

THE IMPACT OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES USING
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITH OVERSEAS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Whitney Tucker

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development (PD) meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. Progressivism drives the research as it pertains to actively engaging learners through ownership and the growth of their individual knowledge. The central research question examined intended to gather the lived experiences of instructional coaches who use engagement strategies in coaching sessions in an overseas Department of Defense community. Voluntary participants live in an overseas Department of Defense-connected community. The participants are of diverse ethnicities with numerous personal and professional backgrounds. Interviews were conducted, focus groups held, and journals were collected to document instructional leaders' delivery of professional development and the effectiveness of information delivered to educators on a routine basis. Data were analyzed using procedures laid out by Moustakas' (1994) seven step plan to determine findings, and limitations, and identify gaps to be recommended for future research. Five major themes were identified: (a) questioning techniques, (b) differentiation, (c) relationships, (d) goals and objectives, and (e) professional learning. The analysis of the data aligned with the research. The determined results state coaches should leverage open-ended questions to allow coachees to reach their own conclusions when possible. In addition, based on the collected data, providing specific guidance through instructional inquiry should be utilized in specific instances when working with time sensitive situations.

Keywords: active learner engagement (ALE), andragogy, coaching, collaboration, differentiation, learner-centric environment

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, from whom all good things flow!
Through my faith and belief in You, I was able to persevere to completion.

To my wonderful husband, Ben. You not only supported me on this journey but walked beside me, holding me up when I needed it most. You sacrificed time and resources as I spent years working towards this goal. You ensured our family unit remained strong and confidently filled every gap as I had to shift my focus. I could not have done this without your support. You are my everything.

I dedicate this work to my children, Payton and Brock. These last four years have not been easy on you. I have missed important life events, but you both were understanding each step of the way. You allowed me space and time to study, write, edit, and grow. I continue to try to model for you the importance of determination and hard work. I love you beyond measure.

Finally, a special thanks for the continual guidance of my parents, Karen and Terry. Throughout my life, you always encouraged me to pursue my dreams. You provided me with an unshakable foundation of knowledge, confidence, and support. Thank you for always being there to proofread, ask questions, and make suggestions to help pull the best out of me. Growing up, I had huge shoes to fill walking in your footsteps. I hope I have made you proud.

To all of you, with all your support, I never lost sight of my goal. I could not have done this without you.

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List of Abbreviations

Active Learner Engagement (ALE)
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)
Instructional Specialists (ISs)
Knowledge in Action (KIA)
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
Professional Development (PD)
Video Conferencing (VTC)
Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

School transformation is possible when intentionally planning professional development (PD) strategies, such as coaching, to shift the current school culture and increase student engagement (Aguilar, 2013; Fountas & Pinnell, 2021). Convincing instructional leaders of the purpose and need for a coach is critical in the process of engaging new learning strategies for adult learners. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development (PD) meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. Through examining Dewey's concept of progressivism as a leverage point for the adult learning theory of andragogy, a comprehensive understanding is developed. Historical background in various settings, including social and professional dynamics, is examined. An overview of the theoretical, practical, and empirical information is examined before concluding with the alignment of the research study focusing on the lived experiences of instructional coaches who use learner-centric strategies in coaching sessions in an overseas Department of Defense community. Finally, definitions are provided for concepts necessary to grasp the foundation of the research.

Background

At the turn of the 20th century, John Dewey began a philosophical shift to provide learners with ownership of their education through teacher-centric delivery (Gutek, 2011). Piaget and Montessori supported Dewey's progressivist theory by leveraging student-centric learning implementation (Gutek, 2011). Students would not be viewed as empty buckets ready to be filled; rather, learners expect to engage with content, development, and collaboration to obtain knowledge. A century later, active learner engagement (ALE) has become a primary

instructional delivery method for classrooms across the United States (Buck Institute for Education, 2015).

Various groups of individuals are involved in this research. Instructional coaches are defined as trained professionals who mentor, support implementation expectations, and partner to support systemic reform (Aguilar, 2013). These individuals can be used as thought partners using questioning and intentionally working with various perspectives (Higgins & Parsons, 2021). Instructional leaders are defined as individuals assuming responsibility for educational objectives (Edmonds, 1979). The instructional leaders consist of administrators and subject matter experts responsible for content. Distinguishing between the different groups and having a clear understanding of each term is paramount. Instructional leaders are at a district or school-level and work with instructional coaches to improve their practice. The instructional leaders hold the position of superintendents, community superintendents, instructional specialists, principals, or assistant principals. The superintendent is the highest authority figure within the district. Community superintendents are assistants to the superintendent. Principals and assistant principals are building-level leaders who make decisions that impact all community stakeholders. Stakeholders are identified as all local community members affected by the educational environment, structure, or facilitation. PD is intentionally and routinely prepared and then delivered to all Department of Defense leaders to meet organizational objectives. Professional learning for the adult population is designed around the adult learning theory of andragogy and delivered through intentional planning, which leverages connections and application. A clear understanding of these different roles and the expectations brought to each role is essential to clarifying Dewey's work.

Historical Context

Preparing educators to provide quality instruction for students has been a topic of debate in the American school system (Abraham et al., 2019; Cunningham, 2019; Davidson et al., 2015; Heise, 2018). In 1965, federal officials began passing legislation that started influential decision-making of the public school sector to the government through legislation such as the Higher Education Legislation Act (Heise, 2018; Patton et al., 2019). This legislation allowed the government access to influence the educational sector beginning the pendulum swing of shifts impacting schools (Davidson et al., 2015; Patton et al., 2019). With the intent to help underrepresented populations obtain higher education opportunities, a shift toward more individualized instruction was set in motion. Davidson et al. (2015) notes the reauthorization of previous legislation in 2001 such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act from 1965 led to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) being enacted in 2002 as the largest expansion of federal power in the role of education. Davidson et al. (2015) goes on to exert the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, began to move the educational classroom from the masses to individual learners.

In 2002, the legislation of NCLB placed a greater emphasis on educational design (Davidson et al., 2015; Heise, 2018). NCLB stressed standardized testing (Heise, 2018). NCLB was created to increase student achievement, and it resulted in an environment where teachers were expected to increase scores annually or face severe consequences, with the possibility of being fired (Aguilar, 2013). The results of the legislation did not have the positive impact intended. Heise (2018) points out the pressure placed on schools and educators to increase individual student achievement rather than improving instructional practices. In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB returning much power to the state level (Davidson

et al., 2015). Learner-centric instruction was encouraged by this legislation.

For the first two centuries of the United States' existence, a top-down instructional design dominated classes before the emergence of progressivism (Mohamed, 2020). The model was designed like an assembly line, where citizens were mass-produced as they pushed through the educational system. A traditional teacher-centric led classroom compromised most schools around the nation, with a single lecture-based delivery provided for all students (Mohamed, 2020).

Leveraging personal interest became a topic of discussion through Dewey's progressive theory as it gained traction in the early 1900s (Duke et al., 2020). Dewey suggested advocating for increased student ownership of learning which led to discussions regarding the role of individuals within the classroom (Duncan & Redwine, 2019). Over the past century, an influx of progressive learning strategies has become more evident in classrooms across the nation (Mohamed, 2020).

Today, there is not a classroom across America that does not show both traditional and progressive strategies (Mohamed, 2020). The degree to which the collaborative technique is primarily used varies depending on the teacher (Stewart et al., 2020). Previous research suggests a specific number of multiple designs should be evident within a classroom to maximize learning opportunities for diverse students (Stewart et al., 2020; Xin et al., 2019); however, the specific breakdown has not been determined. Teacher discretion, in combination with their students, should choose the most effective means of education to meet the diverse nature of each learner that impacts all students within the education system (Mohamed, 2020).

Social Context

Education directly combines information delivery with human connections and critical

thinking skills to build individual relationships (Duke, 2020). Information retention is deemed imperative to society's future success (Heise, 2018; Hung et al., 2019). Due to the importance of taking the learned information and placing it into action for the betterment of society in conjunction with the strength of the collective population, continuing to work towards methods that would increase the usability of information collaboratively continues to be a topic of discussion. Debates regarding the specific design and delivery of PD, collaborative efforts, and education continue to be discussed (Bernardo et al., 2021; Buck Institute for Education, 2015; Cunningham, 2019; Stewart et al., 2020).

Schools should work to effectively combine an individual's growth of knowledge with social interaction, such as collaborative efforts (Bernardo et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2020), to strengthen personal understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Andragogy or the philosophy of adult learning, has shown some similarities to pedagogy, the focus on the learning experience of the children and minors (Knowles, 1977, 1980). Aguilar (2013) points out, however, the importance of interactions for adults, through multiple experiences and coaching experiences are essential to implementing lasting change. Coaching has the opportunity to improve the capacity of educators to help deliver information that opportunities for synthesis of cognitive will ultimately encourage student engagement and collaboration with each other (Aguilar, 2013).

Leveraging various relationships can improve numerous components of society, such as collaboration (Goodman, 2016). Collaboration can provide opportunities for the synthesis of cognitive ideas as well as collective support for team members (Bernardo et al., 2021); students practice through partnering in the formal educational environment (Stewart et al., 2020). Society is directly related to the constructs of educational environments. "Schools represent a microcosm of society," where students learn moral expectations of relationships between each other to

strengthen society (Keeling & Young, 2016, p. 21). Gaining knowledge is paramount to education which relies heavily on the intentional lesson design by teachers to help facilitate situations for societal growth.

Direct societal interaction was significantly impacted by the 2020 worldwide pandemic (Bernardo et al., 2021). In the past few years, the increase in remote learning due to the global pandemic (Bernardo et al., 2021) has drastically increased the need for technological learning and virtual support for learners in isolation. Teachers needed to broaden their ideas of collaboration in various remote settings (Kosic, 2018). Bernardo et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts worldwide to educate and strengthen learners' understanding of content. The focus was to combat problems initially practiced in classroom settings. As the future remains uncertain, the ability to collaborate is an essential skill requiring practice from an early age (Kosic, 2018).

Theoretical Context

Dewey (1910) added philosophical and educational context to the concept of progressivism (Gutek, 2011). Gutek (2011) explains how Dewey was able to combine the world's changing dynamics with the smaller intricacies of the state and local communities. Gutek (2011) goes on to explain the importance of the progressive theory Dewey (1910, 1938) detailed as it laid a foundation for influencing educational practice. The work, specifically, emphasized experimentalism with the engagement of learners to obtain a broader understanding of the content.

Throughout Dewey's extensive career, he was a sought-after educator who wrote numerous books, journals, and periodicals (Gutek, 2011). Dewey initially began publishing his revised syllabi and extensively detailed lecture notes garnering him much respect and admiration

within the academic community (Gutek, 2011). Gutek (2011) details how Dewey would frequent lecturer content, which is rather contradictory to the theory of increased engagement of learners. Dewey combined the learning of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy of learners within his work (Gutek, 2011). This combination of these academic fields in conjunction with university-level education was a unique twist for the turn of the 20th century (Gutek, 2011).

In 1896, Dewey was offered the opportunity to put his theory into action at the University of Chicago Laboratory School (Gutek, 2011). This opportunity offered Dewey the setting required to combine child psychology with an educational setting leading to learning (Gutek, 2011). For eight years 1896 through 1904, Dewey examined the combination of learning with instruction (Gutek, 2011). Dewey (1910) stated the relationship between the school, community, and students was too strong to ignore. Dewey (1910) went on to state the societal impact of such learning styles would greatly impact social needs. From there, a shift within perspective to see how not only society impacted the educational setting, but rather how the school setting impacted the community at large (Dewey, 1910). Dewey (1910) noted, the physical setup of classroom furniture was designed for listening, rather than for engaging. This epiphany for Dewey (1910) stated an increase in awareness of messaging; everything that was developed for an educational experience was designed around the instructor, not the student. Dewey (1910) made this connection and increased the drive for progressivism.

The belief, and ultimate adoption, of progressivism, would lead to an increased level of engagement of learners and the propensity for change which was incorporated through experimentalism (Gutek, 2011). Gutek (2011) details how progressivism was defined by an era of westward expansion within a newly expanding America by westward expansion. With the larger role of individuals experiencing the transition of expansion, Dewey (1910) noted the roles

of adults, children, and gender played in partaking in new and diverse tasks. Through initiatives like sewing, a larger historical context was established (Dewey, 1910). The interwoven concept of history was expanded simply by sewing a button or placing a patch on clothes. In basic terms, the experience of mending clothes was expanded into how the unique qualities of America, growing through immigration, were being established and how the overarching concept of a melting pot could be obtained (Dewey, 1910).

Dewey's (1910) work and its expansion (1938) ultimately began a shift in the philosophy of educational delivery. Through experience, learners would translate written knowledge into practice (Dewey, 1910). Gutek (2011) points out how the progressive theory that Dewey detailed led to a powerful impact which could be observed throughout the Cold War and space exploration of the mid to late 20th century (Gutek, 2011). Education heavily relied on the progressive theory, resulting in a shifting dynamic of mainstream instruction that incorporated progressive strategies within the American classroom (Gutek, 2011).

This study will aid the current research. It will examine one aspect of PD, coaching instructional leaders, resulting in instructional shifts. The research will examine the lived experiences of trained instructional coaches in modeling engagement techniques with instructional leaders during coaching sessions. Focusing on the experiences of the instructional leaders expected to support and influence adult students through intentional andragogical strategies is a primary focus of increasing educational impact (McNally et al., 2019). In addition, this specific research could delve into a more distinct and deliberate context of PD options available for the educators. Combining the lived experiences with previous research and literature on engagement strategies, an examination will conclude the ability to prepare instructional leaders to grow educational delivery practices with engagement strategies. As the

progressivism theory suggests, engagement techniques benefit learners of all abilities in various age ranges and require support to ensure that educators are equipped to plan intentionally for such opportunities.

Problem Statement

The problem is determining the type of engagement strategies that are most effective during coaching sessions based on the lived experiences of instructional coaches with instructional leaders. Knight (2021) identified two distinct models of support, the inside-out and outside-in approach work when focusing on coaching instructional leaders. The inside-out compared to the outside-in approach Knight (2021) explained was imperative to determining lasting and sustainable change. The role of the coach was to make the learning come to life and tangible for the instructional leader. Similarly, the facilitative engagement strategy where the instructional coach guides the coachee to their own decision would represent an inside-out approach. Knight (2021) defined an outside-in approach that would align with an instructional coaching method where someone is directing the instructional leader to a specific determined way forward. With a plethora of engagement strategies, such as experiential, interdisciplinary, or even long-term projects, determining the best fit for individuals both benefits and will grow the learner the most is something to consider (Heinrich et al., 2021).

To increase the possibility of implementation, the coach must utilize both facilitative engagement and collaborative strategies to support the coachee (Aguilar, 2016). Aguilar (2013) catapults coaching theory with previous research from the Annenberg Foundation, published in 2004. It is claimed that coaching sessions are the most effective manner in effectively shifting the culture, behavior, conditions, and practice of educators (Aguilar, 2013). Therefore, determining the critical balance between the coaching styles to maximize these shifts is essential.

At the turn of the century, a shift began to take place, and a focus has been placed on the importance of instructional interactions (Aguilar, 2013; Kee et al., 2017) from the commonplace coaches in sports arenas (Gawande, 2011). To support and even leverage PD sessions, the perception of instructional coach was intentionally shifted from an intentional human connection to a focus on the actions, practices, and strategies required to be a productive educator (Aguilar, 2013). Mello et al. (2021) state individuals thrive when supported and appreciated by their supervisors. However, when an individual is struggling in these areas, they are less likely to receive this feedback. Therefore, the support for instructional leaders (Kee et al., 2017) to have an instructional coach is essential to improving skill, knowledge, and confidence (Aguilar, 2013).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development (PD) meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. At this stage in the research, the use of ALE to meet the diverse needs of the instructional leaders were examined. ALE strategies are generally defined as the intentional instructional practice for the instructional leader to allow the learner to construct their meaning through intentional questioning and specific interactions with the content (Cole et al., 2021).

Significance of the Study

The contribution of this study will support instructional design as well as individual diversity within the academic environment. By examining the study's significance, the need for this research is evident through theoretical, empirical, and practical lenses. The significance of the role of an instructional leader for educational leaders is made evident as detailed research

studies are limited at this time. The collected research will launch the current work and contribute to data-informed research.

Theoretical Significance

This study will provide an in-depth examination of coaching as a means of PD for instructional leaders leading to instructional shifts. Watts (2018) suggests a variety of instructional deliveries is necessary to meet the diversity of adult learners. While expanding on Dewey's (1910, 1938) theory of progressivism through learner engagement strategies, Bandura (1977) states self-efficacy as a driving force to implement change. The desire to change is imperative for noting the specific shifts (Bandura, 1977) in practice toward the need to engage learners with the inquiry of knowledge (Dewey, 1910, 1938). The interpretation that Aguilar (2013) recommends leveraging the concept of self-efficacy is through verbal persuasion of partnering with admired peers. These coaching sessions are used as an intentional and consistent strategy that requires continual research. The research of coaching sessions, if utilized effectively will lead to shifts in educational practice. Coaching provides the opportunity to combine the growth of skills and the ability to implement those skills through intentional opportunities with support (Aguilar, 2013). Through this work, coaching theory is strengthened by examining the most effective means of engaging diverse adult learners. The ability to focus on progressivism and leveraging change using the coaching relationship is documented and examined for successful practices. The absence of this research exemplifies the necessity for this research as the instructional shifts continue to be emphasized and instructional leaders are expected to lead these changes. The results of the research will lead to a significant and intentional strengthening of future coaching sessions.

Empirical Significance

The empirical research will contribute to the current literature by Duke et al. (2020), Hung et al. (2019), and Richard et al. (2021), determining implementation through modeling engagement strategies with instructional leaders. The personal connections which are made during PD sessions will not only provide specific strategies but also allow educators to participate as learners (Holland et al., 2018). This study will support implementation strategies regarding the impact on learners to enhance their educational experiences. Therefore, this research study is unique to current studies found within the literature.

Practical Significance

The practical implication is how coaches can communicate and expressly work with voluntary instructional leaders. A shifting instructional practice where learners engage with content within the organization is becoming more paramount. The specific design of using project-based learning (PjBL) (Duke et al., 2020), PBL, and flipped classrooms (Jensen et al., 2018; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Zheng et al., 2020) within the study supports various engagement strategies to help determine specific benefits and challenges to diverse strategies (Hopper, 2018). Instructional leaders, who express concern over current understanding are reluctant to implement such strategies (Aguilar, 2016). As instructional leaders participate in coaching sessions with similar strategies, and PD, their confidence has been shown to increase (Aguilar, 2013). When this occurs and intentional coaching sessions are planned, the adoption and implementation of engagement strategies should also increase (Voet & De Wever, 2017). When individuals find personal meaning and relate to the content, they are more likely to continue to utilize those strategies in correlation with their individual strengths as educators (Stewart et al., 2020).

Research Questions

Maximizing the opportunity for instructional leaders to remove opinions and promote the implementation of learning to obtain reciprocal accountability during a coaching session is of the utmost importance (Aguilar, 2013). Providing opportunities for instructional leaders to intentionally plan for the most efficient method to transition from retaining information to implementing new content can be directly related to the coaching approach (Aguilar, 2013). Through the intentional design of planned sessions, instructional leaders are encouraged to implement the gained knowledge to school-level educators to impact students positively. Examining strategies beyond simply attending regular coaching sessions will help determine future actions to maximize the possibility of implementation. Specifically, examining the opportunities for the learner to engage with information and ultimately make their connections needs to be investigated to determine if there are specific strategies that increase the chance of implementation. This intentionality will ultimately support the research on the experiences of instructional leaders.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of overseas instructional coaches who intentionally plan engagement strategies during coaching sessions with overseas instructional leaders in a Department of Defense community?

Sub-Question One

How do overseas American instructional coaches intentionally plan for individualized coaching sessions which impact instructional leaders?

Sub-Question Two

How do overseas American instructional coaches guide meetings for either an instructional or a facilitative type of session?

Sub-Question Three

How do overseas instructional coaches determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented?

Definitions

1. *Active learner engagement (ALE)* – A variety of approaches involving teacher delivery and learner-constructed meaning through a student-centered classroom environment (Cole et al., 2021).
2. *Andragogy* – Teaching and learning experiences of adult students (McNally et al., 2019).
3. *Collaboration* – The process through which a solution or product is reached by the collective group, which creates a combined agreed-upon outcome (McClellan, 2021).
4. *Coaching* – Establishing an environment that maximizes conversation as a way of being, to facilitate a process so an instructional leader can move toward desired goals (Aguilar, 2013).
5. *Differentiation* – Intentionally planning for learning opportunities that include diversity and various individual components of the learner (Colognesi & Gouin, 2020).
6. *Flipped classroom* – Delivery of content through an inverted instructional design as an alternative approach where students receive information before discussion or delivery with the teacher (Jeong et al., 2019).
7. *Instructional Leader* – The individual assumes responsibility for educational objectives (Edmonds, 1979).

8. *Project-based learning (PBL)* – Engaging learners through culminating tasks of interest to help solidify learner knowledge specific to intended content outcomes and standards based on projects to meet the objectives and standards (Duke et al., 2020).
9. *Teacher-centric learning* – Instructor delivery of content promotes a passive student engagement in learning and retaining content (Bransford et al., 2000).
10. *Student-centric learning* – Learner-focused design maximizes personal understanding by allowing personal connections to meaning via active knowledge utilization (Dear, 2016).

Summary

Since the turn of the 21st century and through legislation, increased awareness has been brought to delivering information to American learners (Heise, 2018). Progressivist theories have been leveraged to increase the involvement of learners within the classroom walls (Mohamed, 2020). While an entire industry has developed around which techniques and strategies should be actively implemented to support student learning, none has secured the optimal technique in all cases. In addition, there is a gap in the research regarding leveraging the instructional model of PD for leaders responsible for implementing ALE (Kahn, 2021). Therefore, the examination of the research needs to shift from why engagement should be planned for learning opportunities to how to prepare instructional leaders for such strategies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A thorough systematic review of the literature is designed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of engagement strategies when learning and growing in tasks. With a continued focus on learners of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, differentiation is addressed as a key strategy to meet the diverse needs of those working on expanding their thinking in particular areas. This chapter presents a broad yet detailed review of current, documented, and related literature to efficiently guide instructional practices for individual learners. The review is broken down into three sections: theoretical framework, historical instructional design, and related literature, before the culminating summary. The work focuses on various educational engagement theories in conjunction with the implications of various implementation practices. The literature emphasizes the instructional coaches' role, interactions, and ultimate relationships alongside their instructional leaders. The determination of instructional and facilitative deliveries to expand skills and outlook is also examined. In concluding this review, a specific gap within the literature is discussed, which justifies the research and study being prepared.

Theoretical Framework

The study will determine the need for adult instructional leaders' access to information along with the need to plan for engagement strategies during coaching sessions. The availability of PD through coaching sessions and the desire to work with trained professionals is the basis of the study. Delving into the intricacies of intentionally planned coaching sessions with instructional leaders by trained professionals to shift behaviors, cultures, and implement new knowledge will "keep the focus on teaching and learning" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 9).

Theory of Progressivism from Dewey's Inception to Current Implementation

The progressivism theory defined by Dewey (1910) explains the distinction between thought and reflective thought. While the thought is more of a stagnant one-time action, thinking is distinguished as the ongoing overtime measure related to the process. Dewey based the concept of progressivism on merging the learner with knowledge acquisition, ultimately providing the implicit intent of reaching a solid understanding of individual conclusions (Gutek, 2011). Dewey's (1910) concept of reflective thought was the primary method utilized to strengthen content connections. Therefore, progressivism was driven by the process through the intentionality of planning, deliberation, and calculation. Understanding the need for individual connections with experience, Dewey molded the need to train learners in thinking (Dewey, 1910).

Dewey (1910) highlights reflection as an integral part of signifying the importance of learning and depth of understanding. Grounded in belief, experiential learning is the driving force for a sustainable and meaningful educational experience (Gutek, 2011). When thinking is subsequently introduced to facts in such a concrete and meaningful manner which they cannot be ignored, personal beliefs will ultimately be overridden (Dewey, 1910). This level of learning is the pinnacle of instructive education, not with the intent to change a student's beliefs but rather to create a relationship of desire to look critically at information before concluding on a firmly held thought (Dewey, 1910, 1938).

It is important to define the attributes of learners to best meet their needs. The unique qualities of the learner should be considered (Van Laer & Elen, 2017). For an adult learner, the delivery may appear different than that of a child as the adult learner does require different techniques than that of a minor (Knowles, 1977). Children are extremely inquisitive, frequently

asking questions, and show curiosity, yet adults tend to lose some of the insatiable wonder (McNally et al., 2019). Understanding this instinctive desire affirms the point Dewey (1938) questioned when observing the same level of interest does not seemingly transition into the classroom; it truly did spark conversation. Although much of this is still unanswered, the level of interest could add much to the discussion of effective engagement strategies to spark genuine intrigue. Advocating thinking is the connection between one's prior knowledge with the intake of information of perception to navigate in conjunction with the ability to solidify future understanding (Dewey, 1910, 1938). Though many of Dewey's concepts reflect an inquisitive child, the premise of the desire to learn and grow can be transferred to sincerely interested learners of all ages.

Inquisitive learners are continually searching for information to absorb and progress their comprehension through connective learning (Ibourk, 2021). Within the classroom, learners' questions can be guided to fit the flow of intentional learning rather than true inquiry regarding a topic. Dewey (1910) claims personal experiences create background knowledge that impacts the direction of the individual's future learning. Dewey (1938) laid out the need for purposeful planning to obtain a significant understanding of current intellect, attain knowledge through pre-assessments, and plan effective deliveries where information will fill gaps with the goal of extending knowledge. The relationships between the learner and educator were examined primarily to meet such needs (Dewey, 1910, 1938). When information was closely aligned with the stated and sensible facts, Dewey (1910) determined that a reasoned conclusion was reached.

For centuries, effective instruction has been a conversational topic (Gao, 2021). Over time, the role of everyone within the discussion can be diverse and passionate, if not specifically debated or argued. Dewey (1910) initially proposed the progressive concept, which would

completely flip the learning environment into a learner-centered structure to provide opportunities for students to engage with concepts, so they can take ownership of their learning. In recent decades, engagement in instructional practice has catapulted a noticeable shift in instructional delivery throughout classrooms around the United States (Gao, 2021). The results shift a heightened dialogue of which delivery method is the most effective in conjunction with the circumstances and content being delivered (Gao, 2021) along with preparations and PD for those responsible for the implementation (Aguilar, 2013, 2016).

Learners continually enter any subject with some exposure to knowledge (Gao, 2021). Some learners find that as additional information is provided, it is understandable to change one's mind; however, other specific beliefs are so strongly held, which defy the new premise that adjustments will simply be ignored (Dewey, 1910, 1938; Hartman et al., 2018). The variance could lead to requiring differing amounts of time for various learners to grasp a concept. Making real-life connections is required for long-term adoption (Buck Institute for Education, 2015). Experiential learning is imperative for Pragmatic learning (Dewey, 1910, 1938; Gutek, 2011).

Limitations of Pragmatism

The conceptual implementation of Pragmatism has notable limitations. The degree of belief in the concept is based on the timeliness, thoughts, and information of prior experiences (Kahn, 1992). The question of how the morals and values of the learner direct future thought also result in the degree and time of adoption of differing concepts.

Knowledge is power. However, introducing individuals to new and diverse information does not ensure it will be adopted. It is often believed that information is the scaffold to which learners are supported. Bansal (2021) quoted Malcolm X as saying, "A man who stands for nothing will fall for anything" (p. 1). This adage directly influences the acquisition of new

information and is imperative to the quality of education an individual receives. As educators, coaches, or simply lifelong learners, it is imperative that the thirst for knowledge never be fully quenched. Continually asking questions is part of the learning process. Whether through intentional planning, grouping for collaborative learning experiences, or assessing acceptance of the material, practical wisdom is influenced by the learner's convictions.

Ultimately, individuals determine what information should be accepted or rejected when creating their understanding (Dewey, 1910). Some individuals replace reason with passion (Dewey, 1910) or the simple desire to believe something as truth (Dewey, 1938). This firmly held belief could be either directly affirming their current values or rejecting the thoughts to replace the ideas with new knowledge. Dewey (1910) reflected on this concept as difficult to sway previously held convictions to information. If information is presented away from an individual's beliefs, it is less likely that adoption will occur. (Dewey, 1910).

Various learner experiences lead to various limitations with progressive delivery (Clark et al., 2021). As learners enter the new environment with preconceived notions, experiences, and a range of interests, making connections to the given information will also differ (Starr-Glass, 2020). Starr-Glass (2020) noted that participants take the available information to reflect on their purpose of learning the material to establish a final product unique to each learner. Starr-Glass (2020) goes on to explain that the combination of the resources intertwined with those previously held beliefs and understanding intertwined, intended takeaways also differ. It must be noted that this concern is also true of teacher-centric delivery (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Just because the content is presented uniformly does not guarantee a consistent takeaway from all learners leading to the need for differentiation to meet students' unique needs (Heng & Song, 2020). Ultimately,

every individual exposed to the material, no matter the instructional design, does not ensure each learner has the same grasp, understanding, and belief of the knowledge.

Related Literature

Determining the most efficient use of time, resources, and delivery has begun to shift over the past century (Adams et al., 2020; Bolt et al., 2019; Cheng et al., 2019; Jensen et al., 2018; Lin, 2019; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). One topic shifting education is the importance of the student-led instructional model. Within this approach would be subcategories, conceptually fitting the scope of student-centered learning. The specific approaches are tailored to meet the objectives (Goodman, 2016) set forth during the planning stages before instruction (Holland et al., 2018). However, the topics have multiple solutions where students could actively engage in learning activities resulting in a variety of correct outcomes (Altmeyer et al., 2020; Bolt et al., 2019). In conjunction with instructional models, student-led classrooms are effectively combined to ensure all students are engaged at high levels (Buck Institute for Education, 2015). Combining these components of planning with student needs, and formative assessments, will ensure objectives are met. Acquiring knowledge must always remain the primary focus. To meet all learners' needs, the modern classroom teacher needs to move beyond archaic lectures to tailor instruction for individual purposes in which learning is maximized for all (Goodman, 2016).

Leveraging a Growth Mindset

Leveraging the concept that learners are not born with a stagnant capacity for information, but one that can be grown over time is essential to continued educational growth is within their control (Dweck, 2016; Yu et al., 2022). Dweck's (2016) growth mindset is but one piece of a very convoluted puzzle where all individuals are honored and allowed to explore

content (Buck Institute for Education, 2015). Learners must have time to engage with content to fully grasp the knowledge being examined. Such learning is a process and requires a mindset of continual learning (Dweck, 2016).

Aguilar (2013) points out that for meaningful learning to occur addressing the variables in each situation should be garnered. Aguilar (2016) goes on to emphasize the importance of leveraging the strength of relationships, whether in coaching individually or in teams. These relationships can be impacted by what information to disclose and at what time to strengthen the relationship. Developing trusting connections is imperative when working to gain knowledge and ultimately having the confidence to continue growing (Aguilar, 2013).

The relationship is dependent on the quality, impact, and desired results of informational delivery. The balancing act of showing good faith in providing timely information is one few have mastered (Aguilar, 2013, 2016). Historically, delivering pertinent information has contradicted the initiative, as being transparent does not align with the desired outcome. Countries, such as Spain, were made to be an exemplar for not sharing information during the Great Influenza of 1918 (Aguilar, 2013). Their active acknowledgment ultimately solidified the moniker of the time as the Spanish Flu. Therefore, determining the relationship between continually having the ability to learn (Dweck, 2016) with the delivery of a timely release of information must be considered when planning for ongoing learning (Aguilar, 2013).

Acknowledging the unique tipping point, known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which occurs among all learners is a balance between the acquisition of knowledge and teaching above one's capacity (Vygotsky, 1978). Those contributions focused on the degree of difficulty of assignments that the students were expected to complete. These tasks should not be outside a specific range of complexity for which the learner was currently considered ready.

Educational success is dependent on delivery style, learner interest, or individual mindset (Dweck, 2016). Dweck (2016) encouraged learners to continually return to content with a focus on improving their overall understanding. Aligning classroom design and instructional practice with this shift required teachers to reflect on the traditional practice. Through understanding and supporting the mindset and engagement level of learners, as well as their conviction to continue to improve their understanding through Dweck's (2016) growth mindset and Duckworth's (2016) concept of grit, the shortcomings of expectations will no longer be a hindrance to the learning community.

Leveraging Grit Through Trusting Relationships

Trust is not simply a skill in isolation. It has various levels, stages, and cycles to grow and build upon (Aguilar, 2013). Aguilar (2013) emphasizes that trust is important to assess continually and engage with others appropriately. The process is not easy to navigate, and occasional stumbling is inevitable. Within the educational field, trust is a skill that can be leveraged to grow learners (Kee et al., 2017). As more advanced content and changes are introduced, PD is required to ensure success (Kee et al., 2017). To provide continual support for educators, instructional coaches who have earned trusting relationships could more rapidly help influence positive change (Aguilar, 2013; Kee et al., 2017). Trust is not simply a skill one shows but an expression of making connections (Aguilar, 2013).

It goes beyond a conceptualized notion to useful planning tactics to increase student achievement when used effectively (Stott, 2016). Learners of all ages can find success when pre-existing knowledge is determined and expanded upon accordingly (Stott, 2016). The most growth is observed when an established environment cultivates trust, teamwork, and collaborative work to maximize learning.

During the last decade, education has widened the perspective of how learning occurs from the absorption of knowledge now to a continuum of growth of understanding to deepen the scope of learning over time (Dweck, 2016). Rather than in the moment, Duckworth (2016) emphasizes the need to support learners in various capacities through multiple exposures to difficult tasks, leading to the coined phrase “grit.” The term grit is synonymous with perseverance. The support of the determination to complete complicated work without giving up, and for Duckworth, relates directly to educational tasks. Duckworth’s (2016) concept of grit references a learner’s continual effort to push through difficult concepts. When an educator simply spoon-feeds information into the learner’s brain, grit cannot be established. Building off Dewey’s (1910, 1938) notion of Pragmatism, Duckworth (2016) contends that the learner must have access to the information to manipulate the concept as it intertwines with the previous experiences, ultimately forming a new thought or idea. The readiness, support, and ideas leveraged a continual growth of understanding without a pinnacle of obtained knowledge. Duckworth (2016) goes beyond establishing a need for such perseverance while contending the routine examination of improvement to fight through difficult tasks to overcome is essential in the learning process. Duckworth (2016) encouraged educators to stretch a learner’s perceived limits while allowing them the opportunity to continue to obtain knowledge at their pace within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and ultimately connect with the content (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). Strengthening confidence was surmised to increase desire and interpersonal desire to work resulting in increased understanding.

During this same time, Dweck (2016) advocated for the ability to grow and learn over time. The work addressed the conflict between learners with a fixed mindset and one willing to take multiple attempts to engage with the learning until they overcome, as defined as a growth

mindset. The concept of a “growth mindset” requires learners to accept failure at first attempts or exposure to information (Dweck, 2016). The perception of a growth mindset examined learners interested in obtaining a deeper degree of information with more difficult work. It was theorized that when delving into more difficult content or specifically the in-depth material. The learner would inevitably stumble, hitting roadblocks. The difference between these two types of learners was directly related to their ability to overcome such obstacles. Questions continue to be examined as to why some learners halt their course while others persevere and continually return to the material until ultimately overcoming it.

Impact of Traditional Historic Instructional Design

Traditionally, individuals have been lumped into groups and classified as a single collective (Adams et al., 2020). Adams et al. (2020) suggest that the needs of the individual learner have been brushed aside to plan for a more generalized delivery. The need for the teacher to acquire pre-assessment information or determine the current understanding of the topic has the tendency to be brushed aside. What is the point of collecting individual abilities, strengths, and deficits if the planning and delivery do not address them? Historically, the teacher was the gatekeeper of knowledge, and the students were expected to sit quietly, hanging on every word of the message.

The shift from the group mentality to focusing on individual abilities has made its way to the forefront of many discussions (Xin et al., 2019). Education has struggled to keep up with the transition of divergent societal perspectives (Goodman, 2016; Zheng et al., 2020). Instructional delivery has primarily focused on group delivery rather than the individual needs of the diverse learners housed within the classroom. Goodman (2016) suggests the need to shift from a teacher-

centric design to a student-centered learning environment is the pivotal component to elevating education and individualized learning.

Historically, a traditional classroom has been the expected learning environment (Hyun et al., 2017). This design emphasizes the instructor's knowledge to deliver specific content to determined learners, often through lecture-based instruction (Bolt et al., 2019). With the traditional-based model, the teacher's intent is the primary focus, and the students are secondary to what information is delivered. In the teacher-centric model, a group of individuals is all exposed to a single delivery (Bolt et al., 2019). In this case, the learners receive a wider overview of information. The benefit of this delivery is that many individuals are exposed to information. Unfortunately, the message cannot be individualized or directed to the diverse needs, understanding, or abilities of those intended to learn the information (Bandura, 1993).

Bandura (1993) claims that leveraging the prior knowledge of those being taught will increase learning. There are specific assumptions in Bandura's (1993) thinking. First, all people are inherently different, including in the way they learn and retain information. Next, the participants are willing to share and express their experiences to others which provides growth of the topic. Finally, the group will collaboratively associate their experiences with new information to reach a deeper understanding. Communicating these expectations, understanding relevant and non-relevant information, and working to communicate is something, historically, areas where learners have struggled.

Students should routinely engage with opportunities to self-regulate personal growth and experiences (Bandura, 1993). When behaviorist style teaching is utilized, and a student is simply a passive learner, one instructor cannot effectively reach a group of learners. Conversely, constructivism allows students to take ownership of their learning and fill in the necessary

known learning gaps. This style will maximize all learners' abilities (Dean Jr., & Kuhn, 2007). Intentionally planning to actively engage students with their learning will inherently have a positive impact on student performance which can be measured through multiple styles of assessments.

Historical Instructional Design

When addressing the most effective implementation plan for instructing learners, the questions as to why education exists must be examined. Formal education was a process that supported rote memorization of delivered information, regurgitation of actions by the masses, and ultimately provided individuals who were ready to improve society (Manan, 2019). To extend this logic, those completing the formalized learning would need to align with society's expectations of productive citizens to effectively impact the culture at large (Massimiliano et al., 2021). Therefore, education can be surmised as a path to create productive citizens to support the greater good.

Approximately half a century ago, the United States educational system began to shift. It was placed under a microscope due to both implicit and direct statements, and federal laws mandated requiring a shift (Rossides, 1984). In 1965, with the inaction of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as the Title I program, federal funds were provided to schools with many low-income families (Davidson et al., 2015). The federal funds were provided with the anticipation of elevating financially struggling schools to approximately the same level as their better-performing and more affluent counterparts (Davidson et al., 2015). However, the new program and federal funding would subsequently mandate assessments to ensure progress was occurring (Davidson et al., 2015).

The federal government continues to insert its authority into the educational process (Heise, 2018). States and local governments followed suit as they began to jockey for power (Heise, 2018). By leveraging the need for funding and providing fiscal resources, the government could strip power from the school system. Heise (2018) asserts that it only took a few decades for many school districts to become dependent on government assistance.

In 1984, a 'Nation at Risk' was published, which set in motion several events which would bring attention to the struggles of the state of education (Rossides, 1984). Rossides (1984) contends that this publication highlighted the struggling educational system and ultimately forced a crossroads. As the microscope of public opinion became ever more apparent, educational delivery began to be examined, allowing legislators to question the degree of student achievement for those preparing for the workforce.

As the turn of the century approached, with little growth being noted in classrooms around the country, the passionate discussion continued. Emotionally charged conversations began to force ideas that would address change. It was inevitable for the government to step in and address the new focus of education to enhance all learning conditions (Abraham et al., 2019; Heise, 2018). More simplistically stated, the search for the truth was proposed to be shifted towards a more concrete understanding of support for the workforce (Abraham et al., 2019; Heise, 2018). The desire has been to keep the foundation of education in a broad sense. To compound the issue further, the world's knowledge rate continues to grow exponentially in ways never seen (Smith, 2013).

Since the turn of the century, and in accordance with the current technological age, most citizens in the first world have had access to computers, the Internet, and ways to communicate at a moment's notice. Education, however, has proven slow to keep pace with this rate of change.

A few decades ago, classrooms were structured similarly to an assembly line (Mohamed, 2020). In addition to access, accumulated knowledge has been overwhelming (Smith, 2013). To exemplify the growth rate, Smith (2013) notes that over 50 million articles have been published since the inception of the first article in 1665. Notably, Smith (2013) goes on to point out that well over half of those articles have been published since 1991.

Historic and Legal Ramifications

Numerous theories have been proposed, debated, and even put into practice. However, there has yet to be a definitive agreement among the educational community as to which methodology is the most effective in reaching *all* learners. To try and adequately address the inequities, the government stepped in. In recent decades, different government agencies have been established and, with the support of specific legislation, have attempted to equate the playing field Mann (Isseks, 2017) felt had already been established.

For generations, education has followed American national and political culture (Shea & Sandoval, 2019). Shea and Sandoval (2019) explain how accepted societal norms have been extremely influential in the various aspects of formal education as they scaffold the school's environment to the overall perception of education. The nation faced numerous catastrophic events throughout the first half of the 20th century. The ripple effect of war, financial disparity, and fear led to a stronger government influence which allowed for being processed through the educational community. Throughout much of its historical impact, the focus on psychological safety needs to be addressed (Frazier et al., 2016). Societal impact on relationships establishing a climate where individuals feel safe to question, address concerns, and not feel as if their perspective would have negative repercussions is essential to sustainable growth (Aguilar, 2013, 2016; Kahn, 1992). Much of the 20th century's educational transition was reflective of civil

unrest and globalization around the world (Subaran & Swetasree, 2021). Subaran and Swetasree (2021) attest that the increasing amount of technology in conjunction with the influx of foreign investments increased employment. They determine that this growth ultimately resulted in more transiency and ultimately resulted in a push for educational adjustments. As the dominos began to fall, inequities were noticed, and voices began to clamor for change. In essence, the society provided opportunities and a solidified feeling of safe environments where individuals were compelled to speak up for perceived injustices.

By the mid-1950s, the world had been torn apart by two devastating World Wars, the Great Depression, the Korean War, and the start of the nuclear Cold War with the Soviet Union. In addition, the Civil Rights Era was evolving, and the United States was transitioning into modern-day society. During this period, the level of uncertainty caused a great deal of concern among most Americans, which was reflected in the educational reform about to transpire. Elected officials responded through the concept of equity in education, which continues to be debated (Aguilar, 2020). Askew (2013) points out these heightened tensions may have been an underlying result of the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling of 1954. The United States Supreme Court ruled on the racial divide of separate facilities being unequal (Askew, 2013).

Legislation was continuing to be enacted, and by 2004, laws were in place to measure progress through NCLB (Heise, 2018). There were stipulations on the schools which accepted the federal funds forcing them to succumb to the demands and will of the governing bodies (Heise, 2018). Although educational reform had been enacted before NCLB, this mandate deliberately stated accountability was at the forefront. Failure to meet the Annual Yearly Progress would result in steep negative repercussions (Davidson et al., 2015). These assessments were the first high-stakes tests that would negatively impact schools, and individuals, based on

poor performance (Tienken, 2014). Although the goal was to determine if students measured a level of proficiency at specific grade levels, the amount of stress placed on those at the school-level was immense, the focus ultimately shifted from the content, and students' need to succeed with the test. Initially, NCLB was presented as having a positive impact on the nation, which ultimately veered differently (Abraham et al., 2019).

Through the implementation of NCLB, teachers would be revitalized to improve teaching practices to improve test scores (Abraham et al., 2019). The amount of time spent teaching content and the standards declined, while instruction began focusing on test-taking strategies and other summative assessment skills (Abraham et al., 2019). Tienken (2014) ascertains that the level of stress and ramifications placed on educators due to the high-stakes tests is equivocal to "institutional abuse" in some regards (p. 156). States were forced to submit to the demands of the policy or refuse the much-needed federal funds on which they had become financially dependent (Heise, 2018).

In recent decades, the learner has become the primary focus of instructional models. At the turn of the 21st century, national legislation like NCLB brought students' individuality to the forefront (Heise, 2018). Therefore, identifying diversity within education began to take center stage, along with the learner's individual needs (Lin, 2019; Swaner & Ackerman, 2018). Heise (2018) continues to emphasize the impact of high-stakes annual testing, which put pressure on educators and forcibly shifted previous whole group instruction to more individuality devised to meet the needs of each learner. Examining a student-centric or student-led modernistic classroom is one of the most imperative shifts to address the dysfunction within the educational system. Going on to describe the decrease in direct instruction by the teacher and more individually determined learning with peers and collaborative real-life experiences (Bolt et al., 2019).

In 2015, NCLB expired. Power was not returned to the schools but was ultimately replaced with ESSA (Heise, 2018). This legislation swiftly returned a great deal of power that NCLB had taken from the lower-level governments (Heise, 2018). Although ESSA did cause change, the focus returned to the student's learning, the power grab had taken place, and federal influence remained. Discussions continued about the specifics of returning to previous instructional practices and ultimately traditional teaching throughout much of the nation, as previously stated practices had adversely affected learners for years.

Traditional teaching would follow a stagnant format. Teachers designed units, lessons, and ultimately the assessments based on educational standards (Bolt et al., 2019; Hyun et al., 2017; Jensen et al., 2018). Isseks (2017) notes Mann's (1848) claim has been the accepted narrative since the 1840s stating education is the great equalizer. Therefore, discovering the most effective delivery technique to reach all learners must be considered the greatest undefined problem of the modern age. Reaching a universal agreement upon a single utilized strategy is unrealistic. Doing so would not meet the diverse needs of all individual students, meet the objectives, or ensure the transfer of knowledge. The limitless variables in any given lesson would negate the possibility of tapering down the options to a sole solution. It is unfathomable to consider all classrooms nationwide delivering the same content in the same fashion simply because the needs, experiences, and learning styles of the learners are unique. Questions began to arise regarding what impact intentionally planning to actively engage students with the content has on student performance measured by educational assessments.

The typical instructional pattern delivered singular dimensional content to the masses in a teacher-centric design. Students sat in a classroom formation of isolated rows, all facing the front of the room (Bloom, 1956). Traditionally, the planning did not consider personal differences, nor

was it intended to differentiate for learners' needs (Adams et al., 2020; Pulcini & Dennett, 2018, Tomlinson, 2003). The interest was solely designed around the direction and mental capabilities of the instructor. Although questions were allowed, the specific intent initially did not attempt to modify the direction of the delivery, which could leverage the purpose of formative assessments (Kurtz et al., 2019), but rather to simply verify understanding was occurring and move forward toward the final goal. Many of the questions aligned with Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy questions remained on the lower-level tiers of understanding or knowledge in the hopes of regurgitation. In most cases, it was believed the intent was simply to ensure students were following along with the delivered information.

The encouragement to utilize different levels of questions to determine the depth of student understanding is based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). In 1956, Bloom created six sequences that specified the readiness level and depth of understanding, recall (remembering), applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating to engage with information. Initially, Bloom's taxonomy tiers required a solid grasp of the understanding of one stage, before progressing to the next subsequent level of questioning (Bloom, 1956). The consecutive order layout supported the teacher's intentional design of students' grasp of knowledge and opened future doors for formative assessment through differentiation of instruction based on the level of readiness and leveraging the background knowledge of each learner. In 2001, cognitive psychologists specializing in curriculum and instructional research updated Bloom's tiers with the intended results of shifting attention from a static position to one of the educational objectives allowing for more fluidity among stages (Anderson et al., 2001).

The behaviorist theory exemplified classroom instruction (Gutek, 2011). Students arrived at school ready to absorb all the knowledge the teacher was willing to bestow upon the learners

(Seoane et al., 2020; Vidovic & Domovic, 2019). Teaching practices centered on teacher-directed instruction with the belief that students' knowledge was directly dependent on the instruction before being processed by the learner (Seoane et al., 2020). However, as more research studies have been conducted, the more evident it has become that maximizing time and providing engaging, differentiated lessons is necessary to meet the diverse learners of all students (Hartman et al., 2018; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Tomlinson, 2003; Zheng et al., 2020). While some students have a firmer grasp of information through background knowledge, experiences, or simply research, others may be more primary.

Constructivists like Bandura (1993) claim strong self-efficacy has a greater impact on cognitive ability and overall learning than being a blank slate waiting for another individual to write the story. Students must have a vested interest and play a leading role in their knowledge retention. Learners must move beyond simply being an observer to engrain knowledge (Bandura, 1993). Numerous studies have been conducted in which actively involving the learner in their education helps obtain knowledge and retain the information for transfer.

Different teaching techniques have been debated leading to the need to be routinely studied. Through countless experiments, learning theories have been scrutinized for the course of the 20th century. In addition, behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism have been examined to determine the relevance of information and applicability for the most appropriate delivery method or if a combination would be best (Gutek, 2011).

The current culture and belief in growth are influential in the success of an inquiry-based learning model, which is essential in the Cognitivism Theory. Bandura's (1993) findings were affirmed by Lotter et al. (2016), stating that classrooms taught by teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy have more supportive learning environments. However, in defining self-efficacy,

Bandura claimed two essential components would not always align: personal self-efficacy and outcome-efficacy (Lotter et al., 2016). Bandura claimed that an individual's prior experiences directly impacted the level of implementation in which future events would emerge. This conflict, as Bandura argued, could ultimately hinder the experience and fidelity in which the attempt was implemented (Lotter et al., 2016). Simply stated, if teachers had previous negative experiences with a specific content or delivery style, they would not provide the same initiative of implementation as one with former positive experiences when asked to attempt to utilize this modality.

Impact of Implementation

Witnessed more readily in recent decades, classroom design has become more student-centered (Hyun et al., 2017; Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017). Students no longer face the instructor in a uniform direction but are more likely to be placed in collaborative groups facing each other. Collaborative conversations are paramount. Striving to meet the diverse needs of each student and providing numerous learning opportunities have taken center stage. Numerous different instructional practices are discussed and working to implement the most effective delivery is being centered around IBL, yet none have solidified the most effective in all diverse situations (Hartman et al., 2018; Hyun et al., 2017; Jensen et al., 2018; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Servant-Miklos et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2020). Therefore, continuous work is required to ensure students' needs are met while continually being examined as to what is the most effective.

Limitations of Teacher-centric Instruction

The number of limitations of this style of educational delivery method hinder the learners' ability to grow (Goodman, 2016). Examining content through a single individual's vantage point lays out a framework and subsequent path toward a conclusion. With teacher-

centric lessons being created in isolation, rather than collaborating with others (Akella, 2021), the perspective and understanding of the specified content directly can align with that of the educator. It is impossible to teach content beyond the current level of understanding of an individual in a teacher-centric model. This plan effectively places the learners to align their depth of knowledge with the teacher. Unfortunately, although often viewed as the keeper of knowledge, teachers do not have all the answers. In addition, limiting a student's prior knowledge, experience, and learning does a disservice to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the ability of all involved.

Frequently, a teacher-centric instructional model relies heavily on lecture-style teaching (Dean Jr., & Kuhn, 2007). Although this delivery format can introduce a specific common message, it also limits differing points of view and various perspectives and shuns inquiry. This approach can be effective if the intention is to ensure all learners take away a similar grasp of the information. Concerning, however, is the long-range understanding, application, and use of this content. Rather than teaching students learning to examine the content and think critically, the message is provided, which often guides thinking (Akella, 2021).

During direct instruction, learners may obtain some new knowledge through this delivery style. The knowledge may all be memorized information, which the instructor desires (Moussa-Inaty et al., 2019). However, there is little application of use in this style of instruction, with a delivery method that must be implicitly explained to express relevance (Smith, 2013). The lack of control the learner has regarding their individual growth when the instructor delivers a set lecture is non-existent. As students become involved with learning through listening to instructor-led teaching rather than participating in learning tasks, the level of engagement, and possibly interest in the content declines (McIntyre et al., 1983).

The teacher-centric instruction focuses on one individual, the instructor. Frequently this delivery expected students to absorb knowledge through passive note-taking, sitting in rows facing the instructor, and idly absorbing each word. The teacher-centric type of instruction allowed for little to no differentiation for individual students' needs (Pulcini & Dennett, 2018). Often content is presented with a single touch, not allowing for learner inquiry, and is delivered without the engagement of information. The content is trusted to be accurate. Questions devised by teachers answered by select students were beneficial for the room leader and a top-down approach to education (Cheng et al., 2019; Goodman, 2016).

Instructional Shifts towards Actively Engaging Learners

It is impossible to have a class of learners ready to obtain knowledge uniformly (Smith, 2013). Therefore, when planning to meet the individual needs of all students, the vision must be based on activities that optimize instructional time. Designing engaging student-centered activities which are standards-focused can be obtained when open-ended activities are utilized (Lotter et al., 2016). The student-centric instructional technique allows the students to launch from their previously obtained knowledge and delve into their areas of interest and focus on their specific areas of need (Lotter et al., 2016).

Depending on the amount and depth of information shared, the absorption of information is reflective (Moussa-Inaty et al., 2019). When students take ownership of their learning, they can stretch the learning to indefinite proportions (McIntyre et al., 1983). This provides inherent levels of differentiation not available in teacher-led instructional models (Tomlinson, 2003).

There are some benefits of lecture-style instruction. First, the amount of instructional time devoted to delivering specific content information is finite (Dean & Kuhn, 2007). The information can be synthesized and delivered based on specific criteria determined by the

instructor. When most effective, the backward-design model is used. The information delivered is provided as a scaffold with a means to higher learning, if not directly related to assessable information (Goodman, 2016). This direct instruction does not frequently differ from the planned informational path and unless the instructor permits, it will not deviate from the intended message.

In most cases, there is a definitive learning path. The student is guided to ensure each learning goal is achieved (Lotter et al., 2016). Unfortunately, there are limitations that come with this style of teaching as well. Students of differing abilities are subjected to information to which there are most certainly various levels of exposure. To ensure all students are progressing in this form of instruction, the group can only move as fast as the most severely struggling learners are able (Dean Jr, & Kuhn, 2007). For more capable students listening to already-understood information is a waste of time, creates boredom, and frequently leads to behavioral disruptions. Engaging students to work on activities to their ability will negate such concerns. Maximizing instructional time and enhancing student engagement while increasing student self-efficacy are all results of students engaging on their contextual content level.

The benefits of transitioning from a traditional, teacher-led practice to a student-led classroom seemingly gloss over the preparation and training required. Time, resources, and collaborative discussions are essential to support an effective student-led learning structure. While PD can support these efforts, maximizing the resources becomes paramount to moving the suggested implementation forward.

Active Learner Engagement: Entry Points

Initially, teachers were not equipped to shift their instructional style to an effective student-centric environment (Servant-Miklos et al., 2019; Xin et al., 2019). Through

intentionally designed pre-assessments, determining the current ability in conjunction with a plan to reach the objective of the learning, requires specific PD (Holland et al., 2018). Intentionality to support teachers' desire to move to more student engagement should be planned over time, rather than expecting teachers to implement strategies they are not comfortable with or suitably understand (Weinhandl & Lavicza, 2019). Turner et al. (2018) advocate for training through the planning of PD, stating that the impact of implementation is tied to the effective modeling of these data. Multiple forms of active engagement have been narrowed over the past few decades focusing on student inquiry, and problem-based learning (PBL) (Buck Institute for Education, 2015; Hartman et al., 2018; Hyun et al., 2017; Servant-Miklos et al., 2019), flipped classrooms (Jensen et al., 2018; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Zheng et al., 2020), and collaborative assignments (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017; Senn et al., 2019) are all intended to actively engage the learners.

All individuals have specific roles in successfully implementing an effective IBL classroom. First, the teacher needs to provide the environment's overall parameters, including a time frame, objectives, and measurement tools, all while sharing successes (Hopper, 2018). Through cooperative learning and clear expectations, success is achieved no matter which IBL strategy is highlighted. For effective lessons, the teacher needs to initially communicate the expectations and fundamentally wrap up the lessons, shifting the focus from grades to content (Xin et al., 2019).

Flipped Classroom

Learners taking ownership of personal and individual growth is paramount to success. Flipped classrooms were one of the first, and most popular designs, during the initial implementation phase of the IBL theory (Hartman et al., 2018; Swaner & Ackerman, 2018). The

flipped classroom appeared to be a transitional model from traditional instruction to IBL at the turn of the century (Jensen et al., 2018). Over time, the flipped classroom has morphed into a deeper and more complex design than the initial structure (Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Swaner & Ackerman, 2018). The stereotypical reading of notes or watching prepared videos and slides has expanded to game structures to elicit engagement outside of the formal classroom structure.

The concept of Flipped Classroom structure is designed around individual introductory learning before engaging in lessons within the classroom (Jensen et al., 2018; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). The learners are provided specific content outside of the structured classroom to gain a preemptive insight into the information to enter the whole group environment with questions and insight regarding the material (Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Swaner & Ackerman, 2018; Zheng et al., 2020). The ultimate focus of the flipped concept is to maximize learning time within the formal classroom while merging the equipped knowledge of students to ask questions and delve deeper into the concept (Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Swaner & Ackerman, 2018).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Students tend to become interested and invested in educational topics by asking pertinent and concept-driven questions. Real-life learning impacts directly and solidifies learners to grasp deeply embedded concepts to help retain information and apply it outside of a given situation (Servant-Miklos et al., 2019). Hung et al. (2019) advocate for the need for specific components with problem-based learning that evolves and improves. These steps are to implement, experiment, revise, and modify the work.

PBL is an intentional design for merging real-life situations with content-based objectives (Buck Institute for Education, 2015; Manzoni, 2017). Students are part of each step in the

process, from developing the problem to engaging the learning, designing, and ultimately resolving the inquiry (Hartman et al., 2018; Hung et al., 2019; Hyun et al., 2017). The investment in time and interest are leveraged to increase student engagement throughout the process.

Research studies have suggested the effectiveness of PBL when intentionally planned and delivered (Bolt et al., 2019; Buck Institute for Education, 2015; Senn et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2020). The use of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in conjunction with PBL strategies entwines authentic learning strategies to meet planned objectives (LaVelle et al., 2019). The intentionality of both STEM and PBL provides opportunities for individualized learning experiences while asking questions and exploring diverse interests. Allowing for wide variations of engagement that the learner takes charge of supports the learning process.

Hung et al. (2019) suggested that through the reviews in identifying different, yet key perspectives, in PBLs Meta-Analyses and Reviews. Trends, gaps, and future research directions are minimized through a concrete understanding of key concepts. Student-led discourse and asking questions relating to real-life situations help students achieve a deep understanding (Manzon, 2017). The objectives are met through intentional PBL design and learning strategies, binding knowledge is obtained, and students remember the deep overarching concepts (Buck Institute for Education, 2015).

Research Studies supporting Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Teaching and learning in isolation are no longer considered effective delivery to meet the diverse needs of learners. It has been determined that the vast knowledge students bring to the classroom can enhance the lessons while making connections to help retain information. Combining individual thinking with differing experiences and opinions helps create a

collaborative learning environment (Bolt et al., 2019). Through experiential learning, discourse needs to occur at various levels, including student and instructor, as well as peer-to-peer (Stewart et al., 2020).

Previous research studies had supported the effectiveness of collaborative learning when intentionally planned and delivered (Bolt, 2019; Senn et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2020). The Center for Economic and Social Research delved into Advanced Placement (AP), specifically pertaining to PBL. Through a randomized sampling, it was determined that teaching learners with primarily IBL techniques in AP classes in the United States government and environmental science. The Knowledge in Action (KIA) is a specific delivery model, with components designed for increasing a significant improvement of learning output to measure achievement. The above passing score of three shifted from 37% to 45% using the KIA model (Saavedra et al., 2021). In addition to the improvement of students passing the AP exams, this research study concluded there was no difference between the impact on socio-economic groups of low or high-earning families.

Supporting Saavedra et al. (2021), research was compiled regarding PD and its impact on adult learners. The expansion of the previous study included the topic of PD and examined what benefits of IBL (Saavedra et al., 2021). The objective was to determine the most definitive program to meet the needs of all learners. A direct tie was found to the level of engagement and investment of adult learners, in conjunction with routine and ongoing PD opportunities significantly impacting the adult learner. It is most important to note that the PD design was intentionally modeled around the student experience within the classroom. With minimal variations of the expectations of what teachers should be planning when preparing lessons and units.

Downfalls of Active Learner Engagement

There are limitations and pitfalls to implementing strategies that actively engage students. One area which requires support centers around ALE. Implementation of specific strategies of ALE provided for instructional leaders (Lotter et al., 2016), known as Instructional Specialists (ISs) in the overseas community. Previous studies affirm the positive impact of student-centric learning experiences on minors within K-12 programs (Dear, 2016; Goodman, 2016; Keller & Johnson, 2019; Xin et al., 2019), but research is not available on the impact of adult learners receiving modeled engagement strategies during PD.

Leaders have expressed concern over the lack of specific training teachers have received when expected to implement ALE strategies (Robertson et al., 2020). Robertson et al. (2020) go on to state that teachers do not have the specific resources to routinely affirm the intended learning objective obtained by the students in an ALE delivery. Dear (2016) contends the issue that compounds the problem is the various engagement strategies available for implementation, none of which have been solely identified or agreed to be the most effective for all learners.

It is claimed that one single strategy will not meet the diverse and demanding needs of all situations or all learners (Adams et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2019; Jensen et al., 2018; Lin, 2019; Sailer & Sailer, 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). Kahn (2021) highlights a concern with combining mathematics, theory, and real life. It was determined that conceptual knowledge and practical work do not merge seamlessly. For example, when viewing the concept of simple arithmetic, it is agreed that $1 + 1 = 2$. Unfortunately, in some real-life situations, such as combining atoms into a molecule, $1 + 1 = 1$ (Kahn, 2021). Kahn (2021) when explaining the combination of hydrogen and oxygen elements creates a new molecule, therefore negating the mathematical understanding. Depending on the degree of understanding of the learner, ALE would vary. If the

objective for this type of knowledge is simple arithmetic, a more basic level of examination would suffice. Unfortunately, teachers cannot determine all the misconceptions, degrees of understanding, and the specific scenario which each student might take. Determining when Active Learning Strategies should be limited or avoided completely should be thoroughly examined (Turner et al., 2018). Turner et al. (2018) advocate having a firm grasp of the content, prior knowledge, and intended direction, which needs to routinely be examined, verified, and realigned as necessary.

The instructor's lack of confidence and numerous variables are frequently sighted for reasons teachers are not keen on relinquishing control of their lessons. Through IBL, students have more ownership, while the teacher has given up much of their control (Buck Institute for Education, 2015; Duke et al., 2020; Hartman et al., 2018; Saavedra et al., 2021). To move forward, many instructors note they need to become comfortable with not holding all the answers. Phrases that may contain uncertainty or emphasize additional research are not frequently encountered in traditional classrooms. The most successful educators with IBL are found outside of their comfort zone, knowledge, and modeling the Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2016).

Defining the Role of an Instructional Coach

All professionals can benefit from collaborative and coaching sessions (Gawande, 2011; Taylor, 2019). Simply because a professional is viewed to be at the pinnacle of their job should not presume a need for advice is no longer required. Top professional athletes, Chief Executive Officers, and different experts have advisors in some form or fashion (Gawande, 2011; Taylor, 2019). Whether through an intentional coaching model, advisor, or thought partner, even those at the highest part of the organization realize the need to bounce ideas off someone before

implementation (Taylor, 2019). Various models have been implemented to ensure education leaders receive ongoing training through both direct and indirect growth models.

Educational or instructional coaches are trained professionals who support systemic reform and thought partners through critical advice and unique outside perspectives (Higgins & Parsons, 2021). The use of an instructional coach is a confidential confidant who can provide feedback in a non-threatening environment. The most effective instructional coaches work in close individual relationships with the leader to help work through various topics (Aguilar, 2013). Sessions are devised for routine or impromptu meetings and are structured to meet individual needs. Impactful relationships are intentionally planned, to ensure progress towards individual, district, and organizational goals.

Leveraging Andragogy for Adult Learners

Pedagogy, and andragogy, are philosophies of delivering content to learners (Knowles, 1977, 1980). Neither philosophy specifically identifies the learner's previous knowledge but delves into the delivery of information (Knowles, 1977, 1980). Although not specifically related to chronological age, pedagogy focuses on the learning capabilities of children, while andragogy is the delivery to meet the instructional needs of adults (McNally et al., 2019). The transition between pedagogical learning and the andragogical process is not always smooth.

McNally et al. (2019) suggest a shift in educational delivery is required between 18 and 21 years of age, focusing on more learner autonomy. This concept suggests the need for instructors to adjust their informational delivery. Various deliveries are required to meet these diverse demands of the adult learner (Watts, 2018). Gender dynamics and desired achievement levels directly impact teaming efforts related to future performance (Ting-Ling et al., 2020).

The instructor has a responsibility to meet the diverse needs of each learner (Hartman et al., 2018; Senn et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2020). Senn et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of intentionally planning for new experiences with concepts that can make connections to previous ones. When working with adult learners, it is not as important to deliver the content as it is to create an environment (McNally et al., 2019). Understanding, at some point, every learner transitions from pedagogical needs to have the ability to create their meaning through context.

Professional learning is frequently required to address the need for increasing adults' understanding of these intricate and specific instructional techniques (McNally et al., 2019). Leveraging engagement opportunities for adult learners has been suggested to both model and encourage the implementation of such instructional techniques (Aguilar, 2013). Successfully implementing these strategies as the techniques are intended without specific PD has not been at the forefront of the research (McNally et al., 2019).

There is a need for extensive PD sessions to begin to implement change for best practices of instructional delivery. Andragogical strategies are essential for adult learners to fully grasp information (Hartman et al., 2018). Implementing Dewey's (1910) theory of progressivism into current-day interactive classrooms has been a topic of discussion (Hartman et al., 2018; Hopper, 2018; Weinhandl & Lavicza, 2019). The most appropriate implementation strategies to allow learner engagement to continue to be debated (Hartman et al., 2018; Hopper, 2018; Weinhandl & Lavicza, 2019). Furthermore, the most appropriate PD to support instructional leaders with the shift from teacher-centric classrooms (Mohamed, 2020) to a student-centric learning environment is ambiguous (Goodman, 2016). Determining the specific strategies to increase learner engagement is also being examined.

Andragogy requires autonomy where the learner takes on a greater sense of responsibility for obtaining new knowledge (McNally et al., 2019). This is imperative for the learning structure of adults. Adults are collaborative learners, and although they no longer require handed information, exposure to information and experiences is essential to making connections individually. Therefore, planning for experiences with content, context, and diverse approaches should be intentionally designed (McNally et al., 2019).

Aspects of andragogy that need to be considered are both explicit and implicit communication (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014). Communicating positive words of encouragement is a simple yet highly effective means of supporting the adult learner. McNally et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of long-term designs impacting the adult learner. Ensuring ample time for adults to thoroughly examine content while making connections is critical for the adult learner (McNally et al., 2019). In addition, explicitly planning for appropriate technology and the comfort of the adult learner can greatly impact the adult learner. McNally et al. (2019) suggest diverse worldviews and experiences. Over the past few decades, the availability of technology resources has dramatically expanded (Sailer & Sailer, 2021) resulting in a struggle to keep up with the rate of change. Not all learners have had the same exposure and comfort with these tools. Ensuring the support provided is aligned with their current knowledge of these resources is imperative to the outcome of the learning for the adult learner. Therefore, these concerns need to not only be planned for as a group but also for the individual needs of the adult learner in conjunction with the content being addressed.

Instructional Inquiry Design

When a learner requests or requires support in a skill-based improvement, instructional coaching is effective in reaching those goals (Virginia Tech University, 2016). Skill-based

learning applies to the application and execution of different skills required to accomplish a task. Examples of this would be learning new technology or software, systemic expectations, or procedural requirements. Instructional coaching delivery provides a direct plan of communication (Robertson et al., 2020). The learner is provided with steps to follow and ultimately reaches the end goal through a sequential plan. During a coaching session, the coach manipulates the intended material through explicit instructions delivered by the coach. The intended outcome is that the steps can be replicated by the learner later to use the content as intended. Instructional Coaching Designs are most effective in using sequential processes required to be routinely used. The instructional coaching model can move the learner forward to the intended objective in a short time frame. There are a few deviations. Productivity can be quickly observed and measured.

Facilitative Inquiry Design

Situations arise where the learning does not have an expected or required outcome. Instead, multiple solutions could be reached and found to be acceptable. During these sessions, the learner's actions, beliefs, and overall manner of being are examined and leveraged to grow (Virginia Tech University, 2016). The facilitative coaching model requires a great deal of practice to help guide instructional leaders on their way forward.

Facilitative coaching meetings are most successful when there is no definitive answer to the concern being addressed (Aguilar, 2013). Most frequently, open-ended questions are asked, and thoroughly examined, and the learner reaches the final decision through these inquiries. With facilitative coaching, time is not a guiding factor. Exploring possibilities (Servant-Miklos et al., 2019), examining ideas, discussing various points of view (Taylor, 2019), and asking numerous questions support the process of growth (Stratton, 2021). Understanding the facilitative coaching

design is about possibilities, and comfort is as essential to learning as the final product (Aguilar, 2013). This form of discussion is one-sided, and the instructional leader does most of the heavy lifting of the conversation. Some difficulty can arise if the coach, from an outside perspective, can see a glaring problem. However, ultimately the learner is struggling to pull far enough away to look at the situation any differently. Ultimately, with the facilitative coaching design, the learner makes each decision to create an established plan or path forward.

Gaps in Current Research

Society continues to grow and evolve, as do learners. While most research appears to be towards minors (Hyun et al., 2017), adult learners implementing the desired change are not examined (Keller & Johnson, 2019; Xin et al., 2019). Phrases such as life-long learner have become emblazoned within education, almost used as a buzzword, but the research values only minors seated within traditional classes as learners (Holland et al., 2018; Weinhandl & Lavicza, 2019). Research specifically designed to measure the effectiveness of individual coaching strategies designed to implement change by educators and leaders was not located. Through examining the process and steps within adult learning theory, it is essential to understand the lived experiences, brain development, and need for processing time for those individuals. As attributed leaders within the educational field who voluntarily seek out support to continue their educational journey need to be examined explicitly to provide proper support.

Previous research focused on individuals with little voice in the placement of the learners. A teacher is assigned a group of students, and the research delves into the interactions and growth from there. Focusing on individuals who are seeking out opportunities to determine growth through instructional coaches is a more recent concept. The need for this research is imperative to help determine the level of impact of instructional coaching for adults. Requiring

fiscal responsibilities, long-term gains, and a degree of interest for these thought advisors is essential to determine the most effective use of the opportunity.

The current literature focuses on an instructional inquiry design coaching model. Whether explicitly telling the instructional leader one specific path or allowing a choice of possible solutions, the research primarily focuses on this directed approach. The studies lay out whether a coaching model improves educator practice through an instructional inquiry design by a perceived more knowledgeable professional to move an educator forward on a specific path (Robertson et al., 2020). Although a few variables of implementation are seemingly represented, the model teacher to peer coach or outside professionals working to support teachers, the designs are similar. The teacher requires improvement, and the coach directs them with specific actions to move towards a more optimally defined view of success.

Research is needed to determine the effectiveness of leveraging questioning techniques in a facilitative role. More research is needed to allow the amount of control and engagement among the instructional leader to reach desired conclusions. As the instructional leader's confidence increases through coaching sessions, the instructional leader will rely less on the coach to provide specific guidance in difficult situations (Aguilar, 2013). Additional information is being collected to determine how this model is impacted in difficult situations. Conversely, instructional leaders taking control and guiding themselves through similar processes in future instances continues to be researched.

The domino effect of this research is immense. Ensuring the appropriate level of exposure, for adults, in being provided specific content regarding the cognitive learning theory, behaviorism theory, and social cognitive theory can extend studies needing to include this population, ultimately having an exponential impact on future learning within education. Once

this is secured, more profound claims are made regarding the success of such application of coaching relationships and the most effective techniques to meet the diverse needs of adult educators.

Summary

The most effective mode of instructional learning, primarily coaching, has been widely discussed. Education has shifted from multiple grades taught in one-room schoolhouses (LaVelle et al., 2019) to grouping learners by chronological age, with whole-group lessons commonplace. The government has asserted power, and schools struggled to adjust from one strategy to another. Progressivism has taken a commanding lead in the discussions on the best practices of the individuality of educational delivery (Bolt et al., 2019; Gutek, 2011). The degree to which learners can practice and for assessment (Kurtz et al., 2019) while continually having access to information (Manzon, 2017), along with relating the knowledge to everyday life work (Servant-Miklos et al., 2019), has come to be considered the best practice. As times have changed and technology has become a driving force in most individuals' lives, another level of complexity has been added. World dynamics have rapidly progressed and changed, and PD opportunities for instructional leaders have struggled to keep pace. Coaching has become a strategy being used to meet the diverse needs of individual learners of all ages. In recent decades, the rate of change in aspects of technology and industry has been exponential and educational delivery has not been able to continue to make the same strides. Ultimately, as learners have seized control of their education through individual-led instructional practices, professionals have attempted to take more of a facilitator role.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. This research entails a qualitative phenomenological study using data collection that includes interviews, focus groups, and journaling by district and school-level leaders' coaches within the overseas Department of Defense school district. This research study will include 12 voluntary participants across various Pacific locations. All the participants are Department of Defense-connected professionals. The study will include leaders responsible for planning and providing PD for educators within the district. All considerations are made to ensure trustworthiness, validity, and ethical considerations are made as proactive strategies.

Research Design

Moustakas (1994) defines the research of lived experiences of participants as transcendental phenomenology. The focus of this qualitative research is designed to collect this specific data. The transcendental phenomenological study is the most conducive to this study due to its subjective nature of participants' lived experiences (Kalu, 2019; Moustakas, 1994). Kalu (2019) expressly commits to combining qualitative research with the individual researcher collectively to deliver a better result through the interpretation of the information. The data being gathered is a combination of lived experiences, and reflective interpretation combined in conjunction with known educational practices (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the primary means of data collection will leverage interviews of those experiences (Moustakas, 1994), which delve into participant perceptions of the strategies as imperative to gaining insight (Voithofer et al.,

2019). Moustakas (1994) states there are numerous variables directly influence the reliability of implementation among participants in each study, to be prior life experiences. Voithofer et al. (2019) have determined that the perception of concern held by the coach outweighs the desire to utilize the strategy. There is no amount of PD which will increase the chance of implementation. Moreover, the confidence level of an educator with delivery and content directly relates to the decision to implement them decreases (Lange et al., 2021).

The phenomenological approach is the most effective data collection for the retrieval of personal experience and perception of human events (Cope, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). The focus of the research is to examine the personal lived experiences of participants during coaching experiences. Since the data collection will primarily focus on the participants' belief in effectiveness and experience, it is imperative to use a qualitative approach to data collection (Downing et al., 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental approach is utilized, so as not to allow personal beliefs to influence the interpretation of the findings. To ensure that personal bias is excluded, peer review conversations of the data were held to increase reliability after initial data interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). Conversations are extensively communicated with professional data analysts as follow-up discussions to ensure personal bias is not interfering with results. The timing of the work is documented as being in the moment and was leveraged to ensure accurate information about the specific experience is accurately collected and interpreted (Moustakas, 1994).

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of overseas instructional coaches who intentionally plan engagement strategies during coaching sessions with overseas instructional leaders in a Department of Defense community?

Sub-Question One

How do overseas American instructional coaches intentionally plan for individualized coaching sessions which impact instructional leaders?

Sub-Question Two

How do overseas American instructional coaches guide meetings for either an instructional or a facilitative type of session?

Sub-Question Three

How do overseas instructional coaches determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented?

Setting and Participants

Instructional leaders of the worldwide organization have a diverse demographic, experience, and professional knowledge. The focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has become more prevalent within the organization (www.dodea.edu, 2020). Since this time, an intentional shift has been made to identify and encourage qualified individuals to apply for positions of educational leadership. Practices and protocols which reflect an interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion, among the current coaches and district leaders have emerged in the past few years. Currently, the instructional coaches within the Pacific Region are comprised of Caucasian and African American or Black. In addition, the instructional leaders the coaches interact with self-identify as a variety of Caucasian or White, African American or Black, Asian, Latino and Latina, and multi-racial. The organization requires all leaders hired into the positions to have a minimum of a Master's Degree in Education. However, 50% of the coaches have a doctorate with an additional 25% actively working towards their educational doctorate. The socio-economic breakdown of both the coaches and instructional leaders averages over \$100,000

per year with an additional Living Quarter's Allowance of approximately \$36,000. Participants receive transportation accommodations of round-trip airline tickets for themselves and all dependents back to their home of record on alternating years.

Site

The Pacific Region includes three of eight districts within the Worldwide organization, which primarily supports the Department of Defense dependents around the globe. The district is one of three designated districts within the Pacific Region. Specifically, the region encompasses the Korean peninsula, the island of Guam, the mainland, and Okinawa, Japan. Each district has a leadership hierarchy, including a superintendent, either one or two supporting community superintendents, ISs, school-level administrators, and coaches designated as specialists. The region has 15 instructional coaches supporting the districts. There are a total of 45 schools of different compositions of grades of Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade (www.dodea.edu). The intentional breakdown of school settings is primarily elementary, middle, and high school which include various combinations of educational configurations. In addition, each district has schools with both 21st-century open environment learning models and legacy, or traditional structures. The region is widely dispersed among the physical locations of several Department of Defense installations to include all branches of the overseas military community.

There are limitations to American resources both geographically and personnel. The financial cost and time delay of physical procurement when sending resources overseas can be exorbitant. Therefore, many pieces of training are delivered virtually or in a hybrid of virtual and in-person learning structures. The transcendental phenomenological approach is the most appropriate research method because it intentionally focuses on the lived experiences of the participants and can collect the unique and diverse perspectives of each voluntary participant

(Moustakas, 1994).

The organizational structure is based on shared leadership. From the superintendent down to the school-level leaders, decisions are made through consensus agreement and numerous discussions. Leadership at all levels within the Pacific Region is committed to increasing student engagement as it has been a primary point of discussion in the district over the past five years. There has been a large professional turnover during each of the past five years within the region. Some districts have had major transitions since 2013. Openings, closings, moving locations, combining with others, and realignment of districts have all occurred in the past nine years. This greatly impacts the instructional delivery and cohesion of the schools within the Pacific Region.

Participants

Educational leaders are a diverse group of individuals from various demographics, genders, and races. The leaders are a combination of district and school-level personnel who directly impact the coaching received by leaders responsible for grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12th-grade educators. The leaders have different roles in the district including senior leadership, administrators, and specific subject matter experts. Each leader has a different role and impacts a different portion of the district's initiative or personnel.

The district leadership is made up of three superintendents. The district employs 26 instructional coaches known as Instructional Specialists, 15 females, five males, and six current vacancies. All participants have a minimum of five years of professional experience as educators. There are 12 participants, nine females and three males who volunteered for this study and are limited to a professional and peer relationship with the researcher.

Researcher Positionality

Determining the most effective instructional strategy to maximize the learning potential

of diverse needs continues to be a primary focus of my education. At the turn of the 21st century, when I began teaching, I focused on individual learning. In 2002, legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) began to spotlight the diversity in student learning and encouraged the school system to find ways to meet those differences (Heise, 2018). At this same time, I was beginning my educational journey as a teacher. Quickly determining the importance of meeting all students' needs, with a lack of preparation during my schooling, I began to delve into strategies to employ within the classroom.

The philosophical framework of ontology is imperative to this research. Understanding there is not only the concrete understanding of learning but also the abstract and debatable version of learning combined with the degree of successful learning. The definition of learning continues to be debated. Whether defined by the ability to regurgitate information or the usability of the obtained information, understanding what truly defines knowledge needs to be examined through a qualitative study.

Interpretive Framework

The research is viewed through the social constructivism lens. Social constructivism allows for collaboration and peer work to solidify learning while delving into the content (Vygotsky, 1978). Since the learning took place in a social setting, the amount and quality of peer interaction are essential to the learning. Vygotsky (1978) advocated for the individual experience through social settings and interactions. Vygotsky's (1978) views are combined with Dewey's (1938) constructivist views of peer engagement to maximize learning potential is essential to adequately support learners.

The design of the research study will primarily encompass the individual experience (Moustakas, 1994) gained through a collaborative setting (Aguilar, 2016; Bolt et al., 2019). The

coaching is provided in a group environment, with an emphasis on collaboration during each session. Pairing together is essential to individual understanding as peer engagement is the goal of the coaching sessions. Through peer support, the implementation of similar strategies and designing reflective learning sessions will occur within the Pacific Region.

Philosophical Assumptions

The values and beliefs which I bring to this research are that all students have the capability and willingness to learn, albeit not in the same manner, time, or with the same desire. I believe it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students have access to education and can maximize their ability to learn. Assignments and activities may need to be altered or adjusted to ensure that each student can capitalize on the learning. This can be reflected in various forms such as environmental factors, topics of interest, and learning activities. I believe too frequently, the teacher-centric approach does not meet the diverse needs of the learners and intentionally building relationships to learn more about each learner as an individual will greatly impact the knowledge acquired.

Ontological Assumption

Due to the experiences, background knowledge, and perceptions brought into schools every day, the understanding of multiple realities needs to be addressed (Altmeyer et al., 2020). Altmeyer et al. (2020) claim everyone enters with a different experience which can impact their perception of the material being delivered. Aguilar (2013) explains coaching is deeply influenced by a philosophical study on how individuals focus on a way of being as it manifests through language, body, and emotions. The assumptions of myself as a researcher also connect to my way of being. Understanding the level of engagement and the interaction with instructional leaders are also molded from their past experiences (Dewey, 1910). With individual diversity

comes the way they relate to this information can provide very different outcomes (Altmeyer et al., 2020; Bolt et al., 2019). Leveraging diversity also includes acknowledgment of various perceptions of reality which may be in stark contrast with others around them, relating to each learner's previous experiences (Heise, 2018). It is at these times that taking a step back and listening to others becomes key to understanding the reality of those around me, allowing me an insight into a very diverse world.

I believe learners make connections and interpret information in a variety of ways. This means although there is a uniform delivery learners may ultimately leave with different understanding of the content. Expressly stated, diverse learners can have unique nuances which drastically alter a single meaning or message. This can occur when one concept or idea is combined with previous experiences and knowledge resulting in various interpretations of the same message. The ontological premise that everyone has different background experiences which directly impact their understanding of the content left me conflicted. There was an ease of planning one instructional delivery method, however, the diverse group of learners' experiences could lead to various interpretations being ascertained. Over time, I came to value the importance of addressing the individuality of each learner as it intertwined with the content to leverage these unique realities minimizing misinformation, confusion, or at least diverse takeaways.

Epistemological Assumption

Honoring the knowledge and experiences of everyone is paramount to quality research. Removing my experiences and personal beliefs regarding the importance of educational coaching from the research and following the trail which the data reveals is imperative to revealing objective and revealing information to the true study. Justifying the subjective understanding of the combination of all the participants can create a clear picture and outcomes.

Throughout my educational experience, I have come to rely on peers to improve my instructional practice. I have experienced colleagues who support my growth as thought partners, collaborators, and direct advisors. These experiences have directly impacted my belief in the importance of continually learning and being coached in the professional arena. Acknowledging these experiences has been a driving force behind intentionally designing questions and setting a foundation for an open mindset to receive the research. Though these beliefs supported the identification of the need for this research, removing myself from this data are an integral part of ensuring the data are reflective of the study and not swayed in a particular direction.

Axiological Assumption

Through the interpretivism axiological, the research study is conducted (Bacus & Alda., 2022). As a trained instructional coach, prior knowledge of coaching practices, along with research, teachings, and content being examined, has the possibility to overlap. Adult learners retain information more readily when there are multiple opportunities to explore and engage with the information on a personal level (Aguilar, 2013; Knowles, 1977). Relying on previous research with the intent of building on this information will also be a clearly defined separation between my research and professional responsibilities.

Due to my previous experiences within education and my current position, I am aware of the axiological assumptions brought to this topic. Raised in a household where both parents were educators, my entire life has been consumed by instructional role models. I deeply value and seek out opportunities to continually learn and improve. I have received formal education from Miami University of Ohio and Indiana Wesleyan University focusing on educational best practices. Over two decades as a professional, both within the United States and in Asia, has reinforced my values.

Currently, I am an instructional coach for above-school-level leaders. The subsequent research is value-bound, and intentional measures are continually taken to remove any personal experiences leading to biases that may impact the study (Bacus & Alda, 2022). The mindset of obtaining a user perspective on coaching and the delivery of such interactions will help define the role of the researcher as a professional. My interest in increasing engagement in learning strategies for diverse learners has been a focus of my career for several years, primarily examined through the lens of pedagogy. With an intense focus on growth opportunities of andragogy, the participants' personal experiences will help determine how the interest and engagement of learners directly impact the amount of knowledge taken away from the experiences. This is how I specifically view my deep-seated interest in this research study. Therefore, this study will help solidify a better understanding of engagement strategies with leadership among districts that are committed to strengthening teaching strategies.

Researcher's Role

My position is to support the Pacific Region's three designated districts as a subject matter expert for all elementary instructional coaches and district-level leaders. I am not a supervisor of any individual but viewed as an instructional coach of designated leaders. I am the primary contact of the Japan district. Although I am assigned to the Pacific Region, the focus, and data collection where the participants are solicited do not align with my work. I do not have any direct or indirect influence over participants. Therefore, any concern regarding negative consequences as a coach will not impact the research study. Communication was routinely expressed that participation is completely voluntary to all possible individuals through emails and verbal remarks during each meeting.

I have recently transitioned from the district level to the Pacific Region, where I have made numerous contacts. In addition, the large turnover of new hires within the three districts continues to focus on the participants, and the work I do will not overlap with the voluntary participants. The 12 participants were selected from the district and school-level leaders with whom I have not already established an ongoing professional relationship. Therefore, I was able to engage individuals with whom I do not currently have an in-depth relationship, ultimately validating the data. Identifiable researcher bias is identified as research-based best practices and implemented coaching techniques. Asking intentional predesigned questions to allow open-ended thought and discussion will minimize the identified bias.

Procedures

No data was collected until the appropriate IRB approval has been granted. All site and organizational permissions were followed throughout the process. Specific permission was received before beginning all components of the research and was communicated with transparency to participants, the organization, and Liberty University.

Permissions

Discussions have been held with coaches and district leadership within the Pacific Region regarding the research study. The leadership is interested in participating based on the implementation strategies of modeling engagement techniques to determine the most effective implementation of strategies for district and school leaders to encourage similar strategies to trickle down to students through planning and modeling of coaching sessions. The superintendent has communicated support for the research study. Currently, I am in communication with my organization regarding approval for inquiries regarding completing studies within the organization. The office responsible for approvals is in transition now and has

started all requests that are currently on hold. The current timeline to begin accepting the applications began during the summer. To maximize time, I began organizing the required paperwork for the organization and filled out all required documents. I am working with a peer who has previously received tentative approval so I can increase my chance of the organization also approving my request. Once applications began being accepted, the request was made in conjunction with the IRB submission. See Appendix B for the IRB approval letter. The proper documentation, support, and approval were requested through both the worldwide organization and the official IRB request. Once the permissions have been received, they were emailed to Liberty University to proceed with the research study and were included in the appendix of this study.

Recruitment Plan

This organization has determined active engagement strategies for learners are an initiative that requires further examination by district leadership. The sample size was 12 voluntary participants. This voluntary group was identified as instructional leaders or instructional coaches within the organization. The final determination regarding the number of participants was made based on interest, accessibility of the individuals to participate in all components of the research, and ensuring there are enough participants to accurately retrieve the necessary data. A list of possible candidates was determined by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year. See Appendix A for organizational site approval. This approval allowed communication to be directly sent via email request to all possible participants no later than the first month of school. Participants were asked to respond to the inquiry no later than the end of the first quarter, allowing one month to ask questions and respond to the request. Once confirmation of participation, the researcher had two weeks to schedule an individual interview

time of 60 minutes with each volunteer. The interviews will all be scheduled no later than Winter Recess. During the individual interviews, the researcher will explain the future procedures and requirements of data collection regarding the journal entry. All journals were kept and filled out through the end of the first semester. All submissions will need to be provided to the researcher by one week after the data has been completed or by the end of the first week of February 2023.

Focus group conversations were scheduled by the end of November 2022. The groups were flexibly grouped by the availability of the time to attend the designated focus group. All participants conduct similar tasks and hold direct coaching conversations with district and school-level leaders; therefore, the physical location of the participant was not identified as impactful to the focus group conversations. All focus group discussions were completed by the spring of 2023. During the focus group conversation, the researcher will take detailed electronic notes, which were shared with the participants for review upon the conclusion of each focus group. It should be noted that only the notes from the specific focus group held were reviewed by the participants within each conversation. Finally, once all documentation has been collected by the conclusion of the first week of February 2023.

Data were coded to minimize the opportunity for misinterpretation of content (Cascio et al., 2019). All peer data conversations were concluded one month after receiving the data. Only pseudonyms were used to represent participants and any identifiable information when being reviewed and aligned to the coded information (Cascio et al., 2019).

It is a priority to obtain an inclusive understanding of experiences. Therefore, volunteers were a combination of convenience, and purposive samples were included in the study (Moustakas, 1994). Convenience sampling was utilized to measure the growth of intentional engagement strategies (Stratton, 2021). As the qualification for instructional coaching is

specified with a minimum of a Master's Degree in Education, the use of a demographic survey (Appendix D) will allow a dividing purposive sample utilized to determine which participants have similar levels of understanding regarding engaging learning environments of PD for teachers. See Appendix C for the informed consent form. Individuals were reminded before each interaction of the process, of confidentiality, and be requested to provide consent moving forward. In addition, participants were reminded of the process of removing themselves from the study during these interactions. All steps were followed to ensure that participants are not coerced or pressured to remain in the study throughout the duration of the data collection process.

Data Collection Plan

The data were collected in three specific approaches to allow for the triangulation of data from differing experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Once the IRB has approved the research study, the process of selecting participants began. As a best practice, the participants were provided with the research plan, and explained there are no repercussions for not participating, as it is completely voluntary, and if at any time they choose to withdraw, there were no repercussions (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas' (1994) detailed plan for analyzing data was used throughout the triangulation (Guion, 2002; Mathison, 1988) of data collection and analysis.

Moustakas (1994) details procedures for organizing data to align and interpret collected information. A focus was placed on clearing the mind through epoché to avoid specific positions regarding the topic will occur (Moustakas, 1994). Adequate time was allotted to transcribe, examine, and ensure horizontalization will take place for all data collection (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the completion of transference of the information and horizontalization will occur to identify specific statements within the transcript (Moustakas, 1994). The focus on

horizontalization will allow for grouping and open coding to occur. The following step was to align the data with the central research and sub-questions. The data were transferred to a separate document to narrow the lengthy communication to intensive and specific data (Moustakas, 1994). Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) explain the importance of reduction early within this phase of the process. Combining the transcripts to cluster common data points to be included within a table to identify the continuum of perspectives (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Such transcripts and statements were documented verbatim, only eliminating any personally identifiable information of the participant. Allowing for specific and actual responses will allow for a deep and thorough understanding of the participant's lived experiences. At this point, removing redundancy will occur and be noted. The goal is to identify the invariant constituents or essential information, and data to stand out (Moustakas, 1994).

The first step of data collection was gathered through individual interviews (Moustakas, 1994). During the data collection, each participant was given individualized attention in a one-on-one setting. The interview plan is to meet virtually to record the data for the most accurate detailed transcription and review of the interview post-conversation. The discussions were held through video teleconference (VTC) with cameras turned on in real time. Upon the conclusion of obtaining the information on the experiences and interests of engagement strategies by district and school leaders, the participant received an explanation of the research study's steps of data collection explicitly described to each participant (Moustakas, 1994). The subsequent steps will include the participant creating a journal of their coaching sessions and observing the implementation strategies discussed during coaching sessions with instructional leaders, in conjunction with the focus groups regarding the degree of implementation of those engagement strategies. The coaches were provided with an electronic reflexive journal (Meyer & Willis,

2018) to document coaching sessions, overall thoughts, and perceptions. The implementation of engagement strategies will also allow for reflection based on the description and depiction of the intentionally planned sessions. The purpose of the journal will allow participants to collect thoughts, obtain footing with information, and organize data (Meyer & Willis, 2018). As part of the journal, the instructional coach was able to attach any photos, slide decks, or specific information they determine pertinent to support their anecdotal notes. Focus group discussions that were conducted leveraged to gather a complete understanding of the level of engagement of the educators (subsequent learners) shown during coaching sessions which encouraged the desire to implement the strategy.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews are crucial to the qualitative research study (Moustakas, 1994; Roulston, 2017). Utilizing open-ended questioning, which provides opportunities to highlight individual lived experiences, is pertinent to gathering data for the study (Moustakas, 1994). Gaining an insight into the epistemic understanding of concepts is most greatly gathered through discussions, asking questions, and ultimately interviewing individuals within the field (Roulston, 2017). Gaining such insight is essential to clearly identifying an overall picture of the lived experiences throughout the participant's reality.

Individual interviews were conducted throughout the study at designated points before the initial coaching sessions and upon its conclusion. For routinely scheduled coaching meetings, information was collected at the mid-point of the study. Each interview was conducted in a planned semi-structured format with a specified list of questions asked of all participants. Depending on the responses of each participant determined if subsequent or additional questions were required (Moustakas, 1994). Documentation and verbatim notes were taken through a

transcript recorded in a virtual setting. Due to organizational constraints, recordings of the interview were not used to capture participants' exact words. The researcher took copious notes, through detailed and exact statements to reflect the exact thoughts and remarks of the participants. , writing down noteworthy concepts, phrases, or direct quotes. After the interview transpired, the written transcript was provided to the participant to be reviewed, edited, and verified.

The specific interview questions are provided in the next section. The initial interview was based on building relationships with the participants, documenting their comfort level with the topic of student engagement, and delving into the research question along with the initial information about prior experiences. In addition, questions were asked regarding their interest and excitement level in the topic. The second interview will detail the perceived progress of the participant. Gaining additional insight into specific subcultures of their teachers and staff and their perception of how much they have implemented specific engagement strategies. The final interview will encompass reflective questions on how the coaching experience has impacted their leadership abilities, their focus on future endeavors of implementation, and if they have seen a change in the number of teacher-planned opportunities for student engagement.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.

CRQ

2. How long have you been an instructional coach? CRQ

3. What specific training have you received regarding andragogy and adult learning theory?

CRQ

4. What is your understanding of the roles of the coach and instructional leader; how do you define an instructional coach? CRQ
5. How do you intentionally plan for a coaching meeting? SQ1
6. How do you individualize the coaching session for the different instructional leaders?
SQ1
7. How does the concept of trust play a factor in how you plan for a coaching meeting? SQ1
8. Explain your understanding between instructional and facilitative coaching. CRQ/SQ2
9. Which type of coaching, instructive or facilitative, do you consider to be the most impactful? Why? SQ1/SQ2
10. If issues arise, how do you pivot during a coaching meeting that is not going as planned?
SQ2
11. Provide examples of types of questions you have used during coaching sessions that have helped the instructional leader implement new strategies. SQ3
12. What is your intended outcome for an instructional leader through the coaching session?
SQ3
13. Describe your level of commitment to helping your instructional leader implement topics or ideas discussed during the coaching meeting. SQ3
14. How do you communicate progress of the implementation with the instructional leader?
CRQ/CR3
15. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences which have helped you be a more effective instructor based on engagement practices? SQ3

The questions have been intentionally designed to collect information and data regarding the comfort, understanding, and frequency of the participant's use of engagement strategies. The

inquiry is to address the participants' understanding and implementation of diverse learning needs, as well as specific engagement strategies. It is a primary concern to collect data regarding the planning and preparation, pre-assessment, implementation of instruction, assessment, and reflection of the teaching practice. The theoretical framework used is intentionally utilized from the initial planning stages through reflection. In the absence of a pilot study, the questions were peer-reviewed by an expert data analyst with a Doctor of Philosophy degree, who has been focused on engagement learning strategies for the past five years to ensure clarity of meaning.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The logical design provides a systematic plan to analyze the information. Individual interviews are an essential part of quality qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994). Interpretation of experiences requires analysis of the events to acquire a meaningful understanding (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). A structured approach to the data is required to obtain a clear phenomenological analysis.

The interviews allow the participants to communicate their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994), learning, and growth regarding the studied topic. The information collected allows a wide variety of experiences to be discussed and analyzed. Interviews allow the participant to communicate the intricacies of learning over a span of designated time and have the capabilities to delve deeper into the content than simple quantitative documentation. Being prepared for additional questions to arise from the interviews is vital, as this will ensure open-mindedness in the data collection and will allow the data to drive the conclusions, removing any possibility of the researcher's bias.

Moustakas's (1994) data analysis steps were followed. The technique of open coding was used to organize and delve into the data. The use of open coding is imperative for aggregating

major categories of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The information was transcribed, reviewed multiple times, and ultimately coded to determine the necessary number of categories based on the responses of participants. The commercial software MaxQDA was used to code responses.

The opening coding of everyone's responses was recorded and analyzed (Moustakas, 1994). Themes were identified through the initial opening coding, verified for accuracy, and then grouped accordingly based on identified patterns of responses. The intent is to maximize the grouped information, the researcher was able to separate relevant from irrelevant data to the specific phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) states this step will allow information to be grouped based on individual participants' lived experiences. Themes were identified based on the equivalence of each statement (Moustakas, 1994). Although pertinent to the findings of the composite report provided, specific quotes from participants were used to explain and emphasize the experiences of those participants who encompass the overall findings of the research in the subsequent report (Moustakas, 1994).

Focus Groups

Focus groups provide an opportunity for multiple individuals to meet and discuss their experiences to delve deeper into a topic of conversation (Richard et al., 2021). The purpose of the focus group is to gather information from professionals with lived experiences who hold differing perspectives (Richard et al., 2021). The groups will include similar positions of instructional coaches and those who volunteer to be coached instructional leaders. The intent is to allow comfortable and safe environments where professionals can articulate their lived experiences, points of view, and interest in the coach and instructional leader's relationship. The

power of the focus group is to allow others' perspectives to be leveraged to make connections, expand upon thinking, and clarify various points of view.

The use of VTC video conferencing (VTC) meetings is a feasible way of conducting meetings over a large geographical area when individuals are unable to physically meet in the same location. These types of discussions have become more routine recently with the increase in online gaming and even more so since the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing began (Falter et al., 2022; Scriven, 2021). In educational settings, leveraging this type of interaction allows participants to meet virtually during coaching sessions. Various types of meetings and correspondence have been held with similar platforms allowing both verbal and written communication (Scriven, 2021). In addition, many platforms provide additional interaction options available to include, but not be limited to, both verbal and written communication (Scriven, 2021). The diverse ways meeting participants are now able to interact virtually is something in-person meetings do not always offer (Falter et al., 2022). The use of interaction has become more commonplace and can increase the volume of shared thoughts.

The purpose of the focus groups was designed to allow diverse perspectives, a natural flow of conversations, and deeper insight into andragogy and the coaching experience. Focus groups were designed by participants to gain another perspective on the coaching opportunity. The focus groups will also allow for interactions to occur on planning for individual sessions (Falter et al., 2022; Scriven, 2021), the varying experiences during the sessions (Heinrich et al., 2021), and why some individuals implement discussed strategies and others do not (Marino et al., 2020). The focus groups were intentionally planned to ensure all participants can share. Each question is thoroughly discussed, while the time remains within the designated hour timeline. It should be noted, that although the researcher will keep the information discussed during the

focus group session confidential to specific participants, the same assurances cannot be made of other participating members. Specific reminders were given verbally as part of the directions and opening remarks of each focus group. The focus groups were not recorded through the VTC function, as a constraint by the organization. All comments were transcribed by the researcher who then provided access to all focus group participants the notes to be edited and reviewed.

Focus Group Questions:

1. Describe any pertinent training you have received regarding engagement strategies to utilize and leverage during your coaching sessions? (CRQ)
2. How has the continual change of restrictions for instructional leaders due to the worldwide pandemic impacted how you intentionally plan for your coaching sessions (Scriven, 2021)? (SQ1)
3. How do you modify or adjust during a coaching session (Heinrich et al., 2021)? Please provide examples. (SQ2)
4. How have the engagement strategies been implemented within the school setting (Marino et al., 2020)? (SQ3)
5. What final thoughts or information would you like to share which has not yet been covered?

Focus Group Analysis Plan

Similarly, to the individual interview data analysis, Moustakas analysis steps were followed to isolate, identify, and categorize the remarks to examine the collected data for themes (Moustakas, 1994). To suspend judgment and leverage epoché, the researcher began by self-reflecting and being aware of biases, and intentionally planning strategies to minimize the chance of such an impact (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Working to ensure the researcher's personal

knowledge does not influence the research or participation of statements of neutrality was specifically addressed with each focus group. The researcher intentionally only asked the specific five questions to each group and provide clarifying information rather than participate in the discussion.

Due to the organizational restrictions, which employ all 12 participants, videos of the focus group are not permitted and will not be obtained. No recordings, audio or video, were collected during the focus group conversations. Detailed transcription was completed during the focus group conversation and provided to participants for review immediately upon completion of the discussion. As noted, written dialogue may be interpreted differently. The voice of the participants being transcribed is necessary to ensure clear and consistent understanding was reviewed, specifically with the delivery to decrease miscommunication of tone through text. Therefore, specific requests were provided to all participants before the start and upon conclusion of the focus group conversation. Explicitly requesting each participant to review and edit the transcribed notes taken during the focus group discussion. A horizontalization will occur, allowing for an examination of content (Moustakas, 1994). The software MaxQDA was utilized to help organize the responses and code into specified categories. Each participant's thoughts and contributions were separated within a table to be isolated by the perspective being examined. If at any time questions arise regarding statements or shared information, the participant were provided an opportunity for clarification. Once coded, the data collected were intentionally aligned with the central research and sub-questions being examined.

Journaling

A journal entry was collected to determine the degree of implementation, the participants will need to complete one journal entry. The journal artifact was to document a coaching session

and reflect on the progress made aligned with the planning of the session. The journal was solely viewed by the researcher.

After the conclusion of the coaching sessions, the participant will respond to five specific questions in the journal to share with the researcher. At a minimum, these journals will include but are not limited to the intentional plan for the coaching session, guiding questions planned for as well as ones asked, next steps for the instructional leader and the coach, and final thoughts regarding the session. The purpose of collecting the journal is to determine the implementation of engagement strategies (Meyer & Willis, 2018). These documents were specifically collected from the field as completed.

Journaling Analysis Plan

Individual reflection journals were used to suspend judgment. Open coding after a thorough review of the journal will take place. Five prompts were asked to ensure participants have a way to communicate their experiences. Each participant was asked to respond to each of the following prompts in their journal:

1. Describe the steps you take to intentionally plan for a specific coaching session. (CRQ, SQ1)
2. Describe the overall impression you have of this coaching session's effectiveness. Explain. (CSQ)
3. What guiding questions did you use to ask during this coaching session. (SQ2)
4. What are the next steps for the instructional leader before the next coaching session? (SQ3)
5. How will you intentionally plan for the next coaching session with this instructional leader based on the observed implementation of the next steps? (CSQ, SQ1, SQ3)

The researcher will request a copy of any journal entries to be submitted upon completion. There were formal requests for journal submissions to be sent to the researcher as completed entries at the end of each month. The participant's journal was used to collect data through a reflective artifact. This data artifact was taken regarding the specifics to highlight the different components of the coaching sessions. The participants were able to retain copies of each journal entry, although only one is required, and leverage them during future coaching sessions with their instructional leaders if they desire. The final step of reflection needs to be utilized rather than simply reacting to the lesson or work being analyzed (Gunn, 2011). Gunn (2011) encourages instructors to reflect through multiple means, mainly using evidence to improve their practice.

Data Synthesis

The data were initially coded individually and the data were discussed with a subject matter expert for analyzing data to minimize the chance of bias (Cascio et al., 2019). Cascio et al. (2019) claim the use of open coding will greatly increase the confidence and trustworthiness of the data being examined. Once an understanding of each component has been reached, the data were analyzed collectively. This process is imperative to triangulate the received data accurately (Guion, 2002). Interpreting one data point in isolation is not sufficient to be able to determine the results accurately (Mathison, 1988). Mathison (1988) advocates for multiple data points for the triangulation of information. The use of triangulation of data does not simply define results but rather corroborates each point solidifying the findings. Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulations of data, method, investigator, theory, and data source triangulation. Triangulation of data is vital to the validation of the research (Guion, 2002).

The way data synthesis will take place is through data source triangulation (Guion, 2002; Mathison, 1988). Creating an Excel spreadsheet with categories of the participant to determine the success based on subgroups will allow the identification of trends and commonalities. Determination of categories was made once participants were selected, and groups can be determined. In addition, notating glaring differences in the information was collected. The purpose of this data collection was to identify trends with the data as well as outliers within the research study. Much of the data collected was subjective inquiry and reflection. Therefore, intentionally working to create as objective documentation as possible is imperative to the results. In addition, reviewing the table and the findings with peers to ensure the interpretation of information is accurate and not influenced is essential to creating reliability and credibility. The use of MaxQDA software was used to organize subjective information. However, it is not an intentional part of the research plan or data review.

Trustworthiness

The value and importance of trustworthiness are imperative to the credibility of the research. In 1985, the concept of trustworthiness was developed by Lincoln and Guba. The concept was developed to express the believability of a research study. Jones (2012) has delved further into the concept while comparing trustworthiness and trust. Jones (2012) determined the two were not synonymous. Trustworthiness is a three-part process. Going on to detail the difference in trust as being finite, which can be broken, while trustworthiness is the growing and sustainable belief that one has the integrity of follow-through.

Establishing trustworthiness as a researcher is vital to becoming reliable and showing integrity in all aspects. This was accomplished as a qualitative researcher through transparency, honesty, and clarity. Anticipating derailment or concerning issues and making deliberate

decisions to avoid negative or concerning barriers are essential (Naddaff & Brown, 2021). Ensuring all voluntary participants, documentation, and involvement are kept informed is paramount throughout the research study. Providing open communication and access to information while continually engaging with the participants to answer questions and support their progress all play a vital role in building and sustaining the trustworthiness of the research study.

The importance of trustworthiness has been researched, defined, and elaborated on by multiple researchers. Jones (2012) states the importance of trust within research solidifies the usability of obtained research for future implications. Therefore, trustworthiness is not a single point within a research study but should be achieved throughout the entire process. In this research study, the use of intentional steps of numerous strategies has been leveraged to achieve the most trustworthy research.

The use of open coding during the data analysis will increase the trustworthiness of this research study (Cascio et al., 2019). Having multiple individuals with various perspectives in the field is essential to ensure the data are accurately deciphered. This will also allow for multiple opportunities to review the descriptive notes and interview discussions. Thorough communication will also allow for additional research to be gathered as necessary.

In addition, the use of multiple data collection points, to including interviews, and observations with anecdotal and visual evidence, triangulates multiple data points. The trustworthiness of multiple entry points and examination of data will strengthen the trustworthiness of the research. This research has great implications for future coaching sessions resulting in planning for PD delivery strategies. Based on the results, documentation, and future data will support a specific direction of future learning opportunities for district leadership to

include possible expansion of research studies. Once determined if the research should be expanded upon, it will determine if the research is stored for use or destroyed after a given period. Based on the academic interest in this topic, the lack of research related to instructional coaching leading to active engagement during PD would presume further need for additional research.

Minimal risks to any district or school-level leader participating in this study have been determined. The coaching meetings were received in various forms, including both formal and informal, and routine meetings or scheduled for an on-time requested appointment. All mitigation factors to ensure the benefits of obtaining knowledge while ensuring minimal risks have been thoroughly examined. If any additional concerns not previously examined arise during the study, it will result in an immediate pause in the research. The intentional plan would be to discuss with the Chair and committee, reach out to the IRB and organization would occur, and not move forward until the determination of safety is provided and appropriate permissions have been granted.

Credibility

Credibility is established and maintained through the transparency of findings, ongoing research, and the use of peer reviews. Identifying the truth behind the study, and subsequent results is imperative to establishing the credibility of the work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Debriefing with a peer to review my work was used to establish credibility. Through working with a peer of experts, including ongoing conversations, routine observations, and interviews, while returning to narrow in on results, credibility was established. Creswell and Poth (2018) encourage the use of a peer reviewer to help keep the research honest and targeted. This individual will provide multiple layers of support, as they will question all imperative aspects of

the work, including the reported results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, ensuring there is not one data point that is relied on heavily is the key to establishing credibility (Noble & Smith, 2015). Reflecting on the work with a peer offers credibility since the results are communicated with objectivity. In addition, having another individual review and challenge my thinking will ensure reliability. This study will provide openness to all responses and results.

Transferability

The research study of coaching is a singular data collection within a vast world of collaborative learning designs. Therefore, ensuring the work can be transferred to other partnerships is essential. The work is transferable through descriptive procedures and detailed findings. With the detailed procedures and steps taken, future research can leverage the information. The findings can be replicated, examined further, or used as a launching point for future studies. The reporting process will provide all necessary details within each stage of planning, procedures, and data dissemination. Creswell and Poth (2018) state the importance of providing a detailed description to duplicate the work with the possibility of transferring the information to be made possible. It was the responsibility of future researchers to take the information and elaborate in ways that will help examine their data points to add to the collective knowledge of collaborative educational improvement.

Dependability

As stated in the previous sections, the ability to replicate and expand on the procedures of the design is imperative to securing dependability. Once collected, respondents had the opportunity to confirm all aspects of the data as a member check. The importance of this step was to ensure accurate messaging and increase dependability. The coding used to organize the data will increase the dependability of the study (Cascio et al., 2019). All information received

was reviewed to directly support the data reported (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Appropriate procedures will ensure the writings can be articulated in a detailed manner. The work must be not only examined but deciphered by subject matter experts, along with department personnel and committee members, to secure dependability. The specified actions are conducted by the university to complete an inquiry audit which will examine the process and products of all information by the dissertation committee and Qualitative Research Director.

Confirmability

The research questions have been intentionally designed to avoid entering the research with anticipated results. All interview questions were piloted to individuals with coaching experience before the implementation of the research to ensure clarity. The research will thoroughly examine the statements provided through interviews, data collected, and meetings held to decipher the data provided before coming to conclusions. The techniques of audits, triangulation of data from the research collected, and reflexivity were used to ensure confirmability. All data from various perspectives and resources were collected and reviewed before reaching any conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Priority is continually placed on ethical considerations throughout the research study. From the onset of the research, transparency of intent, research, and prioritizing safety measures have been at the forefront of all decisions. The roles of all individuals are clearly defined. Written approval regarding access and consent from the organization in coordination with all participants was requested and received before beginning the study on time. The IRB approval from Liberty University will also be obtained before communicating with participants or collecting research data. In addition, all guidelines and notifications of adjustments will continue

to be requested for the use of human participants during a research study. Ensuring all timelines are followed without collecting any research or data before consent will strictly be abided by. Each participant was provided non-obligatory requests for voluntary participation and was permitted to withdraw at any time without negative repercussions. To solidify ethical concerns once participants had been recruited and selected, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to remove any personally identifiable information. Pseudonyms will also be used for any district, schools, or other entity being represented within the research. No pressure was placed on any prospective participant to engage with the research study. All conversations, including interviews, focus group discussions, or peer reviews, were conducted in private or with the use of headphones through technological conversations. Throughout the data collection process, it was routinely saved in a password-protected file to which only the researcher had access. Any printed or hard copies are kept in a secured locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Any information needing to be shared during the peer review was redacted of all personally identifiable information and only include the use of the designated pseudonym. After three years from the conclusion of the research study, all electronic and hard copies of the research will be destroyed or permanently deleted.

The integrity of this research study was conducted voluntarily. All participants were able to decline to comment on any question they may choose and ultimately could withdraw from the research at any time by contacting the researcher directly and did not need to provide a reason. All contact information for the researcher is initially provided in the consent form. Although no participants opted to withdraw from the study, statements regarding declination or removal from the study were provided before each interview and focus group, and upon requesting journal artifacts. It was directly stated if a participant decided to withdraw from the study, all previous

information collected, excluding the focus group data, would be deleted, or destroyed within 48 hours of communication being received.

Overall, the risks to any participant in the research study are minimal. There is not any direct benefit to the recipient for participating in this research study. No monetary or other direct incentives were provided to individuals who choose to participate, nor will any recourse be acted upon those who decline to participate. It is essential to ensure confidentiality which allows participants the certainty of confidentiality to provide honest, reflective remarks and not worry about personally identifiable information. Specific techniques of identifying participants with constantly assigned pseudonyms from the beginning of the project and throughout the research study.

Summary

The Pacific Region is the district where participants were recruited. While the region has advocated for engagement learning strategies for classroom instruction, they have not provided specific deliveries to be implemented when coaching instructional leaders. The region has a great deal of diversity throughout the three districts and numerous individual leaders. The qualitative phenomenological transcendental study allows individual participants to give detailed subjective versions of their experiences regarding coaching. This design examines interviews, focus groups, and journals to determine the most effective results of intentionally designed coaching models. Combining the interest of individuals, along with the collective support of district leaders, make the Pacific Region the optimal location. The data design has been intentionally designed to ensure that lived experiences are collected and examined (Moustakas, 1994).

Intentional design with routine discussions by peer collaborators will help determine accurate results of the obtained data. This design and continual collaboration with peers will

ensure results are interpreted objectively and remove bias. The procedure is strategically designed to be replicated by other researchers and in various settings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to study the shared lived experiences of American overseas instructional coaches supporting instructional leaders in the Pacific Region engaging in coaching conversations to help improve instructional practices. The study is presented by introducing the various participants and detailing the data analysis determined through the alignment of procedures of a modified version of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Chapter four will explicitly state the themes and sub-themes presented, before concluding with answers to the research questions.

Participants

This research examined the shared lived experiences of 12 instructional coaches supporting various instructional leaders in the Pacific Region who voluntarily participated in this study. All interested participants qualified and were selected to participate in the research study. To ensure anonymity for all participants, leaders, and educational institutions, pseudonyms were provided and consistently referenced. The participants are comprised of instructional coaches who were hired due to their knowledge and expertise with researched best practices, personal expertise in the field of education, and ability to lead. All 12 participants signed and completed the consent form (Appendix C). The combined participation pool was comprised of educators with a range of personal education of above Master's Degrees in Education and Doctoral Degrees in Education. The range of professional experience in teaching, administration, and instructional coaching ranged from 20 to 40 years. In addition, the participants self-identified that the time of being an instructional leader ranged from three to 36 years. The overseas setting of all participants did identify a range of experiences, as the participants had a span of the first

year to 26th year of living outside of the continental United States. All 12 participants engaged in an individual interview. The 11 participants were able to attend and actively engage with three focus groups. While six of the participants completed and submitted the journal entry, as requested.

Individual demographics were collected by each participant to self-identify educational and professional experience, overseas living experiences, gender, and ethnic background. The participants comprised a diverse group of knowledgeable and highly trained individuals. In addition, the self-identification noted a continuum of experience. Three participants were male in gender and nine participants were female. The instructional coaches within the Pacific region are comprised of seven Caucasian or White, four African American or three males who , and one who declined to self-identify their ethnicity. The educational experiences fall within two categories, with six stating an above Master's in Education degree coursework and the other half fully completed doctoral degrees. Currently, three of the participants are actively enrolled in doctoral programs. Detailed information is provided accurately and thoroughly to provide a more complete picture of the participants' lived experience. Quotations from the participants were utilized as appropriate to provide a clear understanding of their individual experiences. See Table 1 for Instructional Coach Participants.

Table 1*Instructional Coach Participants*

Pseudonym	Years as an Instructional Coach	Highest Degree Earned	Years in Current Position	Years Overseas
Ali	5	Above Masters	5	20
Benjamin	5	Doctorate	2	3
Brock	19	Doctorate	2.5	2.5
Chelsea	6	Above Masters	2	26
Heidi	7	Doctorate	1.5	10
Karen	36	Above Masters	7	17
Payton	6	Doctorate	4	8
Regan	3	Doctorate	3	21
Riley	31	Above Masters	5	23
Taylor	16	Above Masters	4	1
Terry	25	Doctorate	5	5
Zoey	3	Above Masters	2	7

Ali

Ali is a white female who is currently working towards her doctorate in educational leadership. Previously, Ali earned her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, and Master's of Education degree in early childhood education. Before becoming an educator, Ali was in the United States Navy where she found a passion for teaching as a classroom teacher. After leaving the Navy, Ali became a reading specialist. Ali found success as a curriculum specialist at the district level before being hired as an assistant principal and ultimately a school-level principal. Through the success and leadership skills, Ali brought to the schools, she was hired as an instructional coach for the Pacific Region.

Ali was asked about the specific training she has received regarding instructional coaching. She emphasized the importance of continual learning. Although Ali explained she did not have much training from her employer, she has identified gaps in her learning which she continually works to fill. She leverages books, courses, and opportunities to increase her knowledge. She encouraged the official course work of her graduate classes to help solidify a foundation of best practices as she continually works and teams with various leaders. In addition, Ali made sure to express thoughts on how each leader is unique and requires a variety of techniques to ensure their individual needs are met, so they can continue to grow.

Benjamin

Benjamin is an African American male with 25 years of experience in the field of education. He earned his associate degree in biology and Sociology, before earning his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. He went on to earn his Master's in Education in secondary administration. Ultimately, Benjamin earned his doctorate in education. After teaching middle school science for eight years, Benjamin was promoted to a variety of leadership positions. He

left his mark on the New York educational system as a Dean of Students at the high school-level, an Assistant Superintendent and ultimately being named Superintendent. Benjamin has spent a decade overseas. Most recently, Benjamin has been a professional learning instructional specialist and now holds the position of an instructional coach for a district within the Pacific Region.

Benjamin views the work and his role as being a servant leader. He expresses the importance of support and leading through partnerships. Benjamin continually references data to find ways to improve the current practice. He bases his work on the premise of purpose and why and continually directs the conversation to the immediate needs of the leader.

Brock

Brock is a white male who has been a professional educator for 26 years. He began his time in 1997 as a teacher in Tennessee, where he was hired as a teacher. Teaching in a few different districts, allowing for various experiences with socio-economic schools, Brock earned his Master's in Educational focusing on educational leadership and in 2004 was promoted to be the assistant principal at an inner-city school primarily known as an English Language Learner School. Brock identified this time as when he began to truly be an instructional coach. Working with teachers and peers, he found skills and conversations where he could lead through a coaching relationship. A few years later, Brock was promoted to principal. While holding the position of principal for three years, he was able to make a huge impact as the work reflected a measurable increase in state student achievement scores. Due to this success, Brock was highly recruited to higher leadership positions. He was sought out as a peer coach for fellow principals and ultimately became the assistant superintendent before becoming the superintendent of the district. Throughout his professional growth, Brock began teaching online graduate-level courses

at universities along the east coast which he has continued for the past 17 years. In 2020, Brock moved overseas and began his current position as an identified instructional coach within the Pacific Region.

I asked Brock about his educational experience and career, he expanded to detail his experience with leaders which has shaped him into the leader and coach he is today. Brock explicitly stated during his interview, his experience with an overtly negative and harsh leader. He emphasized this experience has drastically influenced his leadership and coaching style of positivity, encouragement, and a growth mindset. He explained that personal experiences can not only help people align with what they want to become and do but in addition, find characteristics that people do not want to become. In the example of a prior leader who was led by fear, Brock explained he knew he did not want to be this type of leader.

Chelsea

Chelsea is a white female with vast experience over the past 25 years. Although she graduated in 1982 with a degree in secondary education, focusing on English theater and public speaking, for a variety of reasons, Chelsea did not consistently begin her teaching career until 1990. Married to military personnel required frequent movement, and starting a family impacted the early years of her career. Her teaching experience includes working in the Pacific, Europe, and America in a variety of capacities has impacted her current work. Chelsea's experience encompasses teaching elementary through secondary learners in general education to small group settings. Being promoted to above-school-level positions has also included being an instructional coach, district level Chief of Staff, and district-level subject matter expert supervisor. Now, Chelsea holds one of the coaching specialist positions in the Pacific Region.

During Chelsea's interview, she was asked about the work she does for a coaching session. She emphasized the need for intentionality and going in with a plan. She explained how each instructional leader is constantly putting out fires, and often needs the support of a coach to focus and find success. Chelsea explicitly stated, "Intentionally planning for a coaching meeting is a multifaceted approach based on the coachee's needs, what's on fire, and what they need for the day, that's what you do. You take their direction and support them as best you can."

Heidi

Heidi is a white female who has recently joined the Pacific Region. She places a great emphasis on continued learning, and frequently enrolled in various coursework to improve her knowledge and expand her extensive knowledge base. Initially, Heidi received her Bachelor of Arts degree in math communication with a minor in business administration before earning her Master's in Business in administration. From there, Heidi earned a second Bachelors of Arts degree in secondary education with a focus on English Learning Art. Continuing her academic growth, Heidi returned to earn a Master's in Education concentrating in educational leadership aligned to a principal K-12 license. Continuing to expand her knowledge, she received an Instructional Systems design degree before pursuing her doctorate which she is currently pursuing. Heidi's professional experience is just as extensive as her knowledge. She has taught middle and high school courses, in public, private, and as a substitute in the continental United States as well as in Europe for military-connected learners. Heidi was ultimately promoted to being a principal in an elementary school setting for numerous years before being selected for the instructional coaching position last year.

When Heidi was asked about building trust, she emphasized both the importance of establishing trust and building relationships to maximize growth opportunities. Coming in from

outside of the organization, Heidi specifically noted how the transition was difficult. Making connections to leaders who are unaware of the expertise Heidi brings to them without knowing her, made the transition difficult. However, the ability to listen, reliability in the work provided, and ways to support them through following up, began to build bridges. While some leaders continue to be reluctant to the relationship, she has earned their trust and continues to strengthen the work with all the leaders she supports.

Karen

Karen is a white female who has been a teacher and coach for 36 years. During the same time, she began her teaching career as a middle school music teacher supporting military-connected learners, she was providing vocal lessons as a coach in private sessions preparing for vocal competitions. Due to her natural ability to lead, she was quickly approached to take on the team leader position. Karen held this position before expanding her influence on elementary music teachers. She has worked to expand her knowledge of music to the world of technology. Through taking additional classes and enrolling in programs, Karen became an identified subject matter expert with technology usage in education. In 2006, Karen moved to the Pacific Region where she directly supported one of the districts as a technology expert. Karen held that position. She continued to support in this capacity over several years before being promoted to a regional level expert to directly coach and support the three districts' technology experts with their growth. While in this position, Karen's leadership skills were noticed, and the role expanded to becoming a project manager of the educational division. She continues to support and leverage this work as growth has expanded in the Pacific Region.

Being an instructional coach was expressed as a natural fit for Karen who has based her professional leadership. She identified experiences by focusing on the uniqueness of others and

leveraging differentiation to meet everyone's individual needs. Karen brings her extensive knowledge to supporting leaders in a variety of capacities while making explicit connections to core and specialty content. Karen identified the role of a music conductor as very similar to that of being an influential coach working with leaders. Each person has a specific role and is working to move in a specific direction, while the conductor must continually support the group to move together in a uniform, yet individual capacity.

Payton

Payton is an African American female with 20 years of educational experience. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and Secondary English. Payton holds graduate degrees in Educational Administration and Leadership and culminated her educational learning when she earned her doctorate in educational leadership. Throughout her professional career, Payton shared she has been a teacher, administrator, and instructional coach. While Payton notes she has been in her current position for 4 years, she has been an instructional coach for six. She has lived overseas for a total of eight years.

Payton emphasized the work with her peers in coaching relationships where she has made the greatest impact. The work as a coach began when Payton was promoted to assistant principal. She views all interactions with adults and professionals as opportunities to coach. The amount of time she spends with teachers, district and school leaders, peers, and the community can be impacted through purposeful and transparent communication.

Regan

Regan is a Black female from Jamaica who received her Doctor of Philosophy 12 years ago. Regan has been in the field of education for more than 30 years. During this time, she has identified she has held various responsibilities. These responsibilities include classroom teacher,

supervisor of English Language Arts, Technology instructional specialist, PD teacher, reading specialist, and adjunct college professor.

Regan passionately expressed the need and ability for coaching relationships. With the various roles held throughout her career, Regan explained how coaching played an integral part in teaming with peers and instructional leaders. Regan stated whenever you meet with a leader or educator it is an opportunity for coaching. Whether it is facilitative or instructive, the ability to help an educator grow in their practice is available through purposeful and engaging interactions.

Riley

Riley is an African American female with 31 years of experience as a teacher, administrator, instructional designer, and instructional coach. Riley initially received her Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood, before deepening her knowledge through the Master of educational leadership degree. Riley is currently working to obtain her doctorate in curriculum and instruction. Riley epitomizes a growth mindset through her continuous learning and coursework. Specific training with Harry Wong stands out as a primary foundation for the work that Riley has completed and built a foundation of best practices with her current work. The work includes extensive research on Adult Learning Theory, and the various certifications and specialties held. Throughout her professional career, she has been a classroom teacher, educational technologist, and reading specialist for kindergarten to 6th-0grade students, and worked as an instructional designer, and administrator. Through her time as a principal and above school-level leader, Riley found a passion for PD and supporting colleagues. Riley has worked extensively in all three districts within the Pacific Region throughout her career. Currently, Riley is an instructional coach to school and district-level personnel to help increase their professional careers.

Riley emphasizes the importance of turning theory into action to make identifiable and sustainable change. The entire environment of a PD session is not enough to help support current leaders. This includes logistics, planning, resources, audiences, and even the relationships all impact the success of PD. Once this has been secured, it is imperative to follow up with the work and ensure it is being put into practice. Riley explains, even the best PD ideas will not be impactful if they are not turned into action.

Taylor

Taylor is a White female who has a specialization in science and previously worked as a laboratory scientist. After several years working in this environment and identifying a love for the educational portion of the work, Taylor opted for a second career which allowed her to teach high school students in various roles. The effectiveness of Taylor was noticed by the elementary school principal, and her expertise was asked to teach 4th-grade science. Although Taylor was hesitant to make this shift, she ultimately decided to make the shift. In addition to teaching science, the principal requested Taylor to lead PD with the current elementary school teachers on how to effectively deliver science instruction to children. She was placed as the lead science teacher and her effectiveness helped a successful implementation of the standardized testing in science. This work increased as she was designated to write the elementary science curriculum for fourth grade. This work expanded for years where she began several instructional coaching relationships and studied under Jim Knight and a cadre of instructional coaches. This role grew to influence all educators from kindergarten through high school. Taylor eventually worked on panels for student improvement and was selected to coordinate the instructional coaching. Taylor ultimately expanded her role to lead a private school before being hired as an instructional coach for district and school-level leaders.

When Taylor was asked about the role of an instructional leader, she emphasized the role of a guide to help professionals discover their own path. The need to help the leader identify the needs of their campuses and teachers is a driving factor. Using data, having resources, and asking pertinent questions are vital to the growth where leaders can discover the areas themselves.

Terry

Terry is an Irish-Italian male, who has worked in the field of education for 40 years. Although passionate about teaching and learning, Terry states that his path is probably outside the normal for a typical teacher. While preparing to graduate with a Liberal Arts degree in history and civilization, Terry opted to become a public schoolteacher. As he prepared to graduate, he was brought into a cohort of non-education majors to work towards obtaining his teaching license for New Jersey state teachers. This program was described as a renegade program and shifted the thinking of possible educators. Much of the teaching in the 1960s was traditionally based, however, this program emphasized more student-centered learner facilitation. Upon completion, Terry taught social studies for several years in an upper-middle-class, suburban environment. After several years, Terry took a step away from education for 13-14 years, to explore opportunities as a classical opera singer and earn his seminary degree. Throughout these years, Terry found opportunities to continue teaching as an adjunct teacher. Finding it difficult to make a living off the profession of a classical entertainer and with the support of his family, he returned to teaching full-time. Back in the classroom, with excess space, Terry planned and taught students through experiential learning concepts. During this time, the opportunities came to teaching which allowed faculty members to take leadership roles. He jumped at the opportunity and was selected as a teacher leader. The goal was to provide peer leadership programs through peer mentoring. Terry identified this as how he was able to truly

expand his influence. As this program continued, Terry was able to participate in a training program that honed his skills as a leadership advisor. This is when he identifies the true shift from teacher to advisor. In 1992, Terry became a director of a non-profit educational center which allowed his skills to be strengthened. As his growth continued, he became a professional developer and coach of those responsible for children. Five years ago, Terry secured a position as an instructional coach for school-level leaders.

Much of Terry's interview focused on supporting the coachee self-reflect and make personal connections through experiences. Terry suggests that the biggest growth occurs when individuals are placed in situations allowing the experience to combine prior knowledge with the desired goal. Experiential learning is the premise of the in-depth growth that leaders are able to leverage.

Zoey

Zoey is a White female who has been working as an educator for 28 consecutive years. Zoey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education with a specialization in Early Childhood Education. She went on to earn her master's degree in curriculum and instruction and educational specialist in leader administration. Her professional career encompasses a wide variety of experiences from teaching preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and all elementary grades except for 4th grade. In addition, Zoey has held the position of a development coach, professional learning instruction systems specialist professional learning instruction specialist subject matter expert, assistant principal, and principal. In 2021, Zoey was promoted to officially hold the position of instructional coach for a district within the Pacific Region.

When asked about the role of the instructional coach, Zoey focused on the importance of supporting leaders to move forward. Through leveraging intentional and open-ended questions,

Zoey has helped leaders stuck to move forward. Zoey identified a need for time to allow leaders to make connections and come to their conclusions while also noting the importance of providing advice when needed. The various roles of being a thought partner also became evident as she discussed the importance of the coach to support diverse and strong leaders. The goal of a coach is to help the leader become the best version of themselves.

Results

The results of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study are provided. This research is designed to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development (PD) meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. The data used to analyze were collected from individual interviews, focus groups, and participant journals. Initially, the data were analyzed through open coding. Moustakas (1994) recommends examining sub-themes to identify the overarching major themes to deeply understand the data. MaxQDA software was used to code all interviews, focus group discussions, and journal artifacts. Once the collected transcription was collected, the data were uploaded into the MaxQDA software. The data began with open coding where 26 codes were identified across all the uploaded data. Irrelevant data were eliminated, and codes were scrutinized to identify commonalities and narrowed down to a manageable 14 sub-themes. At this time, five major themes were identified. The use of open coding was used to consider new theoretical possibilities. The five detailed themes were identified as (a) questioning techniques, (b) differentiation, (c) relationships, (d) goals and objectives, and (e) professional learning. An overarching concept of the use of andragogy and adult learning theory was prevalent in all major themes throughout the research.

Commonalities were identified from the individual interviews, focus groups, and journal collection. The process of open coding and examining the data highlighted emerging themes. Specific quotes, comments, and perspectives from the participants were used to highlight the themes which emerged during the data analysis. The organization of data was provided by detailed sub-themes to support the five major themes. Stating the description of the themes broken down by both major and sub-themes will provide a thorough and accurate picture of the participants' experiences in alignment with effective coaching strategies.

Table 2*Major Themes and Sub-Themes*

Major Themes	Sub-Themes
Questioning Techniques	Open-Ended (80)
	Knowledge (49)
	Theoretical (37)
Differentiation	Identifying Diverse Needs (52)
	Resources (42)
Relationships	Trust and Confidentiality (50)
	Defining Roles (47)
	Build and Grow (34)
Goals and Objectives	Progress Towards Goal (37)
	Goal Identification (12)
	Pre-Work (11)
Professional Learning	Employer Driven (19)
	Personally Procured (18)
	Experiential Learning (16)

Note. The quantity in the parenthesis is the total of identified open codes referencing the sub-theme. For example, 34 open codes supported the sub-theme of Build and Grow under the major theme of Relationships.

Major Theme One: Questioning Techniques (CRQ, SQ1, SQ2)

The first theme to emerge from the data were the importance of the range and style of prepared questions. Three sub-themes were identified based on individual interviews, focus

group conversations, and reflection journals. The sub-themes identified were open-ended, knowledge, and theoretical questions. It should be noted that some of the sub-themes could overlap, such as open-ended and theoretical. For this analysis, a definite separation was made between the two sub-themes. Open-ended responses were specific and concrete knowledge based on the coachee's reality. Theoretical questions were hypothetical situations, which were offered by the participant to the coachee to allow them various perspectives and did not specifically align to a given problem at hand. Bloom's (1956) hierarchy of types of questions aligns with the participant's perspective as the questions build on the depth of understanding of a learner. The participants noted the importance of not only the type of question asked but also the intent.

Ali stated, "I have a set of tools, not that it is only questions, but a set of tools, I work to help my leaders determine their answers." Overall, the participants placed a good deal of emphasis on the theme as it allowed them to gather insights into the coachee and could allow future intentionally planned questions.

Table 3

Major Theme 1: Questioning Techniques

Sub-theme	Code
Open-Ended	(80)
Knowledge	(49)
Theoretical	(37)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate code frequency.

Open-Ended

For this research, open-ended questions are considered inquiries made that do not have a predefined or binary response. Participants expressed the importance of allowing their leaders to come to their conclusions and provide a way forward. Lotter et al. (2016) emphasizes the importance of designing open-ended questions to allow learners to reach their conclusion. When specific binary questions are asked, participants stated many coachees felt there was a right or wrong answer. These judgmental inquiries did not allow for dialogue, nor did they provide a long-term application of a skill. The participants explained, when asking questions that appeared to their leaders as having a predetermined correct answer, the coach became an advisor and removed the leader's power and authority over the situation.

During one of the focus groups, the conversation regarding questioning shifted when the group began to focus on not only the type of questions being asked, but the importance of how to pivot during a coaching conversation. Cheng et al. (2019) encouraged learner engagement to shift learning from a top-down approach to a student-centered learning atmosphere. One focus group participant stated, "Perhaps coming prepared with specific questions to move the leader forward is important, however, being able to adjust and rephrase questions is also part of our role." Another focus group participant went on to say, "These types of questions that truly allow my leaders to go down a path of self-discovery is just as important as the answer itself." These statements provide valuable insight into the work and understanding of the experiences of the coaches.

The premise of planning for the session, with a variety of questions, to begin with, openers has been noted as the most effective strategy to help guide a coaching conversation. While there were variations, most participants remarked they began each coaching conversation

with a similar version of “How are you doing?” Terry stated, “A question that I always ask is, what is on your mind today?” These soft opening questions help determine the current reality of the leader being supported, as well as guide the conversation to the plan of the session or allow the coachee the opportunity to pivot right from the beginning of the session.

Open-ended questions were frequently addressed as a primary technique used by the participants to guide the conversations. Much was discovered about the perspective the participants saw themselves as they reflected on their questioning skills. “I ask a lot of questions about where they see themselves going,” remarked Chelsea. This sentiment was reiterated throughout many of the participants’ responses.

The participants ultimately described the importance of leveraging open-ended questions as essential to both learning about the participants’ perspective, as well as gathering details about the situation being discussed. Ibourk (2021) reflected on the degree of inquiry of the learner, emphasizing the point that learners are seeking opportunities to create their knowledge. In addition, open-ended questions allow the coach to gently guide the conversation without telling the coachee what they should do. Regan referenced in her journal the importance of guiding questions. The skill to ask a guiding question, without giving the [instructional] leader the answer is not easy. This was confirmed during Brock’s interview when he explained, “You need to have a bank of topics or questions to help them get to the root cause of the problem. To help them work through the issue for themselves without you giving them the answer.” With the remarkable number of open-ended questions prepared and discussed during the data collection phase, it is evident this is a frequently used practice among the participants.

Knowledge

Knowledge-based questions were found to be another sub-theme of the importance of questioning strategies. Bloom (1956) noted knowledge-based questions as a lower-level of difficulty type question which is pulled from previous knowledge. The participants expressed the use of this strategy to be helpful in a variety of ways. Chelsea explained, “When conversations become emotionally triggering for some leaders, asking more factual based questions, can decrease the emotion.” Regan stated, “I am very intentional in the questions I ask based on these goals. I want to ensure I am clear with what they are saying, to best support them.” Both participants clearly state the purpose of these types of questions.

Another strategy that was emphasized by several participants is the importance of data-driven conversations. Benjamin explained in his journal response, “All aspects of a formal coaching conversation revolve around data. This includes determining what to focus on, setting the goal, and checking along the way that we are making progress.” Regan commented in her journal:

Because coaching addresses an individual’s behaviors beliefs and ways of being, it is especially effective in helping educators to explore their own biases, use data to determine student needs instead of relying on their own feelings about students, and plan lessons that meet the needs of all students.

Being informed about what the current reality is, beyond subjective measure should not be pushed to the side. During coaching conversations, having the data to back up the claims leaders are helping make the determination of the most efficient path to reaching the identified goal. One participant in the focus group commented on the importance of goals:

The talent to get to the root cause of why someone is making progress or not toward their goal. Having the ability to pivot and help them identify what it is that is helping or hindering them to adjust those goals.

Benjamin summed up the importance of data when he stated, “What data did you collect?” before going on to ask, “How does that support what you are doing now?”

Theoretical

Various participants stated their leaders have a wide range of abilities to see various perspectives when working through concerns. During the focus group, one participant pointed out the importance of flexibility.

Sometimes the principal is not very open to other ideas. Although I plan questions to guide the conversation in one direction, when the leader is not willing to consider anything other than what they know, I have to change the direction of the conversation. Sometimes I just have to admit they may not be in that headspace. So, we might shelve the topic and come back to it later.

The overarching concern with rigidity and only seeing one possible way forward is it is not always the most effective to obtain the result or goal the leader has previously expressed.

Karen stated in her interview a question she typically asks, “Is that achieving the results that you would have hoped?” Although this question is not theoretical in nature, it can begin a conversation where other possibilities are examined. Karen went on to explain, “They usually have an idea of how they want to go, but it does not always get them there. So, I might have to give them a hypothetical situation, for them to see different possibilities.” Ali noted an interesting reflection on the impact her emotions might have on the coaching conversation. “Based on my observations and reflections, I would definitely have to examine my emotional

compass to ensure my emotions are not driving my perceptions and behaviors towards the coachee.”

Theoretical questions also have been used to help participants narrow the focus of goals for their leaders. Chelsea found the most effective theoretical question to focus her leaders as, “If you could snap your finger, what would you do?” She expressed the concern that school-level leaders are continually having to deal with high-priority, emergency-type issues. During a coaching session, having the leader focus on just one or two, can be challenging. The questions like the above have resulted in identifying the most pressing issue at hand, as well as helping the leader to become actionable, rather than simply jumping from issue to issue without making progress.

Major Theme Two: Differentiation (CRQ, SQ2)

The second theme to emerge from the data was the importance of differentiation. Two sub-themes were identified based on the interviews, focus group conversations and reflection journals. The importance of identifying diverse needs and resources was overwhelmingly strongly identified in sub-themes. For this analysis, a definite separation was made between the two sub-themes. In this case, the primary sub-theme of identifying the diverse needs of the leaders led to the need to provide differentiated resources. This sub-theme does segway into the subsequent Major Theme regarding relationships, however, the reflection and importance of not only identifying the unique qualities of each leader but also the root cause of why a one size fits all approach does not work, is stressed by the participants through their responses.

Table 4*Major Theme 2: Differentiation*

Sub-theme	Code
Identifying Diverse Needs	(52)
Resources	(42)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate code frequency.

Identifying Diverse Needs

Humans are inherently unique individuals. When planning for learning sessions, unique qualities, skills, and perspectives should be considered (Van Laer & Elen, 2017). Benjamin stated in his journal submission, “ I need to get input from the instructional leaders to know if this meets her needs or to follow up with additional layouts to help her meet her objectives.” This exemplifies the importance of individualizing the growth of this instructional leader compared to the other coachees Benjamin supports. Learners have their own areas of strength and growth, interests, and experiences that shape their decision-making. Much of the personal experiences are related to the individual’s knowledge, beliefs, and Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). To connect with the content (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018), and truly examine the work, participants need to have time to consider possibilities and reflect on the learning (Aguilar, 2013). Beyond the overall makeup of the leader, their current reality can rapidly shift, based on their circumstances. A coach must combine all this information to make the most informed decision on how to guide a conversation which will allow the coachee the ability to grow.

Interestingly, every participant commented on the importance of individual diverse planning sessions in either their interview, journal submission, or during the focus group. In the

focus group, one participant notated how the differentiated strategies they use can be seen as a result of a successful coaching conversation for each of their leaders. Karen broached the uniqueness of the organization and the additional support required for leaders hired from outside entities. Karen reflected in her journal on how she intentionally plans for each coaching session, she stated, “One of the first things I consider is if they have been with the organization for a while or hired from outside the gate. Understanding there is a great deal of language and resources that are unique to us requires a lot of forethought.” In her interview, Riley stated, “[I need] different entry points of learning, not everyone will be at the same stage. There is often learning different teams, storming, norming, forming, basic level of learners and how to work with them in where they are, we always have to start with that.” Chelsea went on to explain, “What works for one coachee, will not work for all of them. Every one of them is unique and what they want from up is unique. This kind of fluctuates and varies, as it is different for each person.” The participants overwhelmingly acknowledged the importance of not adjusting their coaching sessions to leverage the characteristics that combine to create each individual but to ensure the planning was designed for each coachee to maximize their progress.

Fellow participants took the importance of differentiation further and described how the differentiation would lead to the individualization of each session. Karen commented on the importance of individualization of the coaching session as it is related to the leader’s identified goals.

All coaching sessions are individualized because the goals are different based on what the leaders need. We take their goal of where they want to go, and we work through the process of the GROW method. Using this method, I use questioning, planning for resources, sitting down, and discussing a Problem of Practice to ultimately get them

where they want to go. Meeting them where they are and helping them move in their direction. It is not a one size fits all.

During the focus group, Ali explained further, “Every leader is at a different place, not only in their school but also in their career. You must ask the leader what they want from the session and their vision for their school.” Payton then expanded on these thoughts when she proclaimed:

I individualize based on their [the leader’s] goals, their own development. Each leader is developmentally in a different place. I use that knowledge to differentiate my coaching. I also differentiate based on their personality. Some of my leaders that I coach happens spontaneously, and they call me. They call me on the phone, and it is usually already attached to their goal. As it is something that we focus on in the school, when I go. It may be seven, eight, or nine at night, they call with an issue. This is typically related to the mindset shift work. I am okay with knowing I have a plan for them, but my plans are looser, with broader solutions for them. This is just how they have to work.

All three of these participants focus on the needs of their leaders. By focusing on the prior knowledge of each learner, and individualizing their work, learning can be maximized (Bandura, 1993). Whether it is the current reality, the longevity of their career, or the time of the session, each participant noted how they make themselves available to their leaders by meeting their unique differences as a process of differentiation.

Resources

Delivering concrete tools and resources for leaders to utilize moving forward is a concrete way to offer support. Whether using researched best practices or simply being new to the organization, providing tangible resources to help make informed decisions can be a critical part of the leader’s journey. This can include diverse approaches to learning (McNally et al.,

2019). Some of the most consistent supports described by the participants were tangible supports. Chelsea explained the resources provided included both tangible and thought parameters for their decision-making when she said, “so many templates, guides, opportunities for growth, here what you can do, what you can’t do. I have to often provide guidance, without it being directing them on what to do.” Payton and Riley both also mentioned in their interviews “pulling graphic organizers.” In Benjamin’s journal, he communicated that the principal was looking for an assessment that could gather information on social-emotional learning. The principal did not have time to find something specific, so Benjamin was asked to identify something. As the journal entry went on, he explained how he located and shared the CASEL websites, assessments, and supporting resources that he provided to his leader based on a coaching conversation. These tangible resources were described by various participants as used to help guide coaching conversations, organize thoughts, and ultimately narrow down a plethora of options to establish a way forward.

Major Theme Three: Relationships (CRQ, SQ3)

The third theme to emerge from the responses was the importance of building and growing relationships. Three sub-themes were identified based on individual interviews, focus group conversations, and reflection journals. The two most important sub-themes resulted in similar numbers of responses. The importance of trust and confidentiality and then defining roles emerged as the participant's priorities. While trust and confidentiality cannot be synonymous, Aguilar (2013) emphasizes numerous levels and stages of these skills in establishing relationships. The third sub-theme with much fewer responses was the ability to build and grow relationships over time. The concept of relationships is extremely noteworthy as every

participant explicitly stated the importance of the growth of the relationship as a critical component of their work.

Table 5

Major Theme 3: Relationships

Sub-theme	Code
Trust and Confidentiality	(50)
Defining Roles	(47)
Build and Grow	(34)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate code frequency.

Trust and Confidentiality

A foundational component of the work in the education of a coach is trust (Kee et al., 2017). Numerous statements which emphasized the importance of trust included Brock's comment, "Without trust, there is no coaching. If there is no trust, there is no relationship, no conversation, no growth, none of that happens." This exemplifies the foundational importance of this personal skill. The focus groups were encompassed with the concept of trust. One participant stated, "I still have a very hard time with leaders trusting we are having honest conversations. Still, things are surface level." Another participant added the willingness to roll their sleeves up and do the work alongside the leader helped gain trust. Zoey detailed her experience during her interview and explained the importance of trust with a variety of leaders. "Trust is really tricky. Some leaders are open to coaching, they naturally are trusting by nature. They don't want to spend a long-time building trust but go into it with trust," Zoey explained before going on to say, "Some leaders having a natural ability to trust." This provides the assumption that other leaders

do not have this same level of trust as they enter a coaching relationship. There was ambiguity in the actions to create trust within the data. Chelsea notated in her journal submission that while the trust was foundational to the work, determining how to build trust was not as clearly defined. The manner to build and sustain a trusting relationship is not uniform (Aguilar, 2013). Zoey went on to expand upon her role by focusing on trust, “I think about how I don’t violate the trust. I come back if I do something that might violate it. I make amends and am transparent.” Other participants stated all their work is based on establishing trust.

Heidi stated the following,

It is everything I do. You know, part of the problem, when I first started the position, it was really difficult as I came from outside of the gate. What would they need to hear from me? I don’t know any of the processes within the organization, I have trained staff, but not with government processes. It was really difficult at first, however, I used my team for a long time, and it was a huge help.

While 100% of the participants agreed that trust was vital to the future success of the work, the description of confidentiality had a wider spread understanding. Although all participants agreed on the importance of confidentiality, describing how to avoid breaches of confidentiality was not as easy to pinpoint. Brock explained how this is a one-sided skill. Brock stated, “The trust comes with the coach. The leader (coachee) can break trust all they want; it comes to the coach not to break trust.” This was an interesting perspective as most relationships are a give and take, this perspective pointed out the uniqueness of the coaching relationship as more of a business model. These poignant statements within the data surmise there is no specific formula to build or strengthen trust; however, uniformly, the participants discussed the concept of confidentiality. All participants who commented on breaking confidentiality stated this breach

would shatter any degree of trust previously established. The coach held both the ability to strengthen or break confidentiality and trust, while the individual being coached did not have to abide by the same terms. In addition, Benjamin eloquently stated the importance of this foundational skill, “I may not be the greatest coach, but I can keep my mouth shut.”

Defining Roles

Another key sub-theme was defining the roles within the coaching relationship. The leader being coached, also known as the coachee and the coach. While perspectives on the specific actions may differ, the overarching job of each role is agreed upon by the participants.

The coach is expected to listen, guide, and support the leader in making progress toward an identified goal. Regan stated, “The coach is an optimal role to support and guide. The coach is not even meant to be a mentor. To guide to changing practices and behaviors.” The topic of roles, as it enhances a trusting relationship, was an important component during one of the focus groups. One conversation centered around the relationship between the coach and the coachee. The following was stated by one of the focus group members, “While I work to create guiding questions, the [instructional] leader ultimately determines where we go. However, when we have established a continuing relationship, the principals are more likely to trust me and answer questions they may not connect to the issue.”

The role can be described as a person to help the work move forward. Zoey descriptively explained the coaching role, “The coach is to help people get unstuck.” Overall, the coach should not provide a definitive answer but rather help guide the leader on a path which allows them to answer their own problems.

The participants came up with various and extensive descriptions of instructional leaders. While there are numerous foci of the instructional leader, the task is to address self-identified

needs, be open to exploring possibilities, and venture down a path to meet the intended goals. Each participant viewed the role of the instructional leader as someone with a growth mindset, who wanted to improve their practice. Brock detailed his understanding by saying:

The role of the instructional leader is to ensure they are doing their very best and they are giving their teachers the very best so the students can be successful. Sometimes because they get everything dumped on them, they are the lowest person they don't have time to process." He went on to say, "Someone who is willing to have a partner help them map out a goal for students, teachers, whomever. That is the overarching thing the instructional leader has to do, work to achieve student success. How can they grow their faculty so they can help educate the students?"

Ali expanded on this thinking, "the instructional leader improves instructional practices. Whether school or district, how do you improve instructional practices at all levels to help students achieve success." Chelsea noted, "While the coaching relationship is just that a relationship, the coach is in no means a therapist, and should never be viewed for sensitive and emotional content." The importance of this reflection is while emotions may come into conversations, as instructional leaders are invested in their work, focusing on the work, rather than solving instructional leaders' problems is crucial to the defined role. While the role was not explicitly referenced in any of the journal entries, the concept of knowing how much support a leader requires, when creating questions to guide conversations was a serious consideration. Karen noted in her journal, "I have to consider the readiness of my coachee when I create questions. If I push them too hard, I actually lose progress." This exemplifies the give and takes during a coaching conversation. While the instructional coach does guide the questions, often, the direction of the conversation is relegated to the coachee's responses. Overall, the roles of both

the coach and instructional leader are imperative to the partnership, as both play a part in the success of the work.

Build and Grow

Relationships evolve through mutually interested individuals. Time is needed for many individuals to have a meaningful connection. This is imperative to the coaching relationship. Sustainable growth is reliant on feeling safe and addressing specific concerns (Kahn, 1992). Starting from a cursory, introductory relationship that can be nurtured to foster and grow into a meaningful relationship takes time. Heidi eloquently expressed the impact of building relationships when she stated,

When we talk, when we get to the point in the relationship where they can establish goals, everything changes. I can craft agendas based on their goals, but the second meeting might be what issues they are facing. How I can point them to that. That is how I prepare, but it takes me, in all honesty, six to eight weeks to truly build a strong foundation.

Reflecting on the length of time Heidi described, emphasized the importance of maintaining consistency with an individual who has built and grown a coaching relationship. If the agreed-upon coaching relationship is working, switching coaches can be detrimental to the progress of the instructional leader. As Heidi mentioned, it could take upwards of two months to simply build the foundation of trust. In a typical school year, this would be close to the end of the first nine weeks. Therefore, if consistency with the coach was not maintained, it could drastically hinder the start of the school year, as well as any progress.

Sustaining relationships is also paramount to the success and depth of ongoing coaching conversations. The design of how coaching relationships are designed also brought up some

feedback. Forced coaching relationships have been more difficult to navigate. Higgins and Parsons (2021) identify the role of the instructional coach to help support systemic reform. As previously mentioned, the relationship between the coach and instructional leader affects the degree of movement possible in a coaching relationship. Taylor expressed the importance of continually providing support and care. Taylor stated, “It doesn’t matter how much I know until they (the instructional leader) know how much I care. This is an ongoing process. Continually checking in and reminding them I am here to support them.”

Major Theme Four: Goals and Objectives (CRQ, SQ1)

The fourth major theme is setting goals and objectives. Three sub-themes were identified as progress towards the goal, goal identification, and pre-work. Progress towards the goal was a commonly referred to sub-theme, while the participants did not speak to the goal identification or pre-work as frequently. Identifying and working to progress towards goals was a commonality among participants. Goals were identified and established primarily by the instructional leader and were supported by the coach. Duckworth (2016) advocates for overcoming hurdles and working through difficulties. Establishing a goal and plan to move towards the determined objective allows the leader to overcome the challenges along the way. While many participants discussed how the coach would connect the sessions, provide support, and ask guiding questions to progress closer to the goal, it was still identified as the instructional leader’s responsibility to come prepared for the session and be willing to learn.

Table 6*Major Theme 4: Goals and Objectives*

Sub-theme	Code
Progress Towards Goal	(37)
Goal Identification	(12)
Pre-Work	(11)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate code frequency.

Progress Towards Goal

Once a goal has been determined, a coach typically lays out a plan to help the instructional leader move in a common direction, by identifying a goal and objective, to support the coachee's aspirations. Ali noted in her journal all the questions that she plans for are to help guide the conversation toward the objective of meeting the goal. Benjamin commented, "The main thing is to have goals and outcomes established. My job is to help them not only manage their time but also their action plans and goals. The foundational piece, and the social-emotional mindset. Being new to the organization, it is kind of interesting as we are learning more about the principals and their workload. There seems to be a constant hurry to get things accomplished." This is where Karen's comments picked up, "The intended outcome is always to help them move forward. The next step forward is to meet their goal. It could be baby steps, or it could be a big leap. This especially happens when they are close to meeting their goal. Initially, it is just small steps."

The focus groups also emphasized the importance of improvement. One participant commented,

I have worked closely with my principal to help build their programs. I expanded my coaching role to model ways to support the school to improve the initiative of Instructional Rounds. It was intended to be grassroots, but the work was just not getting going. So, I helped coach the instructional leader through modeling a conversation with teachers to help spark that interest.

A fellow focus group member expanded on this thinking, “Coaching is not just holding conversations. It is putting those thoughts into action. Working with our leaders side by side with visiting classrooms, doing observations, and helping craft feedback, can move the leader forward toward their goal.”

Goal Identification

Early in the coaching relationship, the team should identify the direction the instructional leader is looking to grow. There are a variety of means by which goals can be identified. Several participants commented on the importance of data. This can be qualitative, such as observations and anecdotal notes, or quantitative, such as summative assessment scores. The use of various data points can support not only the goal itself, but the urgency that completion, or meeting the goal, requires. Heidi stated in her interview, “When we get to that point, we are talking about what type of data we can use to make progress. What do they understand and where they want to go personally.” The significance of this comment is that the instructional leader makes the final determination of the goal. This is not guided by the coach, but rather a focus which the instructional leader opts to focus.

Benjamin stated specific data points which are considered when an instructional leader is developing their goal consist of, “all types of data. Classroom observation, student work,

feedback statements the principal is providing. Then I ask reflective questions, to see if the current communication is helping move the school in the right direction.”

While the previous participants focused on internal data, Zoey looked at a more global perspective of data. The accreditation cycle provides continuous and ongoing data on which instructional leaders can determine a way forward. Zoey commented, “It is not up to me to determine the outcome for the school... The instructional leader mentioned the importance of classroom visits as they were meeting the expectation of COGNIA (the accreditation panel).” With all the expectations and requirements that instructional leaders are responsible for, the support of the coach, in this instance, helped combine their initiatives to save time and resources. The goal was identified, which aligned multiple concerns, and together, the team was able to move the school forward.

Pre-Work

All participants specifically stated planning occurs during routinely scheduled coaching sessions. Due to the workload and expectations of the instructional leader, many participants stated they hold much of the responsibility of creating agendas, preparing questions, and even finding resources to support the instructional leader. While the planning responsibilities fall heavily on the coach, there is work for the instructional leader to complete. Taylor explained her role in a coaching session as,

I outline an agenda, it may not be formal, but I basically have an idea about what the meeting will be about. Having an agenda of what will be covered helps keep me and my leader on track.” Taylor went on to say, “I also provide questions so that I can help them get to the root of where they want to go to ensure it will be productive in the end. If it is a principal, I may look at data, to find where their challenges are.

As for the instructional leader, they often have the next steps or actions that they need to complete. The instructional leader needs to move from theoretical conversations to action and begin applying the concepts discussed. These actions are explicitly stated and known upon the conclusion of a coaching session. During Benjamin's interview, he stated, "Sometimes the work has to be done together between sessions. They may ask if we can work on Instructional Rounds or another initiative together, and I am always happy to team with them." To maximize growth, working between coaching sessions often occurs. Whether it is the coach preparing an agenda, or follow-up on the next steps from a previous session, the work continues whether the coach is directly meeting with the instructional leader.

Major Theme Five: Professional Learning (CRQ, SQ3)

The job of a coach for instructional leaders can be described similarly to a chameleon. The coach needs to be all things to all people and knowing how to transform learning and navigating those needs is a unique skill set. Continual PD provides support for these skills and updated strategies for coaches to implement in the field.

Participants have received a range of PD offered by the employer over the course of their careers. Various participants have been employed by several different employers over the course of their careers. With a wide range of PD experiences, the instructional leader can bring preconceived notions to the experience (Lotter et al., 2016). Therefore, this data reflects a vast degree of experience and a broad understanding of various employers. A commonality that was identified in the responses was that although a glossary PD on the topic of coaching has been provided, the participants are eager for more in-depth training. Introductory training was provided at the onset of many of the participants' careers, however, as they continued to grow, they found the need to personally procure training to deepen their understanding.

Table 7*Major Theme 5: Professional Learning*

Sub-theme	Code
Employer Driven	(19)
Personally Procured	(18)
Experiential Learning	(16)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate code frequency.

Employer Driven

Employer-driven PD has been provided to a small degree for all participants. Much of the experiences were discussed during focused group conversations. The range of information stated by expert speakers as in the first focus group conducted. Several participants spoke about experts in the field of instructional coaching and the work completed by those experiences.

One participant commented during the focus group, “The training the organization provided by Elena Aguilar gave us strategies, like sentence stems, and ways to plan our coaching. That was one of our formal coaching training sessions.” During the same focus group, a newer team member commented about a former employer procured experience,

Mine started back in 2006 when we had Jim Knight piloted the research with him. For two years, we implemented this concept in our district, ten of us. We went out on the job and did the work, then had Jim come in and talk with us about where their challenges are, and how they took it to the next level. The following year, we went deeper on how it changed from the initial part.

Another focus group discussed similar experiences, with one participant commenting on their experience with Leslie Hobbs.

Leslie Hobbs was a jack of all trades. She worked with the organization and offered course for credit, facilitation, and adult learners. It was not a sit and get, but rather provided different opportunities for us. It was a train the trainer model. She was an excellent strategist and engaged with hands-on learning. We received great engagement strategies with the Coaching Model and the GROW model. I use what I learned every day.

Personally Procured

As coaches are taught to identify the diverse needs of their instructional leaders, they are also self-reflective and able to identify their personal needs for growth. All 12 participants noted much of their PD was individually procured through either structured academic programs or specified training. While most spoke of their personally procured degrees, some expanded upon their training with both formal and informal programs. During the focus group commented on the tools and resources of the Aguilar series. The focus group member stated,

My former team chose to do an extensive book study on the Art of Coaching Teams. We did hands on learning, we had the book open, providing feedback, activities, strategies, we really got into it cover to cover. We spent quality time diving into resources and being able to refer to chapters with leaders. The book has been a great source of coaching teams, as well as helping me know myself.

A fellow focus group member expressed how the Aguilar-sponsored website, Bright Morning, provided effective tools for each chapter. The member specifically stated, “It provides support for establishing norms and the key things to work with leaders. We can differentiate the work

with our leaders, as we have support to share to meet their various needs. There are tons of books that help with crucial conversations, too.”

It must be noted, the degree requirements for the instructional coaching positions, and the requirements to participate in this research study is to have a minimum of a Master’s in Education Degree. Such programs are aligned with adult learning theory and andragogy, which provide the basis of a coaching conversation partnering with adult learners.

Experiential Learning

Although traditional learning helps grow a practice, learning at the moment and self-reflection on experiences is also a powerful tool to strengthen skills and practices. Gutek (2011) emphasizes that for the adoption of beliefs to be obtained, meaningful and sustainable learning through experiences must take place. Obtaining knowledge through experiencing feelings can embed and strengthen a core understanding. While the intent is to improve the instructional leader’s practice, coaches gain confidence throughout the interactions, and many participants commented on the growth they made during coaching conversations. Ali stated she plans for experiential learning during her sessions. Part of the pre-work is considering ways to partner with the principal or leader to help them grow through hands-on learning. This could entail actual work the leader has or scenarios to work through to help the leader grow.

Much of the focus group conversations centered around learning through experiences. One participant during a focus group reflected on the specific growth they self-identified during a coaching conversation. Chelsea commented, “The interactive and experiential learning where it was hands-on, and I experienced the emotions of asking powerful questions has been the most beneficial.”

Many of the focus group conversations delved around experiential learning. One participant commented, “Most of my training in coaching has been on the job experience. Over the course of 30-plus years doing this kind of thing. You know, I did not take a program in instructional coaching or leadership coaching, it has been an evolution of the work, as part of my career.” This was echoed by each participant in this focus group. As each participant offered their personal experience of learning through doing, the power of the statements increased. Another participant commented, “I agree with Terry. Most of the engagement strategies have been on the job and learn as you go.”

Another focus group had similar comments. The use of role-playing has been a vital part of the growth of in-the-moment questioning and feeling comfortable shifting in real-time. During this focus group, a member commented, “The application of the craft to strengthen the conversations and providing us with the use of sentence stems leads to giving the coaching and scenario base real meaning.”

The final focus group also emphasized the importance of experiential learning. As one member of the focus group commented, “For me, it was on the job training, nothing formalized. I read a lot on my own for growth, the additional training when I assumed this position was having the conversations.” The conversation continued to grow around the power of the experience. The conclusion of the conversation was a member stating, “On-the-job training has been the most impactful training I could receive. Listening to podcasts of individuals asking questions, and me practicing asking similar in-depth questions has made me the coach I am.”

Outlier Data and Findings

Although many of the participants expressed similar viewpoints, one specific inquiry stood out as varying from the norm within the data. The impact of shifting from a face-to-face

interaction to a primarily virtual coaching experience was noted by one focus group as a difficult shift. These findings were interesting, as the perspectives of the focus groups and comments provided would be extremely different from the other groups, resulting in outlier data.

Outlier Fiending: Impact of the COVID Pandemic

One outlier which was commented on during a particular focus group was the surprising impact the worldwide pandemic had on the degree of sustainable coaching relationships. While not across the board, one focus group took particular interest in this shift. The pandemic forced the coaching relationship from primarily face-to-face interaction to a virtual meeting space was a difficult shift. In one of the focus groups, the impact of the virtual meeting space caused strife for the coach. One participant was hired during the pandemic. During this time, they had to establish initial relationships, and commented, “Not having initial face-to-face interactions forced me to be creative on building relationships. Online, it took a lot longer to do that (establish a trusting relationship).” Another focus group member expanded on this difficulty outside of just the pandemic, as their clientele is to support a geographically dispersed area. This participant stated, “A widespread district requires me to travel by plane, train, (long distant) vehicle rides, restricts my typical interactions. My reality has become the typical structure of providing quality instruction is a managerial piece in everyone’s environment.” Understanding the impact of a virtual coaching environment cannot be negated or overlooked, as the impact of COVID played such a crucial role in coaching conversations and relationships over the past several years. In addition, it should be noted that only the focus group explicitly asked the participants about the influence of the COVID pandemic. COVID was not referenced or discussed in any of the 12 individual interviews or the six journal entries received.

Research Question Responses

The collected data from this research study was designed to answer a central research question and three sub-questions. The research was collected through individual interviews, consisting of 15 questions, three complete focus groups consisting of five discussion questions, and a submitted journal entry responding to five reflection questions. This section will provide an overview of the data collected to briefly answer these questions.

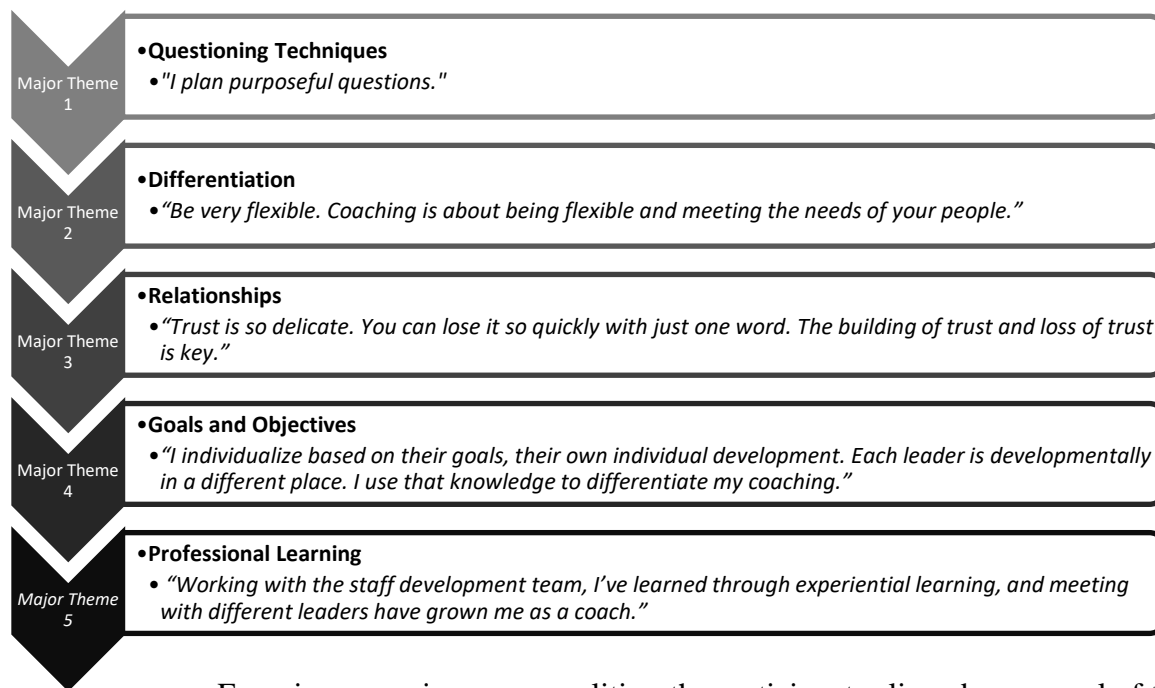
Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of overseas instructional coaches who intentionally plan engagement strategies during coaching sessions with overseas instructional leaders in a Department of Defense community?

There are unique experiences of all twelve participants in the research study. The premise of the work is aligned. See Figure 1 for an overall description based on a graphic depiction of the information. The importance of asking relevant and intentional questions, differentiating based on individual needs, relationships, the identified goals and objectives, and the amount of received PD were identified as major components of the work and learning of the participants.

Figure 1

Central Research Question alignment with the data: What are the lived experiences of overseas instructional coaches who intentionally plan engagement strategies during coaching sessions with overseas instructional leaders in a Department of Defense community?



Focusing on major commonalities, the participants aligned on several of the major themes. Riley noted,

Having training and readings about ways to make key decisions have been very powerful. Recognizing that coaching is emotional. There is an Ebb and flow within the realm of coaching. I know there are times when I need to advise, I need to adjust on a dime. That is the role of the coach. What are the second and third-order consequences for this decision? Understanding I represent a much larger group, my team is essential as I move forward doing the best I can.

The experiences vary not only from one individual to another but by working with each diverse leader. The uniqueness of the job was spotlighted through the data and various responses

regarding the importance of pivoting at any given moment. The unique opportunity to not only support leaders with various aspects of their work but also help them grow through questioning and thought partner reflection is a powerful tool. Regan stated, “The coach’s role is to support the instructional leader to lead to transformational learning. The coach is not to dictate but advise at some point. It is not to mandate any kind of task. The coach is an optimal role to support and guide.”

Found within the focus groups, the lived experiences of the participants were varied. Interestingly, some participants had the opportunity to receive ongoing professional learning from trained professionals; one participant stated experiences with Jim Knight, who is considered an expert in the field of instructional coaching. Others, however, have received asynchronous training as part of the job. With a wide range of experiences, the participants expressed the importance of relying heavily on their teammates to learn and grow their instructional coaching practice.

The lived experiences exemplify the work of caring nurturing individuals with a plethora of experiences. Working for an organization that advocates a growth mindset, by providing instructional coaches validates the work and knowledge of these professionals. Growth comes with not only acknowledging their lived experiences but having the opportunity to share them through coaching conversations. The goal has been communicated that with the support of the participants, current and future instructional leaders will continue to become the best version of themselves.

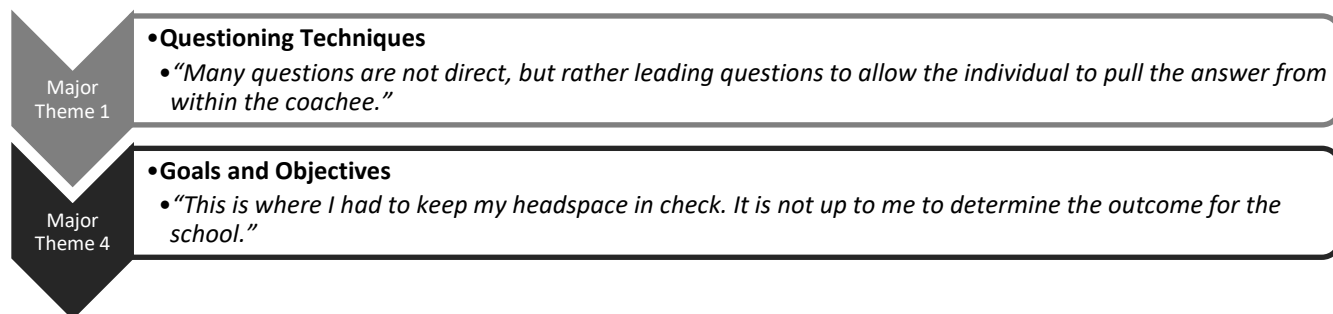
Sub-Question One

How do overseas American instructional coaches intentionally plan for individualized coaching sessions which impact instructional leaders?

Various intentional strategies and resources are leveraged when coaches intentionally plan for individualized coaching sessions to have the greatest impact on instructional leaders. See Figure 2 for the alignment of sub-question one to identify major themes. A few participants commented on the creation of agendas around predetermined goals, creating open-ended questions, or pivoting based on the needs of the instructional leader. The use of intentionality was a driving factor to the success of sessions, based on the information received during individual interviews and journal reflections.

Figure 2.

Sub-Question 1 alignment with the data: How do overseas American instructional coaches intentionally plan for individualized coaching sessions which impact instructional leaders?



All participants commented on their commitment to helping the leader move forward. Specifically, Taylor commented on the importance of planning thoughtful coaching questions. Taylor stated, “One of the reasons I plan our coaching session questions is so that I can use the best questions to not come across as evaluative. It is easy to slip into a coaching session, where you are less reliant on questions that can appear evaluative. So, this helps build trust.” As Taylor eloquently stated, the participants overtly stated the importance of the coaching relationship. Overwhelmingly, as the data were analyzed, the delicate relationship between the coach and instructional leader became evident. A determination was made that if the coach was an evaluator, the relationship could easily crumble.

Providing differentiated learning experiences designed to meet the individual needs of the instructional leader is a primary concern of each coaching session. The participants commented on a plethora of strategies to intentionally plan for each formalized coaching session. The coach often brings resources to support the instructional leader, as well as defined questions to help spark open-ended discussion and reflective thought. Intentional design cannot be minimized, as this is the shell that holds the instructional leader's progress moving forward together.

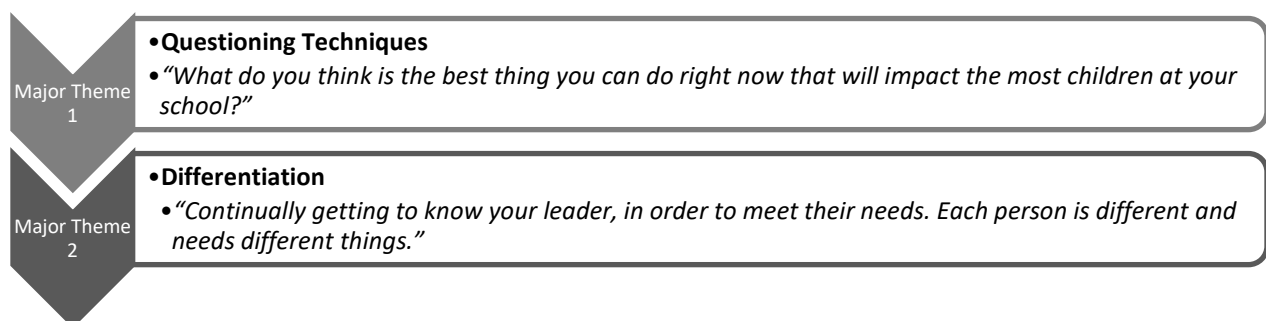
Sub-Question Two

How do overseas American instructional coaches guide meetings to either an instructional or a facilitative type of session?

Questioning techniques in conjunction with determined goals and objectives guide much of the coaching sessions. See Figure 3 for the alignment of sub-question two to identify major themes. Coaches have explained the importance of aligning their questions with the predetermined goals and objectives of the coachee. The participants stated the importance of ensuring to guide the conversation through intentional questions, based on those identified goals.

Figure 3

Sub-Question two alignment with the data: How do overseas American instructional coaches guide meetings to either an instructional or a facilitative type of session?



There were two obvious positions based on participant responses. One group stated it depended on the situation to which was more impactful. The other group stated unequivocally

that facilitative strategies were the most impactful in the long term. This is not to say that formative instruction is not vital. See Figure 4 for how to determine instructional or facilitative coaching questions.

Facilitative coaching sessions allow the instructional leader to come to their conclusion. To make long-term sustainable change, the participants noted the importance of guiding adults to their own conclusions. A few participants stated a variation of Brock's thinking.

Facilitative coaching to me is more of a journey than a pull. We are going to go there together. It is what you need. I might bring in my experience to guide the path. If you hear or like what I am saying you will come with me. If not, I will go with you, and the path is going to be based on others.

Allowing adult learners to come to their own conclusion is a guiding principle of andragogy and adult learning theory (McNally et al., 2019).

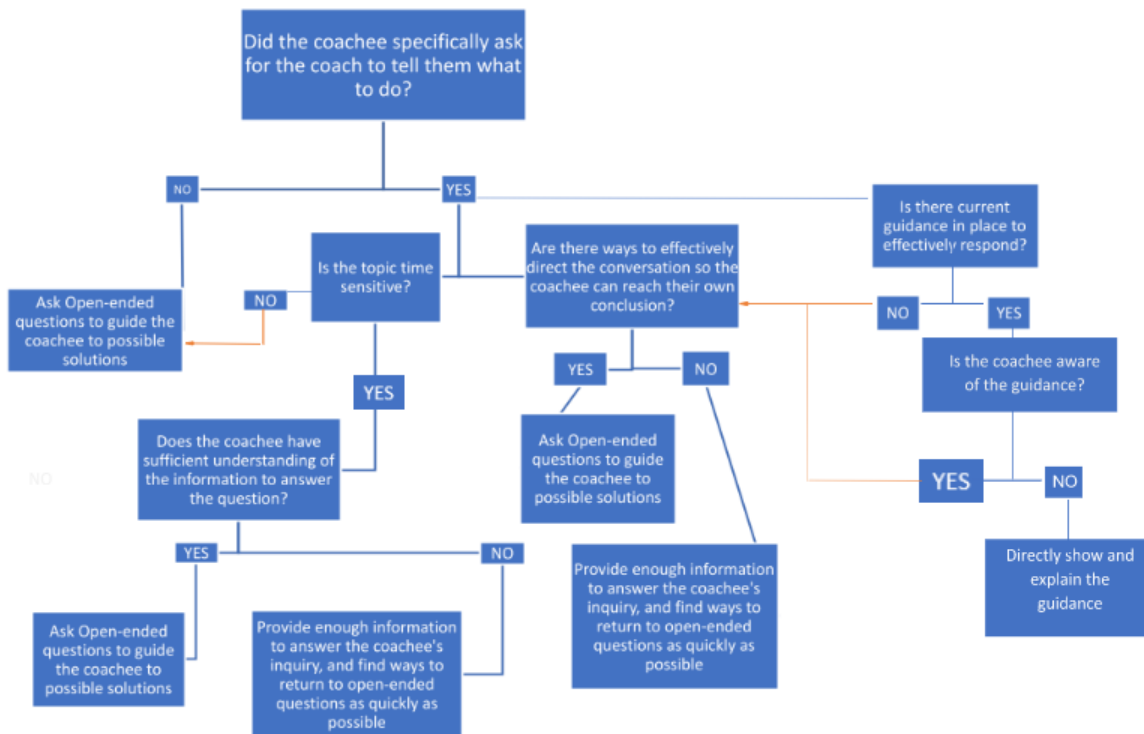
Instructional coaches use a combination of factors to determine the need for instructional or facilitative support. The instructional coaching design of explicitly telling the instructional leader how to proceed can be highly effective when circumstances warrant severe and immediate consequences. When safety is in question, or if a law may be broken, the coach needs to explicitly lay out a plan forward to support the instructional leader. Several participants cited situations that warranted instructional guidance.

Instructional coaching is when you need to know this, or you will get in trouble legally. It is more direct. I would call it an urgent way of coaching. I always think of situations that will keep my leaders out of jail. Things that will keep my leaders employed. Things require instructional approaches.

Payton provided another perspective on the instructional coaching approach.

In instructional coaching, a leader comes with a problem and wants to know exactly what to do. There may be an issue in the school, and the leader may not have developed the skill set, or it may have an adverse effect on the Instructional leader down the road. This is where I am giving knowledge. Here is the policy, procedure, and provide advice. Step one, two, three. This is necessary sometimes. In the cases just described it is not when there is a short-term situation that has a very clear outcome. Maybe there is a short suspense. Sometimes we don't have time to build all of the mindset work and come to the understanding in their mind. When their job or safety is on the line. We have to make choices.”

Through the interviews, focus groups, and journal submissions, the participants intentionally strive to ask open-ended questions. Though many participants identified the need for supporting the instructional leader with direct support in situations when their coachee specifically requested guidance. See Figure 4 for guidance on what the participants collectively described how they determine which coaching strategy is beneficial.

Figure 4*Determining Types of Questions to Ask During a Coaching Session*

Note. The flow chart begins at the top and moves downward based on binary responses. The only exception is when the orange lines identify a shift from one pathway to another. Follow the arrows as necessary based on the exceptions.

Sub-Question Three

How do overseas instructional coaches determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented?

The determination of progress and implementation is reliant on the relationship between the coach and instructional leader. See Figure 5 for the alignment of sub-question three to identify major themes. The continual movement towards the goal is imperative to the work being accomplished. When the leader feels successful, and continually feels movement towards the

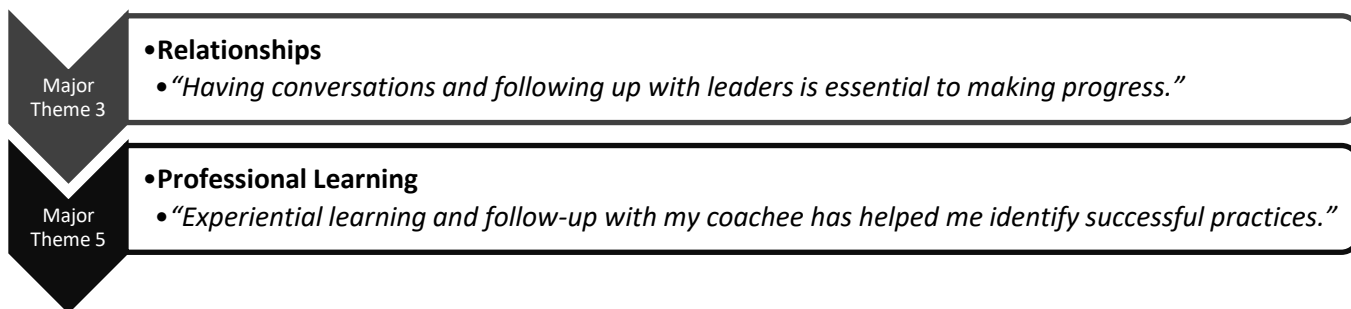
identified goal, progress is being made. When appropriate, quantitative data is used to measure growth, but ultimately, reflecting on the work being done is crucial. Terry stated in his interview,

My commitment is to go where the leader wants to go. I am there for them. I am not primarily for the boss or my boss. I am there for them. My commitment is to them and their personal growth. Their personal growth to be a better leader for teaching and learning. I like the phrase more than instruction as there is a mutuality and teaching is only meaningful if there is learning.

Through the implementation of strategies and progress moving towards goals over time, instructional coaches can determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented during coaching sessions.

Figure 5

Sub-Question three alignment with the data: How do overseas instructional coaches determine the effectiveness of strategies implemented?



Coaching relationships are a series of small steps, combined to make up a trek across a chasm of educational growth. The goal can be the end of the journey or the beginning of another. The work that each coach puts forth is as a fellow traveler. While the instructional leader ultimately decides the direction and progress made, the instructional coach is feverishly working in the background to help keep the coachee moving forward. Payton summed up the importance of determining the effectiveness of strategies, “It is part of our roadmap conversations. We will look at what we have done, what is our goal, what have we done since our last meeting, what happened, how did it go, to determine what is next.”

Summary

Chapter Four stated the purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to study the shared lived experiences of American overseas instructional coaches supporting instructional leaders in the Pacific Region engaging in coaching conversations to help improve instructional practices. The chapter introduced the 12 participants who volunteered to participate in this research study. Data analysis results were analyzed in an open inductive manual coding and provided through numerous sub-themes which ultimately identified five major themes. The identified major themes were (a) questioning, (b) differentiation, (c)

relationships, (d) goals and objectives, and (e) professional learning. This chapter presented each theme, both major and sub-theme, through specific statements made by participants to articulate the data and align the information with the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional development (PD) meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. The research study is synthesized in this chapter. To begin this chapter, a discussion of the research and findings are presented. Subsequently, each section will detail the data from Chapter Four before describing the findings of the themes derived from the collected data. Two subsections were dedicated to the implications of the data collected. The first will describe implications to policy and practice before moving to the next subsection which will delve into theoretical and methodological implications. Finally, chapter five will conclude with the limitations, delimitations, and future recommendations.

Discussion

This qualitative phenomenological study described the lived experiences of instructional coaches in PD meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. Instructional coaches are defined as trained professionals who mentor, support implementation expectations, and partner to support systemic reform (Aguilar, 2013). This study is pertinent to today's educational environment; identifying ways to provide differentiated PD to educators with a variety of experiences continues to be discussed. Utilizing the expertise of instructional coaches to support instructional leaders in a side-by-side partnership can address the above concerns.

Interpretation of Findings

The analysis of the research study provided five themes and numerous sub-themes identified by a modified version of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological research methodology. Through extensive data analysis, themes emerged and were documented in Chapter Four. The themes seemed to converge on one another and were directly related to the conceptual theme of the others. All are centered around the growth of the instructional leader through the direct and intentional support of the coach.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The thematic findings of this research were the result of a thorough analysis of the retrieved data. The concepts of andragogy and adult learning theory were used to examine the lived experiences of instructional coaches as they engaged instructional leaders to improve their practices. All participants had extensive content knowledge in the field of education. The major theme that stood out was the importance of questioning techniques. All participants unequivocally stated the use of open-ended questions was the most impactful way to conduct an engaging coaching session. Additional themes which were important to leveraging engagement were differentiation and relationship building.

Intentional Open-Ended Questions. Asking questions that allow the instructional leader to examine a problem of practice combined with their personal experience opens the door for an engaging coaching session. Open-ended questions allow coachees to work brainstorm solutions, and consider benefits and obstacles, before ultimately selecting a way forward. Skilled coaches provide opportunities where the instructional leader establishes this plan, rather than simply being told how to solve the problem.

The participants' responses exemplified the importance of the internal knowledge of the instructional leader. The coachee was identified as the expert of their life, and only through open-ended questions would the instructional leader conclude what should be turned into action. The instructional coaches communicated although they felt they had areas of expertise; they did not want to simply be a resource to tell the instructional leader how to proceed. The most in-depth data collection was retrieved when the coaches were individually interviewed. Question four asked about the role of the coach and instructional leader. This inquiry allowed for the personal connections of the participants to converge with their daily work. As the participants described the eloquent choreography of a typical coaching session, the passion for the work and care for their leaders emerged.

The ability to ask intentional open-ended questions was a primary focus for many participants. Time was frequently spent between coaching sessions, planning specific and engaging questions which would allow the instructional leader to provide more details and delve deeply into the problem of practice is addressed. Questions were stated as not simply being in the moment, or following the coachee's lead, but would rather guide the conversation towards the goal and objectives previously established. Higgins and Parsons (2021) stated the importance of intentional questions to support peers when providing diverse perspectives and guiding work. The coach worked diligently to align the questions in a manner that did not reflect judgment but would ultimately provide opportunities for the coach to consider various perspectives, and alternatives, and come to a reasonable conclusion.

The use of intentional questioning is imperative not only for making progress with the current circumstances but also to enhance the instructional leader's confidence in making decisions. Aguilar (2013) affirms the concept of building confidence. Aguilar (2013) ascertains

an indirect relationship between the need for instructive coaching practices and the learner's confidence.

Professional Relationships. Taking the time to build and sustain relationships provides more engagement in a coaching session. This was an overarching theme in all data collection forums. Just as in a social setting, when individuals are surrounded by confidants, they are more likely to communicate and express their authentic feelings. This is also true for a professional coaching relationship. Much of what is discussed during a coaching session are areas of growth, educational concerns, or problems of practice. While it might be easy to talk to peers about areas of strength, areas that have been identified as a struggle require a trusting relationship.

The participants commented on how the relationship was paramount, and trust foundational, to truly making strides with each instructional leader. Interestingly, it was not simply about learning who the leader was as a person. The participant's point of view coincides with Aguilar's (2013) concept of ways to leverage trust as a foundation for making embedded connections. The participants communicated building sustainable relationships was a two-way street. They would share information pertinent and appropriate information about themselves while focusing on the instructional leader. The coach would ask questions about how their mindset was, and successes they had felt recently, and eventually get to the areas of growth.

The impact of not having a professional relationship could be quite hindering. Duke et al. (2020) align building relationships directly with the impact of education, as thinking skills are required to make those necessary connections. A lack of relationships would therefore be detrimental for a variety of reasons. One identified reason for a lack of relationships was pointed out by a newly hired instructional coach. As stated in Chapter Four, Heidi commented on the length of six to eight weeks to grow an effective coaching relationship. This could be a personal

preference or geographical distance between the instructional coach and the coachee, but whatever the cause, only time will determine how the coaching relationships develop.

The perceived level of trust between the coach and coachee is crucial to a strong relationship. Through confidentiality and keeping a close hold on information discussed during a coaching session, over time, trust will emerge. As Kee et al. (2017) noted trust is a crucial skill within the field of education; the concept of trust in conjunction with developed PD can be a recipe for success.

Power of Differentiation. Building on the established relationships developed over time, knowing the needs, personality, and direction of the instructional leader is imperative to the engagement process during a coaching conversation. While some instructional leaders are kinesthetic learners, they may require questions and specific role plays where they are physically active. Other coachees may require processing time, where the instructional coach provides thought-provoking questions before the session to be discussed to keep the engagement during the session at a higher level. Even others may require probing questions to tell me more about that, and could you say that differently, so the coach clearly understands the message? While all these skills are useful to hold in an instructional coach's toolbelt, knowing when the appropriate time to use them and with which leader is vital to growth and goal attainment.

Differentiation requires knowing the starting point and end goal to lay a foundation and guided direction to make progress (Colognesi & Gouin, 2020). With adult learners, holding routine coaching sessions and then allowing time for self-reflection is vital to moving the work forward. It is the coach's responsibility to plan sessions that will meet the needs of the instructional leader. To provide differentiated opportunities, the coach truly has to connect with their coachee and plan accordingly.

Implications for Policy or Practice

Providing PD opportunities for instructional leaders has been identified as a priority in education. Providing appropriate support aligned to the individual goals, personalities, and leadership styles of the instructional leaders would benefit all within the educational setting. Modifying the typical PD, of a one size fits all approach, to a differentiated and personalized delivery is recommended to make the biggest impact on instructional leaders within the educational system.

Implications for Policy

Foundational skills such as trust, building relationships, and even differentiation, are vital to the coaching relationship. Recognizing the importance of the relationship should dictate the pairing of coaches with their instructional leader counterparts. If another individual, such as a supervisor, dictates who will coach specific individuals, the work could be delayed. As each instructional leader brings unique qualities to their position, each coach has unique expertise. Allowing individuals to determine whom they open with is a serious consideration to the work moving forward.

The policy should state negotiables and non-negotiables for instructional leaders. For instance, a non-negotiable would include every instructional leader who will meet with a coach at least once every two weeks for the duration of the academic school year. Another expectation would be for the instructional leader to identify a goal and timeframe to strive to attain the goal. An example of a negotiable would be the instructional leader can identify and partner with an instructional coach of their choosing currently hired within the organization.

The importance of the coaching relationship can transform the educational environment (Aguilar, 2013). The claim relies heavily on the way the coaching is delivered. Aguilar (2013)

goes on to claim the shift relies on the behavior, conditions, and practice of educators. This aligns with the premise of a relationship. The way individuals interact with each other is foundational for building strong relationships.

Implications for Practice

Emphasizing the importance of coaching sessions is imperative to the progress and growth of instructional leaders. Although sessions are considered a priority, as the organization has hired a specified number of expert instructional coaches, the time is not always utilized most productively. Expectations have been communicated by district and regional leadership that all school-level personnel will meet with their determined instructional coach, unfortunately the best-laid plans do not always come to fruition. For instance, although school-level instructional leaders schedule coaching sessions in advance, more urgent matters frequently arise taking precedence over the coaching sessions. Frequently the meeting time is replaced and, in all realities, may not be rescheduled.

Implications

Numerous implications can be identified for this transcendental phenomenological research including theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. Instructional coaches, policy-makers, educators, and all individuals with a stake in education are implicated by the shift to individualized coaching sessions. Professional learning has primarily been a one size fits all approach, instructional coaching provides an opportunity to individualize and differentiate the growth opportunities to the unique leaders, their experiences, and needs. The implications suggest a method of specialized delivery of support for educators as we progress into the twenty-first century. Instructional design and individual diversity within the academic environment are implicated in future growth of PD.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of intentional and in-depth coaching were identified as a theoretical implication of this research. The potential to increase the scope of influence of the current instructional coaches to a broader scope of instructional leaders was identified as a powerful use of this resource. Various stakeholders require a range of instructional deliveries to meet the wide array of adult learners' needs (Watts, 2018). The use of a coach has been identified as impactful as the research began to spotlight the importance of ongoing and routine PD by trained professional coaches. Based on the data, the major theme of the importance to establish relationships with instructional leaders is imperative to the success of the coaching experience. The data from this study aligns with van Zyl et al. (2020) study regarding the importance of building relationships as positive psychological support in a coaching relationship. Van Zyl (2020) claimed the relationship enhanced positive behaviors. These results were echoed by the findings within this study. Therefore, the implication is to have ongoing learning sessions with a hired coach who can routinely meet and work with instructional leaders for the greatest impact.

For instructional leaders, the theoretical implications are massive. Participants routinely commented on the need for ongoing coaching relationships to establish, build, and maintain a trusting relationship to address the underlying issues. van Zyl et al. (2020) identify various stages where relationships have differing degrees of established rapport. Early into a coaching relationship, there tend to be more physical and psychological barriers that may hinder the timing and growth of an instructional leader. Gallagher and Bennett (2018) state building authentic and ongoing relationships too early to grow a collaborative partnership. Gallagher and Bennett (2018) go on to emphasize the importance of planning and activities around building

relationships to establish rapport. Payton commented, “Those that I have an established trusting relationship with, I can plan more in-depth. I get to more of the mindset shift, vulnerable conversations leading to sustainable change.” Tomlinson (2003) considered using affirmations to build relationships to impact change. The difference between typical PD and a coaching relationship is the emphasis on ongoing work, spanning over time.

Examining how to make this commitment to PD needs to focus on the reality of limited funds. Barrett and Pas (2020) state in 2017-18 the range of whole group professional development per contact hour for each educator was between \$138.29 and \$158.45. Barrett and Pas (2020) go on to state coaching sessions cost \$169.43 per contact hour. The study stated over three-fourths of the identified professional development sessions were traditional workshops.

With already stretched budgets, and schools reliant on the government for this type of support (Davidson et al., 2015), additional financial support from policymakers would need to be considered for many systems to make routine coaches in all educational systems a reality. Numerous reviews have stated the reliance schools have on federal funding (Davidson et al., 2015; Heise 2018). Increasing the amount of money suggested by Barrett and Pas (2020) would require serious planning and consideration. To shift the current reality of PD which models a traditional approach to supporting instructional learners to a more authentic modern delivery, instructional coaches across the board are highly recommended.

Empirical Implications

This research has empirical implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and districts across the country who are focusing on modeling supportive practices for district and school-level personnel striving to become strong instructional leaders. Addressing the one size fits all approach to PD for instructional leaders is fundamental to the growth of the United States’

educational institutions. The push towards differentiation professional development assures there will not be a uniform approach or even an agreed delivery method to be most effective and efficient for all educators. Discussing various ways to provide differentiated learning is a topic worth exploring.

Various configurations would allow for personalizing professional development for teachers. As Gallagher and Bennett (2018) stated, hiring trained professionals to support the growth of educators is paramount to success. These individuals who model engagement strategies to help guide conversations through intentional and open-ended questions are paramount for future success. Knight (2021) emphasizes modeling strategies are not adequate. Knight (2021) goes on to say the skills identified as best practices aligned with identifying a strategy to address the needs is what culminates into effective learning. While an instructional coach provides the strategy, it is up to the coachee to implement and learn from the technique (Gallagher, & Bennett, 2018; Knight, 2021).

In 1965, policymakers began influencing the public school system (Davidson et al., 2015). Davidson et al. (2015) contend since the inception of ESEA, various legislation has focused on elevating the outcomes of various schools. At the turn of the century, high-stakes testing was forced into the educational environment with little attention being given to the PD of various educators. Various means of PD have been provided in a primarily whole group setting to work to address the shifts in education.

Instructional coaching provides differentiated PD for instructional leaders responsible for making the mandated shifts. Tomlinson (2003) extensively covered the importance of differentiating learning to meet the diverse needs of individuals. In correlation with the need for making personal relationships with learners and juggling the time to do so was paramount to

Tomlinson's (2003) work. By identifying the various needs and providing support to meet those needs teachers can prepare learners to grow and transform (Tomlinson, 2003).

While legislation focused on the learning outcomes, little has been done by these same individuals to strengthen the capacity of those instructional leaders responsible for current 21st-century learning.

Practical Implications

The practical implications communicate the importance of voluntary participation to generate the greatest return on investment. The time for intentional planning for coaching sessions, the meeting to engage in dialogue, combined with follow-up practical application of work is extensive. Participant data indicated the importance of planning for the individual needs of instructional leaders, being prepared to pivot during the session, and continually reflecting on the movement toward a determined goal.

Various best-practice research techniques for student learning were not reflected in the data. The implication of PBL and a flipped classroom, while by design would be supported by adult learning theory's reflective practice, the time required for many of these initiatives was not realistic for the schedule of the instructional leader. Therefore, the implication of the participants' data indicated a need for on the job training. Chelsea explicitly stated, "I had a coaching session with a leader and they explained they were about to have a conversation with an employee. Previous conversations had not gone well. They asked if I would join to help coach them at the moment. I agreed, as long as it was okay with the teacher. I could see and feel the tension, and at times I was asked to step in. By the end, it was a great conversation. That's just what we do." This is a prime example of differentiation within the coaching session. The needs of the coach were not the focus; the identified needs and interests of the instructional leader were the priority.

The work in one session was able to mend fractured relationships and strengthen the educational growth of an instructional leader and teacher. This is the power of coaching.

The overarching practical implication of the work of a coach is finding personal meaning in the world of education. Customizing the work to meet the frequent demands and strategies to meet a plethora of leaders at a moment's notice has the capabilities to completely transform the educational community, along with each student. The possibility to model successful strategies and build the confidence of instructional leaders will ultimately improve the delivery of instructional design and teaching practices across the nation.

Limitations and Delimitations

The most obvious limitation was the physical location of the collected research was the geographical location of the participants. Living overseas in the Pacific region provides a unique experience for instructional coaches. Navigating language barriers, homesickness, and other non-educational issues may impact their lived experiences and perspective of instructional coaching. The twelve participants were all native English speakers, with varying experience of living away from the continental United States. While the participant who most recently moved overseas was approaching their first year outside of living overseas, another participant had lived overseas for 26 years.

A second limitation was during the data collection phase. This research included 12 participants who had a lot of professional obligations already committed. Although the individual interviews did not cause much concern to schedule and complete, the same cannot be said of scheduling focus groups and retrieving the requested journal entries. Working to schedule the focus groups during a time that would accommodate all participants' schedules was seemingly impossible. After much work, shifting, and rescheduling three focus groups were

conducted which included 11 of the 12 participants. The journal artifact collection was the most challenging of the data collection. As this was completed on individual time and then submitted, it was difficult to have participants complete and submit the requested artifact. Numerous communication tactics were attempted with minimal success. In the end, six of the 12 participants provided the requested documentation.

The final identified limitation was the time frame of the data collection was a limitation. In 2020, education was forced out of its physical structure and thrust into the virtual realm. Then, as the data collection phase of the research was being launched, the COVID pandemic was beginning to settle down. Education returned to brick-and-mortar schools. This time frame provided a very difficult and stressful environment for many instructional leaders and coaches. Understanding how this time of transition may have impacted the lived experiences of coaches to respond to specific questions in various ways could not be verified through such a small sample.

Recommendations for Future Research

Through identifying the areas of growth for this research, a few considerations should be emphasized. To begin with, due to the small sample size, this research should not be considered generalized findings. Future research studies focusing on the lived experiences of instructional coaches should be repeated in other geographical settings, with various degrees of educational experience. Considering the experience of American instructional coaches and leaders in foreign countries, their lived experiences may greatly differ from those residing within the United States. An adaptation for future research would include conducting the research at either a different overseas location, within the continental United States, or supporting foreign country schools.

Another recommendation for future research would be to focus on ethnic demographics. This study included self-identified Black and White participants. This demographic does not

fully represent the entirety of instructional leaders or coaches within the field of education.

Having an extensive and more comprehensive participant group would be recommended. A consideration for adaptation would be for a more diverse ethnic representation to participate.

Finally, considering this study was conducted after the COVID pandemic, the responses and focus of the participants may not provide a clear picture of their lived experiences. During this time of de-transition from virtual learning and coaching sessions, back to a brick-and-mortar learning environment occurring during the data collection phase. It would be interesting to collect data on the same questions at another time when there was not as much mayhem in the lives of both the participants and their leaders. Therefore, examining the same work through a more constant lens would be recommended.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of instructional coaches in professional Development meetings with overseas instructional leaders in the Department of Defense-connected community. The research was based on leveraging andragogy and adult learning theory to meet the unique needs of various instructional leaders in personalized and engaging coaching sessions. The focus was on 12 current professional instructional coaches' lived experiences and gathered data based on their insight. Through detailed analysis of the participant's interviews, focus group conversations, and journal artifacts strong interpersonal themes emerged. The major themes included the importance of questioning techniques, differentiation, relationships, goals and objectives, and PD. In addition, some key sub-themes were the importance of trust, confidentiality, and open-ended inquiry to allow the instructional leader to come to their conclusion. The most important aspect of this research is the individuality that is brought to the field of education. With the range of experiences and degree

of expertise by those working with the leaders of tomorrow, honoring personal choice is imperative to maximizing the coaching relationship. In conclusion, allowing adults the autonomy and voice in the selection process of their instructional coach is vital to the pace and desire to grow and learn.

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Appendix A

ORGANIZATION REQUEST DOCUMENTS



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY
HEADQUARTERS
 4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
 ALEXANDRIA, VA 22350-1400

Ms. Whitney Tucker
 PSC 560 Box 276
 APO AP 96376

December 20, 2022

Dear Ms. Tucker,

The research committee has completed its review of your proposal, "THE IMPACT OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES USING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITH OVERSEAS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY." DoDEA is happy to assist with your research project. Specifically, you are approved to conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with up to 15 Instructional Coaches approved for this research project. Please note that survey and interview data collected may not include names, grades, or any other personally identifiable information to protect the confidentiality of participants in your research project. Please use pseudonyms or another coding on interview documents to protect the identities of participants.

Please be aware that all activities related to your research must occur outside the normal duty day. Any additional information you request from schools or individuals or any deviations from your original proposal should be cleared through DoDEA HQ and your university IRB. Permission from DoDEA HQ does not compel any individual(s) to participate in the research; participation or assistance by individuals is strictly voluntary.

As specified in the research agreement, you may not refer to the specific school, district, or school system (DoDEA-Americas, DoDEA-Europe, DoDEA-Pacific, DDESS, DODDS, or DoDEA) in any way in any written reports generated from this research. A final electronic copy of your research report is to be submitted to the DoDEA Applied Research Branch via email or regular mail. Best of luck with your research, if you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email at research@dodea.edu.

Sincerely,

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 Date: 2022.12.20 12:01:33 -05'00'

Jason Debus
 HRPO, Education Research Analyst

Appendix B**IRB APPROVAL COMMUNICATION****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 27, 2022

Whitney Tucker

Timothy Nelson

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-230 THE IMPACT OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES USING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITH OVERSEAS
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Whitney Tucker, Timothy Nelson,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in

which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us

at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix C

COMMUNICATION REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

Dear _____,

I hope this email finds you well. As a graduate student in the Philosophy of Education focused on Curriculum and Instruction at Liberty University, I am beginning my research project with a focus on the lived experiences of instructional coaches working with educational leaders.

You are invited to participate with this research study. You were selected as a possible participant due to your extensive knowledge, experiences, and position as a current instructional coach for educational leaders. Before accepting this invitation, please read all the information and make sure to ask me any questions which come to mind.

I, Whitney Tucker, will be collecting the information, communicating with all participants on a voluntary and anonymous basis, will use pseudonyms to identify all participants, and personally conduct this research study as a doctoral candidate on behalf of Liberty University. The purpose of the study is to acquire and examine the lived experiences of trained instructional coaches which support educational leaders.

Procedures and Requests: If you agree, please see the request for your participation:

- Allow Whitney Tucker to confidentially report your participation through the use of a pseudonym, whenever discussing data or obtained information
- Complete a short demographic survey (15 minutes)
- Participate in recorded interviews (approximately 60 minutes)
- Review typed transcripts of interview (approximately 30 minutes)
- Participate in a recorded online focus group, to include reviewing researcher notes (approximately 75 minutes)

- Document follow-up of implementation of implementation strategy determined during coaching sessions, in an online journal I provide, with any anecdotal notes, determined by your instructional leader and you, the participant, during formal coaching sessions (approximately 30 minutes)
- The timeline for all above components should be completed no later than 30 January 2023.

Risk: The risks involved in this study are minimal.

Benefits: There will not be compensation or specific benefits to the participants for participating in the study.

Compensation: There will not be compensation, to include financial or other, to participants voluntarily agreeing to engage with this study.

Confidentiality: Participants can be assured; pseudonyms will be used to report all pieces of data which may be discussed or published. Participant's names, as well as any identifiable information, and any communication to include the journal, will be excluded from all research records. If official names are required for to track information, they will be kept on password protected devices which only the researcher has access. Be assured whenever communication is being collected, anonymity will be ensured by the use of headphones, monitor placement, or isolation of the interviewer. I will be conducting all interviews and focus group conversations. Three years after the completion of the current study, all collected data and documentation within the research material collected from the participant will be deleted with all hard copies being destroyed.

Voluntary Patriation: Again, participation with this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will not have any bearing on your future relations with the researcher, Liberty University, or the organization which you are employed. At any time during the research study, you are free to ask for clarification, refrain from answering any question, or withdraw from the study completely without fear of reprisal or negative ramification.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If at any time, you would like to withdraw from the research study, reach out to myself via email communication simply stating you would like to be removed. You can expect a written response from myself, as the researcher, and within 24 hours of receiving the acknowledgment from me all individual data collected from you will be destroyed. Please note, if you have already participated in a focus group, that information will remain as part of the study.

Contacts and Questions: Please use the following contact information to reach out for any questions, submissions, or concerns you may need addressed. Whitney Tucker at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]. In addition, you are free to reach out to the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Timothy Nelson, via email at [REDACTED].

If there are any questions or concerns which you would like to address with Liberty University's Institutional Review Board directly, please use the following mailing address or email: 1971 University Blvd. Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, Virginia, 24515, or irb@liberty.edu. Finally, if you agree to participation and would like a formalized copy of the signed information, please request a copy from the researcher.

Statement of Consent: By signing the document, you are acknowledging you have read the document in completion, have had the opportunity to ask any questions and are agreeing to participate with the above explained research study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix D

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

This is a voluntary demographic survey for the sole purpose of better understanding your lived experiences as an instructional coach.

Your Instructional Coaching Role (Circle primary role):

District Senior Leaders

Administrator

Instructional Coach

What is the highest educational level you have completed?

Master's Degree

Above Master's Degree

Doctoral Program

Including this year, how many years have you worked within the field of education?

Including this year, how many years have you been an instructional coach?

Including this year, how many years have you been in your current role?

Including this year, how many years have you lived outside of the United States?

Please note, the time can be segmented; include all time living outside of the United States

What ethnicity do you self-identify? _____

Please share any additional information you would like which may influence your participation or influence your lived experiences as an instructional coach?