel implied, participants expressed that because they have no authority they must rely on other methods for making change. Without authority, they rely on influence.

Table 14

Summary of Codes: Leadership Practices (Theme 4)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
4. Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.	Teacher leadership experiences	36
	Develop credibility with teachers	30
	Be part of teacher team	24
	Not an administrator	22
	Visibility and check-ins	17
	Vast teaching experience	11
	Authenticity and transparency	9
	Communication	6
	Lead by example and service	4

Teacher Leadership Experiences

Participants made clear that their previous teacher leadership experiences (committee work, department leaders, union leaders, etc.) prepared them for leadership work as instructional coaches and provided them credibility with their teacher peers. They expressed pride in having prepared themselves by being teacher leaders and that leadership roles provided them with a “big picture” perspective of their districts or schools. Kacy described this.

All I had done all those years, for instance, like I said, I taught all those grade levels. I was in different leadership roles in the school. I always took on...we call them grade level leaders in the elementary school. I was administrative designee for the principal, so I worked on School Site Council...had to work on the School Plan. And so just understanding the way a school works, all of that became important. But even things like test facilitator. Everything, knowledge of lower grades, upper grades, different types of testing.

Develop Credibility with Teachers

Also connected to developing relationships with and influencing teachers, participants stated the importance of having and developing credibility with teachers. They noted the multiple ways they develop credibility, including having vast teaching experience prior to coaching, having vast leadership experiences prior to coaching, being helpful, being transparent, and following through with teacher support. It was described by Finn as, “I’ve been in the trenches with you.” Shae described having credibility as a coach based on one’s reputation as a teacher, “I think that I was highly respected as a teacher and reasonably well like by colleagues.” Lee described having to earn credibility with the staff, “I would say it took about three to five years before I earned the full respect of the staff. And that was three to five years of being very dutiful

to the staff.”

Be Part of a Teacher Team

Participants expressed the value and satisfaction of being part of a teacher team, whether it is a grade level, department, or leadership team. Working side-by-side with teachers to lead and problem-solve, create plans, and implement change is effective for instructional coaches in being viewed as teacher equals and thus, developing and maintaining credibility with teachers. Taylor described this approach to leadership.

I would say definitely collaborative. My approach always was I’m here in the trenches with you and I’m here to help you in any way that I can. I would join them during their PLC meetings. Actually, I would do rounds from K-5 sometimes to get questions.

Sometimes they have questions for me. I would have my notebook, and I would write them down in other PLC meetings. I just dedicated to certain grade levels.

Taylor further shared that the collaborative, team approach has helped teachers to say, “‘Okay, you’re real, you’re not just here to just tell me to do this and that. But you are here to help,’ That has made the difference.” Nel also described the power of collaborating with a teacher team, so as not to be viewed as a know-it-all telling teachers what to do. Nel shared that facilitating a teacher team to plan and problem-solve together is beneficial for coaches to make progress with implementing change.

My biggest thing coming in is that I’m not the expert. You guys are the experts, so if we collaborate as a team then we can....I lead through getting them to make it seem like it’s their idea to get their buy-in, especially being an instructional coach.

Not an Administrator

A consistent response from participants was about the importance of not being an

administrator and not wanting to be viewed as administrators. Danny explained the politics of being perceived as an administrator.

I walk a fine line. Because I'm real clear with them, and I've tried very hard to be clear with them, I'm not an administrator. Even though I'm on the leadership team, even though I am given the ability to make decisions, I don't. Not without consultation and backing from my administrator. Because there is a perception that instructional coaches are administrators, or that that is their goal.

Many coaches also expressed they do not want to have the pressures that administrators face in their roles. As Marin stated, "We don't have supervisory authority, and we don't want it."

Further, while a few participants have aspirations to become administrators in the future, most participants expressed not wanting to become administrators; they were content in their role as an instructional coach. Interestingly, two participants formerly served as principals but preferred the role of coach. Overall, there was a sentiment that the role of an instructional coach is more impactful to lead change than is the role of an administrator. Reagan summed up the sentiment, "I think it is because I want to be seen as a teacher, as someone they can go to and ask teaching and curriculum questions not admin type questions."

Visibility and Check-ins

For the sake of politics, perception, and credibility, instructional coaches stated the need to be visible on their school campuses regularly. They need to be actively engaged in the work of coaching and supporting teachers for their jobs to be viewed as valuable. They are also sure to check-in with teachers on a regular basis by visiting them in their classrooms and asking if they can support the teacher in any way. Bennie described intentional check-ins.

I know when the recess breaks are. I know when they're in the staff lounge so I just try to

be visible, pop in, check in how they're doing, stop by their classrooms. I try to intentionally plan out check-ins in my schedule, because if you don't plan it then it gets crazy.

Addison said, "And I always keep my door open, and I'm always visible. And I think that a lot of teachers have said that too, that they appreciate that I'm just around. That I'm not locked up in my office or just not on campus."

Vast Teaching Experience

Participants stated their vast teaching experience, many years teaching many different grade levels, made them better prepared to be leaders as instructional coaches, because they can connect with teachers across many teaching assignments and it supports their credibility with teachers. Shae provided an example of vast teacher experience.

I was very comfortable. I mean, I think unlike most teachers, I've taught every grade level for about two or three years. I've taught kindergarten for two, three years and third grade and fifth grade and fourth. I've been all over the place, and I had been at the site for seven and a half years before I became the instructional coach, so I had credibility. I'm comfortable providing instructional leadership or support to any grade level.

Kacy shared a similar perspective to Shae.

It's been a really great transition to go from the classroom to this role, and I enjoy it a lot, because I feel like I can rely back on my years of teaching experience. I taught every grade in the elementary school, so I feel like I can relate to all of them even though I recognize times have changed over the years. But being able to show them that I have this experience, and I can share it with you, and I feel comfortable doing that.

Authenticity and Transparency

Participants expressed the need to be authentic and transparent with teachers to maintain trust, credibility, and positive relationships. Olly explained this.

You may have something to offer me that I don't even give you a chance to offer me because I'm going to pretend that I'm something else. I just don't operate that way. So I'm comfortable. To me, that's being a leader, is that authenticity. I'm comfortable being able to say, "This is what I can and this is what I can't do. I'm going to do everything I can to build that within me so that I can support you."

Communication

Some participants noted communication as a key strategy for leadership. They are sure to keep direct communication with teachers, even if the conversations are at times uncomfortable. Chris candidly shared that direct communication is the leadership work of coaching, even when it is difficult, "Sometimes you need to have those crucial conversations. A lot of times we don't want to because we don't want to offend the other person." Additionally, participants expressed their abilities to state their communication boundaries with teachers. Nel explained a situation of stating boundaries to a group of teachers, "I told them, 'We're professionals. These are the rules. We need to be nice.' I kind of laid it that way. Then, I figured if it happened again, that's when I would go to them directly. It's like, 'Look, it's not happening.'"

Lead by Example and Service

Some participants expressed a service-oriented leadership perspective, to be of service to the school for the benefit of students and teachers. This includes following through and being dependable with the service provided. Nel summed it up best, "As a leader...Again, I think a leader leads by doing. If I'm getting there with them and working with them, by serving them

and helping them... You know, I like the whole servant leader approach.”

Theme 5: Instructional Coaches Need Support from Their Administrators

Participants described the importance of administrative support across multiple interview questions. In terms of their times and tasks, coaches need administrators to understand the role of the coach and honor their time so coaches can work on coaching tasks that increase teacher efficacy and thus lead to increased student achievement. Instructional coaches also need collaborative relationships with their administrators for the purpose of effectively implementing district and school change initiatives that lead to positive student outcomes. The coaches recognize they are not administrators and cannot lead change in the same way as an administrator due to not having authority in their role as coaches. Thus, the collaborative relationships with administrators are critical, because administrators and coaches can serve separate, yet beneficial, roles in leading change. When collaborative, they can be a powerful team for making positive changes that benefit students. Further, lack of administrative support is a major challenge in coaches’ work. They are grateful when they receive administrative support and additionally seek it as their main resource needed for ongoing success in the coaching role. Olly explained effective administrator support.

And I’m fortunate enough to work with a principal who is a great instructional leader, is very clear about the vision she has for the school site, and we communicate regularly so that I know what it is that she would like for me to do to make that vision real for the teachers at that site and their students.

What is also critical is that administrators protect the time and tasks of coaches to ensure consistent, ongoing support so that coaches can be successful in their work with teachers. Further, administrators are often the people arranging the coaches’ professional development

opportunities, meetings, and mentorship. Thus, instructional coaches are dependent upon the district and school administrators to arrange for the system elements in which coaches can successfully work.

Theme 5 emerged in data from Interview Question 1 as shown in Table 15, Interview Question 2 as shown in Table 16, and Interview Question 3 as shown in Table 17.

Table 15

Summary of Codes: Work Tasks and Challenges (Theme 5)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	Lack of administrative support/follow-through	40
	No system/formal coaching structure	27
	Inconsistent professional development and support for instructional coaches	13
	Need to be master of all topics and/or grade levels	8

Lack of Administrative Support/Follow-through

Participants shared that having limited support from a direct supervisor and/or site administrator is frustrating. That limited support includes inconsistent leadership, mixed messaging, or poor follow-through. Participants expressed frustration with this, as they know the importance of administrator collaboration for positively impacting student achievement. Lee noted the challenge of inconsistent leadership due to staff changes in the administrator roles, “One thing that’s been a struggle is stability within the administration. The high turnover rate sometimes causes regression within the site.” Jaden explained this further, “Because there was so

much leadership change, even the past year there was no directive to us as to what our roles would be like.”

No System/Formal Coaching Structure

Connected to non-coaching tasks and limited time to coach, participants reported a source of frustration is when there is no system for coaching or a consistent formal coaching structure. Without a system, the structure of coaching and related tasks tends to change from year to year, sometimes depending on district initiatives, but often depending on the coaching supervisor change in leadership. Also, sometimes budget or staffing issues force new tasks and responsibilities upon coaches. This was a source of frustration for participants. Jaden captured the frustration in her comment.

And my new boss actually this is her first year as anything but a principal. She’s younger than I am. I don’t think that there is a clear vision for what we’re trying to do. So there’s a lot of mixed messages. I am a hard worker, and I appreciate being effective. I don’t appreciate being tasked with things that I’ve put a lot of time and effort into that are tossed away because nobody really knew what they were doing when asked for it.

Inconsistent Professional Development and Support for Instructional Coaches

Though participants stated they have received a lot of professional development during their time as coaches, as will be shared later in this chapter, the professional development is inconsistent. It does not stay consistent in the topic and/or delivery from year to year. This has resulted from a change of district/school initiatives or a change of supervisor leadership, which is inconsistent support for instructional coaches. This was described by Shae.

The following year, that person left and there was somebody who never met with us for a whole year but there were still, I think, coaching meetings but the person who was in

charge of us never really was present.

Need to be Master of All Topics and/or Grade Levels

As noted in the demographic questionnaire, most instructional coaches support teachers across multiple grade levels and multiple content areas. This is a challenge for coaches, as they want to be effective for teachers, but it is difficult to be an expert of everything. Thus, participants expressed worry about feeling as effective as they could be for all teachers. Additionally, they expressed the pressure of the time commitment to learn the content standards of multiple grade levels and content areas. Nel explained the expectation of having to be the master of all topics, “Maybe there was just the assumption, because I had been a coach prior and that even though I went from high school to elementary, that I kind of knew everything.” Kacy also captured the difficulty of this.

I don’t have a specialty, so we used to about eight years ago I think before we got this new director, there were reading specialists, there were math specialists, there were different subject areas. Now, we’re expected to know it all and do it.

Table 16

Summary of Codes: Professional Learning and Support Received (Theme 5)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
2. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you have received, if any, in your role as an instructional coach.	Multiple professional learning topics and opportunities	83
	Administrator/supervisor support	62
	Peer instructional coach collaboration	46
	Consultant support	34

Table 16 (continued).

Conference attendance	20
Book studies	19
Coaching/mentoring for instructional coaches	13
Opportunity to conduct passion/growth projects	12
Self-study/self-paced virtual professional learning	11

Multiple Professional Learning Topics and Opportunities

The participants reported they had received numerous professional learning opportunities provided by their school districts. The professional learning topics were vast, including: content standards, textbook publisher materials, instructional technology, assessment of student learning, instructional methods, coaching methods, and leadership methods. Participants expressed they had received so much training they did not want new professional learning topics. Finn captured it with one sentence, “I feel like I get a lot of training, sometimes too much to bring back.” Kacy also had a one-liner to sum up the same sentiment, “We’re constantly being trained on something.”

Administrator/Supervisor Support

Overwhelmingly most participants expressed they had received support from their administrator/supervisor. Some noted that a previous supervisor was supportive, but their current supervisor was not, and vice versa. However, during their time as instructional coaches most reported they have received and valued support from an administrator/supervisor. Chris described having positive administrative support with two different principals.

I've been very fortunate at my particular site. I've been working under two different principals; that list has not been long. It has been kept very short and my principals have worked with myself and my other instructional coach in terms of checking in with how long that extra list is. They want to make sure that our primary role is working with teachers.

Reagan also shared having a positive relationship with a supervising administrator, "But for me personally, my principal's absolutely fantastic. Any concerns, any questions I have, I go to him, he takes care of what he can. He's a huge support."

Peer Instructional Coach Collaboration

Participants expressed collaboration with their peer instructional coaches as vital to their work. Most had regularly scheduled meetings with peers for collaborative time. Others that did not have regularly scheduled collaborative time were sure to maintain their peer network and collaboration through email or text messaging. Peer collaboration was an important and valued network for coaches, since most were the lone coach at their school site. By having a peer network, they were able to share expertise, grow ideas, have support, and gain inspiration. They expressed leaning on each other across schools within their school districts. Chris expressed appreciation for the peer collaboration time.

There's a lot of collaboration time going on. Plus not only that, it's also good to hear what's happening in the elementary and middle school world. I also get to see my middle school coaches, especially the one that works at the site that leads into my school. We can have sort of an articulation, touch base kind of with what's going on, which is good, that I really appreciate.

Lee also stated appreciation when describing the regularly-scheduled weekly instructional

coaching staff meetings, “Then we get to find out what’s going on with one another. ‘What’s going on at your site? Where are you finding success?’ And that collaboration time is absolutely essential.”

Consultant Support

Overwhelmingly, the participants reported receiving most of their professional learning about coaching methods from consultants who were contracted by districts for the sole purpose of teaching them how to coach teachers. There were also consultants for district-wide initiative purposes, such as the implementation of instructional technology; the consultants trained the coaches to be trainers, known as trainer-of-trainer professional development. Overall, coaches expressed appreciation for all they had learned from consultants. Nel summed it up, “We have a consultant that comes out, and she meets with us. The district is really mindful of making sure that the quality of training is good.”

Conference Attendance

Most participants had attended professional conferences during their time as coaches. The professional conferences topics supported site or district initiatives, such as, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Olly explained, “We have been offered a variety of conferences to attend both as presenters and learners.” This was also shared by Indy, “I’m pretty much free to ask to attend conferences.”

Book Studies

Book studies were reported by most participants. The books were usually selected by their district, studied as a coaching group, and discussed at regularly planned collaborative coach meetings. Often the book studies were facilitated by a consultant or administrator. Reagan shared what was common for most of the participants, “Currently we have monthly instructional coach

meetings that include the instructional coaches and all our TOSAs. Half the day is coaching training. We go through a book study.”

Coaching/Mentoring for Instructional Coaches

Though not all participants reported access to a coach/mentor for instructional coaches, those who did report it stated that access to a coach/mentor was very helpful to their professional growth. Those who received coaching/mentoring in instructional coaching expressed a desire for it to continue and be more frequent. Some only received the support intermittently or for one year and would have liked the time to be longer or ongoing. Paris shared a reason that coach mentors are important, “Coaching can be a lonely job because you’re it. So on my campus, I’m like the department of one.” The coach mentor provides perspective, collaboration, and experience that a coach can appreciate and learn from. This was described by Addison,

So she’s the instructional coach’s coach. And she just meets with us...So we’ll walk through classrooms that we feel like hey, I want some support. Like how would I do this as a coach? And we’ll walk through. We stay in it, we come out. And she just kind of coaches us and helps us to see things like oh, I should have been looking at that or just different ideas and strategies, and we just kind of work through scenarios as how to coach.

Opportunity to Conduct Passion/Growth Projects

Opportunities to conduct passion or growth projects on topics of personal professional interest to participants was noted as a positive. Those who had the opportunity to engage in passion or growth projects were grateful and motivated by the work. They appreciated having personal choice and time to work on a project that would support the growth of their school or district. Quinn said, “We have the freedom to create our own trainings, to do the work that we

want to do. So, you can really grow as much as you want.”

Self-study/Self-paced Virtual Professional Learning

Self-study and self-paced learning were noted as positive by participants. They appreciated the opportunity to earn new skills and certifications of their own personal professional interest. Most expressed their own passion for learning and growing as professionals. Gene expressed enthusiasm about self-study, “Because I read. There’s a thousand-page document, and I read all of it. Yeah, I read, I absorb, I Google things. I steal things from other people.”

Table 17

Summary of Codes Regarding Professional Learning and Support Needed (Theme 5)

Interview Question	Codes	Frequency
3. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you need to continue your work as an instructional coach.	Administrator/supervisor support	24
	Coaching/mentoring for instructional coaches	22
	Professional development to update/refine skills	19
	Time to coach	13
	Opportunity to conduct passion/growth projects	7
	Conference attendance	6
	Peer instructional coach collaboration	6
	Have their own classroom of students	3
	Multi-department collaboration	3

Administrator/Supervisor Support

Participants overwhelmingly expressed that to be successful in their work as coaches, they need support from their administrative supervisor. The support described included understanding the work and perspective of a coach, as described by Kacy, “Maybe more support from our director. Maybe more involvement. And by that I mean maybe visiting our schools and seeing really the ground level, what’s happening.” Understanding the coach perspective could align the vision of a district or school with the day-to-day work of an instructional coach. Bennie explained this further.

I think clear direction is really important from the top down. From the district level to the site level, sometimes it isn’t very clear direction or the district really doesn’t come to the site so they’re not really familiar with what’s going on at the site level.

Olly described the type of support a coach needs from administrators.

I think I would appreciate more feedback from administrators and more side-by-side. I would appreciate if my director spent more time with me in the work, not necessarily in a meeting or giving me information, but sit with me, watch what I’m doing, and give me feedback on what I’m doing so that I can grow and develop based on that feedback, that critical conversation that we might need to have.

Coaching/Mentoring for Instructional Coaches

Coaching and mentoring for instructional coaches was previously noted as a professional learning support received by some participants, and one they greatly valued. Participants expressed that ongoing coaching and mentoring in their work would contribute to their success. As a collective, they expressed their desire to receive feedback about their work so they can continue to learn and grow as professionals. There was acknowledgement of receiving a lot of

group professional development, but a coach/mentor would provide them with personalized feedback to work on their individual professional growth. Erin captured this sentiment, “Just kind of building my own capacity, specific to me, because we get a lot of general coaching mentorship within a group, but not a specific kind of a one-on-one situation.” Kacy expressed the similar need for personalized support, “Some of the one-on-one support to develop our goals would be good.” Addison described the type of work the mentor could provide, “I think the main approach would probably be like a mentorship type where I’m meeting with someone and just kind of like playing through some of the scenarios and just getting feedback.”

Professional Development to Update/Refine Skills

Though participants had expressed receiving many professional development opportunities on a variety of topics during their time as instructional coaches, they expressed a need for ongoing professional development opportunities to update and refine the skills they have acquired. They offered numerous topics for ongoing refinement or to learn new information in an area as it becomes available. Topics included: leadership strategies, coaching methods, working with resistant teachers, content areas, inclusive practices, and instructional technology. Coaches wanted to stay current in their knowledge and skills; as Finn said, “Just making sure we are up on the latest.” Kacy similarly stated, “To continue getting more updated training and practice with that. We have to keep practicing our skills.”

Time to Coach

Because time to coach had already been noted as a challenge for participants, it is not surprising that time to coach emerged as a needed support. Some participants expressed a need to protect and calendar their coaching time, and they noted the need for their administrative supervisors to honor and protect their scheduled coaching time. Participant Taylor captured the

desire for more time to coach, “Just finding the time. A question that kept coming up whenever we did have our coaches meetings or PD is, ‘Is there anything you’re going to take off our plate so that we can coach more?’” Reagan expressed the need for less time spent in professional development and more time to work with teachers, “I think, at this point, we want less for training and more time.” Danny summed it up, “Time. More time to do the actual coaching.”

Opportunity to Conduct Passion/Growth Projects

Some participants expressed an interest in opportunities for conducting their own passion projects for personal professional growth which could benefit their school or district. They said it would be motivating to have the time and support to do such work. Olly described a passion project, “I would like to also be able to offer teachers webinars, and I would like to have the opportunity to find out how to do that.”

Conference Attendance

Conference attendance was noted as an opportunity some participants would like to continue to receive. They recognized that conferences do not necessarily change professional practice, but rather, service as an opportunity to be inspired and learn about current trends in the field of education. Indy explained this, “I guess just always keeping up with current research.” Kacy shared similar sentiments, “I would say the content I get from going to the conferences, outside conferences. So being able to continue to have that option is important to me, because otherwise how do we stay up to date?”

Peer Instructional Coach Collaboration

Peer instructional coach collaboration was previously identified by participants as one of their main sources of support and professional learning. Participants also shared it would be an ongoing support to continue to ensure time for peer collaboration. Chris said, “I would still need

that continued time to be able to have these monthly meetings that the district has allowed us to have with instructional coaches.”

Have Their Own Classroom of Students

A few participants expressed an interest in having their own set of students to teach, even if only for one class period per day or for a few days per week. Having students to teach would support the instructional coaches’ credibility with teacher peers, provide an opportunity for a class in which to demonstrate lessons for other teachers, and keep the coaches current in their instructional practice. Danny said, “The one thing I wish I had, any my colleagues and I have talked about it, I wish I had a classroom that could be the experimental lab.” Connection with students was also expressed as a benefit of having one’s own group of students with which to work, as explained by Addison, “I do feel the need to be more connected with students. So I did ask if I can do like ASB or the morning announcements. Just so that I have a group of kids that I can just connect on more of a consistent basis.”

Multi-department Collaboration

Multi-department collaboration was not about content area departments on a school campus, such as the math department and history department. Rather, participants expressed the need for school district departments, such as Business Services, Educational Services, Student Support Services, Special Education, and Human Resources to collaborate for the benefit of instructional coaching work. The multi-department collaboration with instructional coaches would support coaches in growing their big-picture perspective of the work of a school district and would thus, improve coaching work. Indy explained it well.

I think getting all the departments together, so we’re like separate entities, departments, or educational services, technology, like we’re all language services. I work for all of

them in some capacity, but they don't realize that I'm working for everybody else. I think just having them where everyone's involved, like for impacting work.

Summary

This study explored the perceptions of twenty instructional coaches from public school districts in one county in California. All identified as being in full-time positions of support for teachers. They were an experienced group of educators with fourteen years as the average number of teaching years experience prior to becoming an instructional coach, and the average number of years with instructional coaching experience was six and one-half years.

Additionally, they all came to the coaching position with vast teacher leadership experiences. Through interviews, five open-ended questions were asked of participants to determine their perceived experiences as instructional coaches as they lead for change. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data and effectively answered the study's research questions.

How did instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work? Instructional coaches described the purpose of their work as being agents of change for the sake of students, and they all stated their work has moral purpose. How did instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter? Instructional coaches shared they engage in common coaching tasks, but they also shared they do much more than coaching on a daily basis. How did instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use? Instructional coaches described leading with influence by leveraging relationships, but they also described the need to attend to perception and politics constantly. How do instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change? Coaches described many supports they have received and need, and overall, that translated into needing collaborative support from their administrators.

In Chapter 5, these findings will be discussed in relation to the literature on instructional coaches, as well as the conceptual framework for the study. Further, there will be a discussion of the implications for policy and practice, as well as a discussion of possible areas for additional study.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the perceived experiences of instructional coaches, including their leadership roles and tasks, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature on instructional coaching. Also included in this chapter is an explanation of the connections to Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* applied to the work of instructional coaching. There is then a discussion of recommendations for policy and practice. The chapter concludes with areas for future research and final thoughts.

Interpretation of the Findings

In analyzing the data from the twenty participant interviews it was evident instructional coaches share similar experiences across multiple districts. The findings indicate coaches are focused on the achievement of all students, and they know their best way to positively impact students is through developing teacher efficacy. Further, the findings show instructional coaches are keenly aware they cannot change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices without developing and maintaining positive relationships with teachers. Thus, they constantly leverage their relationships to make meaningful change for students. Further, participants know their district and school goals and initiatives, and they overwhelmingly support them for the benefit of students. Thus, they expressed recognition of the daily political aspects of their work to maintain positive relationships with teachers, collaborate with administrators, and be champions for student success. The findings align with the literature in multiple areas, yet the findings also contradict the literature in some areas and amplify knowledge of the complex work of instructional coach leadership.

Instructional Coaches are Educational Equity Leaders

The participants in this study expressed their service is to teachers, but they further expressed the end result of that service is to improve outcomes for students. This is in alignment with the literature noting that instructional coaches are well positioned to be systems leaders who can create positive change in schools (Timperley, 2008). Because instructional coaches have peer relationships with teachers, teachers are more apt to receive messages of change initiatives and implement such changes when they learn of them from coaches (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Participants in the study had a global perspective about the work of a school district. They had knowledge of district and school plans, goals, and initiatives, and they saw their work as critical to the implementation of those plans, and ultimately critical to student achievement. For coaching to be most beneficial it must be part of a larger, systematic effort to improve teaching and student learning outcomes, and the work of instructional coaches can be easily squandered if not connected to systemic reform initiatives or if the coaching role is thought of simplistically (Knight, 2007a).

While it is evident in the literature that coaches can be the linchpins to connecting school or district reform initiatives to the classroom and moving those initiatives from idea to reality (Knight, 2011a), it was unknown in the literature if coaches had wide knowledge of their school and district reform initiatives. Thus, this study amplified the notion that coaches can be linchpins of change in their schools and districts. Participants in this study were quite knowledgeable about school and district reform initiatives, goals, and actions, and they understood their work in implementing such initiatives for the benefit of students.

The literature make clear there is a benefit for students when instructional coaches focus on developing teacher capacity with content knowledge (Mohler et al., 2009; Campbell &

Malkus, 2011) and assessment of student learning (Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011; Campbell & Malkus, 2011) in one-on-one coaching activities. To achieve change, participants in this study expressed they work tirelessly to figure out the differentiated needs of teaching staff and determine the most effective methods for supporting each and every teacher as an individual. Thus, when designing instructional coaching programs, or conducting coaching activities, focusing on student learning outcomes is paramount. Participants in this study were all outcomes-focused in their work.

There is little in the literature about instructional coaching for the purpose of creating educational equity in student opportunities and outcomes. This study added to the literature by demonstrating that coaches are focused on educational equity in all they do. They work tirelessly in service to teachers to develop relationships with teachers and to increase teacher efficacy. Both of those priorities positively impact students. All their investment in relationship building gives coaches the opportunity to influence change with teachers in their instructional practices and their beliefs about teaching and learning. All their coaching tasks with teachers contribute to increasing teacher efficacy with instructional practices. Coaches do their work of service to teachers ultimately in service to the students at their schools. Participants were consistent in their responses that schools must ensure all students have access to high-quality learning environments and that no student should have their learning needs left unmet.

Instructional Coaches Strategically Invest Their Time and Effort in Relationships

A theme revealed in the analysis of participants’ interviews is that instructional coaches are “go to” staff members by teachers and administrators. They often serve their districts and school sites in quasi-administrative roles with “other duties as assigned” that are not pure instructional coaching tasks. This is also found in the literature. Coaches are often pulled in

multiple task directions beyond offering one-on-one or grade level/department team support to teachers (Chval et al., 2010). Within one school district, instructional coaching can manifest differently from school to school (Walpole et al., 2010), and within a school, the expectations of an instructional coaching role can vary between principals, teachers, and coaches (Ippolito, 2010). Fullan and Knight (2011) describe the use of coaches outside of pure coaching duties as a method for wasting their talents.

However, the findings of this study deviate from the literature about coaching time and duties. Participants in this study expressed the importance of being available to teachers and assisting teachers with any and all types of needs. Overwhelmingly participants valued service to teachers as an opportunity to build relationships. So, while the literature focuses on time for pure coaching tasks, there is little in the literature about coaches' time investing in relationships with teachers, as well as their reasons for investing in relationships. This study brought to light that coaches' time in non-coaching tasks is highly beneficial to their work. Because a school or district's reform initiatives drive the coaches' foci and work tasks (Mangin, 2009), coaches are often key leaders in the implementation of new district and school initiatives. To get staff support with new initiatives, participants recognized they need established, trusting relationships with teachers. Thus, it is important to consider that coaches' time in non-coaching tasks is not really squandered time wasting their talents; rather, participants noted that while their time for pure coaching tasks is limited for a multitude of reasons, their time to engage in other important work on their campuses is to put teachers' needs first and thus, build and maintain relationships with teachers. So, the time spent in "other duties as assigned" is a political investment in relationships that can constantly be leveraged to make meaningful change for the benefit of students.

Influence is Their Main Leadership Strategy

The importance of developing relationships between coaches and teachers is found in the literature. The coach is to develop a trusting and confidential relationship with the teacher (Knight, 2009), listen to the teacher's individualized needs and goals (Knight, 2011a, 2011b), and then develop the plan of support with the teacher. Knight (2011a, 2011b) sums up these ideas with a "partnership approach" to instructional coaching; he describes the coach and teacher as equal peers who engage in open and honest dialogue and reflection with the goal of improving teacher performance and thus, student achievement outcomes. When instructional coaches have peer relationships with teachers, teachers are more apt to receive messages of change initiatives and implement such changes when they learn of them from coaches (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). However, the literature does not explore the concept of relationship building for the purpose of influential leadership.

The results of this study amplify the literature on the importance of relationships between coaches and teachers. This study demonstrated that coaches are extremely perceptive and constantly reflective about their peer relationships and leadership work. They know they cannot tell people what to do and expect results. Rather, they rely on influence as their main leadership method. They are keen about being equal members of the teachers' union, yet they have a global perspective about the work to be done to increase outcomes for students. To make change, they know that an authoritarian approach will not work with their peers. So, they overwhelmingly expressed they leverage their relationships with teachers and use influence to make change. As previously described, participants shared they invest a lot of time supporting teachers with various tasks to ensure teachers' needs are met. That time spent is an investment in relationships which are later leveraged to make change for the benefit of students.

Attending to Perception and Politics is Part of the Work

The literature states that instructional coaches serving in the role of leader and change agent creates tension for them (Ippolito, 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013, 2015). One cause of tension is balancing their teacher peer relationships with school and district policy initiatives. The possibility of creating unequal relationships by disrupting the perceived balance of power in their relationships with teachers can be unsettling for many coaches (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013). Instructional coaches are a minority group amongst their teacher peers because they are not assigned to a classroom and roster of students. Because there are often a limited number of coaches in a district, most teachers are unaware of the full extent of coaching work. This creates issues of perception around, “What do coaches do?” and “How do they spend their time?”

This study demonstrated that instructional coaches are quite keen about the politics of their positions. The literature demonstrates the tension coaches have with the politics of their roles (Ippolito, 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013, 2015). However, this study redefines the concept of coaches’ tension from a negative concept to an asset. Participants acknowledged the tension in their work as they lead change with their teacher peers. However, they demonstrated a matter-of-fact knowledge of tension, for change creates cognitive dissonance in people, in organizations. Ultimately, they acknowledged politics and perception as a reality of leadership they reckon with daily. Their astute understanding of the politics of their role was a strength and indicative of their knowledge and skills as leaders on their campuses. Participants in this study expressed mindfulness to attend to the perception of their peers at all times, be visible on their campuses, be helpful to everyone at all times, meet teachers’ needs, and maintain positive relationships. They stated awareness of losing credibility and influence with peers if they did not attend to politics and perception constantly. Losing credibility and influence with teachers could

ultimately have a negative impact on student achievement outcomes, and they were not willing to take that loss.

Conceptual Framework for Instructional Coach Leadership

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* applied to the work of instructional coaching. Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* encompasses five key elements he calls the five capacities of a leader: moral purpose, relationship building, understanding change, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. All participants in this study expressed their work has moral purpose, with the focus of their work on improving student outcomes and educational equity. Relationship building was repeatedly expressed as critical to their work. Further, participants expressed knowledge of change initiatives in their schools and districts, and they understood their role in implementing change. In terms of knowledge creation and sharing, coaches shared they engage in this when providing one-on-one coaching, as well as small group and large group professional development for teachers. Coherence making is where coaches make a profound impact on their peers. Coherence making is realized in the coach's work with assisting teachers in connecting the big picture reform initiatives with the daily work of a teacher by staying focused on student achievement outcomes with the use of influence as their main leadership strategy.

Coaches are leaders per the key leadership capacities outlined by Fullan, which is shown in Figure 12. They are teacher leaders with a global perspective about the educational equity work of their districts and schools, a perspective that is often gained by being outside the walls of one classroom. As coaches work to support teachers and students at their schools, they continually grow their leadership knowledge and skills. They also constantly have the

opportunity to leverage relationships and influence change by developing teacher beliefs, content, pedagogy, and assessment practices, and they do so. They know their work has moral purpose and can positively impact students by creating more equitable learning environments and performance outcomes.

Figure 12

Conceptual Framework

Implications for Policy and Practice

Per the findings of this study, the researcher suggests considerations for instructional coaches, school and district administrators, as well as policymakers.

1. Invest in instructional coaching positions in a district or school if there are currently no instructional coaching positions. If there are current instructional coach positions, revisit the job description, roles, and tasks regularly to ensure the work of coaches is in alignment with the change initiatives and needs of the district or school per the district goals and the student achievement data.
2. Tap into the instructional coaching staff as the talent pool for future school administrator positions. Instructional coaches are instructional leaders who grow many skills in their

coaching role. They learn how to lead by building relationships with teachers and using influence as their main leadership strategy. In their time as a coach they grow a global perspective about the work of school leaders, including vast knowledge of a district's goals and school's goals, as well as reform initiatives. Ultimately, they are equity leaders who are focused on student achievement for all learners, including those who have been historically underserved in public schools. They have the skills and attitudes foundational to the work of a school administrator, and they also have credibility with teachers. They are more well prepared than most teachers who would be coming directly out of a classroom assignment into a school administration work assignment.

3. Offer professional development for first-year instructional coaches that focuses on the following:
 - a. Reading and analysis of district and school mission and vision statements.
 - b. Reading and analysis of district and school plans for student achievement, including student achievement data.
 - c. Educational leadership theories and methods.
 - d. Change process theories and methods.
 - e. Instructional coaching methods.
 - f. Professional relationship development strategies.
4. Offer ongoing professional development for instructional coaches that provides the following:
 - a. Mentoring and feedback.
 - b. Scheduled collaboration time with coaching peers.
 - c. Personalized professional learning topics and delivery methods based on a

coach's individual needs.

- d. Opportunities for creativity and implementing professional passion projects.
5. Create structures for instructional coach-administrator collaboration, such as:
- a. Regularly scheduled and calendared meetings between instructional coaches and school administrators.
 - b. Addition of instructional coaches to the school leadership team.
 - c. Addition of instructional coaches to district committees on various topics, including an LCFF/LCAP stakeholder committee.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are three areas the researcher believes could be beneficial for further study. The first is to duplicate the study with a larger sample. This study included twenty participants and is thus limited to their perceptions. A larger sample of instructional coaches could reveal greater variance in the tasks, challenges, support, and leadership of coaches, particularly if conducting the study across multiple regions as noted next.

Exploring regional differences regarding educational equity leadership is another area of possible study. This study was conducted in California, which is a progressive state. The current school funding structure with the LCFF and the associated LCAP are elements of an equity-focused public education system. They were intentionally created for the purpose of creating equity across the State's school districts in providing for the needs and education of socio-economically disadvantaged students, English learner students, and foster youth. Not all fifty states of the United States of America may be as progressive or as equity-focused as California and thus, may not have systems in place that are similar to LCFF and LCAP. Thus, the work of instructional coaches could vary by state, and educational equity leadership could be limited for

coaches in some regions. Such further study may identify educational equity leadership as a needed area of professional development for coaches.

This study included instructional coaches from both elementary and secondary schools. It would be interesting to explore how the tasks, challenges, supports, and leadership methods of coaches differ between elementary coaches and secondary coaches. Exploring the differences in detail could better inform how to plan for the work of coaches at each level. Elementary schools are smaller than secondary schools, and so one coach may be sufficient for an elementary school. High schools are large in comparison and may need a team of coaches assigned to a school. Planning for the needs of a team of high school instructional coaches may be uniquely different than planning for the work of independent elementary coaches. Further, because the needs of students are uniquely different at each level, that could impact the work of the instructional coach in a way that this study did not identify.

Final Thoughts

Leadership for educational equity is the work of public education, and it is complex work. It is important to have talented and committed instructional leaders who can effectively engage in the work. Instructional coaches are unique because they are teachers who teach and serve other teachers. They are critical to teacher learning because teachers most prefer to learn from other teachers. In their time doing the work, instructional coaches grow global perspectives about the work of school leadership. They know the moral purpose of their work to develop teacher efficacy which can then lead to student achievement and success for each and every learner. Coaches have a passion to improve school systems for the benefit of students. They are the group that school districts should continue to invest in, develop, and then tap for talent into school administrator positions.

At the time this chapter is being written, the world has been struck by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools across the globe are currently engaging in virtual teaching and learning, and students are not coming to school campuses daily. Millions of Americans are out of work due to the pandemic's impact on businesses. Economic hardship has come to many Americans, and many students are suffering from learning loss and mental health issues because school campuses are closed, and students must learn from the dwellings in which they reside. All previous notions of public schools in America may be forever altered. School is currently being reinvented and will continue to transform in response to this pandemic and the new reality of virtual learning.

With economic hardship comes slashes to public school budgets. With budget cuts come position cuts. People will lose their jobs. This is the current risk and reality for the future of instructional coaching positions. They are not always viewed as necessary as a classroom teacher's position. So, at this time in history, instructional coaching may diminish after having had a decade of vast expansion. However, great school leaders have always been needed, and they are needed now more than ever. With vast inequities in students' home lives and inequities in access to quality education being exposed due to virtual learning, public schools will need to continue the focus on educational equity more than ever. Equity leaders are needed. Instructional coaches are those leaders.

APPENDIX A

Executive Summary

Instructional Coach Leadership:
Perceptions of Purpose, Practices, and Supports in Coaching for Educational Equity

By
Michelle Wise

Abstract

With increased investment in instructional coach positions in public schools, instructional coaches are put into positions of leadership with great variation in their leadership skills, training, and support. The purpose of this study was to describe the perceived experiences of instructional coaches, their leadership roles and tasks, supports they need, and challenges they face so their work can improve educational equity for students. This study used a non-experimental, qualitative phenomenological research design, and twenty seasoned instructional coaches were interviewed. Findings demonstrated coaches are teacher leaders committed to education equity and positioned to be change leaders in schools.

Keywords

instructional coaching, educational equity, instructional leadership, teacher leadership, professional development

Introduction

Educational equity must be the moral imperative of all public educators. Unequal learning environments, opportunities, and outcomes have persisted far too long in public schools across the United States. Prior to the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, schools were segregated by race and ethnicity, and they were unequal in resources and student outcomes. The inequities negatively impacted the academic achievement of black and Hispanic students, student groups that are also overwhelmingly socio-economically disadvantaged in the United States. Though achievement gaps have narrowed in recent decades, they persist.

Of all staff and resources in schools, it is teachers that matter most for student achievement (Oppen, 2019). Knowing teachers are the main change-makers in students' lives at school means the system of support for teachers must be focused on educational equity. Principals can support teacher development and lead for educational equity, but principals are usually alone in their work at a school. It is beneficial to both principals and teachers to have partners in their leadership work.

Instructional leadership is powerful with informal leadership from teachers (Hopkins, 2003). Teachers learn best from other teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fullan, 2011; Hopkins, 2003). Instructional coaches are teachers who work in full-time or part-time roles to teach and facilitate the professional learning opportunities of their teacher peers within a school or district. They are well positioned to be the partners and change agents, the linchpins (Knight, 2011a) between federal, state, and local equity initiatives and teachers in the classroom, as they have the power of peer relationships with fellow teachers, different from the supervisory role of a principal.

Across the country, there has been increased investment in instructional coaching with the number of coach positions doubling between 2000 and 2015 (Domina et al., 2015). The number of school districts using instructional coaches has grown significantly (Knight, 2017), and coaching is one of the costliest professional development initiatives of the last three decades ("Coaching for Impact," 2016). Thus, it is imperative to understand the leadership roles and tasks of coaches, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity opportunities and outcomes for students. That was the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study.

This study asked twenty seasoned instructional coaches about their perceptions of the purpose of their work, to describe the daily work they do, explain the roles in which they serve, and share the challenges they face. Their leadership roles and responsibilities as coaches, as well as the leadership practices they use, were also examined. Further, they were asked about the support and professional learning opportunities they have received to prepare them to lead district equity reform initiatives. It further asked them to identify the support and professional learning opportunities they need to be most prepared to conduct instructional coaching for educational equity. The following four research questions guided this study:

1. *How do instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work?*
2. *How do instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter?*
3. *How do instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use?*
4. *How do instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change?*

There were limitations to this study. The study included a small sample size from one

county in southern California. Though the selected county was representative of the student population diversity across the state, the study was regional. Another limitation of the study was that the reported experiences of the participants cannot always be generalized. Lastly, participant self-reporting was limited to their personal perceptions of their experiences, values, and beliefs.

Background

California's budget for public education was bleak for many years. In addition to a poor economy during the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the funding system for California's schools was not resulting in equitable funding across the state's school districts. The decades-old system included a complicated algorithm ("LCFF Frequently Asked Questions," 2018), and it was difficult for the public, school boards, educators, and legislators to understand.

Further complicating the funding formula was the existence of categorical funds. There were over sixty categorical funding programs mandated by state policy (Smith et al., 2013) with funds meant to target the needs of specific demographic groups of students ("LCFF Frequently Asked Questions," 2018). The funding formula was not resulting in the closing of student achievement performance gaps (Smith et al., 2013) for historically underserved groups of students. The categorical program roadblocks to student achievement were vast (Smith et al., 2013). Overall, categorical funding was considered too specific, too narrow (Weston, 2011), not allowing for districts to craft unified, systemic approaches to making positive change for the students it was meant to serve.

On July 1, 2013, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into state law the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which overhauled public school funding in an effort to improve equity and access for students ("Local Control Funding Formula Guide," 2017). In addition, a related compliance requirement for proper use of the LCFF funds was mandated for public school

districts across the state. That compliance requirement manifested as the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and 2014-15 was the first year of implementation of those plans ("Local Control Funding Formula's First Year," 2014).

The new funding formula and LCAP offered districts increased resources to provide extra service to historically underserved student groups and close achievement gaps. Because research supports a teacher as the main factor in a student's academic achievement (Fullan & Knight, 2011), many districts invested in the development of teacher capacity ("Local Control Funding Formula's First Year," 2014). This is evident in past and present LCAPs with investment in teacher professional learning and instructional coaches. Across the United States, instructional coaching is one of the fastest growing methods for offering teacher professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). While some districts have invested in instructional coaching for many years, for many school districts in California LCFF and LCAP provided the first opportunity to do so.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* applied to the work of instructional coaching and can be found in Figure 1. Fullan's (2001) *Framework* encompasses five key elements he calls the capacities of a leader: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. An instructional coach is an instructional leader on a school campus and must develop these five capacities. Paramount is moral purpose. Regarding moral purpose, Fullan (2001) states, "In education, an important end is to make a difference in the lives of students" (p.13). Moral purpose guides the work of the organization, and a leader must cultivate it with strategic work. In the United States, the moral purpose of public schooling

manifests in equity initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels. Thus, the moral purpose of instructional coaching is evident—improving student outcomes and educational equity.

The instructional coach as a leader must stay focused on the moral purpose of educational equity while engaging in the coaching of teachers. The teacher is the main change agent for student achievement in schools (Fullan & Knight, 2011), and the coach is supporting the teacher’s learning. The instructional coach can make a great impact on the teacher, and thus, student achievement. The coach is already in the role of relationship building with teachers, as well as knowledge creation and sharing. Fullan’s (2001) last element is coherence making, and that is realized in the coach’s work with assisting teachers in connecting the big picture reform initiatives with their daily work by staying focused on student achievement outcomes. Staying focused on student outcomes helps instructional coaches and teachers make sense of the messiness of the work of change.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

Teacher professional learning in the United States has been described as very flawed (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) with little inclusion of teacher collaboration time or opportunities for teachers to work with peer mentors. Additionally, professional development

activities are often disconnected from systemic reform efforts of a school or district.

Recommendations to improve teacher professional learning include focusing on student achievement outcomes and connecting to school reform initiatives (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Teacher collaboration needs to be a part of professional learning, with opportunities for teachers to have mentors and/or instructional coaches and work in collaborative teams (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fullan, 2011; Timperley, 2008).

Roles and Tasks of Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches are teachers who educate their teacher peers, and the main work of a coach is to provide individualized support for teacher professional development (Knight, 2004). The coach is to develop a trusting and confidential relationship with the teacher (Knight, 2009), listen to the teacher's individualized needs and goals (Knight, 2011a, 2011b), and then collaboratively develop the plan of teacher support. Knight (2011a, 2011b) sums up these ideas with a "partnership approach" to instructional coaching; he describes the coach and teacher as equal peers who engage in open, honest dialogue and reflection with the goal of improving teacher performance and thus, student achievement outcomes.

Another key role for instructional coaches is to support grade level or department teams of teachers (Knight, 2004; Walpole et al., 2010). In such small group settings, instructional coaches provide teachers with professional learning opportunities focused on content and pedagogy. They also assist teachers in analyzing and reflecting upon student performance data to drive instruction. Just as in the coaching of an individual teacher, the small group setting requires relationships built on trust and open communication.

Instructional coaches' roles and tasks are highly dependent upon the school districts in which they work. A school or district's reform initiatives drive the coaches' foci and work tasks

(Mangin, 2009). Additionally, many models of instructional coaching exist (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). District leaders must decide on one or more models of instructional coaching to implement to best address the local needs, policies, and reform initiatives (Blachowicz et al., 2005). Yet, within one school district instructional coaching can manifest differently from school to school (Walpole et al., 2010), and even within a school, the expectations of a coaching role can vary between principals, teachers, and coaches (Ippolito, 2010). Fullan and Knight (2011) note the main way to waste the work of instructional coaches is by having unclear goals for their work. Coaches need to clearly understand the reform initiatives they are supporting and the tasks of their work with teachers.

Because instructional coaching models and roles vary greatly across districts, coaches can often be pulled in multiple task directions beyond offering individual or team support to teachers (Chval et al., 2010). Sometimes coaches are pulled from their main work and pushed into roles that fill staffing gaps in schools, such as substitute teaching. They can also be used for quasi-administrative tasks in which they are serving as an assistant to the school principal, conducting student discipline and other administrative tasks. Fullan and Knight (2011) describe the use of coaches in this manner as a method for wasting their talents.

Impact of Instructional Coaching on Student Achievement

Studies focused on the impact of instructional coaching on student achievement outcomes have some overlapping findings. Length of time in service as an instructional coach matters (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Being a novice instructional coach may have a limited impact on students' academic growth. Campbell and Malkus (2011) identified that first-year instructional coaches had little to no impact on increasing student performance, but the impact began to be evidenced in the second year of coaching. Further, the longer coaches stay in

the role and gain expertise in the role, the greater impact on student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010).

Time also matters in terms of coaches' time spent in one-on-one coaching activities with teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Mohler et al., 2009). When coaches spend between twenty to thirty percent of their time directly coaching teachers in one-on-one coaching events, student achievement increases. In addition to the quantity of time spent coaching, how the time is spent also matters. Time spent in specific, identified coaching activities are most impactful. There is a benefit for students when instructional coaches focus time on developing teacher capacity with content knowledge (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Mohler et al., 2009) and assessment of student learning (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011).

Instructional Coaches as Leaders and Change Agents

Instructional coaches are well positioned to be systems leaders who can create positive change in schools (Timperley, 2008). Coaches can be the linchpins to connecting school or district reform initiatives to the classroom and moving those initiatives from idea to reality (Knight, 2011a). Fullan and Knight (2011) espouse teachers as the most significant factor in impacting student achievement, principals are the second, and instructional coaches are third. Because instructional coaches have peer relationships with teachers, teachers are more apt to receive messages of change initiatives and implement such changes when they learn of them from coaches (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). However, for coaching to be most beneficial it must be part of a larger, systemic effort to improve teaching and student learning outcomes. The work of instructional coaches can be easily squandered if not connected to systemic reform initiatives or if the coaching role is thought of simplistically (Knight, 2007a).

Instructional coaches serving in the role of leader and change agent creates tension for

them (Ippolito, 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013, 2015). One cause of tension for coaches is balancing their teacher peer relationships with school and district policy initiatives. The possibility of creating unequal relationships by disrupting the perceived balance of power in their relationships is unsettling for coaches (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013).

Beyond the stress of creating unequal power relationships, coaches also struggle with how their coaching role is often framed as supporting individual teacher's professional learning needs and goals (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). The needs and goals of an individual teacher may not be aligned with the school or district reform initiatives the coach is expected to implement. This creates fear and doubts in coaches about their role in leading change (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Instructional Coaching for Educational Equity

In *Coaching for Equity*, Lee (2002) calls for educational equity to be both the goal of and approach to instructional coaching. Yet, there are few studies with a key focus on coaching for the purpose of creating educational equity, and research in the area of professional development for teachers of diverse learners is not well examined (Wei et al., 2010). There are a few studies examining the impact of instructional coaching on teachers of diverse groups of learners, including historically underserved student ethnic groups, socio-economically disadvantaged students, and students learning English as a second language (Teemant et al., 2011; Teemant, 2014; Teemant et al., 2014), and there are some commonalities in the findings.

Coaching teachers on specific pedagogical protocols of instructional practice can make a positive impact on the achievement of diverse groups of learners (Teemant, 2014). However, deeply held teacher attitudes and beliefs are difficult to change. Though teachers can learn and apply effective, rigorous instructional methods per a protocol, ongoing implementation of those

methods is limited by teachers' beliefs about student learning, even with the support of a coach (Teemant et al., 2011; Teemant, 2014). Perhaps this is because professional development, including instructional coaching, needs to get at the root of developing teacher beliefs and attitudes about student achievement (Fishman et al., 2003).

A similarity is found in instructional coaching for Critical Stance (Teemant et al., 2014), in which teachers have difficulty achieving the highest level of implementation of Critical Stance because the highest level requires deep transformation of their beliefs. Overall, there are few studies with a focus on instructional coaching for equity or examining if educational equity is a priority for coaches personally and professionally, and if it is a priority in the schools and districts in which they work.

Professional Learning and Ongoing Support for Instructional Coaches

Failing to provide and plan for the professional learning of coaches is a definite way to waste their talents (Fullan & Knight, 2011). The true measure of success in the work of coaching is increasing student achievement outcomes, and the professional learning of coaches has been linked to positive gains in student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011). Coaches need initial training and ongoing professional learning to be successful (Knight, 2009; Shanklin, 2007), and they need their professional learning to cover many aspects of coaching. Coaches need to know their content, and time invested in their content expertise is beneficial (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Kowal & Steiner, 2007). Coaches also need professional development about instructional pedagogy (Kowal & Steiner, 2007) so they can effectively model multiple instructional methods in teachers' classrooms. They need to know how to coach their teacher peers (Chval et al., 2010; Kowal & Steiner, 2007), including knowledge of adult learning theory (Chval et al., 2010). And, to effectively be a leader of school

reform initiatives, they need professional development on their role as leaders, methods for leadership, and strategies for managing conflict (Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Chval et al., 2010).

Identifying “what” coaches need to learn is one-half of understanding their professional learning needs. It is also important to understand the “how” of instructional coach professional learning. According to Knight (2004), instructional coaches learn how to do their work in a variety of ways. They learn by collaborating with other coaches and watching them engage in acts of coaching. Coaches learn with opportunities to expand knowledge by attending professional conferences and by reading professional research on teaching, learning, and coaching. However, more research is needed to further understand coaches’ professional learning needs and identify the most effective methods for preparing and supporting coaches with ongoing learning opportunities (Ippolito, 2010; Kowal & Steiner, 2007).

Gaps in the Literature

While it is evident in the literature that instructional coaches are well positioned to be linchpins to connecting school or district reform initiatives to the classroom and moving those initiatives from idea to reality (Knight, 2011a), instructional coach leadership is not well documented. It is unknown in the literature if coaches have wide knowledge of their school and district reform initiatives. Additionally, there is little in the literature about instructional coaching for the purpose of creating educational equity in student opportunities and outcomes. Overall, the literature is limited regarding instructional coach awareness of their leadership role, their strategies for leading and making change, as well as the methods for developing and supporting their instructional leadership skills. This study addresses these gaps in the literature.

Research Method

This study used a non-experimental, qualitative phenomenological research design.

Phenomenological research was used to describe and understand the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2014). Demographic data was collected from participants to understand and describe the characteristics of the instructional coach sample group. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with instructional coaches. Interviews were conducted in one-on-one sessions of thirty-to-sixty minutes in length and were audio-recorded. The purpose of qualitative interviewing was to understand the instructional coaches' lived experiences and perceptions of their experiences (Seidman, 2006), to document their stories (Patton, 2002). The collected stories were analyzed for common themes of their experiences and perceptions.

Participant Selection Criteria

Criterion sampling was used to carefully select the participants for the study (Patton, 2002). Participants were to meet intentionally chosen criteria to support the researcher to understand the shared phenomenon; this was purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). The participants in this study met the following criteria:

1. Participants worked in ABC County, California. ABC County was selected because its K-12 public school student enrollment demographic profile was similar to the K-12 public school student demographic profile of California per Table 1 (DataQuest, 2013). While ABC County was very similar to the state in terms of racial/ethnic demographics, it was particularly similar in two main categories, English Learner students and students receiving free or reduced-price school meals (socio-economically disadvantaged). These two categories, English Learner students and socio-economically disadvantaged students are of great significance in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). A school district's student enrollment in these two categories determines LCFF supplemental and concentration grant funding, which is

additional funding for the purpose of addressing educational equity. Table 1 shows the student demographic comparison and similarity of ABC County with California.

Table 1

California and ABC County Student Enrollment Demographics, 2016-17

	African American %	Asian %	Hispanic or Latino %	White not Hispanic %	English Learners %	Free/Reduced- Price Meals %
ABC County	6.2	3.1	63.3	21.4	20.2	63.2
State	5.6	9.0	54.2	23.6	21.4	58.1

- Participants worked in a public school district in ABC County. Additionally, the school district met percentages equal to or above the county percentages for student enrollment demographics in two categories: English Learner students and students receiving free or reduced-price school meals. Per Table 2, there were twelve public school districts with student enrollment demographics that met the criteria (DataQuest, 2013). District J was the researcher's district of employment, and sampling was not included from District J to limit bias in the study.

Table 2

Student Enrollment Demographics by District in ABC County, 2016-17

School District	English Learners %	Free/Reduced Price Meals %
District A	37.2	76.3
District B	49.9	92.9
District C	21.1	63.2
District D	24.0	66.7
District E	32.7	75.0
District F	21.5	81.7
District G	22.5	68.1
District H	33.3	83.4
District I	49.7	84.4
District J	21.6	72.6
District K	21.6	77.1
District L	20.6	81.9
ABC County	20.2	63.2

3. The participants were employed in public school districts that cited and funded instructional coaching positions or like-kind positions in the 2017-18 LCAP of each respective district. As noted in Table 3, two districts did not have instructional coaching noted in the 2017-18 LCAPs and were excluded from the criteria, leaving nine school districts in the sampling criteria.

Table 3

School District List: Instructional Coaching in 2017-18 LCAP

School District	Instructional Coaching in LCAP
District A	Yes
District B	Yes
District C	No
District D	Yes
District E	Yes
District F	Yes
District G	Yes
District H	Yes
District I	No
District K	Yes
District L	Yes

4. Research participants self-identified as employed as part-time or full-time teachers serving in an instructional coaching position or like-kind position.
5. Research participants self-identified as having served more than one year in an instructional coaching or like-kind position.
6. Research participants self-identified as instructional coaches of teachers who teach any grade in the kindergarten through grade twelve span of grades.
7. Research participants self-identified as instructional coaches in the following content areas: English language arts, English language development, mathematics, social studies/history, science, and/or instructional technology.

Participants

A list of potential participant email addresses was compiled from the public-access

school district websites of the nine included school districts. The researcher emailed potential participants a description of the study, a letter of consent for research participation, and a digital demographic questionnaire with use of Qualtrics during January 2020. The demographic questionnaire provided the researcher with information about potential participants, and twenty met the criteria to be interviewed. A summary of participant demographic information is found in Table 4 and the narrative that follows.

Table 4

Participants' Demographic Information

Participant/ Pseudonym	Degree(s)	Credential(s)	Years of Teaching Service Prior to Coaching	Years of Service as Instructional Coach
A1: Addison	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	12	6
A2: Bennie	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	14	7
A3: Chris	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	12	6
A4: Danny	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	16	5
A5: Erin	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	10	4
A6: Finn	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	9	9
A7: Gene	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub. Admin.	18	3
A8: Hunter	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	13	21
A9: Indy	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	9	7
A10: Jaden	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	7	7
A11: Kacy	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	27	6

A12: Lee	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	9	5.5
A13: Marin	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	17	4
A14: Nel	Bachelor's Master's	Single Sub.	8	11
A15: Olly	Bachelor's	Multiple Sub.	13	7
A16: Paris	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Single Sub.	24	4
A17: Quinn	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	7	4
A18: Reagan	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub.	25	5
A19: Shae	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	16.5	5
A20: Taylor	Bachelor's Master's	Multiple Sub. Admin.	20	6

All participants in the study identified as being in a full-time position of support for teachers. Eleven identified with job titles of instructional coaches and nine identified with job titles of teachers on special assignment (TOSA) focused on the professional development of teaching staff. All participants in the study had earned a bachelor's degree, and all but one had a master's degree. The average number years of teaching experience prior to becoming an instructional coach or TOSA was fourteen, and the average number of years with instructional coaching experience was six and one-half. Fifteen participants held a multiple subject teaching credential, six held a single subject teaching credential, and seven held an administrative services credential.

In terms of leadership experience prior to becoming an instructional coach or TOSA, all participants held school site or district leadership positions. The range of leadership experiences

was two to seven, with an average amount of five leadership experiences across all participants. In relation to their leadership experiences, all participants reported having familiarity with their school district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Eight participants reported they were "very familiar" with it and twelve participants reported they were "mostly familiar" with the LCAP. Additionally, eighteen participants reported having knowledge of how their instructional coach or TOSA positions were funded and were able to identify the funding source(s). Only two participants reported they did not know how their positions were funded.

Participants reported the content areas and grade level spans in which they supported teachers. Eighteen participants were supporting teachers across multiple content areas, and two participants were supporting teachers in only one content area. On average, participants were supporting teachers across five content areas. In addition to content area support, participants reported the grade level spans in which they supported teachers. Most participants supported teachers who taught the elementary grade levels, grades kindergarten through six. There were also participants who supported teachers of middle school and high school grade levels, grades seven through twelve.

Data Collection

The instrumentation was a semi-structured interview protocol designed based on themes from the review of the literature. It contained five broad questions, as well as follow-up probing questions. Interviews were conducted in early 2020. The researcher used a multi-step process to analyze the data (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher first organized the data for analysis by transcribing the interviews and then conducted an initial reading of the transcripts to get an overview of the data. Then a second reading was conducted for significant statements (Creswell, 2014) and open coding was

employed. The Atlas.ti program was used for coding and classification of data. The coded data was organized into categories with consideration of the themes that emerged in the literature review and the corresponding interview questions. The researcher then interpreted and described the data.

Findings

The findings are grouped into five thematic categories that emerged from the data that demonstrated instructional coaches' perceptions of purpose, practices, and supports in coaching for educational equity. They span across the research questions to capture the essence of the work and leadership practices of instructional coaches. The order of the themes as 1 through 5 corresponds with the order of the research questions.

Theme 1: Instructional Coaches are Agents of Change for the Sake of Students

Instructional coaches recognize their service is to teachers, but they know the end result of that service is to improve outcomes for students. Coaches have a global perspective about the work of a school district. They have knowledge of district and school plans, goals, and initiatives, and they see their work as critical to the implementation of those plans, and ultimately critical to student achievement. Thus, they know schools must ensure all students have access to high-quality learning environments and that no student should have their learning needs left unmet. To achieve change, they work tirelessly to figure out the differentiated needs of teaching staff and determine the most effective methods for supporting each and every teacher as an individual.

Educational equity matters to coaches, for they want no student to have limited opportunities or outcomes, particularly students from historically underserved groups. There were high numbers of coded responses regarding implementing school and district initiatives as

well as the purpose of the work to increase student achievement and improve educational equity for students. Ultimately, instructional coaches recognize the moral purpose of their work.

Participant Danny summed up the core purpose of instructional coach work, “It is to ensure our teachers are being the best that they can be so that our kids are getting the best that they can get.”

Theme 2: Instructional Coaches Do Much More than Coach

Instructional coaches are “go-to” staff members by teachers and administrators. They often serve their districts and school sites in a quasi-administrative role. Even if their job description mainly describes the basic tasks of an instructional coach, most coaches spend the bulk of their time in “other duties as assigned.” Those duties keep the district and/or school site progressing, as coaches fill the gaps in work that would potentially go left undone if not for the coach.

They are also overwhelmingly the critical personnel in the roll-out of new district and school initiatives, particularly as the folks who prepare for and train the staff about the new initiative. Most engage in these tasks with a reliable presence for getting the job done. They are dependable, hard workers who see the value of doing the “other duties as assigned” in service to teachers and ultimately as a benefit to students. There were high numbers of coded responses for engaging in helpful tasks for staff as a leadership practice. Participant Finn captured it in one statement, “Coaching teachers is always a priority, but it almost gets secondary sometimes with all the other hats.”

Theme 3: Instructional Coaches Lead with Influence by Leveraging Relationships

Instructional coaches come to the work of coaching with teacher leadership experience, as former department or grade level chairs, union leaders, and school and district committee members. They also enter instructional coaching with vast teaching experience over many years,

grade levels, and subjects taught. Thus, they enter coaching as established teacher leaders who can often get instant credibility from their teacher peers due to their experience and knowledge. But instructional coaches know that instant credibility only goes so far. They know they must immediately develop and constantly maintain positive, trusting relationships with teachers. They recognize that such relationships are foundational to their leadership success.

Instructional coaches are extremely perceptive and constantly reflective about their peer relationships and leadership work. They know they cannot tell people what to do and expect results. Rather, they rely on influence as their main leadership method. To make change, they know that an authoritarian approach will not work with their peers. So, they use their influence to make change. There were high numbers of coded responses about developing teacher beliefs and attitudes as a main task of coaching. Further, there were high numbers of responses about use of relationship development and influence as leadership methods. Participant Marin described the coach's use of influence, "We say we don't have power, but we have influence."

Theme 4: Instructional Coaches Attend to Perception and Politics Constantly

Instructional coaches are a minority group amongst their peers, because they are not assigned to a classroom and roster of students as are most teachers. Teachers are often unaware of the full extent of instructional coaching work. This creates issues of perception around, "What do coaches do?" and "How do they spend their time?" Another perception issue is that instructional coaches are often perceived as administrators, and that is a challenge for them because it can create a division between teachers and coaches. There were high numbers of coded responses about this. This is best summed up by Participant Lee, "I think that people when they first meet you, when they first hear about it, they think you're an administrator."

Instructional coaches are well aware of these perceptions, and they are mindful to attend

to the perception of their peers at all times. They are keen on being visible on their campuses, being helpful to everyone at all times, and maintaining positive relationships. They know they cannot spend too much time in their offices, or else they run the risk of criticism from peers and thus, losing credibility and influence. Losing credibility and influence would most likely limit their ability to make change with teachers which can ultimately have a negative impact on student achievement outcomes. Overall, there were high numbers of coded responses about perception, politics, and being viewed as administrators.

Theme 5: Instructional Coaches Need Support from Their Administrators

Participants described the importance of administrative support across multiple interview questions. In terms of their times and tasks, coaches need administrators to understand the role of the coach. They also need collaborative relationships with their administrators to effectively implement district and school initiatives. The coaches recognize they are not administrators and cannot lead change in the same way as an administrator due to not having authority in their role as coaches. Thus, the collaborative relationships with administrators are critical. Participant Olly explained effective administrator support, "...I'm fortunate enough to work with a principal...we communicate regularly so that I know what it is that she would like for me to do to make that vision real for the teachers at that site and their students."

Further, lack of administrative support is a major challenge in coaches' work, which received a high number of coded responses as a work challenge. Coaches are grateful when they receive administrative support and additionally seek it as their main resource needed for ongoing success in the coaching role, as demonstrated with a high number of participant responses. Administrators are often the people arranging the system elements in which coaches can successfully work, such as their tasks, time, professional development, meetings, and

mentorship.

Summary

The five themes that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data effectively answered the study's research questions. How did instructional coaches describe their perceptions of the purpose of their work? Instructional coaches described the purpose of their work as being agents of change for the sake of students, and they all stated their work has moral purpose. How did instructional coaches describe the daily work they do, including the challenges they encounter? Instructional coaches shared they engage in common coaching tasks, but they also shared they do much more than coaching on a daily basis. How did instructional coaches describe the leadership practices they use? Instructional coaches described leading with influence by leveraging relationships, but they also described the need to attend to perception and politics constantly. How did instructional coaches describe the supports they have received, if any, or need to be leaders of change? Coaches described many supports they have received and need, and overall, that translated into needing collaborative support from their administrators.

Discussion and Recommendations

The findings indicate instructional coaches are focused on the achievement of all students, and they know their best way to positively impact students is through developing teacher efficacy. Further, the findings show instructional coaches are keenly aware they cannot change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices without developing and maintaining positive relationships with teachers. Thus, they constantly leverage their relationships to make meaningful change for students. Further, participants know their district and school goals and initiatives, and they overwhelmingly support them for the benefit of students. Thus, they expressed recognition of the daily political aspects of their work to maintain

positive relationships with teachers, collaborate with administrators, and be champions for student success. The findings align with the literature in multiple areas, yet the findings also contradict the literature in some areas and amplify knowledge of the complex work of instructional coach leadership.

Educational Equity Leaders

In terms of the relation to the themes identified in the literature about instructional coaching, this study aligned with the notion that coaches are well-positioned to be school system leaders. Further, it amplified the idea that coaches can be linchpins of change, because it showed they are quite knowledgeable about school and district reforms, goals, and actions for improving student achievement. This study added to the literature by showing that instructional coaches are focused on improving outcomes for students in all they do, particularly the students who struggle or could easily be left behind, such as historically underserved groups of students. Instructional coaches are educational equity leaders.

Strategic Investment in Relationships

This study aligned with the literature in terms of coaches' time being filled with many roles beyond coaching and professional development. They wear many hats of responsibility engaging in "other duties as assigned." However, this study deviated from the literature that non-coaching tasks are wasted time. Rather, this study demonstrated that time doing those non-coaching tasks is time well spent, because coaches view that time as a political investment in building relationships with teachers. Instructional coaches strategically invest in relationships which they then leverage to make positive change in schools.

Influence is the Leadership Strategy

The importance of developing relationships between coaches and teachers is found in the

literature. However, the literature does not explore the concept of relationship building for the purpose of influential leadership. The results of this study amplify the literature on the importance of relationships between coaches and teachers. This study demonstrated that coaches are extremely perceptive and constantly reflective about their peer relationships and leadership work, and they rely on influence as their main leadership method. They leverage their relationships with teachers and use influence to make change. As previously described, participants shared they invest a lot of time supporting teachers with various tasks to ensure teachers' needs are met.

Matter of Fact About Politics

This study redefined the concept of tension in the instructional coaching role. The literature notes coaches as having tension when implementing new initiatives. The tension stems from teacher resistance to change putting a strain on their relationships with teachers. This study demonstrated that coaches understand tension is apart of the process of making change; it is a function of effective change leadership and there is no growth without productive struggle. Thus, this study demonstrated that coaches understand leading change can and does create tension, and they are matter of fact about the constant of tension and politics in their work.

Conceptual Framework for Instructional Coach Leadership

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Fullan's (2001) *Framework for Leadership in a Culture of Change* applied to the work of instructional coaching. Coaches are leaders per the key leadership capacities outlined by Fullan. They are teacher leaders with a global perspective about the educational equity initiatives of their districts and schools. As coaches work to support teachers and students at their schools, they continually grow their leadership skills. They also constantly leverage relationships and influence change by developing

teacher beliefs, content, pedagogy, and assessment practices. They know their work has moral purpose and can positively impact students by creating more equitable learning environments and performance outcomes.

Implications

Per the findings of this study, the researcher suggests considerations for instructional coaches, school and district administrators, as well as policymakers. Invest in instructional coaching positions in a district if there are currently no instructional coaching positions. Tap into instructional coaching staff as the talent pool for future school administrator positions because instructional coaches grow many instructional leadership skills in their coaching role. Ultimately, they are equity leaders who are focused on student achievement for all learners and have the skills and attitudes foundational to the work of a school administrator. They are more well prepared than most teachers who would be coming directly out of a classroom assignment into a school administration work assignment.

Offer professional development and ongoing support for coaches. For first-year instructional coaches focus their professional development on understanding district and school plans for student achievement, leadership and change process methods, and instructional coaching methods. Offer ongoing professional development for established instructional coaches that provides mentoring and feedback, scheduled collaboration time with coaching peers, and personalized professional learning experiences. For ongoing coach support, create structures for instructional coach-administrator collaboration through regularly scheduled meetings between instructional coaches and school administrators, addition of instructional coaches to the school leadership team, and addition of instructional coaches to district committees.

Recommendations for Further Study

Exploring regional differences regarding educational equity leadership is an area of possible further study. This study was conducted in California, which is a progressive state. The current school funding structure with the LCFF and the associated LCAP are elements of an equity-focused public education system. They were intentionally created for the purpose of creating equity across the State's school districts in providing for the needs and education of socio-economically disadvantaged students, English learner students, and foster youth. Not all fifty states of the United States of America may be as progressive or as equity-focused as California and thus, may not have systems in place that are similar to LCFF and LCAP. Thus, the work of instructional coaches could vary by state, and educational equity leadership could be limited for coaches in some regions. Such further study may identify educational equity leadership as a needed area of professional development for coaches.

Final Thoughts

Leadership for educational equity is the work of public education, and it is complex work. It is important to have talented and committed instructional leaders who can effectively engage in the work. At the time this article is being written, the world has been struck by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools across the globe are currently engaging in virtual teaching and learning, and students are not coming to school campuses daily. Millions of Americans are out of work due to the pandemic's impact on businesses. Economic hardship has come to many, and many students are suffering from learning loss and mental health issues because school campuses are closed. All previous notions of public schools may be forever altered. "School" is currently being reinvented and will continue to transform.

With economic hardship comes slashes to public school budgets. With budget cuts come position cuts. People will lose their jobs. This is the current risk and reality for the future of

instructional coaching positions. So, at this time in history, instructional coaching may diminish after having had a decade of vast expansion. However, great school leaders are needed now more than ever. With vast inequities in students' home lives and inequities in access to quality education being exposed due to the pandemic, public schools must confront educational equity. Equity leaders are needed. Instructional coaches are prepared to be those leaders.

Appendix

Interview Instrument

Interview Question 1: Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.

Follow-up Questions:

- 1a. How have your job roles and tasks been explained to you?
- 1b. How does your actual daily work align with the roles and tasks as they were explained to you? Explain.
- 1c. Are there any extra job roles or tasks you put upon yourself? Explain.
- 1d. Do you focus in your work on changing teacher beliefs and attitudes, and if so, what methods or approach do you typically use?

Interview Question 2: Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you have received, if any, in your role as an instructional coach.

Follow-up Questions:

- 2a. What topics have you been offered for professional learning on instructional coaching?
- 2b. How has the professional learning been provided to you (e.g. professional reading, conferences, consultants, mentoring)?
- 2c. Have you been offered ongoing support? If so, what does that look like (from whom, how often, what topics, etc.)?

Interview Question 3: Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you need to continue your work as an instructional coach.

Follow-up Questions:

- 3a. Describe the specific topics you would like to receive in future professional development for your instructional coaching role.
- 3b. Describe how you would like to receive that professional learning (e.g. conferences, consultants, mentoring, etc.).
- 3c. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as instructional coach.

Interview Question 4: Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.

Follow-up Questions:

- 4a. How comfortable are you with leadership work in your role as instructional coach? Explain.
- 4b. Was your work as an instructional coach described to you as a leadership role? If so, how was it messaged to you?
- 4c. Were you prepared for a role as a leader? If so, how (e.g. professional development, other leadership roles, etc.)?
- 4d. How do you develop and maintain relationships with teachers in your role as a

leader?

4e. How have you experienced tension, if at all, in your role as a leader?

4f. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as a leader.

Interview Question 5: Describe the purpose of your work as an instructional coach.

Follow-up Questions:

5a. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to your district's goals?

5b. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to educational equity?

5c. How does your role as an instructional coach fit with your own beliefs or goals for educational equity?

5d. Do you believe your work as an instructional coach has moral purpose, meaning does your work improve student outcomes and educational equity? Explain.

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APPENDIX B

CGU Agreement to Participate

~Agreement to participate in a phenomenological study about instructional coach leadership perceptions, practices, and supports in K-12 public schools~

You are invited to participate in a research project. While volunteering may not benefit you directly, you will be helping the investigator to inform instructional coaching practices in public K-12 schools. If you decide to volunteer, you will be:

- 1) Responding to a questionnaire, which will take about ten minutes of your time, and
 - 2) Participating in a face-to-face interview, which will take thirty to sixty minutes of your time.
- Volunteering for this study does not involve risk beyond what a typical person would experience on an ordinary day. Since your involvement is entirely voluntary, you may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP. This research project is led by Michelle Wise, a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University, who is being supervised by Dr. DeLacy Ganley, professor of education.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this study is to describe the perceived experiences of instructional coaches, including their leadership roles and tasks, the supports they need, and the challenges they face so their leadership work can be planned for and well implemented to improve educational equity.

ELIGIBILITY. To be in this study, you must be a certificated employee in a public school district in Riverside County who: 1) currently serves in an instructional coaching role, 2) has been serving in the instructional coaching role for more than one year, and 3) coaches teachers in one or more of the following content areas: English language arts, English language development, mathematics, social studies/history, or science.

PARTICIPATION. During the study, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire asking about your education and work experience that will take about ten minutes, followed by possible participation in a face-to-face interview of approximately thirty to sixty minutes.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION. The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal. The risks to you are your personal time and possible fatigue from answering interview questions. Participants' names will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used to protect their confidentiality. Additionally, pseudonyms will be assigned to school district names. The interviewees will be able to stop the interview at any time and will be informed of their right to do so before an interview begins. The researcher will create a comfortable and safe environment for each interviewee. Further, the researcher will not be employed in the same school district as the participants, and thus, will have no supervisory or evaluative relationship with the participants.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION. I do not expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit the field of study and practice about instructional coaching models and practices in public K-12 school.

COMPENSATION. For taking part in the online survey, you will be given a \$5 Starbucks gift card (eGift card delivered via email) following survey completion. For participation in the interview, you will be given a \$50 Amazon gift card at the end of the interview.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time without it being held against you. You may also refuse to answer any particular question for any reason. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU, and it will not be mentioned to your employer.

CONFIDENTIALITY. Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data collected with other researchers but will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, participants' names will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used to protect your confidentiality. Also, pseudonyms will be assigned to school district names. Each interview will be audio-recorded with a digital recorder device and saved as a digital file on a password protected computer. A backup copy of the digital interviews will be saved on a flash-drive. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim. The researcher will take notes during the interviews, and the researcher will bracket observations of non-verbal communication during the interview. All interview notes and digital files will be stored in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the notes and digital files.

FURTHER INFORMATION. If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me at michelle.wise@cgu.edu or 951-318-1197. You may also contact my faculty advisor at delacy.ganley@cgu.edu.

The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project. You may contact the CGU Board with any questions or issues at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it. You may print and keep a copy of this consent form.

CONSENT. Checking the box below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

APPENDIX C

Email Invitation for Research Participation

Dear Instructional Coach,

As a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University in the School of Education Urban Leadership Program, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a PhD. I will be completing the research study under the supervision of Dr. DeLacy Ganley.

I am requesting your support in completing my dissertation research. The title of my study is *Instructional Coach Leadership: Perceptions of Purpose, Practices, and Supports in Coaching for Educational Equity*. The purpose of my qualitative study is to better understand the perceived experiences of instructional coaches. The study will ask instructional coaches their perceptions of the purpose of their work, the daily work they do, the leadership practices they use, in what roles they serve, and the challenges they face. Further, they will be asked about the support and professional learning opportunities they have received and feel they need to prepare them to lead district equity reform initiatives. All information will be treated with confidentiality.

For this study you will be asked to answer a short demographic questionnaire of approximately 10 minutes. In honor of your time, you will be given a \$5 Starbucks gift card (eGift card delivered via email) upon survey completion. Further, some survey participants will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. The interview consists of five open-ended questions during a one-on-one interview of thirty to sixty minutes in length. This interview will be done in person (or by phone, if needed) outside of your contractual workday at a time and location convenient for you. I will audio-record the interview, but at any point you may ask me to turn off the recording or opt out of answering a question. You may also stop the interview at any time. The audio-file, transcripts, and interview notes will be kept in a locked and secure file cabinet, only accessible by me. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. Your school district name will also be assigned a pseudonym. As a token of my appreciation for your time, you will be given a \$50 Amazon gift card. The risks to you are minimal.

My research review has found that instructional coaches can make a difference in equitable outcomes for students. My goal is to add to the body of research about instructional coaches as leaders for educational equity to inform the work we all do as public educators and leaders. I currently work in a public school district as an Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, and my work includes the implementation and oversight of an instructional coaching department. I will be happy to share the summary of my findings with you.

Your participation is voluntary. Your job status will not be impacted by refusal to participate in the study, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time. All collected data will be accessible to my dissertation committee. No identifying names of people, schools, or districts will be used in my dissertation or any future publications.

To participate in the study, please click this [link](#). A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after clicking on the link. Please click on the box at the end of the informed consent document to indicate you have read it and would like to take part in the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at michelle.wise@cgu.edu. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely, Michelle Wise, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

Follow-up Email Invitation for Research Participation

Dear Instructional Coach,

As a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University in the School of Education Urban Leadership Program, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a PhD. I will be completing the research study under the supervision of Dr. DeLacy Ganley. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to please consider participation in the study.

I am requesting your support in completing my dissertation research. The title of my study is *Instructional Coach Leadership: Perceptions of Purpose, Practices, and Supports in Coaching for Educational Equity*. The purpose of my qualitative study is to better understand the perceived experiences of instructional coaches. The study will ask instructional coaches their perceptions of the purpose of their work, the daily work they do, the leadership practices they use, in what roles they serve, and the challenges they face. Further, they will be asked about the support and professional learning opportunities they have received and feel they need to prepare them to lead district equity reform initiatives. All information will be treated with confidentiality.

For this study you will be asked to answer a short demographic questionnaire of approximately 10 minutes. In honor of your time, you will be given a \$5 Starbucks gift card (eGift card delivered via email) upon survey completion. Further, some survey participants will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. The interview consists of five open-ended questions during a one-on-one interview of thirty to sixty minutes in length. This interview will be done in person (or by phone, if needed) outside of your contractual workday at a time and location convenient for you. I will audio-record the interview, but at any point you may ask me to turn off the recording or opt out of answering a question. You may also stop the interview at any time. The audio-file, transcripts, and interview notes will be kept in a locked and secure file cabinet, only accessible by me. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. Your school district name will also be assigned a pseudonym. As a token of my appreciation for your time, you will be given a \$50 Amazon gift card. The risks to you are minimal.

Your participation is voluntary. Your job status will not be impacted by refusal to participate in the study, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time. All collected data will be accessible to my dissertation committee. No identifying names of people, schools, or districts will be used in my dissertation or any future publications.

To participate in the study, please click this [link](#). A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after clicking on the link. Please click on the box at the end of the informed consent document to indicate you have read it and would like to take part in the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at michelle.wise@cgu.edu. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wise, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E

Demographic Questionnaire (Qualtrics)

1. How do you classify your position in your school district, that is, the activity at which you spend most of your time during this school year?

- ☐ Full-time instructional coach
- ☐ Part-time instructional coach
- ☐ Full-time teacher on special assignment (TOSA), including professional development specialist
- ☐ Part-time teacher on special assignment (TOSA), including professional development specialist
- ☐ None of the above

2. Excluding time spent on maternity/paternity leave, medical leave, or sabbatical, how many school years did you work as an elementary- or secondary- teacher in public, public charter, or private schools prior to becoming an instructional coach or TOSA? School years

3. Excluding time spent on maternity/paternity leave, medical leave, or sabbatical, how many school years have you worked as an instructional coach or TOSA in public, public charter, or private schools? School years

4. Excluding time spent on maternity/paternity leave, medical leave, or sabbatical, how many school years have you worked in your current position as an instructional coach or TOSA in a public school district? School years

5. What degrees do you hold? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Educational specialist or professional degree/certificate
- ☐ Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., D.D.S.)
- ☐ None of the above

6. What credentials do you hold? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ General Education Multiple Subject Teaching Credential
- ☐ General Education Single Subject Teaching Credential
- ☐ Special Education Teaching Credential
- ☐ Career Technical Education Credential
- ☐ Adult Education Teaching Credential
- ☐ Administrative Services Credential
- ☐ Pupil Personnel Services Credential
- ☐ Speech Services Credential
- ☐ School Nurse Services Credential
- ☐ Teacher Librarian Services Credential
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ None of the above

7. What authorizations do you hold? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development Certificate/English Learner Authorization
- ☐ Bilingual Authorization
- ☐ Certificate of Completion of Staff Development
- ☐ Specialist Instruction
- ☐ Reading and Literacy Added Authorization
- ☐ Reading and Literacy Leadership Specialist Credential
- ☐ Mathematics Instructional Leadership Specialist Credential and Mathematics Instructional Added Authorization
- ☐ Added Authorization in Special Education
- ☐ Adapted Physical Education
- ☐ Resource Specialist Added Authorization
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None of the above

8. Prior to becoming an instructional coach, what type of teacher leader roles/experiences, if any, did you have?

- ☐ Master teacher for a student teacher
- ☐ Department chairperson
- ☐ Union leader
- ☐ Grade level leader
- ☐ Site Leadership Team member
- ☐ District committee
- ☐ New teacher induction coach/mentor
- ☐ School Site Council member
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ None of the above

9. In what grade level(s) do you support teachers as an instructional coach or TOSA? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ K-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ K-5 or K-6
- ☐ 6-8 or 7-8
- ☐ 9-12
- ☐ Other: _____

10. In what content area(s) do you support teachers as an instructional coach or TOSA? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ English-Language Arts (ELA)
- ☐ English Language Development (ELD)
- ☐ Math
- ☐ Social Studies/History

___ Science
___ Instructional Technology
___ Other: _____

11. On average, what percentage of your weekly contractual time is spent doing the following coaching activities (please ensure a total of 100%)?

Professional development facilitation _____ %
Preparation of professional development presentations and/or materials _____ %
Professional development activities for yourself _____ %
Collaboration with other instructional coaches _____ %
Administrative and/or paperwork activities _____ %
Teacher substitute coverage _____ %
Clerical substitute coverage _____ %
Administrator substitute coverage _____ %
Other _____ %

12. On average, what percentage of an instructional coaching or professional development session with a teacher or multiple teachers is focused on the following topics (please ensure a total of 100%):

Developing teacher beliefs about student learning _____ %
Developing teacher capacity in assessment of student learning _____ %
Developing teacher content knowledge _____ %
Developing teacher pedagogical/instructional practices _____ %
Other _____ %

13. Please rank in order of importance (with 1 being the most important and 4 the least important) the most important outcome of your work as an instructional coach or TOSA:

___ Build positive relationships with teachers
___ Close achievement gaps for historically underserved student populations
___ Develop teacher beliefs and skills
___ Improve student achievement

14. How familiar are you with the goals of your district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)?

___ 1 Very familiar
___ 2 Mostly familiar
___ 3 Somewhat familiar
___ 4 Not at all familiar

15. Do you know how your instructional coach or TOSA position is funded?

___ No
___ Yes

If yes, please choose all funding sources that apply:

___ Local Control Funding Formula Supplemental and Concentration Grant
___ Federal Funding (Title I, Title II, Title III, or Title IV)
___ General Fund

___ Other: _____

16. Would you like to receive a copy of the findings from this study? ___ Yes ___ No

17. Do you have any questions about the study? ___ Yes ___ No

Question(s): _____

18. Best days, times, location, and contact number for meeting to completing the interview:

Mark the best days and times by placing "X" in the cell for each of your available day/times.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Location(s): _____

Cell phone number: _____ Preferred email address: _____

APPENDIX F

Interview Instrument

Main Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
1. Describe the roles and tasks of your work as an instructional coach, including any challenges.	<p>1a. How have your job roles and tasks been explained to you?</p> <p>1b. How does your actual daily work align with the roles and tasks as they were explained to you? Explain.</p> <p>1c. Are there any extra job roles or tasks you put upon yourself? Explain.</p> <p>1d. Do you focus in your work on changing teacher beliefs and attitudes, and if so, what methods or approach do you typically use?</p>	

Interview Instrument continued.

Main Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
<p>2. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you have received, if any, in your role as an instructional coach.</p>	<p>2a. What topics have you been offered for professional learning on instructional coaching?</p> <p>2b. How has the professional learning been provided to you (e.g. professional reading, conferences, consultants, mentoring)?</p> <p>2c. Have you been offered ongoing support? If so, what does that look like (from whom, how often, what topics, etc.)?</p>	

Interview Instrument continued.

Main Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
3. Describe the professional learning and ongoing support you need to continue your work as an instructional coach.	<p>3a. Describe the specific topics you would like to receive in future professional development for your instructional coaching role.</p> <p>3b. Describe how you would like to receive that professional learning (e.g. conferences, consultants, mentoring, etc.).</p> <p>3c. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as instructional coach.</p>	

Interview Instrument continued.

Main Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
4. Describe the leadership practices you use in your work as an instructional coach.	<p>4a. How comfortable are you with leadership work in your role as instructional coach? Explain.</p> <p>4b. Was your work as an instructional coach described to you as a leadership role? If so, how was it messaged to you?</p> <p>4c. Were you prepared for a role as a leader? If so, how (e.g. professional development, other leadership roles, etc.)?</p> <p>4d. How do you develop and maintain relationships with teachers in your role as a leader?</p> <p>4e. How have you experienced tension, if at all, in your role as a leader?</p> <p>4f. Describe the ongoing support you would like to receive to be successful in your role as a leader.</p>	

Interview Instrument continued.

Main Questions	Probing Questions	Notes
5. Describe the purpose of your work as an instructional coach.	<p>5a. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to your district's goals?</p> <p>5b. How does what you have been asked to do as an instructional coach relate to educational equity?</p> <p>5c. How does your role as an instructional coach fit with your own beliefs or goals for educational equity?</p> <p>5d. Do you believe your work as an instructional coach has moral purpose, meaning does your work improve student outcomes and educational equity? Explain.</p>	

APPENDIX G

IRB Approval

Dear Michelle Wise,

Thank you for submitting your research protocol to the IRB at Claremont Graduate University for review. On 05/09/2019, based on the information provided for Protocol #3425, we have certified it as *exempt from IRB supervision* under CGU policy and federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Exempt status means that so long as the study does not vary significantly from the description you have given us, further review in the form of filing annual Renewal or project Closure forms is not necessary. You may specify in relevant study documents, such as consent forms, that CGU human subjects protection staff members have reviewed the study and determined it to be exempt from IRB supervision. The IRB does not "approve" (or disapprove) studies that are exempt, so kindly avoid use of this verb.

Please note carefully that maintaining exempt status requires that (a) the risks of the study *remain minimal*, that is, as described in the application; (b) that *anonymity or confidentiality* of participants, or *protection* of participants against any higher level of risk due to the internal knowledge or disclosure of identity by the researcher, is maintained as described in the application; (c) that *no deception* is introduced, such as reducing the accuracy or specificity of information about the research protocol that is given to prospective participants; (d) the research *purpose, sponsor, and recruited study population* remain as described; and (e) the principal investigator (PI) continues and is not replaced.

Changes in *any such features* of the study as described may affect one or more of the conditions of exemption and would very likely warrant a reclassification of the research protocol from exempt status and require additional IRB review. If any such changes are contemplated, please notify the IRB as soon as possible and before the study is begun or changes are implemented. If any events occur during the course of research, such as unexpected adverse consequences to participants, that call into question the features that permitted a determination of exempt status, you must notify the IRB as soon as possible.

Please note that a series of suggestions may also be attached to this email. These are suggestions to develop or improve your research protocol. These suggestions are highly recommended but not required. You do not need to send anything back to the IRB.

If Applicable: Most listservs, websites, and bulletin boards have policies regulating the types of advertisements or solicitations that may be posted, including from whom prior approval must be obtained. Many institutions and even classroom instructors have policies regarding who can solicit potential research participants from among their students, employees, etc., what information must be included in solicitations, and how recruitment notices are distributed or posted. You should familiarize yourself with the policies and approval procedures required of you to recruit for or conduct your study by listservs, websites, institutions, and/or instructors. Approval or exemption by the CGU IRB does not substitute for these approvals or release you from assuring that you have gained appropriate approvals before advertising or conducting your study in such venues.

The IRB may be reached at (909) 607-9406 or via email to irb@cgu.edu. KGI personnel with questions about their exempt status should contact KGI's Office of Research and Sponsored Projects at (909) 607-9313 or irb@kgi.edu. The IRB wishes you well in the conduct of your research project.

Sincerely,
Andrew Conway,
IRB Chair
andrew.conway@cgu.edu

James Griffith,
IRB Manager
james.griffith2@cgu.edu

150 East Tenth Street • Claremont, California 91711-6160
Tel: 909.607.9406

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