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ABSTRACT

SKILLS AND QUALITIES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS TRANSITIONING INTO THE
ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

by

Debra L. Amling

Purpose. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the skills and qualities necessary for a classroom teacher to successfully transition into the role of an instructional coach. There appears to be limited data and research on this subject that could be used to assist school districts in hiring the best candidate for the role of instructional coach.

Methods. The research question chosen for this qualitative case study investigated the qualities and skills of successful instructional coaches as determined by their peers, evaluators and the coaches themselves. The participants were purposefully selected because they are successful instructional coaches or in a relationship with a successful instructional coach as a classroom teacher or administrator. The combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews provided insight into specific skills and qualities instructional coaches possess which contribute to success in their role.

Results. This study analyzed the skills and qualities of an instructional coach based on interviews and surveys with teachers, administrators and coaches. The initial data analysis revealed thirty-four subthemes. Based on the research, these subthemes were grouped into four distinct themes: relationship building skills, skills related to curriculum, leadership skills and qualities and personal qualities. After the analysis of the research, it was determined that the skills were not as vital as I had previously thought. Rather, it appears to be the qualities that a coach already possesses that are most significant in terms of allowing them to develop the skills they need as coaches. With this understanding, it is recommended that specific qualities rather than skills should be the primary focus of a hiring process for an instructional coach.

SKILLS AND QUALITIES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS TRANSITIONING INTO THE
ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Caroline, Natalie and Jack who believed in me and my ability to achieve this personal and professional goal.

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Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

My entrance into education had an unusual beginning. As a freshman at Michigan State University, one of my first classes in my major was "Introduction to Hotel Management". After learning more about a career in Hotel Management, I realized that the idea of changing cities every 18 months wasn't going to be conducive to the life that I wanted as a wife and a mother. Beginning to look for a new major was a daunting prospect when my English teacher recommended that I consider teaching high school English. While the idea appealed to my interest in English and writing, I felt intimidated by the idea of teaching high school students. After much thought about who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do with my life, I enrolled in Introduction Elementary Education and immediately felt that I had found my place.

As my classes and field placements began, I knew that I was ideally suited to elementary education because I had a knack for connecting and motivating young children in their education. My career as a primary teacher began with a class of 27 second graders. I learned quickly that while my college classes gave me some skills, being a classroom teacher was an on the job training experience. Each day was a new experience with classroom management, finding or inventing new ways to help each student reach their potential and learning how to deal with parents and colleagues. As my first year of teaching went on, I discovered that my focus on an individual child's development was not an approach that fit well with some of my colleagues, many who were near retirement. It was also an approach that confused some parents that were used to a more whole-class approach.

I was seeking professional learning that would help me define my beliefs and inform my practice. Our district was providing many professional development opportunities that were one time, quick one-hour meetings with no follow-up, no expectations and little discussion about how to implement the new learning.

After three years in first and second grade, my school district opened an alternative school whose focus was on multiage education and differentiated learning. This approach was a much better fit for me as a young teacher who was developing her pedagogy. My initial assignment was teaching in a 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade multiage classroom. The year began with nine first graders, nine second graders and nine third graders. Working on a team with two other

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teachers, we quickly developed ways to individualize instruction through flexible grouping throughout our three classrooms. Our groups often contained students of all three grade levels because we focused on what they needed and where they were with each academic area. This was the ongoing professional learning that I had been seeking. It was ongoing, job-embedded and collaborative, but it still wasn't enough. After two years in my new school, my district engaged with The Ohio State University to be a part of the Literacy Collaborative program. Literacy Collaborative was a school reform project intended to improve student literacy skills through the use of coaches trained in research-based methods (Literacy Collaborative, 2019).

Working with our coach was the best professional learning I had as an educator because of the ongoing professional learning that was focused on my experiences with my students. I spent seven years in this school before taking a few years off to be at home with my three young children, but the opportunity of working with a coach was an experience that stayed with me throughout the rest of my career.

After staying home for two years, I was offered a position as a kindergarten teacher in a progressive program in another school district. Starting at a new school district and in a new grade level, I immediately began searching for a coaching experience similar to one in my previous district. While the structure of the Literacy Collaborative did not exist in my new district, I quickly found informal mentors to provide me with the professional learning that I was seeking. Then, after 14 years as a kindergarten teacher and numerous applications and interviews, I was finally offered a position as an instructional leader for grades K - 2. In my new role, I continue to seek opportunities to replicate the rewarding coaching experience that I had as a young teacher for my district.

I hoped was to provide professional learning to the teachers in my district that was as meaningful as the experience that I had with the coach in my previous district. Still, I realized that a large portion of the success that I had with the coach was not only due to the coach's knowledge in the content area but also because of his skills as a coach. Our district was looking to hire and utilize instructional coaches in our elementary schools in the 2020-2021 school year. I wanted my district to find the individuals who would be able to provide the professional learning that could impact teacher practice and student achievement. What skills do classroom teachers need to transition from the classroom into a coaching role?

After researching theoretical frameworks, I was unable to find an existing framework that fully addressed my specific research needs. I found frameworks that addressed adult learners, reflective thinking, collaborative learning and many other topics associated with the role of a coach, but nothing specifically related to identifying skills and qualities of an effective instructional coach. Accordingly, I used Grounded Theory to help me frame my research. Grounded Theory is a group of planned but flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data through the use of the coding of the data (Charmaz, 2014). I interviewed 3 coaches, that were considered to be effective by their administrators and teachers, I also interviewed their administrators and a subset of their teachers. I did all of this to identify/describe the skills and qualities these coaches possess.

Research Question

A great deal of research existed around educational coaching. There had been widespread support of coaching programs that created embedded, practice-based learning opportunities for teachers because they were demonstrably effective for improving the quality of instructional practice (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010). However, limited research exists that defined the role of the coach, clearly described the work of the coach or explained how individuals learned to be coaches (Gallucci, Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010)

Moreover, school districts often lacked a purposeful hiring process when implementing a coaching program. This was concerning because their identification of coaches who had the skills and qualities to work toward harmony with administrators and teams of teachers was vital (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). I agreed with Hopkins, et al that specific consideration should be given to the selection and development of coaches to ensure a successful implementation (2016).

In this study, I triangulated data from three sources to determine the attributes that were commonly held as favorable by instructional coaches. My research question was as follows:

What skills and qualities are necessary for a teacher to transition from the classroom into the role of an instructional coach?

Definition of the Problem

As the public and federal expectations for student achievement continued to increase so did the expectations for teachers. When reviewing the language for the reauthorization of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), education experts noted that the federal government's large financial investment focused on teacher effectiveness and the need for high-quality professional

development (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). Along with the funds, came an interest from states and school districts to reform education variables that had direct ties to student achievement. Students who struggled with literacy and mathematics faced severe academic challenges early in life and possible economic inequity in adulthood (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). Meanwhile, quality variables appeared to be more strongly related to student achievement than other factors such as class sizes, overall spending levels, and teacher salaries (Darling - Hammond, 2000). One way to improve teacher quality was accomplished primarily through strong professional development targeted at improving student achievement. There continued to be a growing interest in types of professional development that are designed to improve the skills of teachers, such as study groups, mentoring or coaching (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2009). These reform types of activities usually took place during the school day that make them more likely to connect with classroom teaching (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2009).

The newly revised Standards for Professional Learning called for a focus on student learning, time for teacher reflection and an atmosphere of collaborative inquiry (Heinke, 2013). Related to this call, classroom-level coaching could be used to allow for collaboration and reflection as components of job-embedded professional development. Coaching as a model for high quality professional development had the support of many organizations including The International Reading Association; National Council of Teachers of English; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Science Teachers Association; National Council for the Social Studies; Alliance of Excellent Education; and the National Staff Development (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). Coaching as applied to education was defined as a process whereby seasoned teachers provide instructional support, professional development opportunities, feedback and materials to classroom teachers as a means to improve instruction and build the capacity of school staff members (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

For a coaching model to be effective, the environment needed to allow for a climate of trust, long-term commitment to coaching, professional development specific to coaching and administrative support (Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry & Hewson, 2003). Although seasoned teachers typically possessed knowledge of content and instructional strategies, that did not ensure that they had the competencies necessary to be successful coaches. Sally Heineke and Barbara Polnick, in their article, "Pave the Way for Coaches: Principals' Actions are Key to

Shaping Roles and Relationships," suggested a scenario that helped to illustrate issues with beginning in the role of an instructional coach:

> Can you imagine transitioning a classroom teacher into the role of school counselor, media specialist, or assistant principal without that teacher having prepared for such a role? Yet across the country, teachers have been moved from the classroom into the very challenging job of instructional coach with little or no preparation. (Heineke & Polnick, 2013, p 50)

In my experience, I believed it was difficult to establish a new professional identity as teachers transitioned from experienced teachers to novice coaches. I also felt that to ensure a smooth transition there were some necessary aptitudes that need to be identified to help determine which individuals should be hired to be instructional coaches. I identified the skills and qualities necessary to be an effective coach, in doing so, I found that the research could aid in the hiring and transition process. I asked the following question: What skills and qualities are necessary for a teacher to successfully transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach?

Purpose of Study

In the education world, many different interview tools that can be used to identify individuals for teaching positions. Several commercially available instruments were designed to measure the future success of classroom teachers, including the Haberman Star Teacher Evaluation PreScreener (Haberman PreScreener) and the Gallup TeacherInsight Assessment (Gallup TIA). Both instruments involved the use of a short survey to assess several teacher attributes that were exhibited by highly effective teachers (Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, & Staiger, 2008). These instruments had been used by many large urban school districts throughout the U.S., including Atlanta, Buffalo, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Nashville, Philadelphia, Pomona, San Francisco, San Diego, Tampa, and Washington DC (Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, & Staiger, 2008).

Coaching criteria, that I was aware of, for the selection and hiring process had not yet been widely defined. Districts often described the responsibilities, preferred qualifications, but the definition of the attributes needed for a coaching role was not clearly defined "Simply identifying a willing candidate and calling them coach won't lead to success" (Killion, 2012 p. 9). With a continued focus on teacher quality, school districts looked at a coaching model to improve the skills and knowledge of their teachers (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017). Although the use

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of instructional coaching roles was not a new concept, I found little peer-reviewed research that (1) defined the parameters of the role, (2) described and contextualized the work of instructional coaching, or (3) explained how individuals learn to be coaches and are supported to refine their practice over time (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2009). Coaches' content knowledge and pedagogical development are often assumed competencies in the hiring process of a new coach (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2009). Many districts determined the potential of coaches based on experience and success in the classroom without considering other the development of other skills. Walpole and Blamey identified several roles from their interview data when they asked current coaches to define their position: assessor, curriculum manager, formative observer, modeler, teacher, and trainer (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). With so many roles, coaches needed to have numerous skills and personality traits in place before starting their role as a coach. These were broad topics that do not provide school leaders with sufficiently detailed information regarding how to determine the best individuals for coaching positions. Educational leaders needed to take a long-term approach to the implantation of a coaching program, with attention to the selection, preparation, and development of coaches (Hopkins, Ozimek, & Sweet, 2017)

I think additional research could undoubtedly be conducted to determine the skills and qualities of successful coaches to be used in the selection process of potential coaches.

Significance of the Study

In the 2020-21 school year, my school district planned on implementing an instructional coaching program. Several area districts already had moved toward this form of professional learning, with varying measures of success. Our goal was to hire individuals with the desired personal attributes as well as the necessary classroom experience. What skills and qualities do classroom teachers need to transition to the role of a coach? The answer can be used to create a successful coaching program. As other school districts turned to instructional coaching as an effective form of professional learning for teachers, the need for a closer look at the qualifications of coaches became vital to the success of the learning. I hoped that my study will help determine the qualities and skills necessary for coaches in an elementary setting. These identified skills and qualities could be used to write a job description, design an interview process and to build an evaluation tool to aid in the selection process. If the skills and qualities were more clearly identified, then appropriate personnel would be more likely to be hired. Once

hired, I hoped that a quality coaching program could be developed that results in increased student achievement through improving the pedagogy of classroom teachers.

Background and Role of Researcher

I chose this topic for my dissertation because I believed finding the most qualified individuals for coaching positions could result in a successful experience for coaches, teachers and ultimately for enhancing student achievement. Throughout my career in public education, I saw numerous teachers hired as some form of coach either in a content area or as a curriculum specialist. Generally, I felt these teachers had been successful, even though most were veteran classroom teachers with little or no experience facilitating/promoting adult learning. The ones I was familiar with were rarely in a setting that required them to reflective about their practice or had been required to articulate their personal beliefs or instructional practices. Outside their team of teachers, they often had not extensively collaborated with other teachers; qualities that I believed were necessary to be a successful coach. In my role as Instructional Leader in my district, I was often asked to help teachers with their practice. Sometimes the request was in an area of expertise for me and sometimes it was not. I discovered, that even if I was not familiar with the content, I could be successful in helping the teacher identify the pedagogical aspects of the concern and help them develop a plan to improve their practice. As I reflected on these experiences, I thought about what skills were necessary in a particular situation that helped that individual move beyond being a successful classroom teacher.

Definition of Key Terms

Professional learning - when designed well, is typically interactive, sustained, and customized to teachers' needs. It is often aimed to encourage teachers to take responsibility for their learning and to practice what they are learning in their teaching contexts (Scherff, 2018).

Professional development - which "happens to" teachers, is often associated with one-time workshops, seminars, or lectures, and is typically a one-size-fits-all approach (Scherff, 2018).

Instructional Coaching - "Instructional coaching is defined as content-based (eg., math coaching or literacy coaching) and intended to support teachers in meeting the goals of district-based instructional reform (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

Skills - For this purpose, a skill refers to as a particular ability and be gained through experience, in this case the ability to coach.

Qualities – In contrast to the term skill, quality is a distinctive attribute or characteristic.

Organization of the Study

In summary, my study focused on determining the necessary qualities and skills for a classroom teacher to transition into the role of an instructional coach. My dissertation was divided into five parts, beginning with an explanation of the development of coaching in public education. Throughout the first chapter, the focus narrows to clarify the importance of the coach as an individual, specifically their skills and qualities. Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature. Chapter two further explains the concepts of professional development and instructional coaching. Chapter three speaks to the methodology used to perform the research followed by the results of the research in Chapter four. My dissertation concluded with Chapter five with a summary of the findings and implications for further research, possible policy implications and refined coaching practice in public education.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

        To help my readers to better understand the need for defined attributes for teachers as they transitioned to the role of instructional coach, I attempted to explore the concepts of professional learning and instructional coaching that many felt were needed. The delivery of professional learning was the main role of an instructional coach as seen in the following literature review that attempts to outline the history of professional learning and its goals in public education. The literature review of instructional coaching was an attempt to provide an understanding of the various duties of an instructional coach and the need for the professional development of coaches, as well as illustrate the gap in the research that I feel falls short of laying out the attributes of successful coaches. The literature of grounded theory provided me with an understanding of how and why I can use grounded theory and why it was chosen for my study.

Professional Learning

        The National Education Association (NEA) defined the purpose of professional learning on their website to be "for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels" (Standards for Professional Learning, NEA, 2011). Unsurprisingly, I discovered that many school districts tended to focus on professional learning, especially considering the lure of potential improvement in student performance. As a result, there were many policy reforms related to professional development, including the refinement of professional development standards at local, state and national levels. Although these initiatives were necessary, the implementation of these policies and the design of an effective professional development program were less clear.

        According to "A Brief History of Teacher Evaluation in Ohio" on the Ohio Department of Education's website, recent efforts to design a policy for professional development in Ohio began with the Ohio Senate Bill 1 which called for the Governor to appoint members to a Governor's Commission on Teaching Success (Educator Evaluator Overview, ODE, 2019). The purpose of the commission was to examine and make recommendations on how to improve teaching quality in Ohio and how to attract and retain high-quality educators (Educator Evaluator Overview, Ohio Department of Education, 2019). In 2003, the commission issued a report with 15 recommendations (Educator Evaluator Overview, Ohio Department of Education, 2019). In

2004, using those recommendations, Senators Gardner, Prentiss, Mumper, Goodman, Harris, Spada, Carnes, Blessing and Armbruste proposed Senate Bill 2. Governor Bob Taft then signed Senate Bill 2, which addressed the topic of teacher quality, specifically in the areas of standards, teacher preparation, recruitment and retention and professional development (Educator Evaluator Overview, ODE). The State Board of Education adopted the new teacher standards in October 2005 (Educator Evaluator Overview, ODE). The Standards for Ohio Educators detailed the standards and how they will be used:

> (1) To guide the design of teacher education programs that serve both teacher candidates and experienced teachers;
>
> (2) To guide school-based professional development that is aligned with student achievement;
>
> (3) To determine what types of professional development the district and schools within the district should provide to teachers;
>
> (4) To guide expenditures of state and federal funding for professional development;
>
> (5) To develop criteria for decision making by local professional development committees;
>
> (6) To ensure that third-party providers of instructional services use or meet the professional development standards; and
>
> (7) To guide all licensed school personnel in developing their own plans for professional growth

Chapter 3301-24-6 of the Ohio Revised Code provided further details in the area of Licensing and Education Programs.

> Professional development shall be required for the renewal of all educators licenses except as otherwise noted in division (H) of section 3319.22 of the Revised Code, standards and requirements for educator licenses, local professional development committees stated, in short, that: It shall be guided by the needs of the educator, students, school, and district and shall be aligned to the applicable professional educator standards adopted by the state board of education. All professional development should lead to new or enhanced knowledge in the classroom and be related to student achievement.

Despite the language in the Ohio Revised Code, Senate Bill 1 and 2 and the Standards for Ohio Educators, I feel that there is still a lack of accountability of whether teacher professional

development was aligned to student achievement and whether it leads to "new or enhanced knowledge" (Educator Evaluator Overview, Ohio Department of Education, 2019). I felt that policymakers often looked for ways to restructure the professional development system to provide professional development that resulted in an improvement in student performance. In his article "Professional Development as a Policy Pathway", Michael S. Knapp suggested that reformers consider the following eight key issues when considering new policies for professional development: investment levels, evidence base, structures, content focus, expertise, incentives and norms, accountability and connection to reform agendas (Knapp, 2003).

In considering the investment levels necessary in improving staff development, financial implementation needs should be considered. According to Heather Hill in her article "Fixing Teacher Professional Development", continuing teacher education continued to be big business in the United States (Hill, 2009), with professional development spending typically ranging between one to six percent of a school district's budget. These figures did not include what teachers spent on their own to fund their professional development nor do they include what states or federal spending provided. In Michael Podgursky's comments on a plan to raise the amount of money spent on teacher professional development, Podgursky said, "little evidence exists that spending on professional development raises student test scores" (Koppich, 2000, p 265-295). While funding is generally necessary for professional development to occur, spending more money without a specific plan may not result in improved student performance.

When considering the evidence base that Knapp suggested, it is necessary to understand the connection between professional learning and student achievement (Knapp, 2003). However, most teachers reported that professional development only reinforced their current teaching practices (Hill, 2009). Teachers report that they are "lukewarm" about their professional learning experience (Hill, 2009). This also appeared to be a difficult area to assess, very few studies of teacher professional development included measures of student learning (Kennedy, 1999). Often these studies relied on teachers self-reporting about the effect of their learning on their students' performance (Cohen, 1990.)

Instructional Coaching

Beginning in the early 1980s, scholars such as Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce, began to emphasize the view that changes in the school organization in training design could solve implementation problems (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Joyce and Showers reflected on how

teachers learned new behaviors and put them into practice through their work with teachers in schools and colleagues at the university level and presented a set of ideas about trainings that were likely to produce results (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Their ideas resulted in a theory of coaching that involved modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback (Joyce and Showers, 1996). Numerous staff development models at that time involved the term "coaching" (Joyce and Showers, 1996). Some districts have defined the role of a coach in their district as an instructional coach. This title can vary extensively, and school districts have needed to determine what type of coach fits their instructional needs (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). For the purpose of this study, instructional coaching is defined as content-based (eg., math coaching or literacy coaching) and intended to support teachers in meeting the goals of district-based instructional reform (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

While coaching was not a new concept, it had a resurgence in education in various models due to the importance being placed on teacher quality. Coaching was one of the fastest-growing forms of professional learning across the United States (Wei, Darling- Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Due to the growth in coaching positions, state-level officials responded by developing endorsements in instructional coaching (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017).

It appears that instructional coaching grew quickly as a preferred form of professional development due in part to new policies directed at funding new programs in impoverished schools. For example, in 1999 the federal government passed the Reading Excellence Act (REA) which granted funds to states to help poverty-stricken schools (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Some schools participating in the REA project used some of their funds to provide coaches to focus on improving reading instruction. (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Also, in January 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act became law, with certain goals being similar to REA (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). The Reading First Initiative (RF) under NCLB also included funding for teachers to improve reading instruction strategies, and the use of coaches was suggested as a way to support teachers with developing reading instruction strategies and thousands of coaches worked in school that participated in RF (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). While other researchers agreed with this concept, coaching in practice looks very different in different environments (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Northwest) developed five categories of coaches: data-oriented, student-oriented, managerial, and two teacher-oriented categories, one working with individual teachers and another that works with groups (Deussen, 2007). All of these roles are meant to have an impact on instruction, regardless of the title. Still, the increasing number of different types of coaches working in schools has further underscored that the many aspects of these position(s) have not been addressed or informed through research (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009).

In Matthew A. Kraft, David Blazar, and Dylan Hogan's article, "The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence", the authors found positive effects on instruction and achievement and considered these effects to compare favorably when contrasted with other school-based interventions (Kraft, Blazer & Hogan, 2018).

While coaching was considered a successful model for effective professional learning, it was the development of the coaches themselves that require further examination. Making the transition from classroom teacher to instructional coach can require acquiring many additional competencies. As Joyce and Showers suggested coaches needed to be able to work with colleagues in a collaborative and nonjudgmental manner (Joyce & Showers, 1996). The concept of building a relationship between coaches and teachers was a topic often mentioned when discussing the success of a coaching program. Coaches needed to develop a climate of trust, collegiality and continuous growth (Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 2010). The success of a relationship was dependent on coaches and teachers spending time together to begin to understand each other. Other researchers added reflection to the list of elements (Hooker, 2013).

The role of an instructional coach can vary from district to district, as previously noted, and the support that coaches needed has been clearly explained by numerous experts in the field. They have pointed to the need for professional learning and support for the coach. Current studies assumed that coaches began their roles with expertise and skill (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2009). Case reports detailed the challenges of coaching, which points to the need for professional learning (Garet, et al., 2009). Jim Knight, an instructional coaching expert, stated that without participating in their professional learning, instructional coaches could be ineffective in their role of supporting teachers (Knight, 2006). He believed that professional

learning for coaches should have two focuses; coaching practices and teaching practices (Knight, 2006). Opportunities for coaches to develop their practice were often scarce in school districts (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010). In response to this issue, some districts turned to structured coaching programs, like Content-Focused Coaching (CFC), which was a literacy coaching program (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010).

Many times, veteran teachers were chosen to be instructional coaches because of their success in the classroom, but success in the classroom did not always translate into success as a coach. Perhaps this was due to the number of roles that coaches are expected to fill. Sharon Walpole and Katrin Blamey suggested that coaches view themselves as assessors, curriculum managers, formative observers, modelers, teachers and trainers (Walpole & Blamey, 2008). Walpole and Blamey explored the link between specific roles and outcomes for teachers and students. They argued that carefully defining the roles was necessary in the development of a successful coaching model. Part of the lack of clarity of characteristics of effective coaches could be due to the multitude of types of coaches. The Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (REL Northwest) released a document analyzing the roles of coaches in five northwestern states and designated 4 categories of coaches: data orientated coaches, student-oriented coaches, managerial coaches and teacher-oriented coaches (Deussen T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. 2007). All of these roles provided support and guidance to teachers through the use of different titles, such as academic coach, instructional coach or reform coach (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Deborah Reed and Sebastian Wren, in their article for the Southwest Educational Development Library (Reed, 2005) discussed the role of coaches through a research lens and concluded that "to date, no evidence-based or data-driven empirical studies of the various factors that can influence the effectiveness of literacy coaches" had been conducted (Reed, 2005).

Steiner and Kowal (2007), among others, have called for more research regarding the interpersonal capabilities that school districts should look for in a potential coach (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). Likewise, Neuman and Cunningham (2009) argued that much work still needs to be done to determine the characteristics of effective coaches. I concur with these viewpoints, and the present study is designed in part to contribute within this space.

Questions

      The literature review provided numerous insights into the role of an instructional coach and the professional learning that coaches needed. It also demonstrated a lack of research available about the desired attributes of an instructional coach. As our district moves forward with writing a job description and selecting instructional coaches, it would be helpful to identify the skills and qualities necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into the role of an instructional coach. Aligning the literature review and research collected to this problem in practice provides a collection of qualities attributed to successful instructional coaches.

Theoretical Framework

      A variety of theoretical frameworks were considered to study the competencies necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into an effective instructional coach. Several are detailed in subsequent paragraphs.

Andragogy

      I considered using Andragogy, a theory of adult learning as a possible theoretical framework for my study because Andragogy theory was based on four main concepts: changes in self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn and orientation to learning (Knowles, 1972). This theory focused on a participant in a learning experience, in this case, a teacher in a coaching cycle. In the end, I felt that the Andragogy theory was not a good fit because it did not examine the attributes of the coach but rather the teacher.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

      I also considered Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, a theory that learning, change and growth occur when learners reflect on experience (Page & Margolis, 2017). Kolb believed that individuals do not learn only because of the learning experience they had but to learn they must reflect (Page & Margolis, 2017). He believed that an experiential learning cycle with 4 elements (concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation) allowed a learner to take action based on their learning (Page & Margolis, 2017). Another level of Kolb's theory was that individuals prefer a certain single different learning style (Page & Margolis, 2017). In the area of instructional coaching, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory would be best used to analyze the changes in a teacher during a coaching cycle, not to focus on the coach as an individual.

Self Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) was also considered as a potential theoretical framework. SDT considers the concepts of the motivation behind people's behaviors (Goldman, 2018). SDT focuses on how people interact with their environment and then internalize their motivations to make decisions on how to behave (Goldman, 2018). This theory would be best used to focus on the teacher's interaction with the coach and their learning environment, not on the qualities and skills of an instructional coach.

Teacher Leadership Theory

There had been very few models developed which apply specifically to teacher leadership (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). A four-factor model of teacher leadership proposed by Angelle and DeHart (2010) could be used a conceptual framework. There were four factors in the framework: Sharing Expertise (SE), Sharing Leadership (SL) Supra-Practitioner (SP) and Principal Selection (PS) (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). SE focused on the perceptions of teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills as well as their willingness to share those skills with colleagues (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). SL detailed the relationship between the principal and the teacher (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). SP explained the teachers' willingness to go beyond their typical roles (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). PS measured the teachers' perceptions that the principal controls and activities teachers participated in what activities (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). This framework could be used to examine a teacher's aptitude toward being a coach but does not focus on the skills and qualities of the coach.

Grounded Theory

If little is known about a topic and few adequate theories exist to explain the topic then grounded theory would be especially useful (Hutchinson, 1986). Grounded theory is an inductive methodology (Cho & Lee, 2014). Grounded theorists have used intensive interviewing as their main method of gathering data, in addition to ethnographic methods and analyses of documents (Charmaz, 2014). They typically chose people to interview whose experiences can shed light on a topic that they want to study (Charmaz, 2014). Intensive interviewing ideally entails the researcher and participants engaging in gently guided conversations that explore participants' perspectives on their personal experience with the topic (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) suggests important elements of intensive interviewing include:

Selection of research participants who have first-hand experience that fits the research

topic.

In-depth exploration of participants' experience and situations

Reliance on open-ended questions

Objective of obtaining detailed responses

Emphasis on understanding the research participants' perspective, meanings, and experience

The practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints and implicit views and accounts of actions (p. 56)

I adhered to these guidelines for the construction of interviews, and to the guidelines and steps regarding data analysis (my processes are described further in the next chapter). My first analytic step, for example, involved implementing particular coding practices, as recommended by Charmaz (2014). My analysis of data involved a systematic coding process of labeling, finding categories, finding relations among categories and generating a theory based on the relationship (Cho & Lee, 2014). Through the coding of data, I aimed to discern the meaning(s) of the data (Cho & Lee, 2014). I went through multiple stages of coding, as recommended by Charmaz (2014). In initial coding, words, lines, segments, phrases were studied and categorized. Focused coding was using the most significant codes to sort through and analyze data (Charmaz, 2014). Axial coding related themes to subthemes by making decisions about the properties of each category and then returning to the original data to develop an emerging analysis. (Charmaz, 2014).

Memo-writing was the next step after coding. Memo-writing allowed me to focus on the codes, compare them and consider relationships between them (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling was the gathering of pertinent data to develop your emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014). There are two approaches to GT, constructivist and objectivist. Constructivists theorize based on the data but acknowledge that the resulting theory was an interpretation (Charmaz, 2014). Objectivists conceptualized the data without interpreting it, they focused on variable concepts (Charmaz, 2014). Symbolic interactionism is the theoretical perspective in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014), symbolic interactionist was the perspective for viewing the social realities (p 262). Symbolic interactionist encouraged researchers to look at how people accomplish their activities. (Charmaz, 2014). I adopted a symbolic interaction is perspective for this research. Grounded theory tools such as memo-writing and coding helped to

develop theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2014). The final step in grounded theory was the development of a theoretical framework.

Grounded Theory was chosen for the theoretical framework for this research, primarily because I saw it as a research design that would help me develop a general theory grounded in the views of the participants (Creswell, 2018). I felt that grounded theory's use of interviews with participants, in this case coaches and teachers was a more authentic method of capturing the skills and qualities of an instructional coach. In addition, many of the documents that were gathered such as interview questions, job descriptions and job performance tools were critical in helping me better understand the important aspects of the role of an instructional coach.

Summary

Reviewing the literature and the lack of an appropriate theoretical framework helped to determine the use of grounded theory. The research question: What skills and qualities are necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into an instructional coach? was an appropriate fit for grounded theory because the framework of coding and analysis helped me to determine themes that I then articulated into skills and qualities.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Question

The goal of my study was to determine which particular skills and qualities appeared to be necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into the role of a successful instructional coach. My methodology included surveys and interviews with current coaches considered successful by their administrators, as well as with their administrators and the teachers that they coached. It was also my plan to include an analysis of the job descriptions used by the school district and the evaluation tools used by the administrators to evaluate the coaches' skills and qualities.

Research Design

Grounded Theory involved using many stages of data collection and which helped me ascertain relationships between categories of data. Initially, surveys were the primary data collection approach that was used. To gather data, a survey was sent to teachers (Appendix A and B) that included questions designed to capture the teachers', administrators' and coaches' backgrounds and experiences with instructional coaching. This data was then coded and initial subthemes were developed. Next, I conducted involved, intensive interviews as a gently guided, conversation that explored the interviewees' perspective on the topic of coaching (Charmaz, 2018). The interviews I conducted (see Appendix C and D) contained broad open-ended questions that invited conversation and opportunities to relate their experiences. The questions I constructed for the survey and the interviews were developed using questions and guidance from *Constructing Grounded Research* by Kathy Charmaz (2014). The questions were designated into three categories: initial open-ended questions, intermediate questions, and ending questions. I intended to develop questions were that would encourage elaboration. Following the gathering from the interviews, I was better able to code the data in two separate phases, initial coding and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). I intended to request the job description and evaluation tools from each administrator but in communication with the Director of Elementary Curriculum, the documents were shared with me.

The literature did not direct the theory but provided support as patterns and themes were developed from the data (Creswell, 2018). In this process, I learned to generate a cogent theory that helped facilitate the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2018). Throughout the process of researching, I continually wrote memos that helped me to analyze data and develop/refine codes (Charmaz, 2014). The final phase helped me construct a framework or theory through the

analyses of my data (Charmaz, 2014). I found that utilizing GT allowed me to use the data to drive my conclusions.

Research Setting and Sample

The location for interviewing the coaches, teachers and administrators took place in a suburban school district in Columbus, Ohio. The school district was considered to be an upper-middle-class school district. There were three elementary coaches, one at each of the three elementary schools. My research design included an initial electronic survey with the teachers and coaches. I asked the coaches to send the survey to the teachers who they coach, along with an introduction and explanation of the study, the consent form, the purpose and the fact that approval had been granted by their superintendent. The electronic surveys were anonymous; I didn't collect participants' names or email addresses. Other than the amount of teaching experience and the amount of times that they had participated in a coaching cycle, there were no identifiable characteristics. There were more than twenty teachers in each of the three buildings and 13 teachers completed the electronic survey. Then follow up interviews were scheduled and conducted with all three coaches. In addition, follow up interviews were scheduled and conducted with three classroom teachers. The coaches asked if any teachers were interested in participating in the survey and were chosen based on interest and availability. A request was also made to a central office administrator to share evaluation tools and job descriptions. The electronic administrator surveys were anonymous; with these participants as well, I did not collect names or email addresses. Other than the amount of administrative experience and amount of time in the district, there were no identifiable characteristics. Of the seven administrators, four completed the survey. The interviews and surveys were then analyzed through the use of coding to determine common themes.

Access to Participants

Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval was the first step before contacting districts. The next step was to contact the Superintendent to explain the project and share the IRB documentation. After receiving permission from the Superintendent, the initial electronic surveys (Appendix A) were sent to teachers, coaches and administrators. Follow up interviews were then scheduled with the coaches and teachers.

Methods for Establishing a Researcher – Participant Working Relationship

I was familiar with the coaches who participated in this research study through a professional organization, but I did not have a prior relationship with any of the teachers or administrators who participated. Hatch (2002) stated that when researchers ask others to participate in their studies at any level, they owe them respect, concern and consideration to build a working relationship. To ensure these needs were met, researchers need to have the objectives of the research clearly stated so they understand their responsibilities and the scope of the project (Hatch, 2002). All administrators and teachers in the three buildings were sent an email outlining my interest in the research topic and explained why I chose to focus on the role of instructional coaches and their specific skills and qualities. In addition, I explained how participants would be involved in the study through their participation in the survey attached to the email and that their perspectives and experiences would be included in my research.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

Creswell (2014) addressed wherein the process of research, ethical issues can occur. Prior to conducting the study, he stated that approval through an institutional review board (IRB) and permission from the site and participants must be granted. Accordingly, researchers need to file an application with the IRB that contains procedures and information about participants to allow the committee to consider the extent to which you placed participants at risk (Creswell, 2014). As such, permission to conduct the research study was submitted to and approved by Miami University's IRB committee. Next the site for research was chosen because of its accessibility to me and the fact that they had an established coaching program. Then, the superintendent was contacted through email to gain permission to use the school district as a site for research.

Justification for Data Collected

The research question was developed to identify the specific qualities and skills of a successful instructional coach. Surveys and interviews were the two main forms of data collection used for this research. Surveys were chosen as a form of data collection because of the ease of distributing, collecting and analyzing information. Surveys allowed for the ability to collect information anonymously. The flexibility of completing a survey potentially meant that more teachers and administrators could participate. Interviews were chosen specifically to gain an understanding of coaches' skills and qualities through the participant's experiences with a coach. Interviews uncovered the meaning structures that participants used to organize their

experiences and make sense of the world (Hatch, 2002). Interviews also provided access to events and experiences that were not observed by researchers (Hatch, 2002).

Surveys

Teachers and administrators completed a survey in the fall of 2019. Survey items for teachers focused on background information (teacher experience in the district and overall, and amount of experience with a coach). Two Likert scale questions designed to determine the success of their experience with a coach and its effect on their practice. In addition, the coaches responded to the open-ended question, "What skills and characteristics do you feel that your coach has that has helped to make coaching a positive experience?"

Survey items for the administrators focused on background information (administrator experience in the district and overall and amount of experience with a coach), One scale question asked administrators to rate their experience with a coach on a scale of one to five. Also the administrator survey asked, "Would you consider your coach to be successful based on the job description for this position?" The final questions asked administrators to respond to a prompt asking them to share details about the positive impact that the coach had in the building and to answer the following question, "What skills and qualities were necessary for the coach to have that impact?"

Interviews

Coaches and teachers participated in interviews during their school day in their school building in November of 2019. The teacher's interview was designed to allow teachers to share about their experiences with their instructional coach and to refer to specific skills and qualities of the coach. The nine questions were also developed based on examples of Grounded Theory questions from Kathy Charmaz's book, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, and were aimed to allow teachers to talk about the impact of the coach on their practice. The coaches' interview contained eleven questions designed for the coach to provide a detailed response about their ability to be an instructional coach and their role in their building. The questions were conversational and a question was deleted if a participant responded to future questions in an answer. If a participant did not address the question specifically in their answer, the question was repeated or restated.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected was analyzed through the use of coding. Conducting Grounded Theory coding involved the initial phase and the selective phase. The initial phase involved naming each

word, line or segment and the selective phase involved using the most significant codes to analyze the data (Charmaz, 2018). In this case, each question was recorded into a separate spreadsheet. Each participant's answer was recorded electronically and copied and pasted from the transcript into a spreadsheet and label with a letter, for example, Teacher A. After all the answers for a particular answer was recorded on the spreadsheet, then each answer was reread for clarity and corrected if words were misunderstood by the transcription service. Once the answers were pasted in the spreadsheet, the answers were reread multiple times and analyzed for words and phrases that were specific to the question that was asked and common words and phrases between the participants' answers. The common words and phrases were highlighted within each answer and then recorded in the spreadsheet. If a word or phrase was used more than once, the amount was listed next to the word or phrase in the spreadsheet. With each succeeding question, the highlighted words and phrases were transferred into the next spreadsheet for commonalities to be recorded. Finally, the list of words and phrases with the amounts were calculated for each interview and survey. Once the words and phrases were calculated, then they were analyzed for common themes, for example, similar words or phrases were grouped into categories. As described near the end of chapter 2, I adhered to processes and guidelines related to the grounded theoretical analysis of data.

Using Grounded Theory also involved the use of memo-writing to stop and analyze data, codes, and ideas throughout the data collection period (Charmaz, 2018). The memos allowed for a space to record references to the skills and qualities of coaches. The memos were written after each group of surveys and interviews took place. The memos contained reflections on the answers from the interviews, specifically the demeanor and emotion of the participants. The memos were written to also reflect my impressions of the interactions with the participants. After completing each memo, I reread the previous memo to make connections between each research experience.

Symbolic interactionism was considered an initial step in the development of theory in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2018). Symbolic interactionism was a process of developing a perspective that focused on how participants engaged in activities (Charmaz, 2018). Symbolic interactionism created an opportunity for me to pause and refocus on the data in relation to the environment. Finally, GT was used to theorize how meanings, actions and social structures were constructed (Charmaz, 2018).

Timeframe

        The timeframe for the study involved sending the initial survey out in late September 2019. Then the follow-up interviews took place in November with the teachers and coaches. The coding and analysis of the data occurred in January and February 2020. The timeframe for the interviews was chosen based on the timing of the approval of the IRB and at the suggestion of the coaches. The coaches based their decision on the schedule of the building, specifically to not interfere with testing, parent-teacher conferences, progress reports and other events in the life of the schools. Choosing the best possible timeframe was crucial to this research to allow for access to the teachers and coaches.

Design Limitations

        One limitation could be the difficulty in obtaining access to evaluation tools and job descriptions. A job description had the potential of providing additional information about what the school district valued in the role of a coach. Job descriptions can include specific requirements, characteristics, skills and/or qualities. Job descriptions were not easily accessible because they were often developed at the central office level. While, I had the approval of the school district's central office, including the superintendent, I did not have a relationship with the human resources department which made obtaining the job description difficult.

        Another contributing factor for the limitation of the job description was the possible inadequacy of the job description. I had concerns that the school district did not write a job description specific to the role of the coach, but rather just listed it as a teacher on special assignment. Teacher on special assignment was the term often used by a school district for a teacher that does not have a classroom or group of children that they were directly responsible for. A teacher on special assignment was a general description that can be used for a teaching position that does not have a defined role. If the district wrote a job description for a teacher on special assignment, then having the job description would not provide any additional insight into what the school district wants in terms of qualities and of skills.

        Another possible limitation was my ability to obtain access to the district's tool for evaluating a coach. I considered that available evaluation tools could be very useful in having an insight into the district's priorities. A limitation would be if the evaluation was not specific to the role of the coach. Teachers on special assignments were not typically evaluated in the same

manner as classroom teachers because they do not have classroom assignments. Instead, districts determined their evaluation tools to fit the needs of the district or were specific to the position. In my district, a narrative was used and the content was determined by the teacher on special assignment and their superior.

A third limitation could have been the scheduling of the interviews with the teachers and coaches and the participation in surveys. Interviews required an interrupted amount of time to allow the teachers to focus on the questions and their answers and elementary teachers' schedules allow for little flexibility in their day. Coaches also had difficulty finding time in their schedules because their time was often determined by the schedule of the teachers. Having access to the coaches and teachers was vital to completing the interviews. Participation in surveys was important and again, finding the time and motivation to complete an optional survey was a concern. The interviews and surveys provide the majority of the evidence for this research.

Delimitations

A delimitation could have been the choice of the school district. Using just one district limited the ability to verify that the conclusions were not limited to the specific district but instead could project the findings as general conclusions of all coaches. The school district was an upper-middle-class suburban school district. Using this district did not allow for the fact that the economic level of the district could have affected on the role of the coach. The role of the coach was often developed based on the needs of the district. If the needs of districts were determined by the economic impact of their community, it can affect the role of the coach and the skills and qualities necessary to be a coach in the district.

Another delimitation was the fact that there were only three coaches used for the interviews. Using a small sample did not allow for a large amount of information especially if there was an outlier whose data was unable to be used. In terms of documents, other than the job descriptions and evaluation tools, there were very few other options for documents relating to the skills and qualities of a successful coach.

Chapter 4 Research Findings

Introduction

In this qualitative study I examined the following research question:

RQ1: "What skills and qualities are necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into an instructional coach?"

I pursued this question in hopes of identifying the skills and qualities that successful coaches possess so that a profile of potential coaches could be developed. My research study was designed to identify these skills and qualities through surveys and interviews with successful instructional coaches, their teachers and their administrators. Three instructional coaches, four administrators and 13 teachers responded to questions in interviews and surveys that were designed to accentuate specific skills and qualities. After reading the transcripts from the interviews and answers from the surveys, I identified phrases that pertained to skills and qualities of an instructional coach. I then classified these phrases into subthemes that identified a specific skill or quality. After all the coding was complete, there were 36 subthemes. Then, I identified the subthemes as a skill or quality, using the definition that a skill can be referred to as a particular ability and be gained through experience and a quality was a distinctive attribute or characteristic. Some of the subthemes did not fit into either category, specifically, teaching experience, curriculum knowledge, availability and having an interest in working with teachers. Table 1 represents the subthemes sorted into qualities, skills and other characteristics. I coded each set of data separately to be able to see the subthemes that were important to each stakeholder (administrator, teacher and coach). The differences between stakeholders will discussed further in chapter five.

Table 1: *Subthemes Listed as Skill, Quality or Outlier*

Skills	Qualities	Other Characteristics
Problem Solving	Energetic	Curriculum Knowledge
Communication	Positive Attitude	Experience
Classroom Assistance	Encouraging	Availability
Guidance	Patience	Interest in Working with Adults
Organization	Supportive	
Curriculum Development	Collaborative	
Forward Thinking	Learner Mentality	
Relationship Building	Passionate	
Reliability	Proactive	
Modeling	Approachable	
Leadership	Jovial	
Observation	Valuing Others	
Feedback	Reflective	
Flexible	Honesty	
Trust Building	Resilient	
High Expectations		

Some of the subthemes represented part of a skill set. For example, "listening" was mentioned several times in terms of listening as part of a conversation, and accordingly listening was coded as "communication skills". "Interpersonal skills" and "valuing others" were both placed in the relationship building subtheme because both were necessary to build relationships. Other subthemes were easily developed because the specific theme was used in a phrase, for example, "flexibility" was used as a subtheme because the word "flexible" was used in phrases. Examples of phrases that were classified into subthemes were represented below in Table 2.

Table 2: *Examples of Phrases Used for Coding*

Skill, Quality or Outlier	Example
Relationship Building Skill	"to be successful, I think you need to build relationships with teachers first, to honor their craft"
Supportive Quality	"if you are not a classroom teacher, your job is to be supporting the classroom teacher. I just tried to live that with everything I do. "
Communication Skills	"I think I'm a good listener. I hear what they say, and I might not have a solution immediately, but if I sit on it, I normally come up with something that's doable. And it might not be that week but a month later I might come back and be like, hey remember when you said this? How about we try this?"
Curriculum Knowledge	"A strong knowledge base in both the specific subject as well as background in the curricular resources we are utilizing as a district."
Learner Quality	"person who is willing to actually learn, constantly learn and believe that they don't know it all, because that can be a barrier for someone coming in thinking they have nothing to learn. "

Administrators Survey

I began by coding 38 key phrases from the administrator's survey responses to two questions into 19 distinct categories. The four administrators responded to the following two prompts:

1. Please share the positive impact that your coach has had in your building.

2. What skills were necessary for the coach to have that positive impact?

Their responses were then analyzed for key phrases that pertain to skills and qualities of the instructional coach in the building. To ensure each participant's identity was protected, I used a letter to represent each participant: Admin A, Admin B, Admin C and Admin D. In addition to the short response questions listed above, the administrators were asked about their background and their experience with an instructional coach in their building and their perception of the success of the coach in their building. Despite the fact that the administrators' experience level, amount of time in district and amount of time working with an instructional coach vary, they all were very positive about their experiences with their instructional coaches and their belief that the coaches were successful in their roles. Table 3 represents a profile of the four administrators.

Table 3: *Administrator Profile*

Administrator	Administrative Experience	Administrative Years in District	Time spent Working with an Instructional Coach	On a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being positive and 1 being negative, how would rate your experiences with being part of a coaching process in your building?	Would you consider your coach to be successful based on the job description for this position?
Administrator A	16 – 20 years	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	5	Yes
Administrator B	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	5	Yes
Administrator C	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	5	Yes
Administrator D	6 – 10 years	0 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	5	Yes

Table 4 represents the total number of phrases coded in each category. A total of 38 phrases were coded from the administrator surveys. The administrators mentioned many specific skills and qualities but many of them pertained to relationship building and communication. When administrators commented on relationship skills it was regard to how the relationship skills help to further the coaches' support with teachers.

Administrator C (personal communication, November 25, 2019) explained:

She has worked hard at building relationships so she can get into classrooms for modeling, co-teaching and feedback. She creates and shares amazing resources. She excels at supporting teachers, so they are able to successfully implement this new curriculum and beyond.

Administrator B (personal communication, November 25, 2019) added:

A strong knowledge base in both the specific subject as well as background in the curricular resources we are utilizing as a district. While this was important, the interpersonal skills needed to work hand in hand with teachers in a collaborative way was paramount. To be successful, coaches have to instill trust with teachers as well as work collaboratively with support staff and the school's administrative.

Administrator D (personal communication, November 25, 2019) added:

The skills necessary for the coach to have a positive impact are strong interpersonal skills, excellent communication skills, flexibility, high expectations but also high willingness to support, expertise in their content area (and/or recent training/experiences to support them in their role), and ability to build rapport/respect from staff.

Table 4: *Administrator Phrases Coded Totals*

Categories	Total
Relationship Building Skill (Valuing Others)	8
Communication Skills	5
Leadership Skills	3
Learner Mentality	2
Flexible	2
Observation Skills	2
Collaborative Skill	2
Curriculum Knowledge	2
Curriculum Development Skill	2
Guidance Skill	2
Organization Skill	2
Positive Attitude	1
Modeling Skill	1
Experience	1
Supportive Quality	1
Feedback Skill	1
Trust Building Skill	1
High Expectations Skill	1

Teacher Survey

The survey was sent by the coaches to the certified teachers at all three buildings and thirteen teachers responded to the anonymous survey. The request to complete the survey came from their coach, but there was no incentive to complete. Teachers received surveys frequently because it was a format that school districts used to gather individual responses from their staff without having to meet with them in person and interrupt their school day. The survey asked about their teaching experience, the amount of time spent in the district and the number of times that they had been a part of a coaching experience. To ensure each participant's identity was protected I used a letter to represent each participant (Teachers A-M). With the exception of

Teacher L who rated her experience as a four out of five, all of the teachers were very positive about their experiences with coaching by rating their experiences as a five out of five. All but two teachers, Teacher L and Teacher D, rated the impact of coaching on their teaching practice as positive by rating it as a five out of five. Teacher L and Teacher D rated the impact on their teaching practice as a four out of five. Table 5 represents the teachers' experiences as part of a coaching experience and a profile of their teaching career.

Table 5: *Survey Teacher Profile*

Teacher	What is your teaching experience?	How long have you been teaching in the district?	How many times have you been part of a coaching experience?	On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being positive and 1 being negative, how would you rate your experiences with being part of a coaching experience?	On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being positive and 1 being negative, what type of effect did coaching have on your teaching practice?
Teacher A	11 – 15 years	6 – 10 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher B	21 years +	16 – 20 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher C	21 years +	16 – 20 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher D	16 – 20 years	16 – 20 years	1 – 5 times	5	4
Teacher E	21 years +	21 years +	21 + times	5	5
Teacher F	6 – 10 years	0 – 5 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher G	6 – 10 years	0 – 5 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher H	6 – 10 years	0 – 5 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher I	11 – 15 years	11 – 15 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher J	21 years +	21 years +	21 + times	5	5
Teacher K	0 – 5 years	0 – 5 years	21 + times	5	5
Teacher L	21 years +	16 – 20 years	21 + times	4	4
Teacher M	11 – 15 years	0 – 5 years	1 – 5 times	5	5

The teachers also responded to a short answer question: What skills and characteristics do you feel that your coach has that helped to make coaching a positive experience? A total of 47 phrases were coded from the Teacher Surveys. Many of the teachers' responses centered around knowledge of the curriculum or curriculum development. Table 6 represents the categories that were coded from the survey question.

Teacher B (personal communication, October 29, 2019) explained:

She is very well organized, energetic, participates in classroom activities and develops meaningful lessons. She is very insightful in looking down the road.

Teacher G (personal communication, October 30, 2019) added:

She is always available, knows our curriculum very well, has a ton of experience, will model how to effectively teach within the classroom, helps pull supplies to help encourage our time to work together.

Teacher H (personal communication, October 30, 2019) continued:

Her knowledge of strategies and resources is amazing and it's so helpful to have another colleague to bounce ideas off of. It is comforting to know that we are not in the classroom alone when we have the amazing coach that we do. While it's helpful to bounce ideas off of colleagues that are teaching the same lessons, she has a different understanding and knows the curriculum so well that she can help us see the big picture and where our students are headed in the following years.

Table 6: *Teacher Survey Phrases Coded Totals*

Categories	Total
Curriculum Knowledge Skill	6
Curriculum Development Skill	5
Classroom Assistance Skill	4
Problem Solving Skill	4
Communication Skill	3
Guidance Skill	3
Relationship Building Skill	3
Supportive Quality	3
Energetic Quality	3
Organizational Skill	2
Forward Thinking Skill	2
Positive Attitude Skill	2
Reliability Skill	1
Encouraging Quality	1
Patience Quality	1
Collaborative Quality	1
Availability Skill	1
Modeling Skill	1
Experience	1

Teacher Interviews

In addition to the teacher survey, three teachers volunteered to participate in a 30 - minute interview. To ensure each participant's identity was protected, I used a letter to represent each participant: Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C. The interview allowed for a more detailed description of the role of the coach from the teachers' perspective. The questions were focused on the experiences of the teachers with the coach and the impact that coaching had on their classroom practice and their professional learning. The questions that were used in the interview are listed below:

1. Within your professional life, how do you think you have changed as a teacher since your experiences with the instructional coach?

2. What surprised you about your interactions with the instructional coach?

3. How have your thoughts and feelings about instructional coaching changed since you have worked with an instructional coach?

4. What skills do you think are needed to be an instructional coach?

5. Describe the most important lessons you have learned from your interactions with the instructional coach?

6. What advice would you give to someone that wants to be an instructional coach?

A total of 42 phrases were coded from the teacher interviews. Similar to the teacher survey question, the teacher interviews also revealed a focus on the knowledge of the content but also an appreciation for more relationship building qualities. Table 7 represents the categories that were coded from the interview questions.

Teacher A (personal communication, October 29, 2019) shared:

Listen to your teachers. All of them. Even the ones that maybe, I don't know, I feel like there's teachers that get insecure or don't feel like they want to be coached and so, to make sure that you have their back and are with them helping them. Once you, I feel like, win them over, then you're able to like take them one step. You know what I mean? Like it's kind of like with teachers, they're, they don't care what you know, until they know that you care kind of thing.

Teacher B (personal communication, October 29, 2019) added:

Like I think it's nice to feel that we're not on our own. We're not left alone to figure everything out, because the knowledge that she gives us.

Teacher A (personal communication, October 29, 2019) also explained:

I feel like she's definitely on my team supporting me. I even had a few parent emails, questions about like, am I challenging their kids enough or how to support parents during conferences.

Teacher B (personal communication, October 29, 2019) also shared:

Whenever I feel like I'm lacking, sometimes she's just my cheerleader. Sometimes she'll pull out the data and she'll say, but look at the data. You're doing fine. You know what I mean? Like sometimes you need that reminder. And when I feel like I'm floundering,

she's on the outside looking in. When you're in it all day every day, you sometimes feel

defeated, and just her sometimes saying, "We're fine. We're doing okay," is enough to.

The teachers' answers also showed a need for leadership skills, for example being visionary and being able to be forward thinking.

Teacher C (personal communication, October 29, 2019) shared:

I think that you need to have a vision of what coaching looks like, of where you see the

role, how you perceive the role. I think you need to have a good understanding of how

others perceive the role, and what the expectation is set before you. I think knowing that

not everyone's going to want your help and that, that's okay. And, I just....taking a step

back and looking at the big picture, but again, the meeting people where they are.

The teachers' comments on the survey matched the comments in the interviews in terms of the importance of having curriculum knowledge. Their comments reflected that the coaches' curriculum knowledge was imperative for their own professional learning as well as support for families.

Teacher C (personal communication, October 29, 2019) explained:

Well, she has just taught me so much just about Math in general. I am very much a

literacy person, and so math especially, the way that we're teaching kids these days.... It's

so different, but she's taught me just so much about math. She's been able to.... Now I can

tell you why a student, a child is not, learning how to read, and drill it down and, analyze

that data. But to be able to look at math that way, has just been incredible. She's taught

me so much.

Teacher A (personal communication, October 29, 2019) added:

She's also able to kind of help me provide resources for families that need support there

too.

Table 7: *Teacher Interview Phrases Totals*

Categories	Total
Supportive Quality	6
Forward Thinking Skill (visionary)	4
Curriculum Knowledge Skill	4
Flexible Skill	3
Reflective Quality	3
Collaborative Quality	2
Organization Skill	2
Classroom Assistance Skill	*2*
Proactive Skill	2
Approachable Quality	1
High Expectations	1
Leadership Skill (implementing change)	1
Patience Quality	1
Encouraging Quality	1
Modeling Skill	1
Availability Skill	1
Positive Attitude Quality	1
Reliability Skill	1
Relationship Building (value others) Skill	1
Curriculum Development Skill	1
Guidance Skill	1
Communication Skills	1
Problem Solving Skills	1

Coaches' Interviews

Three elementary instructional coaches that were considered successful by their teachers and administrators were interviewed and asked a total of seven questions to gain insight into their skills and qualities as an instructional coach. To ensure each participant's identity was protected

I used a letter to represent each participant: Coach A, Coach B and Coach C. The questions that were asked of the coaches are listed below:

1. Tell me about your journey to become an instructional coach.
2. Within your professional life, how do you think you have changed since becoming an instructional coach?
3. What surprised you about being an instructional coach?
4. What makes you a successful instructional coach?
5. If you went back into the classroom now, how would you be a different teacher than you were before becoming an instructional coach?
6. What do you think your teachers would say about you and the skills that you have?
7. What else do you want me to know about becoming a coach?

A total of 75 phrases were coded from the coaches' interviews. The coaches referred to the need to possess a learner mentality to be a successful coach. They also felt strongly about the importance of relationship building skills in a coach. Table 8 represents the categories that were coded from the coach interview questions.

Coach A (personal communication, November 25, 2019) shared some thoughts about being a learner:

I have done a lot more reading, as far as research. I don't know why this was missed on me when I was in the classroom, maybe because in the classroom I was responsible for everything and didn't have the luxury of focusing on one content area. So when I shifted into instructional coaching, I started devouring professional texts and really researching online and really wanted to do a lot of professional development.

Coach A (personal communication, November 25, 2019) added more thoughts about being a learner as a coach:

But for a person being hired, I would want a person who is very flexible in their thinking, a person who is willing to actually learn, constantly learn and believe that they don't know it all, because that can be a barrier for someone coming in thinking they have nothing to learn.

Coach C (personal communication, November 25, 2019) shared thoughts on how to build relationship with teachers:

I definitely think having that foundational relationship with them has been helpful. It was easy when I started coaching with first grade, because I had worked with the team for 11 years, but with kindergarten I hadn't. They had just seen me as a classroom teacher and had their own opinions of me. So I guess I just had to start off by trying to do as much as I could to help them do their jobs. So to make things as easy as I can. Just to help build that relationship so that they trusted me.

Coach A (personal communication, November 25, 2019) added suggestions for developing a relationship with teachers:

Being approachable, great relationships, laughing and joking. Making sure colleagues feel comfortable and see you as a peer, not as someone that's going to run and tattle. I think that's critical, so that you can even get in the door to start to share.

Coach B (personal communication, November 25, 2019) explained how she has built relationships:

I think I'm always around. I think that one advantage I have over other instructional coaches is I only work with one building, and I think that's a big part of being successful because they see me often. Relationships are the most important piece. I know they value and respect because they'll say it all the times at meetings and, "Thank you so much for doing this for us." But it's the little things behind the scenes that you do, like the positive notes you're writing to teachers or sometimes I do lottery tickets, trying to keep morale up, feeling personal conversations, like knowing what people's kids are doing, that you have more than just the school relationship but also the care for them as a person or as a family or like your mom just had surgery. How is she doing? Knowing enough about each of them to have those other conversations that are unrelated to math that build rapport and trust.

Table 8: *Coach Interview Phrases Totals*

Categories	Total
Learner Quality	9
Relationship Building Skill	7
Communication Skill	6
Supportive Quality	6
Reflective Quality	5
Leadership Skill	4
Interest in Working with Teachers	4
Encouraging Quality	3
Proactive Quality	3
Approachable Quality	3
Organization Skill	2
Modeling Skill	2
Trust Building Skill	2
Passionate Quality	2
Jovial Quality	2
Honesty	2
Forward Thinking	1
Reliability	1
Availability	1
Experience	1
Collaborative Quality	1
Observation Skill	1
Flexible Quality	1
High Expectations Quality	1
Resilient	1

Compilation of Results

199 key phrases were identified in the surveys and interviews and coded the phrases into 36 subthemes. The subthemes and totals are presented in Table 9. There were 5 subthemes that totaled 37% of the total subthemes coded: Relationship Skills, Supportive Quality, Communication Skills, Curriculum Knowledge and Learner Quality. While these were the five highest - ranking subthemes across the administrator surveys, the teacher surveys and interviews and the coaches' interviews, these subthemes do not match the five highest - ranking subthemes from each individual group of stakeholders. Table 10 represents the five highest - ranking subthemes from administrators, coaches and teachers (this combines the teacher interviews and surveys). There were no subthemes that appeared in all three stakeholder lists. However, five subthemes appeared in in lists of two stakeholders: Relationship Building Skill, Communication Skill, Curriculum Development Skill, Curriculum Knowledge Skill, Supportive Quality.

Table 9: *Subthemes Totals*

Relationship Skills	19
Supportive Quality	16
Communication Skills	15
Curriculum Knowledge	12
Learner Quality	11
Curriculum Development Skill	8
Leadership Skill	8
Reflective Quality	8
Problem Solving Skill	7
Organization Skill	7
Forward Thinking	7
Classroom Assistance Skill	6
Collaborative Quality	6
Flexible Skill	6
Guidance Skill	6
Modeling Skill	5
Encouraging Quality	5
Proactive Quality	5

Positive Attitude Quality	4
Approachable Quality	4
Interest in Working with Teachers	4

Table 10: *Subthemes Totals continued*

Energetic Quality	3
Reliability Quality	3
Availability Quality	3
Experience	3
Observation Skill	3
Trust Building Skill	3
High Expectations Quality	3
Valuing Others Quality	3
Patience Quality	2
Passionate Quality	2
Jovial Quality	2
Honesty Quality	2
Feedback Skill	1
Resilient	1

Table 11: *Top Five Highest Ranking Themes from Stakeholder Groups*

Administrator	Code	Teacher	Code	Coach	Code
8	Relationship Building Skill	10	Curriculum Knowledge Skill	9	Learner Quality
5	Communication Skill	8	Supportive Quality	7	Relationship Building Skill
3	Leadership Skill	6	Forward Thinking Quality	6	Communication Skill
2	Curriculum Development Skill	6	Classroom Assistance Skill	6	Supportive Quality
2	Curriculum Knowledge Skill	6	Curriculum Development	5	Reflective Quality

After reviewing the top five categories from each stakeholder, the subthemes were grouped into 4 larger themes: Relationship Skills and Qualities, Skills Related to Curriculum, Leadership Skills and Qualities, and Personal Qualities that represented each group's top five subthemes. Grouping the subthemes required considering the subthemes and the comments used to develop the subtheme to understand the intent of the stakeholder. This was done to ensure that the subthemes and larger themes were represented accurately. These themes were presented in Table 11 with the total number of times the subthemes appear in the surveys and interviews. Table 12 illustrates the total number of times the themes appeared in the surveys and interviews.

Table 12: Themes and Subthemes

Relationship Skills and Qualities	Totals	Skills Related to Curriculum	Totals	Leadership Skills and Qualities	Totals	Personal Qualities	Totals
Relationship Building Skills	22	Curriculum Knowledge	12	Reflective	8	Supportive	16
Communication Skills	15	Curriculum Development Skill	8	Overall Leadership Skills	8	Learner Mentality	11
Collaborative	6	Classroom Skills	6	Organization Skills	7	Flexible	6
Approachable	4	Teaching Experience	3	Forward Thinking	7	Encouraging	5
Ability to Build Trust	3			Problem Solving Skills	7	Positive Attitude	4
Availability	3			Guidance	6	Energetic	3
				Modeling	5	Reliable	3
				Proactive	5	Patient	2
				Interest in Working with Adults (Teachers)	4	Passionate	2
				High Expectations	3	Jovial	2
				Observation Skills	3	Honest	2
				Ability to Guide Others	2	Resilient	1
				Feedback Skills	1		

Table 13: *Themes and Totals*

Themes	Total
Leadership Skills and Qualities	66
Personal Qualities	57
Relationship Skills and Qualities	56
Skills Related to Curriculum	29

Job Description and Evaluation Tool

A job description and evaluation tool that is used with the instructional coaches was requested. The Director of Elementary Education stated that the Danielson Evaluation Form was used to evaluate the coaches, but that it was not specific to the role of a coach. After reviewing the form, the general topics (planning and preparation, school environments, delivery of services, and professional responsibilities) listed were not specific enough to be used as part of this research. After reviewing *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice* by Charlotte Danielson and Thomas L. McGreal, I was unable to find the specific form that the school district used. The intent of obtaining the evaluation form that the district used was to see what the district valued in terms of an instructional coach. Also, because the Director stated that the form was not specific to the role of the coach, I chose not to use it. The Director also shared that he did not recall having a specific job description for the role of instructional coach but shared a job posting for a similar position. I had planned to use the job description and evaluation tool with the interviews as part of the theoretical sampling to further define my categories. Since it was not specific to position that the teachers, coaches and administrators were discussing in the interviews and surveys, it was not used as a part of this research.

Chapter 5 Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

In the data analysis of my explorative qualitative study, I investigated what skills and qualities were necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into an instructional coach. My initial data analysis revealed thirty-four subthemes. Based on the research, I ultimately grouped these subthemes into four distinct themes: relationship building skills, skills related to curriculum, leadership skills and qualities and personal qualities. Within the relationship building skills theme were the following six subthemes: relationship building skills, communication skills, collaborative skills, approachability, ability to build trust, and availability. Within skills related to curriculum theme were the following four subthemes: curriculum knowledge, curriculum development skills, classroom skills and teaching experience. Within leadership skills and qualities theme were the following twelve subthemes: reflective ability, overall leaderships skills, organization skills, forward thinking skill, problems solving skills, modeling, proactive and interest in working with adults, high expectations, observation skills, ability to guide others and feedback skills. Within the personal qualities theme were the following twelve subthemes: supportive, learner mentality, flexible, encouraging, positive attitude, energetic, reliable, patient, passionate, jovial, honest and resilient. The coaches interviewed in this study either described/demonstrated these skills and qualities through examples shared during their interviews or these skills and qualities were attributed to them by teachers and/or administrators who work with them through interviews and surveys.

Summary of Findings

The themes identified by this research study relating to the specific skills and qualities that instructional coaches possess which presumably facilitate their success in their work with teachers and administrators. The subthemes identified by this study can be defined as either skills or qualities. For this study, a skill could be learned by a teacher to aid in the transition to an instructional coach and a quality was already within a teacher's personality and can be further developed as necessary.

The first theme that was identified was relationship skills and qualities. The participants in this study all addressed the need for the ability to build relationships and trust, communicate and collaborate with others, as well the need to be approachable and available to teachers and administrators. Administrators included four of the six subthemes in the relationship skills and qualities theme: relationship building skills, communication skills, collaborative skills and trust

building skills. Administrators considered the ability to build relationships and communicate to be the two most important skills for an instructional coach. The majority of the skills and qualities that administrators valued were equally from the relationship skills and qualities theme and leadership skills and qualities theme. Administrators discussed the importance of having a relationship with teachers prior to having a successful coaching experience.

Coaches also believed in the value of relationships with relationship building skills and communications skills as the second and third highest subthemes, but overall as a theme it was not considered a priority. Coaches shared the need for establishing a relationship before beginning a coaching cycle, but they talked at length about the need for a coach to constantly find ways to expand develop their knowledge of a wealth of instructional practices and theories.

While teachers considered these relationship skills and qualities to be relatively important, the research did not indicate that they considered them to be the highest priority when considering a teacher for a role as a coach. The teacher surveys and interviews both placed little value on relationship skills and qualities as a theme.

The second theme that was identified was skills related to curriculum. All participants included references to curriculum knowledge and development except the coaches. Their only reference to skills related to curriculum was one phrase related to the need for a coach to have experience as a teacher as being necessary to relate to teachers. Teacher surveys not only considered curriculum knowledge and curriculum development as the top two skills needed for coaches, they also considered the overall theme of skills related to the curriculum as one of the most important themes tied with leadership skills and qualities. The teachers who were interviewed did not consider skills related to the curriculum to be as important as the teachers who were surveyed instead the interviewees focused more on leadership skills and qualities and personal qualities; this divergence, could be due in part to the fact that more detailed responses were obtained via the interviews as compared to the survey. Administrators considered skills related to curriculum to be the least important of the four themes.

The third theme that was identified was leadership skills and qualities. All stakeholders considered leadership skills and qualities to be vital to the role of a coach. Both the teachers surveyed and interviewed considered the overall theme of leadership skills and qualities to be a top priority with the number of phrases totaled tied for the most coded. Coaches considered it to be the most important theme for their position with leadership skills as the third most coded

subtheme. Administrators, however prioritized relationship skills and qualities over leadership skills and qualities with their comments.

The fourth theme that was identified related to personal qualities. Administrators considered it to be the least important of the themes with only mentioning four of the twelve subthemes: learner mentality, flexibility, positive attitude and supportive qualities. Coaches, in comparison, considered personal qualities to be the most important theme and included most personal quality subthemes with a total of 9 subthemes: learner, supportive, encouraging, passionate, jovial, honesty, reliability, flexibility and resiliency. Teachers as a whole, were in the middle by considering to be one of their top two themes by referencing 6 subthemes.

Analysis and Reflection on Study Findings by Type of Participant (Stakeholders)

Three types of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and coaches) participated in this study. Overall, the responses to the surveys and interviews were positive. Not all teachers and administrators participated in the surveys and interviews. There were many possible reasons for that fact. Time, I believed, was a large factor in stakeholders lack of response to the survey. It could also be that the stakeholders who did not respond were not strong proponents of the coaching program or the coaches. I had little indication that the lack of response was due to a lack of positive regard for the coaches or the work they did. During the interviews and in the survey short answer responses, teachers made very few references to anything that could be considered negative. One teacher stated that "not everyone is going to want your help" about a coach which implied that there were teachers that did not want the coach's help. The context of the comment was in relation to meeting teachers where they were with their learning. I believed that the responses I received were positive in large part because the right people were in the right positions. I believed the school district was successful at placing people in the coaching positions who had the necessary qualities and skills. In addition, I believed that the administrators and teachers in the buildings value the position of instructional coach.

A total of seven administrators were sent the survey, but only four responded. I later learned that one administrator was out on leave when the survey was sent. Administrators were challenged with budgeting their day and an optional survey may not have been a priority for them. This was a challenge that I anticipated and was pleased that four did take the time to respond. Based on the survey results, all four administrators ranked their coach as a five on a scale of one to five (with five being positive and one being negative) in response to the question,

"how would you rate your experiences with being part of a coaching process in your building?"
They also all responded "yes" when asked if they considered their coach to be successful. I was
pleased with their responses because to identify the skills and qualities of a successful coach, I
wanted to make sure I was interviewing coaches that were considered successful by the
administrators and the teachers.

As I continued with my memo-writing throughout the process, I started to notice that the
perspectives of the stakeholders were illuminated in their responses. The administrators' survey
results indicated that the subthemes labeled the ability to build relationships and communicate
were the two most important skills for an instructional coach. In responding to the question
"what skills and qualities were necessary for the coach to have a positive impact?", three out of
four administrators spoke to the importance of their building coach's ability to build
relationships. While two administrators remarked on the coaches' strong interpersonal skills as a
part of building relationships, the third administrator specifically stated the need for the ability to
build relationships. I believed administrators value building relationships because it was a skill
that they practice daily and know that to lead a staff, it is necessary to build a relationship with
the individuals on the staff. I thought administrators saw the coach as an extension of
themselves, especially in their roles as instructional leaders. In response to the same question,
three out of four of the administrators referred to the coaches' ability to provide clear
communication to teachers. Specifically, they commented on the role of the coach to provide
professional learning to the staff. Building administrators were responsible for ensuring that
teachers know and deliver the curriculum. Having a coach who was able to communicate
curriculum content and instructional practices to the building staff aides in accomplishing that
goal.

The survey was sent to teachers in all three buildings. Thirteen teachers responded. When
asked to rate their experiences with working with a coach on a scale of one to five, all but one
responded with a five. One teacher ranked their experience as a four. I considered all thirteen
responses to be positive and was pleased that they responded that way because my goal was to
identify the skills and qualities of a successful instructional coach. When teachers that were
surveyed, they placed a high value on personal qualities subthemes like providing guidance and
problem solving, but they placed curriculum knowledge and development higher. Teachers who
were interviewed also rated three subthemes from the personal quality theme, supportive,

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flexible and reflective as important with supportive being the most important. They also noted curriculum knowledge and being forward thinking as being valuable. I was not surprised to see that curriculum was valued because teachers spend most of their school day delivering curriculum and the rest of the day and after school hours preparing how to deliver curriculum. The teachers mentioned the necessity of coaches knowing the content and providing resources to deliver the curriculum. I believed teachers looked to coaches as colleagues who could support them with their daily practices. They talked about the coach being able to be "a step ahead" of them with understanding the content. I believed the teachers interviewed did not reference it as often as the teachers surveyed because the teachers interviewed expanded on their answers to talk about what it takes to be "a step ahead", which required being a learner, something the coaches placed in high regard.

In regards to coaches, the two most referenced subthemes were learner quality and relationship building. The concept of being a learner was the highest rated subtheme for coaches. They discussed the need to seek out professional learning for themselves whether it was from reading books, taking classes or finding additional training. They commented on the fact that to lead teachers, coaches needed to understand the content and instructional practices to a high degree. One coach mentioned that having the opportunity to understand the conceptual aspect of a content area had helped to improve the professional learning that was delivered to teachers. One coach stated that trying to stay a step ahead of the teachers required being a learner. Being a learner was a subtheme under the qualities theme. Coaches also pointed to two other qualities that were in their top 5 subthemes, being supportive and being reflective. I thought it was important to note that being reflective was a quality listed in the leadership theme, supportive was in the personal quality theme, both were qualities. Coaches detailed with clarity qualities that were necessary to lead a building and build relationships. The amount of detail and clarity from the coaches as compared to the administrators could be due to the opportunity to express themselves in a more detailed manner than the administrators that participated in a survey only.

Coaches agreed with the administrators about the importance of building relationships. The references were more detailed in terms of relationship building. They spoke about the need to create a foundational relationship by building a rapport with teachers. They commented on the importance of making teachers be comfortable with the coaches and also pointed to the need of showing that they value and respect the teachers that they work with. The ability to listen to

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teachers and honor their craft also pointed to specific ways that they build relationships. While building administrators looked at supporting the building as a whole, coaches realized the need to build individual relationships with teachers. I believed that coaches knew that being able to collaborate successfully with teachers and support and guide their practice, teachers needed to have a relationship with their coach.

Theoretical Findings

Grounded Theory (GT) was the conceptual framework chosen for this research study. Not surprisingly for a progressive educator, whose pedagogy relies heavily on the constructivist works of John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget, my research and analysis was consistent with constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theorists study how participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations and then develop a resulting theory that was an interpretation of the research (Charmaz, 2014). To develop my theory, I examined my subthemes from the surveys. On closer reflection, I noticed that some subthemes were redundant. For example, I had a subtheme named reliability and one named dependability. When I considered the comments that were attached to reliability and dependability, I realized that they could both be coded as reliability. I made similar decisions with collaboration and teamwork and many others. After examining the subthemes, I looked at relationships between the subthemes. Memo writing was the intermediate step in GT between data collection and the analysis of the research. It allowed me to analyze my coding at the moment. As I went through the process of memo writing, I discovered that certain codes stood out in terms of whether they were a skill or a quality and forced me to stay focused on my definition of skills and qualities. Initially, I sorted the subthemes into two categories; skills and qualities. When considering the literature review, I reframed the overall themes. Many articles that I read and quoted for my literature review focused on leadership skills and relationship skills so I considered the subthemes to see if leadership and relationship skills could be potential themes. In addition, many articles pointed to the need for instructional coaches to have content knowledge. When I used that lens, I grouped subthemes that related to classroom experience and curriculum knowledge because both topics and others related to be a skilled classroom teacher. As I continued categorizing and defining subthemes, I discovered that the leadership, relationship and curriculum themes contained mostly skills and not qualities. In addition, the subthemes that were not grouped in one of those themes were all qualities.

The next steps were the interviews. The interviews were specifically planned to be an opportunity to do theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling as a part of GT was intended to be additional data to refine the subthemes and themes. As I reflected on the interview participants' comments in the research through memo writing, I kept returning to the comments focused on specific skills. Memo writing allowed me to examine the relationship between the subthemes. While skills and qualities could be defined into two categories, I noticed that many of the qualities were necessary to develop the skills. This idea of the necessity of the qualities to develop skills for me was the concept of symbolic interactionism that was a step in GT. The participants referenced a specific skill as part of the answer to a question but as they continued, they described a quality that supported the development of the skill. More and more as I coded the research and wrote memos, I became focused on the qualities rather than the skills because the participants consistently gave examples of the qualities that allowed the coach to demonstrate their skills. For example, the concept of developing relationships was considered a priority for all stakeholders, but on further reflection, personal qualities like being encouraging, patient, reliable and supportive were the qualities that an individual needed to build relationships. I believed the following question, from Teacher B (personal communication, November 25, 2020) illustrates this point:

> Whenever I feel like I'm lacking, sometimes she's just my cheerleader. Sometimes she'll pull out the data and she'll say, " look at the data. You're doing fine." You know what I mean? Like sometimes you need that reminder. And when I feel like I'm floundering, she's on the outside looking in. When you're in it all day every day, you sometimes feel defeated, and just her sometimes saying, "We're fine. We're doing okay," is enough to... Because in my mind, I think so highly of her, and I think that's... The rapport is a big part of it, but I think so much of her that if she tells me I'm doing okay, I'm truly doing okay. She's honest. She's not going to tell me something just to get me through the day.

Leadership skills were also considered important for an instructional coach, but as I considered the qualities that the stakeholders described when they were talking about leadership skills, I heard references to the ability to be reflective, forward thinking and proactive. Those were qualities that were necessary for an individual to demonstrate leadership skills.

Teacher C (personal communication, November 25, 2020) shared:

I think that you need to have a vision of what coaching looks like, of where you see the role, how you perceive the role. I think you need to have a good understanding of how others perceive the role, and what the expectation is set before you. I think knowing that not everyone's going to want your help and that, that's okay. And, I just think taking a step back and looking at the big picture.

The skills related to curriculum theme contained the top two subthemes as mentioned by teachers: curriculum knowledge and curriculum development skills. As I reread the transcripts from the interviews, I thought about how the coaches were able to acquire these skills. This caused me to reflect on the fact that the most important quality to the coaches was the need to have a learner's mentality. To have a deep and rich understanding of the curriculum, a teacher needed to be a learner, someone who wanted to read and develop themselves professionally through learning.

Teacher C (personal communication, November 25, 2020) shared;

Her knowledge of strategies and resources is amazing and it's so helpful to have another colleague to bounce ideas off of. It is comforting to know that we are not in the classroom alone when we have the amazing coach that we do. While it's helpful to bounce ideas off of colleagues that are teaching the same lessons, she has a different understanding and knows the curriculum so well that she can help us see the big picture and where our students are headed in the following years.

I theorized that specific qualities of a candidate were vital to the development of skills and the successful interactions with teachers as a foundational component to their role of instructional coach.

Recommendations and Suggestions

This study analyzed the skills and qualities of an instructional coach based on interviews with teachers, administrators and coaches. Specifically, my research question was, "what skills and qualities are necessary for a classroom teacher to transition into an instructional coach?" Extant research outlined the importance of the role of an instructional coach in the success of the teacher and ultimately in the improvement of student achievement and specifies the different roles of the coach in an educational setting. This research outlined tasks from data analysis that coaches completed daily from curating resources to demonstrating lessons and providing professional learning. My research instead focused on the skills and qualities necessary to

accomplish these tasks successfully. I reasoned that it was necessary to do so because it was important to identify the skills and qualities to determine who was the best candidate for the role of instructional coach.

I had hypothesized that my research would outline specific skills and qualities, but throughout the memo writing, I realized that my research was pointing in other directions. I was not surprised to see that the different stakeholders varied in their comments around specific skills and qualities however I did not predict that their overall priorities would be vastly different. As I continued to analyze the research, it revealed a correlation between the stakeholders' roles and their prioritization of the skills and qualities of the skills and qualities of an instructional coach. Teachers, for example, had very different relationships with instructional coaches than administrators do. Administrators' work with coaches often centered around the needs of the staff as a whole. They inquired about what the staff's professional learning needs were and what support they needed. Their focus was on the building as individuals but mostly looked at the staff as a group. Many of the administrators' comments discussed the role of the coach as a leader and the qualities and skills necessary to lead the staff. They were most concerned with how their relationships and knowledge would allow them to lead. Teachers, conversely, were more concerned with their individual needs and how those could be met. They focused on whether the coach could communicate and understand their specific concerns. Finally, the coaches seemed most interested in the qualities that were most beneficial in terms of meeting the individual and group needs. The coaches were the middlemen between the teachers and the administrators. They were trying in essence to serve two masters, meet the needs of the individuals while serving the greater good of the staff. These observations enlightened me about the role of participants in the research and how their perspective based on the position in an educational setting impacted their opinions about the skills and qualities of a successful instructional coach.

Having the perspective of the teachers and administrators was helpful as background information but in my view the coaches had the best understanding of what was necessary to be a successful coach. To expand on my research in the future, I would interview more coaches in other environments to identify the qualities of an instructional coach to ensure that the qualities identified were consistent in different settings and use the comments of the principals and teachers as supporting documentation for the coaches' opinions. Initially, I felt that having the perspectives of various stakeholders would increase the amount of data and aid in developing

subthemes and themes. After completing this research, I believe that a focus specifically on the coaches would provide a clearer picture of the qualities necessary for a coach to be successful, because it provides various perspectives but all from participants who hold the same position.

Grounded Theory (GT) was used for this research study and the use of memo-writing as a part of GT was also used throughout the process of coding interviews and surveys. The memo writing brought me back to the definitions of skills and qualities. I had expected that I would be able to identify different skills and qualities, but I was surprised to realize that it was the qualities that I should have looked for throughout the process. Determining which teachers would make a successful instructional coach was not about the skills that they had; but rather it seemed to be about who they were as a person that allowed them to develop the skills that they need as a coach. With this understanding, I recommended that qualities rather than skills should be the primary focus of a hiring process for an instructional coach. Except for the personal qualities theme, each of the themes contained both skills and qualities subthemes. Since the personal qualities theme contained only qualities, this theme and the subsequent subthemes along with the qualities within each theme should be considered primarily when considering a teacher for the role of an instructional coach.

My recommendation based on this research study was to investigate how schools can use these qualities to determine a candidate's potential during the hiring process. Based on the data analyzed from this research study, a focus on these qualities could be used as a part of the interview questions to determine the best coaching candidate. The interview team should use questions that focus on the qualities revealed by this study. Interview questions should allow candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the specific qualities during the interview. Accordingly, below I offered several potential interview questions/prompts that I developed, after reflecting upon the findings generated in this study. These questions/prompts were also divided into three main areas (relationship qualities, leadership qualities, and personal qualities. Relationship Qualities – collaborative and approachable

- Discuss a positive experience that another teacher has had when working with you.
- Discuss a negative experience you had working with another teacher and how you responded.

- Discuss a time when you were communicating with someone and they didn't understand you, what did you do and how was it resolved.
- Discuss a time a colleague approached you for help and what advice you gave.
- How would you help a new teacher develop confidence in the classroom?

Leadership Qualities – reflective, forward thinking and proactive

- Provide an example of a suggestion you gave to a team of teachers that you have worked with and your success or failure with its implementation
- Discuss a time that someone was not pleased with your performance and how you responded.
- Provide an example that shows a strength and a weakness of yours.
- Discuss a goal that you set for yourself and how you approach trying to reach your goal.
- The position of the instructional coach will evolve and change as education changes, how do you see the role of a coach changing in the future.

Personal Qualities – supportive, flexible and encouraging

- How would you support a teacher who is struggling in the classroom and a teacher who is successful in the classroom?
- How would you work with a teacher who has a different style of teaching than you?
- How would you respond to a teacher after they disagree with your suggestions?
- How would you respond to a teacher that is hesitant to try new instructional practices?

Conclusion

School districts across the country supported coaching programs that created embedded, practice-based learning opportunities for teachers because they were demonstrably effective for improving the quality of instructional practice (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010). Although, school districts appeared to believe in an instructional coach model, they had often lacked a purposeful hiring process when implementing a coaching program (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). For a hiring process to be effective the interview questions needed to consider what qualities the individuals had and if those qualities will allow them to develop the necessary skills to be a successful instructional coach. It was not the skills that an individual already had that

were important to discover in an interview, it was what qualities were already a part of their personality that can help them to learn to be a coach. Consider the important quality that the coaches themselves identified as having a learner mentality. If a teacher was a learner at heart then they can learn the necessary skills of relationship building, curriculum and leadership, but how they demonstrated those skills depends on their flexibility, reflectivity, encouraging behaviors, supportive and encouraging nature, and proactive forward thinking.

In my view – and I believe this is supported now also by the results of the present study - teachers in general already have the necessary qualities to be an instructional coach. They are at heart learners. They are educators. Learning is not only a component of their daily practice, but a requirement of their profession. They are typically encouraging, supportive and patient with their students but to be an instructional coach, a teacher must use these qualities and many others to build necessary skills, like leadership, relationship and curriculum skills, which are crucial to the role of instructional coach.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Administrator Survey

This questionnaire is designed to gain background information as well as initial impressions of working with an instructional coach.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research.

1. What is your administrative experience?

___ 0 – 5 years

___ 6 – 10 years

___ 10 – 15 years

___ 15 – 20 years

___ 20 + years

2. How long have you been an administrator in your current school district?

___ 0 – 5 years

___ 6 – 10 years

___ 10 – 15 years

___ 15 – 20 years

___ 20 + years

3. How long have you been working with the instructional coach in your building?

___ 0 – 5 years

___ 6 – 10 years

___ 10 – 15 years

___ 15 – 20 years

___ 20 + years

4. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being positive and 1 being negative, how would you rate your experiences with the coaching process in your building.

___1

___2

___3

___4

___5

5. Would you consider your coach to be successful based on the job description for this position?

___yes

___no

6. What tool do you use to evaluate your coaches' performance?

7. Please share the positive impact that your coach has had in your building.

8. What skills and qualities were necessary for the coach to have that positive impact?

9. Would you be willing to share the district's job description for the coach in your building and a blank copy of the evaluation tool that you use with your coach.

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

This questionnaire is designed to gain background information as well as initial impressions of working with an instructional coach.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research.

1. What is your teaching experience?

___ 0 – 5 years

___ 6 – 10 years

___ 10 – 15 years

___ 15 – 20 years

___ 20 + years

2. How long have you been teaching in the New Albany School District?

___ 0 – 5 years

___ 6 – 10 years

___ 10 – 15 years

___ 15 – 20 years

___ 20 + years

3. How many times have you personally been a part of a coaching experience?

___ none

___ 1 – 5 times

___ 5 – 10 times

___ 11 – 20 times

___ 21 + times

4. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being positive and 1 being negative, how would you rate your experiences with being a part of a coaching experience.

___1

___2

___3

___4

___5

5. Would you be willing to share your experiences with a coach in a follow up interview?

___yes

___no

Appendix C

Teachers' Interview Questions

1. Within your professional life, how do you think you have changed as a teacher since your experiences with the instructional coach?

2. What surprised you about your interactions with the instructional coach?

3. How has the instructional coach assisted you with a professional challenge?

4. How did you respond to those challenges?

5. How have your thoughts and feelings about instructional coaching changed since you have worked with an instructional coach?

6. What skills do you think are needed to be an instructional coach?

7. Describe the most important lessons you have learned from your interactions with the instructional coach?

8. What advice would you give to someone that wants to be an instructional coach?

9. Is there anything else that I have not asked about your experience with an instructional coach that you would like to share?

Appendix D

Coaches' Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your journey to become an instructional coach.

2. Within your professional life, how do you think you have changed since becoming an instructional coach?

3. What surprised you about being an instructional coach?

4. What personal challenges have you faced in becoming an instructional coach?

5. How did you respond to those challenges?

6. What makes you a successful instructional coach?

7. If you went back into the classroom now, how would you be a different teacher than you were before becoming an instructional coach?

8. What contributed to this change?

9. Describe the most important lessons you have learned by becoming an instructional coach.

10. What advice would you give to an instructional coach?

11. Is there anything else that I have not asked about being an instructional coach that you would like to share?

Appendix E

Individual Interview Consent Form

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to take part in a research study about your experience as or with an instructional coach. The purpose of the study is to examine the skills and qualities that teachers need to transition from the classroom to a coaching role. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Procedures: As part of this study, you are asked to participate in a 30-minute interview. It will include demographic questions along with sharing your experiences as or with an instructional coach.

Risks/Benefits: Precautions will be taken to maintain your anonymity as a study participant by removing identifying information; however, you should be aware that there is a slight risk that someone might attribute published quotes to you.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be confidential; but the number of participants in this study is relatively limited which increases the possibility that your responses could be identified through demographic information. Results will be presented in a way that individuals will not be linked to sensitive opinions. Names of school districts will not be mentioned in any publication or presentation resulting from this study. Research records will be kept in a locked file in a locked office and digital research records will be kept on a password protected computer.

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not need to participate. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may elect not to answer any question that you do not want to answer.

Contact and Questions: If you have any questions about this research study, you can contact

Debra Amling using the information below. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as research participant, you may contact Miami University's Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at humansubjects@MiamiOH.edu or 513-529-3600.

Researcher: Debra Amling 614-404-0093 or amlingdl@miamioh.edu

Appendix F

Individual Survey Consent Form

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to take part in a research study about your experience as or with an instructional coach. The purpose of the study is to examine the skills and qualities that teachers need to transition from the classroom to a coaching role. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Procedures: As part of this study, you are asked to participate in an electronic survey. It will include demographic questions along with sharing your experiences as or with an instructional coach.

Risks/Benefits: Precautions will be taken to maintain your anonymity as a study participant by removing identifying information; however, you should be aware that there is a slight risk that someone might attribute published quotes to you.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be confidential; but the number of participants in this study is relatively limited which increases the possibility that your responses could be identified through demographic information. Results will be presented in a way that individuals will not be linked to sensitive opinions. Names of school districts will not be mentioned in any publication or presentation resulting from this study. Research records will be kept in a locked file in a locked office and digital research records will be kept on a password protected computer.

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not need to participate. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may elect not to answer any question that you do not want to answer.

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