A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL VIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MOTIVATION AS EXPERIENCED BY SECONDARY HIGH SCHOOL STAFF WHO ENGAGED WITH NEW INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

by

Emily Marie Cornwell

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School in a rural desert of California. The theory that guided this study was Knowles's theory on adult learning, as it explained how adults learn and their motivations for professional development. The central research question was: what were the lived experiences of 10-12 public-school teachers at the secondary level while interacting with an instructional coach? The methodology in this qualitative study was hermeneutic phenomenology in which participants shared their lived experiences working with an instructional coach. The data collection methods were interviews, observations, and journal entries. The analysis approach to the coding was based on Saldana. The study highlighted the transformative impact of instructional coaching on classroom instruction and management. Teachers described adopting new strategies and approaches suggested by coaches, resulting in improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Importantly, the findings challenged negative perceptions associated with seeking help, fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth among educators. Overall, this study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the coaching cycle in enhancing classroom instruction and management, as perceived by secondary school teachers in a rural desert setting. The findings contributed to the ongoing discourse on personalized professional development and underscored the importance of continued support mechanisms for educators.

Keywords: instructional coaching, adult learning, teacher learning, secondary level

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, from whom all good things flow! To my dad, your love, wisdom, and unwavering support are still felt even though you are no longer with us. To my mom, who never gave up on my spelling. To my wonderful husband and supporter, who is always there with words of encouragement and tissues. To my baby sister who never let me forget my ambitions. To my nephews and nieces, may you pursue knowledge throughout your lives.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Every Study Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Instructional Coaching (IC)

Instructional Coaches (ICs)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Professional Development (PD)

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Educators have taken on new roles in and out of the classroom to combat the learning loss frequently discussed due to the pandemic (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). In order to establish meaningful connections, teachers are looking for new ways to connect with students and present engaging material. Teachers would benefit professional development to help them hone their craft (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional coaching is a way teachers can receive professional development with individual attention on a topic that interests them. The coach's role is to give the teacher the autonomy to choose a goal relevant to the struggles they have in their own classrooms (Knight, 2019). When teachers seek out a coach, they welcome help in their classrooms, and through the theory of adult learning, the coach can facilitate a conversation to find out the actual needs of the teacher. This chapter will cover the background of coaching as a professional development tool with historical, social, and theoretical context. It will also include the problem, purpose, significance, and research questions for this study. Definitions will be listed at the end of this chapter to clarify any terminology used.

Background

Schools are held accountable for student achievement and growth with the implantation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). To effect change in the classroom, teachers must continue to develop their instructional delivery methods and classroom management skills. Instructional coaches are teachers who have transitioned into a coaching role to help teachers with individualized professional development. Instructional coaches can research personal plans or draw upon their own knowledge to formulate a plan for teachers willing to have them into their classrooms for observations. A

teacher and coach can set goals that are personal to what the teacher would like to change in his/her classroom. Teachers have ownership of the process, and the changes made in their classrooms because instructional coaching takes the partnership approach where the teacher and the coach have a voice in the discussions. The coach is there to listen and ask questions to help the teacher discover his/her true needs and help develop a plan for which the teacher is the owner. Through this approach both parties are equal with the teacher having the final say over the plan and desired outcomes.

Historical Context

Professional development in education was built on the idea of three training elements: to study the theory of the skills, to observe someone else teaching, and to practice with feedback. Joyce and Showers (1981) added on-site coaching is a fourth element to help teachers improve their instructional development skills. When teachers are learners, there is an assumption they can transfer the skills they learned as learning into skills they can use as teachers. Transferring the knowledge into practice is not always the case, and instructional coaching is designed to give teachers a person in whom they can confide and seek out information about their needs in the classroom. The problem with traditional professional development is the need for more follow-up. With instructional coaches on a site, they can follow up with teachers to answer further questions and help implement the new training.

The role of coaching is evolving as researchers and developers recognize the importance of the individualized need for professional development (Knight, 2007, 201, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The “Pathways to Success Program” (Knight, 2004) began after the establishment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2002. With the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, there was a need to address teachers' professional development through

dialogue, reflective questioning, and collaborative effort (American Institute for Research, 2005). Through the use of instructional coaches, schools have an opportunity to have site-based professional development that meets the needs of the students and teachers to address concerns on campus rather than a one-size-fits-all district plan. Through the implementation of NCLB, there was a mandated site-based professional development initiative that would address the needs of the students (Desimone & Pak, 2017). According to research by Mangin and Dunsmore (2015), the implementation of instructional coaching as a professional development model was a systematic change to the instructional models teachers use to impact student achievement.

Teacher quality impacts student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Dunsmore, 2011; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). There is a need to have data-driven instructional methods implemented in classrooms, but teachers have limited time to research and implement these practices. Instructional coaches can research for the teachers. With these identified research strategies, teachers can positively impact student achievement (Marsh et al., 2009). Instructional coaches evolved as change agents who can be reflective partners for teachers by building rapport and providing individualized help.

Instructional coaching is a form of professional development (Desimone & Pak, 2017). When working with an instructional coach, a teacher or staff member will have a topic they bring to the conversation about how they would like to improve. In this discussion, the coach intends to aid the teacher in devising a plan to enhance their performance for the benefit of the students (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The goal of coaching is not to judge but to have a collaborative relationship between teachers and coaches; however, coaches must build their rapport with the teachers for them even to be asked into the classroom (Jacobs et al., 2018).

Social Context

Teachers who feel there is a lack of support from their site regarding continuing professional development or help with classroom management are prone to leave the classroom or education in general (Allen, 2018; Bogler & Nir, 2014; Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980; Cooley & Shen, 1999; Ingersoll, 2016; You & Conley, 2014). A teacher's identity is directly related to how they see themselves as an educator. If teachers are not happy with student outcomes or classroom management, they see themselves as failures. Additionally, teacher turnover due to dissatisfaction is high following the Covid 19 pandemic (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). Due to a lack of support, teachers are leaving the field.

There is an increasing demand for instructional coaches who aim to assist both new and experienced teachers to assess and hone their teaching methods and have a significant impact on their students. One-day professional development is not sustainable without follow-up in a teacher's classroom (Huijboom et al., 2021). Instructional coaches, however, can follow up and build individual plans for each teacher's needs. Teachers can choose what they want to work on and have autonomy over the process (Knight, 2019). Since teachers have a choice in what is being worked on, there is ownership and buy-in from that teacher, and the professional development is tailored to their needs.

Theoretical Context

Instructional coaching has emerged as a professional development approach that draws upon the principles of peer coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1981; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). While peer coaching has been studied extensively, this approach has been transformed into instructional coaching (Knight, 2022). These studies were primarily quantitative to study coaching effectiveness with elementary and middle school educators. The coach provides non-

evaluative feedback and supports the teacher in researching new instructional materials or management techniques as needed. By facilitating these collaborative interactions, instructional coaching has the potential to foster teacher growth and improve student learning outcomes.

The proposed research seeks to add new information to the existing literature by focusing specifically on the lived experiences of teachers who have worked with instructional coaches at the secondary level. By collecting qualitative data on the perceptions and experiences of these individuals, the study can provide insights into the factors that may influence the success or failure of coaching programs at this level and the potential impact of coaching on student learning outcomes. The proposed research will extend and refine the existing knowledge in the area under study by providing a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of teachers who work with instructional coaches at the secondary level. By focusing on the lived experiences of these individuals, the study can shed light on the specific challenges and successes they encounter while implementing the learning gained from working with a coach. Additionally, by exploring the perceptions of control that teachers have during their coaching interactions, the study can help to refine our understanding of how coaching can be most effectively implemented to support teacher growth and improve student outcomes. Overall, the proposed research has the potential to contribute valuable insights to the field of instructional coaching at the secondary level and inform the development of more effective coaching programs in the future.

Problem Statement

The identified problem is not a lack of literature per se but rather the absence of a comprehensive exploration into the lived experiences of secondary teachers in a public-school who have undergone instructional coaching. Instructional coaches, who are experienced teachers available to provide assistance with content delivery and classroom management, serve as a

valuable resource for struggling teachers (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). As teaching can be a demanding profession, with teacher burnout at an all-time high, there are concerns regarding retaining teachers who may leave the profession due to frustration or lack of support (Allen, 2018; Bogler & Nir, 2014; Cooley & Shen, 1999; Ingersoll, 2016; You & Conley, 2014). Instructional coaching has the potential to address these issues by providing just-in-time support and long-term solutions that can help teachers rekindle their passion for teaching. By serving as a sounding board and offering targeted support, instructional coaches can play a pivotal role in improving teacher effectiveness and, ultimately, student learning outcomes (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Instructional coaching is well documented in the elementary and middle school levels, with student and teacher success when using instructional coaches (Hashim, 2020; Monroe & Marvin, 2020; Myers et al., 2021). This study seeks to understand how secondary teachers in a public-school setting perceive and may shift their perspectives after interacting with an instructional coach on a secondary campus and to contribute to the literature on staff experiences when working with an instructional coach as a professional development option.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (pseudonyms) in a rural desert of California. At this stage in the research, instructional coaching will be generally defined as a professional development approach through which instructional coaches support secondary teachers in public schools. The theory guiding this study is adult learning theory by Malcolm Knowles (1970) as it relates to how adults learn and professional development of teachers.

The aim is to help teachers enhance their classrooms, ultimately benefiting their professional growth and the overall academic progress of their students. The sites that will be used in this study are new to having instructional coaching, and there is a concentrated effort by the district, sites, and coaches to positively impact the practices of the staff through meaningful and impactful conversations that will ultimately enhance the learning for the students (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). Coaches are there to provide support to staff through professional development (Reddy et al., 2019), mentoring, coteaching, planning, or observation with a coaching cycle (Zugelder, 2019). Through these relationships, coaches, as Knight (2019) demonstrated, can assist staff in their professional and personal development while also serving as role models and collaborators to enhance their interactions with students.

Significance of the Study

Many studies on instructional coaching that concentrate on self-efficacy at the primary level have been published. By exploring the lived experiences of public-school teachers who have worked with instructional coaches at the secondary level, this study aims to shed light on the potential benefits of a personalized professional development approach within an overlooked context (Gallucci et al., 2010; Hashim, 2020; Joyce & Showers, 1981; Knight, 2007, 2022; Postholm, 2012).

Theoretical

Through the lens of adult learning theory, this study seeks to provide insights into how the coaching cycle can effectively improve classroom instruction and management (Gallucci et al., 2010; Roumell, 2019). Adult Learning Theory states that for adults to learn, the adult must be involved in the planning of the lessons, the learning must be problem-centered, the learning must consider the learner's experiences, and the new learning must be relevant to the learner's life

(Knowles, 1978). The teacher typically seeks out instructional coaches and controls the learning. The teacher sets the lesson, typically focused on a problem they would like to solve in their classroom; the instructional coach will ask questions about the teacher's expertise and use prior knowledge to build. When this process is completed correctly, the learning is relevant to the learner's needs and thus uses all the principles of Adult Learning Theory. Moreover, by focusing on the perceptions of the public-school secondary teachers who have participated in instructional coaching, this study may help to dispel negative perceptions associated with asking for help and promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement among educators (Jacobs et al., 2018).

Empirical

The empirical significance of this study relates to other studies in the field of instructional coaching and may add to the existing literature by highlighting the potential benefits of this form of professional development. While there has been some research on instructional coaching at the primary level, and with staff development in hospitals with nursing staff, there is limited qualitative research focused at the secondary level at public high schools (Hashim, 2020; Monroe & Marvin, 2020; Myers et al., 2021; Waddell & Dunn, 2005; Wareing et al., 2018). By focusing on the lived experiences of public-school secondary teachers, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature and provide insights into how instructional coaching may be effective in improving teaching and learning outcomes. Additionally, by using qualitative research methods to gather data, this study may add to the methodological approaches used in studying instructional coaching.

Practical

The practical significance of this study lies in its potential to affect change on a wider scale. By highlighting the benefits of instructional coaching, this study may help to promote the adoption of this form of professional development in schools and districts. The findings may also be used to inform the development of instructional coaching programs that are tailored to the specific needs of teachers and schools. By improving teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction, instructional coaching may ultimately lead to better student outcomes and a more positive school culture. Additionally, this study may provide insights into how teachers and schools can promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement, which can have positive implications for the broader education community.

Research Questions

As schools strive to improve student outcomes and teacher effectiveness, instructional coaching has become a popular model for professional development. While research on the effectiveness of instructional coaching has been mixed, anecdotal evidence suggests that it can be a valuable tool for supporting teacher growth. To gain a deeper understanding of the perceived impact of instructional coaching, this study aims to explore the lived experiences of public-school secondary teachers who have worked with a coach.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level while interacting with an instructional coach?

Sub-Question One

In what ways are teachers at the secondary level motivated to seek the support of an instructional coach?

Sub-Question Two

What do public school teachers at the secondary level perceive best facilitates their learning while interacting with instructional coaches?

Definitions

The terms listed below are pertinent to the study and are grounded in literature related to the topic, theoretical framework, or research design of the study.

1. *Andragogy* – Andragogy is how adults learn verse pedagogy in how students learn. Adult learning theory was pioneered by Knowles (1973). Knowles presented nine significant characteristics of adult learners: control of the learning topics, ability to use the learning immediately, learning that concerns them, testing knowledge as they go, how they will be able to use the new knowledge, expected performance improvement on the topics learned, increase available resources, the environment must be collaborative, respectful, and informal, the information must be appropriate and developmentally placed (Zepeda et al., 2014, p. 299).
2. *Instructional coach* – Instructional coaches are educators, usually classroom teachers that have transitioned into the role of an instructional coach at a school site; the goal is to have an impact on the instructional practices in the classroom and student learning (Knight, 2019). The instructional coach is a collaborative partner for teachers who use reflective questioning to help the teacher build their confidence and professional development (Knight, 2019).
3. *Teacher Professional Development* – Teacher learning; how they learn to apply the knowledge they have gained to support the students learning. The learning can come in

different forms with the ultimate goal to have an impact on the students in their classrooms (Postholm, 2012).

4. *Teacher Self-efficacy* – "Teacher's beliefs or convictions that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be considered difficult or unmotivated" (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 628).
5. *Administration* – the management of all school operations, including a safe learning environment for students (Malone et al., 2021), the school budget, the grounds and building, and ensuring that teachers perform their daily jobs. This also includes the school climate and culture, moral (Schipper et al., 2020), and standards of learning (Neal et al., 2019)
6. *Leadership* - a complex process with many different theories on how to best lead others. Leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve a common goal (Kruse, 2013).
7. *Instructional Leadership* – "principals setting high standards for teaching and learning; being knowledgeable about effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment" (Goddard et al., 2019, p. 200)

Summary

With limited research on instructional coaching at the secondary level, it is difficult for new instructional coaches to get buy-in from teachers who are reluctant to have someone observe and help implement changes in the classroom. The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School in a rural desert of California. Instructional coaching is voluntary professional development driven by the teacher and the needs of the students in the classroom. The proposed

research aims to contribute fresh insights to the research on instructional coaching, concentrating on the real-life experiences of secondary-level teachers who have collaborated with instructional coaches. Through collecting qualitative data on teachers' lived experiences, this study can shed light on the various factors that might shape the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of coaching programs at this level. This research seeks to broaden and enhance the existing knowledge in this field by offering a more intricate comprehension of the experiences of teachers who engage with instructional coaches in a secondary school setting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A literature review was conducted to explore the problem of implementing instructional coaching at the secondary level in a public-school setting as a form of professional development presents a critical issue. This chapter will present a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. In the initial section, the history and development of adult learning theory will be discussed, followed by a synthesis of recent literature regarding professional development, successful implementation of professional development, and hindrances to successful professional development. Lastly, the literature surrounding the factors that lead to successful professional development for teachers regarding instructional coaching interactions will be discussed. In the end, a gap in the literature will be identified, which presents a need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The premise of this study assumes effective professional development takes place in the form of instructional coaching; the training or professional development must be delivered in a way from which adults can learn. Adult learning theory outlines how adults learn from other adults (Knowles, 1978) which is different from how students learn (Knowles, 1978; Zepeda et al., 2014).

Background

The theory of self-directed learning in adult education arose from the work of Malcolm Knowles, a prominent figure in the field of adult education. Knowles was influenced by the work of other educators and psychologists, including Carl Rogers, Eduard C. Lindeman, and John Dewey, who emphasized the importance of learner-centered approaches to education. Shortly

after World War I, the idea of adults having different learning needs and learning characteristics began to emerge, and these ideas evolved into an adult learning framework (Knowles et al., 2005).

The theory of adult learning began in 1926 with the foundation of the American Association for Adult Education in New York (Lindeman, 1926). Two streams of inquiry gave way to the current theory. The first was a scientific stream, and the second was an artistic or intuitive/reflective stream. The scientific stream was developed by Edward L. Thorndike with his publication *Adult Learning* in 1928 (Knowles et al., 2005). This process was not concerned with how adults learn but with their ability to learn. The artistic stream sought to discover how the new knowledge and analysis of experience are connected to how an adult learns. This stream was influenced by John Dewey and his work that stated adult education curricula must be built around the student's needs and interests. The adult learner's highest value is his/her experience. The authoritative teaching styles used in pedagogical learning have no place in the adult learner's environment because adult learners have a process where they learn to solve their problems. Teachers have a new function in adult learning. The teacher is not the sage on the stage that speaks from a place of authority on a subject; instead, the teacher is a guide who is also part of the learning process (Knowles et al., 2005).

Knowles summed up Lindeman's critical assumptions about adult learners into five key points. First, adults are motivated to learn as they experience a need; second, adults' orientation to learning is life-centered; third, experience is the richest source for adult learners; fourth, adults have a deep need to be self-directed and fifth, individual differences among people will increase with age (Knowles et al., 2005). By the 1940s, these elements had all been discovered as

different insights, concepts, and principles. However, it was not until the 1940s and 1950s were all these ideas brought together in a unified framework.

Knowles believed adults have unique learning needs and characteristics that differ from those of children and traditional teacher-centered approaches to learning are not always effective for adult learners. He argued adults are self-directed and autonomous learners who desire to learn based on their interests and goals. Knowles also believed adults have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can be used as a basis for further learning, and they can take responsibility for their learning and set their own goals. He saw the role of the educator or facilitator as supporting and guiding the learner in this process rather than dictating the content or approach to learning. Over time, the theory of self-directed learning has been refined and expanded upon by other educators and researchers in adult education. It has become a key component of many adult education programs. It has influenced the development of various instructional approaches and strategies, including problem-based, experiential, and action learning (Knowles et al., 2005).

Knowles (1980) made four assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners different from the assumptions and characteristics of younger learners. In 1984 he added the fifth assumption. The five key assumptions of adult learners are:

1. Self-Concept: Adults are self-directed and have a desire to take responsibility for their own learning. They see themselves as capable of making decisions and solving problems and prefer learning experiences that allow them to apply their own life experiences and skills.

2. Experience: Adults bring a wealth of experience to the learning process. They have a reservoir of knowledge that can be tapped and built upon in the learning

environment. Therefore, adult learning must be connected to their past experiences and be relevant to their current situation.

3. Readiness to Learn: Adults are generally ready to learn when they feel that the information will help them in their lives or work. They prefer to learn things that are practical and immediately applicable and tend to resist learning something that does not have a clear purpose or relevance to their lives.

4. Orientation to Learning: Adults prefer to learn by doing, rather than by being passive recipients of information. They want to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their own learning experiences and want to know how the learning relates to their personal goals.

5. Motivation: Adults are motivated to learn when they perceive that it will help them solve a problem or achieve a goal that is important to them. They may also be motivated by external factors such as job advancement, increased pay, or personal satisfaction. Therefore, adult learning must be designed to tap into their motivation and to provide opportunities for them to see the relevance of what they are learning to their personal goals (Allen et al., 2022; Knowles, 1978; Zepeda et al., 2014).

From these five assumptions of adult learners Knowles (1984) proposed the four principles of andragogy. First, adults need to be involved: Adults need to be part of the planning and evaluating the instruction. Adult learners should be given opportunities to participate in the decision-making process about their learning, including setting goals and objectives, determining the learning activities and methods, and evaluating the effectiveness of the learning experience. This involvement helps to increase the learner's motivation and sense of ownership in the learning process, as well as ensuring that the learning activities are relevant and meaningful to

their needs and interests (Knowles et al., 2005). Secondly, the learning must be problem–centered around the learners' needs: Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. Adult learners are more likely to be motivated by learning activities that help them solve problems or meet their needs rather than learning activities that focus solely on acquiring knowledge. Problem-centered learning encourages learners to apply their new knowledge and skills to real-world situations and use their experiences and resources to solve problems (Knowles et al., 2005). The third principle is that the learning must include the Adult Learners' Experience: Experience, including mistakes, provides the basis for the new learning activities. Adult learners have a wealth of prior knowledge and experience that can be used to build new knowledge and skills. Adult learners should be encouraged to reflect on their positive and negative past experiences and use this reflection as a foundation for new learning activities (Knowles et al., 2005). Lastly, the learning must have Relevance and Impact on Learners' Lives: Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life. Adult learners are more motivated to learn when they see a direct connection between their learning and their needs and goals. Adult learning should be designed to be practical and applicable and should provide opportunities for learners to apply what they have learned to real-world situations. By emphasizing the relevance and impact of the learning activities, instructors can increase the learners' motivation and engagement in the learning process (Knowles et al., 2005).

Adult learning theory recognizes that adults bring their prior knowledge, experiences, and motivations to the learning process, which shapes their receptivity to new ideas and strategies. It highlights the importance of learner-centered approaches, reflective practice, and the need for relevant and practical learning experiences. Instructional coaching is a reflective process for the

teacher with the role of the instructional coach to ask questions to help the teacher discover the actual reality and help the teacher discover solutions the teacher is comfortably implementing in the classroom. Instructional coaching is meant to be a voluntary form of professional development.

As reflected in the literature, adult learning theory has played a vital role in shaping the design and implementation of instructional coaching programs. These strategies include fostering self-reflection, encouraging collaborative problem-solving, and offering continuous feedback. This study utilizes adult learning theory as a guiding framework to understand and analyze the experiences of public-school secondary teachers with instructional coaching. By applying the principles of adult learning theory, the study aims to explore how instructional coaching influences the perspectives and practices of participants.

Furthermore, this study has the potential to advance or extend the theory of adult learning by generating empirical evidence on the effectiveness of instructional coaching in facilitating adult learning processes. The findings can shed light on approaches that align with adult learners' needs and promote their professional growth. Additionally, the study may identify gaps or areas for improvement in the current instructional coaching practices and implementation.

Related Literature

Adult learning theory, or andragogy gives a framework for developing professional development, professional learning communities, instructional coaching, and the role of the learner in learning and development. These tenets will give instructional coaches a framework for how to present the information that will be engaging for teachers and, in turn, be used in the classroom with students (Allen et al., 2022; Brown et al., 1989; Daniëls et al., 2020; Knowles, 1978; Seniuk Cicek et al., 2019; Zepeda et al., 2014).

Professional Development

Professional development is the time taken during the school year to improve oneself, typically done away from students and with a group of peers. Professional development is critical for teachers to have dedicated time to develop and hone their craft (Kennedy, 2016). Teachers must keep up with new and changing curricula, teaching methods, and personal development (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012). Professional development encompasses activities such as professional learning communities, conferences, podcasts, webinars, instructional coaches and other learning and skill-building opportunities teachers undertake to enhance their expertise to increase student learning.

Professional development plans should include input from teachers based on problems or needs teachers or staff see in the classroom and around the school campus as a whole (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012). The plan should not be decided by a principal or district-level administration (Huijboom et al., 2021) without input from teachers and staff members because of different viewpoints members will encounter based on their positions and relations to the students. When teachers or other staff members engage in learning that directly relates to the current challenges or situations teachers or staff have experienced on campus, they become more actively involved in the learning process and are invested in the outcomes. This investment is driven by the hope the newly acquired knowledge and skills will improve in correcting the issues occurring on campus or in the classroom.

While the studies cited above give great insight into professional development from around the globe, there is a lack of research that give specific ideas and guidelines for public

school secondary teachers on how to become instructional coaches, how to build relationships that will allow the instructional coaches to gain the trust of teachers to allow them to be coached. This study will look at the lived experiences of the teachers who have sought an instructional coach and gain insight into why the teacher chose that instructional coach and what help the initiation coach could provide to the teacher as part of professional development.

Staff Meetings

The initial form of professional development was primarily conducted through staff meetings, which served as a means for principals to distribute information to the entire staff simultaneously. The structure of staff meetings followed a top-down approach, with the primary purpose being the dissemination of information rather than encouraging staff input in their learning. While this style of professional development still has its place, it is often complemented by other forms of professional development (Bragg et al., 2021; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012).

Professional development has evolved in modern education to include a more collaborative and participatory approach. While staff meetings continue to serve as a valuable means of communication and information sharing, staff meetings are now combined with other methods that promote active engagement and empower educators to contribute their insights and experiences.

By integrating various forms of professional development, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, online courses, and peer collaboration, the aim is to create a comprehensive learning experience. This approach recognizes the importance of involving educators in their learning process, allowing them to address specific challenges and tailor their professional growth to their unique needs and contexts. By combining traditional staff meetings with other

forms of professional development, schools can foster a more holistic and inclusive approach to supporting teacher growth and enhancing overall educational practices (Bragg et al., 2021; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012).

Staff meetings are typically not a collaborative environment where the staff has input on the topics; the information passed down is not necessarily problem-centered for all members of the staff and can lack relevance for the adults in the room to give their full attention and learn from the information that is being passed. This style of professional development is different from adult learning theory. This study will aim to discover better professional development methods that public school secondary teachers feel are more relevant and valuable, primarily using instructional coaching to inform the teachers' classroom practices.

Professional Learning Communities

A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of teachers who meet regularly to share experiences, work to improve teaching skills, and improve students' academic performance (Fred et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2018; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). Teachers need to connect with others to improve their classrooms and school culture (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021), which can be accomplished through PLCs (Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Turner et al., 2018; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). When teachers are working in their small collective groups (Fred et al., 2020; Johnson & Voelkel, 2021), they can change the culture of their group through discussion (Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Turner et al., 2018) and find value in the discussions with teachers who are experiencing the same students or curriculum issues (Fred et al., 2020; Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Turner et al., 2018; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). Teachers need time to collaborate with their peers to work on teaching skills and support each other through this support (Huijboom et al., 2021). The culture will be affected on campus when teachers work

together to improve classroom management and students' behaviors that affect the campus outside of the classroom (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Turner et al., 2018; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019).

Professional development can be in professional learning communities where teachers are grouped by grade level or subject (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; Earley, 2020; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012) in these groups the teams can plan curriculum, discuss students' scores and plan based on the data, or research new instructional strategies to try in the classroom. The team might have administrative guidance on the tasks to accomplish in a meeting or for the year. For this time to be genuinely effective, the team must be dedicated by using norms and order to keep individuals on task and productive during the time the team meets (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Turner et al., 2018; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019).

Professional learning community research is abundant, but there are still areas to explore regarding how instructional coaching can also be part of the professional development process. The above studies vary from quantitative to qualitative research but lack instructional coaching research as part of the research collected and analyzed. Instructional coaches can work with departments to help develop the PLC culture by asking reflective questions of the group or working with the teachers individually from an entire department. The studies cited above also were conducted in a different setting than this study. By focusing on rural public secondary schools with new instructional coaches and building the culture of asking for help, this study will add to the research cited above with a new lens.

Teacher-led Professional Development

Teacher-led professional development puts teachers in charge of the content, the delivery, and the follow-up with their peers to answer questions and evaluate the effectiveness of the training (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017). When teachers oversee professional development, there are elements that teachers are aware of and include in the training that the administration might overlook because they are too removed from the classroom setting (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017). There is a focus on the content and how students can connect to the learning (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017). Active learning involves teachers interacting with the covered topic, aligning with teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and participating collectively in training by grade or subject (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017). The training is sustained and intensive, meaning there will be multiple pieces of training on the same topic to further teachers' knowledge of the subject (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017).

Teacher leaders of the PLC time have limited training. They are usually in that role because ex-teacher leaders of the PLC time have limited training and are usually in that role due to experience in teaching. The above research does not mention or include instructional coaching in analyzing productive teacher-lead professional development. Instructional coach training adds tools to the teacher leaders' toolboxes that can benefit the school culture, teacher professional development, and student learning outcomes. The studies above did not happen at the secondary level in a rural public school. Also, with the lack of research about instructional coaching, this student will add to the body of knowledge about why teachers can become leaders at a school site by working with an instructional coach to improve and become leaders because they have shown they can grow in their instructional practices.

Personalized Professional Development

There are blogs, webinars, and podcasts that cover many topics a teacher may find exciting and relevant to his/her current learning needs. This learning is asynchronous and on demand. When teachers feel connected to a community with a similar ideology, they will learn and improve (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021).

Teachers might also turn to peers to help enhance their talents in the classroom and provide support for any questions they might have. This support can have many names and different models, typically labeled as mentors or induction coaching or training, but the support goal is to meet teachers where they are and answer their questions. By reaching out, teachers effectively use adult learning theory because they ask for help and are intrinsically motivated to learn and improve their classroom (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021).

When teachers receive personalized help, the help is problem-centered based on the current need, making the learning based on their experiences relevant. This study will use an adult learning framework to seek out teachers who have used an instructional coach for personalized professional development. This style of professional development will add to the adult learning theory research. This study will be conducted qualitatively, giving teachers' voices a chance to contribute to the field of instructional coaching and add to why the teacher chose to seek out a coach for professional development.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is different from mentoring because instructional coaches are trained to let the learner come to his/her conclusion based on the individual's specific needs in the classroom (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Knight, 2019; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Instructional coaching follows the adult learning theory model with the learner seeking an instructional coach to better themselves, thus being intrinsically motivated for personal learning.

Instructional coaching is built on the foundation of using active listening skills. Effective questioning helps the coach to discover the teacher's true goal and build relationships, so the teacher will continue to seek out an instructional coach for further help and development in his/her classroom (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Knight, 2019; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The instructional coaching model is built upon the principle that both the instructional coach and teacher are equal in the relationship. This is seen as a partnership where both parties have equal voice and equity in the instructional coaching process. (Knight, 2019; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Mihiotis & Argirou, 2016).

Based on Jim Knight's model, instructional coaching gives a goal for the instructional coaches to help the teachers have a clear picture of reality. The teacher needs to see their classroom from the point of view of a student or outside observer. A clear picture of reality can be done by recording a lesson and having the instructional coach and teacher watch the lesson and then reflect on what the teacher saw and would like to improve upon (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). By recording the lesson, the teacher is able to watch what they are doing, what students are doing, and how the learning is taking place (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).

Knight (2011) developed this partnership approach through his work at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning with the Kansas Coaching Project (KU-CRL). The research has led to this approach framework with seven principles: equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).This framework was developed into the Impact Cycle, which can be broken down into three stages.

1. Identify Stage: In this stage, the instructional coach and teacher work together to set specific, measurable, and achievable learning goals for the teacher's students. The first step is to collect data. The instructional coach and teacher collect data to assess the student's current learning state and identify improvement areas. The goal of the data collection is to have a clear picture of reality by watching a recording of the lesson, interviewing students, observing the class, or a combination of these methods. The second stage is to analyze data. In this step, the instructional coach and teacher review and analyze the data collected to identify patterns and determine the root causes of any areas where students are struggling. Instructional coaches will use questions to help identify a goal from the collected and analyzed data. The questions will lead to a powerful, emotionally compelling, easy, reachable, and student-focused (PEERS) goal set by the teacher.
2. Learn Stage: Instructional coaches and teachers will continue their conversation, and based on the PEERS goal, the pair will start to brainstorm a plan that will include a teaching strategy that can be incorporated into the lessons to improve student outcomes. If the teacher has questions about how to implement the strategies, the instructional coach can explain the strategy, watch a video of the strategy or model a lesson.
3. Improve Stage: Making adaptations to the goal based on the needs of students and the teacher. When the teacher and instructional coach meet the instructional coach, they should review the progress and make course corrections. Before each of these conversations, the pair should plan the next steps (Knight, 2011, 2019, 2022).

When teachers work with instructional coaches to better their classrooms, the partnership, using Knight's research, should be seen as an authentic partnership where both parties are equal, and learning can happen as a result of a conscious choice on behalf of the teacher. The teacher has all the power in the relationship because their choices drive the sessions. Their choices involve what they will put into practice in their classrooms if they choose. The dialogue is mainly from the teacher, with the instructional coach asking questions to help the teacher discover their revelations. The praxis aspect is where both parties will be able to reflect on the conversations and put those into practice (Gadamer, 1975; Senge, 1990). Voice allows the teacher to have his/her chance to share. This is not one-sided training where the teacher gets advice from an instructional coach rather than expressing their opinion of how the ideas will work in their classroom. The teacher's viewpoint is essential for the partnership to be productive and meaningful for both parties (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1999; Vella, 1995).

The research is clear on how to implement the impact cycle, but the gap in the research concerns the age of the students, and the fidelity with which the instructional coaches are able to get into teachers' classrooms. There is a lack of studies that show the perceived impact that secondary instructional coaching can have on teachers who seek out instructional coaching as a form of professional development (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012).

Implementing instructional coaching in a rural public secondary school is an area that requires further research to understand its impact and effectiveness. This study will be conducted to explore the lived experiences of teachers who have worked with a coach and can provide valuable insights into the implementation process and its outcomes. This research can contribute

to the existing framework for instructional coaching by examining its specific application in the context of secondary education.

Leadership Style Association

The various leadership styles exhibited by the district administration, site leadership, and non-evaluative leaders influence professional development on campus. When decisions regarding professional development topics are made without considering the input of teachers and staff, their interest in those topics may wane because they may not perceive the relevance to their current needs. Additionally, if there is a requirement to adopt a new curriculum or classroom management approach, teachers may feel a loss of autonomy in their classrooms. The introduction of too many initiatives simultaneously can create a sense of overwhelm and result in resistance or a preference to stick with familiar, proven methods (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

School administration leadership directly affects learning in the classroom because of the effect on the organization. This positive influence affects the teachers, who then change the students through their instruction and dedication to learning and teaching (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Administration can affect motivation through improvements in working conditions and obstacles teachers must overcome to teach (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

The administration is not the only position of organizational power in the school. Teachers who can lead without administrative authority affect the other teachers and the students. These roles are considered non-evaluative leaders. They can use their influence to positively impact the school culture and create a more positive workplace for all (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

Individuals not in official leadership positions can still positively impact others and encourage them to assume more responsibility at the school site. Their actions and dedication to their work can serve as an inspiration, motivating others to get involved and contribute. By demonstrating initiative, collaboration, and a strong work ethic, these individuals can influence their peers to actively participate and take on additional responsibilities within the school community. Their enthusiasm and commitment can create a ripple effect, encouraging others to step up and become more involved in leadership roles.

While there is a correlation between leadership styles and professional development on campuses, the research cited above does not discuss the use of instructional coaching in the professional development models of a school. This study aims to understand why teachers seek out an instructional coach as part of the teacher's individual professional development. By understanding the lived experiences of the teacher, future instructional coaches can use the conclusions of this study to inform the professional development plan at each individual campus.

School Administration Leadership Style

School administration leadership is a personal choice of the principal, but there are proven leadership styles that effectively keep schools running efficiently. Leadership influences teacher morale, instruction, development, and student learning (Kalkan et al., 2020). The success of the school is built on the organization as a whole. Choosing the correct style of leadership for the person and role is critical for success. Efficient leadership is vital for schools to educate and prepare students for their futures (Bellibaş et al., 2020). The successful implementation of leadership requires aligning one's chosen leadership style with the leader's beliefs and the needs of the followers. It is crucial for leaders to be genuine in their style and leadership approaches, as

this fosters belief and trust among their followers, ultimately leading them to follow the leader's guidance (George, 2015).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership was introduced in the 1970s to address the educational leadership role high-performing schools used to ensure student success. Research has shown that principals in these schools were performing well, and instructional leadership indicated that the principal prioritizes and focuses on improving teaching and learning in the school (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Shaked, 2020). By having school-wide instructional strategies, teachers and leaders can present a unified message to the students about the importance of the information they are learning in each class. The school's instructional climate (Goddard et al., 2019) is critical for a leader who is practicing instructional leadership. The leadership given to the teachers brings around change at the student level through two keyways: determining the direction the organization is headed and motivating teachers and students to move in that direction (Goddard et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2018). Since teachers have a say in the instructional strategies, there is buy-in with new initiatives that are started, and follow-through will increase. Teachers see the value in training and how it will relate to their classroom when this style of leadership is implemented at a site (Goddard et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2018; Shaked, 2020).

Path-Goal Leadership

With path-goal leadership, the leader builds up the teachers' motivation for their jobs. The leader is working to build the followers' performance and job satisfaction. The leader does this by finding out what motivates and uses that to boost at work (Northouse, 2018). A leader can increase motivation by removing obstacles that decrease productivity in the followers' way. There are different levels of leadership in the path-goal theory that a principal can take to work

with a teacher or staff member to meet his/her needs. A principal, mentor, or instructional coach can be directive, supportive, participative, or achievement oriented (Northouse, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020), and the style can change from teacher to teacher. Teachers who are being led under this theory need to know the organizational goals, and the leader needs to understand what motivates the individual teacher for this leadership style to be effective (Saleem et al., 2020). Since there is open communication and flexibility under this style, the leader and teacher can find professional development that models or curriculum the teacher's learning style, find topics of interest to the teacher that will benefit the students and teachers have input in their personal professional development plan.

Task-Oriented Leadership

A leader who puts the majority of the emphasis on the task over the person is task-oriented (Engelbert & Wallgren, 2016). This type of leadership is used when teams are not meeting their deadlines. For example, if teachers are late turning in their grades, lesson plans, or participating in state testing, task-oriented leaders will need to give definite deadlines and follow through with consequences if the deadlines are not met. Groups that can meet deadlines can feel this type of leadership is micromanaging (Engelbert & Wallgren, 2016) because they cannot accomplish tasks or be creative with their timelines. Task-oriented leadership aims to work on employee tasks through training and gives clear expectations and timelines (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Leaders new to a role or taking over a disorganized team can use task-oriented leadership to help create procedures and guidelines. While this leadership style can have a role in schools, teachers thrive on autonomy in the classroom. If teachers feel they are micromanaged or pushed into a professional development that is not relevant to the current citation there can be a lack of buy-in and follow-through from the teachers (Engelbert &

Wallgren, 2016; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Task-oriented leadership can hinder professional development at a site or distinct if leaders use this style exclusively.

The studies cited above focus on the principal's leadership style and its effects on teachers. This study aims to understand the teacher's lived experiences in their professional development as a teacher on a rural public school secondary campus. As part of the professional development model for a school, the instructional coach needs more research to understand why the classroom teachers chose to seek out the instructional coach as part of the teachers' personal professional development. There may also be a correlation between the leadership qualities of coaches that teachers connect with and positively impact teachers who hope to build relationships that lead to instructional coaching sessions. The teacher's why will be discovered through interviews, observations, and journals to add to the research on how instructional coaches can influence future teachers in their personal and professional development.

Non-Evaluative Roles and Leadership Styles

Non-evaluative roles refer to positions or responsibilities within an organization where individuals are not primarily tasked with assessing or appraising the performance of others. These can be department leaders, instructional coaches, and other positions within a school that are not in an administrative or evaluative role but have leadership roles. This type of role is non-evaluative and often plays supportive, collaborative, or advisory roles (Northouse, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020).

Functional Leadership

With functional leadership, the leader does not have to have a leadership title but helps to guide the organizational goals and those within it (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). A non-evaluative leader on campus can influence the learning of teachers, staff, and students through

their knowledge of instructional strategies, classroom management, and ability to help others solve their own problems. While these leaders can walk through classrooms and give feedback to an individual teacher, they are not in an official role to perform evaluations or provide information to the administration. Teachers are in a non-evaluative role when they are leaders but are limited in administrative power in that they may not put teachers or staff on probation or professional remediation plans. The roles can include department leaders, instructional coaches, or leaders without an official title. These types of leaders are there to help other teachers with lessons that are not going well, take on students who need a time-out or run activities at lunch. With this leadership style, the leader is task-oriented because they see a job that needs to be completed, so they step in and help when needed. Teachers or others at the school are leaders because they keep the school's goal in mind and step up to lead a team (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2018; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Functional leadership requires those who lead to have the skills and knowledge to perform their teaching tasks as well as the other obligations or roles they find themselves in (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2018). Teachers or staff in this role can profoundly impact the professional development at a site because they can see the need and create the training that teachers and staff need to solve current issues teachers are facing.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been the focus of much research since the 1980s (Cheung et al., 2018; Hameiri & Nir, 2016; Northouse, 2018). The goal of transformational leadership is to change people, presumably for the better. Teachers who take on the leadership style of a transformational leader look to change their students and possibly peers for the better. There is a high level of influence that a transformational leader has over their followers, and leaders must be aware of the impact. This leadership style uses one’s own charisma to connect

and bond with followers (Hameiri & Nir, 2016; Northouse, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). The leader is a strong role model for the followers and uses that to set goals for the followers. Leaders and followers tend to have the same ideology and beliefs. Leaders must be cognizant of the trust that others place in them to maintain the relationships. With the teacher-and-teacher relationship, teachers must use this trust to guide the teachers toward success, which will increase their confidence (Northouse, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). Peers will look to this leader for guidance. This leadership style will have an impact on professional development because of the level of trust in the leaders' opinions, knowledge, and expertise in the training that is being conducted.

The studies cited above focus on leadership styles of the staff members who are looked to as non-evaluative leaders and how these teachers' effect change on campus without having an authority over the teachers' evaluations. This study aims to understand the teacher's lived experiences in their professional development as a teacher on a rural public school secondary campus. Within the framework of a school's professional development model, there is a need for additional research to comprehend the reasons behind classroom teachers' decision to engage with the instructional coach as a component of their individual professional growth, considering that the instructional coach holds a non-evaluative leadership role within the school. The teacher's why will be discovered through interviews, observations, and journals to add to the research on how instructional coaches can influence future teachers in their personal professional development.

Transitioning from a Teacher to an Administrator

Teachers transitioning from the classroom to administration have a new role because they now lead adults and children. The administration must have a leadership style and understand

how to use their influence to lead the school. Leadership styles can change and adapt to meet the needs of those being led (Gumus et al., 2018; Malone et al., 2021; Northouse, 2018; Thelen, 2021).

As a leader in instruction, principals must make clear their goals for teachers and student learning. The school's academic goals should be visibly outlined and publicized, so all know the school's goals through the student learning objectives. Leaders supervise teaching, review student progress, encourage teachers to provide a rigorous curriculum to their students, and encourage teachers to continue to develop professionally. Leadership must also provide time for teachers to attend professional development to keep up with the latest in their fields or hone their teaching styles (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Kalkan et al., 2020; Malone et al., 2021). Effective leadership that establishes a learning-oriented atmosphere is crucial for students as it empowers teachers to guide the education system and harness their motivation to educate and motivate students (Saleem et al., 2020; Schipper et al., 2020).

The studies cited above focus on the principal's leadership style and its effects on teachers. As cited above, when principals put value on teachers continuing their own learning, there will be value added to professional development. Professional development has many models. This study aims to understand the teacher's lived experiences in their professional development as a teacher on a rural public school secondary campus. As part of the professional development model for a school, the instructional coach needs more research to understand why the classroom teachers chose to seek out the instructional coach as part of the teachers' personal professional development. The teacher's why will be discovered through interviews, observations, and journals to add to the research on how instructional coaches can influence future teachers in their personal professional development.

Teacher's Classroom Practices

The administration's leadership style affects classroom creation (Bell & Hernandez, 2017; Webb, 2009). Teachers can learn from the administration and transform their classroom management styles through professional development (Bell & Hernandez, 2017; Webb, 2009). The administration must set professional development goals, take teachers' input on topics, and give time for teachers to learn. This makes a learning culture at a site. When teachers learn, they set an example for students and improve themselves.

Building students' leadership skills is part of the teacher's responsibility. Teachers can build students' soft skills by giving them classroom jobs and responsibilities (Bartel, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018). Teaching students to make decisions and lead groups is part of the learning process demonstrated through the jobs. Principals can demonstrate leadership skills through their relationships with teachers and students and build a culture for a school where leadership is encouraged as an expectation of school leadership (Kalkan et al., 2020; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

Schools with a school-wide leadership model can build on lessons from all classrooms and use common language with students. In a 2007 study, a school-specific transformational leadership model included motivation, capacities, and work setting. The focused student achieved better scores because students heard the same information from class to class. By having a framework that was easy to follow, teachers were able to lead students and alter their teaching approaches; therefore, the students learned more (Kalkan et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019;).

How the leadership and teachers work together is evident in the culture and climate of the school. When teachers and administrators can work together with a common framework and

vision for the school's climate, the students benefit (Kalkan et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Students who can feel connected to the school can contribute to better the school culture and organizational image (Kalkan et al., 2020; Schipper et al., 2020). While teachers can feel isolated in their classroom, having a school-wide culture can decrease this feeling because teachers know they are not alone in teaching school-wide expectations (Schipper et al., 2020).

The studies cited above focus on the principal's leadership style and its effects on classroom practices. As cited above, when principals put value on teachers continuing their own learning, there will be value added to professional development of the teachers that will affect the student learning. Professional development has many models. This study aims to understand the teacher's lived experiences in their professional development as a teacher on a rural public school secondary campus.

What Makes Professional Development Successful

Successful professional development for teachers and staff should be modeled after the adult learning framework. Teachers and staff must be involved in selecting the topics covered during the professional development. When teachers are involved in the plan's development, administration and leaders will understand the problems and develop problem-centered training or programs, which can eliminate some obstacles that teachers or staff face. By using the adult learners' experience and expertise in professional development, the trainers acknowledge the learner and the experience that is brought to the training. Finally, the training must have relevance and impact on the learners. Teachers need to see the relevance and impact in their classroom with the students. The knowledge must be implemented immediately to make learning successful for the procedure to become a habit.

The type of professional development must also fit the learning styles of the teachers and staff. Teachers learning from other teachers show more significant growth in student outcomes (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Bragg et al., 2021; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Poekert, 2012). Professional development aims to keep teachers learning, and in turn, students will benefit from what teachers have learned (Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016). When professional development is implemented, the training should not just be conducted once and expect that all teachers will follow the new program without the need for follow-up and retraining (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012). When professional development plans are created, there must be time to retrain those that are struggling or resistant to new concepts, so multiple pieces of training on the same subject are needed for the continuity of the concepts (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012).

The administration is one of many positions of executive power in the school, and non-evaluative leaders also affect the other teachers and the students. They can use their influence to positively impact the school culture by creating a learning culture that can generate a more positive workplace for all (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

The studies cited above give a great framework for using adult learning theory, principal leadership, and non-evaluative teacher leaders to influence professional development on campus. The gap in the research is related to how to start and maintain an instructional coaching model of professional development in a rural public secondary school. This study aims to understand why teachers seek out instructional coaching and how this affects the teacher's professional

development on campus. Through the lived experiences of teachers who have worked with an instructional coach, the goal is to understand why the teacher chose that professional development model.

Developing Effective PLCs

Developing professional learning communities (PLC) is a process that should be collaborative, where teachers can get out of their classrooms and build connections with other teachers to better themselves, ultimately improving the students' education (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021; Weddle, 2022). PLC development is complex and difficult to research in the field because of the individualized nature of school culture, personalities, the time that teachers have worked together, the objectives of the professional development time, and the amount of time dedicated to professional development (Huijboom et al., 2021; Voelkel, 2022). There are characteristics of productive PLCs and the stages of development that can be categorized into three clusters: leadership, collective autonomy, and facilitating (Fred et al., 2020; Voelkel, 2022). The group must have a shared vision, shared responsibility, focus on student learning and continuous teacher learning, mutual trust and respect for each team member, and cohesion (Huijboom et al., 2021; Weddle, 2022). Still, even with all this knowledge, more connection between educational research and practice needs to be made. The question could be asked: Why is this occurring? Teachers mistrust research because many see the research as separate from the classroom if the variables are not similar to the teacher's classroom, and some find studies hard to understand due to the language used in the reports (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021; Voelkel, 2022). There is also difficulty in having teachers participate in studies due to time commitment (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021; Voelkel, 2022).

PLCs have research that gives characteristics that make them effective, but there is a limit on how to develop these characteristics. The features of effective PLCs are grouped into three clusters: indicial and collective learning, group dynamic characteristics, and professional orientation (Fred et al., 2020). These three clusters explore attributes of collaboration, reflection, feedback, and experimentation with dynamic group characters (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). The characteristics of mutual trust and respect, collegial support, social cohesion with professional orientation, shared vision, shared responsibility, focus on student learning, and continuous teacher learning is discussed (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). Despite the research on these characteristics, the challenge remains in motivating staff to cultivate all these traits and establish strong ones based on trust and commitment (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). There needs to be more research on building an effective PLC. Many studies give different points of view on other parts of the PLC process, but there is limited research on the development process (Voelkel, 2022).

When non-evaluative leaders develop the PLC framework, they use “steering factors” (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). Leaders will follow the steering factor framework to develop and convey the vision of the PLC for the year. Leaders will also be part of the process and model how the PLCs should run with each group (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). Leaders will provide questions to guide the agenda for each meeting and collect data to share at the meetings (Gesel et al., 2021; Huijboom et al., 2021; Voelkel, 2022). The PLCs should align with students’ learning goals (Gesel et al., 2021; Huijboom et al., 2021). By having the teachers use the students’ learning objectives, the PLCs will use the common language as the goals, and it will be reflected in the teaching of the students (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021).

Leaders will give a framework, but professional autonomy is also needed in the PLC process (Fred et al., 2020; Weddle, 2022). The administration or leaders should not always manage the PLC (Fred et al., 2020; Voelkel, 2022) because teachers must have a voice in the conversation (Fred et al., 2020; Huijboom et al., 2021). Autonomy also gives ownership of the process to the teachers, who will be responsible for the decisions made and how the time is appropriately used (Voelkel, 2022; Weddle, 2022).

Student learning starts from the top and flows into the classroom. School leadership affects all parts of the campus. The leadership styles that the administration embodies will impact student learning and classroom practices. The right leadership style will have a positive effect on teachers and students. School culture and the organization are affected by the leadership from the administration at the school site (Huijboom et al., 2021; Voelkel, 2022).

The research cited above does give some insight into how to develop PLCs, but there needs to be more content about using instructional coaching in the PLC process. This study explores why teachers seek instructional coaching and how using an instructional coach can improve the teacher through professional development. If an entire department utilized the instructional coach, there could be a correlation to how the department approves since all teachers are using the instructional coach to personally improve, which can compound to departments having a better PLC process. Part of the instructional coaching process is learning to question teachers and help the teacher set personal goals. PLCs could benefit from this questioning practice.

Instructional Coaching

No matter the chosen leadership style of the principal, teachers must have peers they can turn to enhance their talents in the classroom and provide support for any questions they might

have. This support can have many names and different models, but the goal of the support is to meet teachers where they are and answer their questions. By reaching out, teachers effectively use adult learning theory because they ask for help and are intrinsically motivated to learn and improve their classroom.

Instructional coaches are one of the options for a teacher to work with a peer. Instructional coaches are teachers who are part of the campus with specialized training and are there to interact with teachers, preferably voluntarily, to get a clear picture of reality. With this clear picture, the teacher and the instructional coach discuss the changes the teacher wants to see in their classroom. This process is done with the understanding that the instructional coach only gives some answers but helps the teacher develop a plan and implement the teacher's goals. The instructional coach's role can also include researching, modeling, and planning lessons for a teacher.

Teachers and staff should have a say in the professional development offered because it will be relevant to the staff's current needs based on what is happening in the classroom. Instructional coaching allows the teacher or staff to set goals with the instructional coach to facilitate goal setting and data collection (Knight, 2022; Knowles et al., 2005). Professional development should solve a problem that teachers or staff have in the current school year. This new learning must present a solution to real problems that help resolve the issues. Instructional coaching is not based on the instructional coach's needs but on the needs of the teacher or staff who is seeking the instructional coach for help or guidance. The instructional coach asks questions to help the teacher or staff discover the problem, and then they work together to find a solution that the teacher or staff feels is appropriate to solve the problem. Instructional coaches accomplish this goal by asking questions and having a clear picture of the current reality (Knight,

2022; Knowles et al., 2005). By acknowledging and valuing the learner's prior experience, instructional coaches can create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Instructional coaches are not instruction experts but active listeners who help the teacher or staff by asking questions that allow the instructional coach to come to a solution for that classroom. If the teacher or staff member does ask for help, it is presented as a choice for them to implement in their classroom. Through choice, the teacher or staff member can maintain control of the learning and implement new knowledge in the classroom (Knight, 2022; Knowles et al., 2005). When teachers and staff decide on professional development topics, there is a connection made to the topics. Instructional coaching as a professional development option allows teachers and staff to have a personal, professional development session tailored to their needs and, therefore, relevant to the challenges that might be happening in the classroom. Having instructional coaching as a choice gives autonomy in the professional development offered at a school site (Knight, 2022; Knowles et al., 2005).

Instructional coaching is a proven professional development tool. The gap in the research comes to developing a culture where teachers or staff will seek out the coach. The research supports instructional coaching as an effective professional development model, but there is also research showing resistance to instructional coaching at the secondary level. The study states that time commitment to working with an instructional coach is one of the barriers (Jacobs et al., 2018). Instructional coaches are a costly investment because teachers are taken from the classroom, training and resources are also needed to fully implement the model. If teachers find time to meet with an instructional coach, the coach's talents are well-spent. Another gap in the research is the improvement of student outcomes, this will take multiple year studies to discover, and during that time, schools and districts need to stay committed to keeping instructional

coaches on campus and working with teachers. This gap also relates to the school's culture and wanting all teachers to seek out a coach for help (Tanner et al., 2017). This study aims to explore the experiences and perspectives of secondary-level students who have worked with an instructional coach in their classrooms. The goal is to understand why teachers or staff members at the secondary level choose to enlist the help of an instructional coach and how this collaboration contributes to improving the classroom environment. Also, to understand if the school site or district has a culture shift of enlisting an instructional coach to help the teacher set goals and improve the classroom. As well as, to understand how instructional coaches add to the professional development culture at a school site, through the teacher's lived experiences, have used an instructional coach.

This study seeks to shed light on the experiences of secondary-level teachers who have worked with instructional coaches and explore why teachers or staff members decide to enlist their help. The findings will contribute to the existing knowledge on instructional coaching, informing educational practices, and policymaking in secondary-level education. The research cited above has a lack of a framework specifically for rural public high schools at the secondary level. The research has an overall focus on teachers with much of the research conducted at the elementary level.

Hindrance in Professional Development

Change is complex, and acquiring new knowledge can be overwhelming if the training is mandatory with limited resources or lacks relevance to a teacher's or staff's current issues (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Wolf & Peele, 2019). Professional development activities like off-site workshops, informative meetings, and training sessions are less effective in substantially changing students' performance in the classroom because there is limited follow-through and

built-in support on the campus (Huijboom et al., 2021). When professional development is delivered in this way without follow-up, support, or subject matter expert, no one on campus can answer questions, help with implementation, or coach teachers throughout the implementation process (Sancar et al., 2021).

When there is a lack of resources that accompany new professional development, this can also be a hindrance. New tools or curriculum is terrific if all of the parts for implementation are included (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020). There must be more opportunities to train and familiarize teachers with new products. A new curriculum without an implementation and training plan will wind up on a bookshelf and have limited success in implementation (Qiu, 2018). When new initiatives are started one after another without time to perfect the previous plan, teachers and staff will experience burnout on new ideas and resort to tried and true methods of instruction (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Wolf & Peele, 2019).

If too many ideas or new initiatives are in place, this can also lead to a lack of motivation from the teachers. If the school or district has a history of trying new things and never giving anything time to stick, teachers know they can wait out the new and keep doing what works (Qiu, 2018; Wolf & Peele, 2019). There is also a time commitment to learning new things. If teachers are not given professional development time to learn, ask questions, and give feedback, the books will sit and collect dust (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Wolf & Peele, 2019). Evaluation of implementation is a critical part of the implementation process. The administration must walk through the classroom and see teachers using the new curriculum. These teachers are leading the adoption and can be part of the support team to help struggling teachers. If teachers refuse to adopt it, the new plan's administration must also be willing to investigate why. If it is not related to training or resources and is just defiance, the administration

must take the following steps in the district's discipline policy for that teacher. When other teachers or staff see that the adoption is mandatory and followed up on, there will be more compliance in those teachers who were on the fence but are willing to comply (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Sancar et al., 2021).

Effective leadership ensures that all of these resources are in place for teachers to ensure success. Resistance to change is also possible if teachers are not given time to learn, resources, and opportunities. Habits and comfort zones can hinder professional development. Leadership has a duty to keep a learning culture in the school and encourage all to be better teachers and learners (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Sancar et al., 2021; Wolf & Peele, 2019). When teachers or staff experience obstacles with the adoption or implementation of new materials, there should be a process in place for them to give feedback or ask for help. If the administrator has not fostered an open and transparent method for feedback, this will hinder the process.

When teachers are limited in their own personal growth mindset, seeking out a coach can also hinder a teacher's professional development if the teacher is embarrassed by how bad the classroom management is or if there is a lack of trust in the instructional coaching staff. Instructional coaches must take time to build trust so teachers will understand that their conversations are confidential (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Qiu, 2018). Leadership has a role in helping teachers or staff understand that working to correct an issue is a sign of progress and growth. Leadership can also encourage teachers to experiment with new learning methods, and risk-taking will be rewarded. By having a supportive atmosphere where teachers can seek help and try new strategies or technology, leaders promote a growth mindset in teachers (Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Sancar et al., 2021).

As cited above, the hindrance to professional development is the lack of follow-through with the new training initiatives at a school. This study aims to find out why teachers seek an instructional coach and what the teachers hope to use the knowledge the instructional coach helps the teacher discover as a result of the time the parties spend together. Can teachers use the time with an instructional coach to improve classroom practices and build their knowledge and confidence with new initiatives? Can the instructional coach help the teacher see the current clear reality in the classroom, set goals, and follow through with sustainable change?

Summary

Adult learning theory and andragogy guide how to build training that creates buy-in and presents information to keep adults engaged in learning. Adults are self-directed learners capable of making decisions based on the learner's life experiences. This experience is part of building new knowledge and connecting to previous experiences. Adults must be ready to learn and want the new learning relevant to their learner's problems at work or home. The new knowledge must involve the learner; it is not a passive process when adults learn. Finally, the learner must be motivated for adults to get the most out of the training.

This theory helps us understand ways to train adults, in this case, teachers, to improve their classrooms and student learning. By understanding how adults learn and how to present that learning in the context of real-world application, the training can be delivered in an engaging and meaningful way that caters to how adults learn and process new information.

During professional development, teachers must learn more about their subjects, teaching strategies, and classroom management techniques. When teachers are presented with professional development, the goal is to improve student learning. Professional development can be taught by teachers who are part of the campus and know the struggles and problems currently

happening on campus. Alternatively, the school can bring in outside trainers to introduce a new concept to the campus and have teachers attend training off campus. Professional development should have clear goals and objectives that align with the school's student learning objectives. Professional development should be meaningful so teachers will engage with the topic and see the value for their students in the classroom.

Professional learning communities are inclusive groups of teachers grouped by grade or subject. Teacher leaders should develop the group's goals and build a plan to improve. During PLC time, teachers can connect and share their experiences. Once established, PLCs are very effective in building teacher collaboration and cooperation on campus, which can positively affect students' performance. The gap in the literature comes from a need for more resources for developing a well-functioning and influential PLC group. With a clear understanding of how these groups are formed and what makes them function effectively, it is easier for new teacher leaders to develop a proper PLC with the use of trial and error. There is a need to create a plan for establishing and maintaining productive professional learning communities.

Instructional coaches can personalize the learning and professional development of each teacher the instructional coach works with because the teacher sets the goals. Instructional coaches can observe lessons, model new teaching or classroom management techniques, and are there to bounce ideas off of. Instructional coaching is an investment from the site, and to see the effect, the instructional coaches must be given time out of the classroom to perform the duties required of a coach. Instructional coaches are non-evaluative leaders on campus that can lead professional development, and instructional coaching is a proven professional development model. Still, more research needs to be conducted on how to effectively deploy instructional

coaches at the secondary level in the culture necessary when instructional coaching is started on campus, and that is where this research hopes to fill in the gap.

In summary, a study on instructional coaching based on the principles of andragogy can have both theoretical and practical value. The study could help narrow the literature gap by providing lived experience evidence for the effectiveness of instructional coaching that is implemented using an andragogy framework that is self-directed, problem-centered, and the use of prior experience in adult learning. Finally, the study could improve professional development practice by providing instructional coaches with evidence-based recommendations for designing effective and engaging learning environments for adult learners.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This hermeneutic phenomenological study aimed to understand the experience of teachers on a public high school campus with new instructional coaches. Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (pseudonyms) promoted four teachers to instructional coaches with a new implementation model and training provided by Peach Tree Unified School District (PTUSD) (pseudonym). The study's goal was to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School in a rural desert of California.

The theoretical framework of Knowles (1978) Adult Learning Theory was the theoretical lens used. This chapter communicated the study's design, research questions, setting, and participants. There was also a detailed outline of the procedures that were used to conduct the study. This chapter also indicated the steps that were taken to increase the study's trustworthiness, along with other ethical considerations that were taken during the study.

Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative, as it was essential to thoroughly explore and interpret the thoughts and findings derived from the teachers' lived experiences. The process involved in the qualitative study included exploration, coding, and triangulation of the events to give answers to the research questions. Phenomenology, at its core, entailed the meticulous description of lived experiences. It delved into the inherent meaning of events and offered a framework for engaging with individuals who had directly encountered them (van Manen, 2014; van Manen & van Manen, 2021). Essential to this approach was the authentic recollection of the lived experience by the individuals who underwent it. Researchers sought to

capture the richness of human experiences by digging into the details, emotions, and perspectives associated with a particular phenomenon or event. The aim was to go beyond mere factual description and uncover the deeper layers of significance and understanding. The phenomenological question aimed to understand a single event through reflections on how that event happened to the person it happened to (van Manen, 2014). Using qualitative phenomenology, I captured the lived experience of the teacher who had worked with instructional coaches.

The design of this study was chosen because of my role as an instructional coach, and trying to bracket out my experiences as a coach would have been difficult. Hermeneutical phenomenological reflections started with an event that the participant experienced, and this experience was then told to a researcher who documented the experience. Phenomenological research aimed to find the meaning resulting from the experiences (van Manen, 2014). The collected data was coded into statements and then developed into a description of the event. With hermeneutical phenomenology, the interpreting focused on the themes and interpreted the meaning of these lived experiences and gave meaning to the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study examined teachers' lived experiences at a secondary public school with new instructional coaches.

Research Questions

The questions below are the basis for the research. The questions will be the framework for all questions asked in the interviews, observations, and journaling.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level while interacting with an instructional coach?

Sub-Question One

In what ways are teachers at the secondary level motivated to seek the support of an instructional coach?

Sub-Question Two

What do public school teachers at the secondary level perceive best facilitates their learning while interacting with instructional coaches?

Setting and Participants

This section opened with an overview of the site and population that was used in the study. It then narrowed down the focus to describe the characteristics of the study participants. Also included in this chapter were the descriptions for the sampling techniques and sample size. Finally, this section concluded with a description of the data collection plan.

Site

The site for this study was a rural unified school district in southern California, which was referred to as Peach Tree Unified School District (pseudonym). It was a public school district with approximately 13,000 students enrolled in preschool through adult education. There were about 1,978 people employed in the district, from administration and teachers to classified staff. The district office had one superintendent, three assistant superintendents, and fifteen directors that managed the district. Each school site had at least two administrators, and the traditional high schools had six administrators on site. PTUSD had implemented instructional coaches in the past, but the coaches were never trained at the district level, only at the site level. This study examined the implementation of instructional coaches at two of the high schools. This site was chosen because there was limited research on the implementation of instructional coaches at the secondary level. Since both sites were new to coaching, gathering teacher insight

as to why they trusted an instructional coach or sought out a coach was valuable since it was a new program. This added to the research regarding instructional coaches at secondary sites.

Participants

Participants in this study included 12 teachers from two high schools: Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal was to recruit 7 teachers from each site. The teachers I sought to recruit were of different genders, had different levels of teaching experience both in and out of the district. I sought to recruit mentor or master teachers who had worked with new teachers. I sought to recruit teachers with different education levels. Since the study aimed to describe the lived experiences of staff who had interacted with instructional coaches, the researcher recruited staff that had interacted with the instructional coaches.

Recruitment Plan

Peach Tree Unified School District currently had two traditional high schools with a combined staff of about 150 teachers. The goal of the researcher was to recruit seven teachers from each site to conduct interviews, observations, and journal prompts. The research sample was of a maximum variation of teacher experience, gender, and race, but it was a snowball sampling from those who had worked with an instructional coach. Using snowball sampling was appropriate because it allowed me to have study participants identified by the instructional coaches; the teachers working with the coaches were information-rich due to working with the instructional coach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To start the recruitment, the researcher sent a personal letter to inform the potential participants of the research protocols. They were asked to fill out a demographic information sheet to gather their years with the district and positions at the school. The researcher emailed the

time commitment and appointment requests for interviews and then scheduled the first face-to-face meeting. During each interview, teachers were reassured that all information obtained would be kept secure and that no answers were right or wrong. The researcher advised each teacher that interviews would be auto-recorded utilizing GarageBand, an Apple digital recording application. Each audio-recorded interview underwent transcription and was returned to teachers for approval. Once the interviews were completed, direct observation was scheduled with the teacher and coach to coincide with one of their regular meetings.

Researcher's Positionality

As a new instructional coach, I was drawn to learn more about why people seek a coach and what the teacher hoped to gather from the experience. I wanted to understand whether an instructional coach impacted the teachers they visited with, and if the instructional coach did, whether that impact was based on the training the instructional coach had received or the instructional coach's personality and rapport with the teacher. My motivation for this study was to learn from other coaches through observation to better my coaching practices and further the research for building a new coaching program at the secondary level.

Interpretive Framework

I identified with the interpretative framework of pragmatism, which emphasized focusing on the research, situation, and using the best research methods to find answers to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was a problem solver and fixer. If students struggled with decisions, I enjoyed talking them through their options. I enjoyed working with colleagues and finding solutions to their problems, whether it was a new instructional method or how to handle a particular student in the class. When a researcher was pragmatic, they could use quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There was a practical approach to the

problem. If a survey collected the data, then a pragmatic researcher would use a survey, and if an interview collected the data, then the pragmatic researcher would conduct an interview. The "what" and "how" were what this type of researcher sought to solve. I could identify with this type of thinking, what was the problem, and how could I fix it.

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions were consistent throughout the researcher's life and served as a framework for each person's values and beliefs. By sharing one's beliefs, others could better understand their positions and the researcher's point of view. The ontological assumption involved the beliefs about the nature of reality and truth. The epistemological assumption was where the researcher addressed knowledge and how the researcher would be unbiased in the research process. Finally, in the axiological assumption section, the researcher's values were addressed and potential bias brought into the study.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions asked what the nature of reality was and how it was viewed from the researchers' point of view (Gruber, 1993). The researcher had to have an open mind to consider different perspectives when coding research and developing themes in the analysis of data. From the pragmatic interpretative framework, an ontological position took a practical approach to finding realities in practical nature and understanding why things worked. I firmly believed in the existence of one God, and He was in Heaven. I acknowledged that not everyone I interacted with or came across shared my beliefs. I approached this research with an open mind, valuing the diversity of ideas that came from these encounters. Even when I encountered other beliefs, I still actively listened to others' ideas and experiences. In this research endeavor, being transparent about my convictions was essential. Through the disclosure process, I disclosed the

lens through which this research and study were viewed. This transparency aimed to foster an environment of intellectual honesty and allow others to view my work with similarities and differences in their beliefs. Moreover, by actively seeking out diverse perspectives and experiences, even those that challenged my beliefs, I could uncover common themes and patterns that contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. This approach enabled me to broaden my horizons, challenge any biases I might have held, and enrich the overall quality of my research.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions were based on knowledge and how knowledge was acquired (Scotland, 2012). Understanding the researched point of view and building a rapport with the subject gave the researcher an advantage in gathering open and honest evidence. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher actively acknowledged the collaboration between the participants and the researcher. The participant was not in a subordinate role but rather a co-creator of meaning, which made the relationship more equitable, and the researcher valued the experiences the participant brought to the research. This time also helped to understand the entire picture of what was being researched, not just questions and answers in an interview. As a pragmatic researcher, the researcher took advantage of different tools and techniques to conduct the research. The researcher interpreted the objective and subjective evidence to reach a well-rounded conclusion considering others' expertise and backgrounds. In this study, it was imperative to build rapport with all the participants to fully understand and explore their experiences as data for this research and collect valuable first-hand research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Axiological Assumption

This study incorporated axiological beliefs due to my personal identity and the reasons underlying my interest in conducting research, which were deeply intertwined with my personal history. These individual experiences were vital in shaping my research and intrinsic biases. In any research endeavor, the ultimate aim was to establish credibility through a foundation of sincerity and ethical conduct. Maintaining a stance of transparency and integrity was imperative for all researchers.

I believed that coaching was effective professional development for teachers. From the few teachers I had worked with, I was able to help them see the current reality of the classroom and assist them in setting actionable goals. I believed that I would be able to demonstrate a positive correlation between instructional coaching and teachers' attitudes toward professional development. I also believed that by building these positive relationships with teachers, instructional coaches would be given more leadership roles due to their influence over the staff. Since I was new to the instructional coaching role, I had experienced limited success, and most of the teachers I had worked with were those I had a relationship with before becoming an instructional coach. My goal with this study was to describe the process of relationship building and make recommendations for developing programs.

Researcher's Role

My role at the site was as a new instructional coach; I worked with teachers during the school year on individualized professional development that my coachees saw as relevant to their classrooms and students. I did not have any authority over anyone at the site as my role was still that of a teacher and not an administrator. My interest in this study was to describe relationships between teachers and fellow instructional coaches because I wanted to see instructional coaching

continue to be funded at the district level. By observing coaching at both school sites, I hoped also to bring back any ideas happening on the other campus that my campus could institute to strengthen the institutional coaching relationship with our teachers. While I was an instructional coach at one of the sites, I did not use any of my interactions in this study. I only observed teachers with whom I was not personally working so I did not skew the data or make the teacher uncomfortable when working with another instructional coach.

Procedures

Study procedures followed all Liberty University and Peach Tree Unified School District procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data retention. At the study's conclusion, the participants were given a copy of the data for final review before publication. The researcher stored all data on a password-protected USB hard drive for a period of five years. After five years, the researcher destroyed the data according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection for a qualitative dissertation was completed in various ways, including interviews, observation, document analysis, physical artifacts, focus group interviews, or journal prompts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using various data collection methods, the researcher could find a method with which the participants felt the most comfortable and ensured they were genuinely open about their experiences (Heath et al., 2018). The data could also be triangulated into a complete reflection using multiple data collection tools.

Interviews were conducted with the new teachers to gather preliminary information about the training and experiences. The goals were to gather experiences for the researcher to reflect upon and from which to gather meaning (van Manen, 2014), and to collect stories that were then coded and interpreted for meaning. The researcher asked opening questions to help the

participant feel comfortable and to encourage the participants to be open and honest with their answers. The questions were predetermined before the interview and corresponded to the research goal. The interview was recorded, and its transcription was done at a later date.

The second form of data collection was direct observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was done during a coach and teacher's regular meeting. The researcher video recorded the meeting to be transcribed and coded at a later date. The researcher also took notes during the meeting to look at the questions the coach was asking, the opportunities for the teacher to respond, and the time that each member was talking during the meeting. The rationale for direct observation was to see the interaction between the instructional coach and the teacher.

The final form of data collection for this study was journal prompts. Journal prompts or writing letters to oneself is a reflection tool that is used for data collection (van Manen, 2014). The goal was that participants would take time to reflect and refine their thoughts during the journaling. Since this required a time commitment, the goal was to keep the prompts to four or six reflection questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Protocol writing consisted of generating original text from participants which the researcher could utilize (van Manen, 2016). The teachers used journal prompts to reflect on the training and provide insight into the ways that the interaction with the instructional coach had influenced their teaching practices. The prompts were sent as an email or Google form for the participants to fill out after completing training or after interacting with an instructional coach.

Individual Interviews

Data collection with the semi-structured interview was conducted in an extended interview method. This informal and interactive process consisted of open-ended questions and allowed time for reflection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participant and researcher built trust

and rapport by starting the interview with semi-structured open-ended questions. The researcher gathered thick, rich data by modifying the interview questions as needed to describe the phenomenon being studied. Interviews were conducted during the school year. The participants were staff members who had instructional coaches during the current school year. The goal of the interview was to collect the teacher's thoughts and reactions on how they perceived the institutional coaches were helping the teachers to improve themselves through interactions with the coach. The interviews were conducted in person, with the goal of the interviews taking an hour.

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe your educational background and career through your current position. CQ
2. In what ways have you interacted with an instructional coach. CQ
3. Describe what it has been like to work with an instructional coach. CQ
4. Describe your feelings after you interacted with an instructional coach. SQ2
5. What experiences have you had that motivated you to work with an instructional coach? SQ1
6. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with the instructional coach? SQ1
7. What other forms of professional development have you tried in the past? SQ2
8. What was the outcome of those trainings? SQ2
9. Describe practices or new instructional strategies that you use after working with an instructional coach. SQ2

10. What professional development experiences have you had besides working with an instructional coach? CQ
11. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with an instructional coach? CQ

The questions above explored how the staff interacted with the coaches and how they felt about the new coaches being on campus. The staff's lived experiences provided insight into the coaches' effectiveness from an individual perspective. The questions were asked to a test group of staff members who had interacted with coaches. Then, the researcher used the feedback from this small group to refine each for clarification of the questions and the desired data.

Observations

Observations were conducted in the natural meeting place for the teacher and the coach (classroom, department office, or other meeting room on campus). The observation documentation included the location, the reason for the meeting, and how often the teacher and instructional coach had met before the observation. This was documented on a form to ensure that all observations collected the same data. The reflective field notes also included how many questions were being asked, who was asking them, and who spent the most time talking. Facial expressions were also observed.

The observations lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were video recorded while the researcher took notes during the observation. The audio was transcribed using the above listed method. The observations took place during their usually scheduled meetings. These observations were kept in the journal that was in the appendix. During these observations, the researcher was a passive observer and did not interact with the teacher or instructional coach.

Using Table 2 below, the field notes recorded what was happening in the room, such as body language and other non-verbal communication.

Table 2

Observation Field Notes

Date, Location and Time	
Observation	Observer's Comments

Journal Prompts

For the final data collection, the researcher used journal prompts; when using journal prompts, participants often had much more time to create, revise, and submit responses to the questions. Journal prompts were an excellent supplement to interviews and could broaden participant viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants had ten days to complete the questions after the training. The goal of these journal prompts was to collect feedback on the effectiveness of the training and how they would apply it to their current coaching style. This evaluation style prompt had open-ended questions so the participants could construct their responses and not be influenced to give a particular rating.

1. Please describe your mood or feelings before your meeting with the instructional coach. Were there any specific expectations or apprehensions you had before your meeting? SQ1
2. Please describe the any emotions and thoughts that you had during the coaching session itself. Did you experience any moments of clarity, validation, or uncertainty as you and the instructional coach were discussing your teaching practices? SQ2

3. Please describe any specific takeaways or action points from your session. What if any did you implement in your classroom or teaching practices after working with an instructional coach? SQ3

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred as research was collected through interviews, observations, and journal entries. The interviews were transcribed using the voice-to-text feature on Microsoft Word. The transcripts were reviewed, and filler words were added to the transcripts. The initial familiarization of the data came from reading transcripts and adding in nonverbal elements to understand what the participants were saying, along with the tone of the interactions (Saldaña, 2021). Once the transcription was complete, the member had an opportunity to review the data to ensure that their voice was truly represented. The initial coding was done inductively with an open mindset to allow themes or patterns to emerge naturally (Saldaña, 2021). The goal here was to identify and label any meaningful text parts. In vivo coding was also used to code direct quotes that seemed relevant to the research questions. This process continued until there was code saturation or no new codes were discovered for each type of data. Once saturation occurred, all research was re-read, and coding was reviewed. Once saturation occurred, a code book was formatted to define the codes.

Along with the coding, analytic memos were also used while coding. These memos were dated with the researcher's thoughts about the coding, data analysis, or questions presented in the data. These reflections related to the participants and the research questions about the interactions between the instructional coaches and the coachee. These memos were only coded if they were included in the results.

The second coding cycle was conducted once all the data was collected and coded in the initial coding phase. During this cycle, there was a focus on organizing the codes into categories or themes that captured the broader patterns or contents. The themes emerged by comparing and contrasting codes and data sources (Saldaña, 2021). Analysis happened with code mapping, where codes were listed alphabetically, and then the codes were put into categories. These categories were then grouped further and renamed if needed. Codes could also be diagrammed or mapped into a flow chart to see the progression of the data if needed. The eclectic combination of coding techniques following the protocols by Saldaña (2021) was used to understand data and triangulate the meaning of the data as it related to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

The study's trustworthiness was paramount, and by using pseudonyms, memoing, and creating a code book, I established an audit trail for reliability, validation, credibility, and transferability. The researcher was transparent with the participants and the sites. All understood the purpose of the research and the data collection methods used for the analysis. Every participant signed a written consent form and understood they were not obligated to continue the study if they felt uncomfortable. In order to ensure that accurate information was collected, once interviews were transcribed, the researcher returned them to the participant for review. Any changes were made and returned to ensure their message and voice were accurately displayed through interviews. Trustworthiness was the validity and reliability of the data through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Credibility

Credibility was established through the transparency and replicability of research (Closa, 2021). Using specific techniques outlined in Lincoln, Guba and Pilotta (1985), the researcher

employed the process of triangulation to increase credibility. Data points and themes were compared to determine numerous points of view. Data trends were processed through color-coded Microsoft Excel sheets to visualize connections. Data were collected throughout the study and at various times to gather viewpoints, establishing consistency in ideas since collections were at different times. Direct quotes were used to ensure participants' perspectives were present and gave an authentic lived experience, not the researcher's viewpoint.

Additionally, all participants were given their transcripts to review to verify the accuracy of their opinions and the initial interpretation so the researcher could confirm their viewpoint and the meaning behind their words if needed. The study gained credibility by providing participants an opportunity to review the data, according to Creswell and Poth (2018). Participants were able to check themes discovered throughout the study to ensure their voice was present and accurate in the findings.

Transferability

Transferability was established by using rich, thick descriptions of the methodology and characteristics of the participants and sites (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of individuals ensured that the results of this study were distinct and influenced by the participants' unique perspectives and life experiences. How these experiences were perceived with a specific phenomenon that had occurred was different for each participant. Using this design, all information reflected the individual at that moment. The phenomenon that all participants had experienced was the same, but the individual experience was unique to each individual. Since the study results were the personal experience of a phenomenon, there was difficulty in the transferability of the study. The

phenomenological research could be transferable, but the results of other studies would depend on these participants' experiences.

Dependability

All data and documentation for the study were collected and processed for internal and external auditing. A detailed outline of the research design, including procedures and methodology, was included in the appendix. Since the study took place in a public school system, the local education agency provided an external auditor to oversee the implementation of the research and therefore increased the study's dependability. Throughout the study, the Peachtree Unified School District representative served as the external auditor of the data collection process and ensured that all data was collected and maintained per the district policy. There were scheduled debriefings throughout the research process, where the researcher detailed the steps taken to collect the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability was established in this study by emphasizing the importance of being able to apply the necessary interpretations of the lived experiences of the participants in the research and, through objectivity, developing themes based on the context and understanding of the themes (Lincoln et al., 1985; van Manen, 2014). In this study, two different sites were used for participants to collect data to triangulate. This enhanced the credibility and confirmability of the study. Through the use of confirmability audits and audit trails, other researchers were able to view the process and hear the participants' words to see how conclusions were formed.

The researcher used triangulation to pool and collect all data, which was coded for common themes. The triangulation data collection method included interviews, journaling, and focus groups. By pooling all the data, the researcher was able to identify common themes and

elements of the study. An organizing framework and analysis were used to confirm the study's results.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were considered during all parts of the study. During the data collection phase, the researcher obtained site and district permission to collect data. Informed consent was also collected from each participant, and they were made aware they could withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure that all participants felt comfortable discussing their personal experiences, the researcher disclosed their background knowledge and interest in the study. The interpretative process was used to code and theme their interviews and journal entries. The participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used when describing their experiences in the research.

Additionally, all participants received a copy of the transcripts of their interviews. They were encouraged to review and adjust their statements if they did not feel it accurately represented their feelings or experiences. The district was also assigned a pseudonym to further protect participants from being discovered.

All data that was collected was kept under lock and key with the exception of digital notes that were secured on a Google drive protected using the 2-stage sign-on service through Google. The data was saved for five years on a USB flash drive. The researcher deleted all data from electronic or physical files at the end of the five years.

Permissions

Peach Tree Unified did not have a formal letter or process for permissions. I submitted a letter to the Superintendent asking permission to collect data from the teachers at the two sites. Letters were sent to the sites explaining the data collection process so they knew what would be

collected on their respective campuses. These letters were included in Appendix A with the IRB approval from Liberty University.

Other Participant Protections

Once IRB and site approval were in place, I asked teachers if they wanted to participate in my study. I had a written letter that detailed the time obligation to the study. This letter also included that the study was entirely voluntary in nature and that participants could withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was also included in the letter. I used pseudonyms in all documents. The master list of pseudonyms was kept on my personal home computer in a Word file. All electronic data was kept on password-protected devices and the latest security software. Any physical notes or data were kept in my personal file cabinet in my home office. This cabinet was always locked, and I was the only person with a key. At the end of three years, all data, both physically and electronically, would be destroyed or deleted. Lastly, I explained the nature of the research and the risks and benefits to the teachers for their participation in this study. The risks included data breaches. The benefits of participation included a better understanding of why teachers chose instructional coaching and better professional development at the site.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to delve into the unique lived experiences of individuals working with new instructional coaches, emphasizing the distinctiveness influenced by participants' perspectives and life histories. The study focused on a common phenomenon shared by all participants. However, it acknowledged the individuality of how each person's interactions differed based on past experiences, the differences in an individual coach, and prior conversations. The phenomenological design

presented challenges in the transferability of study results, given its reliance on the specific experiences of the participants.

The data collection strategy encompassed interviews, observations, and reflective journal entries. As for the interview component, the transcriptions were facilitated using Microsoft Word's voice-to-text feature, followed by a meticulous review. The transcripts underwent enhancement with nonverbal elements during the initial familiarization phase, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of participants' expressions and tone. Member validation was integral, allowing participants to verify and confirm that their unique voices were accurately represented in the data. Observations provided a crucial dimension, capturing behaviors and interactions in real time. The study aimed to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences beyond verbal expression through systematic observation. Participants also filled out reflective journals, allowing them to articulate and delve into their thoughts, feelings, and reactions after interactions with an instructional coach. These journals served as valuable supplementary data, providing an intimate perspective on the participants' inner reflections. The coding process adopted an inductive approach, fostering an open mindset to allow the emergence of themes and patterns in a natural and participant-driven manner (Saldaña, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (pseudonyms) in a rural desert in California. This chapter will present the results of the data analysis and findings; it contains participant descriptions using realistic pseudonyms, narrative themes, and the research questions addressed in this study. Themes include the temperament of coaches, navigating uncertainty together, and enhancing classroom effectiveness. The research collected data through one-on-one interviews, observations, and journal entries.

Participants

The participants in this study were secondary teachers who have worked with an instructional coach in the past. The teachers have various teaching experiences, ranging from six months to twenty–five years of experience. The following is a detailed description of each of the participants. Table 3 gives an overview of the participants, their years taught, highest degree earned, content area they teach in and the grade level of students they teach.

Table 3

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Allen	17	Masters	Social Studies	12th
Betty	7	Masters	AVID	12^{th}
Charles	5	Masters	Math	10^{th} – 12^{th}

David	8	Masters	Special Needs	11th – 12th
Elijah	8	Industry Certification	Career Technical Education	10th – 12th
Fern	1	Masters	Math	9th
Geoff	10	Masters	Career Technical Education	9th-12th
Helen	19	Bachelors	Career Technical Education	9th-12th
Iris	9	Masters	Science	9th-12th
Jacob	.5	Bachelors	Art	9th-12th
Karen	25	Bachelors	Special Education	9th-12th
Laura	3	Masters	English	9th

Allen

Allen, a dedicated educator, has been enriching the field of education for seventeen years. His journey has taken him through three different school sites, all within the same district. Armed with a bachelor's degree in social science and a master's degree in Instructional Technology, he has honed his skills in implementation and leadership. His primary focus is on 12th-grade students. Throughout his career, Allen has embraced the opportunity to work with multiple instructional coaches, a testament to his continuous learning and growth mindset. Allen stated, "I guess my ways of interacting with instructional coaches is often how most people interact with their deities in times of need. You know, when I've been stressed or confused or

frustrated by something going on in the classroom, that's when I would typically reach out to an instructional coach and get them that feedback."

Betty

Betty, a lifelong learner, has been on a continuous journey of growth at one school for her entire seven-year career. Starting with a bachelor's degree in social science and a master's in education, she has transitioned from Social Science to AVID. She is currently her site's AVID Senior teacher and coordinator. Her seven years have been a testament to her adaptability and openness to change, as she has worked with multiple coaches to better understand her teaching practices through data collection and reflection. When working with a coach, Betty said, "It was always refreshing when I could get validation. It was refreshing when I could vent, and then also when I was like no, tell me what I need to do because my coach was willing to do all those things because I had no idea what that heck was doing."

Charles

Charles is a fifth-year teacher with a bachelor's degree in business management, a master's degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance, and a master's degree in education for credentialing purposes. Teaching is a second career for Charles, who has moved from business and industry to a math classroom. Through his business experiences, he can bring a practical side of math to students' learning. Charles has used an instructional coach to build better lessons and finetune his craft. After working with an instructional coach Charles stated, "Seeing different perspectives is important. As a math teacher, I focus on the math when structuring lessons. It's valuable to have input from someone less experienced in math who can offer student engagement ideas."

David

David is a moderate to severe special education teacher who moved from para-educator to classroom teacher. This is his eight-year teaching. His education journey started at the local community college, where he transferred to a state university to finish his bachelor's degree in social science. He has a master's degree in education. Charles's work with instructional coaches has focused on adapting general education practices to his needs in his special education classroom. Charles work with instructional coaches has focused on adapting general education curriculum and technology to fit his students needs he stated in his interview, "Instructional coaches offer confirmation on my ideas but also expand on my ideas with a few extra suggestions. They boosted my confidence when introducing new strategies and perspectives that I have not considered."

Elijah

Elijah is considered a veteran teacher at his site and has eight years of experience. He teaches in the career technical education department, where his years of experience transform the classroom into a workplace. Elijah's goal is for students to leave his program and have a job placement after graduation. He is very successful in this goal, and many students leave with job offers at graduation. While Elijah is more than qualified to teach, he lacks formal education in education, so he looks to the instructional coaches to fill in his gaps in new and evolving teaching strategies. Elijah stated, "Instructional coaches really help me feel confident about my ideas and show me new ways to improve. They make it easy to stay updated with fresh strategies to enhance my teaching."

Fern

Fern is not new to teaching, but this is her first year in her classroom. She has been a resident sub for the past five years. She is also a talented sports coach at her site. Fern has a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and a master's in education. Fern has six daughters who have moved through the education system and felt it was time to start teaching. While this is only her first year, she has impacted the students and staff with her kind-hearted words and patience. She is a self-proclaimed rookie who knows that she is making mistakes but seeks out coaches for advice about things she wants to improve in her classroom. Fern stated, "I really appreciate not feeling judged. I know they might be thinking 'oh, rookie mistake,' but I am a rookie, so I appreciate their understanding. They are approachable and friendly, and I feel supported by them, rather than judged."

Geoff

Geoff is a ten-year teacher with a bachelor's degree and a master's in education with an emphasis in technology. He enjoys pushing students in their learning by making learning by using real-world examples and problems for students to solve with their computer skills. When speaking about instructional coaches Geoff stated, "Instructional coaches are awesome for brainstorming new lessons and ideas. They help me keep up with the latest tech and teaching tricks, which makes a big difference for my students and keeps me pumped." Geoff is competitive and builds mini competitions for students in class to engage them in their learning. Geoff utilizes coaches to develop new lessons and bounces ideas off of them. He knows that keeping up with current technology and teaching practices makes a difference for his students and his well-being.

Helen

Helen has moved to a few districts and school sites but feels she is finally home. Her passion and love for students mean lots of late-night and weekend projects, but her time and commitment do not go unnoticed by her students. She has been teaching for nineteen years and is still honing her practice. Helen has a bachelor's degree in construction management, which comes in handy when managing projects in her classroom. Helen enjoys working with the coaches to turn traditional lecture lessons into a hands-on lab for students to process the learning in real-world scenarios. Helen stated, "I enjoy working with my instructional coach on new lessons, so I don't get bored teaching the same thing year after year. The ICs give me so many cool ideas and suggestions."

Iris

Iris is closing out her ninth year in the classroom this school year. A department lead, Iris is seen as a leader by her peers but still seeks out a coach for mentorship and guidance on new curriculum and lessons. Iris has a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's in education. Iris stated in her interview, "Even as a department lead, I still seek out instructional coaches for mentorship and fresh ideas. They help me find new and exciting ways to make learning meaningful for my students." She always looks for new and exciting ways to show students how learning can be meaningful.

Jacob

Jacob has only taught for six months, starting during the winter break. This is his first time back in school since high school. He has a bachelor's degree in fine arts and is currently working on his teaching credential. He frequently seeks instructional coaching when planning his lessons and revisits the instructional coach to reflect on lessons and refine them for next

year. Jacob stated, “The instructional coaches are my saviors, they have helped me lesson plan, navigate difficult situations and reassured me that this job gets easier.”

Karen

Karen is a twenty-five-year teacher with different teaching assignments under her belt. She has worked at various school sites with varying students’ ages but admits that she enjoys the seniors the most. Karen has a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts. Her experience with instructional coaching started when she received a recommendation from an administrator to seek an instructional coach before her subsequent evaluation. Karen stated, “I was reluctant at first to talk an instructional coach, but I am so glad I did. She has been supportive and helped my make small changes to the way I teach that have had an impact on student learning.”

Laura

Laura is another new teacher with three years of experience. She is debating moving from public education into the private sector. She has a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts and a master’s in education. Laura has only ever wanted to be a teacher but has had a tough few years. She seeks an instruction coach to help with classroom management, lesson development, and venting. Laura is on the fence about returning to the classroom next year. Laura stated, “As a newer teacher, dealing with students has been really tough. Instructional coaches have been a lifeline for classroom management, lesson ideas, and someone to vent to. They’ve helped me get through these frustrating first years.”

Results

Three themes and nine subthemes emerged as a result of data analysis. The data gathered from induvial interviews, observations of teachers’ and instructional coaches’ meetings, and journal entries yielded nearly 500 pages of transcripts, observations and notes with resulted in

175 preliminaries in vivo codes. When completing the one-on-one interview, observation, and journal entries, it was noted that most of the participants used instructional coaching as just-in-time support. Just-in-time support is a concept in which teachers seek help for current problems in the classroom, solutions for problem lessons, student engagement, or any other issue where they want a second option. The teachers were working on new lessons or had a lesson that could have improved and wanted feedback on improving the lesson. When seeking out the instructional coach for input, the teachers sought confirmation that their ideas were solid and aligned with current school-wide objectives. According to Elijah, teaching can feel very solitary, and by seeking out an instructional coach, they could get feedback that they usually cannot receive by just staying in their classroom. Most of the teachers also mentioned in the interview that after working with a coach, they felt some hope, relief, or "less stress like a light at the of the tunnel."

Table 4 gives a visual of the themes and subthemes found in the data of the teachers' lived experiences of working with an instructional coach. However, lived experiences are dynamic and multifaceted (van Manen, 2016). Table 4 simplifies the data that was observed and interpreted. However, it is necessary to mark the data to show teachers' feelings and reasoning in their motivation for seeking an instructional coach.

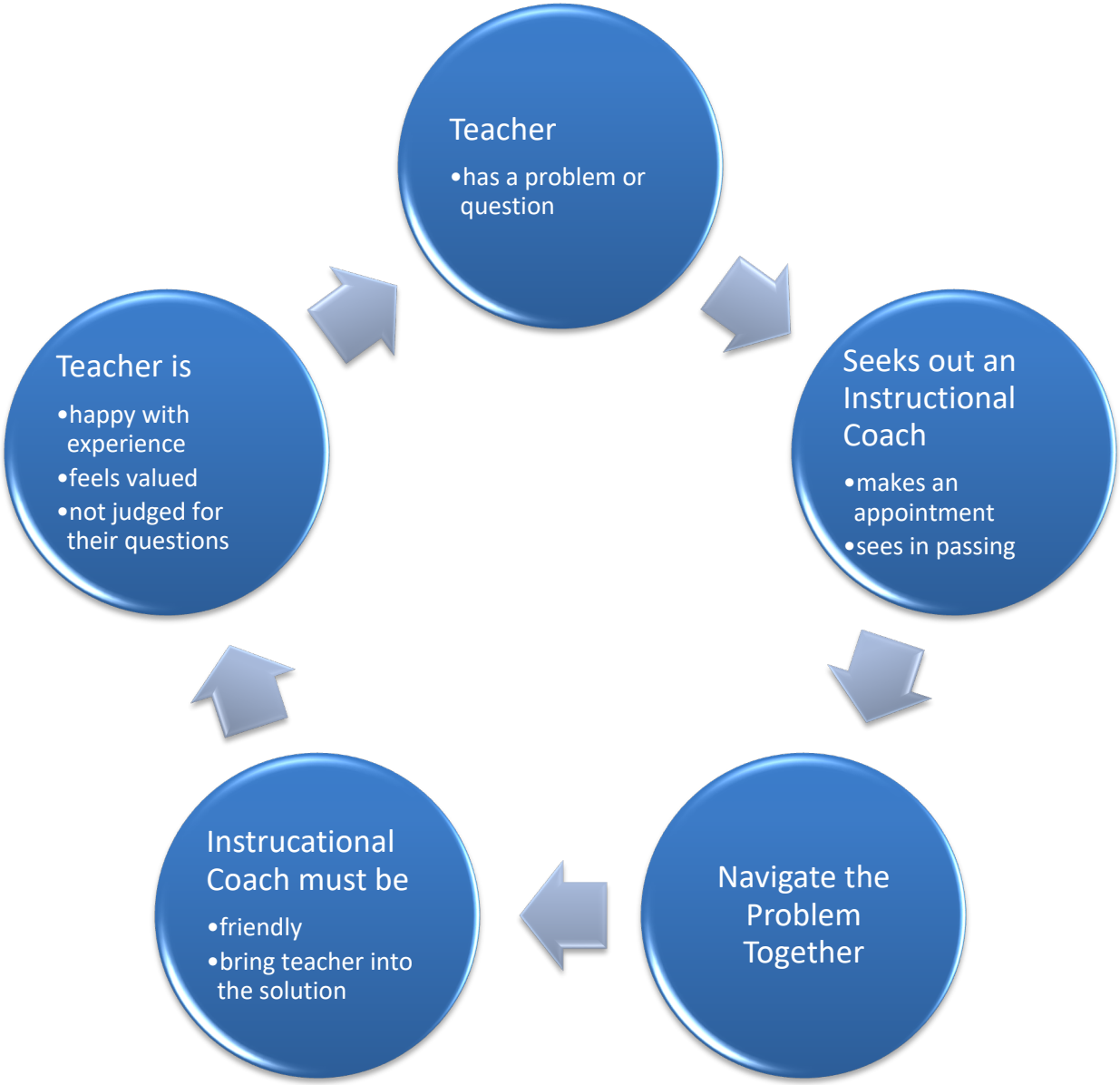
Table 4

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes			
Temperament of Instructional Coaches	Friendly Coaches Are Supportive	Availability Is Critical	Relationship Is Essential	Fostering Positive Support
Navigating Uncertainty Together	Seeking Clarity, Finding Relief	Collaborative Exploration		
Enhancing Classroom Effectiveness	Classroom Management	Instructional Practices	Becoming a Better Teacher	

Figure 1 represents the cycle teachers and instructional coaches go through together. Teachers are motivated to seek out an instructional coach for a problem or question they are experiencing in their classroom. The instructional coach and teacher navigate the problem together. The instructional coach must understand and respect the teacher's experiences and build upon their prior knowledge, engage in a two-way conversation rather than simply imparting information, and foster an environment where the teacher feels comfortable sharing and discovering solutions to their problems. Additionally, the instructional coach must be friendly, non-judgmental of the teacher, and listen to the teacher. This cycle ensures the teacher will return to the instructional coach when the next problem arises.

Figure 1



Temperament of Instructional Coaches

The *Temperament of Instructional Coaches* was a common theme that developed across all forms of data collection and coded in vivo 116 times. This theme explains why coaches are sought out when teachers have issues and seek advice. *Friendly* was coded into a subtheme because it reoccurred in the data 36 total times and was mentioned by all participants in every interview. The subtheme of *availability is critical* was built from codes about instructional coaches' availability to include, when and where teachers could find support with a total of 23

occurrences when coding. Another essential subtheme of *relationship is essential* was built from codes about relationships and trustworthiness, which were coded 22 times. The final subtheme of *fostering positive support* was coded 35 times from the codes of non-judgmental, supported, feeling less alone, and uplifted. The instructional coaches' temperament is also why teachers repeatedly use the services of instructional coaches. Allen stated in his interview, "I've been stressed or confused or frustrated by something going on in the classroom that's when I would typically reach out to an instructional coach and get their feedback." The subthemes give a clear picture of why teachers use instructional coaches on a repeated basis. The subthemes included friendly, available even in passing, relationship, trustworthy, nonjudgmental, supported, and uplifted.

Friendly Coaches are Supportive

Elements of instructional coaches have a friendly nature that appeared across all three data sources for most participants. Teachers mentioned that the coaches were always available when seeking help without looking too hard to track them down, and they always welcomed them into the space with a smile and an inviting nature. Helen stated, "My instructional coach has been an incredible support. Her friendliness and collaboration keep my teaching fresh and exciting. With their help, I'm constantly exploring new ideas and approaches, ensuring my students receive the best education possible." Many participants mentioned that the nature of their questions or issues did not matter; the instructional coaches were willing to help track down the answer if they did not have it. Karen added, "Our conversations are about the problems in my classroom, and my IC is always positive that there is a solution if we are willing to try a few ideas to find what works for me and my students." The observations showed evidence of their welcoming nature and the instructional coaches' warm demeanor when welcoming the teacher

into the space. Even the instructional coaches' voice inflection would change as teachers entered the space. This was observed during observation when Jacob entered the coaching space. Before Jacob entered the space, two instructional coaches discussed the next staff meeting and planned the professional development. When Jacob entered, they both stopped, made eye contact with Jacob, and welcomed him into the space. The instructional coach he saw made room at their desk for his materials and invited him to have a seat. The inflection of their voices changed to a singing song greeting. Jacob responded to this greeting with a smile and a slight shoulder dip. It was observed that he also let out a more extended breath, which is indicative of a release of stress and calming down. As the conversation was conducted, the coach offered reassurance that Jacob was on the right track with lesson plans. Jacob was nervous that he was moving too slowly in his plans and felt that students were not understanding the unit. Jacob and the instructional coach reviewed the exit tickets that he used as a formative assessment for the lesson. The instructional coach pointed out that students understood most of the concepts, but a review was needed for a few new concepts, which they both agreed was most likely a vocabulary issue. During this interaction, the instructional coach used terms like "correct," "great observation," and "right track" to show support for Jacob.

Availability Is Critical

Teachers want to be able to find coaches throughout the campus, and many questions are asked in passing where short answers are given to fix a quick problem. This just-in-time support is the backbone of coaching at the sites. David saw a coach in the hallway and was asking a random question about helping get his students signed on to their Chromebooks; the instructional coach mentioned a QR code that is used at the elementary levels. David took this information to IT and got the technology for his classroom. Fern mentioned that she likes "dropping in:" "I've

done that a count of times just walking by like, hey, if someone is to talk about something." Jacob stated in his interview, "I always peek my head in, and they welcome me with open arms and often offer a snack." The support teachers feel from this quick meeting reassures them that they are doing the right things in the classroom and building trust in the relationship.

Teachers are encouraged to stop by the instructional coaching office at any time, but appointments are also encouraged. When teachers are working with the same coach, a schedule is set up, and appointments are made. The instructional coach blocks time for one teacher by making these appointments. The appointments are often made during the teacher's prep period, which is about an hour long. Karen, who is recommended to work with a coach from an administrator, made several appointments over the month. During one of these appointments, the observation took place. The goal of this appointment was to plan an engaging lesson for the administrator to observe. Karen was anxious about the observation. The instructional coach asked Karen if she would like her to come and observe a different lesson before her formal observation. Karen agreed to this, and as they were concluding their conversation, Karen and the instructional coach set calendar dates for this observation and a follow-up conversation. The instructional coaches still teach, but only a limited number of classes give them availability throughout the day to fulfill their instructional coaching obligations, like being available for teachers.

Relationship Is Essential

Relationships and trustworthiness were the teachers' focus when explaining their motivation for seeking support. The instructional coach's role extends beyond providing guidance and support; it also involves building strong relationships with the teachers to establish trust. Hence, teachers feel comfortable and supported in their professional development.

Teachers see the instructional coaches as approachable, empathic, and genuinely interested in their well-being, not just classroom outcomes. Instructional coaches often act as confidants and mentors.

> For instance, Laura mentioned in her interview, “Seeking out an instructional coach was nerve-racking at first, but once I got to know her, I felt much more comfortable. I think of her as my mentor and friend because of the time we have spent together. Our conversations start with talking about work, but we often get sidetracked and talk about our personal lives.”

Since these interactions can include sensitive information about students and the teacher, there is an understanding that these conversations are confidential and that what is said to a coach will not be repeated to other teachers, staff, or administrators. For example, Allen’s comment during his interview that he has sought out an instructional coach when stressed or confused “I've been stressed or confused or frustrated by something going on in the classroom that's when I would typically reach out to an instructional coach and get them that feedback.” This highlights teachers’ trust in coaches to provide sound advice and support without fear of judgment or worrying that other teachers will discover their troubles. This trust is further reinforced through consistent, positive interactions, as indicated by Jacob’s experience of feeling welcomed and reassured during his informal visits to the coaching space. Jacob journaled after his coaching session, “I am always nervous before I go see my instructional coach, but I always leave feeling better. I don’t know why I am still nervous I think it is because I don’t want to disappoint her. I know this is silly, but I really look up to her and appreciate that she always makes time for me.”

Fostering Positive Support

While working with an instructional coach can leave a teacher vulnerable, it was noted that most felt they were not judged by the questions or help they sought from the instructional coaches. Fern stated in her interview that she felt supported: “I did not feel judged like even if things were not going well; it was always positive.” Geoff echoed this when leaving his instructional coaching session: “Thank you for answering my dumb questions; I just wanted to ensure I was on the right track.” Nonjudgmental was mentioned 18 times in the interviews. A few teachers expressed this feeling multiple times throughout the interview.

Throughout the observations, coaches gave astronomical numbers of confirmation statements during their interactions with the teachers. Teachers asked questions, and instructional coaches praised ideas; often, coaches mentioned they would try a teacher’s idea in their own classrooms because they liked it. These interactions validate the teachers’ thoughts and strategies and foster a sense of mutual respect and collaboration.

The positive reinforcement from coaches had a tangible impact on the teachers’ morale. Teachers’ spirits were visibly uplifted as they left the coach’s space or area where they interacted. They left with smiles, and four interactions ended with a hug, underscoring the deep personal connections formed. This uplifting environment created by instructional coaches helps build a community of trust and mutual support, essential for teachers’ continuous professional growth and teachers’ return to the instructional coaches when new problems arise, or new instructional strategies are introduced on campus.

Overall, instructional coaches’ nonjudgmental and supportive natures play a crucial role in encouraging teachers to seek help and engage in reflective practices. This environment of acceptance and positive reinforcement boosts teachers’ confidence and enhances their willingness to innovate and improve their teaching methods.

Navigating Uncertainty Together

Navigating uncertainty together was the second common theme that emerged across all data collection and was coded in vivo 62 times. This theme has two subthemes: *seeking clarity and finding relief*, which derive from the codes of confusion, frustration, and venting, which were coded 20 times. The other subtheme of *collaborative exploration* is comprised of the codes advice, looking for suggestions, bouncing ideas off, and confirmation, which were coded 42 times across all data collections. The role of instructional coaches is pivotal in helping teachers navigate the uncertainties in the teaching profession. This collaboration is especially vital when teachers feel confused, frustrated, or need to vent. Coaches provide a sounding board and a source of professional validation, ensuring that teachers do not feel isolated in their challenges. By asking questions and building solutions, instructional coaches build teachers' confidence in their abilities and judgment to further student achievement.

Seeking Clarity, Finding Relief

Teaching can be a highly stressful profession, with teachers often encountering situations that leave them feeling confused, frustrated, or needing a sympathetic ear. Instructional coaches are an essential outlet for these emotions, offering a safe space for teachers to express their concerns and frustrations without fear of judgment. Fern's experience underscores this, as she felt supported and not judged even when things were not going well. Karen also shared, "Sometimes I just need to vent about student behavior, and my instructional coach listens without judgment, which helps me process and move forward." This emotional support is crucial in maintaining teachers' morale and resilience, allowing them to perform at their best. Burnout is inevitable when teachers are isolated in their classrooms and do not have a constructive outlet to vent. During the observations, it was noted that while a teacher started venting, the instructional

coach asked more questions and built a solution with the teacher to deal with that situation. This included seat changes, fidgets or strategies to deal with a student, and, in one case, an entire lesson plan to reteach expectations for the entire class based on the behaviors driving the teacher to the breaking point.

As Geoff noted, "Sometimes I just need to vent about student behavior, and my instructional coach listens without judgment, which helps me process and move forward." By providing a non-judgmental space for teachers to express their frustrations and by offering practical advice, coaches help teachers develop and refine their classroom management skills.

Collaborative Exploration

Beyond emotional support, teachers frequently seek instructional coaches for practical suggestions, bounce ideas off, and gain confirmation about their teaching strategies, new lesson plans, or inventive activities the teacher would like to try out in the classroom. This collaborative exploration is personalized professional development. Teachers bring their problems to an instructional coach who offers suggestions, gathers input from the teacher, and allows the teacher to decide the course they will proceed with for their classroom. Teachers were more often seeking instructional coaches' support after returning from training and working to implement the new strategies in the lesson plan. Despite their extensive educational backgrounds—eight out of the twelve participants hold at least one master's degree in education—teachers still seek the affirmation and expertise of instructional coaches. This support is tailored to questions that individual teachers have and each teachers' needs.

Charles, for instance, values the confirmation he receives from his coach regarding lesson design, even though the coach may not be an expert in his specific subject matter. The coach's role in validating and refining teachers' instructional approaches is highlighted here because

teachers are not as concerned with the subject, in which they are often confident, but are looking at new ways to make the content engaging for students. Having a well-versed coach in new initiatives provides critical support during these transitions.

Teachers appreciate that instructional coaches offer actionable advice rather than theoretical suggestions. Coaches provide minor tweaks and practical enhancements that can be immediately implemented in the classroom, making their feedback highly valuable. Karen's comment, "I always walk away with something extra after I drop by," reflects the practical nature of the support instructional coaches provide. Journal entries from teachers consistently mention actionable items they can take back to their classrooms, demonstrating the tangible benefits of their interactions with coaches.

Enhancing Classroom Effectiveness

The final theme of *enhancing classroom effectiveness* was coded 95 times and has three subthemes. The subtheme of *classroom management was* comprised of the codes Kagan, room layout, and student engagement, which were coded 41 times. The subtheme of *instructional practices*, which is made up of new curriculum and lesson planning, was coded 33 times. The final subtheme of *becoming a better teacher* comprises, instructional tweaks, and technology, and this was coded 21 times. Instructional coaches enhance classroom effectiveness by providing targeted support in critical areas such as classroom management, new curriculum implementation, and lesson planning. This support empowers teachers to perform better and fosters a more effective learning environment for students. Teachers can get personalized support from instructional coaches when a conference ends, and their support is not one size fits all. Teachers can work with instructional coaches to tailor their learning to their classroom instructional style, personality, and student level. This personalized professional development is

vital in providing solutions for real work problems. Many participants mentioned that after traditional professional developments like a conference, they came back energized but fell back into old practices because they needed more support to get their questions answered, missed steps in new communication, or needed help integrating the new learning. When an instructional coach was able to help with implantation, the level of follow-through increased based on the teacher interviews.

Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is foundational to creating a productive learning environment. Teachers often turn to instructional coaches for strategies to handle classroom dynamics and student behavior issues. This guidance enables teachers to maintain a positive and orderly classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. When new classroom management practices are rolled out and supported by instructional coaches, teachers are able to put into practice new district initiatives with support and follow-up.

Cooperative learning is a school strategy that many of the participants mentioned in their interview; during the observation, it was noted that implementing Kagan strategies into their lessons was the reason for the visit, and finally, during the journal entries, Kagan was also a significant theme. Charles stated, “I have good student engagement but wanted them to talk more. I knew Kagan could help with that, but I needed help putting the right stature in the right place, so the lesson still flowed.”

Teachers shared they implemented new seating arrangements based on new training and saw an improvement in student engagement, which has decreased the teacher’s need to discipline a student or send them out of the room for misbehavior. Iris stated, “Things are not perfect in my classroom, but I see an improvement in my student’s engagement based on new practices I

learned from my instructional coach." Helen mentioned, "I love my new groups, and room layout. Change is hard for me, but I see a difference in the students and their behaviors."

Instructional Practices

Teachers can find introducing new curricula or teaching strategies daunting. Instructional coaches help ease this transition by offering expertise and support in lesson planning and curriculum implementation. Instructional coaches do not have to be subject matter experts in the subject. They are well versed in teaching, and the teacher can use their expertise in the subject to make suggestions and new strategies that fit their subject. This partnership allows both parties to be experts and ultimately allows the teacher to be in the driver's seat for how new initiatives are rolled out in their classrooms.

> Laura mentions in her interview that she routinely lesson plans with instructional coaches to get new ideas for activities that allow the students to be in control of their learning. She stated, "Since planning with an instructional coach, I have built better lessons that leave me with more energy at the end of the day because I can go around and help students. I am not lecturing for the entire period. Students are putting in the work, leading to them learning more."

Becoming a Better Teacher

Instructional coaches are dedicated to helping teachers improve their practice. Teachers who seek the support and help of an insertional coach want to be better and are motivated to change their instructional practices for the betterment of the students. By offering validation, practical advice, and emotional support, coaches help teachers navigate challenges and strive for excellence.

Teachers often seek confirmation from coaches regarding new learning strategies or programs being implemented in the classroom. This affirmation is crucial, especially during the rollout of new initiatives. Having an instructional coach who is well-versed in these initiatives provides essential support, ensuring that teachers feel equipped and confident in their implementation. During Allen's observation, he told the instructional coach that he was having difficulty getting students to answer his review questions. The instructional coach offered two suggestions: have the students work in pairs to discuss the answers and then share answers with the whole class. The second suggestion was to have students write down their answers to the questions so they could read their answers from their notes when asked again. In Allen's journal entry about changes he made to instructional practices after meeting with a coach, he stated, "I took what my IC suggested. I now have students work in pairs to answer questions and write them down, and when we come back to the whole group, the pairs are able to read their answers. I loved both suggestions, so I am using them both together."

Instructional coaches were observed asking questions about the teacher's concerns and clarifying what results they wanted to see in the classroom. This line of questioning often led to an epiphany for the teacher, and their original ask was not the ultimate goal or problem they wanted to be corrected. Instructional coaches could dig to the root and assist with solutions for problems the teacher has just discovered.

Research Question Responses

The research questions were guided by the problem and purpose of the study, which was to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach. Further, the research questions were specially aligned with the complements of the theoretical framework of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1978),

specifically looking at readiness to learn, problem-oriented learning, and self-motivation to seek out new learning.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level while interacting with an instructional coach? The participants' perspective is that working with an instructional coach is uplifting since they are so available and positive in their willingness to help. Teachers consistently found that after working with an instructional coach, they could return to their classroom a little lighter and refreshed. They also had new ideas for student engagement and strategies to deal with behaviors. This sense of relief and renewed focus was common among the participants.

Betty stated, "I was always relieved ... and felt more focused typically; I had a better perspective because she would always find a way of being like that's out of your control." This quote shows the emotional and psychological support that instructional coaches provide. They can help teachers manage their stress and build positive and healthy boundaries.

Overall, the lived experiences of secondary-level public-school teachers interacting with instructional coaches are marked by emotional support, practical advice, and a renewed sense of focus and motivation. The instructional coaches' availability and positive approach significantly contribute to the teachers' professional well-being, enabling them to deliver more effective and engaging instruction in their classrooms.

Sub-Question One

Participants overwhelmingly sought the support of an instructional coach to confirm their classroom practices and lesson plans. This need for confirmation was a primary motivator, as it helped teachers feel more confident and assured in their instructional strategies. David succinctly

captured this sentiment stating, “Most of the time, it’s a confirmation of what it is we’re working on, so it’s like, okay, sweet, I do know what I’m thinking about was right.” This quote highlights the reassurance teachers gain from these interactions, confirming that their approaches and methods are effective and appropriate.

Beyond confirmation, teachers sought out instructional coaches for several other vital reasons, like when they were confused or just needed to vent. Teaching can be high-pressure with numerous stressors, from managing classroom behavior to meeting diverse student needs. Teachers often feel overwhelmed and need a supportive space to vent and seek advice. Geoff mentioned, “Sometimes I just need to vent about student behavior, and my instructional coach listens without judgment, which helps me process and move forward.” This non-judgmental support is crucial for maintaining teachers’ emotional well-being.

Teachers also looked to instructional coaches when they were looking for suggestions or needed to bounce an idea off someone. Teachers frequently encounter challenges that require immediate, practical solutions. Instructional coaches offer valuable, actionable suggestions that can be implemented right away. For instance, Karen remarked, “I always walk away with something extra after I drop by,” indicating that the advice provided by coaches is directly applicable and enhances their teaching practice. Instructional coaches provide a fresh perspective and new ideas, helping teachers refine their techniques and stay current with educational best practices. Charles appreciated the feedback on lesson design from his instructional coach, even when the coach was not a subject matter expert. This demonstrates the value of having an instructional coach who can offer insights and suggestions that broaden a teacher’s approach and enhance their effectiveness.

When new curricula or teaching strategies are introduced, teachers often turn to instructional coaches to help implement them. Well-versed in new initiatives, instructional coaches help teachers navigate these transitions smoothly. This support ensures teachers feel equipped and confident in adopting new methods, ultimately benefiting their students.

The feedback and confirmation provided by instructional coaches help build teachers' confidence in their abilities. This, in turn, enhances their competence and effectiveness in the classroom. Knowing that an expert validates their methods reassures teachers that they are on the right track, which is particularly important when trying new techniques or strategies.

Sub-Question Two

Teachers at the secondary level strongly believe their learning is best facilitated when instructional coaches address their individual needs. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, teachers find value in seeking guidance tailored to their specific challenges and inquiries. When teachers approach instructional coaches with questions or concerns, they receive personalized feedback and supplementary resources reinforcing their existing practices.

Allen's experience serves as a powerful testament to the impact of instructional coaching. A small suggestion from an instructional coach led to a significant change in his teaching approach. He now has students write down their answers in pairs, and when it is time to have students answer verbally, they can read from their paper, not try and come up with an answer off the cuff. This simple adjustment has had a profound effect on his classroom dynamics, preventing moments of confusion and enhancing student understanding. Allen's story underscores the transformative power of even minor adjustments recommended by instructional coaches.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of collaborative partnerships between teachers and instructional coaches in fostering continuous professional growth, which may enhance student learning outcomes. Through targeted support and tailored guidance, instructional coaches empower teachers to refine their instructional practices and create more engaging and effective learning environments.

Summary

Discovering the lived experiences of secondary teachers who have worked with an instructional coach requires using hermeneutics through data collection analysis and reporting the findings. Through Chapter Four, the hermeneutic phenomenological reflection resulted in three remarkable themes: the temperament of instructional coaches, navigating uncertainty together, and enhancing classroom effectiveness. The temperament of instructional coaching is a crucial factor in why teacher seeks out their assistance. Multiple participants described the instructional coaches as friendly, available, and supportive. Strong relationships are built on trust because the teachers know and believe that their conversations are confidential and come without judgment. These traits by the instructional coaches collectively explain why teachers repeatedly seek out instructional coaches for support and guidance. The second theme of navigating uncertainty together highlights the role of the instructional coach in helping teachers manage confusion, frustration, and the need to vent. This emotional support and practical solutions to teacher challenges show the need to have someone on campus that teachers can turn to when they have questions. The process of bouncing ideas off of an instructional coach and receiving confirmation helps teachers refine their craft. The final theme of enhancing classroom effectiveness adds to the value of instructional coaches because when teachers are working to implement new strategies or return from a conference with new ideas, the instructional coach is

there to support new imputation and ensure the continued use of new ideas. Teachers got practical tips from insertional coaches that changed their classroom from the layout to how teachers have students process questions.

Based on the examined data, instructional coaches are well-liked and used in the district. All participants enjoyed their interactions and felt refreshed after their conversations. The teachers felt they added to their classroom practices without being pushy or demanding but by giving small suggestions it gave the teacher something new to think about and try in their classrooms. The teachers were motivated to seek out the instructional coaches due to their supportive and reassuring nature, and the relationships they have built on the campus, also for a confirmation about the teachers' current plans.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (pseudonyms) in a rural desert in California. This chapter thoroughly discusses the study findings, which are expressed through the developed themes. The discussion encompasses five major submissions: the interpretations of the findings based on the interviews, observations, and journal entries. This chapter will discuss the following: interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The finding of this study underscored the importance and relevance of instructional coaches in the educational setting. The instructional coaches' availability and non-judgmental nature created an environment where teachers felt safe to seek guidance and share their vulnerabilities. Trust-centered relationships and safe spaces motivated teachers to actively seek out instructional coaches for confirmation. The coaches, in turn, provided positive feedback and enriched the conversations with their suggestions. These insights not only answer my research questions but also have significant implications for policy, practice, and future research guidance, emphasizing the importance of instructional coaching in the educational landscape.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Knowles (1978) surmised that adults learn differently than children. The five key assumptions are the foundation of the research conducted. The first assumption is self-concept,

where adults are self-directed and take responsibility for learning. They want to be part of the decision-making and problem-solving for their learning. With this lens, the research shows that an instructional coach's temperament is critical because the instructional coach must be welcoming to hear the teacher's problem. The instructional coach is building a relationship of trust. When teachers decide they need help, they are seeking out help, and having instructional coaches available at all times of the day ensures that when the teacher is ready for help, help will be available. This positive support system also allows for the relationships to grow. Instructional coaches also navigate the uncertainty together with the teacher. Teachers come to an instructional coach for help, but the teacher must be heard in their needs.

The second assumption is experience. Adults have life experience. They base their new learning on tying it to past experiences. The teacher is often seeking clarity and confirmation. This process involves collaboration, where the teacher and instructional coach build knowledge based on the teacher's and instructional coach's foundational knowledge. This connection is also essential when enhancing classroom effectiveness. Teachers learn many ways to teach, but making changes or learning new technologies can be difficult. The instructional coach is there to help build on the teachers' skills and help them build better classroom management and instructional practices that ultimately make the teacher better.

The third assumption is readiness to learn. The instructional coach's availability ensures that when a teacher is ready, the instructional coach is also ready. This is a voluntary process, and when adults want to learn, the learning should be practical and immediately applicable. Instructional coaching is about the teacher and the problems they want to solve. Teachers bring in an issue, and by navigating it together with a collaborative partner, the teacher is able to learn to solve a problem that is relevant to their current classroom needs.

The fourth assumption is an orientation to learning. Adults prefer to learn by doing rather than passive recipients of information. The teacher must be involved in the solution. When teachers seek clarity, they might have a solution or new lesson or want an opinion; an instructional coach will listen to the lesson and give feedback. If a teacher sees an instructional coach seeking a solution, the instructional coach will ask questions and give options to the teacher. The solution that the teacher proceeds with is untimely their own choice.

The final assumption is motivation. Adults are motivated to learn to solve a problem or achieve a goal. When teachers seek out an instructional coach, their motivations drive the conversations to solve their problems. This typically involves enhancing classroom effectiveness through classroom management or instructional practices.

Adults need a reason to learn, which usually means they are solving a problem. Teachers see an instructional coach when motivated to learn more about their craft. Instructional coaches should be friendly so that teachers seeking advice and feedback do not feel judged. They must also be available when teachers need help. Teachers who seek out these coaches overwhelmingly reported that they seek confirmation; they are successful educators but want a second option to their lesson ideas.

Interpretation of Findings

All 12 participants willingly engaged in one-on-one interviews, allowed their interactions with an instructional coach to be observed, and completed a journal entry reflecting on that interaction. The themes observed were derived from these interactions, which were then reviewed by the researcher. This process of developing themes allowed for an interpretation of the findings through the lens of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1978).

Building Collaborative Relationships to Combat Professional Isolation and Enhance

Teaching Effectiveness

Teaching can be a lonely profession if you only stick to your classroom and never look outside of your four walls. The teachers in this study wanted to be better teachers and took a chance and sought out an instructional coach. They were able to find someone who could help with their lessons and reflect with them, and some also built a friendship to make their time on campus less lonely. The relationships that the instructional coaches are building not only benefit the teachers but also make them better educators because they are exposed to new ideas, subjects, and teaching styles. For instance, Jacob reported that the instructional coach's feedback on his lesson plan significantly improved his students' understanding of the topic. Jacob reported in his journal that after he reviewed the vocabulary with the students as discussed with the instructional coach the students who were struggling with the exit ticket scored well on their quiz.

This research credited instructional coaches with providing great educational resources, information, teaching tips, and social and emotional support to teachers. Laura stated, "I think of her as my mentor and friend because of the time we have spent together. Our conversations start with talking about work, but we often get sidetracked and talk about our personal lives." With a welcoming and non-judgmental space, instructional coaches encourage teachers to share their challenges and successes openly. This interaction fosters a sense of community where mutual respect is present, which is essential for professional growth.

Instructional coaches play a critical role in motivating teachers to hone their craft and improve themselves by seeking this improvement in their teaching practices. With the support of instructional coaches, teachers are developing better classroom management practices, more effective routines, and using collaborative learning strategies to increase student engagement.

This collaborative relationship allows teachers to reflect on their methods and adopt new and innovative approaches to their teaching style.

Overall, the relationships that instructional coaches build with teachers significantly enhance teacher effectiveness. By helping teachers seek help and try new techniques, instructional coaches help teachers continuously evolve and improve, ultimately benefiting the students' learning experience. This partnership between teachers and instructional coaches is a vital element in having a campus where the educational environment is dynamic and supportive.

Motivated Learning and Professional Growth through Instructional Coaching

Teachers are motivated to learn more about their craft when things are not going well in their classrooms. Teachers in the study have sought a coach to help them develop classroom management plans, develop more efficient beginning and ending routines, and increase student engagement. When teachers want more for their students, they also want more for themselves because putting the learning back on the students gives the teacher time to interact with them. Teachers are asked by the instructional coach to start the conversation, "What is on your mind?" this question allows the teacher to bring up any issues they would like to work on together. This open-ended question allows teachers a chance to vent.

This interpretation underscores the crucial role that instructional coaches play in fostering professional growth and learning among teachers, particularly in times of difficulty. Teachers often turn to instructional coaches when faced with challenges in classroom management or student engagement. The support the teachers receive helps them devise effective strategies, where the teacher gets to make the final decision of how they will change their classroom for their own personal betterment and also for the students. The teachers in this study said they felt better after their conversation with an instructional coach, and based on the observations, the

teacher is the person talking most of the time in their meetings. Teachers need time and a safe space to verbalize their thinking, plans, and frustrations. By having a skilled instructional coach who knows how to listen and ask the right questions, the teacher solves their problems with an instructional coach's prompting. Betty journaled, "I felt energized and inspired by the ideas that my coach was giving me. I also felt like I was gaining clarity as the coaching session went on."

Moreover, seeking guidance from instructional coaches represents a commitment to continuous improvement. Teachers' motivation stems from a desire to overcome immediate obstacles and a more profound aspiration to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. By refining their skills and adopting new strategies, teachers can better engage with their students, facilitating a more enriching educational experience. This enhances the climate and culture of a school because when teachers are excited about their lessons, the students are excited to learn from those teachers. The real learning for the students takes place by adding to a teacher's toolbox with collaborative strategies to help students learn how to speak and work together. They are building the necessary skills once they are out of high school.

Instructional coaches provide a collaborative and supportive framework where teachers can explore new ideas and receive constructive feedback. Teachers are invited into the instructional coach's classroom to watch a lesson, teachers and instructional coaches will co-teach a lesson, or the instructional coach will model a new structure for the teacher in the teacher's classroom so they can see it working with their own students. This partnership is integral to professional development, allowing teachers to reflect on their practices and make informed adjustments. As a result, teachers address current issues and build a foundation for long-term success and innovation in their teaching careers.

Motivated learning and professional growth through instructional coaching lead to a more responsive and effective teaching approach. By continuously evolving and adapting, teachers can ensure that they meet their students' needs and foster a positive, engaging, and supportive classroom environment.

Empowering Educators: The Crucial Role of Instructional Coaches in Professional Development

While not engaging in deep coaching cycles as trained under Jim Knight's Impact Cycle, instructional coaches play a unique role in the professional development process. They provide critical, just-in-time support to teachers, confirming their thoughts and prompting further reflection with questions like 'And what else?' Instructional coaches enhance lesson plans and classroom strategies by suggesting additional elements the teacher might have yet to consider. This collaborative approach ensures teachers feel supported and empowered to innovate and refine their teaching methods.

Instructional coaches play a pivotal role in adding valuable extras that contribute to the success of a lesson. Teachers who struggle with their instructional practices, like beginning and ending routines, lose valuable instructional minutes. Instructional coaches can help teachers develop or refine these first few or last few minutes, which adds days to learning back in the classroom. Their experience and diverse subject matter expertise enable them to offer insights and ideas that teachers might need help to arrive at independently. Instructional coaches do not have to be an expert in the subject. They must be well-versed in school-wide initiatives to develop professional development and support implementation. This support is critical in answering questions and helping teachers follow through with learning from conferences or school-developed professional development. By working with an instructional coach, the help

the teacher receives not only improves the immediate lesson but also enriches the teacher's overall pedagogical approach. The instructional coaches act as sounding boards for brainstorming, helping teachers explore various classroom possibilities and strategies.

Moreover, the accessibility, personality, and support of instructional coaches keep teachers coming back for more support. Teachers appreciate the confirmation and constructive feedback they receive, which validates their efforts and encourages continuous improvement. The additional "tweaks" provided by instructional coaches—be it a fresh perspective, a new resource, or a different instructional technique—are invaluable. These contributions help teachers to feel more confident and capable, knowing they have a reliable source of support and inspiration. The success stories that instructional coaches hear after the lesson or class validate the time, energy, and effort they put into each of the conversations they have with the teacher. Instructional coaches have developed a culture of professional growth and collaboration on their campuses. By being readily available and approachable, they help create an environment where teachers feel secure and trust in the coaching process, comfortable seeking help and sharing their challenges. This ongoing support system is essential for professional development, as it promotes a mindset of lifelong learning and adaptability among educators.

In summary, instructional coaches empower educators by providing timely, relevant support and fostering a collaborative atmosphere where teachers control their classrooms and teaching practices. Their contributions help teachers enhance their instructional practices, engage more effectively with their students, and continuously develop their professional skills. The crucial role of instructional coaches in professional development cannot be overstated, as they are vital to creating a dynamic and supportive educational environment.

Implications for Practice

The research setting and style were specifically chosen for the form and function of providing the lived experiences of high-school teachers who have worked with an instructional coach. The phenomenological design was chosen to understand the teachers' motivations for seeking an instructional coach. The implications for practice are specific to recommendations for the instructional coaches along with district personnel for a successful instructional coaching program.

Based on data gathered from the one-on-one interviews, observations, and journal entries, there are a few suggestions for instructional coaches and district leadership. Applying these suggestions for practice can help future instructional coaches and educators in this ever-changing world of education. This researcher recommends that all secondary campuses have at least two instructional coaches. These instructional coaches should be limited in the number of classes they teach, so most of their day is reserved for instructional coaching duties, which may include meeting with teachers, data collection, or professional development. It is further recommended that each teacher has an opportunity to meet with an instructional coach once per quarter. While it is difficult to mandate working with an instructional coach because one of the cornerstones of institutional coaching is that it is voluntary, teachers should be highly recommended to work with a coach. Beginning teachers or new teachers to the site should be given training on school climate and culture by the instructional coaches before the start of the year. This will help establish a relationship and allow the new teachers to build relationships with the instructional coaches.

It is also recommended that instructional coaches have a dedicated space for teachers to find them for help and to be out and walking around campus during common times. This

visibility is key, as it encourages teachers to engage in conversations that might not have occurred otherwise. By being available and having a space where instructional coaches can meet with teachers one-on-one or conduct small professional development sessions, teachers see the value in the programs and the professionalism of the instructional coaches.

District administrators, as the backbone of the coaching program, play a crucial role in its sustainability. These teachers, now instructional coaches, are not just instructional coaches but leaders and experts on campus. They are more than willing to answer questions, assist with planning, and be partners in the profession. I implore you to recognize their value and expertise, and to continue supporting them in their important work.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

This study's findings and implications align with those of previous literature. The application of adult learning theory provided an effective framework for addressing the research questions. Through this lens, the motivations and responses of teachers in relation to their engagement with institutional coaches were uncovered.

Empirical Implications

The lived experiences of the teachers who have worked with instructional coaches are valuable from the lens of professional development, leadership, and non-evaluator roles in instructional coaches. The instructional coaches are seen as expert teachers but are not so intimidating that teachers are too afraid to seek them out for advice and opinions on their classroom practices. This approachable demeanor fosters a collaborative culture by encouraging teachers to share their experiences and learn from each other. This mirrors the goal of teachers seeking to create collaborative classroom environments.

Professional Development

Instructional coaches also promote professional growth by mentoring and supporting the teachers. The professional development that the teacher and instructional coach engage in is a form of personalized professional development because the instructional coach is working with the teacher one-on-one and helping solve the teacher's problems. By the teacher being in charge of their own learning for their own problems, they can focus on their own needs (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Macias, 2017). While they are learning together, the teacher and instructional coach are also building relationships that can significantly impact teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Knight, 2019; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The personalized professional development created and facilitated by instructional coaches is noteworthy because it directly addresses the specific needs of the teachers at the site (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Furthermore, instructional coaches provide follow-up support on campus initiatives, enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives and reinforcing new teaching practices (Balta & Eryılmaz, 2019; Bragg et al., 2021; Brunsek et al., 2020; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2018; Earley, 2020; Kennedy, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lambirth et al., 2021; Poekert, 2012). This follow up support can happen after a staff meeting where new initiatives are introduced or expanded upon. Instructional coaches are there to offer support to keep these initiatives moving forward for the school site.

The role of instructional coaches goes beyond just providing feedback; they help teachers enhance their reflective practices, allowing them to hone their teaching skills continually. When the teacher seeks out an instructional coach for help with their classroom, the teacher is able to keep control of the decisions of the changes they want to make in their classroom. This keeps the

teacher in charge, and they keep the autonomy in their classroom (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). The flexibility of instructional coaches is another remarkable aspect—they meet teachers' needs by providing timely feedback tailored to what each teacher wants and needs when they want it (Knight, 2022; Knowles et al., 2005). This responsiveness is crucial in helping teachers implement new strategies and improve their practices in real time.

Leadership Style Associations

School administration leadership directly affects learning in the classroom because of the effect on the organization. While the principal is the official leader of the campus, many can be seen as non-evaluative leaders who influence the campus. Instructional coaches are part of this category (Leithwood et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). When decisions regarding professional development topics are made without considering the input of teachers and staff, their interest in those topics may wane because they may not perceive the relevance to their current needs. Instructional coaches influence the culture and climate of campus through their influence on curricula, listening to teacher needs, and input on professional development and implementation. By understanding the needs of the teachers, instructional coaches can positively impact the teacher's professional development, which affects the learning in the classroom (Fibuch & Ahmed, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017).

School Administration Leadership Style

School administration leadership significantly influences teacher morale, instruction, development, and student learning (Kalkan et al., 2020). Effective leadership aligns with the leader's beliefs and the needs of followers, fostering trust and guidance (George, 2015).

Instructional leadership, which prioritizes teaching and learning, promotes a unified instructional strategy and climate, enhancing teacher buy-in and follow-through on new initiatives (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Goddard et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2018; Shaked, 2020). Path-goal leadership boosts teachers' performance and job satisfaction by identifying individual motivators and adapting leadership styles, facilitating open communication and tailored professional development (Northouse, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Conversely, task-oriented leadership focuses on meeting deadlines and clear expectations, which helps create procedures and guidelines, especially for new or disorganized teams, but may hinder teacher autonomy and professional development if overused (Engelbert & Wallgren, 2016; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

The instructional coach's leadership style was not a factor in this study, but it was noted that the temperament of the instructional coach and their willingness and availability were factors in why and when teachers were able to get help from an instructional coach. Instructional coaches are seen as leaders and experts in campus initiatives. They must know how to answer teachers' questions, provide resources to support the teacher and give feedback on a teacher's performance if requested.

Non-Evaluative Roles and Leadership Styles

Non-evaluative roles in schools, such as department leaders and instructional coaches, play supportive and advisory roles without assessing performance (Hameiri & Nir, 2016; Northouse, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). Functional leadership involves guiding organizational goals without official titles, focusing on instructional strategies and problem-solving (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Transformational leadership aims to change students and peers positively, using charisma to connect with followers and set goals (Cheung et al., 2018; Hameiri & Nir, 2016; Northouse, 2018). Both leadership styles significantly impact professional development by

fostering trust and collaboration. The leadership style of the instructional coach was not relevant to this study, but the instructional coach was observed helping teachers with their instructional strategies and problem-solving with teachers when the teachers bring their problems to the instructional coach. The instructional coaches can connect with teachers through their temperament, subject knowledge, or instructional strategies. There is an observable relationship between the teachers and the instructional coaches, which was built through many interactions (Northouse, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020).

Transitioning from a Teacher to an Administrator

Teachers transitioning from the classroom to administration must adapt to leading both adults and children, requiring a clear understanding of leadership styles and their influence on the school (Gumus et al., 2018; Malone et al., 2021; Northouse, 2018; Thelen, 2021). As instructional leaders, principals must clearly communicate their goals for teachers and students, visibly outline the school's academic goals, supervise teaching, review student progress, and encourage professional development among teachers (Bellibaş et al., 2020; Kalkan et al., 2020; Malone et al., 2021). Effective leadership that fosters a learning-oriented atmosphere is crucial for empowering teachers and motivating students (Saleem et al., 2020; Schipper et al., 2020). Instructional coaches were observed having an impact on the professional development of teachers through their interactions and answering the questions of the teachers. Through the data collection process, the teacher's reasons for their interactions working with an institutional coach were noted because of the institutional coach's temperament, expertise, and willingness to help a teacher discover their own solutions.

Teacher's Classroom Practices

The administration's leadership style significantly influences classroom creation and management. Teachers can enhance their classroom practices through professional development, with the administration setting goals, incorporating teacher input, and providing learning time, thus fostering a learning culture (Bell & Hernandez, 2017; Webb, 2009). Building students' leadership skills is part of a teacher's responsibility, achieved by assigning classroom jobs and encouraging decision-making (Bartel, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018). Principals can model leadership skills, creating a culture that promotes leadership among teachers and students (Kalkan et al., 2020; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). A school-wide leadership model, where common language and consistent information are used across classrooms, improves student outcomes and teacher collaboration (Kalkan et al., 2020; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). This shared framework and vision enhance the school's culture and climate, benefiting students and reducing teacher isolation (Schipper et al., 2020). Instructional coaches are part of this influence because of their work with teachers. Instructional coaches were observed helping develop lessons that teachers took back to their classrooms. Teachers journaled that they went to instructional coaches for help because they wanted to improve on the initiatives that the school was implementing. The teachers are untimely helping the school climate and culture by wanting to improve their classroom.

What Makes Professional Development Successful

Effective professional development for teachers should adhere to adult learning principles, involving teachers in selecting topics to meet their needs and removing barriers. It should leverage teachers' experiences, ensuring immediate classroom applicability to establish new practices. Professional development should cater to diverse learning styles, with peer-led

training showing positive impacts on student outcomes. Continuous support and follow-up training are essential for sustained implementation and overcoming resistance. School leaders play a critical role in fostering a supportive learning culture. Professional learning communities (PLCs) should be collaborative, fostering shared vision, trust, and continuous learning, though challenges exist in their development and sustainability. Non-evaluative leaders can guide PLCs by facilitating discussions and supporting teacher autonomy. Instructional coaching supports teachers' growth through goal-setting and collaborative learning environments. Instructional coaches were observed supporting the principal's initiatives for student learning. By being available for teachers, the instructional coaches were able to remove some of the barriers to the teachers' learning by providing follow-up and support for the teacher's new learning and skill acquisition.

Hindrance in Professional Development

The hindrance to effective professional development often stems from inadequate follow-through on new training initiatives within schools. Teachers may struggle to implement new practices effectively when professional development lacks ongoing support, resources, or relevance to current challenges. Frequent introduction of new initiatives without sufficient time for mastery can lead to teacher burnout and reluctance to adopt changes. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in mitigating these barriers by ensuring comprehensive support, fostering a learning culture, and promoting a growth mindset among teachers. Addressing these challenges requires a structured approach to training, ongoing support mechanisms, and a culture that values continuous improvement and experimentation in educational practices. The instructional coaches were observed helping teachers continue learning and implementing new learning strategies in their classrooms. The instructional coaches were supportive and knowledgeable about the

practices that the school and teachers were working to implement in their classrooms; there was lots of encouragement to keep trying even when the new initiative was challenging to implement in the classroom. The follow-through that the instructional coaches were able to give seems to keep the initiatives alive, and through this support, teachers were not giving up on their new learning.

The impact of instructional coaches on campus culture is profound. Many teachers have developed strong trust and reliance on these instructional coaches (Knight, 2007, 2011, 2019, 2022; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). This trust is because of the relationship and the positive support they offer while working with the teachers. Their support and guidance are integral to maintaining a positive and productive learning environment (Bellibas & Liu, 2017; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Instructional coaches can offer support after conferences, help the school with initiatives, and give personalized help when teachers are struggling with implementation. The presence of instructional coaches helps cultivate a supportive community where teachers feel empowered to seek help, share ideas, and continuously improve their teaching practices (Huijboom et al., 2021; Qiu, 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Tanner et al., 2017).

Theoretical Implications

The understanding of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1978) and its application in the context of instructional coaching for teachers is a pivotal aspect of this study. The interpretations of the study findings closely align with the principles of Adult Learning Theory, underscoring the theoretical underpinnings of this research. The five assumptions of Adult Learning Theory were applied to understand why teacher seek out instructional coaches for professional development.

The first assumption of adult learners is that they are self-directed and have a desire to take responsibility for their own learning (Knowles et al., 2005). This study's teachers exemplify this by proactively seeking instructional coaches to improve their teaching practices. Their interactions with instructional coaching demonstrate the principle of self-direction. Teachers understand they have a problem in their classroom or desire to improve their instructional practices, so they seek an instructional coach. By forming supportive relationships through instructional coaching, the social aspects of Adult Learning Theory are highlighted, emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning environments (Allen et al., 2022; Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005; Zepeda et al., 2014).

The second assumption of adult learners is that they bring a wealth of experience to the learning process (Knowles et al., 2005). The teachers in this study, with their extensive educational backgrounds and classroom experience, conversations, and interactions with their instructional coach, value these experiences and grow their knowledge based on their collaborative conversations with the instructional coaches. The instructional coaches provided new perspectives and constructive feedback, allowing teachers to integrate their existing knowledge with new insights, thereby enhancing their instructional strategies (Allen et al., 2022; Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005).

The third assumption of adult learners is that when they are ready to learn, it is because they experience a need to know or do something to improve their performance (Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005). The teachers' motivation to seek coaching stemmed from their immediate needs, which included classroom challenges, new lessons they were designing, or support with training they had attended and needed help with implementation. This readiness to learn is a critical component of Adult Learning Theory, reflecting the teachers' desire to improve their

practice and student outcomes (Allen et al., 2022; Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005; Zepeda et al., 2014). All the situations in which the teachers in this study sought out the instructional coach on their own time showed their commitment to becoming a better teacher.

The fourth assumption for adult learners is that they are problem-centered in their orientation to learning (Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005). They want to learn skills and knowledge that are immediately applicable to their work or personal life. The instructional coaches in this study provided immediate, relevant feedback that teachers could directly apply to their classroom practices. This just-in-time support helped teachers improve their lessons and classroom management in real-time, aligning with the adult learning principle that adults prefer to be involved in planning and evaluating their learning activities. While the instructional coach gives suggestions and tips for teachers to take back to the classroom, it is ultimately up to the teacher to take the suggestions and implement them in their classroom (Allen et al., 2022; Knight, 2004; Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005).

The fifth and final assumption is that adults are motivated to learn when they see the content's relevance to their work or personal life (Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005). The teachers' motivation to seek instructional coaching was driven by their desire to overcome immediate classroom challenges and improve their teaching effectiveness. This intrinsic motivation underscores the effectiveness of instructional coaching in fostering professional growth and development. With the availability of the instructional coaches, they are also planning a part in this because the teacher needs to be able to find support when they are looking at the moment. Just-in-time support helps teachers look for changes they can make the following day or lessons they want to give soon after the meeting (Allen et al., 2022; Knowles, 1978; Knowles et al., 2005; Zepeda et al., 2014).

In summary, the study's findings reflect the core assumptions of Adult Learning Theory. The self-directed nature of teachers' engagement with instructional coaches, the integration of their experiences, their readiness to address classroom challenges, their problem-centered approach to learning, and their intrinsic motivation to improve all demonstrate how Adult Learning Theory can be effectively applied to instructional coaching. These insights highlight the pivotal role of instructional coaches in facilitating professional development and enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had limitations and delimitations. Limitations included the sample size, the type of data to be collected, the intensive process for data analysis, and the lack of statistical analysis. Delimitations included the limitation of participants based on the selection criteria of working with an instructional coach.

Limitations

Qualitative studies have inherent design limitations that influence what they can and cannot achieve because of the design and data that can be collected. A qualitative study provides an in-depth understanding rather than broad generalizability. Qualitative research excels at offering detailed, rich descriptions of complex phenomena. Through this study style, the researcher can see the intricacies of human behavior, experiences, and social processes in context and document this as the subjects' lived experience. Additionally, qualitative research can help generate new theories and hypotheses that can later be tested through quantitative methods.

Qualitative studies also have limitations that must be understood to ensure the researcher selects the correct research style for the data they intend to report on in their study. The sample size is typically small because of the amount of data that must be collected, and the analysis that

goes with that data is time-consuming and labor-intensive, making it less suitable for studies requiring quick results. Qualitative research does not aim to produce statistical data or probabilities; it focuses on the depth of understanding rather than numerical analysis. The context-specific nature of qualitative research makes it difficult to replicate studies exactly, and different researchers may interpret the same data differently, leading to variations in findings. There is a degree of subjectivity, with the researcher's perspective potentially influencing data collection and interpretation and introducing bias based on how the data is coded and interpreted.

Delimitations

The study's delimitation was choosing participants who had worked with an instructional coach. This delimitation was necessary to collect data on the lived experiences of those teachers who had worked with an instructional coach for this study. By focusing on these specific participants, the study was able to gather rich, detailed insights into the dynamics, benefits, and challenges of instructional coaching from the perspective of those directly involved.

The limited scope also means that the study does not capture teachers' perspectives who have not worked with an instructional coach. Understanding why some teachers choose not to engage with instructional coaches could provide a more comprehensive view of the factors influencing the utilization and effectiveness of instructional coaching. This missing piece of the puzzle could reveal barriers to participation, such as lack of awareness, perceived lack of need, or negative perceptions of instructional coaching. It could also highlight differences in professional development needs and preferences among teachers.

Focusing exclusively on teachers who have worked with instructional coaches may overlook broader systemic issues that affect the adoption and impact of instructional coaching. For instance, factors such as school leadership support, availability of coaching resources, and

overall school culture can significantly influence whether teachers seek and benefit from coaching. Including these broader contextual factors could enhance the understanding of effectively implementing and sustaining instructional coaching programs in various educational settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the study's findings, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations and delimitations that were placed on the research. These factors have guided the following recommendations for future research. One significant limitation was the selection of participants who had already worked with an instructional coach. While this provided valuable insights into the experiences and benefits of instructional coaching, it also excluded perspectives from teachers who have not engaged with such support. To address this gap, additional research should mirror this study but include a broader range of participants to understand why some teachers may be reluctant to work with an instructional coach. This could involve exploring various factors such as perceived lack of value in instructional coaching, personal conflicts, or the relevance of the coaching subject to their teaching needs. By identifying these barriers, future studies could offer strategies to encourage more teachers to seek instructional coaching, thereby enhancing overall professional development.

Another area ripe for future research is the exploration of why teachers often prefer just-in-time support over more in-depth coaching. The study highlighted that teachers appreciate immediate, actionable feedback that can be directly applied to their classroom practices. Understanding the underlying reasons for their reluctance to engage in longer-term, data-driven coaching processes is crucial. Teachers may be concerned about the implications of classroom data collection, fearing it could be used for evaluative purposes rather than purely for

professional growth. Research into these concerns could lead to developing coaching strategies that better align with teachers' preferences and create a more supportive and trusting environment. By addressing these issues, instructional coaches can refine their approaches to ensure they meet teachers' immediate and long-term needs more effectively.

Furthermore, the role of instructional coaches in leading Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and growing other teacher leaders presents another promising avenue for future research. PLCs can often lack structure and guidance if teachers are not utilizing the time properly by having an instructional coach facilitating PLC norms, and goals could be set and the goals met by the group. Investigating the impact of instructional coaches in this role could provide insights into how they can effectively foster a culture of continuous improvement and collective responsibility for student outcomes. Understanding how instructional coaches can mentor and develop other teacher leaders within the school can have significant implications for building a sustainable professional development model and the next generation of instructional coaches. Future studies could examine the strategies used by instructional coaches to identify and nurture leadership potential among their peers, thereby contributing to a more robust and self-sustaining culture of professional learning at a school site.

Expanding the scope of research to include teachers who have yet to work with instructional coaches, exploring preferences for just-in-time support versus in-depth coaching, and examining the role of instructional coaches in leading PLCs and developing teacher leaders can provide a more comprehensive understanding of instructional coaching. These insights can inform more effective instructional coaching practices, ultimately improving teaching and learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach at Peach Tree High School and Rock High School (pseudonyms) in a rural desert of California. The study found that teachers are true adult learners and seek out instructional coaches when they are motivated to fix a problem in their classroom or receive confirmation that their practices are correct for the lesson or topics they want to teach. Teachers value interactions with instructional coaches because they are friendly and can provide non-judgmental support with actionable suggestions for immediate implementation in the classroom.

The study illuminated that the temperament of instructional coaches plays a pivotal role in why teachers seek out an instructional coach during their time of need. Subthemes highlighted the importance of friendly and supportive instructional coaches who are available when needed, build a trust-based relationship, and ensure confidentiality. Positive support from instructional coaches made teachers comfortable asking even the "silliest" questions. Instructional coaches who demonstrated empathy and understanding of classroom complexities were seen as allies in professional development, offering personalized support and strategies that aligned with instructional goals and student needs.

The study emphasized that effective instructional coaching relationships are built on temperaments characterized by friendliness, approachability, and non-judgmental support. Instructional coaching is a cyclical process of building trust, exporting uncertainties, and refining practices based on evidence and feedback. When teachers feel supported and empowered, they are better equipped to meet diverse student needs and contribute positively to the school culture of continuous improvement and excellence.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 22, 2024

Emily Cornwell
Amy Schechter

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1108 A Hermeneutic Phenomenological View of Professional Development Motivation as Experienced by Secondary High School Teachers who Engaged with New Instructional Coaches

Dear Emily Cornwell, Amy Schechter,

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).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Site Permission Request

Dear Mrs. [redacted],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Education. The title of my research project is A Hermeneutic Phenomenological View of Professional Development Motivation as Experienced by Secondary High School Teachers Who Engaged with New Instructional Coaches, and the purpose of my research is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [redacted] and [redacted]

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview, participate in an observation of a meeting with an instructional coach, and complete a journal entry.

Thank you for considering my request. If you grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Emily Cornwell
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix C

Site Permission Response

[redacted]

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

[redacted]

SUPERINTENDENT

[redacted]

February 2, 2024

To Whom it may concern,

This letter is to confirm permission for Emily Cornwell, a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University to conduct research within the [redacted] at [redacted] and [redacted] for her upcoming research project.

I appreciate her willingness to share the data and findings of her research and for ensuring the participation in this research is voluntary.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Trenae [redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, at Liberty University, I am conducting research on instructional coaching and professional development as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. The purpose of my research is to understand how teachers view professional development after working with an instructional coach and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be employed by [redacted], a high school teacher at [redacted] or [redacted], and worked with an instructional coach at one of the above sites. Participants will be asked to participate in an in-person, audio/video-recorded interview, review the transcripts of the interview for accuracy in transcriptions and interpretation, participate in a conversation with an instructional coach that will be audio/video recorded and observed in person, review the transcripts of the conversation with an instructional coach for accuracy in transcriptions and interpretation and complete a journal entry that will consist of three questions after you have worked with an instructional coach. It should take approximately 4 hours and 30 minutes to complete the procedures listed.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please complete the attached screening survey and return it to me at E[redacted]
If you meet my participant criteria, I will work with you to schedule a time for an interview. A consent document will be given to you if you meet the study criteria at the time of the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Emily Cornwell
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
[redacted]

Appendix E

Screening Questions for Participants

1. Are you a high school teacher? Yes/No
2. Have you worked with an instructional coach at your site? Yes/No

Appendix F

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological View of Professional Development Motivation as Experienced by Secondary High School Teachers Who Engaged with New Instructional Coaches
Principal Investigator: Emily Cornwell, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a high school teacher who has interacted with an instructional coach. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the lived experiences of public-school teachers at the secondary level who engaged with an instructional coach.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person, audio/video-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour.
2. Review the transcripts of the interview for accuracy in transcriptions and interpretation that will take no more than 1 hour.
3. Participate in a conversation with an instructional coach that will be audio/video recorded and observed in person that will take no more than 1 hour.
4. Review the transcripts of the conversation with an instructional coach for accuracy in transcriptions and interpretation that will take no more than 1 hour.
5. Complete a journal entry that will consist of three questions after you have worked with an instructional coach that will take no more than 30 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased awareness of adult learning theory, instructional coaching, and benefits of professional development.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Apple Valley Unified School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Emily Cornwell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Amy Schechter, at [redacted].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix G

Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe your educational background and career through your current position. CQ
2. In what ways have you interacted with an instructional coach. CQ
3. Describe what it has been like to work with an instructional coach. CQ
4. Describe your feelings after you interacted with an instructional coach. SQ2
5. What experiences have you had that motivated you to work with an instructional coach? SQ1
6. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with the instructional coach? SQ1
7. What other forms of professional development have you tried in the past? SQ2
8. What was the outcome of those trainings? SQ2
9. Describe practices or new instructional strategies that you use after working with an instructional coach. SQ2
10. What professional development experiences have you had besides working with an instructional coach? CQ
11. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with an instructional coach? CQ

Appendix I

Observation Instrument

Date, Location and Time	
Observation	Observer's Comments

Appendix J

Journal Questions

1. Please describe your mood or feelings before your meeting with the instructional coach. Were there any specific expectations or apprehensions you had before your meeting? SQ1
2. Please describe the any emotions and thoughts that you had during the coaching session itself. Did you experience any moments of clarity, validation, or uncertainty as you and the instructional coach were discussing your teaching practices? SQ2
3. Please describe any specific takeaways or action points from your session. What if any did you implement in your classroom or teaching practices after working with an instructional coach? SQ3