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## Instrucational Coaching: A Multiple Case Study Investigation of a Pre-Service Teacher's Self Efficacy Through Supportive and Reflective Dialogue

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INSTRUCATIONAL COACHING: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY  
INVESTIGATION OF A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S SELF EFFICACY THROUGH  
SUPPORTIVE AND REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

By

Amanda Steiner

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Leadership

Under the Supervision of Dr. Elliot Ostler

Omaha, Nebraska

April 2017

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INSTRUCATIONAL COACHING: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION  
OF A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S SELF EFFICACY THROUGH SUPPORTIVE AND  
REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

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University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2017

Advisor: Dr. Elliot Ostler

**Abstract**

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), "...learning cannot occur in college classrooms divorced from schools" (p. 31). University coursework that is paired with carefully coordinated field experiences as well as being supported by university faculty that are skilled in helping the teacher candidate examine their practice through purposeful questioning and reflective dialogue can set the stage for developing a teacher candidate's belief in their capabilities to reach their goals (Darling – Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman, 2005; Costa & Garmenston, 2002; Bandura, 1977).

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the language and response patterns that exist between a coach and teacher candidate through the use of verbal persuasion, social modeling, questioning, active listening, pausing and paraphrasing, and problem solving as a means to support a teaching candidate's ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy.

This study explored the experiences of five elementary teacher candidates who were currently enrolled in a forty-hour field experience with the support of an instructional coach using semi-structured interviews and a multiple case study design. Eight themes emerged from the data and the results of this study support the efforts to reform teacher preparation programs by designing carefully constructed field experiences with the support of instructional coaches and provides insight about the development of self-efficacy and the potential of teacher candidates finding success in their first years of teaching.

*Dedication*

*In loving memory of my Grandma Betty who always encouraged me to spread my wings.*

## *Acknowledgements*

I always share with teaching candidates that becoming a teacher is a journey. Working toward my doctorate has aided in my journey to becoming a better educator for my students and has been a wonderful yet most challenging adventure. There are so many individuals that have contributed to helping me reach this goal and I find that as I try to put it in to words, articulating the depth of my gratitude poses a challenge.

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To my parents, Gary and Jan, from a very young age you instilled in me the value of hard-work, dedication, and the drive to succeed. You have consistently supported me and championed me through my triumphs and tribulations not only on this journey but throughout this journey called life. Thanks for always lighting the candle and sending extra prayers!

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## ***Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem***

### *Introduction*

As cited by Hollins (2011), “Conventional pre-service teacher preparation programs have been criticized for being too often characterized by fragmentation, weak pedagogy, and a lack of articulation among courses and field experiences, as well as for the absence of a set of organizing themes, shared standards, and clear goals (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Zeichner, 2006). The American Education system is in transition and conversations about Teacher Preparation have been at the forefront of these discussions. Teacher candidates need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will help them be successful in their first years of teaching (Darling – Hammond, 2003). One way to build a teacher candidate’s self – efficacy and better prepare them for the challenges of teaching is through the use of an apprentice model (He, 2009). University coursework that is paired with carefully coordinated field experiences as well as being supported by university faculty that are skilled in helping the teacher candidate examine their practice through purposeful questioning and reflective dialogue can set the stage for developing a teacher candidate’s belief in their capabilities to reach their goals (Darling – Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman, 2005; Costa & Garmenston, 2002; Bandura, 1977).

One model used to examine self-efficacy as it pertains to academic development of teacher candidates can be contextualized by Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977). This model shows promise because studies of teacher self efficacy has been linked to a teacher’s increased confidence that the training they have received and the experiences

they have been provided aid in developing their strategies to overcome obstacles in their classrooms (Cantrell, Young, & Moore 2003).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) defines self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura (1997) believed the opportunity for mastery experiences are the most powerful source of efficacy, as these experiences can raise or lower expectations about one's future. Furthermore, self-efficacy can be derived through an individual observing a highly qualified individual's successful completion of a task. Research conducted by Jimil, Downer, and Pianta (2012) found, "Teachers reporting a strong sense of efficacy upon completing their first year of teaching have greater job satisfaction and a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession" (p. 121).

Early models associated with teacher preparation focused on providing students with theory and philosophy of education while experiences working in the field were limited to Clinical Practice. According to Grossman & Loeb (2008), early entry models of teacher preparation assumed that most of what novice teachers needed to learn about teaching could be learned on the job and the role of the university could be minimized without serious loss. Bandura (1977) argues that social modeling serves as the basis for most learned behavior. "By observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on a later occasion this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977, p. 22). Prospective teacher's need opportunities to observe, perform, and practice teaching task in an authentic environment where modeling and non-evaluative feedback is provided as a means to develop a teacher candidates sense of self efficacy.

Early success as a teacher can play an important role in building a teacher's confidence in their practices. According to Susan Headden (2014), "From 1988 to 2008, annual teacher attrition rose by 41 percent, and now nearly a third of teachers leave the profession within the first three years of their careers" (p.4). Teachers not staying in the field report feeling underprepared for the challenges of the classroom as well as not feeling supported while in the field as reason they left the profession (Headden, 2014). A study conducted by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement in Teaching (2014) states, "Clinical practice is especially lacking. More than a quarter of the nation's new teachers, studies show, have had no student-teaching experience, and those who do have typically only two and a half months' worth" (p. 13). Studies on teacher efficacy highlight that when teachers are comforted with challenges in the classroom, those who have had opportunities for mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997) with the support of positive and constructive feedback from a respected peer, teachers demonstrate the persistence and resilience to remain in the profession (Yost, 2006). As a result of this, some universities have begun taking strides to look inward at their own teacher preparation programs and are developing structures that increase pre-service teaching candidate's time in the field with the support of clinical faculty.

### *Background of the Problem*

According to a 2014 report conducted by the Carnegie Foundation, Susan Headden reports, "In a 2013 study of teacher attrition in four large urban systems, TNTP, a teacher recruitment and training organization, found that nearly one-third of highly effective teachers left within two years, and almost half left within a year" (p. 4). The learning curve for novice teachers is steep. The climate in schools has shifted

dramatically as content standards, standardized testing, shifts in instructional practice, and stricter accountability will be primary challenges novice teachers will face and need to overcome.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), through its program the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), has been working with states to reform and improve teacher education and licensing (Houlihan, 2002). As Higher Education works to align their programs to state and INTASC standards, significant changes are being made to how Teacher Preparation Programs and State Licensing Facilities assess pre-service candidate's preparedness to enter the teaching field. The new standards require teacher candidates to demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be an effective teacher by providing evidence such as portfolios, videotapes of teaching, reflections on performance, analysis of student's work, as well as test of pedagogical and content knowledge to demonstrate their qualifications.

One of the measures that universities are taking to ensure students are able to successfully meet these standards and demonstrate readiness to enter the teaching field is providing teaching candidates with increased time in the field. Field Experiences provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply the theory they learn in their university-based course work and practice in a school based setting. These school-based experiences allow students opportunities to see and experience the complexities and realities of everyday teaching. Zeincher (2010) states:



A perennial problem in traditional college- and university-sponsored teacher education programs has been the lack of connection between campus-based, university-based teacher education courses and field experiences. Although most university-based teacher education programs now include multiple field experiences over the length of the program and often situate field experiences in some type of school-university partnership (e.g., professional development schools, partner schools), the disconnect between what students are taught in campus courses and their opportunities for learning to enact these practices in their school placements is often very great even within professional development and partner schools. (Bullough et al., 1997, 1999; Zeichner, 2007)

Carefully crafted field experience can provide opportunities for teaching candidates to develop a deeper understanding of the day to day operations of the teaching profession. Partnerships with local school districts have often left teaching candidates unsupervised in the field and mentor teachers have been provided with little guidance about the university's curriculum and goals for the student. Far too often a candidate's time maybe spent at the back of the classroom observing instruction, leaving teacher candidates to watch what teachers do but not always understanding the why behind the teacher's actions (Danielson, 2002). The result of unguided field experiences minimizes the teacher candidate's opportunity to observe, plan, implement lessons, and receive feedback on their teaching practice in relation to their campus coursework. Unguided field experiences create limitations for universities to adequately evaluate a candidate's preparedness to enter the teaching field thus placing completion of coursework rather

than application and translation into the field as the sole means for evaluation (Zeichner, 2007).

One Urban Midwest University has taken steps to shift their teacher preparation program's focus from university based learning to a shared campus to field connection. The notation that teachers learn to teach by teaching is at the forefront of this shift. Ken Zeichner (2010) states, "Two of the most in-depth national studies of teacher education in the United States have shown that carefully constructed field experiences that are coordinated with campus courses are more influential and effective in supporting student teacher learning than the unguided and disconnected field experiences that have historically been dominant in American teacher education" (p. 91).

Often partner schools and mentor teachers are asked to monitor the work of the pre-service candidate in addition to fully carrying out the responsibilities of classroom teaching. With the high demand of accountability in education, it is vital that mentor teachers do not have one more thing added to their plates. Universities need to find more ways to support teacher candidates when they are in the field in order to build strong relationships with partnering schools. According to Zeichner (2010), there are often few incentives for tenure-track faculty to invest time in mentoring and monitoring the work of candidates in the field.

Darling-Hammond (2009) referred to the "lack of connection between campus courses and field experiences as the Achilles heel of teacher education" (p.43). A structure to support field based experiences that allow pre-service candidate's the opportunity to observe quality teaching, to practice and reflect upon their experience, and connect their learning to university course work can be supported by the framework of

instructional coaching. Instructional Coaching is not unique to education. In response to increased accountability placed on schools, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has augmented school systems focus on professional development for teachers as a means to improve teaching practices and increasing student achievement (Seed, 2008). Research is prevalent on instructional coaching as a vehicle for professional development and enhancing teacher knowledge and skills (Knight, 2007).

The research suggests, there is a need for research on the value of guided and supervised field experience based on an urban Midwest university's model that aligns their teacher preparation program with the new INTASC standards and increases the amount of time teacher candidates spend in the field while being supported by an Instructional Coach. Field based experiences often lead to a disconnect between theory and practice therefore teaching candidates could benefit from having on-going support while in the field. Lana Danielson (2002) states:

“To be effective teachers, they (student teachers) need to be able to articulate the purpose behind their behaviors. They must be able to explain to students, parents, and school personnel not only why the content they teach is important but also why the methods they use are appropriate. They must understand the connections between what was taught yesterday, what is taught today, and what will be taught tomorrow so that they can understand how individual lessons fit in the greater curriculum picture. With good supervision from field-based teachers and university professors, student teachers can begin to develop a deeper understanding of their work, but left to their own devices in the early years of teaching, they are unlikely to grow (p.

183).

An instructional coach can guide the pre-service candidate's growth in their capacity to understand and apply best practice while in the field. Instructional coaches provide individualized support to the teacher candidate through the use of observations followed by guided conversation that prompts the candidate to reflect on their teaching and helps make the unknown known to the candidate. The ability for an individual to reflect on their teaching, recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching is critical for an individual to improve their teaching and develop personal efficacy (Danielson, 2002). The instructional coach serves as a mentor to teaching candidates by offering non-threatening feedback to the candidate about their instruction and monitors their development throughout the experience.

Research has shown that a teacher's belief system about their ability to be successful impacts the likelihood to persist and stay in the profession. In a study conducted by Jamil, Downer, and Pianta (2012), they share, "High teacher self-efficacy has been linked to especially positive outcomes for novice teachers (Burley et al, 1991; Hall, Burley, Villedo, & Brockmeier, 1992). Teachers reporting a strong sense of efficacy upon completing their first year of teaching have greater job satisfaction and a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession" (p. 119). With the support of a coach, teaching candidates are provided an environment that allows candidates to safely experiment, reflect upon, and revise their practice.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Although research supports the need for pre-service candidates to engage in carefully constructed field experiences there is a gap in literature about the

implementation of instructional coaches at the pre-service level. Furthermore, ample research has been conducted that supports the idea that coaches can be very effective in helping in-service teachers implement newly learned strategies and yet a gap in knowledge exist about the impact that instructional coaching has on a teacher candidate's competence and self efficacy. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the language and response patterns that exist between a coach and teacher candidate through the use of verbal persuasion, social modeling, questioning, active listening, pausing and paraphrasing, and problem solving as a means to support a teaching candidate's ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy. The results of this study provide insight to efforts teacher preparation programs can take to produce well-prepared and reflective teaching candidates.

### *Theoretical Frameworks*

Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is grounded in the belief that learning occurs in a social context by observing and interacting with others. An individual's engagement using observation, modeling, and dialogue with others can have an impact on the outcome of actions an individual takes as they grow and develop. "If people believe they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen" (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Bandura referred to an individual's beliefs in their capacity to organize and execute a course of action required to produce given attainments as self efficacy. Studies on self efficacy illustrate that when teachers are confronted with challenges in the classroom those who demonstrate persistence and resilience tend to persevere and remain in the profession (Yost, 2006).

Bandura suggests four strategies that aid in developing an individual's self efficacy: mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and improving physical and emotional states. Bandura believed that mastery experiences provide individuals with numerous opportunities to practice and become successful in performing simple tasks. The successful completion of a task can then be scaffolded into a more complex task allowing the individual to persist and master the task. Just as mastery experiences are important for developing self efficacy, so is the opportunity for social modeling.

Social modeling allows individuals to observe others performing a task. Bandura (1986) believed that social modeling could motivate an individual to attempt a task that they deemed to be challenging by providing a model that illustrates steps to accomplish the task. Observing others succeed can boost an individual's belief in their own ability to accomplish a task and vicariously promotes self efficacy (Wentzel, Wigfield, & Miele, 2009).

Social modeling can also be supported by social persuasion. Social persuasion is supported by the use of feedback and praise to highlight the strengths of their efforts. Helping others see their success through the use of positive verbal praise and encouragement aids in developing an individual's belief about their abilities. At the same time, negative praise or criticism that offers no suggestions for growth or improvement can be detrimental to an individual's self efficacy.

This use of positive and negative persuasion can effect an individual's physical and emotional state. According to Schunk & Pajares (2009), "Strong emotional reactions to a task provide cues about an anticipated success or failure" (p. 37). An individual's

ability to gauge their physical and emotional state contributes to the development of self efficacy. Learning how to manage positive and negative emotional states helps individuals identify and reach their goals (Bandura, 1986). Social learning theory supports the use of these four strategies as an aid in developing an individual's self efficacy.

Cognitive Coaching also supports the current study. Cognitive Coaching is a theory that was first presented by Costa and Garmston (2002) and has been expanded upon by Jim Knight (2007). Costa and Garmston refer to cognitive coaching as an ongoing form of Professional Development that provides an efficient process for enhancing a teacher's capacity for professional learning. Costa and Garmston state, "All behavior is determined by a person's perceptions and ...a change in perception and thought is a prerequisite to a change in behavior...human beings construct their own meaning through reflecting on experiences and dialog with others" (p.7). Costa and Garmston identify three elements of cognitive coaching:

1. A Planning conversation
2. An event, which usually is observed by the cognitive coach
3. A reflecting conversation

The work of an instructional coach is supported by this theory as coaches work closely with teacher candidates to support their efforts in the planning and implementation of instructional strategies. After teacher candidates implement their instruction, instructional coaches engage in dialogue with the teacher candidate using carefully planned questions that aid the candidate in reflecting upon their actions and providing non-judgmental feedback. The purpose of this guided conversation is to focus

on “mediating a practitioners thinking, perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions toward goals of self-directed learning and increased complexity of cognitive processing (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p.5).

At the conclusion of their first year of teaching, teachers reporting a high level of self efficacy demonstrated an increase in job satisfaction and positive attitude toward the teaching profession (Jimil et. al., 2012) Prospective teachers need opportunities to perform and practice teaching task in an authentic environment where modeling and non-evaluative feedback is provided as a means to develop a teacher candidate’s sense of self-efficacy.

### *Research Questions*

The current study is designed to investigate the perceived impact of instructional coaching. The broad question that was explored is: What is the teacher candidate’s perceived role of the instructional coach? This question will be contextualized by the following research questions:

RQ1: Are there language patterns (verbal persuasion, type of feedback given, structure of the conversation, leadership in the conversation, etc.) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ2: Are there response patterns (posing open ended questions, providing feedback, actively listening, pausing, paraphrasing, or problem solving) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ3: Does the coaching conversation assist the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?



*Definition of Terms:*

*Instructional coach:* an instructional coach is a non- evaluative university faculty member who works collaboratively with pre-service teachers while in field based practicums to support their growth and learning and promote reflection on their practice. (Knight, 2007)

*Coachee:* pre-service teachers who are participating in conversations with an instructional coach.

*Teacher Preparation Program:* a four-year, higher education program of study where participants will earn a bachelor of science degree in elementary education.

*Teacher candidate/Pre-service teacher:* an individual who is enrolled in a higher education teacher preparation program working to earn their bachelor of science degree in elementary education.

*Self efficacy:* the effort an individual invest in a task based on their perceived capability to accomplish desired outcomes and the motivation to persist at the task despite setbacks or challenges (Bandura, 1977; Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

*Significance of the study*

The rationale for this study stems from the potential to contribute to the current, yet limited, body of knowledge on the impact of instructional coaching. In order to determine the role of the instructional coach and the impact coaching conversations have on a teacher candidate's improvement of performance and self-efficacy, more research is needed on the impact of implementing this practice into teacher preparation programs. Pre-service teachers often have misconceptions about the teaching profession. The opportunity to observe teachers in the field and provide teaching candidates an

opportunity to engage in master experiences with the non-evaluative support and feedback from an instructional coach could aid in developing a teacher's self efficacy. Findings from this study support the efforts to reform teacher preparation programs by designing carefully constructed field experiences with the support of instructional coaches. The data from this study provides insight about the development of self-efficacy and the potential of teacher candidates finding success in their first years of teaching.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### *Introduction*

Becoming a teacher is a journey, and education as a profession is under more pressure now than ever to prepare teachers to meet high standards of excellence, accountability, and effectiveness (Varney, 2009). For the last two decades change efforts for quality instruction and improved student learning have been focused on the improvement of teaching practice (Galluci et. al., 2010). To meet the demands of these expectations a new kind of preparation is needed in higher education. A study conducted by Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2008) found that teacher preparation programs that utilized a well-supervised, full-year student teaching with alignment between theory and practice produced more effective candidates for the field of teaching.

A growing body of evidence indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the field within the first three years of teaching (Darling – Hammond, 2003). Producing highly qualified teachers goes hand in hand with keeping these teachers in the classroom. There is no lack of teachers in United States, our universities produce more teachers than jobs are available (Darling – Hammond, 2001). The problem lies with the quality of teachers that are being produced and the retention of effective teachers. A study conducted by National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) in 2000 found that teachers who received training and had opportunities to practice teaching and received feedback on their teaching left the profession at less than half the rate of those who had no training or support (Darling – Hammond, 2003).

Teacher candidates need to grow their knowledge base about learning and teaching by being provided authentic experiences to practice instructional strategies while receiving timely and informative feedback that prompts the candidate to critically evaluate their instruction and offers support to improve on their teaching practices. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), "...learning cannot occur in college classrooms divorced from schools" (p. 31). Field experiences create a holistic approach for learning the art of teaching. A strong preparation program provides teaching candidates with field experiences that integrate theory and pedagogy and provide candidates with opportunities to develop their understanding through focused inquiry, observation, and guided practice (Hollins, 2011). Given the current pressure for educational reform and the implantation of new standards in higher education, instructional coaching may serve as a way to bridge theory and practice for teaching candidates as they engage in field based experiences.

The following review of literature will begin with a brief look at how instructional coaching has migrated from the business world to the domain of education as an effective model for enhancing performance and helping individuals meet their potential. Following this section is an examination of the role of the instructional coach as support in building a teacher's instructional capacity. The third section of this review will take a closer look at the qualities of an effective instructional coach. The fourth section of this review will examine a framework for coaching, with a focus on Cognitive Coaching. Cognitive coaching is a theoretical framework that has provided a foundation for current conceptual frameworks, such as Jim Knight's model of instructional coaching, that is utilized in schools today. The exploration of literature about cognitive coaching may

provide insight to the role dialogue and reflection play in supporting improvement of teaching practices and building self efficacy.

### *Instructional Coaching*

The employment of coaching practices has existed for centuries. Models of coaching, outside of athletics, emerged first in the business industry. Businesses have utilized coaching as a means to produce more effective performances from their workers and build the potential of each employee (Zeus & Skiffington, 2006). The impact of coaching on the business industry found that employees who received coaching reported an increase in confidence and developed more effective problem solving strategies (Leonard – Cross, 2010). The success of coaching and mentoring being utilized in the business world prompted educators to look at how this practice could be adapted as a means to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report titled, “A Nation at Risk”. The report painted a grim picture of the American Education System and the shortcomings of American schools. One of the key findings detailed in the report was a need for substantial improvements to be made in preparing future teachers. The study also revealed teacher shortages in the area of math and science and went on to report that half of newly employed teachers were not qualified to teach in these subject areas (United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Due to the reports findings a shift took place in the field of education and the need for professional development for teachers grew out of this shift.

A 1970’s study conducted by the RAND Corporation, often referred to as the Change Agent study, found that skill specific training alone did not have sustainable

gains on student learning. Furthermore, isolated training and quick fix trainings did not allow teachers the appropriate amount of time to assimilate new teaching techniques into the classroom (Giella and Stanfill, 1993). Giella & Stanfill note that, “The most important findings produced by the RAND study were:

1. Teachers often represent the best clinical expertise available.
2. For teachers, the learning task is more like problem solving than mastering proven procedures.
3. Involving classroom teachers in identifying problems and solutions is valuable.
4. Professional learning is a long term, linear process.
5. Staff development is part of the program building process in schools.” (p.252)

The RAND study and its findings raised awareness for needed change in staff development practices and assisted in the process of developing a coaching system.

An additional study conducted in the 1970’s by Joyce and Showers indicated that teachers implemented only 10% of what they learned in staff development workshops. The *sit and get* approach with little guidance or opportunities to practice implementing instructional strategies rarely found their way into the classroom. In the 1980’s, seeing a need for on-site professional development, Joyce and Showers pioneered and began implementing peer coaching in schools (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Their work revolved around creating opportunities for teachers to attend seminars, learn new practices, and then work with a peer to practice implementing these practices while receiving coaching or feedback. Joyce and Showers (1980) found “modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback was the most productive training design” (p. 384). The work of Joyce and Showers provides evidence

that suggest that the use of coaches provides educators with more likelihood that knowledge learned will be practiced, applied, and refined.

These studies and the raising expectations for growing student achievement brought about by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has prompted schools to rethink staff development for teachers. Many schools across the country have turned to job embedded professional development rather than utilizing the traditional method of one-day workshops. School based instructional coaching has grown in popularity across the United States as a way to sustain and enhance professional development for teachers to improve their practice and increase student achievement (Ippolito, 2010). With the growing pressure to produce highly effective teachers, instructional coaching provides a model of support with a focus on improvement of teaching practices and increasing student achievement. The development and use of instructional coaching is promising but under-researched thus resulting in a lack of understanding of the role of the coach and the impact it has on promoting teacher and learner growth. (Taylor 2008, Knight 2009, Gallucci et. al 2010).

In a review of research conducted by Cornett & Knight (2008) they argue that a) coaching impacts teacher's attitudes b) coaching impacts teacher's practices c) coaching impacts teacher efficacy d) coaching impacts student achievement. A study of 15,000 eighth grade math and science students was conducted to see if teacher inputs, professional development, or classroom practices influenced student performance (Wenglisky, 2000). The study found that professional development was an important factor in predicting student achievement. Wenglisky states, "Changing the nature of teaching and learning in the classroom maybe the most direct way to improve student

outcomes” (p.11). A five-year longitudinal study (Bush, 1984) examined if peer coaching increased a teacher’s implementation of new skills. The study found that when modeling, practice, and feedback accompanied training 16% of the new skills transferred to the classroom. Furthermore, when coaching was added to this model 95% of teacher’s implemented the new skill (Bush, 1984). A similar study (Showers, 1982) found that individual’s who received training followed by peer coaching were more likely to transfer newly acquired skills into the classroom than those who were not provided a coach. These studies have laid the foundation for implementation of instructional coaching in our schools.

The term coach is multifaceted. An instructional coach is defined as “an onsite professional developer who works collaboratively with teachers, empowering them to incorporate research – based instructional methods into their classrooms in a non-evaluative role” (Knight 2007, p. 12). The term non-evaluative is imperative to the role of the coach. Eliminating the role of appraisal allows the coach and coachee to work collaboratively, establishes trust that promotes authentic dialogue free of judgment and an openness to implement change or try new practices through the use of free-will rather than out of compliance.

### *Qualities of an Instructional Coach*

There is a limited body of research pertaining to the characteristics of an effective coach. Much of the research reported in this area is case studies or surveys. When reviewing the current literature, three themes were identified as qualities of an effective coach. Instructional coaches are highly skilled individuals. Killion, Harrison, Bryon, and Clifton (2012) suggest that characteristics of effective coaches can be defined by the



following: teaching expertise, content expertise, their beliefs and dispositions, coaching skills, relationship skills, and leadership skills.

The research unanimously identifies effective coaches as experienced teachers who have excelled in the classroom and have a high regard for the teaching profession (Knight, 2009). In order for the coach to be seen as a creditable source, the coachee must view the coach as a successful teacher (Killion, et. al., 2012). Instructional coaches have a deep understanding of how children learn and are skilled in utilizing a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning. Instructional coaches model best practice for teachers and have a wide array of tools in their teacher toolbox that can be used to assist teachers in their growth and development of implementing new instructional strategies or refining them. Effective coaches not only understand pedagogy, but they also must have a deep understanding of the content they coach. Coaches need extensive content knowledge. In her study, McCrarry (2011) found that coaches with higher content specific pedagogy had a greater impact on teaching practices. An instructional coach must have an understanding of the content and curriculum teachers engage in as well as the progression of the content. This understanding allows the coach to help promote the teacher's depth of learning and plan for the complexities of delivering content in a way that produces student learning and lays the foundation for future learning.

In addition to teaching and content expertise, an effective coach must demonstrate strong interpersonal skills including relationship building and a strong belief in another's ability to succeed. In a study conducted by Ertmer et al., 2003, twenty-four out of thirty-one participants in the study highlighted that a coach must possess strong interpersonal

skills over any other area of expertise. Instructional coaching is rooted in the belief that learning occurs when dialogue, reflection, and self-assessment are practiced through the use of a collaboration (Knight, 2007). In order for rich dialogue and collaboration to occur, a coach must be a highly skilled communicator that has a knack for building relationships with others. Through a series of interviews, teachers listed the following actions as characteristics of an effective coach: listens, builds relationships, models, questions, encourages, and motivates (Morgan, 2010). A coach's ability to connect with others is at the heart of what coaches do. Since teaching is a highly personal activity a coach must be able to create relationships that are built upon honesty and trust. The relationship that must exist between a coach and a teacher can be viewed through the lens of "ethic of care" as defined by Noddings (2005). Care ethics supports the idea that the career (coach) is attentive and receptive to what the cared for (coachee) is feeling and expressing. Noddings (2005) states:

When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for. This does not mean that I will always approve of what the other wants, nor does it mean that I will never try to lead him or her to a better set of values, but must take into account the feelings and desires that are actually there and respond as positively as my values and capacities allow. (p.2)

Developing a caring relationship lays the foundation for successful coaching interactions. A coach must engage in conversation with the coachee and listen intently to the coachee to learn about their needs, interest, and talents. Noddings (1999) suggest that from this learning we gain important information about how to plan for promoting progress and it creates a framework for support. A coach must be compassionate and

able to show that they care about teachers, about children, about teaching and learning, and about him/herself. The establishment of a caring relationship creates a platform of encouragement and support for the teacher, creating a safe environment for rich conversations between a coach and coachee.

Coaching should be a collaborative and reflective process that pushes teachers to examine the effectiveness of their instruction and deepens their understanding of how students learn (Deussen et. al., 2007). A coach must be able to convey to the coachee that they believe in them and their capabilities and are committed to helping them grow and develop as educators. Conversations are at the heart of conveying this belief to the coachee. A coach must be able to identify the needs of the coachee by listening intently, using effective questioning, and employing support that aligns with the coachee's needs. As the coach and coachee engage in dialogue and reflection there must be an understanding of professional ethics, especially in confidentiality. For a coach to grow, build, and maintain trusting relationships with a coachee, the coachee must believe that the coach will act with integrity and keep the confidence of coaching interactions.

### *Role of the Instructional Coach*

Instructional coaches do not adhere to a "one size fits all" model. A problematic issue that many institutions face when developing a coaching program is defining the role of the coach. The current demands for reform in education, has lead to the need for on-site professional development for teachers, thus creating a role for instructional coaching without a clear definition or well-articulated framework for the role of the coach. According to Denton and Hasbrouck (2009), "Unfortunately, the rush to implement coaching before strong theoretical models, or even well defined job descriptions, were in

place has caused a good deal of confusion related to the role and focus of coaching” (p.155). The reason for the lack of framework and definition for the role of the coach may lie in the fact that instructional coaches find themselves wearing many hats.

Killion (2009) identifies ten roles that coaches may fill in their work. The roles are vast and the knowledge and skill that a coach must possess to support the individual needs of teachers vary. The roles identified by Killion are: data coach, resource provider, mentor, curriculum specialist, instructional specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, school leader, catalyst for change, and learner. According to Killion, a coach that serves as a mentor often works with individual’s in the early stages of their career to provide support in acquainting the teacher to the school and serves as a guide to increasing their instructional practices. Killion suggest that a coach that is an instructional specialist and a resources provider supports teachers in implementing best practices in the classroom and provides the teacher with resources that can be used to enhance instruction. A coach as a classroom supporter engages in the role of modeling instruction and observing the teacher teach as a means to provide feedback that promotes reflective thinking (Killion, 2009).

With the variety of responsibilities associated with the role of the coach, a coach’s work can become expansive and fragmented (Knight, 2007). How an instructional coach views their role and allocates their time is a challenge of this role. The work a coach engages in may be dependent upon aligning their coaching practices to the initiatives and needs of the school. A coach may be utilized to support novice or veteran teachers therefore a coach must understand the dynamics of working with a variety experience levels. As a coach recruit’s teachers, the participant’s eagerness or resistance to work

with a coach can affect the coach's role and how they navigate these encounters. No matter the situation or framework for coaching, the role the coach plays is very much reliant on the individual needs of the teacher. Just as teachers must create and consistently examine their own teaching philosophies, coaches develop their role by examining their fundamental beliefs about teaching and student learning and focus their work on developing the roles that will have the greatest potential for impacting teaching and learning (Killion, 2009). Often times coaches find themselves "flying the plane while building it" (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 9).

The purpose of the instructional coach is to build the instructional capacity of teachers with the goal of accelerating learning for students and closing the achievement gap. (Casey, 2006). Current literature suggests that a basic framework for a coaching model consist of (a) enrolling teachers to be coached (b) identify appropriate interventions (c) model teaching or co-teach lessons (d) gather and evaluate classroom or assessment data (e) observe lessons and provide feedback (f) engage teachers in dialogue about their teaching (g) conduct workshops to introduce new teaching strategies (Knight, 2006, Denton & Hasbrouck 2009, Gallucci et. al 2010).

#### *A Framework for Instructional Coaching*

One of the earliest scholars in regard to teacher supervision was George C. Kyte. In 1931, Kyte outlined a three- phased process for supervision; planning, getting the most of the observation period, and analyzing the teaching observation (Anderson, Snyder, & Bahner, 1993, p.11). In 1973, Morris Cogan purposed a seven- stage cycle of observation and formalized its use in clinical supervision. Cogan's model continued to evolve through the work of Anderson and Krajewski (1980), and Acheson and Gall

(1980). In 1990, Paven took the work of Cogan and Anderson & Krajewski and developed the Instructional Improvement through Inquiry model (III). The elements of plan, observe, analyze, and feedback from previous models served as a launching pad and the was extended to add reflection as a key component of the III model (Paven, 1993). Paven's work provided a framework for teacher's, principals, and mentor's to use while coaching and observing others.

Prior to a coaching session a pre-observation conference is used to build rapport with the teacher. The first initial meeting between a coach and coachee may be utilized to clarify expectations, define the role of each individual, and develop a relationship that fosters trust (Wise & Hammack, 2011). The pre-observation conference can also be utilized to provide feedback to a coachee on a lesson plan, model an instructional strategy, or define a purpose for the observation. For example, the pre-observation conference allows the coachee to share a concern or specify something specific they would like the coach to observe and provide feedback on (Anderson, Snyder, & Bahner, 1993).

Following the pre-observation conference, the lesson is observed and the coach takes anecdotal notes. A single lesson has many intricacies and facets. The complexities of the classroom can leave a coach overwhelmed with what to observe, however Jim Knight (2007) suggest that during an observation a coach should pay particular attention to the Big Four. The Big Four consist of classroom management, content, instruction, and assessment for learning. As the coach observes instruction they must be skilled in making decisions about where they can leverage the most change (Coggins et. al., 2003).

The focus on the Big Four can help coaches analyze the data they collect, identify the strengths of the teacher, and highlight areas of growth.

At the conclusion of the teaching episode, the coach and the coachee engage in a post observation conference. During this conference the coach and coachee engage in a conversation that provides the teacher with feedback of how they can improve their practice. This framework is not a lock step process. Current instructional coaching models combine feedback and reflection through the use of guided conversations.

### *Cognitive Coaching*

Cognitive Coaching is an effective strategy that instructional coaches can use to guide conversations and promote reflection. Cognitive Coaching is widely used in various coaching models across the country. It is rooted in the belief that an individual's behaviors change after their beliefs change. Cognitive Coaching draws on the work of Lev Vygotsky. Lev Vygotsky (1978) identified learning as a social process. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory suggest that social interaction plays a critical role in how an individual thinks, learns, and communicates. Vygotsky (1978) highly regarded an individual's ability to observe and interact with others as a major component of how one learns self – control and self-maintenance. He claimed that learning was an active process and believed that speech plays an essential role in the organization of higher physiological functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's social-cultural theory suggests that through dialogue, a coach and coachee create a shared context for learning (Teemant et al., 2011).

Vygotsky's work also suggests that when an individual works with a more knowledge other learning can be scaffolded to the learner's "zone of proximal

development” or ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84 –91). The zone of proximal development defines what a learner can achieve on their own and what a learner can achieve with the guidance and assistance of the more knowledgeable other. Providing support and guidance during these sensitive periods of learning can lead to greater understanding and performance for the learner.

The goal of Cognitive Coaching is to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity of high performance both independently and as a member of a community. (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p. 16). The discourse that occurs between a coach and the coachee provides opportunities for the teacher to engage in a metacognitive process that prompts them to examine their interactions in order to bridge previous learning to new understandings (Heineke, 2013; Collet, 2012). In this model, the coach and the coachee work together to examine a teaching experience, analyze its meaning, reflect on the implications, and construct new learning that can be utilized in the future. The cognitive coaching model places responsibility on the coachee to evaluate their performance while the coach offers nonjudgmental support to encourage the coachee to think about, modify, or transform their teaching in new and novel ways. (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Therefore, the goal of the coach is to mediate the teacher’s thinking by asking dynamic, scaffolded questions that invites inquiry, facilitates a teacher’s ability to examine their internal thought structures, and brings forth new learning. (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

The coach’s ability to formulate and utilize questioning during the reflective process is imperatival to Cognitive Coaching. “Questioning is essential to teachers’ learning. It is critical in the dialogue time to help teachers become aware of what they



are learning about” (Reed-Wright, 2009, p. 106). An instructional coach should be skilled in asking questions that elicit a teacher to examine the decisions they make in the context of teaching and the coach must be able to help the teacher bridge the gap between perception and reality.

Coaches must be attuned to noting teacher’s needs and facilitating the conversation to support the needs of the teacher (West & Staub, 2003). Costa & Garmston (2002) emphasized that coaches should use the knowledge that teachers already have and use coaching to help support the improvement of instructional practices. Jim Knight (2007) writes, “A good coach can see something special in you that you didn’t know was there and help you to make that something special become a living part of you” (p. 15).

Research compiled on Cognitive Coaching has been linked to increased student test scores, growth in teacher efficacy, having an impact on teachers becoming more reflective practitioners, increased collaboration, and an increase in teacher satisfaction (Edwards, 2012). Cognitive Coaching provides a structure for teachers to engage in collaborative, non-evaluative dialogue that promotes reflection and provides support for on-going learning.

Conversations that are constructed with the intent of having meaningful dialogue can transform a teachers practice. Thomas (2015) refers to this as transformative learning. He states, “During transformative learning we critically examine prior interpretations and held assumptions in order to form new meaning(s) “(p.2). In order for coaching to be transformational, the coach must be skilled in balancing the conversation

so that it is collaborative and focused on measurable outcomes that are driven by the coachee rather than the coach (Teemeant et al., 2011).

### *The Art of Dialogue*

Dialogue is a complex and unique process. Susan Scott (2004) writes, “Our very lives succeed or fail gradually, then suddenly one conversation at a time” (p. 1).

Instructional coaching fails or succeeds one conversation at a time. More often than not, novice teachers do not have a grasp on the reality of their teaching or the impact it has had on student learning. Through coaching conversations, a teacher can develop a better understanding of their perceptions and whether or not they are accurate (Reiley, 2015). Solely observing and providing written feedback to an individual does not promote the depth of learning and reflection that is fostered through the use of carefully crafted dialogue between a coach and coachee.

“Dialogue is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand one another’s viewpoints and deeply held assumptions (Garnstom & Wellman 1998, p. 31). It is through conversation that the coach and coachee can dissect a lesson, raise awareness, and enhance learning. Coaching through interaction builds metacognition. Careful facilitation of dialogue that causes a coachee to analyze their actions and the thought process behind their actions can promote opportunities for the coachee to not only grow but also change their practice (Dunston, 2007; Risko et. al., 2009). As a coach provides feedback and guidance through the use of conversation, Morris (2003) describes this as the “handing down the craft” (p.1). These conversations can help build a bridge between theory and practice for the teacher. Through the observation cycle, coaching provides a mini training session where a coach can explore

what is known and what is unknown with teachers (Fitzgerald, 1993). An effective coach must have the awareness and tact to navigate conversations that offer support and the finesse to engage in difficult conversations to help the coachee make improvements to their practice.

Communicating effectively is essential to instructional coaching. After a coach observes a teacher in action, they must be able to provide feedback to the teacher in a clear and concise manner that is constructive and not overly critical. Constructive and supportive feedback sets the stage for teachers to ask questions about their practice and starts the process of evaluating their own teaching.

To maintain the coaching relationship, an instructional coach must be knowledgeable in response behaviors designed to mediate thinking (Knight, 2009, pg. 86). Listening must happen before dialogue can occur. A coach must give the coachee the purity of their attention, free of judgment, setting all other thoughts and ambitions aside and be present in the moment. A clear focus on the speaker allows the coach to authentically listen to what the speaker talks about and how they talk about it. This type of listening allows the coach to determine how they will respond and where they need to direct their energy in the conversation.

A coach must learn to effectively use pausing, paraphrasing, and probing when they facilitate conversations. When a coach can effectively paraphrase a coachee's words and recite it back to them, it can create a cause for the coachee to examine the meaning of their own words and reshape or deepen their thinking (Knight 2007, p. 86). Coaches inherently need to have the ability to organize collective thoughts and promote critical thinking. A coach can help take the coachee to the next level of thinking and foster

reflection through the use of probing. An effective coach understands the art of asking questions and has precision in implementing these questions into the conversation in a way that does not disrupt the flow of the conversation.

The dynamics of the coaching conversation are dependent on each individual being seen and treated as an equal. Even though the coach brings expertise of teaching to the conversation, the coach must approach every conversation knowing they do not have all of the answers and there must be mutual respect that each individual's ideas and beliefs are valuable. The implementation of coaching has significant benefits not only to the coachee but also to the coach (Sweeney, 2003). A coach that operates under the impression they have just as much to learn as they have to offer exercises the principals of the collaborative process.

A coach must be able to authentically project praise, encouragement, sincerity, and concern to the coachee. If a coach's intentions seem fake or insincere, it can be detrimental to the coaching relationship (Knight, 2007). A coach must be able to convey to the coachee, through their words and actions, that they have their best interest in mind. The ability to converse with an awareness of how one's words can lift or deflate the relationships we have with others is an essential component of dialogue. The emotional wake you leave is what is remembered or felt after the conversation is over (Scott, 2004). A coach must be aware of how the emotional wake they leave can help or hinder the coachee's growth and learning.

### *The Role of Reflection*

Reflection "requires a journey into the deepest recesses of one's self-

awareness, where failures, fears, and hopes are hidden” (Kagan, 1992). Through the use of collaboration, individuals mutually discuss the activity that was observed and elicit intent to explore further learning. Judith Warren Little (1982) suggest that adults learn better when trust, concern, and respect for the learning is exercised and individuals are allowed to be in control of their own learning. The use of dialogue, which is facilitated by an instructional coach, promotes reflection and allows for individualized support that is tailored to the needs of the teacher and their students.

At the conclusion of a teaching episode, “reflection on action” should occur. Reflection on action allows the teacher to identify moments during the teaching episode that went well and moments that need refining (Danielson, 2002). During this reflective process the activities of the instructional coach, modeling, asking probing questions, and praising the teacher’s successes allows the coach to provide scaffolded instruction that helps move the teacher toward self – regulation (Collet, 2012). These activities support the belief that the learning goals of the coachee are not driven by the coach but rather by the individual. A coachee is more likely to implement and sustain new teaching practices if they feel they have had a stake in developing their goal. Armstrong (2012) found, “In a dialogue with the coachee, questions are introduced that encourage the development of new meaning around the coachee’s experience. Once new meaning is generated, new pathways for action can be identified” (p. 39). This allows for real learning to occur because the learner drives the learning. A study on reflective practice (Amobi, 2005) found that teachers who demonstrated the ability to reflect were more likely to self – correct their teaching skills.

*Conclusion*

Instructional coaching can create a synergistic environment that focuses on growing professionals through the use of collective problem solving, decision-making, and reflection. Just as students need to understand the purpose for learning, adults are motivated to learn when they recognize the value of what they are learning (Knowles, 1990). An instructional coach may often wear many hats therefore their role can be multifaceted. The literature suggests that for instructional coaching to be successfully implemented in schools, a coach's role must be well defined and adequate time must be provided for coaches to engage in their work. The lack of a clearly defined role of the coach can also pose challenges when trying to define qualities of a good coach. The literature highlights that coaches help the coachee understand their own needs and provide support to help meet those needs through dialogue, reflection, and personal goal setting (Yost, 2002). Since collaborative, meaningful dialogue is the foundation to instructional coaching and reflective practice, a study to define the role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the essence of one – on- one coaching conversations and the patterns of discourse between the coach and coachee serves as means to support the existing body of literature and fill in gaps as to the role of the instructional coach and the impact instructional coaching has in preparing future teachers for the realities of the classroom.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### *Overview*

If we operate under the assumption that well-prepared and effective teachers are the greatest resource to our schools (Darling – Hammond, 2003), we can benefit from knowing more about how instructional coaches can support teaching candidate's in their ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy. A growing body of evidence indicates that teachers who lack adequate initial preparation are more likely to leave the field within the first three years of teaching (Darling – Hammond, 2003). Due to this, institutions of Higher Education have begun to take steps to better prepare future teachers for the realities of the classroom by providing them with well-supervised field based experiences. The use of instructional coaching has been adopted by an Urban Midwest University to support candidates while in field based practicums as a way to link theory to practice and develop a candidate's knowledge, skills, and dispositions about the teaching profession. An instructional coach provides support to the coachee in lesson planning, modeling, implementation of instruction, and engages the teaching candidate in reflective conversations to promote their growth and learning. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the teacher candidate's perceived role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the language and response patterns that exist between a coach and teacher candidate through the use of verbal persuasion, social modeling, questioning, active listening, pausing and paraphrasing, and problem solving as a means to support a teaching candidate's ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy.

In this Chapter, I describe the methodology that was utilized to guide the data collection and analysis of this study. I provide a rationale for a qualitative case based study, outline the development of the research instrument, identify the case selection process, identify the data collection and procedures utilized, highlight the process for data analysis, identify the role of the researcher and outline ethical considerations made for this study.

### *Design of the Study*

This qualitative study was conducted using a semi-structured interview through the use of a multiple case study design. A case study based research design was selected for this investigation because it seeks to examine the individual experience of each participant. It is rooted in looking at the process, understanding, and interpretation of a phenomenon such as a program, event, or process within its real-world context. (Merriem, 1988; Yin, 2012).

From the perspective of the researcher, the goal of conducting a case study is to examine and develop an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of participant's experience from multiple points of view within the setting that the experience took place. This methodology allows each participant to share his or her individual story. The methods employed in a case study are less important than the questions asked and their relationship to the end product (Merriem, 1988). This study explored the experiences of five participants therefore a multiple or comparative case study allowed the researcher to cross examine the individual's experiences and explore the event more in depth. According to Baxter & Jack (2008), multiple case design allows the researcher to explore similarities and differences within or between cases.



Case studies are suitable for studying phenomena where little is known or understood about the topic. The implementation of instructional coaching in teacher education programs is a new phenomenon; therefore, I chose a multiple case study method to gain multiple perspectives in examining the perceptions of the role of the instructional coach and the impact the coaching conversation has in supporting a teaching candidate's in their ability to reflect, revise, and build their confidence as a future teacher.

#### *Evolution of the instrument*

A modified Delphi technique was chosen as a means to develop the research instrument. The results of this process were utilized to develop the interview protocols for conducting the case study interview. The Delphi technique, created by Dalkey & Helmer (1963), is a method that can be employed to gather reliable information from experts within a field to achieve consensus of opinion on a problem or phenomenon (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi method is a flexible process that allows participants to provide anonymous feedback to the group and affords the researcher the ability to maintain control over this process. As cited in Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn (2007), "Proponents of the Delphi Technique agree that researchers can obtain more accurate data using questionnaires distributed to a group of anonymous experts at a distance than in face-to-face committee meetings where certain individuals tend to dominate the decision-making process (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975; Linstone & Turoff 1975; Moore, 1987)."

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how one defines the role of the instructional coach, five instructional coaches from a higher education institution were selected to serve as experts on the Delphi panel. The Delphi's were made aware that their

participation in this group was voluntary and providing feedback granted the researcher permission for their anonymized responses to be used during the Delphi process. The Delphi method that was used in this study consisted of four rounds. According to Cyphert & Gant (1970) three iterations of eliciting feedback and reaching consensus is sufficient for collecting the information needed in order to form consensus. The purpose of the Delphi group was to explore the research question, “What is the perceived role of the instructional coach?”

The first round of the Delphi process began by eliciting responses from the panel using an open ended prompt provided by the researcher. The Delphi’s were given two weeks to provide a written response to the prompt, “What is the role of the instructional coach?”. Four out of the five Delphi’s responded to this prompt and the researcher compiled responses electronically and housed them on a secure electronic database. The researcher began by reading and analyzing each response individually. During the second reading of each document, the researcher took notes in the margins to summarize each paragraph and highlighted words that reoccurred in the text. After each passage was read and annotated the researcher then cross examined each document highlighting similar words and noting themes. Statements provided by the Delphi’s were coded and organized into common groups. Next the research developed categorize for each group. Based on current literature about instructional coaching each category was analyzed and assigned a title. Table 1.1 illustrates the category titles and the supporting statements consequent from the Delphi’s first round of responses.

Table 1.1

Delphi Round 1: What is the role of the instructional coach?

Category Title	Supporting Statement
Reflective Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead teacher candidates in reflective conversations</li> <li>• Observation and provide feedback</li> <li>• Ask questions without feeling attacked</li> <li>• Prompt candidates with questions</li> <li>• Anticipate needs and scaffold questions</li> <li>• At times, explicitly tell candidate strategies or options for problem solving</li> <li>• Gradual Release - directive conversations in beginning and more reflective with more experiences</li> <li>• Not a “gotcha conversation</li> </ul>
Effective Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find the right words to have <u>fierce</u> conversations</li> <li>• Ask questions without the teacher candidate feeling attacked</li> <li>• Listening ear</li> <li>• Instructional Coach limit conversations that are autobiographical in nature</li> <li>• Questioning for clarification</li> <li>• Mediate the candidate’s thinking by asking dynamic questions that invite inquiry</li> </ul>
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationship with course instructor</li> <li>• Instructors must view the coach as competent, capable, and credible</li> <li>• Partner with buildings and mentor teachers to create the best learning experience for candidates</li> <li>• Connect theory to practice</li> </ul>
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect theory to practice</li> <li>• Capable, competent, and credible</li> <li>• Role play having conversations with mentor teachers</li> <li>• Model instructional strategies</li> <li>• Provide resources</li> <li>• Co-teach in class</li> <li>• Clear concept of educational pedagogy</li> <li>• On- site professional developer</li> </ul>
Mentor/Trusting Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person to talk to, share fears and victories</li> <li>• “Safe place”</li> <li>• Develop trusting relationships with the teacher candidate in a relatively short period of time</li> <li>• Not a “gotcha” conversation where those in the Superior role act as the interrogator</li> <li>• Build candidate’s confidence</li> </ul>

Category Title	Supporting Statement
Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attach goals to improve practice</li> <li>• Create a goal for the next time that they teach</li> <li>• Goals are driven by the candidate</li> <li>• Make self – discoveries</li> </ul>
Growth Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize strengths and areas of growth</li> <li>• Candidate’s become evaluators of their own teaching</li> <li>• Focus on improvement and success</li> <li>• Build instructional capacity to accelerate learning</li> </ul>

Following the coding and categorizing of each Delphi’s written response, the researcher began the second round of the Delphi process. The researcher developed the second round questioner and the Delphi’s were provided a copy of Table 1.1. Delphi’s were provided instructions in writing with specific directions to review the table and verify that it represented their responses to the prompt provided in round one. Delphi’s were also asked to read each category title and the supporting responses and state if they agree or disagreed with the category title and supporting responses. They were encouraged to rename categories if they felt it was inaccurate and to suggest if any responses should be moved to another section, duplicated to fit more than one section, or omitted. Participants were provided two weeks to review and respond to the document. During this round, five Delphi’s provided feedback on the document and the researcher met individually with two Delphi’s to clarify suggestions that were made. The researcher reviewed the Delphi’s suggestions and made revisions to the document which is highlighted in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

Delphi Round 2: What is the role of the instructional coach?

Category Title	Supporting Statements
Lead Reflective Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead teacher candidates in reflective conversations</li> <li>• Observe and provide feedback</li> <li>• Asks non-threatening probing questions</li> <li>• Anticipate needs and scaffolds questions</li> <li>• At times, explicitly tell candidate strategies or options for problem solving</li> <li>• Gradual Release - directive conversations in beginning of the experience and more reflective with more experiences</li> <li>• Bridges theory learned in coursework to experiences in the PK – 12 classroom</li> <li>• Not a “gotcha conversation”</li> </ul>
Effective Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find the right words to have <u>fierce</u> conversations</li> <li>• Ask questions without the teacher candidate feeling attacked</li> <li>• Listening ear</li> <li>• Instructional Coach limit conversations that are autobiographical in nature</li> <li>• Questioning for clarification</li> <li>• Mediate the candidate’s thinking by asking dynamic questions that invite inquiry</li> </ul>
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationship with course instructor</li> <li>• Instructors must view the coach as competent, capable, and credible</li> <li>• Partner with buildings and mentor teachers to create the best learning experience for candidates</li> <li>• Collaborate with field experiences office to explore and create effective partnerships</li> </ul>
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect theory to practice</li> <li>• Capable, competent, and credible</li> <li>• Role play having conversations with mentor teachers</li> <li>• Model instructional strategies</li> <li>• Provide resources</li> <li>• Co-teach in class</li> <li>• Clear concept of educational pedagogy</li> <li>• On- site professional developer</li> </ul>
Mentor/Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person to talk to, share fears and victories</li> <li>• “Safe place” for students.</li> <li>• Develop trusting relationships with the teacher candidate in a relative short period of time</li> <li>• Not a “gotcha” conversation where those in the Superior role act as the interrogator</li> </ul>

Category Title	Supporting Statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build candidate's confidence</li> </ul>
Goal Setting/Growth Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize strengths and areas of growth</li> <li>• Building upon problem solving skills of candidates</li> <li>• Candidate's become evaluators of their own teaching</li> <li>• Focus on improvement and success</li> <li>• Future focused</li> <li>• Build instructional capacity to accelerate learning</li> <li>• Attach goals to improve practice</li> <li>• Create a goal for the next time that they teach</li> <li>• Goals are driven by the candidate</li> <li>• Make self – discoveries</li> </ul>

The third round of the Delphi process promoted iteration, allowing participants to refine their views and move toward consensus. The Delphi's were provided Table 1.2 highlighting their suggested revisions and omissions and were asked to provide feedback. Delphi's had a week to review the document and respond. At the conclusion of this round, Delphi's responses showed 100% degree of consensus.

The Delphi process of repeated questioning and examination of each document supported the development in exploring the role of the instructional coach. Through the lens of the experts in the Delphi group, their responses were utilized to develop interview questions that will be utilized with case study participants to explore the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived role of the instructional coach?
2. Are there language patterns that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?
3. Are there response patterns that exist between the coach and the teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

4. What impact does the coaching conversation have on assisting the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

The development of the interview questions is grounded in the literature and was guided by the responses provided by the Delphi's. At the conclusion of the third Delphi process, the researcher began developing the interview protocol by individually examining each research question. Next, the researcher utilized Table 1.2 to examine each category and supporting statements to identify which category might address the research question. The researcher also noted categories and supporting statements that may overlap in addressing research questions. Next, the researcher carefully examined the supporting statements and used these to derive the interview questions. At the conclusion of this process, the researcher provided the Delphi group with Table 1.2 and the interview questions. The Delphi's were asked to cross reference the table and the interview questions and indicate if the interview questions were representative of the categories they identified during the Delphi Process. Next, the Delphi's were asked if the interview questions were accurately positioned to address each research question. The Delphi's first read through the interview questions and identified what category the question addressed. For example, the interview question: Tell me about your relationship with your instructional coach? Delphi Jo stated, "This makes me think of Liaison, Teacher, Mentor." Next, the feedback provided from the three Delphi's that participated in this round was used to revise interview questions that were identified as unclear. The Delphi's feedback was also used to design follow up questions during the interview process and identify key words or phrases that would prompt the use of follow up questions.

In relation to the research question: What is the perceived role of the instructional coach? The following questions were derived:

- What do you perceive is the role of the instructional coach?
- Tell me about your relationship with your instructional coach.
- What qualities does your coach possess that help or hinder your interactions?
- Describe your coach's communication style?
  - Follow up: How does your coach use verbal and non verbal communication skills in their interactions with you?

Rational: These questions and the follow up question support were identified as a support to the categories of liaison, effective communicator, mentor, and resource. The current body of research also supports these categories as it suggests that instructional coaches should be individuals who have demonstrated success in the classroom and have a keen understanding child development. Instructional coaches should exhibit a deep understanding of pedagogy and should be skilled in developing and implementing research based instructional strategies in a variety of ways in the classroom setting (Kowel & Steiner, 2007). Instructional coaches must also demonstrate interpersonal skills by possessing the ability to connect with others to establish trust and credibility that fosters dialogue and reflective thinking about their practice and connects theory to practice (Kowel & Steiner, 2007).

The following interview questions address the Research Questions 2 and 3.

Research Question 2 & 3: Are there language patterns that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation? Are there response patterns that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the conversation?



- Describe the coaching conversation. What happens in these conversations?
  - Follow up question: In your experience, Is there a structure to the conversations? Explain?
  - Follow up question: What do you perceive is the goal of these conversations?
- During these conversations, how does your coach support you in reflecting on your teaching?
  - Follow up: Can you give examples of questions your coach might ask during your conversation?
- Describe the feedback that you receive from your coach during your conversation.
- How does your coach bridge theory learned in your coursework to the practices you observe or implement in the field?
- Can you provide a specific example of a conversation you have had with your coach that promoted growth and learning?
- What role does goal setting play in your conversations?
  - Follow up: How does your coach support you in setting and reaching your goals?
- Coaching conversations can be lead by the coach, lead by the candidate, or can be an equally shared experience. What do you believe is true of the conversation you had with your coach? Why?

Rational: The goal of cognitive coaching is for the coach to support the coachee in reflecting on their actions during instruction and examining the impact these actions have on student learning (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). Instructional coaches offer personalized learning to teacher candidates through the use of observation and conversation. The discourse that occurs between a coach and the coachee provides opportunities for the teacher to engage in a metacognitive process that prompts the teacher to examine their interactions in order to bridge previous learning to new

understandings through the use of inquiry, discovery, and problem solving (Heineke, 2013; Collet, 2012). The Delphi group indicated that leading reflective conversations, goal setting, promoting growth mindset, and effective communication is part of the role of the instructional coach. These questions aided in assessing the dynamics of the coaching conversation and identifying if patterns exist in the dialogue exchanged between the coach and the teacher candidate.

The following questions examine Research Question 3: What impact, if any, does the coaching conversation have on assisting the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

- How does having a conversation and receiving feedback from your coach after teaching alter/improve your practice?
- Describe the greatest gain or learning you have had from working with an instructional coach.
- Has working with an instructional coach affected how you perceive yourself as a future teacher? If yes, explain how?
- Do you have anything else to add to our discussion about your experience working with an instructional coach?

Rational: According to Bruce and Ross (2008), “When a teacher receives positive and constructive feedback from a respected peer, there is greater potential for enhanced goal setting, motivation to take risk, and implementation of challenging teaching strategies” (p.348). Critical reflection on one’s teaching is necessary for personal efficacy and ongoing growth. Such thinking helps teachers to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching, which in turn provides knowledge that will assist them in improving their teaching processes. Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory suggest that

individual's learn through interactions with others and their environment. These interactions can positively or negatively impact an individual's self – efficacy.

### *Case Selection*

At the conclusion of creating the instrument the researcher began to explore case selection for the study. In order to gain multiple perspectives this study utilized purposeful sampling. Creswell (2008), states, “In purposeful sampling the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomena” (p. 214). Often in social science and human service related fields the utilization of multi-case studies suggest the researcher select the participants and the case rather than soliciting volunteers (Stake, 2005). Therefore, in this study the researcher worked closely with the course instructor and instructional coach to identify possible participants for this study. Qualitative research design allows the researcher to be selective in identifying the site and the participants in their study based on who or what will best help the researcher explore and understand the central phenomena of their study (Creswell, 2008).

Participants in this study include one elementary instructional coach and five pre-service teaching candidates. Stake (2005) recommends, “The benefits of a multi-case study will be limited if fewer than 4 cases are chosen and no more than ten” (p.22). The participants in this study engaged in a fifty-hour field experience in an urban school setting. The elementary education instructional coach has over thirty years of teaching experience in the public school setting and has over sixteen years of mentoring/coaching experience. The pre-service teacher candidates utilized in this study are working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, have previously completed a

sixty- hour field experience where they taught three small or whole group lessons. The teacher candidates were enrolled in a block of three methods courses and completed a five week, fifty-hour practicum with the expectation to teach twelve lessons with the support of an instructional coach in their building two days a week.

### *Data Collection*

The research participants were identified and contacted by the researcher prior to the beginning of the field experience and asked if they were interested in the study. Participants that expressed interest in the study were asked to schedule a formal meeting with the researcher to review the purpose of the study, ask questions, and sign a formal consent waiver to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Data collection for this study utilized recordings of the coaching conversations and an open ended, semi – structured interviews.

### *Interviews*

One –on – one interviews were utilized in this study. A one on one interview allowed participants to work with the researcher in an intimate setting where they were encouraged to speak freely, comfortably, and articulate their experience in order for the researcher to investigate the essence of one – on- one coaching conversations and if this discourse supports learning, enhances instruction, promotes reflection and builds the candidate's self – efficacy. Interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore the interviewee's beliefs, feelings, and motives. The use of interviews allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore the phenomena more in-depth by providing the researcher control in posing questions that elicit responses that deepen the understanding

of the topic while being flexible enough to allow participants to share their personal experiences. (Creswell, 2014).

This qualitative study utilized recordings of coaching conversations and semi-structured interviews. The interview questions are included in Appendix A. Interviews were conducted following the participant's observation and coaching conversation. The researcher recorded each interview using an audio recorder. In addition to the audio recorder, the researcher also took notes during the interview. Interview questions were structured to be open ended and probing was used when needed to gain a better understanding of the interviewee's perspective. Following the interview, the researcher recorded any thoughts or captured descriptive notes that were not recorded in the interaction, such as body language or tone of voice, to aid in the data analysis process and further develop interview questions.

The protection of individual identities was of the utmost importance to the researcher. To ensure anonymity of each participant, the researcher used pseudonyms for each individual and descriptors that would lead to identification of the participants were omitted. Participants were informed of how their identity would be protected and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

### *Data Analysis*

In qualitative research design, data analysis often takes place preliminarily during the data collection process. Creswell states, "Data analysis involves a simultaneous process of analyzing while you are also collecting data. In qualitative research, the data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities" (p.245). As the researcher conducted interviews, she read through her initial notes in order to develop a general sense of the

data being collected and made adjustments to the interviews as needed or asked participants for clarification

At the conclusion of the data collection period the researcher transcribed the audio recordings. “Transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data (Creswell, 2008, p. 246). After the interviews were transcribed the researcher provided a copy of the transcription to the participant to review for accuracy and to clarify any information if needed. Next, the researcher reviewed each transcription multiple times as a means to familiarize themselves with each interview as a whole. While the researcher reviewed each transcription they made notes in the margins as a tool to organize the data into meaningful groups. Then the researcher began to code the data by breaking each transcription into segments to identify distinct concepts or key words that appear throughout the interview. The segments were labeled with codes and each code was explored further to identify commonalities and eliminate redundancy. The codes were then organized by looking for broad themes and were color-coded. From here the researcher synthesized the themes and used cross-examination of each case to make comparisons in regard to similarities and differences of each candidate’s experience working with an instructional coach. The use of individually studying each case and cross examining each case aided in triangulating the data and drawing conclusions.

#### *Role of the Researcher*

In a qualitative study the researcher is the instrument; therefore, qualitative research is sensitive to the integrity of the researcher. Qualitative researchers need to be concerned with the effect their subjectivity will have on their data (Le Compte, 1987). Researchers need to be aware of their own biases and not let that interfere or influence

the data that is collected and how it is analyzed. As a researcher one must be aware of their role and potential bias as it relates to the study. The researchers own perceptions of the role of the instructional coach and benefits of working with an instructional coach during a field experience have been shaped by the researcher's personal experience. In 2013, the author of this dissertation was hired by a Midwest university to develop and implement an instructional coaching model for pre-service teaching candidates. For the last three years the researcher has worked as an elementary instructional coach in close collaboration with pre-service candidates, course instructors, and school leaders at practicum sites. The researcher's role in developing and implementing this program has enhanced their knowledge and imminence to this study and because of the familiarity with instructional coaching, the researcher recognizes their own bias in this study.

Stake states "...researchers have some of the influence of contexts in mind at the outset of a study, but they need to be prepared for the subtleties of unexpected influence" (p. 8). As a researcher it is important to have an awareness of one's own biases so they can refrain from leading the interviewee, inserting themselves into the conversation, or putting words in the interviewee's mouth. The researcher in this study attempted to design the interview questions and structure the interviews in a manner that is not leading and allows for flexibility. According to Stake (2005), the research must be skilled in exercising flexibility in the use of research questions in the sense of being able to pose questions and recognize when new issues emerge. This allows the research to remain objective as a means to not force their own interest or feelings upon participants.

### *Ethical Considerations*

It is of great importance to the researcher that participant's rights are respected during this study. This study sought permission and followed the ethical guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants met with the researcher to review the purpose of the study and data collection methods and provided written consent to indicate their willingness to participate. Participants were made aware that they were free to terminate their participation at any time during the study. The report of the findings was written to protect the identity of the participants and all documents and audio recordings were kept by the research on a password protected computer file in a secure cloud system. Upon the conclusion of the study all the audio recordings were destroyed.

Chapter four and five will describe how the data was analyzed and present the findings of this study through the use of a narrative format.



## Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

This chapter reports the findings from data collected using a semi-structured interview through the use of a multiple case study design. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the language and response patterns that exist between a coach and teacher candidate through the use of verbal persuasion, social modeling, questioning, active listening, pausing and paraphrasing, and problem solving as a means to support a teaching candidate's ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy. The broad question that was explored was: What is the perceived role of the instructional coach? This question is contextualized by the following research questions:

RQ1: Are there language patterns (verbal persuasion, type of feedback given, structure of the conversation, leadership in the conversation, etc.) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ2: Are there response patterns (posing open ended questions, providing feedback, actively listening, pausing, paraphrasing, or problem solving) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ3: Does the coaching conversation assist the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

This chapter presents the data collected from the semi-structured interview. Data collection and analysis of the interviews was conducted in three phases. First, interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher. Participants were sent the transcription and asked to review, clarify, add, or omit any information. Next, each

interview was individually reviewed and coded. Summaries were created to capture the key ideas of each case and are presented as narratives in Section 1 of this chapter.

Next, each individual case was coded and analyzed by interview question and cross examination was used to look for similarities and differences noted in each individual's experience. From this cross examination themes emerged and the data was generalized. Section two of this chapter presents the emergent themes from the cross case analysis. Section three of this chapter presents a discussion of the study's results.

### *Description of Sample*

Interview participants were selected from a pool of pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a block of three methods courses and completed a five week, fifty-hour practicum with the expectation to teach twelve lessons. An instructional coach provided support in their building two days a week. Participants were working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and had previously completed a sixty-hour field experience. The researcher worked closely with the course instructor to select and invite participants to engage in the study to ensure varied experiences working with an instructional coach were represented. Five participants were selected and signed consent for participating in the study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

### *Section 1: Case Study Narratives*

Participants from Case 1 and Case 2, had experience working with an instructional coach in a previous practicum, but the coach assigned to them this semester was their first time interacting with this individual.

*Case 1: Sarah*

Sarah is thoughtful and enthusiastic Caucasian woman in her thirties. She is a non-traditional student whom currently holds a bachelor's degree in another discipline and has returned to higher education to earn a degree in Elementary Education. During her advanced practicum, Sarah was placed in a second grade classroom and in a previous practicum she was placed in a third grade classroom.

**Role of the Coach:** Sarah shared that she perceived the role of the instructional coach as someone who is able to be in the classroom to provide further feedback on her instruction. Sarah shared, "It was nice to have someone other than my mentor teacher give me feedback because my mentor teacher is very direct and she is not very warm so I am often left wondering if I am doing okay?" Although, Sarah admits she had limited interactions with her coach prior to the practicum she described her coach as very warm and perceived their interactions as non-threatening. Working with a coach allowed Sarah to have another person to "bounce ideas off of" during the practicum experience. She claimed that her coach was very friendly and found her communication style to be very open and encouraging. Sarah states, "It was wonderful to have a relaxed conversation. It felt more like I was seeking advice from an old friend."

**Examining the Conversation:** When engaging in a coaching conversation, Sarah shared that the coach used open ended questions to allow her to share her perceptions of the lesson. The coach "guided me along in the conversation but I did the majority of the sharing". Sarah shared that the structure of the conversation was familiar to her from her work with a previous coach and she expressed that she found value in the fact that her coach also asked if there was anything else she wanted to talk about. "This allowed me

to bring up something entirely different than what she observed and she gave me some valuable feedback that I felt was even more valuable than the conversation about the teaching she witnessed.” Sarah shared that this open ended question allowed her to discuss a problem that she was having engaging a particular student and the coach used this opportunity to remind Sarah of content learned in a previous semester about building relationships with students. Sarah states, “She understood what I’ve learned previously ...and helped remind me of those things in the practicum experience.”

Sarah believes the purpose of the coaching conversation is to aid in helping the candidate reflect on their own teaching. Sarah discussed that the framework for the conversation prompts her to think about her perception and feelings about the lesson. The coach prompted her to share strengths of her teaching rather than “tearing herself down”. During the conversation Sarah appreciated that her coach made suggestions for improvements in a way that facilitated conversation. “When she made suggestions to me she would say, ‘Have you thought about such and such’ ...rather than ‘you should do it this way’.” She believed this put a positive spin on the conversation and “I was not being graded so she was just there to give me feedback and help me.”

**Improvement of Practice:** Sarah shared, “In this practicum I have felt like and wondered a couple of times if I can do this...I have felt a little less confident this practicum because my mentor teacher has the bar placed high.” The encouragement and conversation with her coach provided a positive experience and encouraged her to learn from her experience. Sarah states, “Having a conversation with her (coach) about her perceptions of things going well did really make me feel better about my path so far.”

*Case 2: Brooke*

Brooke is a reflective and conciseness Caucasian female. She openly shares that she is in her early forties and has been teaching preschool for nine years. She is a non-traditional student who is working toward a degree in Elementary Education. Brooke's practicum experience this semester was in a kindergarten classroom and her earlier experience was in a second grade classroom.

**The role of the instructional coach:** When asked what she perceives is the role of the instructional coach Brooke openly shares that working with a coach was not what she anticipated. "I think there was overall less personal feedback than I expected. I was expecting more feedback of what the coach thinks where it was more of an encouragement to be reflective." states Brooke. Brooke compared her initial expectations of coaching with that of a sports coach. She gives this example, "...my daughters dance and when their teachers are giving them feedback it is very specific thinking, like some detail of your foot placement or whatever and this (coaching) was more broad." Brooke claims her age and teaching experience aids in her ability to be reflective as she shares:

"If I were doing this as an undergraduate and hadn't had teaching experience or if I was in my early twenties I think the encouragement to be reflective would be more valuable to me - being pushed to really sort of think it through on my own." Brooke shares that this was the first time working with her coach and they only had a few interactions so she didn't feel it was a "tight relationship". She referred to the relationship as "amicable, helpful, and insightful". Brooke felt that her coach had a good sense of her personality and personal style. "Her recommendations fell in line with my

personal style so it wasn't like receiving a recommendation of something (to try) that I would never do ... she seemed to have a good feel for what we like and what we do and what we think and believe and how that would fit into the school and how to advance that."

When asked what qualities her coach possess that help or hinder the interactions she had with her coach Brooke indicated experience in classrooms and being familiar with the building was important. Brooke explains, "A person who can sort of look around and make quick assessments and is familiar with the school helps." Brooke shared that in a longer conversation that she was able to have with her coach and a peer she felt it offered an opportunity to brainstorm and her coach was "very receptive" to the ideas shared during this conversation.

Brooke shared that she found her coach approachable and open to answering questions. She shared that when approached with a question her coach, "gave nicely rounded answers, they weren't curt and she didn't talk my ear off but she definitely had some input and summarized quickly." During conversations Brooke felt a key quality of her coach was her ability to provide "food for thought". She states, "I didn't feel like she was critical or overly critical...the criticism was very constructive."

**Examining the Conversation:** Brooke describes the coaching conversation to follow a structure that is prompted by the coach. She shares, "After being observed they (the coach) start with 'how do you think it went, how would you rate it on a scale, what would you change or do differently or how would you expand upon what you did?'" Brooke shares that these conversations usually happen directly after being observed but she recalls a time when one of the conversations happened about an hour later: "I

remember last semester where it was immediately after and it was those questions, but I hardly had time to think about it ...but I feel like having a little bit of time to sort of process it and let the dust settle a little and give it a little thought helps.” Brooke shared that the conversation was not what she was expecting by explaining, “I think there is a major part of me that was like I don’t mind grading myself but I kind of wanted to know more about what the coach’s think and I guess that’s not part of their task.” When asked to explain this further Brooke shares:

“I think it could be a little more direct or a little more honest or critical...because if I am being coached it would be almost freeing for them to say ‘I don’t give you the grades so you don’t need to sweat that...so here is a little bit more of a bucket full of what I think and take it or leave it because I don’t grade you.’”

Brooke expected the coach to provide a critical analysis of her teaching rather than encouragement of self analysis of her teaching. She explains that her experience may be different as she runs her own preschool program. “For nine years I have run my own program that I teach by myself so I am accustom to doing all of the planning and everything but there is rarely a time I am being watched...so I think I was just expecting more criticism.”

Brooke believes that the goal of the conversation to “encourage self reflection and goal setting.” She shared that her coach uses open ending questioning and prompting to promote reflection. She adds, “The biggest impression I have had is that it is open ended questions with the encouragement of brainstorming about the future.” Brooke reveals that many of the conversations were student centered, focusing on the “delivery of the information to the students throughout the lesson and the interactions with the kids

individually and as a group.” This was often one of the goals she worked toward and Brooke highlights that by the end of her practicum this is where she has seen the most growth. “I have gotten better at differentiating between the small groups and she had something to do with that but having a conversation with someone more seasoned was helpful.”

**Improvement of Practice:** When asked how having a coaching conversation and receiving feedback from the coach alters or improves her practice Brooke explains, “I think it improves just by keeping you thinking about things and I suppose the questions they are asking are a form of critique because maybe they wouldn’t ask you about something if it wasn’t something they noticed.” Brooke doesn’t feel that she has had a “radical change” in regard to how she perceives herself as a future teacher but she does share that “having time to talk with a seasoned teacher and someone who has had a range of experiences” is her greatest gain from working with a coach. She discusses that having someone to brainstorm with is helpful.

She shares that working with a coach was a positive experience and “I definitely feel more confident but I don’t know if that is just two different practicums or another year of school...the difficulty of it is diminished after having done it at least for a portion of a semester twice now, two different schools, two different teachers, two different grades, different coaches, different professors, it feels more and more comfortable.” Brooke concludes by stating, “There are no major flaws with it (instructional coaching) but it was still not what I expected. If possible more would be better.”



Participants from Case 3, Case 4, & Case 5 have experience working with an Instructional Coach and the coach assigned to them this semester was also their coach in a previous practicum.

*Case 3: Josephine*

Josephine is a bubbly Caucasian woman in her twenties. She is a junior majoring in Elementary Education with a concentration in school library. Josephine has experience working with children in a daycare setting and currently nannies for two school aged children. During her advanced practicum she was placed in a second grade classroom. In a previous practicum Josephine was placed in a fifth grade classroom.

**Role of the coach:** Josephine perceives the role of the instructional coach as another voice to provide her direction, reinforce what she has done well, and to lead her throughout practicum. Having previously worked with the coach assigned to her in this practicum, Josephine squeals “I just love her. There is something about her that is really comforting”. Josephine highlights that in the previous semester her coach was helpful because she was nervous to teach lessons and her advice was helpful. Josephine shared that having worked with this coach in a previous practicum, “I am less scared of her than I am of my professors or my classroom teacher just because we have kind of built a relationship.”

Josephine indicates the conversations she engages in with her coach are not a negative experience because “she is not critical... she just is a very positive person.” Josephine shares that her coach engages her by using positive praise as they transition from the observation to the conversation. She states, “The first thing she says after a lesson is ‘you did a good job with that and you don’t have to worry about it anymore’.”

Josephine expresses that her coach “wants me to be open and express my perceptions and frustrations of the lesson by allowing me to take the lead during the conversation.”

**Examining the Conversation:** Josephine shared that the coaching conversation is usually a pretty quick meeting. She appreciates that her coach begins by asking her to rate her lesson on scale of 1 to 10 and states “You know typically I wouldn’t think about that...she has us look at what we just did differently.” Josephine shares that as she is teaching she is often focused on just getting through the lesson and this why she finds having a conversation with her coach helpful as it prompts her to reflect on her teaching. My coach “wants me to use that conversation and think about the things that we have discussed and keep those things in mind (the next time) I am teaching.” Josephine shared that she revisits the written documentation that the coach captures during the observation and also during the conversation to help improve her practice.

Although her coach makes suggestions in her written feedback, Josephine indicated that during the conversation her coach used prompting to make her problem solve and “she really wants me to come up with solutions myself”. Problem solving and coming up with solutions plays a key role in goal setting for Josephine. She shared that by the end of the conversation she and her coach create steps to aid in what she would like to improve upon. Josephine looks back at the goals she has set to see if she is accomplishing them throughout the semester. In a previous semester, Josephine had more interactions with her coach which allowed her to monitor her goals more closely. “I wish I had more time with her this semester” states Josephine, “I feel like I have improved based on the conversations that I have had with her”.

**Improvement of Practice:** “I feel like I am my own worst critic and I will leave a lesson and think ‘oh that was awful’.” explains Josephine. She shares that her coach uses this as an opportunity to to point out the positive elements of the lesson. Josephine expressed that this positive feedback builds her confidence. She states, “...with every conversation that I have with her I feel better about how my next lesson is going to go because she always gives me suggestions or she has me come up with something that I can use.” She concludes our conversation with, “I feel like if I had not had a coach last semester I wouldn’t really have known where to start this semester... I would be a lot less confident.”

*Case 4: Wendy*

Wendy is jovial and confident Caucasian women who appears to be in her early twenties. She is a junior majoring in Elementary Education. Wendy has gained experience outside of the classroom working with children in a daycare setting and volunteering her time in the community with child centered organizations. Wendy’s first practicum experience was in a kindergarten classroom. Her current practicum has afforded her the opportunity to work with second grade students.

**Role of the Instructional Coach:** When asked what she perceived as the role of the instructional coach, Wendy shared that a coach offers support, feedback, and advice during the practicum experience. Wendy shares, “You have that other person that you can go to talk to...it’s just another person to benefit you when you are in the field.” Wendy expressed her appreciation for her coach taking time to get to know her name and highlighted that her coach greets her every time she sees her. She adds, “it is kind of a

more personal relationship than having just a relationship with your professor.” Wendy specified that her coach sought her out and made an effort to be in her classroom.

When asked what qualities her coach exhibits that help or hinder your interactions, she states:

“A good coach needs to obviously know good advice to give, not just a critique, so instead of saying you know you shouldn’t have done this because it really didn’t work they should be able to tell you why it didn’t work and then give you advice on how to improve.”

Wendy expected her coach not only to give good reasons and advice but she also expected her coach to be honest. “They need to be honest I think because I would rather have a coach that says this didn’t work and explain to me how it could be better than just saying oh yeah that was fine. That doesn’t really benefit me.”

**Examining the Conversation:** The majority of Wendy’s interactions with her coach occurred after her coach observed her teaching. She reports that after teaching a lesson her coach pulled her out of the classroom to have a conversation. Wendy reports:

“We like to talk face to face and I think we have better communication when we are talking in person. I would rather talk to somebody in person especially if it is over something like a critique of my teaching, I want that feedback and I think it sticks with me better if I hear it vocally.”

Wendy expressed that this form of communication was beneficial and the interaction right after teaching allows her to reflect and learn from the experience while “it is fresh in my mind”.

Wendy shared that the conversations she has with her coach are relaxed in nature. During the conversation, Wendy shared that her coach prompts her to reflect on her teaching. “Instead of just telling me, you know, this didn’t go well, she gets me to think and reflect on my teaching.” She articulates that during the conversation her coach may ask her clarifying questions if she was unsure about what the context of the lesson. For example, “She makes sure to ask questions and makes sure she fully understands everything (about the lesson) instead of just saying well you should have done it this way.” Wendy highlights that during the conversation her coach poses questions to get her thinking about her own teaching. “I have to think about my teaching in my own way instead of her just saying you did this and this and its not just me listening. I have to reflect on my own teaching and further analyze it.”

Wendy states the goal of the coaching conversation is “to improve my teaching”. Although her coach gave her advice and suggestions for improvement, she also finds it helpful that her coach talks about her strengths. Wendy shared, “to know what things I am doing that are good that I can keep doing... you want to have those strengths to take with you as a teacher.”

Wendy suggested that coaching conversations aid her in goal setting. She explained, “If I notice my goal is the same each time than I know that is something I need to work on because obviously that is being pointed out when I am teaching.” Wendy shared that her coach supports her in goal setting by asking “What is one way that you could do that?”.

Wendy suggested that the greatest gain she has had from working with an instructional coach is seeing her improvement. She shares, “the more times that I have been observed or someone comes in to work with me the more times I have the

opportunity to improve.” At the end of our conversation, Wendy shared that she desired more interactions with her coach. “Maybe having one toward the beginning of the practicum and maybe having one toward the end . . .she could see how I have improved and we could reflect on that.”

**Improvement of Practice:** As a future teacher Wendy claims that there will be things that she needs to work on and she shared, “. . .hearing that there were things that I did do well was like okay I can do it”. Wendy shared that this feeling makes her much more relaxed and comfortable in the classroom.” Wendy stated that having a conversation and reflecting on her teaching is most beneficial. She concludes, “If I wasn’t thinking about what I was teaching or how I was teaching, I don’t think I would be improving at the level that I am.”

#### *Case 5: Lucy*

Lucy is an enduring and enthusiastic Caucasian female who appeared to be in her early twenties. Lucy is seeking a degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in inclusive practices. This semester Lucy was placed in a first grade classroom and her previous practicums been placed in second grade and a special education classroom. Lucy has also worked at a daycare for the last five years.

**Role of the instructional coach:** Lucy perceives the role of the instructional coach as an individual who “gives advice and helps you become a better teacher.” She shared that coaches are beneficial because “they tell you what steps you can take in order to better suit the students and better benefit them.”

Lucy expressed that her coach made getting feedback very comfortable. She states, “They develop a relationship with you and they ask you questions and get to know

you.” Lucy recalls that her coach showed she cared by asking about her goals as a teacher and her end goal and she feels her coach uses this information, “to help you and coach you toward becoming that.”

When asked what qualities her coach possess that help or hinder their interactions, Lucy shares, “She is very open minded, very understanding, and wise.” Lucy shares that her coach being supportive is a quality that helps her interactions. She stated, “I always know that I can go find her and she will give me support and feedback and she helps with anything.” Lucy appreciates that her coach can make light of situations. Lucy shared, “They are funny. They can put humor into something if you are having a bad day.”

Lucy shared that her coach communicates with her face to face and also documents the conversation which is later emailed to her. She indicated that while her coach writes, “she never doesn’t make eye contact... if you are expressing a concern she is not on the computer.” In her experience the conversation is very verbal in nature. She stated that when her coach provides her feedback “it is usually very positive and even if there are things that you can work on they give examples of how to do it.” She expanded by saying, “they know how to benefit and push you forward.”

**Examining the Conversation:** Lucy described the coaching conversation as a shared “back and forth” interaction between her and her coach. She discusses that the conversation begins by the coach posing questions. She added, “She starts with asking you first not giving her feedback first.” Lucy stated that this is beneficial “so you can see and they can see if you are picking up what they are.” Lucy shared that the conversation is structured in a way that allows you to examine every aspect of the lesson and make adjustments for next time. She expressed, “I think it is important to talk about something

positive first and then what you could do better and if you have concerns.” She shared “If there as something that you completely did and you didn’t feel great about it they always find a positive to tell you to keep doing this or work on this but it is very positive feedback.” Lucy shared that feedback her coach shares often offers examples. For instance, “She (the coach) asked how could I have make that better and related it to what we have learned in math like use manipulatives, get them involved, let them be hands on.”

According to Lucy, goal of of the coaching conversation is “to help you improve your teaching and make sure that you are grasping every concept.” Lucy highlights, “making sure that every child is benefiting and not just one students understands so making sure that everyone gets it.” She shared that her coach supports in her in reflecting by “going back through it (the lesson) so you know what you can do better.” She shared that goal setting “provides a focus for what you need to be working on...so you know what you want to and need to accomplish within the practicum experience.”

**Improvement of Practice:** When asked about how having a coaching conversation and receiving feedback after teaching alters or improves her practice, Lucy feels coaching improves her practice. She explained,

“I feel it helps a lot to have that conversation after it (teaching) so you know how the lesson went so if you feel like it went bad they can tell you okay well this is what you could work on next time or this went really well so you shouldn’t change that. It helps me improve a lot.”



Lucy articulated that the coach helped her navigate things in the classroom. “I would have struggled a lot because if I need any advice I know that I can go find her.” Lucy expanded upon this:

In my first practicum one of the teachers was like (to the student’s) “don’t speak in Spanish” and it hit me the wrong way and I went and talked to her about it.

You haven’t been in this experience so when I went into it and I had a sub the first few days I didn’t know what if this was normal or if it was a rule and I didn’t know if some of the stuff that was going on was right or wrong.

Lucy shared that her coach was able to help her understand that this was an individual point of view.

In her work with an instructional coach her confidence grew. She expressed, “I think it is really important having that support in the field everyday.” Lucy continued:

“I feel like coaches provide a lot more feedback than mentor teachers do. I feel like getting that feedback will either help you realize that this is what you want to do or I am struggling a little bit, and even if you are struggling they help you and put you on the right path.”

### *Section 2: Cross Case Analysis*

The following section presents themes that developed when exploring the role of the instructional coach and if the coaching conversation promoted reflection and revision of a candidate’s practice to build upon self efficacy. Furthermore, this section will examine themes in relation to the language and response patterns, such as structure of the conversation, active listening, questioning, problem solving, and delivery of feedback that emerged from the cross case analysis.

*Advisor and Mentor:* Each participant spoke of the important role that coach plays in providing them feedback and giving them advice during their practicum experience. All five participants shared how beneficial it was for them to have another person to bounce ideas off of and to talk to during this time. Brooke states, “talking with someone who has a range of experience provides different input.”

Participants shared ways that their coach advised and mentored them. All five participants drew attention to the fact that their coach was wise and had a vast array of experiences and knowledge about teaching. Wendy shared, “She knows what we have to do and what we need to accomplish.” Brooke expressed that the coach’s familiarity with the school environment assisted in her ability to make quick assessments in order to give personalized feedback. Lucy shared the coach having previous classroom experience aided the coach in being able to push her forward during the practicum.

For the participants having a conversation with their coach and being offered suggestions on how to improve their practice demonstrated to them that their coach was there to help them. Lucy shared, “They are there to help you become better. My coach provided me with more feedback than my mentor teacher...my mentor teacher just didn’t know what to say or even when I did ask she didn’t want to tell me.” Josephine felt that her coach gave her direction while in the field by reinforcing what she did well.

Participants also shared that the relationship they have with their coach is more personal than the relationship that they have with their mentor teacher or professor. Sarah shares, “The conversation feels very non-threatening, not that my instructors are threatening, but it is a bit more relaxed than someone who is going to be giving you a grade.” This sentiment was echoed by Wendy who shared, “It is kind of a more personal

relationship. Instead of having just a relationship with your professor who is giving you feedback you have that other person you can go and talk to.”

***The conversation is the relationship:*** Josephine, who had a previous relationship with her coach, shares “I just love her!” While Sarah shares, “She just has something about her that is really comforting.” Participants note that the coach is very encouraging. Sarah described her first interaction with her coach, “It was wonderful to be able to just have a relaxed conversation. It felt more like seeking advice from an old friend.” Participants shared that their coach made an effort to get to know them by greeting them in buildings, learning and calling them by name, and making an effort to not only come see them in their classrooms but to have a conversation immediately following an observation.

Lucy shared, “They develop relationships with you by asking you questions, getting know you and they really care about where you are going, what your goals are for teaching like what your end goal is.” Participants indicate that their relationship allowed the coach to personalize the feedback that was provided to them. For example, Brooke states, “I thought she had a good sense of our personalities and personal style so her recommendations fell in line with our personal style...she had a good feel for what we like, what we do, and what we believe and how that would fit into the school and curriculum and how to advance that.”

The participants highlighted interpersonal skills that their coached possessed that aided in her ability to build relationships with them. The participants expressed that their coach was warm, friendly, welcoming, funny, and approachable. Sarah shares that she found the coach to be “very warm and encouraging”. All participants expressed that

their coach was approachable and would be more than willing to meet with them or offer more support if asked. Lucy revealed, “I was really stressed out this practicum and she was going into an observation and she had five minutes and she was like we can talk quickly and she was very supportive.”

***Skilled Communicator:*** All five participants perceived the conversations they had with their coach as constructive. Participants described their coach as open minded and receptive to what they had to say. Josephine shared, “She wants us to be open with her and tell her our frustrations and what we have troubles with.” Participants were comfortable being open and honest with their coach because of the encouragement that she provided. Brooke states, “I didn’t feel like she was overly critical. I would say the criticism was very constructive.” Over half of the participants shared that their coach was very positive when delivering feedback. Josephine states, “When she does tell me things I need to work on she is not being critical. She is being helpful...so she doesn’t make it a negative experience.”

Participants share that their coach knows what advice to give and how to give it. Wendy viewed her coach as honest. “She didn’t just critique me,” she continues, “I would rather have a coach that says this didn’t work and explain to me how it could be better than just saying ‘yeah it was fine’ because that doesn’t benefit me much in the end.” Two participants explained that their coach often gave them examples and modeled for them how to have a specific conversation with their K-6 students or mentor teacher. Lucy shared that one time when she sought out her coach her coach modeled a conversation for her. “She was like with the subs permission you could set all the students down and say ‘I know it has been a crazy week and there is a lot going on and

the structure is different...” Lucy shared that her coach modeled these words for her and encouraged her to go have a conversation with her students.

The participants in this study reported that although the coaching conversation went back and forth between the coach and coachee it was very student centered. All five participants indicated that their coach wanted their voice to be the dominate voice in the conversation, therefore, they did not view themselves as being on the receiving end of the conversation and expected to just “sit and listen”. One participant shared, “She guided me along in the conversation but I did the majority of the talking.” Another participant expressed, “She wants us to lead the conversation.”

All of the candidate’s highlight that during the conversation the coach made suggestions when giving feedback rather than making demands. Sarah shared, “When she made suggestions she said, ‘Have you thought about?’ I like that she suggested, you know, rather than you should do it this way.”

***Coach as a Mediator of Thinking & Learning:*** Each participant in the study discussed their perspective on the nature of the conversation that they had with their instructional coach. Participants highlighted that the coach created a relaxed atmosphere for these conversations by delivering feedback in person, using eye contact, and being attentive during the conversation. All five participants stated that the conversation took place almost immediately after each teaching episode. Four participants shared that being pulled from the classroom right after teaching when the episode is still on their mind was beneficial. One participant shared that in a previous semester the conversation came later in the day. She shared, “I feel like having a little bit of time to sort of process

it and let the dust settle a little and give it thought helps as opposed to an instant response.”

Participants indicated that the conversations were structured in a way that allowed them to be examine their experience. The following chart displays how participants described the structure of the conversation.

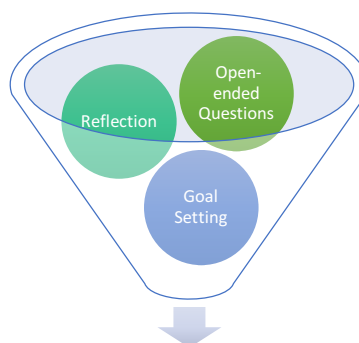


Figure 1: Improvement of Practice

All five participant interviews show agreement that the coach posed open ended questions that allowed them to explore their own perceptions of their lesson. Lucy revealed that the coach started by asking questions first instead of giving her feedback. Participants emphasized that their coach used prompting to have them examine the strengths and areas of growth in their lesson. Wendy shared, “She prompts me to think and reflect on my teaching.” Two participants shared that their coach asked clarifying questions to gain a better understanding of the lesson they observed. One candidate shared that the coach used clarifying to name an area of growth. Josephine stated, “If I say, ‘oh I think I had trouble when this person acted out’ then she might say, ‘so you think you have a management issue?’.” All five participants shared examples of questions that their coach posed to encourage their thinking and reflecting. Examples of these questions are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Examples of questions posed by the instructional coach

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Questions
How would you rate this lesson?
What do you feel went well?
What were the strengths of your lesson?
How could you expand upon what you did?
What do you think didn't go well?
Why do you think that?
What could you do to improve this?
How could you have made that better?
What is one way you could that?
What could you do next time to deal with that?
What would you do if...?
How would you handle...?
Have you considered...?
Have you thought about...?
Is there anything else you want to talk about?

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Three participants indicated that one of the most challenging questions their coach posed was asking them to rate their lesson. Josephine shares, “Typically I wouldn’t think like what would I rate that lesson and so I think she has us look at what we just did differently.” Sarah expressed that her coach asking about her perception of the lesson allowed the coach to understand how the candidate was feeling about it. She shares, “Maybe I am being harder on myself than she is... that really helps direct the conversation.” Lucy adds, “I think that it is beneficial so you see and they can see if you are picking up on what they are and if their concerns are your concerns.”

Three out of the five participants shared that the questions the coach poses throughout the conversation promote problem solving. Josephine shared, “She makes me problem solve...she really wants me to come up with the solution by myself. Brooke stated, “She pushes you to think it through on your own.” All five participants shared that

their coach was happy to support them in finding solutions to their problems. During the interview, Brooke came to this conclusion, "...in fact maybe that has been the biggest impression I have had is that (coaching) is open - ended questions with the encouragement of brainstorming about the future." Participants articulated that the coach offered solutions to problems. Josephine shared, "I usually felt more confident even if I did struggle with something because would work together to come up with a solution."

Reflection was a key term that participants used to describe the nature of the conversation. Participants expressed that the questions the coach posed encouraged self – reflection. Sarah shares, "I noticed in school that reflecting is a very big thing. So we are reflecting on our own teaching." Participants indicated that the conversation requires them to further analyze their teaching. Josephine discloses, "I get so focused in the moment that it helps to reflect...I like to go back and keep those things in mind for the next time I teach." Participants shared that conversations concludes with setting a goal and the coach using prompts like, "What is one way you could do that?" to facilitate the candidate's next steps.

Participants communicated that goal setting plays an important role in their conversations. Lucy asserted, "Goal setting provides you with a focus on what you need to be working on...setting a goal so you know what you want to and need to accomplish within the practicum experience." One participant indicated that goal setting was the main point of the conversation while another participant shared that "the coach gets the top spinning and hopes it perpetuates" adding that she hoped that "there was further follow up on goals" from her coach. Two participants shared that goal setting allows



them to monitor their teaching. Wendy expressed, “If I notice my goal is the same than I know that is something I need to work on.”

Three out of the five of the participants discussed how having a conversation and reflecting on their teaching guides their practice. Josephine articulates how goal setting helps her improve: “I think she wants me to use that conversation and think about the things we have discussed the next time that I teach.”

When participants were asked what they thought the goal of the conversation was four out of five participants mentioned the word improvement. Two participants express that the coaching conversation not only promoted their growth but also took into consideration their learners. Brooke shared that the conversations she had with her coach were often focused on her interactions with students or managing the personal interactions between students and what they bring to the classroom. Lucy stated the goal of the conversation is to “make sure that you are grasping every concept and including all learners and making sure that every child is benefiting and not just one student understands so just making sure that everyone is getting it.”

Wendy shared that she that her coach was there to help her improve. She stated, “She is going to give me feedback on how to improve so the overall goal is to improve my teaching skills.” Lucy sensed that goal setting provided a focus for continued growth while Sarah shares that putting a goal on the lesson can help you learn from the experience. Wendy shared, “If I wasn’t thinking about what I was teaching I don’t think I’d be improving at the level I am.”

***Strength Based Conversation:*** Each participant shared that their experience working with an instructional coach was a positive experience. Participants equated that

the structure of the conversation and the delivery of the feedback aided in this positive experience. Participants shared that conversations always began with focusing on the positive aspects of the lesson by the coach asking the to define what went well. For example, Sarah shared, “Well it is always good to start with a positive because in reality a lot of things we do do go well.” Three participants shared that can be hard on themselves. Josephine explains:

“I feel like I am my own worst critic and I will leave a lesson and think oh that was awful. I did terrible and then they (coach) will point the things that I did well. If I didn’t have that positive feedback, I would probably think that I did awful everything and just focus on the things I did wrong.”

All five participant discussed the positive nature of the feedback they received from their coach. Wendy stated, “It is good to know what things I am doing that are good that I can keep doing. Especially when you are a teacher because you want to have these strengths taken with you.” Sarah did not see these conversations as tear down conversations and Lucy’s interview supported this as she shared that the feedback “is very positive and if there is something that you completely did and you don’t feel great about it they always find a positive to tell you to keep doing.”

***Raising Awareness:*** When participants were asked to describe if they thought coaching altered or improved their practice, all participants stated that coaching helps improve their practice. Participant Sarah explained, “She understands what I have learned previously and what has been emphasized in coursework to help remind me of those things in practicum.” Sarah shared a story about how she was having trouble engaging a student in her lesson. She stated:

“I told her about my troubles and she reminded me of something that I think I learned in previous semesters but I had forgotten about. She reminded me that an important piece that I was probably missing is that I probably hadn’t had a relationship with the student and I remember in past semester talking about this and I remember That I feel like I am good at that.”

Lucy explains that during a math lesson her coach reminded her of how they used manipulatives in class. Lucy shared, “She asked ‘how could you make that better and then she related what we have learned in math, use of manipulatives get them involved, let them be hands on.”

Three participants discussed that the conversations they have had with their revealed things that they hadn’t thought of before. Wendy emphasized that often during lessons her coach provides her with extra information that she didn’t see on her own. For example, she shared that during a small group lesson that she was teaching her coach noticed a student who was not on task at another station. She explained, “She said, ‘so and so isn’t really doing the activity as he should he is just clicking through to get it done.’ That was something she had noticed on her own that I hadn’t even noticed.”

Josephine feels she is more aware of her goals because of the conversations that she had with her coach. She shares, “You know I didn’t even really think about management and she encourages me to be thinking about it and encourages me to put those little management things in my lesson...”

***On the Right Path:*** Participants in this study reported feeling more confident. Four out of the five participants suggested that working with an instructional coach played a role in this. Lucy shared that her coach helped her navigate new experiences.

She shared a story about working with a substitute and explained, “You haven’t been in this experience so when I went into it and I didn’t know if something was normal or if that was a rule and know if some of the stuff that was going on was right or wrong and she was like ‘there is no right or wrong ... it is that person’s view.’” Lucy talked about how receiving feedback from her coach made her feel more confident. She shared that without feedback, “you wouldn’t know if this is the right choice so I feel it has definitely helped me become more confident in what I am doing.”

Similar to Lucy, Josephine also shared that having a coach who is there to answer her questions and give her feedback makes her feel less unsure. She expressed that her coach pointing out things she does well “is good for my confidence”. Josephine stated that she has grown a lot from last semester and she accredits this to her work with her coach. She shared, “I feel like if I had not had a coach last semester I wouldn’t really have known where to start this semester.”

Wendy is grounded in knowing that she can always improve and that throughout her career there will be things to improve upon. “I understand that going into my first year of teaching there is going to be things that I am going to need help...I am not going to be a perfect teacher right off the bat.” The conversations she has had with her coach help. “Hearing that there were things that I did do well was like ‘okay, I can do it.’”

Brooke expressed that she also felt more confident and comfortable in the classroom. She appreciated the input from her coach but she didn’t know if her new found comfort and confidence could be solely equated to her work with a coach. She shares, “I definitely felt more confident but I don’t know if that is just two different practicums or like another year of school. I think that the practicums help a lot.”

Sarah shared that it was nice to have another person to bounce ideas off of and put a positive spin on things. She expresses:

“In this practicum I have wondered a couple of times if I can do this but I have felt a little less confident this practicum because my mentor teacher has the bar set high so high so having a conversation with (coach) about her perception of things going well did make me feel better about my path so far.”

***More is Better:*** All five participants in this study stressed their desire to have more time with their coach. Three of the five participants in this study shared that their class size was very large this semester which limited the opportunities that they had to interact with their coach.” Wendy states, “I wish I had more time with her this semester because I mean she might still observe me again but there is just not much time left but yea I feel like if we had been meeting more we could discuss if whether or not I am meeting those goals that I have set for myself.” Participants feel that in early practicums they had more observations and opportunities for feedback with coach. Josephine shares, “I really have not been observed much this semester and last semester I was observed pretty much every time I taught a lesson.

Lucy believe that having support in the field every day is important for candidates to know where they stand and how to improve. Two candidates highlight their meetings with coaches were pretty quick and one candidate felt that coaches time was limited and she felt coaches were spread pretty thin. She reflects, “If possible more would be better. I get there are limitations to budgets and hiring and people’s hours in the day, but it is good enough that I would say more is better.”

### *Results of the Study*

After analyzing the interviews separately and then cross examining each case, the following research questions were answered: The broad question that was explored is: What is the perceived role of the instructional coach? This question was contextualized by the following research questions:

RQ1: Are there language patterns (verbal persuasion, type of feedback given, structure of the conversation, leadership in the conversation, etc.) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ2: Are there response patterns (posing open ended questions, providing feedback, actively listening, pausing, paraphrasing, or problem solving) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ3: Does the coaching conversation assist the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

#### *Research Question 1 & Research Question 2*

The theme *Skilled Communicator and Coach as a Mediator of Think and Learning* support Question 1 & Question 2. The language and response patterns of the coach during the coaching conversation supported each question therefore they will be discussed together.

The data revealed that the structure of the coaching conversation is supported by the framework of cognitive coaching. The goal of the cognitive coaching is to mediate the teacher's thinking by asking dynamic questions that invite inquiry, facilitates a teacher's ability to examine their internal thought structures, and brings forth new learning (Costa and Garmston, 2002). The success of the coaching conversation was

based on the sound communication skills of the instructional coach. The coach's ability to use praise, encouragement, and pose non-threatening questions during the conversation created a safe space where participants were free to reflect on their experience without the fear of criticism or judgment. Participants in this study shared that the conversations began with the coach asking them to share their perception of the lesson. Although, participants indicated that this was one of the most difficult questions to answer it also provoked a deeper analysis of the lesson and positioned them to think about their lesson in a way they may not have if left to their own accord.

The goal of cognitive coaching is to facilitate change by helping individuals become aware of their thinking and actions (Denton & Hasbrocuk, 2009). The use of open – ended questions allowed the coachee to become the evaluator of their own work and allowed the coach to serve as a guide in the conversation to uncover new learning. This reflective conversation and insights gained by teaching candidates allowed them to not only think about their potential as future teachers but also the impact they can have on student learning by refining their practice.

The data supports that coaching conversations are teacher candidate centered. The examples of questions that the coach posed during the conversation, demonstrated the coach's ability to mediate thinking, promote problem solving, and encourage critical analysis of a teaching episode (Table 2). The coach's ability to elicit a variety of questions allowed the teacher candidate to become aware of their own learning (Reed - Wright, 2009). This process of posing questions for reflection and eliciting problem solving practices positions the candidate to have a key role in the conversation. This promoted ownership of ideas that came out of the conversation. The coach was not seen

as having all of the knowledge and power in the conversation but rather a collaborative partner and resource to guide growth and learning.

The cross case analysis indicates the coach's ability to make suggestions to the teacher candidate during the conversation was a key component of the coaching conversation. Costa and Garmston (2002) emphasized that coaches should use the knowledge that teachers already have and use coaching to help support the improvement of instructional practice. In order for the instructional coach to know what suggestions to give, the coach has to find a way to connect with the coachee and be receptive to the feelings that the coachee expresses during the conversation. The coach's ability to listen and learn about the participant's perception of the lesson allowed the coach to provide personalized feedback that was tailored to the personality and teaching style of the individual. The data supports that coaching is not a one size fits all model and the skill of using questioning that produces rich dialogue allows the coach to differentiate their support for each individual participant. Not only did the use of suggesting provide candidates with recommendations of strategies to try in future lessons, it ultimately led the teacher candidate to set goals for improvement based on free will rather than out of compliance.

### *Research Question 3*

Three themes *strengthened based conversation, raising awareness, and on the right path*, were identified in providing positive evidence to support Question 3. All of the participants in this study reported that having a conversation with their coach and receiving feedback improved their practice. All participants also reported feeling more comfortable and confident in the classroom. One participant did not equate this directly to



working with a coach but rather a combination of things such as coaching, another practicum, and more time in the field.

Bandura's social learning theory suggest that learning how to manage positive and negative emotional states helps individuals identify and reach their goals (Bandura, 1986). Participants indicated that the feedback they received from their coach was constructive and positive in nature. Research shows that positive verbal praise and encouragement aids in developing an individual's beliefs about their abilities. Bandura (1986) refers to this as verbal persuasion. The data collected indicated that the coach's use of constructive feedback strengthened teacher candidate's beliefs in their own abilities while also providing strategies for how they could improve their practice.

For many participants the coaching conversation played a role in shaping the attitudes and perceptions teacher candidates held about their growth and learning. The coach's ability to convey to the candidate the strengths of their teaching, increased the candidate's perception of themselves as future teachers. Participants shared that their perception of their teaching were often harsher than the coaches and they would fixate on what went wrong during their instruction rather than what went right. "Without feedback, we as educators, really don't know whether our own perceptions of our performance is accurate or if we're truly having the impact we need" (Reilly, 2015, p.36). Conversations with a coach provided candidates with another lens to view their lesson and highlighted strengths to build upon.

Through the coaching conversations teacher candidates were offered strategies to overcome obstacles in their lessons. Participants shared that during coaching conversations the coach often modeled for the teacher candidate how to implement a

specific practice or modeled language that could be used when conversing with students or a mentor teacher. Bandura (1986) suggest that social modeling provides an individual with the opportunity to observe another individual attempt a task in order to gain confidence in performing this task on their own. This modeling provided teacher candidates with the tools and encouragement needed to put new learning into action.

Many candidates not only reflected on their work with a coach this semester but also shared how the continuous support of a coach in their current and previous practicums effected their growth and learning. The opportunity to teach in authentic settings and work with a variety of professionals provides teaching candidates with opportunities for learning to occur through mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986).

#### *Broad Question*

The theme of *Advisor and Mentor* as well as the *Conversation is the Relationship* provide support for understanding the perceived role of the instructional coach.

Mentoring is defined as “someone who is a trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. Typically, a mentor motivates, supports, shapes, encourages, and guides a mentee to be all he or she can be” (Varney, 2009, p.128). One of the major roles of the coach as indicated from the data analysis is to provide feedback to the teaching candidate. This feedback helps the participants identify their strengths and makes suggestions for considerations to improve their practices and ultimately provides teaching candidates with encouragement to put new learning into action. The data indicates that participants did not feel the coach’s role was to criticize or tear them down but rather to support their growth and help them improve as future teachers. The constructive and supportive feedback that the coach provided set the stage for teacher candidates to ask questions and

seek advice about their practice. The ability to push candidates to new levels of understanding by providing honest feedback is a critical skill of the instructional coach (Akoury & Walker, 2006).

The data revealed that teacher candidate's viewed the coach having recent classroom experience as a valuable skill set. The coach was seen as knowledgeable about instructional practices and had the ability to suggest a variety of strategies during the conversation. The coach's knowledge and familiarity of the outcomes of the teacher preparation program permitted them to prompt students to reflect on previous learning from other practicums and scaffold feedback to promote growth for what is to come. Teacher candidates indicated that the non-evaluative role of the coach promoted authentic dialogue that was viewed as relaxed in nature.

The study highlights that the coach's disposition and interpersonal skills such as being warm, friendly, welcoming, supportive, and caring are key qualities of a coach. Nodding's (1988) shares that individuals will enter into the spirit of dialogue when they know their thinking will be respected. The coach's ability to exhibit these interpersonal skills created a synergistic environment that allowed participants to openly converse with their coach.

As teacher candidates develop their own beliefs and philosophies about teaching, the coach assisted them in navigating this experience. The data from the cross analysis revealed that the coach served as an experienced individual who supports teaching candidates in interpreting and making meaning of their experiences in the classroom. The use of social modeling and verbal persuasion was used by the coach to help candidates recognize and realize their own thoughts and perceptions about the teaching

profession. As the realities of the classroom become apparent to the teacher candidate, the coach was seen as a guide to help students recognize their potential and help them uncover if teaching is the right path for them.

#### *Further Discussion*

“Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeeded or fail gradually then suddenly one conversation at a time” (Scott, 2004, p. 1). This study indicates that conversation is the lynch pin of instructional coaching. When candidates were asked to explain the relationship they had with their coach they immediately began to talk about their interactions and the conversation. Reed – Wright (2009) claim a coaching relationship can take six to eight months to build. The time frame provided for coaches to work with teaching candidates in a semester poses challenges for deep relationships to form. Therefore, no matter how many interactions the participants had with the coach, the relationship grew through the opportunity to converse with their coach. This is why instructional coaches working with pre-service teachers need to be effective communicators. Costa and Garmston (2002) claim the skills of listening attentively, asking open-ended questions, and being able to paraphrase enhance the coaching relationship.

The coach’s ability to create a safe, non-threatening environment that utilized constructive feedback and encouragement laid the foundation for productive coaching conversations. Taylor (2008) suggest that instructional coaches work from a non-evaluative role therefore their influence comes from the use of their expertise and relationship with individuals rather than a position of power. This study confirms that teacher candidates viewed their coach and their relationship differently than that of their

instructors or mentor teacher. Conversations that candidates had with their coach were described as relaxed and comfortable. By taking the evaluation out of the conversation the coach was viewed as a non-threatening, knowledgeable and supportive individual who was there to promote the growth of the teacher candidate.

Some models of instructional coaching, the coach is seen as the More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978). This study indicates that the coach is an experienced individual whose main role is to mediate the teacher candidates thinking and learning. The coach presents themselves as the More Knowledgeable Other when they are providing suggestions to the student yet the coach's approach to the conversation is collaborative. During the coaching conversation the coach and coachee worked together to examine the teaching experience which positions them to serve as a support to reinforce the knowledge the teacher candidate has already attained and to guide the teacher candidate in acquiring skills that are yet to be learned. The facilitation of the conversation prompts the teacher candidates to be active participants in the conversation. Providing teacher candidates, a voice in the conversation allows them to take ownership of their learning.

This study indicates that over the course of the conversation the coach takes on a variety of roles. Killion, Harrison, Bryon, and Clifton (2012) identify nine roles that the instructional coach may engage in. The data from this study identify three roles that the coach embodied during the conversation; Mentor, Instructional Specialist, and Catalyst for Change. During the conversation, the coach serves as a catalyst for change by prompting the candidate to analyze their teaching and explore new possibilities. As a mentor and instructional specialist the coach works with the novice to provide advice

about instruction, classroom procedures, and instructional practices (Killion, et. al., 2012).

Evidence from statements made by the participants in this study support the framework of cognitive coaching as a bases for the conversation to be reflective in nature rather than directive. The coach in this study supported the learning of the teacher candidate by initiating conversation that promoted lesson analysis through self reflection. The responsive behaviors of the coach through the use of prompting, paraphrasing, clarifying, and problem solving allow the coach to scaffold the conversation to meet the needs of the teacher candidate. Darling – Hammond (2001) declare that when coaching is properly implemented it will alter and strengthen a teacher’s practice. The coach’s ability to provide a wide repertoire of strategies to the teacher candidates supported them in being able to select a strategy that resonated with their personal teaching style and aided in growing their confidence about implementing new strategies in the classroom.

The coach rarely provided direct advice to the teacher candidates but rather offered suggestions for improvement. Germsten, Morvant, & Brengeman (1995) believe that although directive approaches bring about less change than reflective approaches, some teachers may prefer this style. Interestingly teaching candidates had mixed responses about the coach’s feedback. The coach’s use of constructive feedback and suggesting rather than telling was well received by the teacher candidates. One candidate welcomed a more directive approach and hoped that the coach would provide more of their opinion and criticism of the lesson rather than prompting them to use self analysis to reflect on their own.

The coach's ability to foster reflection allowed the teacher candidate to examine the reality and their perception of the teaching. This promoted the use of self – discovery to identify strengths and areas of growth to build the candidate's image of themselves as a teacher and their capacity to focus on maintaining their strengths and refining their weaknesses. This kept the teacher candidate from becoming overly fixated on negative elements of their lesson and afforded the coach the opportunity to affirm the teacher candidate's strengths through the use of praise and encouragement. It is evident that the framework of cognitive coaching and social learning theory played a crucial role in developing the teacher candidate's confidence in their teaching abilities and continued growth. The delivery of constructive feedback fostered a positive perception that goal setting and continued improvement is a common practice within the teaching profession.

The teacher candidate's work with the instructional coach supported improvement of practice by allowing the coach to bring to light things that maybe unknown to the coachee. The coach's suggestions offered strategies that candidate's referred to as simple or minor, but having the potential for great impact on student behavior and learning. Many of the teaching candidate's examples of goals they set or suggestions they received were centered around the topics of classroom management and student engagement.

There is little evidence in the data that shows a clear connection to how the coach bridges theory and practice for teacher candidates. Participants in this study were limited in their response to this question during interviews. This is not to say that the coach doesn't bridge theory to practice but the coachee's ability to identify this was limited. More data is needed to explore if and how coach's bridge University coursework to the field experience.

While coaching proved to be an effective model to support teacher candidates in reflecting on their practice and growing their confidence in the classroom, time and coaching capacity limited coaching interactions. The time the coach had available to observe and converse with students throughout the practicum experience was expressed as a main concern from the candidates. Teacher candidate's also shared that large class sizes and the coach being assigned to multiple buildings limited the amount of time the coach was available to them. Teacher candidates desired more opportunities to engage in conversations with their coach that would allow them to continue the reflection cycle and examine their progress throughout the practicum.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter provided the findings and analysis of five case studies. The five cases were cross examined to identify coded patterns and were synthesized into emerging themes. Chapter five will provide further discussion of the findings and will end with implications and further research.



## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the role of the instructional coach at the pre-service level by investigating the language and response patterns that exist between a coach and teacher candidate through the use of verbal persuasion, social modeling, questioning, active listening, pausing, paraphrasing, and problem solving as a means to support a teaching candidate's ability to reflect, revise, and implement teaching strategies that improve their practice and build their self – efficacy. This study could be helpful to institutions that utilize instructional coaching as means to explore the role of the instructional coach and the coach's ability to promote reflection and improvement of practice through the use carefully crafted dialogue. Furthermore, this study may be of use to institutions of higher education in examining the use of instructional coaching with pre-service teachers to enhance the teacher candidate's reflective practices that build upon their self efficacy.

This chapter will summarize the results of this study, provide a discussion of the study's connection to education especially in teacher preparation programs, and will conclude with implications for future research.

### *Summary of the results*

The broad question that was explored was: What is the perceived role of the instructional coach? This question is contextualized by the following research questions:

RQ1: Are there language patterns (verbal persuasion, type of feedback given, structure of the conversation, leadership in the conversation, etc.) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ2: Are there response patterns (posing open ended questions, providing feedback, actively listening, pausing, paraphrasing, or problem solving) that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

RQ3: Does the coaching conversation assist the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

Based on the results of this study, four important findings can be concluded in relation to the research questions. Overall this study indicates that there is strong evidence in support of the use of instructional coaching with pre-service teachers to aid in the teacher candidate's ability to reflect on their practice and grow in their beliefs about becoming a teacher.

The first key finding of this study reveals that the instructional coach must operate in a variety of roles and possess specific qualities to be successful in their interactions with teacher candidates. In the capacity of working with pre-service teachers, the instructional coach serves as a mentor, instructional specialist, and catalyst for change (Killion et. al, 2012). The coach's ability to wear these hats provides an array of support to teacher candidate's throughout the conversation. The interpersonal skills and dispositions of the coach are key qualities to creating an environment where candidate's feel comfortable and safe engaging in the conversation. The research strongly suggests that the coach's ability to offer constructive, non-evaluative feedback is an imperative quality in this role.

The second important finding from this study signifies that the conversation is the cornerstone of coaching and the foundation for all actions that proceed the coaching conversation. The coaching conversation is dynamic in its structure and language

patterns do exist between the coach and coachee during these interactions. The coaching conversation is a shared interaction allowing both participants equal opportunities to engage in the conversation and construct knowledge together. The structure of the conversation supports a growth mind set by prompting the teacher candidate to examine their perceptions of the lesson as a means to build upon their strengths and explore opportunities for growth. The coaches use of verbal persuasion allows the candidate to make connections to previous learning, expand upon current knowledge, and pushes the candidate to set goals for improvement of practice.

A substantial finding from this study draws parallels to Costa & Garmston's (2002) cognitive coaching. The data indicates that the instructional coach employs the use of questioning, probing, cuing, and problem solving to support teacher candidate's in reflecting on their teaching. This carefully crafted conversation prompts the teacher candidate to examine their perceptions of their teaching and affords the candidate ownership of the ideas and outcomes of conversation. Therefore, this study has strong implications that the coach needs to be a skilled communicator as their role in the conversation is to mediate the candidates thinking to promote self – analysis of the lesson that leads to goal setting for improvement of practice.

Lastly, the results of this study indicate that the opportunity to work with an instructional coach while in a field based practicum aids in growing the teacher candidate's confidence in their path to becoming a teacher. Participants in this study shared that working with an instructional coach made them feel less nervous to deliver lessons in the classroom knowing that their coach would provide them with support or suggestions that would aid them in growth and learning.

*Recommendations in Higher Education*

I embarked on my own journey to becoming a teacher 17 years ago. When I reflect on my experience as a pre-service teacher it looked vastly different from the experience of the participants in this study. Much of what I learned about teaching happened when I took my first job. Similarly, to the participants in this study, my confidence in my own abilities was enhanced with the support of a strong mentor my first year of teaching. But, unlike the participants in my study, my teacher preparation program's field based experiences often left me to experience teaching by sitting in the back of classroom taking notes in hope of adding to my teaching tool kit.

Like many teachers, my first teaching interactions came when I began student teaching and my own personal self – efficacy had a lot of room for growth. Unfortunately, not all teachers have the support of coach or mentor their first year of teaching. Furthermore, more times than not, teacher preparation programs provide candidate's with field based experiences that offer opportunities for candidate's to observe master teachers modeling instructional practices in the classroom setting, but teacher candidates often are left to wonder the “why” behind these practices (Danielson, 2002). With new standards and licensing requirements for teachers (Houlihan, 2002), pre-service teachers need experiences that are different than my experience seventeen years ago. Pre-service teachers should not have to wait for their first year of teaching to learn the art and science of teaching. According to Jin Kim (2012), a teacher's self efficacy arises from having opportunities to observe and apply their knowledge and skills in the classroom setting. Field experiences provide teaching candidates with a holistic environment to learn, yet this study supports that field experiences alone may not be

sufficient in providing teacher candidate's everything they need to be successful in their future classrooms.

As universities seek to expand the amount of time teacher candidates spend in field based experiences, the use of instructional coaching provides a framework to support teacher candidate's ability to reflect on their practice and build their self efficacy. This study supports the current literature in regard to exemplary teacher preparation programs "where field experiences were carefully coordinated with coursework and carefully monitored, teacher educators are better able to accomplish their goals in preparing teachers to successful enact complex teaching practices" (Zeichner, 2010, p.98). Having the support of an instructional coach while engaging in a field based experience proves to be a vehicle for helping pre-service teachers analyze their teaching as a means to reflect and reframe their thinking and improve their practice.

The current body of literature suggest that school districts are often happy to host teaching candidates, but teacher preparation programs face the challenge of ensuring that mentor teachers and teaching candidates get the most out of this experience. Participants in this study highlighted that they were often left with questions about the realities of the classroom and their own practice after implementing lessons. Furthermore, mentor teachers were not always available to engage in conversation after a teaching episode or they did not provide feedback that the candidate found meaningful. Lana Danielson (2002) suggests that without the support of supervision from university faculty, teaching candidates are often left to their own devises and the candidate's ability to develop a deep understanding of teaching can stall. Instructional coaching provides support to mentor teachers and teaching candidates by offering another experienced individual that can

observe, facilitate a conversation that promotes reflection, and provides constructive feedback. The coach can take this responsibility off of the mentor teacher's plate and allow them to focus on their P – 12 students.

Jim Knight (2007) and Costa and Garmston (2002) suggest that the role of the instructional coach should be non-evaluative. When examining the role of the instructional coach in teacher preparation programs, this should be a consideration. The results from this study show a strong indication that the non-evaluative role of the coach brought a dynamic to the coaching relationship that was relaxed and comfortable. "When people in conversations trust each other they share their thoughts openly without fear" (Knight, 2016, p.196). Teacher candidates expressed that the conversations they had with their coach were different than the conversations that they had with their instructor or mentor teacher who uses an evaluative tool to assess their overall performance in the field. The non-evaluative nature of the coach afforded the coach to develop trust and use verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977) to offer suggestions to the candidate. This allowed the candidate to implement feedback without feeling pressured to satisfy the request out of fear of jeopardizing their grade. This allowed teacher candidate's the freedom to set goals that aligned with their own desire to improve their practice.

Teacher preparation programs educate a variety of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences therefore, teaching candidates bring vast experiences, background knowledge, and varying comfort levels in planning and implementing lessons in the classroom setting. Just as classroom teachers must be skilled in differentiating their instruction to meet the needs of all learners, instructional coaching provides a framework for meeting candidates where they are at to promote their growth.

It is through honest conversations with their coach that candidates begin to examine if teaching is the right career path for them.

Teachers reporting high sense of self efficacy during their novice years tend to have greater optimism and more positive attitudes toward the teaching profession. (Jamil, Downer, Pianta, 2012). This study warrants that the support of an instructional coach and the use of dialogue to promote reflection after a teaching episode provides teaching candidates the opportunity to think more deeply about their practice and grow in their beliefs about their capabilities to reach their goals.

A coach's role is to build the capacity of the teacher (Casey, 2006). The instructional coach's role should be well defined, if not, the coach can find that their work becomes expansive or fragmented (Knight, 2008) therefore, teacher preparation programs need to be able to clearly articulate the role and duties of the coach to ensure that coaches are suited to best support teacher candidates. Instructional coaching models in teacher preparation programs need to carefully consider the coach's caseload and mobility in order to maximize the coach's ability to engage in quality conversations and monitor student growth throughout the field experience.

#### *Implications for future research*

Teaching is complex and the journey to becoming a teacher can be challenging. Authentic experiences that allow teacher candidates to practice delivering instruction while receiving constructive feedback can aid in preparing teachers for the realities of the classroom. The results of this study have implications for the use of instructional coaching with pre-service teachers. As teacher preparation programs make strides in increasing the amount of time teacher candidates spend in field experiences, the use of

instructional coaching proves to add value in the development of elementary pre-service teachers.

Findings from this study support effort to reform teacher preparation programs by designing carefully constructed field experiences with the support of instructional coaches. The data suggest that instructional coaching at the pre-service level positively impacts the teacher candidate's ability to reflect and revise their practice and builds upon their self efficacy. This study provides insight to the limited body of research of the use of instructional coaching with pre-service teachers. What we know about Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Coaching supports the development of reflective practice and self efficacy through the use questioning, verbal persuasion, social modeling, managing emotions, and opportunities for mastery experiences.

The data collected examines the experience of five teacher candidates who completed a five week, fifty-hour field experience. The results of this study indicate that there is added value in using instructional coaching with pre-service teachers but more research is needed. This study was limited to advanced practicum students. Due to this, the data only provides a snapshot of the role of an instructional coach in the teacher preparation program. The participants in this study all worked with the same coach during this practicum which may place limitations on the data. Participants in this study varied in age and external experiences working in educational settings, but was limited to women. Exploring the perspectives of other gendered individuals may provide different insights. The use of instructional coaching with pre-service teachers is under-researched therefore more exploratory studies may help advance this research.

Suggestions for further research in relation to this study:



- Replicating the study to explore the teacher candidate's initial perceptions of the role of the instructional coach during their first formal practicum.
- A longitudinal study that follows teacher candidates throughout their pre-service practicums, clinical practice experience, and into their first year of teaching.
- Exploring the coaching conversation more deeply by recording and analyzing the actual coaching conversation to gain a better understanding of the language and response patterns coaches use to promote reflection and revision of practice to promote self efficacy.
- Exploring the patterns of conversations to gain a better of understating of where teaching candidates indicate the need for the most support from an instructional coach (instructional strategies, content, classroom management, etc.) as this may provide insight to program improvement and professional development for coaches.
- Exploring building administrators perceptions of the first year teachers who received training from teacher preparation program that utilized increased time in the field with the support of an instructional coach.
- Exploring the appropriate case load for instructional coaches to ensure optimal support of teacher candidates throughout the practicum experience?
- Exploring other models of coaching and training that supports the coach's professional development in their role working with pre-service teaching candidates?

### *Conclusion*

As cited by Richard DuFour (2005), Michael Schmoker states, “Teachers do not learn best from outside experts or attending conferences or implementing ‘programs’ installed by outsiders. Teachers learn best from other teachers, in a setting where they can literally teach each other the art of teaching” (p.141). Field based experiences provide opportunities for teacher candidates to experience the realities of the classroom and the support of an instructional coach may provide greater benefits to helping teacher candidates not only understand the realities of the classroom but also develop tools that will allow them to persist in the classroom. The instructional coach’s ability to use of collaboration, questioning, and problem solving to promote reflection creates a synergistic environment for growth and learning to occur.

This study suggests that an instructional coach works as a facilitator and guide to help teaching candidates develop the skills needed to construct their own knowledge and efficacy about their abilities to teach. Instructional coaches assist teacher candidates by utilizing cognitive coaching, social modeling, and verbal persuasion while they engage in mastery experiences in an attempt to foster dialogue that promotes reflection and improvement of practice. According to Darling – Hammond (2000) well prepared teachers have the largest impact on student learning. Instructional coaching may provide a model to support teacher candidates in ensuring they are well suited to meet the needs of their students as they enter their first years of teaching.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Semi – Structured Interview Questions with Coachee

Research Question 1: What is the perceived role of the instructional coach?

- What do you perceive is the role of the instructional coach?
- Tell me about your relationship with your instructional coach.
- What qualities does your coach possess that help or hinder your interactions?
- Describe your coach's communication style?
  - Follow up: How does your coach use verbal and non verbal communication skills in their interactions with you?

Research Question 2: Are there language patterns that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the coaching conversation?

Research Question 3: Are there response patterns that exist between the coach and teacher candidate during the conversation?

- Describe the coaching conversation. What happens in these conversations?
  - Follow up question: In your experience, Is there a structure to the conversations? Explain?
  - Follow up question: What do you perceive is the goal of these conversations?
- During these conversations, how does your coach support you in reflecting on your teaching?
  - Follow up: Can you give examples of questions your coach might ask during your conversation?
- \* Describe the feedback that you receive from your coach during your conversation.

- How does your coach bridge theory learned in your coursework to the practices you observe or implement in the field?
- Can you provide a specific example of a conversation you have had with your coach that promoted growth and learning?
- What role does goal setting play in your conversations?
  - Follow up: How does your coach support you in setting and reaching your goals?
- Coaching conversations can be lead by the coach, lead by the candidate, or can be an equally shared experience. What do you believe is true of the conversation you had with your coach? Why?

Research Question 3: What impact, if any, does the coaching conversation have on assisting the coachee in reflecting and revising their practice to build upon their self – efficacy?

- How does having a conversation and receiving feedback after teaching alter/improve your practice?
- Describe, the greatest gain or learning you have had from working with an instructional coach.
- Has working with an instructional coach affected how you perceive yourself as a future teacher? If yes, explain how?
- Do you have anything else to add to our discussion about your experience working with an instructional coach?

