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PERCEPTIONS OF LITERACY COACHING PROGRAM INDICATORS OF
SUCCESS BY KEY STAKEHOLDERS AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

by

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A capstone thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Literacy Education.

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

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To Susie.

Thank you for Lawrence, for your love and support, and for your keen eye for editing.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

Literacy coaching has recently become a widespread model of on-going, job-embedded, and practice-based professional development (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010; Lowenhaupt, McKinney & Reeves, 2014; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010b). As explored by Desimone and Pak (2017) policymakers have increasingly gravitated toward the implementation of literacy coaching programs as an effective professional development model to strengthen teacher efficacy and enhance student reading achievement. Much of the research available on literacy coaching falls under the broader umbrella of instructional coaching. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) state that instructional coaching is “generally understood as a means to build capacity for change and instructional improvement, typically by providing the kinds of learning opportunities necessary to facilitate change” (p. 183). These authors (2015) define the instructional coach as an on-site resource for teachers who also provides targeted professional development opportunities to meet teachers’ specific needs. Literacy coaching is particularly concerned with increasing student achievement in literacy and is based on a professional development model that focuses on long-term and sustained efforts to encourage active and collective teacher participation in order to expand instructional knowledge, increase student engagement, and better utilize assessment data.

Recent studies have focused on the factors that contribute to effective programs and on characteristics of successful coaches. Despite the increase in the number of studies conducted on instructional coaching, there is consensus among researchers that this is a relatively new and understudied area of educational reform that requires more attention (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell., 2012; Rodgers, 2014).

The majority of these studies have taken place in public school districts in the United States, and while there are a limited number of studies conducted outside of the U.S. (Day, 2015; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Piper & Zuilkowski, 2015; Vogt & Rogalla, 2009), the U.S. public school sector continues to drive most research studies. This thesis, however, shifts the focus to a different context – that of private international schools and asks: *How do key stakeholders at international schools perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of a literacy coaching program?*

Chapter One begins with a clear definition of how instructional coaching will be used in this study, followed by a personal and professional narrative of how experiences and pivotal events led to the formation of this thesis idea. Next, a description of how these past experiences relate to my current professional work environment at an international school is explored. I then connect observations made in this particular context to a rationale as to why this topic is both personally significant and relevant to the field of education. The last section of this chapter provides a summary of Chapter One that introduces the focus of the following chapter.

Emergence of an Idea

In July of 2017, in an effort to broaden my knowledge about professional work in education, I attended a 5-day intensive coaching workshop led by Jim Knight, a leader in the instructional coaching movement. During this workshop, held on the campus of University of Kansas, I met and collaborated with teachers, administrators and instructional coaches. Many of the discussions centered on how to effectively implement the dialogical coaching cycle proposed by Knight (2017) and how to overcome potential challenges that schools and districts might face when introducing a new coaching program.

One evening, after a day of lively discussion with new colleagues, I replayed these conversations from the morning and had what can only be described as a breakthrough moment. An idea appeared – forged from the learnings of that day and the memory of an experience ten years earlier, from a research project in Minnesota related to the field of community development.

Development of an Idea

In 2007, I was working as a Research Fellow on a community development project at University of Minnesota Extension. My position required me to visit communities either participating in or having qualified for a poverty-reduction program. I traveled hundreds of miles across the state to interview mayors, farmers, small business owners, and community volunteers in libraries, town halls, diners, and coffee shops. The purpose of this project (Chazdon & Lott, 2010) was to understand the capacity (or readiness) of rural communities to sustain and develop long-term development initiatives.

This research provided a serendipitous catalyst for a new idea that connected research on program implementation in the field of community development to program implementation in the field of education.

Over the course of the 2017 workshop week, the discussions I had continued to intrigue me and brought me back to this former research related to a community's *readiness* to participate in a poverty-reduction program. The connection between this project and my thoughts during the workshop centered on whether a similar research question could address the *readiness* of schools to undertake long-term professional development initiatives similar to Jim Knight's instructional coaching model. More specifically, I wondered if certain indicators related to a school's capacity for long-term professional development initiatives could be identified prior to program implementation. Because this question is too broad and intensive for the scope of this paper, I have narrowed the scope to a related query, that of understanding how key stakeholders at international schools perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of a literacy coaching program.

The significance of this topic for professional practice emerged more clearly during the fall of 2018, when I returned to the international school where I worked as a classroom teacher. My teaching path is described below with emphasis placed on the 2018-2019 school year, and an experience which added important insight to my pursuit of a meaningful and applicable thesis topic related to literacy coaching in the international school context.

Education

My interest in education emerged during my tenure as a graduate student in anthropology and often included an international perspective either through teaching or volunteering abroad or by serving refugee and immigrant populations in the United States. After my first year of graduate studies, I spent a summer volunteering as an English teacher in Salvador do Bahia, Brazil. I was strongly impacted by this experience. Upon my return to the U.S., I found an opportunity to continue working with children as a nutrition and gardening volunteer at a high-needs elementary school for a Denver nonprofit that would later serve as the setting for my thesis research on community gardening.

After both graduate school and completion of the community development project at University of Minnesota Extension, I researched an evaluation of leadership development programs (Lott & Chazdon, 2009). I was then employed by Arizona State University as a researcher on an evaluation of an early-childhood education initiative. At this point I assessed my various interests and decided to return to school to complete a teacher licensure program to become a formal elementary educator. These identities – as teacher and researcher – have led to both my role as an international educator, living and working abroad, and to a scholarly interest in issues related to organizational reform and efficacy.

International Teaching

In 2018/2019 my work was at an international school in the capital city of a European country. The school is part of a consortium of schools owned by a private for-profit organization primarily serving the families of expatriates who are employees of the

United Nations, multinational companies, and overseas consulates and embassies. I first worked at this school from 2012-2013, and then returned to this school in the fall of 2017 after teaching in Minnesota for four years. During the 2017-2018 school year, it became apparent that our school was expected to grow considerably by the following year and plans were put in place over the summer to account for the increase in number of students.

The higher enrollment caused the swift hiring of new teachers and staff, but many of the new teachers lacked experience working abroad and several of these teachers were new to the profession. One new colleague, whom I will refer to as Katie, was hired as the new literacy coordinator – a role that also required her to serve as the elementary literacy coach. This was not a new position for our school but it was for Katie, a former special education teacher with no previous leadership experience.

The beginning of any school year is a pivotal time for both teachers and students. A move to a new district, new school, or new teaching team often creates an additional challenge for teachers. Katie was facing issues that were beyond the scope of what one might experience from any one of these new beginnings in the United States. As a new international teacher, these challenges were compounded. Katie found herself grappling not only with how to establish herself in this role as a literacy coordinator but also with trying to navigate a new country, a new culture, and what it means to be a leader of a group of educators who had different understandings of, and various exposure to, working with an instructional coach.

From Theory to a Problem of Practice

During teacher workshop week, I had my first interaction with Katie who was understandably overwhelmed. I thought the distress would lessen as the school year unfolded, but her challenges persisted. I attempted to support Katie and pointed her in the direction of Jim Knight's blog and other resources with ideas and approaches that she could implement immediately in order to gain a footing in her work with what was proving to be a resistant teaching team.

I was aware that Katie's dilemma was situated within a broader context of research in that her struggle reflected some of the barriers to effective program implementation presented in the literature on coaching. This awareness prompted me to think more deeply about what I knew about program implementation and more critically about factors that either helped or hindered Katie in her attempt to establish her role as coach. I began to wonder if there were other indicators, not yet identified, that might be particularly relevant for the unique context of an international school setting. This line of inquiry aligns with a need for more research on how instructional coaching efforts interface with a specific school context and supports the premise that schools vary in their capacity to promote teachers' professional growth (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). These thoughts contributed to my questions concerning indicators that facilitate implementation of literacy coaching programs in international schools.

Rationale

This idea came to me as an unexpected outcome of a circuitous journey. I have moved between countries, navigated between academic fields and changed the scope of my professional work. Yet one constant has remained – an idea. An idea based on an

interest in how to cultivate *our best communities* and how to unite our resources and energies to prepare organizations for success. This thesis project is personally relevant as it is based on past research experiences that have informed how I think about organizational reform and new initiatives. The project reflects a crossroads where previous scholarship from two different fields have come together to formulate an idea that is aligned with both my research roots and my experience as an educator. The research presented here is timely in that it adds to the limited literature on instructional coaching in international contexts by including a robust analysis of how key stakeholders, at specific schools, perceive their organization's implementation of literacy coaching.

A growing consensus in the literature on successful literacy coaching indicates that several factors must be present during implementation and execution of coaching programs. Multiple recent studies confirm these indicators as sufficient, if not necessary, components of successful literacy coaching (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Knight, 2006; Knight, 2015; L'Allier et al., 2010; Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, B. & Tschannen-Moran M., 2011). These studies offer compelling evidence of the importance of well-constructed literacy coaching programs and the benefits they have on student learning. However, two understudied problems persist. First, current studies have not addressed the context and challenges inherent to international schools. Second, the emerging literature assumes that the presence of specific indicators is sufficient for the success of the literacy programs. The mere presence of these indicators may not be enough for that success, or it may be the case that there are also other components, not yet identified, that are more relevant for international schools.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief introduction of literacy coaching as one type of long-term professional development model. Next, my personal journey was explored, including pivotal moments along my academic and professional career that shaped the formation of the thesis topic presented here. A rationale was then provided for both the personal pursuit of this research question and to the relevancy of this topic for a broader audience of educators.

The following chapter begins with a literature review of recent approaches to educational reform. This portion will inform the subsequent section on characteristics of effective professional development models that provide a foundation for better understanding of how instructional coaching is described in the literature as a model of effective professional development. Next, a review of the success indicators for effective coaching programs will be outlined with special attention to literacy coaching. Finally, the challenges faced by organizations implementing coaching programs will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter One provided an overview of a personal and professional journey that led to an interest in instructional coaching within the understudied context of international schools. Experiences related to work as a professional researcher were described with particular attention to the influence of a project that investigated a community's readiness or capacity to engage in and sustain a long-term development initiative. This project was related to new ideas that emerged from discussions held during one of Jim Knight's instructional workshops in the summer of 2017. Subsequent insights about coaching in the international school setting were made in the fall of 2017 from observations of, and dialogue with, a new colleague regarding efforts to establish her position as a literacy coach. Chapter One provided the background information for understanding how and why this research is personally and professionally relevant and provided a rationale for further inquiry into the research question of this thesis: *How do key stakeholders perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of a literacy coaching program?*

The purpose of Chapter Two is to provide background information about the current research on instructional coaching that will inform an investigation into this

inquiry. The following literature review is divided into three parts with several subsections under each main topic. The first part addresses the research related to a wider lens of educational reform and a shift to those efforts aimed at invoking meaningful and lasting change. Related to this discussion is a new direction of professional development that places a teacher's agency at the forefront of training opportunities to create significant and sustainable reform. This section then describes the features of instructional coaching that align with the characteristics of effective professional development while paying particular attention to how literacy coaching reflects a model of ongoing, integrated, and coherent professional development (Gallucci et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2009). Instructional coaching, as one type of effective professional development, is established within a wider context of organizational change and educational reform.

The second part of the literature review turns to the features of instructional coaching (and, in some cases, to those that relate more specifically to literacy coaching) that have been identified as facilitating effective coaching programs. These factors or 'success indicators' as they will be identified, are widely regarded in the literature as central to the development of effective coaching programs in the United States. The indicators relate to general themes found in the literature and are organized into five categories: the roles and responsibilities of the coach; the coaching model; the qualifications and background of a coach; the teacher and coach relationship, and leadership and administration support.

The third part of the literature review adds dimension to the previous discussion by addressing the outcomes that might emerge (at least in the U.S. context) when the success indicators are not present. Challenges to program effectiveness that are widely considered barriers to program implementation are explored.

Chapter Two concludes with a summary of the literature reviewed in this chapter from the research that speaks both generally to professional development and educational reform to those studies specifically addressing the components of instructional coaching programs that facilitate the success of these programs. The five categories of indicators will be linked to the subsequent discussion in the next chapter about the methodology used in this thesis. The literature review provides the foundation on which the research paradigm, methods, and tools are later developed in Chapter Three to elicit information about the inquiry of this project – to understand how key stakeholders perceive the indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of their literacy (or instructional) coaching program.

A New Era of Educational Reform: Professional Development and Instructional Coaching

It is helpful to frame this inquiry within the scope of a broader collection of scholarship from the field of education. The literature examined in this section points to a paradigmatic shift in educational reform that introduces key ideas behind a call for schools to develop capacity for initiating sustainable and systemic change. These tenets of educational reform correspond to a related discussion of a new way to conceptualize professional development; the characteristics of effective professional development fit

within the broader paradigm of educational reform. A context is provided for understanding the implications of instructional coaching by examining how this practice also reflects these characteristics by providing meaningful, sustainable, and job-embedded professional development (L’Allier et al., 2010).

Educational Reform. In the most recent edition of his seminal book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Michael Fullan explained that education needs “powerful, usable strategies for powerful, recognizable change” (2016, Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 7). Fullan addressed the problem of earlier reform efforts by describing these as primarily focused on what he referred to as “innovations” or the content of new programs, rather than on the “innovativeness” or the capacity of an organization to engage in reform efforts (2016, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 20). According to the author both innovations as well as innovativeness are needed for organizations to make effective and lasting change (Fullan, 2016). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin also emphasized the need for schools and districts to invest in learning opportunities and practices (content) as well as the infrastructure of reform (capacity) to “promote the spread of ideas and shared learning about how change can be attempted and sustained” (2011, p. 83). In their article, first published in 1995, these authors (2011) suggested that a new kind of professional development “signals a departure from old norms and models” (p. 82) by shifting away from policies that attempt to control teachers to those that work to develop both a school’s and a teacher’s capacity for increasing student learning.

According to Lowenhaupt et al. (2014), earlier reform efforts were problematic in that these tended to focus on schoolwide or districtwide issues during one-day pull-out

professional development sessions that centered on isolated or fragmented skill or knowledge development. Other scholars (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015) also pointed to the need for building “collective capacity” to achieve educational reform (p. 180) and supported this notion that a “top-down distribution of one-size-fits-all professional development” (p. 180) in which staff are positioned as experts, is ineffective. Others agreed when explaining that teachers have little ownership or interest in the topics shared at traditional, short-term professional development trainings and workshops (Lockwood, McCombs, & Marsh, 2010; Stover et al., 2011). Furthermore, as Bean (2004) asserted, many of these short-term training sessions did not offer teachers any follow-up or support needed to implement these efforts in the context of authentic teaching environments. New policies related to educational reform efforts have turned away from a traditional and passive workshop approach (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) to those that are more closely aligned with Fullan’s (2016) emphasis on both the *content* of new programs and the *capacity* of organizations to engage in more comprehensive and continuous efforts of reform.

To synthesize, in order to make lasting and meaningful change, teacher agency must be at the forefront of capacity-building strategies. A new approach to reform efforts include educators as actors in their own knowledge construction and in the development of their own learning processes, rather than having these agendas dictated to them by policy makers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Stover et al., 2011). A revised approach to professional development demonstrates how this paradigmatic shift is realized.

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development. The literature above highlights important information about a new era of educational reform. This section continues the discussion by examining how the features of effective professional development mirror the tenets of teacher-driven reform efforts.

Lockwood et al., (2010) demonstrated that new policy initiatives create opportunities for teachers to learn actively, collaborate effectively, and reflect critically in the embedded context of their classrooms – all key features of effective professional development. Several scholars note that offering teachers the time to collaborate, the space to reflect critically on their own pedagogical practices, and the chance to advance their own teaching interests (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011) is essential to effective professional development. Connecting these ideas to a Vygotskian perspective, Lynch and Ferguson (2010) posited that effective professional development provides opportunities for teachers to actively participate in learning that is both social and collaborative.

Another characteristic of effective professional development, offered by Desimone and Pak (2017), is the ongoing structure of learning and training opportunities. Effective professional development can be understood as a *process* linked to the context of both the school and classroom and to the specific instructional needs of a teacher (Lowenhaupt et al., 2014). This process offers educators opportunities to engage in continuous efforts to develop a better understanding between curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Ball & Cohen as cited in Fullan, 2016).

One type of professional development that echoes the features of effective professional development is instructional coaching – a model that emerged from the theories of new reform efforts, framing the learner as a co-constructor of knowledge (Matsumura et al., 2009) and contextualizing learning activities in authentic and collaborative experiences.

Instructional (Literacy) Coaching as Effective Professional Development.

Instructional coaching shares the characteristics of effective professional development outlined above and as Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) pointed out, regardless of the specific model utilized, instructional coaching is “generally understood as a means to build capacity for change and instructional improvement” (p. 183). Similarly, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) affirmed that many policy reform initiatives include instructional coaching models because of the potential to impose change at both policy and practice levels by positioning teacher learning in the context of a teacher’s work. In doing so, the practice of instructional coaching creates authentic and supported opportunities for teachers based on reflection and collaboration (Matsumura et al., 2009).

Literacy coaching is one example of instructional coaching, and as such, has been characterized by these same key features of effective professional development in its potential to provide “job-embedded, ongoing professional development for teachers” (L’Allier et al., 2010). The focus of this thesis is literacy coaching, yet many features of a content-specific approach resemble those that fall under a more general understanding of instructional coaching. Literacy coaching is therefore implicitly addressed in this section within a broader discussion of instructional coaching. Regardless of scope, scale, or

content focus, the strength of instructional coaching to potentially facilitate large-scale reform is often couched in a discussion of the central role of the coach.

The broader impact of a coach was proposed by Woulfin and Rigby (2017) who stated that “armed with specific instructional and content expertise, coaches have the potential to conduct this heavy educative lifting to bring about instructional change” (p. 323). Coaches were similarly described by Lockwood et al. (2010) as school personnel who work with teachers on-site and in embedded contexts to facilitate either individual teacher growth or schoolwide initiatives through collaboration and the development of learning communities. Coaches have been widely described as “systems leaders” (Fullan & Knight, 2011, p. 53) and change agents (Dean, Dyal, Wright, Carpenter, & Austin, 2012; Di Domenico, Elish-Piper, Manderino, & L’Allier, 2018; Fullan & Knight, 2011); they are the drivers of a professional development model aimed at reforming student learning and teacher instruction.

The principles of instructional coaching reflect a teacher-driven professional development model and tenets of a new model of educational reform. In its ideal form, instructional coaching is poised to cultivate sustainable and impactful change, but in order to do so effectively, it is widely thought that certain measures are necessary to ensure the effective facilitation of these programs.

The Features or ‘Success Indicators’ of Instructional Coaching Programs

After situating instructional coaching in relation to professional development and within the larger context of educational reform, it is now helpful to narrow this focus to the factors identified in much of the literature that are believed to contribute to the

effectiveness of instructional coaching programs. This section refers to the literature that outlines general guidelines regarding characteristics of effective coaching programs as well as research that provides a more specific focus on one or two specific areas of these same recommendations.

In an article related to the qualities of effective coaches, Knight (2015) advised that coaches meet seven criteria in order to positively impact instructional coaching programs. Although focused more generally on instructional coaching programs, these characteristics overlapped with those factors identified in other research that pertain more specifically to *literacy* coaching programs (L’Allier et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2012; Toll, 2018). Knight (2015) proposed that coaches should be knowledgeable in their content area, experts in data collection and analysis, aware of the complex needs of the adult learner, effective communicators, strong leaders, and adept at utilizing a coaching cycle that encourages both teacher autonomy and teacher accountability. Similarly, Toll (2018) used data from over twelve years of experience in the field to outline characteristics of literacy coaching programs that promote success while also noting barriers that often act as significant impediments to program success. The suggested practices and recommended components of coaching programs outlined by scholars like Knight (2004, 2015), Toll (2018), and others (Bean & DeFord, 2012; Elish-Piper et al., 2008; Fisher, 2015; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008) are identified and described in the following sections as indicators that facilitate effective coaching programs.

The success indicators isolated from the literature relate to common themes. These themes have been reorganized into five categories that provide a *general* guideline

of the characteristics that are often referred to as important for the effective implementation of instructional coaching programs – especially within the context of U.S. public schools. These five categories relate to: the roles and responsibilities of the coach; coaching models; the background and qualifications of the coach; the teacher/coach relationship; and leadership and administration support. The categories are not mutually exclusive and at times, often inform and overlap with one another.

Roles and responsibilities of the coach. Key indicators for successful coaching programs echoed throughout the literature related to the development of a job description that clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of the coach (Knight, 2015; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Mraz, Algozzine, & Watson, 2008; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; Toll, 2018). Equally important is the understanding of this job description by all key stakeholders involved, including the coach, teachers, and the leadership and administrative team. The steps taken on the part of both administration and coaches to communicate this information with the teaching faculty is also of critical importance. In addition, specific responsibilities – often referred to as coaching activities – are identified in the literature as components of effective coaching programs.

Job description of coaching role. The development of a job description, understood by coaches, teachers, and leadership is often tied to a related category – leadership and administrative support. Sandvold & Baxter (2008) suggested that in order for stakeholders to take ownership of a coaching initiative, it is important that administration, teachers, and coaches work together to develop a shared set of roles and responsibilities divided across the areas of leadership, instruction, and assessment.

Likewise, Toll (2018) emphasized the need for a recurring conversation between the coach and administration to create a detailed job description to be reviewed at the beginning of each year for teachers and staff. It is critical for coaches and administrators to collaborate in writing and communicating a clear job description and subsequently share it with teachers (Bean & DeFord, 2012). A clear job description is also thought to safeguard the coaching responsibilities that facilitate teacher learning – a point addressed by Heineke and Polnick (2013) when stating that coaches are less likely to engage in actual instructional coaching when the job description includes a broad scope of responsibilities.

The importance of a clearly written and widely understood job description is an indicator that facilitates program success. Buly, Coskie, Robinson, and Egawa (2006) summarized the significance of a well-crafted job description by stating that, “in the best situations, a carefully considered job description has been conveyed, understood, and accepted by both administrator and teachers in the district” (p. 24). A job description that fails to articulate a clear objective outlining the purpose of the role of the coach and specific responsibilities of the role has far-reaching implications and is mentioned in the literature as a significant barrier to program success. This will be addressed in more detail in the section about challenges to program implementation.

Coaching responsibilities. The specific responsibilities outlined in a coach’s job description are also indicative of program elements that facilitate success. The responsibilities include providing feedback, modeling lessons, observing teachers, analyzing student data, and providing trainings for teachers. These activities are often

broadly referred to in the literature as components of effective coaching programs. Other scholars, however, address these activities more specifically by speaking to the circumstances or situations under which these activities might be more effective.

In their guiding principles for literacy coaching, L’Allier et al. (2010) outlined several best practices and suggested that coaches are more likely to produce higher student achievement results when they focus their activities on observing classroom instruction, modeling instruction, and providing supportive feedback. Similarly, Mraz et al. (2008) found that all key participants in their research (principals, teachers, and coaches) emphasized the continual need for coaching activities to focus on modeling lessons and observing teachers. In a paper outlining the components of effective literacy coaching, Shanklin (2006) linked recommended activities such as modeling, co-teaching, and providing feedback to the characteristics of effective coaching and suggested that coaches schedule cyclical observations for regular classroom visits. This point is echoed by Scott, Cortina, and Carlisle (2012) in their analysis of coaching activities who found that “the coach can play an important role if she introduces regularly scheduled grade level meetings and predictable pop-in visits” (p. 81). Matsumura et al. (2009) agreed and stated that a coach’s actions including modeling instructional practices and observing teachers in classrooms are “critical to effective coaching” (p. 684). Likewise, Bean (as cited in Ferguson, 2013) recommended that coaches plan demonstration lessons with teachers, discuss the lesson, and follow up this conversation with an observation by the coach of the teacher actually doing the lesson.

The authors above made general references to coaching activities such as modeling, teacher observations, and feedback and described these as features of effective coaching programs. Other scholars provided a more nuanced understanding of these activities and pointed to their effectiveness related to specific circumstances or under certain conditions. For example, in a study of the perceptions of Ontario elementary literacy coaches, Lynch and Ferguson (2010) found that the coaches interviewed *only* offered feedback to teachers when it was requested by teachers – a move described by the authors as creating a collegial, rather than evaluative, atmosphere. In an article (2017) proposing the alignment of coaching and teacher evaluation systems as a way to create coherent effective implementation of instructional reform, Wouflin and Rigby “propose[d] that coaches’ modeling of the observation-feedback routine infused with targeted supportive feedback and development opportunities, including demonstration lessons, has the potential to cultivate adaptive implementation of evaluation” (p. 325). The authors (2017) were careful to differentiate between the more formal observations of administrators and the informal observations conducted by coaches and emphasized prerequisites such as the cultivation of trust between teachers and coaches that are necessary to facilitate a coach’s informal observations of teachers.

Knight also discussed activities such as modeling lessons and conducting observations (2004) but couched the nature of feedback within a discussion that overlaps with key skills of a coach – namely the ability to communicate effectively and listen respectfully (Knight, 2009). Knight emphasized a coach’s ability to relay authentic and positive comments and cautioned coaches to “be aware that they walk on sacred ground

when they suggest new ways of teaching, especially when they criticize a teacher's current teaching practices" (2009, p.511). Clearly stated 'partnership principles' guide the course of a coach's conversation with a teacher and rely on the premises of equality, autonomy, and non-judgement (Knight, 2016). Likewise, Buly et al., (2006) described structured, reflective and non-judgmental conversation as an essential component of effective coaching. Other authors stressed occasions that allow teachers to observe and reflect on their own teaching practices. According to Stover et al. (2011), opportunities for *reflective* coaching conversations are transformative moments for teachers and have the potential to create greater change. Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) also found communication strategies that facilitated a teacher's reflective thinking were more valued than those communication techniques that offered direct feedback to teachers.

Lowenhaupt et al. (2014) recognized that modeling and observing lessons are generally accepted components of a coaching role, but in their exploration of the activities of three literacy coaches, they focused on the everyday responsibilities of a coach that might fall outside the parameters of the official job description. The lens of symbolic interactionism was used in their research (2014) to examine how a school's culture and context influence the ways that coaches negotiate their reality based on their day-to-day experiences. The authors (2014) proposed that symbolic gestures – those everyday activities such as making copies that are not in alignment with predominant official responsibilities like modeling and teacher observations – serve a "critical purpose" (p. 251) of building trust and cultivating strong teachers.

Beyond modeling, providing feedback, and participating in observations of teachers, the literature on coaching activities also discussed responsibilities related to data analysis and teacher trainings. For example, Stover et al. (2011) used coaching vignettes to provide examples of how coaches implemented certain practices, and focused on one coach who used teacher surveys and the lens of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development to assess teachers' knowledge of concepts in order to determine the best topics for professional development trainings. These trainings were said to "offer teachers ownership in the staff development plan that was created as a result of their input" (p. 504). Shanklin (2006) also suggested that a coach act as an "agent of job-embedded professional development (p. 2)" by facilitating book studies, study groups, and leading professional development sessions. Other authors (Desimone & Pak, 2017; L'Allier et al., 2010) shared how activities such as participation in grade-level meetings and coach-led study sessions offer collective participation opportunities for teachers and are powerful ways to establish productive and collegial learning environments. Desimone and Pak (2017) emphasized the coach's role in creating coherence between content standards, curriculum, daily lessons, and instructional strategies. They (2017) explained that coaches are able to "frame PD for teachers in a way that is coherent to both their internal viewpoints and external expectations" – especially as these expectations reflect a number of new and often competing array of practices, mandates, and reforms. Scott et al. (2012) provided a nuanced understanding of this coaching activity and found that only about 2% of a coach's time was spent leading professional development. The authors (2012) framed this low percentage in reference to a move away from the traditional workshop

model toward an approach that embeds a coach's work in grade level team meetings, book studies, individual teacher meetings, and co-teaching. This point is important in that it revisits the earlier discussion about balancing the role and impact of a coach as a point for both individual and systemic change.

Data analysis was also referred to and widely accepted in the literature as a key responsibility of a coach. Shanklin (2006) pointed to a coach's ability to guide teachers in analyzing, interpreting, and utilizing data as a characteristic of effective literacy coaching. Likewise, Desimone and Pak (2017) discussed the importance of job-embedded conversations and the work between a coach and a teacher that focused on the subject-matter content and the diagnostic assessments utilized to ensure students' acquisition of subject matter knowledge (p. 5). In addition, in their study of Michigan's Reading First program, Scott et al. (2012) found that not only did discussions about assessment dominate coaching conversations, but also that coaches reported this area of knowledge to be the one in which they felt most confident.

The information presented above showed some variance in the way that scholars perceive coaching activities as facilitating the effectiveness of coaching programs. Many scholars made general reference to coaching activities and cited these as critical components of effective programs while other experts deconstructed activities to show that only under certain circumstances are these activities effective. In particular, the activities of 'observations of teachers' and 'providing feedback to teachers' were two activities that showed the widest range of discussion. One area of the literature showing overwhelming agreement was the importance of a clearly articulated job description that

is well understood and accepted by key stakeholders, reflecting Joyce and Showers (1981) “common sense proposition that the more thoroughly one understands something the more likely one is able to learn how to use it and is committed to using it” (p 165). The clarity of a coach’s role and the understanding of such role is critical to the success of any instructional coaching program; the absence of this indicator has far-reaching consequences that impact the effectiveness of a program – a point that will be revisited in the discussion of challenges to program implementation.

Coaching models. The literature on coaching models offered many different structures for how coaching can be implemented in schools. Some authors referred to models or approaches emphasizing the scope of specific responsibilities; others focused on facilitating a relationship between coach and teacher that provides a foundation for the cultivation of trust and collaboration. This section will briefly explore some of these approaches but will refrain from an in-depth analysis of the different models. It is important here to limit the discussion to those coaching approaches that specifically connect to the success indicators. This section emphasizes the importance of a clearly articulated reason for coaching as well as a transparent coaching model, regardless of the model chosen.

The literature pointed to the importance of coaching models that placed an emphasis on developing partnerships (Knight, 2015) or establishing egalitarian roles between teachers and coaches (Jacobs, Boardman, Potvin & Wang, 2017; Toll, 2018) – a point that reiterates the value in viewing these categories as mutually inclusive. The

manner in which the role of a coach is perceived and articulated in relation to the role of the teacher drives the model of a coaching program.

Shearer, Carr, and Vogt (2019) proposed six different literacy coaching models: informal coaching models, mixed models, formal literacy coaching models, peer/mentoring coaching models, cognitive coaching models, and clinical coaching models. In her synthesis of action research on coaching, Day (2015) found that coaching models exhibited a high degree of variability but emphasized two theoretical frames frequently mentioned in the literature. In the constructivist approach knowledge is developed together by two equals; in the behaviorist approach knowledge is transferred from expert to novice (Day, 2015). Authors who have linked a model to program success tended to focus more on those models that mirror the description of the constructivist approach (Day, 2015). These scholars stressed an egalitarian approach where teachers and coaches are viewed as partners (Knight, 2004, 2015; Toll, 2018). For example, at the center of what Knight (2004) refers to as the partnership approach “is a deep belief that we [coaches] are no more important than those with whom we work, and we [coaches] should do everything we can do respect that equality” (p. 33). Others also described the concept of coaching as a collaborative process (Jacobs et al., 2017; Toll, 2018). The principles of “choice, dialogue, and knowledge in action” (Knight, 2004, p. 33) are central to a partnership approach based on equal roles.

This section provided a limited review of the overwhelming literature on different coaching models and structures and contained pertinent information about models that related more to how the coach/teacher relationship is ideally conceptualized and

supported. The principles of an equal partnership based on trust, collaboration, and reflection overlap with the following category about the teacher/coach relationship and reflect teacher-driven professional development that mirrors the tenets of the new era of educational reform described by Fullan (2016).

Teacher/coach relationship. Trust has already been discussed as a prerequisite to effective coaching in relation to a clear coaching role that is first and foremost supportive rather than evaluative (Heineke and Polnick, 2013). The degree to which trust is present in the teacher/coach relationship is partly dependent on structural components of a program, such as the creation of a clear (non-evaluative) job description, but the coach is responsible for acquiring a repertoire of skills – some explicit and some more intuitive – that can create and sustain a strong teacher/coach relationship.

In order for the cultivation of trust between a coach and an adult learner to take place, Knight (2015) asserted that the role of a coach must be intentionally established as a collaborator or an egalitarian *partner* to account for the autonomy and sense of agency sought by the adult professional. Instructional coaches who are understood as fulfilling a position outside of administration must also develop a shared understanding with teachers about the role of confidentiality in the relationship (Knight, 2015).

L’Allier et al. (2010) described trust as partly derived from a coach’s facilitative communication style where a coach acts as a skilled listener and as someone who can differentiate suggestions based on the unique needs of a teacher. This communication style values each teacher’s own experiences and unique background (Stover et al., 2011)

and is similar to the dialogical coaching model proposed by Knight where “thinking is done together [and where] the relationship is equal” (2017, p. 23).

In addition, Jacobs et al. (2017) noted that even teachers within the same grade level will have different expectations of the coaching/teacher relationship – some might appreciate problem-solving in a collaborative way, some will rely on the coaches for their expertise, while others will seek coaches’ validation of the teachers’ own knowledge. Effective coaches then, “depend heavily on interpersonal skills and relationship-building, including establishing rapport and trust with teachers” (Jacobs et al., 2017, p. 3).

Toll (2018) deconstructed this relationship further by adding that trust and rapport must be created *while* teachers and coaches engage in an activity. Toll compared this teacher/coach partnership to ballroom dancing partners in which coaches lead with the “subtlety of direction, moving through the partnership in “synchronicity” (2018, p. 15). For the teacher/coach relationship to function in a way that develops trust, Tschannen-Moran, B. and Tschannen-Moran, M. (2011) stressed that coaches must be good listeners as well as skilled *question-askers*, deflecting attention from their own personal experiences to notice opportunities for teachers to “explore and articulate their values and beliefs” (p. 75). According to these authors (2011) coaches have well developed people skills and can influence deeper reflection on the part of teachers – a key characteristic of effective professional development that relates to the cultivation of teacher agency outlined in new educational reform efforts.

Woulfin (2015) conceptualized interpersonal skills in a slightly different manner by using the concept of ‘social skill.’ In a qualitative case study, Woulfin (2015) defined

social skill as an actor's (in this case, coach's) ability to produce *frames* which were described as the skill of strategically assessing a situation in order to leverage and justify certain organizational change practices in a way that will persuade teachers to implement reform efforts. Woulfin (2015) described four different types of tactics – accepting incremental change, invoking experts, building consensus, and delegating – used by effective literacy coaches in their enactment of coaching activities and communication with teachers. The findings from her study (2015) revealed that the nuances of a refined set of communication skills can be discerned from a closer analysis of coaching actions to show that “a socially skilled reading coach is able to construct resonant frames motivating teachers to change their practice” (p. 531). Woulfin's research provided concrete evidence that specific communication skills are able to produce teacher ‘buy in’ – a factor of effective professional development and one that is necessary for successful ongoing implementation of coaching programs (see ‘Resistance’). In Woulfin's study (2015), ‘framing theory’ revealed how specific skills embodied by savvy literacy coaches and other instructional leaders invoke change by strategically connecting policy with practice. This study informed what has generally been referred to as ‘communication or people skills’ by exploring how the knowledge required by coaching is realized in ways that foster positive working partnerships with teachers, thus facilitating large-scale organizational change.

The attributes referenced in the literature, such as the ability to listen, the ability to honor confidentiality, to consider another's perspective, and to be flexible (Calo, Sturtevant, & Kopfman, 2015; Shearer et al., 2019) are influential factors that help

cultivate trust while concurrently building effective partnerships. Both facilitate successful coaching programs and are needed alongside more tangible qualifications such as advanced degrees and specialized knowledge, credentials discussed in the following section.

Background and qualifications of the coach. Coaching requires specialized training (L’Allier et al., 2010) and the depth and breadth of a coach’s professional experiences, along with their ability to communicate effectively and cultivate trust with constituents has been the subject of much research (Knight, 2015; L’Allier et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2012; Matsumura et al., 2010b). This section addresses the indicators related to the skills and background of a coach, such as the specific knowledge related to the adult learner, the communication methods mentioned in the previous section, and other more formal academic qualifications. Indicators that address the importance of on-going training opportunities for coaches are also discussed.

Knowledge of the adult learner. Although an understanding of adult learning theories might be difficult to detect from those professional experiences listed on an educator’s resume, skills related to the “complexities of working with adults” (Knight, 2015, p. 25) and the ability to understand the adult learner’s diverse needs were highlighted by authors as critical to the success of a coaching program (IRA, 2004; Toll as cited in Stover et al., 2011). In an article emphasizing a coach’s ability to understand the adult learner, Knight (2015) stressed the need for professionals to have autonomy and urged coaches to adopt a partnership mindset that acknowledges a teacher’s voice and choice in the coaching process.

Likewise, according to Stover et al. (2011), a coach's awareness of the needs of the adult learner is described as "the core of professional development" in its potential to establish a trusting teacher/coach relationship (p. 499). In their study examining one district's efforts to utilize literacy coaching to facilitate systemic change, Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) found that because coaches needed more strategies to incorporate communication skills to meet the needs of the adult learner, district leaders provided coaches with Cognitive Coaching training in order to cultivate more responsive and reflective communication with the individual adult learner. L'Allier et al. (2010) related this knowledge of an adult learner to the particular aspect of a coach's need for a flexible and intentional plan for working with teachers at different stages in their careers – a point addressed by Jacobs et al. (2017) and Stover et al. (2011) in their assertion that successful coaches are those who tailor their role to meet the individual needs, preferences, and learning styles of teachers.

Formal training and academic qualifications. In addition to the range of skills necessary to adequately account for the needs of the adult learner, the literature on coaching also discussed the importance of formal training and advanced academic degrees. However, as the research below indicates, there is considerable variability in how school districts and principals define this expertise (Calo et al., 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

In 2004, in an effort to add consistency to the qualifications and requirements of effective literacy coaches, The International Reading Association (IRA) issued a statement outlining the preferred qualifications for a literacy coach including a graduate

degree in the area of reading, several years of exemplar teaching experience, and coursework related to knowledge of the adult learner. The Just Read, Florida! initiative (Marsh et al., 2012) also set parameters for a coach's qualification that overlap with the recommendations of the IRA (2004): successful teaching experience, specific knowledge and expertise of reading, data management skills, knowledge of the adult learner, strong communication skills, and a recommendation for advanced coursework or a state reading endorsement or certification. Heineke and Polnick (2013) referenced research findings that linked the success of a coach to those who had a master's degree in reading or a reading specialist certificate in contrast to their peers who did not hold a specialized degree. Likewise, L'Allier et al. (2010) suggested that advanced degrees prepare literacy coaches with a deep and broad foundation of knowledge and that this foundation is instrumental for their effectiveness as coaches. Some studies have shown how coaches who held either Reading Teacher endorsements or certificates achieved higher student gains in reading compared to less qualified coaches (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2006, 2007, as cited in L'Allier et al., 2010). However, it has also been stated that there is not enough research to make a correlation between coaching qualifications and improvements in student reading outcomes (Marsh et al., 2012).

Rather than focusing on formal degrees, other scholars emphasized substantial expertise as educators and knowledge of best practice approaches to support teacher development. Knight (2015) suggested that coaches have "deep knowledge of a set of strategies" that can support teachers in meeting their instructional goals. These research-

based strategies should address instructional planning, assessment needs, and data collection methods as well as classroom community building strategies.

Calo et al., (2015) also thought beyond formal degrees when addressing prerequisites for an effective coach and organized suggested components of a coach's background under a broad category referred to as 'competence' that included formal trainings, coursework, knowledge of district literacy policies, and skills related to leadership, collaboration, and communication. The authors (2015) also emphasized another category referred to as 'character' – a category that included a coach's disposition and personality. The emphasis placed on a coach's personal attributes cannot be understated and as McKenzie (cited in Ertmer, Richardson, Cramer, Hanson, Huang, Lee, O'Connor, Ulmer, & Um, 2005, p. 72) asserted, "while it is tempting to hire impressively advanced pioneers as coaches, the most important criteria have to do with diplomacy, tact, and relationship building."

Another indicator of success for effective coaching initiatives related to opportunities for coaches to participate in trainings while fulfilling the role of the coach in order to continually develop their own range of knowledge and skills. This indicator was recognized by Toll (2018) who suggested that administration and leadership think about how coaches can be supported in their role *prior to* actual program implementation.

In a case study of a single secondary literacy coach, Galucci et al. (2010) found that a "studio model" offered the coach opportunities to learn and practice techniques with the support of an expert consultant (p. 951). The authors (2010) also emphasized that a coach's expertise is constantly evolving and professional development

opportunities across multiple events and in various contexts are necessary to support coaches, thereby influencing their effectiveness (p. 954). In their research aimed at identifying the characteristics of effective coaching programs, Ertmer et al. (2005) found that ongoing learning opportunities increased coaches' confidence, allowing them to be more effective with teachers. The authors (2005) pointed specifically to the benefit of ongoing, weekly sessions that offered coaches the opportunity to apply and reflect on new skills. This approach aligned with suggestions presented by L'Allier et al. (2010) and the particular situations that allowed coaches to work together to analyze and reflect on the language used in coaching conversations and opportunities that allowed coaches to role-play different coaching activities.

Although formal training and specific degrees may be important to the success of a coach, much of the literature recognized other significant factors of a coach's background – especially those skills that are more difficult to define and quantify such as 'disposition' and 'personality' (Calo et al., 2015). In addition, on-going training and professional development opportunities for coaches to refine their practice was a significant indicator for facilitating the effectiveness of a coaching program.

Leadership and administration support. The involvement of a supportive leadership or administrative team in the process of enacting a strong coaching program is essential to its success (Ertmer et al., 2005; Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010a; Toll, 2018). Several authors pointed to the importance of leadership involvement in articulating a purpose for a coaching program, developing a clear job description, taking part in the active distribution of this job description, and providing

ongoing support to the coach (Calo et al., 2015; Fisher, 2004; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Matsumura et al., 2009).

In a study investigating how leadership impacts the initial implementation of a specific coaching program known as Content-Focused Coaching, Matsumura et al. (2009) sought to identify the aspects of principal leadership that either supported or constrained a coach's work. The authors (2009) identified themes from interview data that reflected facets of a principal's support for a coach across four overarching areas: treating the coach as a professional, endorsing the coach as a literacy expert to teachers, supporting the coach's work with teachers, and actively participating in the specific Content-Focused Coaching program. The findings (2009) reported that more interactions occurred between the coach and teachers in schools where the principals treated the coach as a professional (e.g., trusting the coach to manage his/her own time) and where the principal took an active role in the coaching process (e.g., attending team meetings with the coach). In addition, a key finding of the study was the importance of a principal's public endorsement of the coach as a source of literacy expertise – support that was also reported as having direct implications for “helping coaches gain access to teachers' classrooms” (2009, p. 685).

This study is a pertinent example of the overlap between the categories of indicators represented in this review and illustrates the complexities of coaching programs by demonstrating how the behaviors and actions of one key stakeholder (the principal) are closely connected to and influence the degree to which certain behaviors and actions can be implemented on the part of another key stakeholder (the coach).

The Matsumura et al. (2009) findings are echoed in other studies. For example, Calo et al. (2015) found that the “power of administrative support” across data collected from elementary, middle, and high school interviews was a central theme in facilitating the successful role of the literacy coach. Heineke and Polnick (2013) also pointed to the influence that a strong administration can have on the effectiveness of coaching and provided suggestions for preliminary steps that administrators can take to enable successful coaching programs. These relate to administrators co-creating the (non-evaluative) role of the coach with the coach, publicly sharing this role with teachers, facilitating a collaborative school culture, and hiring credible and knowledgeable coaches.

Toll (2018) also pointed to leadership in her description of the characteristics of effective coaching and emphasized the importance of a principal understanding the role of the coach. Leadership’s critical knowledge of coaching role was also described by Day (2015) who referenced instances of districts that began training leaders partway through program implementation because of the apparent lack of administrators to understand what coaching entailed. Day (2015) emphasized that leaders do not need to take a “strong arm approach” but are encouraged to utilize a non-authoritarian stance to leadership that instead positions administrators as active participants in establishing a collaborative culture (p. 101).

One issue raised by Fisher (2007) that circles back to the section of this literature review on educational reform efforts, is the need by a school’s decision-makers to identify and establish the guiding principles or the common theoretical approach on

which the literacy coaching model will be structured. This speaks to an importance at the organizational level to clearly and transparently articulate a shared set of beliefs related to literacy instruction, the adult learner, leadership and professional development (2007). Likewise, Woulfin and Rigby (2017) purported that among other efforts required for program success, “principals need to create school-based systems to organize and support coaches’ work to ensure alignment with the school’s goals and curriculum” (p. 326). The findings of Matsumura et al.’s (2010b) study that examined how contextual factors like school leadership influence the implementation of a program are also of importance. Principals with a horizontal or co-equal leadership style were ranked highly by both teachers and coaches; these leaders were described as taking part in actions to positively frame the coaching program and support coaches (Matsumura et al., 2010b). On the other hand, those principals who were described as reluctant to share leadership were described as either not introducing or explaining the program in a positive manner, mandating that teachers take part in coaching, or negatively framing the program as punishment for poor teaching (Matsumura et al., 2010b, p. 262).

To conclude, the role of the principal described in the contexts above by Fisher (2007) and Woulfin and Rigby (2017), reflects the overarching tenets of the new agency-driven educational models of reform and speaks to how “the role of school leadership – of principals and coaches – must be played out on a systems level to get wide-spread and sustainable improvement” (Fullan & Knight, 2011, p. 51). This section also addressed the impact that the principal has on the everyday interactions between a coach and a teacher

– actions that often are cited in the literature as those that facilitate the effectiveness of coaching programs.

Summary. The criteria outlined above in each of the five general categories of indicators developed from the literature review overlap with one another and work synchronously to facilitate coaching program success. The problems associated with any one of these categories are not mutually exclusive and a deficit in one area will have consequences for indicators represented in other categories. The presence of indicators – whether these reflect the level of the organization or the level of the coach – are critical for program success, and without these coaching programs will face challenges. The next part of the literature review describes the challenges to program success and addresses what happens when these indicators are not present.

Barriers and Challenges to Instructional Coaching Program Implementation

Following the organization of the first part of this chapter, this section begins with a broader discussion of some of the challenges related to large-scale educational reform efforts. Fullan described the scale of educational change as a “sociopolitical process involving all kinds of individual, classroom, school, local, regional, and national factors at work in interactive ways” (2016, Chapter 1, Section para. 16). As illustrated in the previous sections, instructional coaching programs involve multiple actors interacting with what is often a broadly defined position in an organizational setting with unique contextual factors – all of which are linked in some way to the success indicators outlined in research. Although coaching has been described as a promising form of professional development (Cobourn & Woulfin, 2012; Lockwood et al., 2010), many authors also cite

the challenges faced when implementing and sustaining a coaching program (Cobourn & Woulfin, 2012; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015).

Some scholars addressed an issue with the structure of a professional development model that conceptualizes instructional coaching as both an individual and systemic means to enact change. This leads to tensions caused by competing agendas between actual versus intended coaching activities and the issues that might emerge from this disconnect (Dozier, 2014; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Cobourn & Woulfin, 2012). Implications for how the role of the coach is actualized under pressure from wider organizational factors relates to Fullan and Knight's (2011) comment that at times, effective coaching is "not the reality for many coaches who operate in systems that are not organized to create, develop, and sustain the conditions for instructional improvement" (p. 50). Organizations that are not able to implement functional coaching programs with successful and sustainable outcomes often fall short of the indicators outlined above as facilitating the success of such programs.

The following sections address the challenges involved in instructional coaching program implementation. Issues related to the areas of an unclear job description, a coaching role that includes a position of an evaluator, and the roots of teacher resistance will be specifically addressed.

Unclear roles and responsibilities. A clear job description that outlines a non-evaluative coaching role with distinct responsibilities is, according to Buly et al. (2006), an "absolute essential for success" (p. 24) yet, as other scholars have pointed out, coaches

are often hired without specific goals or a well-defined job description in place (Calo et al., 2015; Knight & Fullan, 2011). Several consequences emerge in the absence of a clear job description.

One issue that is particularly problematic to coaches is the vague space in which the coaching role is positioned – somewhere between peer and administrator. Lynch and Ferguson (2010) identified the uncertainty that many coaches felt about both their role and how to clearly articulate the varied and evolving responsibilities associated with their role to teachers as a barrier to effective coaching. Other scholars agreed and pointed to this lack of clarity as creating a tendency for coaches to become overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities associated with conflicting roles (Calo et al., 2015; Knight & Fullan, 2011).

Much of the literature that addressed the issue of an unclear job description also pointed to the lack of strong leadership. Heineke and Polnick (2013) emphasized the role that leadership should have in clarifying the coaching position and suggested that when leaders are not involved, “teachers step into the vacuum left by passive administrators to exert their own influence in shaping the coach’s role” (p. 50). In their study of 31 coaches, Ertmer et al. (2005) found that some coaches were unsatisfied with the leadership at their schools because they felt that principals lacked knowledge about the role of the coach and did not understand that the coach should not take a position of evaluation. Likewise, Lynch and Ferguson’s Ontario study (2010) of literacy coaches found that limited principal involvement was a significant barrier to coaching; coaches cited the importance of a principal’s participation in meetings – especially those at the

beginning of the year – that offer opportunities to clarify the difference between the coach’s role and the principal’s role in supporting teachers.

In their qualitative study, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) captured the tensions created by a lack of clearly defined coaching role by recounting their experiences from interviews with literacy coaches. One coach from the study (2012) described this ambiguous territory as a “precarious situation” because of her role as a “pseudo-administrator” (p. 19). The authors (2012) contended that because of the tensions inherent in this type of position, literacy coaches enacted a political role that led to specific interactions the authors referred to as pressuring, persuasion, and buffering, that were used by coaches to engage teachers in reform efforts to implement Reading First policies. Coburn and Woulfin (2012) did not explicitly claim these ‘political moves’ as challenges to program implementation but suggested that coaching relationships simply involve these types of power relations even if the role functions primarily in a non-evaluation capacity. The data from the study (2012), exemplified by the interviewee’s quote, however, did capture some of the issues that might arise when a role is not clearly understood by the key stakeholders involved in working with the coach.

The challenges that occur when a role is not clear is substantiated by other research that focused specifically on the problems that can occur when a coach’s role is not purposefully separated from a role that includes evaluation.

The problem of ‘The Evaluator’. The importance of an established coaching role and defined responsibilities is a particularly salient topic when the conversation on coaching turns to challenges. When the roles and responsibilities of a coach become

vague or when the role of the coach veers from a position of support to one of evaluation, problems inevitably occur. Buly et al. (2006) stressed that a coach's job description "must include what we believe to be the absolute essential for success – the non-evaluative role of the coach" (p.24). Toll agreed by candidly asserting that "the job of coaches is not to supervise, evaluate or manipulate teachers" (2018, p. 15), a perspective that is widely shared among the literature on coaching.

In a qualitative study examining how coaches navigate the space between enacting change on both an individual and systemic scale, Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) found that coaches hesitated to assert themselves by offering teachers direct support based on the perception that this would position the coach in an evaluator role. This hesitancy was described as a result of uncertainty over how to directly engage with teachers about a specific goal or issue and of a desire, on the part of at least one coach, to have an administrator take a more active role as the evaluator (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). According to the authors (2015), the attribution of an evaluator stance to a nontraditional leadership role such as a coach (particularly when the aim of coaching initiatives is directed at specific student outcomes or the implementation of a mandated policy) tends to create tension between coaches and teachers.

Heineke and Polnick (2013) also emphasized setting clear parameters for the coaching role and noted that teachers described the importance of being able to see coaches "in the trenches with them" (p. 50) rather than as those responsible for evaluating teachers' performance. In their research exploring the perceptions of elementary principals, teachers, and literacy coaches on how literacy coaching is and should be

practiced, Mraz et al., (2008) found that one consistent concern of teachers “was the extent to which coaches functioned in an evaluative capacity rather than in a coaching capacity” (p. 147). This point was echoed by Ertmer et al. (2005) who found that trust is often difficult to develop in situations where the role of the coach was unclear. In their interviews with 31 coaches, the authors (2005) found that misconceptions arose when teachers were unclear about the purpose of the coaching role.

In fact, in their guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities of a literacy coach in the United States, the International Reading Association (2004) included a definition of a literacy coach that specifically addresses this notion of evaluation: “Coaching provides ongoing consistent support for the implementation and instruction components. It is nonthreatening and supportive – not evaluative” (Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz, 2003 as cited in IRA, 2004). As Fisher put it, “danger comes when the coach is seen as *The Expert*” (2007, p. 3) and goes on to explain that when the coach is viewed in this manner, teachers can become overly critical of the coach, evaluating them against an unrealistic model of perfection.

The absence of clear communication about the roles and responsibilities of a coach and failure to involve classroom teachers in the process of communicating the purpose of a coach can lead, as Fisher pointed out, to “disagreements, disgruntled employees, and grievances” (2007, p.1). Transparency of a clearly articulated coaching model and process (Fisher, 2007) can alleviate these kinds of hindrances, but again, this is dependent on the level of intention of administrators and school leadership discussed in the section on success indicators above, and on their level of involvement in helping

shape the coaching program agenda. When transparency and clarity is not included in the process of program implementation, the grievances Fisher (2007) alluded to can take the form of outright resistance.

Teacher resistance. The confusion surrounding a lack of clear responsibilities and role definition contribute to what Dozier referred to as “intellectual unrest” (2014, p. 234), the result of which often leads to teacher resistance. Others (Jacobs et al., 2017) confirmed this by asserting that “simply put, some teachers prefer not to engage in the communication, collaboration, and joint work inherent in coaching programs” (p. 2). Teacher resistance is cited as a challenge faced by many coaches and is often a result of deficits in other categories already mentioned such as an unclear job description, a coach’s lack of awareness about the needs of the adult learner, or a lack of teaching experience on the part of the coach.

In their analysis of the tensions between coaches and teachers, Scott et al. (2012) found that when coaching initiatives were aimed at only a few teachers rather than the whole faculty, low coach satisfaction on the part of teachers was reported. Scott et al. (2012) noted that in this case, buy-in from all stakeholders (coaches, teachers, and administration) is critical when implementing comprehensive organizational reform. Likewise, Bean (2004) stated that in programs with a lack of teacher buy-in that acknowledges the potential for coaching activities to support professional growth, the coaching program will be less than effective. One study also found that some districts and principles hired coaches internally for reasons that may include avoiding the lay-off of a teacher, yet these coaches did not necessarily have coaching qualifications; teachers

were reluctant to participate because of the perception that the coaches lacked content knowledge and skills (Mangin as cited in Matsumura et al., 2009).

Jacobs et al. (2017) couched the topic of teacher resistance in the theory of change by suggesting that instructional coaching requires teachers to accept three fundamental changes to their professional routine related to instructional shifts, reorganization of time, and shifts in instructional practice. The authors (2017) described the reasons some teachers struggle with change as the belief that change is unnecessary, the perception that change is a threat that will negatively impact other teachers and administration, or a wish to retain autonomy. Autonomy has already been addressed in this review in relation to how Knight (2014) conceptualized it as a central component to the partnership principle. When autonomy is not given to teachers, this “deprofessionalize[s] teaching by suppressing teacher knowledge” (Knight, 2014, p. 12), leaving teachers vulnerable and powerless (Musanti & Price as cited in Jacobs et. al, 2017).

The literature above asserts that unclear roles and responsibilities and/or a coach straying into the territory of evaluation may lead to teacher resistance. The discussion shed light on the complex endeavor of coaching that involves multiple actors in what are sometimes competing roles. Challenges will most likely occur if an instructional coaching program is not intentionally designed to account for the success indicators outlined in the literature.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of salient literature on educational reform related to complex change. This background included the features of effective

professional development related to the tenets of a new era of reform focused on long term, teacher-driven and job-embedded trainings. This discussion was essential to understanding the next main section regarding the facilitation of effective coaching programs. Indicators of success were identified from the literature and then synthesized and reorganized into five categories: coaching roles and responsibilities, coaching models, the teacher/coach relationship, the background and qualification of the coach, and leadership and administration support. Barriers to program implementation were explored – first, through the lens of those that pertain to large-scale reform efforts and then by a closer look at the challenges that surface when the critical success indicators are absent. Throughout these discussions, the overlap between the categories of success indicators, along with the related challenges, was emphasized; the categories were shown to inform one another in impactful and significant ways. The organization of the literature into the categories served an important purpose for developing the research tools outlined in the next chapter.

The literature review provided key information about instructional coaching that is necessary for an understanding of the methodology utilized in this research and outlined in the Chapter Three. Chapter Two showed that the research on the success indicators elicited from the literature pertains mainly to the U.S. public school setting. The next chapter will document the process and the tools developed to investigate if and to what extent these indicators are relevant to the key stakeholders in the understudied context of international schools. In addition, Chapter Three will provide essential information on the research paradigm and method used to explore the perceptions of

these success indicators by key stakeholders at international schools. This chapter also provides a foundation with which to understand the findings presented later in Chapter Four that revisit the issues of organizational effectiveness outlined in this chapter. In addition, the framing of instructional coaching within a wider lens of educational literature that relates to organizational effectiveness informs some of the discussion in Chapter Five regarding the implications of this study. But first, a closer look at how the literature presented here, as well as professional and personal experiences noted in Chapter One, will be described and understood as influencing the chosen methodology presented next in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter Two, an overview of educational reform efforts preceded a discussion of the components of effective professional development that can potentially facilitate and sustain long-term organizational change. One particular type of professional development – instructional coaching – was then examined to understand the characteristics that contribute to successful implementation of such programs. A closer look at how these characteristics overlapped with those factors more specific to facilitating the success of *literacy* coaching was explored, and within this discussion, challenges or factors that hinder program implementation, were identified. The literature review in Chapter Two both established the foundation from which to understand the broader scope of this project and provided a framework for developing the specific methodological tools used in this study.

The information presented in Chapter One also informed the methodology of this thesis by highlighting my relevant work as a graduate student in anthropology and as a professional researcher on studies that utilized qualitative methods. Work on a community development project and a program evaluation of leadership initiatives (Lott & Chazdon, 2009) shaped an awareness of issues related to this thesis, especially those

concerning organizational effectiveness. This background is helpful when addressing a phenomenon explored in this thesis – the scarce research on literacy coaching in the specific context of international schools. My previous experience also supported the development of the research paradigm and informed the choice of research tools utilized to understand an important and understudied question in the literature: *How do key stakeholders perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of their literacy coaching program?*

The focus of Chapter Three is to explain the specific methodology used to investigate this research question. In doing so, this chapter explains how the chosen method allows for a close examination of the understudied context to determine if, and to what degree, the success indicators identified in the literature (pertaining primarily to U.S. public schools) are consistent with perceptions of these indicators by key stakeholders at international schools. This chapter also documents the use of these methods to identify other factors present in the international school setting that might be meaningful, relevant, or significant to this particular context.

Chapter Three begins with an important note addressing some of the methodological issues that surfaced early in the study and that shape this chapter as well as subsequent chapters. The qualitative research paradigm used for this project is then explored, followed by a discussion of the method used to answer the research question. General information regarding the different categories of international schools is followed by a description of the research setting of two international schools. The discussion then turns to recruitment and explains the steps taken to identify the potential

interviewees or, key stakeholders, of this study. Next, the data collection process outlines the preliminary steps taken to gain access to the two sites and connects these steps to those requirements established by the human subject review board. The two sources of data – document and archival materials and interview data – are then explained. A subsequent section describes the development of the research tool used to collect the data. This section emphasizes the interview protocol that was developed from the synthesis of literature conducted in Chapter Two. The next part of the chapter outlines the procedure used to analyze the two types of data elicited from the interview protocol – the Likert scale data and the interview data – and in the case of the latter, describes how the codes, categories, and themes that form the basis of Chapter Four’s findings were developed. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the chapter and connects the methodology presented here to the findings in Chapter Four.

Note about Study

The goal for this study was to examine *literacy* coaching programs; however, as sometimes happens when relying on the dynamic and evolving approach of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), information gained during the early stages of fieldwork shifted the scope of the research.

An initial visit to School A revealed that the school’s coaching program utilizes a pedagogical approach rather than one that is discipline-specific. This alternative approach added a new dimension of relevancy to this project. It was later determined that a schoolwide coaching program that focused on pedagogy might lead to interesting outcomes. This was indeed the case, and as described later in Chapter Four, the

interviews conducted with School A's key stakeholders led to the more profound and noteworthy findings that shape much of Chapter Five's discussion about the implications of this study and possibilities for future research. The decision to include School A in the study widened the scope of this project by considering instructional coaching more generally. At the same time, this broader lens offered the opportunity to examine one particular international school with a unique program and to better understand the interplay between context and program implementation within this setting.

This shift had several implications for the study, many of which are addressed in this chapter, while others will be addressed later. In the sections below, it will become clear that some modifications were needed to be made to the intended methodological approach in order to address each school's unique context and the realities of fieldwork.

Research Paradigm

Qualitative research is an approach used to explore and comprehend the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a problem or phenomenon; this is especially true when little research has been conducted on the phenomenon or because the research involves an understudied sample (Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J. D., 2018). Research of this kind is described by Weiss (1994) as an approach used to develop an in-depth description and interpretation of an event, process, system or organization while paying particular attention to the integration of multiple perspectives. In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that qualitative research focuses on understanding meaning in *context*, where data collection is completed in the participant's setting by a researcher who acts as the main source of data collection and analysis. As such, a qualitative

approach is the most appropriate methodology for gaining insight into how success indicators are perceived by key stakeholders as facilitating an instructional coaching program. Following Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) definition of qualitative research, the study presented here is based on the belief that knowledge is continuously constructed by people (key stakeholders at international schools), as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon (instructional coaching programs).

This qualitative approach aligns with the conceptual lens of an interpretive or constructivist worldview in that the research question proposed in this thesis is based on an inquiry into understanding *how* key stakeholders describe, understand, and interpret or make meaning of a certain process – in this case, an instructional coaching program (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The constructivist set of beliefs assumes that individuals interpret their understanding of the world in varied and subjective ways (Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D., 2018). As Yin (2018) pointed out, this lens attempts to capture the complexity of these perspectives from different participants in specific contexts.

The constructivist perspective also aligns with the theoretical tenets of the broader topic in which this research project is couched – educational change – by addressing what Fullan referenced as “the problem of meaning [that] is central to making sense of educational change” (2016, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 15). Meaning must be understood in both individual and collective settings in order to “contend with both the “what” of change and the “how of change” (Fullan, 2016, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 16). An important aspect of Fullan's (2016) point is that a distinction between the intention of reform efforts and how people actually experience change can be understood and

identified by assessing both the big picture (collective setting) as well as the small picture (individual setting).

The qualitative approach, supported by a constructivist worldview, is best suited to explore the meaning-making (Seidman, 2013) behind how central figures in different roles perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of coaching programs. This approach and the constructivist lens also inform the methodology of data collection and interpretation (Kivuna, C. & Kuyini, A. B., 2017). The specific method used to reveal how the coaches, teachers, and administrators of this project make sense of coaching programs within the context of their educational organization is that of a qualitative case study, a description of which follows.

Research Methods

A qualitative case study is the research method that is conducive to “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Chapter 2, Section 7, para. 3). This design is best positioned to explain the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a social phenomenon or process over time and is particularly applicable to situations in which the phenomenon under study is difficult to distinguish from its context (Yin, 2018). Moreover, this thesis used a modified comparative exploratory case study in which the experiences of key stakeholders at two different international schools are investigated. The term ‘modified exploratory’ is used in order to distinguish the aim of this project (to explore the extent to which indicators are present in a context other than the research setting from which these indicators were first identified), from a goal directed at clarifying variables for further research (Chazdon & Lott, 2010).

Although this research project utilized a comparative approach, the objective is not to evaluate the success of the literacy programs at two different schools, but to identify two educational organizations within the same ‘category’ of international schools that are reflective of an understudied context in order to better understand how the key stakeholders at these organizations perceive these success indicators as facilitating their organization’s implementation of instructional coaching programs.

Furthermore, this method was chosen because the case study’s “unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and direct observations, as well as participant-observation” (Yin, 2018, p. 12). The data collection process employed in this thesis incorporates evidence from a variety of sources including interviews and document and archival record analysis – each of which will be explored in a later section of this chapter. The following section turns first to a discussion of the specific setting of this research project to shed some light on the unique characteristics of international schools.

Research Setting: International Schools

International schools vary significantly in terms of size, mission, demographics, and school culture. It is important to review some important background information that distinguishes the setting of this research (private international schools) from other schools operating overseas and to acknowledge the three categories of schools that loosely fit under the broader term ‘international school’.

The first category pertains to independent schools that utilize American, British, or Canadian curriculum and employ certified teachers from these countries. Most of these

schools are nonprofit; some are owned by corporations, others may be sponsored by organizations such as the United Nations (The International Educator, n. d.). These schools are different, however, from a separate category of overseas schools run by the U.S. Department of Defense serving the dependents of U.S. personnel on overseas military bases (Department of Defense Educational Activity, n. d.). Department of Defense schools are distinct from yet another category of schools recognized by the U.S. State Department's Office of Overseas Schools. These schools are usually located in capital cities throughout the world and primarily serve the families of American (and other foreign) citizens working abroad, many of whom are employed by an overseas consulate or embassy. Most of the teachers hired to work at these schools are certified teachers from the United States but they may also be from Canada or other countries, including the school's host country.

Site of Study

Two educational institutions in the third category of international schools described above were selected for this research project. Selection of these schools was initially based on the specific geographic criteria of being located in a European capital city. This was important for two reasons. First, the location in a European capital is relevant because the connection to foreign embassies and consulates creates a shared demographic of students and families. Second, on a practical note, since I lived and worked in Europe at the time of conducting the research, it was advantageous to identify schools that would facilitate ease of fieldwork.

As mentioned earlier, other criteria were established concerning the coaching

programs but these were not always met for a variety of reasons. At the onset of this study, it was thought that each school should have a *literacy* coaching program in at least the third year of implementation to have overcome any challenges in the early stages of reform efforts. In addition, it was anticipated that potential sites would share other similar characteristics such as the type of organizational structure (nonprofit versus for profit) and the size of student enrollment (between 500 and 1500 students). A primary reason for these criteria not being met was due to the challenges involved with gaining access to international schools. In the end, the manner in which the two schools' programs were structured and functioned were quite different – a point that will be addressed below and one that is revisited throughout the next few chapters.

School A¹. School A is a non-profit private institution located near a European capital city. The school is physically impressive with a large campus comprised of both historical and more modern buildings. A recent annual report stated that the school invested a significant amount of financial capital in campus renovations; the overall impression of the school captures its commitment to creating a functional, collaborative, and aesthetically pleasing learning and working environment. School A is accredited by The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council of International Schools, and authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization. In 2017-2018, the school enrolled between 1,000 and 1,500 students from over fifty different nationalities and employed roughly two hundred faculty members from over fifteen nationalities. The school operates four divisions – two in elementary school, middle

¹ In an effort to protect the settings and participants of both schools, the information included in these descriptions is limited.

school and high school.

Instructional coaching at School A. At the time of fieldwork, the instructional coaching program at School A was in its fourth year of implementation. The coaching program is extensive and is structured across content areas and across the school's four divisions. School A has six faculty members working as coaches in some capacity – four of these coaches are housed in the elementary departments and two of the coaches are housed in the high school. Each coach also maintains a position as a teacher although the time allocation of these roles differs among the coaches.

School B. School B is a private, for profit institution with a campus located near the center of a European capital city. The school is small and although some of the facilities are older, there have been recent additions to meet an increase in enrollment. School B primarily serves the families of expatriates; most of the families stationed in embassies and consulates as diplomats, civil servants, or military personnel enroll their children in School B. In addition, employees at several multinational companies and affluent local families also send their children to School B.

School B is accredited by The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council of International Schools, and authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization. The student enrollment during the 2017-2018 school year was between two hundred and four hundred students from about fifty different countries, and speaking more than thirty languages. During the 2017-2018 school year, School B employed about fifty teachers.

Literacy coaching at School B. School B embeds the role of ‘coach’ within the responsibilities outlined in a job description that contains three official titles – K-5 Literacy Coordinator, Assessment Coordinator, and Reading Specialist. The position is now in its fourth year and focuses coaching efforts in the elementary division within the specific content area of literacy.

Participants

The approach used to identify potential participants for this study reflects purposeful selection (Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D., 2018) in that the categories of key stakeholders identified for the project were those thought to contribute to an understanding of the research question. The participants reflected the key stakeholders identified from the synthesis of literature on instructional coaching – school leaders and administrators, teachers, and coaches. It was anticipated that participants from each school within each of these categories would be recruited, but because of issues related to logistics as well as those that surfaced as fieldwork began (such as new understandings about the specific structure of a program), this was not possible. The following sections describe the actual sample of participants and the reasons behind their recruitment.

School leadership. International schools have a different organizational structure from that of the public school sector of the United States and since U.S. public schools are the predominant setting of research on instructional coaching, this difference is significant. Given the different organizational structure of private independent international schools and the absence of the superintendent role, this study included the analogous role of the director or head of school for both School A and School B.

Although School A's director was available and willing to participate in the study, School B's director had taken a position at another international school in a different country and was therefore not available to be included in the sample. At the time of the interviews, the new director had been on-site for only one month. Due to this limited tenure and subsequent lack of familiarity with the school, the new director was not recruited for the project.

The principal of School B and *two* elementary principals of School A were also chosen as potential interviewees. School B has only one principal whose role is to serve all divisions from elementary through high school. In the case of School A, two principals were included in the study – one from the early/lower elementary division and one from upper elementary. Originally, only the principal from the upper elementary school was recruited, but during the return visit, there was an opportunity to interview the second principal from the lower elementary division. This additional perspective became a valuable insight into the perceptions of key stakeholders toward the success indicators and also afforded a better understanding of School A's unique cross-divisional approach to coaching.

Two other participants in leadership roles were identified from each school for recruitment. A member of School A's leadership team closely connected with the coaching program was recruited. In addition, a coordinator who frequently works with the person in the coaching role at School B was also identified as a key participant. In total, six leaders or administrators were chosen to participate in this project – one director, three principals, and two additional leadership personnel.

Teachers. Teachers are key actors in the coaching process and their perspectives about the success indicators are important to consider. However, recruitment issues did arise so that a limited number of teachers were included in the sample.

During the initial contact visit at School A in the spring of 2019, teachers were discussed as one group of participants that would be helpful to speak with later in the fall when the actual interviews would take place. Unfortunately, the timing of the return visit coincided with a busy time of year for teachers as they prepared for parent-teacher conferences, so it was not possible to recruit teachers from School A. In the case of School B, two elementary teachers were selected for interviews based on their length of tenure at the school. In total, only two teachers were selected for interviews and both of these were from School B.

Coaches. Coaches from each school were recruited for this study including two coaches from School A and the person who fulfills the coaching responsibilities at School B.

Although the coaches at School A perform their duties cross-divisionally, they are ‘housed’ in the specific division where they perform their other role as teacher. Two coaches were recruited for the study – one from early/lower elementary and the other from upper elementary. Both of these coaches had been at the school since the program began and were part of the original coaching cohort.

School B’s recruitment focused on interviewing the person in the elementary division who fulfills the role of a coach under the title of Literacy Coordinator, Assessment Coordinator, and Reading Specialist.

This section described the participants recruited for this study – a total of eleven interviews were conducted with six participants at School A and five participants from School B. A discussion of some of the limitations involved with this sample will be discussed later in Chapter Five. This next section will move from a description of the setting and the participants to an explanation of the steps taken to gain access to the sites where the interviews took place. A description of how the interviews were conducted at each school will be explained and an account of the other data sources collected for this project will also be provided.

Data Collection

There are two main components of data collection. The first section outlines the preparatory stage of the fieldwork leading up to data collection including the specific steps taken to gain physical access to the two sites and how these steps met the requirements of the human subjects committee. The second section explains the two different types of data sources used in this project.

Preparation. The pre-data collection stage of the research process is in alignment with descriptions of initial recruitment (Weiss, 1994; Seidman, 2013) that researchers carry out in an attempt to build rapport with potential interviewees, become familiar with the research setting, and establish a pool of interviewees. The process of gaining access to the international school community, particularly as this relates to School A, is described next.

Preparation for the data collection portion of this project began in early spring of 2019 with an effort to contact the directors of international schools in the European

Union. Emails were sent to directors to make an introduction and to explain the goal of the project. This was a challenging process and, in the end, the two schools open to the study were selected as sites.

A trip was scheduled to School A for what Seidman (2013) refers to as a “contact visit.” This visit was instrumental for the success of this project as it allowed for a personal connection with the director and other leadership personnel at the school and opened the door for the future on-site fieldwork. This brief visit also facilitated the procurement of a letter from the school granting the necessary permission to conduct future research at the school at some point between August 2019 and February 2020. This letter is a necessary component of those materials required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Hamline University and is an important step in the process of protecting human subjects involved in research studies. In addition to granting on-site entry to the school, the letter also provided the permission to collect supplemental evidence about the coaching program including any document and archival record materials.

These same steps were taken to obtain formal access to School B, but because of prior connections and familiarity with the school, this process did not require a contact visit. It was, however, equally important to follow the same protocol for meeting the IRB requirements. In May 2019, a letter from the director of School B was obtained permitting on-site interviews to take place between July 2019 (depending on the timeline of the IRB approval) and February 2020. This letter also included a clause allowing for the collection of supplemental documents about coaching.

Once the first committee meeting regarding this thesis was conducted on August 1, 2019, the required materials (including the interview protocol and the formal letter from each school) were submitted to the IRB. As mentioned earlier, because the project included a school with a pedagogical approach rather than a discipline-specific approach focused on literacy, edits were made to account for changes in the phrasing of statements in the final draft of the interview protocol for submission and approval to the IRB. The approval for the project was received on September 12, 2019, allowing for the actual data collection phase to begin.

Data Sources. Aligning with the chosen case study method used in this thesis, the data collected included a variety of sources – qualitative interview data and archival and document materials (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). This first section describes the documents collected from each school while the following section focuses on the interviews. Information about when, where, and how the interviews were conducted will be provided with particular attention to the steps taken to meet the IRB requirements to ensure that participants were fully informed of the full scope of the study.

Archival and Document Analysis. The documents collected for analysis in a case study can reflect a variety of items including notes, agendas, meeting minutes and any evaluation or survey reports (Yin, 2018). Because of the difference in the scope and scale of the two programs, and because the programs reflect two unique contexts, the documents gathered from each school varied considerably.

At School A, the collection and analysis of documents and archival records was completed during the return visit to the school in October 2019, at the time of the on-site

interviews. The official job description was received via email one or two days prior to the first interview; but often other documents were referenced and explained by an interviewee *in situ*. At School A these documents included a working draft of a ‘coaching menu’ outlining how teachers could access different coaching approaches as well as a set of coaching standards used to evaluate the roles and responsibilities of a coach. The documents were requested by the researcher and a copy of each was obtained via email for closer examination. Three documents were analyzed in total – the original job description, the coaching ‘menu’, and the coaching standards. The only document at School B was shared by the coach who emailed the revised job description at the time of the in-person interview, after which it was analyzed.

The sources collected were examined and triangulated as part of the process involved in analyzing data – the findings of which are explained in further detail in Chapter 4. These documents were important pieces of evidence that supplemented and supported the findings from the main source of data for this project – the interviews.

Interviews. Once IRB approval was given, interviews at School B were scheduled as soon as possible for the time between September 27th and October 2nd, 2019.

Interviews at School A were also scheduled for a two-week period between October 15th and October 24th, 2019. All participants were sent an informed consent form via email to review prior to the interviews. The consent form outlined the purpose of the research project, the structure of the interviews, the rights of the participant, any risks or discomforts associated with responding to the questions and issues of confidentiality (Seidman, 2013). In addition, interviewees were also emailed a copy of the interview

protocol with the introductory script prior to the interviews. A hard copy of the consent form was brought to each interview to be signed by the interviewee and secured by the researcher. Consent to record the interviews was obtained at the time of the interviews. Each participant was given a hard copy of the interview protocol to read and follow as the interview was conducted.

The interview tool is described in more detail in the next section but noted here in order to explain how the interviews interacted with the protocol. The first part of the protocol established rapport and gathered background information by asking respondents to describe their level of involvement with the initial implementation of the school's coaching program. The second part of the interview guide was organized into five categories of indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of effective coaching programs. For each indicator, participants were asked to state their level of agreement and explain their response. The third part of the protocol asked about interviewees' professional and academic background in education and offered participants the opportunity to respond to a set of open-ended questions about coaching and the unique context of international schools.

All interviews were conducted in person. At School A the interviews were conducted on school property, whereas at School B, depending on the preference of the interviewee, interviews took place either at the school or in a private setting near the school. All interviews were recorded using the Voice Memo application on an iPhone. Participants were given an alphanumeric code to protect their identity – no names were

used on any transcript documents or on the Voice Memos. The interviews lasted between forty and ninety minutes.

This section described the context of the actual interviews and briefly outlined the three sections of the protocol to convey how the participants interacted with the progression of questions. The next section isolates the specific steps taken to develop the interview protocol in an effort to gain insight into the central research question.

Research Tool

The purpose of this study is to explore how key stakeholders at international schools perceive the success indicators outlined in research as facilitating the implementation of their literacy coaching program. The applicability of these indicators to a context outside of U.S. public schools is explored; within this discussion the presence of indicators that might be more meaningful, relevant, or significant to the context of international schools is investigated. An interview protocol, most of which was semi-structured, was developed with the specific intent to better understand if, how, and to what degree these indicators were represented in the international school context.

The following section establishes how the interview protocol was developed from a review of the indicators presented in Chapter Two. A discussion of the limitations and benefits involved in this approach will also be addressed. This section includes an excerpt from Part Two of the interview guide to show an example of one of the five categories of indicators. The complete interview guide can be found in the appendix (see Table A1).

The interview protocol. Qualitative research methods are premised on an inductive investigative process, working from observations and data collected from the

field toward more generalized findings in the form of themes, categories, or concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although the inductive nature of this process requires a fluid space from which to develop these common themes, qualitative researchers are often “informed by some discipline-specific theoretical framework” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Chapter 1, Section 8, para. 2) that allows researchers to focus their inquiry and concentrate their interpretation of data. The literature on instructional coaching provided a framework for the inquiry of this project by identifying certain indicators in the research on coaching that were discussed as factors that contribute to the effectiveness of coaching programs, primarily in the public sector of U.S. (and to some degree, Canadian) public schools.

This thesis accepts this literature and the criteria established by researchers to identify characteristics of effective coaching programs in the context of the United States. However, the intent of this thesis is to probe more thoroughly to understand how deeply embedded these success indicators are in an international school’s instructional coaching program. The purpose is to further explain the *meaning* (Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D, 2018) that key constituents assign to these indicators and to determine whether they do or do not transfer to their unique context – private international schools.

The interview tool utilized in this thesis reflects a specific framework based on a synthesis of the success indicators found in the instructional coaching literature that were identified in Chapter Two. From this synthesis, indicators related to five categories of inquiry emerged and were used as a rough guide to develop the semi-structured portion of the interview tool. Part Two of the protocol aimed to determine if, and to what extent,

key stakeholders perceive these indicators as facilitating the success of their coaching program.

There are several important points to address when discussing the development of the tool from this body of literature. First, the indicators in the literature were not presented as one explicit and concrete framework. Rather, this framework or categorical guide, was created from a review of indicators that were represented in the literature with some regularity. One of the challenges of utilizing this approach is that some subjectivity is implicitly involved when determining if an indicator is ‘present enough’ in the literature to be included as a success indicator in the interview guide. In addition, the organization of these indicators into five categories also involved a level of subjectivity. The five categories are: coaching roles and responsibilities; coaching models; the teacher/coach relationship; coaching qualifications and training, and leadership and administrative support. These categories surfaced from common themes that emerged from the literature and from the researcher’s perceived relevance of how an indicator reflects categorical belonging under one of these themes.

Some research discussed indicators in broad terms as factors in determining the success of a program; other literature qualified these indicators with a more nuanced understanding of how they might facilitate (or hinder) the effectiveness of a coaching program. This difference had implications for the development of the interview tool.

Rather than including a range of statements that would capture the variances of an indicator, the interview guide encompassed the most basic form of an indicator. For example, statement 1.9, shown below in Table 1, reads, ‘A key responsibility of the

coach is to provide feedback on a lesson given by a teacher'. This statement reflects the literature that broadly identifies coaching responsibilities such as feedback (as well as modeling and observations) as a characteristic of effective coaching programs. This statement does not reflect a more deconstructed understanding of feedback that was also present in the literature – for example, those that discussed the conditions under which feedback should be given or the specific nature of this feedback (e.g., reflective and constructive or directive and explicit).

The development of a framework of indicators based on one researcher's interpretation of literature recognizes the limitations involved in this approach (see Chapter Five). The five categories of indicators should be understood as one (subjective) representation of some of the factors that were identified in the literature as facilitating a successful coaching program. Although there are limitations involved with this approach, this framework did provide a structure with which to inquire about the components of coaching programs while also offering an opportunity to gain information about the nuances of these indicators as these were directly stated by the key stakeholders. Table 2 below shows one section of Part Two of the interview protocol, providing a list of eleven indicators related to the roles and responsibilities of a coach.

Table 1

Excerpt from Part Two, Section I of Interview Protocol: Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Please explain your response. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unknown/Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree	
1.1	The literacy coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by the literacy coach</i> .
1.2	The literacy coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by elementary teachers</i> .
1.3	The literacy coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by administration and leadership</i> .
1.4	The roles and responsibilities of the coach have been shared with the teaching staff <i>by administration</i> .
1.5	The roles and responsibilities of the coach have been shared with the teaching staff <i>by the coach</i> .
1.6	The literacy coach's role is reflective of ongoing professional development initiatives at this school.
1.7	A key responsibility of the literacy coach is to conduct formal evaluations on teaching performance.
1.8	A key responsibility of the literacy coach is to model lessons for a teacher.
1.9	A key responsibility of the literacy coach is to provide feedback on a lesson given by a teacher.
1.10	A responsibility of the literacy coach is to analyze student data with the teacher.
1.11	The literacy coach has an equal amount of time in his/her schedule allocated between providing student support and teacher support.

The complete interview protocol provided in the Appendix (see Table A1)

consists of three sections. Part One includes one open-ended question about a

participant's involvement in the implementation of the coaching program/initiative. Part

Two asks about a participant's level of agreement to the statements organized into the five categories discussed above. This part of the interview represents the focus of this thesis by attempting to better understand how key stakeholders at international schools perceive success indicators as facilitating their organization's implementation of their coaching program. Part Three of the interview guide includes questions to elicit background information about each participant and offered interviewees an opportunity to provide additional information about coaching at their school and to reflect on the unique context of international schools.

Data Analysis

Because the protocol utilized two different structures for gathering data, two different approaches were needed to analyze the data. The Likert scale data is described first. This is the data gathered from Part Two of the interview guide that required specific steps for data analysis. Next, the process used to analyze the interview data from the open-ended questions and the follow-up explanations to the Part Two statements is described.

Likert Scale Data. Part Two of the interview guide asked participants for their level of agreement to thirty-one statements organized into five categories. This portion of the guide utilized an ordered categorical scale known as a Likert scale to establish a level of agreement to each of the indicators (Heiberger and Robbins, 2014). Participants were asked to choose from five responses: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = unsure/unknown; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree.

The Likert scale data was analyzed separately for each school. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the agreement of each statement and to create diverging stacked bar

graphs for each of the five categories. This approach provided useful visual representations to portray how the perceptions of the key stakeholders intersected with the indicators identified in the literature. The graphs included in Chapter Four are a critical piece of the findings for this project and help to establish a platform for further discussion of the interview results.

Although the Likert scale data provided a helpful starting point for understanding the indicators in the context of the international school setting, the explanatory piece of each statement provided more significant insight into how key stakeholders perceived the success indicators. The process of analyzing the participant explanations to the Likert scale statements as well as the information gathered from the open-ended questions is described next.

Interview Data. The analysis of the interview data aligns with the three steps to overall data management outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data preparation, data identification and data manipulation.

The first phase of this process – data preparation – included transcribing the interviews and reading through the transcripts. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews using Microsoft Word, and once transcribed, the digital record of the interview was deleted. In some cases, if the interviewer missed capturing a specific leveled response or when the response was unclear, the interviewees were contacted by email, sent the applicable portion of the transcript and asked to clarify their level of agreement to that statement. Once the data was clear and the transcripts were complete, several steps were involved in analyzing the transcripts.

Following Agar's advice (as cited in Creswell, 2007) and prior to uploading the transcripts to a software program to code the interview data, the transcripts were read several times in order to get an overall sense of the interview and notes were taken. The notes may have referred to a key word or phrase or a recurring theme that had surfaced during the interview. For example, one interviewee referred to a coach as a 'thought-partner' – a phrase of interest that was later shown to reflect the organization's emphasis on a partnership mindset. Other notes were written about such themes as 'teacher buy-in' and served as reference points during the later coding process.

Once the documents were read for a general sense of the interviews, the transcripts were uploaded to a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program called ATLAS.ti. The use of this program is not a substitute for a researcher's analytical lens but serves to assist in the process of efficiently determining and organizing codes, themes, and patterns across a set of interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). This began the next process involved in the analysis of the interview data – coding.

The second phase of data management is data identification in which each individual transcript was organized into segments and ascribed codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D., 2018). The coding process involved several stages. First, a process of open coding identified the main ideas in each of the responses. Using ATLAS.ti, codes were assigned to segmented sentences in the interview quotes.

The third stage of data management, data manipulation, involves sorting and rearranging the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This stage often involves a reflective

process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) during which changes are continually made as the codes are revisited and reanalyzed. This project relied on an inductive process used in axial or analytical coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to assign labels to the coded segmented sentences that exhibited similarity and that could be grouped and organized into categories. In ATLAS.ti these coded sentences were organized into ‘Code Groups’. This process also involved determining how the categories related to each other to reflect the main recurring patterns across the data sets from each school. Subsequent review of the data also involved a deductive process where a segment of a text provided evidence of a previously identified category. An example of the conceptual framework showing the connection between codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the analysis of School A’s interview data is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Examples of Themes, Categories, and Codes from School A's Interview Data

Theme	Code Categories	Codes
Site-Specific Model	Pedagogical Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are framing our coaching positions first and foremost as pedagogical • We also didn't want [instructional coaches] to work and be bound by divisional domains or by subject-area domains
	Teacher-Driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's always the teachers driving the parameters of the feedback • If [the teachers] have asked for that, then yes, but that's not a part of the – it's not automatically assumed, if you go through a coaching cycle.
Credibility	Structure of Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it does sort of make them those very accessible people and not seen as anything other than one of their colleagues • There's a credibility factor for teachers – this person is in the trenches along with me
Recruitment	Internally-Focused Hiring Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first six that we hired were all internal. It was a huge advantage just because of the relationships – just the familiarity with the way the school operates, things like that. • It was all internal coaches that were appointed at that point – we didn't get our first external coaches until the following year.
	Sought Attributes of Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We felt they had that combination of quiet confidence and humility that a coach needs. • One of the things we specifically looked for was humility because we don't want a coaching program that pushes things on people

This section outlined the systematic steps taken to analyze the interview data.

Although these steps follow those data analysis approaches outlined in the research on

qualitative methods, it should also be noted that “qualitative analysis is an interpretive process that necessarily involves creativity and subjectivity” (Benaquisto, 2008). The codes, categories, and themes represent one researcher’s interpretations of the patterns that emerged from the interviews. These patterns represent the major findings of this research and will be addressed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Chapter Three began with a review of information in Chapter One and Chapter Two that reestablished a rationale for an inquiry into *How do key stakeholders at international schools perceive success indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of their coaching program*. Before examining the methods used in this study, an important note about the research was offered to provide insight into how the scope of the project shifted to include a broader focus on instructional coaching. The first section of Chapter Three then detailed the research paradigm of the qualitative approach used in this study and how this approach aligned with the constructive or interpretive worldview. The next section focused on the reasons behind choosing a case study approach as a means to understand the how and why of a particular understudied phenomenon. The research setting was described by explaining the differences in the categories of international schools before detailing the two different sites involved in this study. A subsequent section on the participants selected for this study provided further insight into the local contexts of the two chosen schools. The chapter then moved to a discussion of the data collected from documents and interview sources and outlined the processes involved in that collection. Next, the main source of data – the interviews – was

examined and the development of a protocol designed from Chapter Two's literature review was summarized. A critical understanding of the interview tool both raised the issue of subjectivity involved and affirmed the benefit of utilizing a general framework in answering the central research question of this thesis. Chapter Three concluded with a description of the processes involved in analyzing the data.

Chapter Four will continue to highlight the importance of the local context as it was described in Chapter Three by identifying how the two schools differ in terms of program scale and scope. Chapter Four will illuminate the key findings that emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts. In doing so, the chapter will provide evidence of how key stakeholders at international schools perceive the success indicators as facilitating the success of their program and will demonstrate that other indicators might be more relevant to the establishment of effective coaching programs in the international school setting.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is to understand how key stakeholders at international schools perceive indicators in the literature as facilitating the success of a coaching program. The specific methodology of a multiple exploratory case study, described in the previous chapter, was chosen to explore this research question. The goal in choosing a case study approach was to better understand the perceptions of and meanings attributed to a bounded program (instructional coaching) within the specific context of two international school settings. The purpose of Chapter Four is to report on the primary findings of this research in a manner that reflects this methodology. In doing so, this chapter informs a discussion of how and to what extent these indicators are relevant in determining the success of coaching programs in the understudied context of international schools.

Although the research question could be studied through the lens of one representative sample of key stakeholders, it is important to address the findings for each school separately for two reasons. First, both the context of the individual schools and the scope of their coaching initiatives vary greatly; data presented together would confound the findings, masking any nuance in perceptions and meanings related to the distinct groups of participants. Second, the goal of the multiple exploratory case study is to show

in depth how key stakeholders at two schools perceive the indicators from the literature. A presentation of findings that discusses participants' perceptions from both schools together might stray into territory that would unintentionally result in a *comparison* between the two schools' coaching initiatives. The organization of this chapter is based on these considerations.

Chapter Four discusses the results of this research project and is organized into two main sections. The first section begins with an introduction to the primary findings. This introduction addresses the notes about the terminology that will orient the reader to understandings that emerged during the on-site research. It also includes clarifications concerning the visual representations reporting on the Likert scale data, the format and content of which is necessary to explain prior to reading the subsequent sections reporting the findings for each school. After the introduction the results for School A are described, followed by the findings for School B. The results for each school are organized into two parts. The first part presents the data from the Likert scale statements and includes a discussion of how the interviewees' level of agreement connects to the success indicators in the literature by either supporting or refuting the significance of these factors for the international school context. The second part reveals the themes and patterns that emerged from participants' explanations of their statement responses and from other open-ended questions asked during the interview. Data from supplemental sources, such as additional documents about each school's coaching initiative, will also be considered. Connections to the literature review will be discussed throughout the reporting of the findings for each school and addressed again in the chapter's conclusion.

The second main section of Chapter Four will conclude with a summary of how the findings relate to the broader context of the literature. This section will revisit the original research question of the study to discuss how key stakeholders at international schools perceive indicators identified from the literature as facilitating the success of a coaching program. The conclusion will also address the additional research questions about if, and to what degree, these indicators are applicable to and embedded in the context of international schools, and if there are other indicators, not yet identified in the research, present or more significant to the key stakeholders of international schools.

The findings presented in Chapter 4 will establish a foundation from which to better understand the limitations of and implications for this study, the recommendations for future research, and the new understandings made in connection with the literature review – all of which will be explored in Chapter Five.

Findings

The research data is organized separately for each school. Prior to presenting the data, a preliminary section about terminology used in the findings and clarifications about the visual representations are described. This information is followed by the Likert scale data for each school regarding the five categories of statements from the interview protocol. These statements reflect the indicators identified in the literature as facilitating successful coaching program implementation primarily in schools in the United States. Participants' level of agreement to these statements reveals insight into the main objective of this thesis – to determine how key stakeholders at international schools

perceive these indicators as significant to successful program implementation in an international school setting.

The literature, for example, isolates the importance of a coach's job description shared with teachers by administration as a factor in determining the success of a program (Calo et al., 2015; Fisher, 2004; Matsumura et al., 2009). Interviewees' responses to this statement highlight the degree to which key stakeholders at international schools perceive an indicator such as this one as contributing to the success of their own program. The Likert scale data also include visual representations showing the agreement toward a given statement as well as consensus or lack of consensus among the interviewees at each school toward each statement. In some cases, a deeper understanding of the school's program accounts for differences in responses. In other cases, the manner in which a statement in the interview protocol was phrased contributed to discrepancies between respondents. In either case, this information will be noted to provide a context for understanding the results of this data.

The second main section under each school reveals the themes and patterns identified from the preliminary open-ended interview questions about program implementation and from the semi-structured portion of the scaled statements that asks interviewees to explain their answers to each of their leveled responses. The data here differs significantly for each school and is most likely explained by the variances in the scope and scale of the school's program or initiative – a point that will be revisited throughout this chapter and discussed at more length in Chapter 5.

Notes on Terminology and Clarifications about the Visual Representations.

Similar to Mangin's (2014) study of coaching initiatives across twenty districts in the U.S., the research conducted for this thesis found that the two schools did not use common language to discuss coaching. Results from the interview data from School A, supplemented by evidence from the official document outlining the coach's job description, revealed the school's use of 'Teaching and Learning Coach' – a title, discussed in more detail below, that mirrors both the structure and pedagogical philosophy of School A's overall program. Interview data, as well as information gathered from a job description, revealed that the responsibilities of a coach at School B are couched under two of three roles listed as one distinct position: K-5 Literacy Coordinator, Assessment Coordinator, and Reading Specialist. The positioning of the responsibilities of a coach under this three-pronged title reflects what participants described as 'informal' coaching practices rather than a formal coaching *program*.

The two distinct settings have very different coaching structures – not all districts create classic coaching roles but instead, adapt these roles to conform to the needs of a localized context (Mangin, 2014). This point is critical to the understanding of the findings presented in this chapter and is one that will be addressed again in Chapter 5. Despite the lack of consistency in language between the two contexts, the term 'instructional coach' will be used throughout this chapter to refer to those persons at each school who carry out the functions of an instructional coach. In addition, there may be times when the phrase 'instructional coaching initiative' is used; it can be assumed that in the case of School A, *initiative* refers to the efforts related to a more formalized coaching

program whereas in the case of School B, this term refers to the work associated with the *role* of the coach.

Another important point of clarification concerns the content and format of the visual representations showing the different levels of participant agreement to each statement within the five categories. Participants who responded ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ are represented as positive numbers whereas those who responded ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ are represented negatively. The number of participants who responded ‘unknown/unsure’ were split between positive and negative values – a choice that recognizes the drawback of applying positive and negative values to a neutral category but one that was made to show a range of data across a continuum of five response categories. These clarifications support an understanding of the data presented in the next sections.

School A

School A has a formalized and established coaching program based on a robustly defined and continually evolving coaching model. This model was strategically developed from a well-crafted and deliberate approach to initial program implementation guided by leadership efforts to identify the *what*, *how*, *who*, and *why* of their school’s coaching program. At first glance, the findings presented from the Likert scale data suggest that key stakeholders at School A perceive many of the success indicators identified in the literature as equally significant for determining the success of a coaching program at their school and to a certain extent, there is evidence to support this assertion. However, a closer look at the data, supported by evidence from the themes and patterns

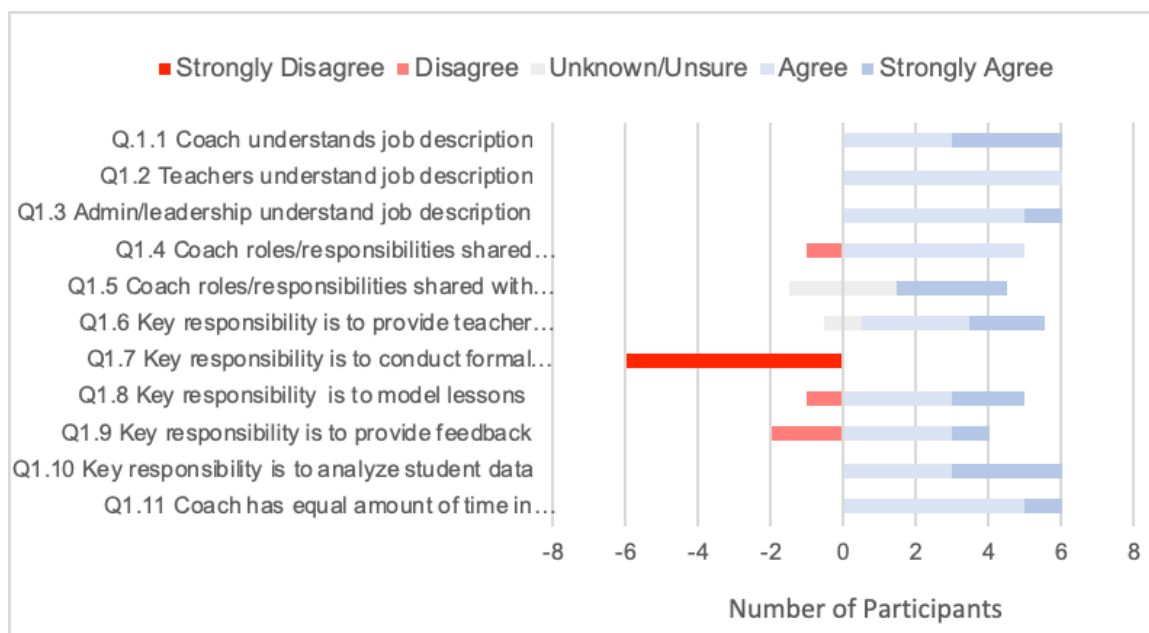
that emerged from the open-ended responses, reveals something much deeper about the School A's coaching program. The findings presented below uncover other factors embedded in the coaching structure, coaching model, and in overarching organizational processes and principles, that act as more significant indicators of the program's success at School A.

Likert Scale Data. The data presented in this section is organized to correspond with the five categories of the interview protocol: coaching roles and responsibilities; coaching models; coaching qualifications and background; the teacher/coach relationship, and administrative and leadership support. Rather than describing the results of each individual statement, the information presented here will highlight the most noteworthy findings within each category. It is also important to acknowledge that a discussion concerning a statement in one category is often more salient to a discussion of a statement in another category as participants' responses raised concurrent points about several statements across categories.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach. This section of the interview protocol was organized into eleven statements referring to the roles and responsibilities of the coach. For the majority of the statements shown below in Figure 1, the data illustrates that those indicators identified in the literature as contributing to the success of a coaching program correspond to School A's program – yet there are some significant areas that challenge the degree to which these indicators might determine program success for this international school.

Figure 1

School A Responses for Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach



The correspondence between the participants' responses and those indicators identified in the literature is most clear from the statements regarding key stakeholders' understanding of a coach's job description (1.1-1.3), the analysis of student data as a key responsibility of a coach (1.10), the conducting of evaluations as *not* a key responsibility of a coach (1.7), and to the equal division of time allocated in a coach's schedule to teaching and coaching responsibilities (1.11). The statement pertaining to the coach's understanding of the job description (1.1) and the statement referencing issues of evaluation (1.7) show the strongest agreement and warrant further discussion.

All respondents emphasized the importance of a clear and concise job description that was easily understood by key stakeholders – especially the coach. This is a central tenet of School A's coaching program from its inception to the current day. Interviewee

2A strongly agreed with statement 1.1 and explained how the coaching team continually reflects on the roles and responsibilities outlined in the school's description:

We've done a lot of work at the beginning of this year – we've got two new people on our team and just going into our fourth year, we want to make sure that we're still kind of aligned and in agreement with our purpose and with our mission so we've just been doing some work together on articulating a mission for ourselves so I can definitely say that it does align. I mean, it's really about collaborating with our peers at the school in a way that improves student learning and empowers our colleagues to continually move forward in their own professional development and I think everything in our job description aligns very well with that. There's nothing that like jars against that, in my opinion, and I think the rest of the team agrees because we've just been looking at that.

The job description was also referred to as the coaching team's 'North Star' – a document that serves as a guide to confirm that what is asked of coaches aligns with the responsibilities outlined in the document. The description was "unpacked" during the early stages of the program as a collaborative process between leadership and coaches, and although clear in its delineation of responsibilities, space was also created for "a little bit of fluidity in the interpretation" of the description, allowing the role to evolve over time to fit the changing needs of the school (Interviewee 1A).

A job description referred to as "well in place and well-practiced" (Interviewee 6A) is in line with the overwhelming evidence in the literature (Knight, 2015; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Sandvold & Baxter, 2008; Toll, 2018) suggesting first and foremost,

that a coach's job description outlines well-defined responsibilities and that these responsibilities are clearly understood by both the person performing the role and other key stakeholders.

The second area of interest relates to statement 1.7 about coaches as evaluators. These responses show unanimous inverse agreement when participants all chose 'strongly disagree' – a response that corresponds to the literature suggesting coaching responsibilities should *not* be evaluative (Calo et al., 2015; Galluci et al., 2010; Knight, 2004; IRA, 2004; Rodgers, 2017; Toll, 2018).

School A's stakeholders not only strongly disagreed when asked if coaches evaluate teachers but did so by emphasizing that the role, in no way, includes responsibilities that could be viewed as pertaining to either formal or informal evaluations (e.g., through 'walk-through' observations). This perspective corresponds with the following clause included in the official job description of the coach: "it is important to note that the coaching role does not include an evaluation component" (document obtained October 20, 2019). As Interviewee 6A explained:

It's always been very clear to faculty that [coaching] is not connected at all to sort of our evaluation professional growth side of things and I feel like that line was very clearly drawn for people at the beginning and it's one of the things that I think has allowed it to be a really successful program.

The position School A takes in response to evaluation is clear from interviewees' responses and official school documents that reflect the suggestions of experts in the field. Moreover, Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) suggest that tensions arise when coaches

are positioned as evaluators. Measures taken by School A to avoid these tensions correspond to the findings that emerged from statements about the key responsibilities of a coach which will be discussed next.

The previous examples showed clear correspondence between the perspectives of key stakeholders and the literature concerning some of the statements under ‘Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach’, but there are also areas where respondents diverge from indicators identified in the literature. The first area refers to some of the key responsibilities of the coach – most notably, modeling lessons (1.8) and providing feedback (1.9). The responses to these statements necessitate closer examination in that they offer further insight into how interviewees position responsibilities in relation to the context of evaluation.

The data shows that although most participants responded positively to these statements, if taken at face value, two important points about the school’s program would be missed. First, most of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements did so by qualifying their responses to clarify that modeling and providing feedback would *only* occur if these acts were part of an explicitly agreed-upon coaching cycle determined by the teacher, in partnership with the coach. Second, respondents such as Interviewee 4A, who disagreed with the statements, did so by explaining this same point:

I would say disagree because our role is not to provide feedback on a lesson. Our role is to hold a mirror up to the teachers towards their goal. So, first of all, it’s to help the teacher describe what’s happening and how to use the student work or the

lesson to base their goal and it's not up to us to say what's happening...feedback on a lesson in the sense of this worked, this didn't work – I don't see that as – when you say feedback in that sense, to me that starts to stray into, even if it's not formal evaluation, an evaluative role.

This excerpt adds dimension to the school's localized context by speaking to both the practical role of the coach as a partner in garnering collaborative teacher reflection about his/her own practices (Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, & Schock, 2009) and to the overarching principles of the organization to uphold the established (non-evaluative) role of a coach by safeguarding the boundaries surrounding coaching activities. Interviewee 6A spoke to this complexity by saying that “it's a more complicated one to answer...it's an expectation that [the coaches] will do it, if it's agreed upon with the person, that it's right for the occasion.”

Feedback is not automatically assumed at School A, nor is it conceptualized in the same manner as described in much of the literature. Even though *constructive* feedback is urged (Wouflin & Rigby, 2010), feedback is still generally noted as a key responsibility of a coach and one that is critical to effective coaching (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2009; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). School A reflects an alternative perspective about feedback – one that corresponds to Lynch and Ferguson's (2010) findings, suggesting that those coaches who offer feedback (even if its constructive or positive) to a teacher do so *only when the teacher requests it*, in order to foster a more collegial (rather than evaluative) relationship.

While School A's respondents unanimously agreed that the coaching role should not include evaluation as the literature suggests, they disagreed with the key responsibilities of the coach outlined in much of the literature because of the perception that these responsibilities might perpetuate a view of the coach as an evaluator. At least some of the indicators identified in much of the literature do not, in fact, contribute to the success of School A's program to the same degree to which these indicators are thought to determine program success in other contexts.

The second area where respondents diverge from the literature concerns statement 1.4. Most respondents agreed that the coach's roles and responsibilities were shared with teachers *by the coaches* but there was less agreement about the coach's roles and responsibilities shared with teachers *by administration and leadership*. Since these results correspond to the findings from a similar statement, regarding the sharing of the coaching model by administration and leadership under 'Coaching Model', this discussion will be addressed in the next category.

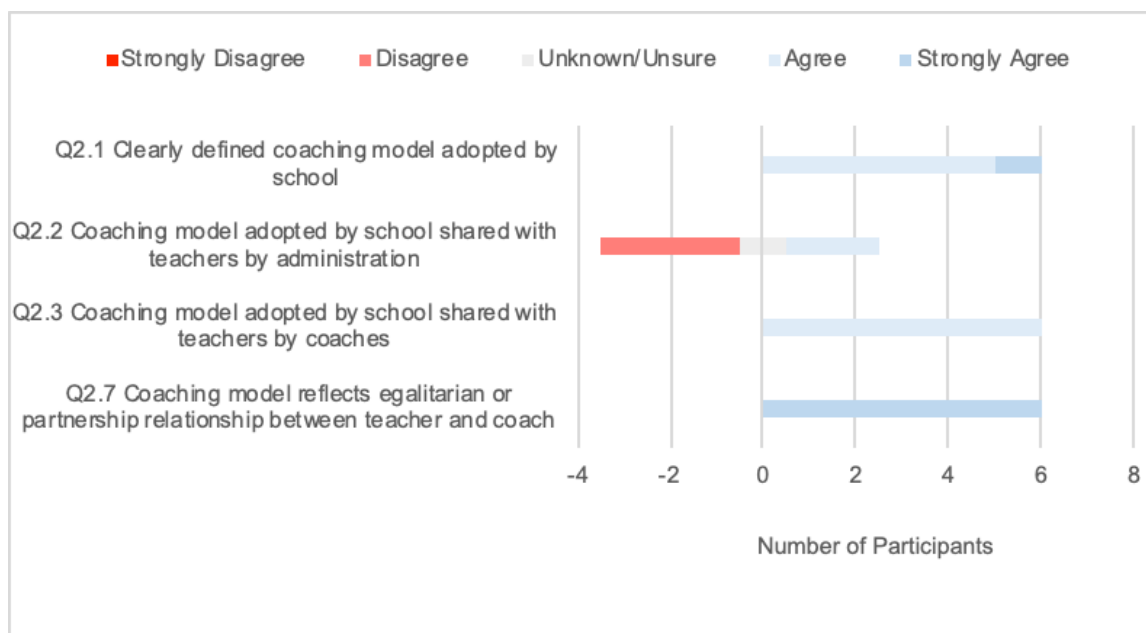
Coaching Model. The data presented in Figure 2 below resembles the types of responses depicted in Figure 1, showing participants' agreement with the majority of statements. However, in line with the findings reported above, some statements require closer examination.

The clearly defined coaching model adopted by School A was explained by all interviewees as contributing to the success of this program – a model that was also identified as reflecting an egalitarian or partnership relationship between coaches and teachers in the responses to statement 2.7. One of the central and underlying principles of

School A's model is adherence to the program's roots in Knight's partnership mindset where coaches "must genuinely see themselves in equal partnerships with teachers and expect to get as much as they give whenever they collaborate" (2004, p. 37). This mindset not only describes the relationship between a coach and a teacher but is also evident in multiple aspects of School A's program including how leadership plans for recruitment, how the job description is created and shared, and how the development of coaching standards holds coaches accountable for embodying the partnership principles in their interactions with teachers.

Figure 2

School A Responses for Section 2: Coaching Model



In Figure 2, the category that shows the higher number of participant *disagreement* is statement 2.2, which states that the coaching model is shared with teachers by administration. In the case of School A, this disagreement is not a negative.

For the most part, the literature on coaching calls for strong leadership and administrative support that is described primarily in terms of the activities that a school's leadership team take part in, such as attending coaching trainings, meeting with coaches, and discussing the coaching program with teachers (Matsumura et al., 2009). In addition, Toll (2018) suggests that when leaders understand (literacy) coaching, they will be able to effectively support coaches and engage teachers in the coaching program. Although this understanding is almost certainly a necessary prerequisite of successful programs, the findings presented here suggest that School A's approach to cultivating and enacting leadership on a *systems* level within various parts of its organization might be a more useful indicator for determining the success of a coaching program (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

The findings for School A align with a synthesis of research on the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (Day, 2015) suggesting that "administration needed to ensure they were actively supporting their own leadership agendas that clearly envisioned a change in professional learning, dependent on a collaborative culture" (p. 101). School A coaches do not rely on leadership to share information about the coaching program – the school takes a different (and collaborative) stance on how information about coaching is disseminated to the school's faculty. This position is best described by Interviewee 2A when discussing how information about the coaching program, as a whole, is shared with teachers:

Often what will happen is the leader – whether it's the [director] at the full faculty meeting or the [principal] here in the elementary school – will say a little

something to kind of set us up, to show support of the coaching program, but then they're usually leaving it to us to fill in the details of like, 'this is how we can support you, this is what we do, these are our skillsets' so they're very supportive but they usually leave it to us to articulate what it is that we do.

Many respondents answered 'disagree' or 'unknown/unsure' to statement 2.2 because, as one interviewee remarked, "the administration team has allowed the coaching team to share their own vision of what coaching is like with the faculty." This sharing is evidenced in the agreement of respondents to statement 2.3 which asserts that the coaching model is shared with teachers by coaches. Because leadership and administration had already established a platform for the coaches to literally take the stage as knowledge keepers of the program, it is the coaches at School A who share the coaching model with the teachers.

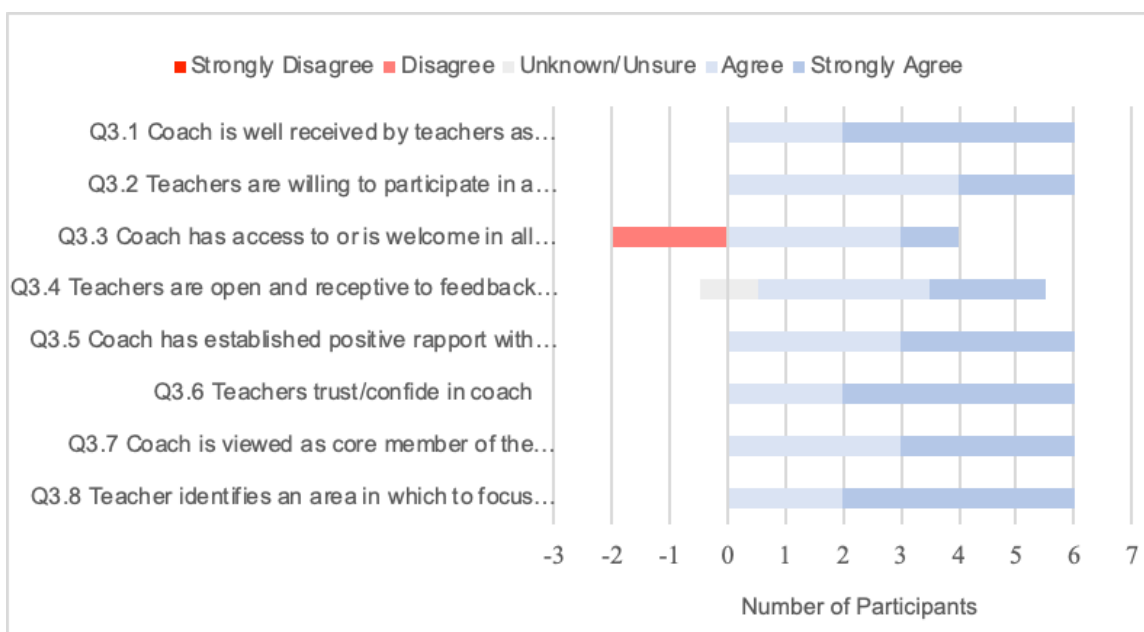
Administration support is enacted by developing the leadership capacity of other roles and structuring the program in a manner that supports and perpetuates the coaches' agency as leaders. Leadership and administration at School A are considered supportive of coaching in a way that allows the coaches to take the reins on distributing knowledge – an indicator of success then that could be more significant for the context of this particular school and one that will be addressed again with regard to the themes and patterns that emerged around 'Recruitment'.

The complexity of the data represented in the statements above regarding the coaching model is also present in the responses to statements about the next category from the interview protocol – the teacher/coach relationship.

Teacher/Coach Relationship. One of the areas that shows the most consistency to those indicators identified in the literature on coaching are those responses to statements regarding the teacher/coach relationship, shown in Figure 3 below. In order to grasp the full scope of participants' perceptions about this category, the responses to statements 3.3 and 3.4 require a closer look.

Figure 3

School A Responses for Section 3: Teacher/Coach Relationships



As with the responses to statements 1.8 and 1.9, referring back to feedback and modeling in 'Coaching Responsibilities and Roles', several participants qualified their responses to statements 3.3 and 3.4. When respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with statement 3.3, asking if coaches were welcome in teachers' classrooms, most of the respondents agreed, but did so by first referencing the fact that a coach's visit to a classroom would *only* occur if the teacher granted this permission. Even though, one

coach “couldn’t imagine anyone saying ‘no’” to a request to visit a teacher’s classroom, this participant also went on to say that a coach would *never* assume their presence in a classroom without first discussing this with a teacher: “We always make sure we have permission and consent from the teacher before we go into the classroom.”

Those respondents who disagreed with statement 3.3 did so because of this same point – coaches did not visit a classroom under any circumstances, including informal walk-throughs or ‘pop-in’ observations. As Interviewee 4A stated, they “only have access to the classrooms where they can negotiate some kind of an invitation into the classroom.” The issue is not whether a coach is welcome or unwelcome in a teacher’s classroom, but is more indicative of a broader theme reflecting the localized agreements about both tangible and intangible spatial boundaries that correspond to the articulated role of the coach and to the philosophical underpinnings of School A’s program that shape this role.

In a review of literature concerning how coaching is implemented in schools, Denton and Hasbrouk (2009) found that “overall, there appears to be consensus that coaching is a form of sustained, job-embedded professional development and that it includes some form of teacher observation” (p. 155). Although the first premise might be true for School A, the second proposition is unequivocally not. In fact, many respondents referred to a situation concerning a former (externally-hired) coach who had proposed walk-throughs – a suggestion that was swiftly blocked by the other coaches who did not want teachers feeling judged or, as Interviewee 2A put it, like the coaches had “caught

them off-guard.” This situation raised several concerns for the coaching cohort, evident from the following excerpt:

We do not pop in uninvited. That’s very clear. We do not do drop-ins. Because that kind of goes back to that evaluatory [role] and even if it’s giving positive feedback, it’s not part of our role. There was a discussion about that I guess two years ago because there was a coach – a new coach coming in who had previously done that in his old school – and he was kind of pushing that and it was very quickly shut down - we’re not doing that. And actually, the coaches who had already been in the school, we actually felt quite uncomfortable with that. We don’t do that (Interviewee 3A).

Classroom accessibility and by association, the act of observing teachers, is *not* assumed at School A. Moreover, these practices are explicitly framed in opposition to the school’s agreements about coaching – in fact, the only mention of observations in the coach’s job description is in reference to the coach’s ‘lab’ classroom where “other *teachers* [my emphasis] can come and observe, discuss, reflect and perhaps co-teach” (document obtained October 20, 2019). This *teacher-driven* model of coaching is a key theme that emerged from interview data; much of the evidence for this theme emerged from these responses about feedback and observations.

Although modeling, providing feedback, and observing teaching in classrooms are often framed in the literature with an emphasis on taking a non-evaluatory or constructive approach to these activities, the literature nevertheless positions these as being key responsibilities that promote effective coaching (Blamey et al., 2009;

Matsumura et al., 2009; Shanklin, 2006; Wouflin & Rigby, 2017). Moreover, in their research investigating teachers' perceptions of Michigan's *Reading First* coaches, Scott et al. (2012) found that predictable structures like daily pop-in visits contributed to the importance of a coach's role. The responses from School A participants suggest otherwise and reflect a perspective demonstrating that some factors identified in the literature as indicators of successful programs in other contexts, are not significant for determining the success of School A's coaching program.

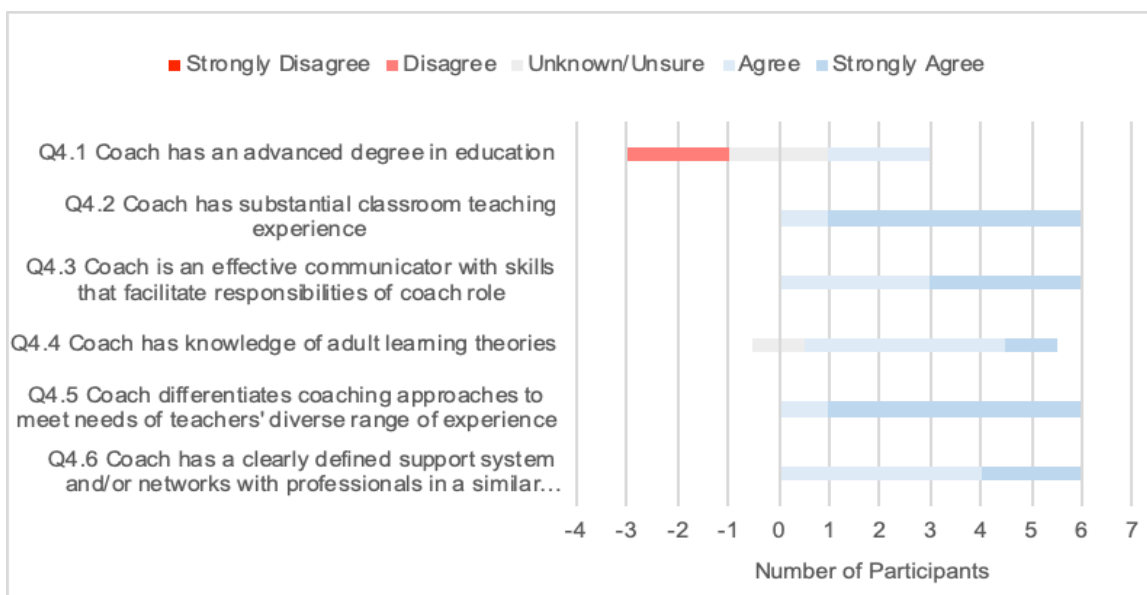
Similar insight was revealed from respondents' levels of agreement to statement 3.4 – about teachers being open and receptive to feedback from the coach. Again, mirroring the earlier discussion concerning feedback as a key responsibility of a coach (statement 1.8), the responses to statement 3.4 are best understood by taking a closer look at respondents' qualifying explanations. In some cases, participants revealed that any feedback provided by the coach would *only* happen if this were part of the already established agreements made between the teacher and the coach prior to or during the coaching cycle. For example, Interviewee 4A stated 'agree' but did so by clarifying that the language of feedback in statement 3.4 be "adjusted to reflect the way that [the school] has crafted the position" – a point reinforced by Interviewee 2A who said, "usually, if I'm giving feedback, it's because we've agreed that [the teachers] want feedback." Feedback is "never pointed" or "stand-alone" but rather indirect and "part of a dialogue" between the teacher and the coach – a response that places further emphasis on the partnership mindset (Interviewee 1A).

The responses to the statements about the teacher/coach relationship show that in general, the success indicators from the literature concerning teachers' willingness to participate in a coaching cycle and the overall receptivity of teachers toward coaches, are significant indicators of a successful coaching program in this particular international school setting. However, other indicators emerged from a closer look at the data that diverge from those identified in the literature and account for School A's specific agreements that both frame the teacher/coach relationship and define the parameters of the coach's role. Information about classroom observations and feedback, along with the findings presented in the next category pertaining to a coach's qualifications and background, continue to shed light on how those indicators identified in the literature relate to School A, and how other factors might be more significant for the success of this school's program.

Coach's qualification and background. As with the previous categories, the information gathered about a coach's qualifications and background, shown in Figure 4 below, reflects agreement with the success indicators found in the literature, yet responses to one of the statements under this category need further clarification.

Figure 4

School A Responses for Section 4: Qualifications and Background of the Coach



The responses to statement 4.1 refer to a coach's attainment of an advanced degree in the field of education as a factor in determining the success of a coaching program. This indicator represents the criteria outlined in the literature pertaining mainly to *literacy* coaching and the belief that completion of an advanced degree does make a positive difference for coaching effectiveness (IRA, 2004; L'Allier et al., 2010). This may be the case for a content-focused program but for organizations like School A, with a focus on cross-divisional pedagogical coaching rather than discipline-specific coaching, this factor might indicate a varying level of significance for program success.

Many School A respondents revealed that an advanced degree was not a necessary qualification for the coaching position. There is no mention in the official job description that a candidate will have an advanced degree in education. Rather, the job description focuses on requirements for classroom experience (5 years minimum) and for

a repertoire of skills and knowledge including those related to communication, differentiation, and adult learning theory. The data from the statements concerning a coach's qualifications – especially those from statement 4.2, referring to a coach's experience as a classroom teacher and statement 4.5, referring to a coach's ability to differentiate – supports an emphasis on teaching experience and other skills, as opposed to a coach's procurement of an advanced degree. Even Interviewee 4A who agreed with this statement did so uncertainly: "I agree, they do [have an advanced degree] but um...whether or not we set that as a criteria, we would eliminate somebody because they might not tick that box, I don't know. It hasn't come up." Other participants who responded by stating 'unsure/unknown' did so because of this same reason – they did not remember or did not know the actual degrees held by the coach.

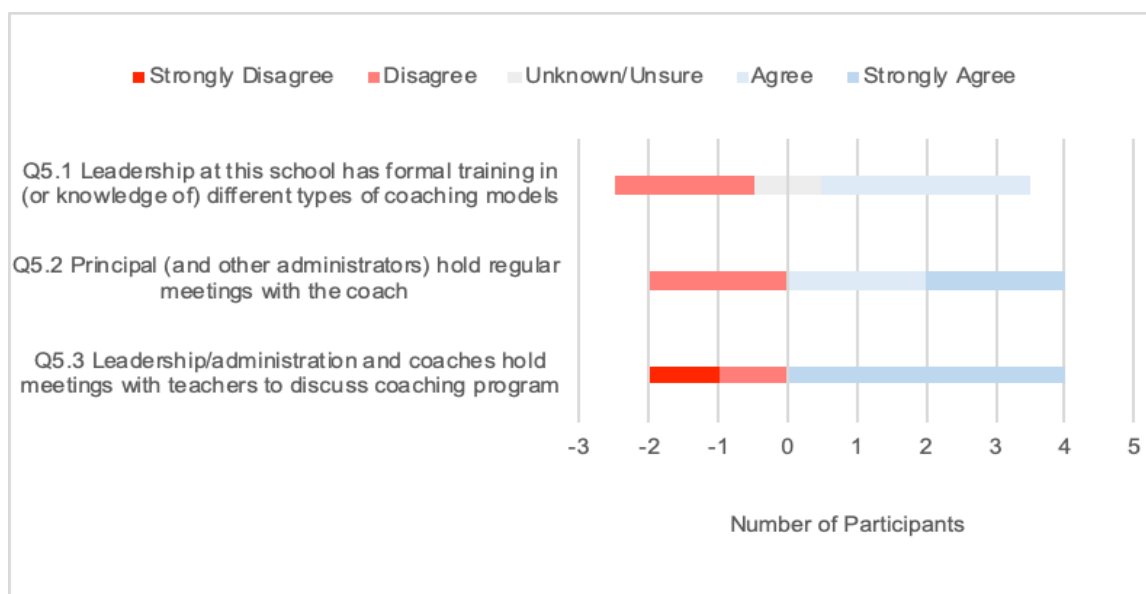
This data supports the idea that an advanced academic degree is not a success indicator for the coaching program at this international school. Instead, respondents spoke to a coach's disposition and skillset as key factors in determining the success of the program. Because these factors correspond to the category of 'Recruitment', a discussion about the significance of a coach's disposition and skillset will be addressed in the next section. Before turning to a discussion of School A's themes and patterns, the last category – administration and leadership support will be revisited.

Leadership and Administration Support. Information about leadership and administration support has already been described, especially as it relates to the sharing of both the coach's job description and the coaching model by administration and leadership. This discussion informs the responses to other statements shown below in

Figure 5. These show a relative lack of consensus (compared to other categories) among participants about the types of leadership activities, including participation in formal training about coaching models and participation in coaching meetings with coaches and/or teachers about the coaching program. Again, it might appear that leadership and administration understanding and/or support of the coaching program is lacking, but this is not the case. An understanding of misconceptions surrounding the phrasing of the interview questions, as well as other details about the meetings at School A, captures a more accurate picture of leadership and administration support.

Figure 5

School A Responses for Section 5: Leadership and Administrative Support



The phrasing of some of the statements caused discrepancy in participant responses and may have contributed to a lack of agreement among the key stakeholders. For example, with regard to statement 5.1, some interviewees considered all of the school's leadership in their responses whereas other interviewees grouped only those

leaders with more immediate knowledge of and access to coaching. Also, because the research lens focused on elementary grades while coaching at School A is school-wide, it was sometimes unclear whether respondents were also referencing middle and high school divisional meetings in their responses to statements 5.2 and 5.3.

Two other clarifications are necessary to better understand the specific responses to the statements about meetings. First, coaching meetings do take place, but most of these regularly-scheduled meetings reflect the structure of the school's coaching program that uses a 'coaches coaching coaches' model. These meetings often include a 'lab' element where coaches participate in book studies, discuss issues related to coaching cycles, and take part in a process of reflection by showing videos of their coaching practice and sharing feedback with one another about these practices. One interviewee explained that this process requires a level of vulnerability that has contributed to the "close-knit" nature of the group, making it "one of the strongest teams on campus" (Interviewee 4A). These meetings do not correspond to a specific descriptor identified in the literature as facilitating the success of a coaching program but the interviewee data suggests that this internal network of support offered from regularly-scheduled cohort meetings is an important factor in determining the success of School A's program.

The second point of clarification is that the responses about meetings elicited information about School A's flexible model of coaching – a key theme that emerged from the interview data. For example, a principal from one division had recently begun a bi-weekly meeting with the two coaches 'housed' in this principal's division, while the principal from a different division holds meetings 'as needed' with the two coaches

‘housed’ in this division. The responses indicate that there is a lack of uniformity across divisions concerning how meetings are structured, possibly reflecting the flexible nature of the program that functions well to meet the present needs of the school.

The leadership and administrative support category of the interview protocol did not elicit the same degree of consensus among participants as other categories.

Leadership and administrative support enacted through certain activities like participation in trainings and meetings with the coach, described in the literature as an indicator of success for coaching implementation (Matsumura et al., 2009; Matsumura et al., 2010a) were not as relevant or as significant to the coaching program at School A. This is not to say that communication between coaches and administration and teachers is not critical to a successful program at School A. On the contrary, as already discussed regarding the sharing of coaching knowledge, interviewees did reference a supportive administration and leadership and the interview data revealed that meetings do take place. In particular, cohort meetings were shown to be significant to the success of the program. These meetings are instrumental in providing opportunities for the coaches to conduct peer-led trainings and take part in reflective practices that are a key element of how the coaching program is implemented.

Summary of School A’s Likert scale data. Overall, the Likert scale data for School A shows that a clearly understood job description of a coach by teachers, coaches, and leadership contributes to the success of School A’s program – an assertion that will be reinforced by the themes and patterns that emerged from participant explanations of their scaled responses explained in the next section. Indicators from the literature

outlining key responsibilities such as modeling, providing feedback, and teacher observations were not identified as significant for School A's program success. The key responsibilities of a coach at School A can be better understood by viewing the program more holistically within the wider context of the school's overarching philosophy and approaches to teaching and learning. These principles are integral to the school's coaching program and also inform the level of agreement when participants were asked about the teacher/coach relationship, particularly in relation to the degree to which coaches were welcome in teachers' classrooms. Much of the data referenced clear agreements that refrain from automatically assuming certain responsibilities – a measure that ultimately safeguards teacher/coach relationship. The evidence suggests that a clearly-defined coaching model based on a partnership relationship between teacher and coach and shared primarily with teachers by the coach, is an indicator of program success at School A. Regarding a coach's qualifications and background, most of the data supports the indicators in the literature concerning teaching experience and skills. However, the Likert scale responses, as well as evidence from the analysis of the actual job description, show that an advanced degree is not regarded as a success criterion for the coaching program at School A. The data collected from the section on leadership and administration support showed a lack of consensus among participants. A closer analysis of this data revealed a style of leadership that veers slightly from the micro-level leadership activities identified in some of the coaching literature to reflect a more capacity-driven, systems-level leadership approach addressed in other literature (see Chapter 5).

These findings captured the perceptions of key stakeholders in relation to the indicators presented in the literature that are thought to determine the success of a coaching program and in some cases, the inclusion of participants' explanations supported a better understanding of these perspectives. The next section continues to delve into the perceptions of key stakeholders at School A by exploring the layers of meaning elicited from the themes and patterns that were coded and categorized from these explanations and the more open-ended questions to present an even more comprehensive picture of the coaching program at School A.

Interview Themes. Because of the scope and scale of the coaching program at School A, the amount of interview data was substantial yet several clear categories and themes emerged that ultimately identified significantly modified indicators, or other indicators entirely, that are more impactful for this international school in determining the success of its coaching program. The categories that emerged are not mutually exclusive but often influence, inform, or overlap with one another. Chapter Three described how the interview data was coded, analyzed for themes, and organized into broader categories. This section will provide an in-depth exploration of the categories and corresponding themes that emerged for School A by first describing the category of a site-specific coaching model based primarily on the themes of a flexible and pedagogical model. This section will also incorporate a discussion of a recent challenge to a coaching approach and how the school used this challenge as an opportunity to reflect on the theme of a teacher-driven model. The discussion will then turn to a category of themes related to recruitment – particularly the procedure followed by leadership to recruit coaches and the

related discussion of a coach's disposition and skillset that leadership seeks when hiring. The next category discloses the actual structure of the coaching model – a category that overlaps with the site-specific coaching model but is discussed separately because of its connection to the theme of credibility.

Site-Specific Coaching Program. School A systematically planned for a coaching program. The program was founded primarily on principles of Jim Knight's coaching model and continues to include the use of Knight's Impact Cycle for its full coaching cycle, but the school's coaching program was also created on the premise that it would reflect, first and foremost, the specific context of School A. In doing so, the program evolved to include other approaches such as Jenni Donohoo's collaborative inquiry approach and more recently, cognitive coaching. The program uses a model based on the teaching and learning framework by incorporating three core pedagogical approaches (inquiry-based learning, language for learning, and collaborative learning) used school-wide and across divisions, reflecting the wider organizational context rather than a coaching program directed at any one discipline. In addition, the school has encouraged coaches and leadership to explore and reflect on some of the newer directions in an effort to reexamine earlier commitments to a teacher-driven model. Together, these themes – flexible, pedagogical, teacher-driven – allow for a site-specific program that functions to support the unique localized context of School A.

The theme of a flexible and evolving coaching program surfaced several times during the interviews and can be better understood by briefly discussing initial steps to implementation. Prior to the hiring of coaches for School A's program, leadership at the

school brainstormed, researched and discussed precisely how the program would be implemented. Two leaders attended Jim Knight's workshop and one of Knight's trainers visited the school to provide on-site training to the coaches. This training was one of three steps that were taken during initial implementation; other steps included the use of a clear model and a commitment to using this model for at least one year before any changes were made. Although the school began with the Knight model, several shifts in the use of this model, as well as the addition of other coaching approaches, were implemented as the school began to shape its unique program. Some of these were subtle shifts, as one interviewee addresses here:

Jim's [cycle] starts with video of the classroom and we found that when we started purely with video, that most goals tended to go in certain directions and that's fine, except that was the only direction they were going. Most goals are around student engagement and those kinds of things, the kind of things teachers notice when they watch a video of themselves teaching or when they watch the kids. They weren't as focused on what the kids were doing well or not so well on the tasks that they were being sent, necessarily. So now we're just more flexible so the starting point can be a video, the starting point can be some pieces of student work, the starting point can be whatever...once we go past that, we still stick with Jim's model. The only thing we've really varied is where might we derive that goal from (Interviewee 4A).

This interviewee described the flexibility of a model implemented by School A to meet the focused and desired goals of the coaching program. Likewise, another participant

pointed out that the program has evolved to include different levels of coaching – from the use of coaches as “thought-partners” to a full coaching cycle, a “truncated version of the full coaching cycle”, and the more recent development of team coaching (Interviewee 5A). The coaching program was described as “still having a lot of purity” due to its foundation in coaching conversations around pedagogy and impact on learning but also suggested the school was “playing around with a range of ways that [people] can tap into that [coaching] experience that might be a little more customized” (Interviewee 5A).

One area that reflects the purity of the model’s foundation is the focus on pedagogy rather than content as the basis for the school’s program. The theme of pedagogy overlaps with the actual structure of the coaching program and will be referenced again later. For this discussion, it is important to understand how a focus on pedagogical approaches and the related teaching and learning goals contribute to the site-specific model of coaching at School A. This is best explained by the following excerpt from Interviewee 4A:

One of the things we really want to embed here is certain approaches to pedagogy. One of the things that’s kind of particular about [this school] is we believe in inquiry-based learning. We have our own inquiry-based learning model and it’s very difficult to get that happening in classrooms...The second thing is we have a genre-based approach to language teaching and we expect every teacher in this school to teach genre-based...You can’t just expect that to happen in your classroom. We also have a cross-curricular skillset around collaboration and we expect our teachers to not just send kids off in groups to do something but

to actually explicitly teach and assess the skills of collaboration. And so those are the three things – and the coaches do whatever the goal tends to be – but we want them to become experts in those three sets of skills.

This embeddedness of the professional practice of coaching within a wider organizational agenda reflects ideas from the literature (Fisher, 2007, Knight & Fullan, 2011) concerning educational reform efforts – particularly an identified need on the part of the school’s leadership and decision-makers to establish guiding principles or a common theoretical approach on which to structure a coaching model (see Chapter 5).

School A intended to create a model that offers space for flexibility to meet the changing and evolving needs of the school, but the established founding principles also guide any new paths that the school might take with regard to coaching. One of the reasons that School A appears to be so successful with their program is that the school’s coaches and leadership continually seek feedback from staff about these new directions. Responses to statement 3.8, about teachers choosing an area on which to focus for a coaching cycle, revealed that the feedback from a recent team coaching initiative was less positive than the feedback elicited from years prior concerning individual coaching cycles. One respondent strongly agreed to teachers choosing their focus area for coaching but added, “with the exception of team coaching” and pointed to an example from the previous year when a team was told, “you’re going to go through team coaching” (Interviewee 2A):

So usually, when we ask for feedback on individual coaching cycles, we get pretty much unanimous positive feedback. That wasn’t the case with the team

coaching. And I also think with the coaches involved, we were sort of mixed – like there were some teams, it went well with, other teams it went less well with. It felt a little more like we were pushing an agenda on to people. So, we did write down and send out to faculty some sort of a synthesis about what some of the feedback was, with our commitments, so that if we do work with teams again in a team coaching role, we know we need to find a way for everyone to have some voice and choice in the process.

The team coaching initiative was described as not fitting School A's coaching model because it was not voluntary, the teams did not set their own goal, and it strayed into more curricular areas (Interviewee 4A). A flexible model allowed for the new direction of team coaching, but with that exploration there was an awareness of the importance of the school to reiterate and recommit to the founding agreements and key principles of a teacher-driven coaching model. Participation, as one interviewee stated, is “always teacher initiated and...so many of those focused goals require a conversation that are massaged in dialogue with the coach but that's all teacher-driven” (Interviewee 5A).

The emphasis on a model that is described as teacher-driven, has already been the focus of many of the findings related to School A – especially from discussions concerning the Likert scale data about the key responsibilities of a coach. These findings are reinforced from the data that emerged about the program's initial implementation and subsequent stages of coaching, including the more recent initiative aimed at team coaching. Team coaching continues to be explored at School A, but as many participants responded, future advances in this area will be tempered by the knowledge gained from

teacher feedback and from a recommitment to the standing teacher-driven agreements and fundamental principles related to partnership and pedagogy. Another area where the principles of partnership and pedagogy emerged was in the category of recruitment, a discussion that overlaps and informs the site-specific program.

Recruitment. The category of recruitment was developed based on information captured around two interrelated themes – the first is the actual organizational process of *how* the school recruits and the second addresses the skillset and disposition of a coach actively sought during recruitment.

Recruitment follows a specific procedure and represents a tenet of School A’s coaching model that stays close to the school’s context and to its people – an idea perhaps best described by one interviewee who, in referencing her own (internal) recruitment during the early stages of implementation, said:

To be honest, I didn’t know a whole lot about instructional coaching at that time but that didn’t seem to be like too concerning [to the school’s leadership]. I think they really wanted to *shape up the program together with the people* (my emphasis). They were more like looking for people that had a certain set of dispositions and skills.

This reflection captures both a reason behind internal recruitment – to essentially grow teacher leaders as coaches from the inside – and draws attention to the desirable disposition and skills of a coach sought by leadership when recruiting. Participant 1A further clarifies this desired set of dispositions and skills in the following remark:

I remember very clearly, we were after what depth of knowledge and experience does this person have about pedagogy, about good teaching and learning, but equally important – what ability/capacity, does this person have to articulate that and to meta-cognate about that.

The skillset of a coach then, relates to both pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience, as well as to the ability to communicate about and reflect on that knowledge. Participants mentioned the ability to ask good questions and be good listeners (Knight 2015; Tschannen-Moran, B. & Tschannen-Moran, M., 2011) along with the ability to cultivate trust and develop rapport with teachers (Jacobs et al., 2011) correspond to the indicators identified in the literature as contributing to successful facilitation of a coaching program.

One interviewee (2A) referred to multiple aspects of School A's coaching program including the role of the coach, the recruitment process and the desired softer skills of a coach when explaining that:

We've made it very explicit that we don't evaluate and that [the teachers] bring something to the table and we bring something to the table. I also think [the leadership team], they had this agreement that they had to be unanimous on the coaches that they hired. I see something similar in our personalities which is...that partnership principle is naturally very important to all of us. We all have a sort of gentle way of interacting with people, if that makes sense. We're all kind of introverts, really, so that helps, I think.

This partnership principle is key to School A and quite possibly reflects the program's roots in Jim Knight's model, evident from the statement from one participant who attended the initial Knight training:

One of the things we specifically looked for was humility because we don't want a coaching program that pushes things on people because we know – all the research says if you push something, they're not going to do it. Teachers just don't do it...so it's always seen as a partnership and we deliberately try to pick people that will adhere to that and embody that. And we've had a couple of quite good teachers apply but they just don't have the personality to be an equal partner with somebody. I mean, they'll say in an interview, 'I have so much to offer' and we're like, 'that's not what it's about' (Interviewee 4A).

At this point, much of the evidence pulled from the interview data has focused on the disposition and skillset sought in potential coaches but the above quotes also highlight one of the more unique aspects of School A's recruitment process related to *how* coaches are hired.

The requirement, established by leaders, calling for unanimous approval of a coaching candidate was referred to by every single participant. Interviewee 4A said that the motivation behind this particular practice stemmed from the view that coaches hold an "influential position" and from the intention, on the part of leaders, to develop a program the "right" way by developing a strong reputation for the program. This process is further described by Interviewee 4A in reference to the early stages of implementation:

So, we picked six coaches that we all agreed on unanimously and put them in place. We picked them because they were like good models of teaching within the context of our school so they exemplified the kind of teaching we wanted to see – and because we thought they had the communication skills to talk to people and because we felt they had that combination of quiet confidence and humility that a coach needs.

In summary, the themes that emerged to reflect the school's recruitment practice referred to a specific procedure that required unanimous leadership approval for (primarily internal) hires and to a specific set of skills and attributes that interviewees identified as important for a coach to have. Guidelines to facilitate the hiring practice as well as to seek specific candidate traits and skills speak to a leadership that holds coaching personnel and the coaching program in high esteem. Moreover, this practice ensures that coaches embody key skills and attributes that address the local context of the coaching program; coaches are proven practitioners with knowledge of and experience with the school's pedagogical approaches, and they are humble in their interaction with colleagues and embrace a key principle of the model – the partnership mindset.

The recruitment process, specifically the unanimous approval of high-quality educators, emerged as an indicator that facilitates the success of School A's program. This indicator is not identified in the literature but is unique to this particular international context and reflects the values about coaching that were established during initial stages of program implementation and that continue today. The identified skills and dispositions of a coach, on the other hand, do reflect indicators outlined in the literature about the

desired background and characteristics of a coach (Knight, 2006; Jones & Rainville, 2014) and are also shown to be indicators that facilitate the success of School A's coaching program. What is distinctive to School A, is the level of interplay between the skills and dispositions embedded in the school's coaching model and the degree to which the coaching model is structured to support these skills and dispositions – a dynamic that speaks to the reach of the program's tenets in the broader organizational practices at School A (see Chapter 5) and one that will be further addressed in the next section.

Program structure. A third category and a central piece of the coaching model at School A is the actual structure of the program – namely that all coaches are also classroom teachers. The nature of this role was conceptualized during the initial phase of program implementation and continues to be a central part of how the program functions. The structure allows for a relationship between coach and teacher that is based on a key theme that emerged from the interview data – credibility.

This structure, although mentioned by some interviewees as being difficult to balance with regard to juggling two roles, was described as influential in cultivating professional comradery. According to Interviewee 1A, a coach is “in the trenches along with [the teachers]. They aren't above this and a lot of coaches here say that it actually enables them to serve as a model.” This perspective is echoed by a coach who described this teacher/coach role as “quite important in that it keeps us grounded, it keeps us believable” (Interviewee 2A). The structure of the role alone does not create credibility – this characteristic is also acquired through an educator's tenure at the school and through the ability to build rapport – a point made clear in the following excerpt:

We have two new coaches this year. One is a high school math teacher – he’s been here for three or four years – so if he were to step out of teaching completely, people already know him. They know he’s a good relationship-builder. They know he’s a good teacher. I think he has the respect and the credibility already but the elementary – one of the sixth-grade coaches – is brand new to the school and people here don’t know what her teaching background is or was, so the fact that she’s in the classroom approximately half time, I do think that actually goes a long way (Interviewee 1A).

The degree to which a coach may have already established credibility with peers is important but the specific structure of the program only serves to provide a platform on which credibility can continue to be developed. This platform is explained in more detail here:

To coach well, you have to stay in the game and so much in our school is evolving and so much of our own personal pedagogy is evolving and what we’ve found that’s worked is to really stay in immediate contact with the day-to-day realities of what teaching and learning looks like in this environment. And not just dabble in it because you’ve parachuted in to do a lesson or two, but to know the realities at the unit level, at the reporting level, at the on-going assessment level, that enables somebody to have the depth of knowledge, the credibility that’s connected to it (Interviewee 5A).

Coaches are required to be knowledgeable about the school’s pedagogical practices but they must also continue to be practitioners of this pedagogy themselves.

This transparency of practice relates, too, to how coaches communicate their own learning as a coach and circles back to the implementation of coaching labs mentioned earlier in the discussion of cohort meetings. Several participants spoke to the practice of new coaches developing their own coaching skills with other coaches first, before working with teachers. In fact, when the program started, for about the first six weeks, none of the coaches worked with a teacher and instead focused their work on practice within the cohort:

So we paired up so one of us would coach another coach and then a third person would coach that person... so that you could try out the cycle, you could become comfortable with it, you could feel what it was like, and we could have conversations about you know, what's it like to be on the coachee side because we were all on that side and what kind of things could we do to make that more comfortable for people. So, those were some of the things – the decisions we made early on in the program – that I think really supported it being a success (Interviewee 4A).

Early decisions structured the dual role of a coach as both a teacher and a coach and reflect one of the core “beliefs about why [the school’s] model works” (Interviewee 6A). The decision to structure the program in this way creates credibility by reinforcing equal role positioning among coaches and teachers. In doing so, coaches are offered transparent spaces (classroom and cohort) with which to practice and refine their role as a practitioner.

Summary of Interview Themes. A close analysis of the patterns that emerged from the Likert scale data and the open-ended questions revealed deeper insight into the coaching program at School A. Themes emerged that related to a flexible, pedagogical, and teacher-driven coaching model. Examples from steps taken during initial program implementation as well as those from more recent initiatives showed both the fluid nature of the program and a commitment to fundamental principles that guide the program as it evolves. Interviews also revealed interesting insight into the themes of recruitment. Recruitment procedures (*how* a coach is hired) as well as those skills and attributes sought when recruiting a coach (*who* is hired) were identified as indicators of success – indicators that also reflect, inform, and overlap with the central tenets of the school’s program. A third category was also explored as this related to the actual structure of the coaching model – namely, that coaches continue in their role as classroom teachers – a move that reinforces cross-divisional pedagogical approaches and enacts credibility, a key theme identified from the interviews.

The themes that emerged from these findings add substance to those indicators that were described in the Likert scale data as facilitating the success of an established and formalized site-specific coaching program at School A. The depth and breadth of the interview data from School A offered multiple insights into how the program was originally created and sustained to reflect the broader organization – a topic which will inform much of the discussion in Chapter 5. Before turning to this discussion, a presentation of a more limited sample of findings from School B will be reviewed.

School B

In the findings presented above, the importance of including the localized context in an understanding of the full scope of School A's coaching program cannot be overemphasized. The program was shown to be implemented in a manner that reflected central tenets of the school's pedagogical approaches and systematic practices that worked together to ensure the successful efforts of the program and the day-to-day interactions of its coaches. One of the reasons for choosing the multiple exploratory case study was its strength to capture an in-depth understanding of a case or cases and in the subsequent creation of a written product that could develop a detailed analysis of these cases with special attention to their contexts (Creswell, 2007). The importance of context is equally important to an understanding of School B and recognition of how these two schools' coaching initiatives differ from one another should be acknowledged here – *not* to offer a comparison of the two schools' coaching programs – but to help explain the vast differences in the representation of the data from the Likert scale statements.

School B, as noted in the beginning of this chapter and described in detail in the previous chapter, does not have a formal coaching program but does have a person who performs a coaching role as outlined in the official job description. Because of the smaller scale and scope of School B's initiative, a few issues arose with the data collection process. Some of these will be discussed in the next chapter with regard to the limitations of this study while others are important to include here as a reference point for the data presented below.

Because of the lack of a formal program, it was difficult to draw any conclusive insights that could isolate whether the indicators identified in the literature contribute to

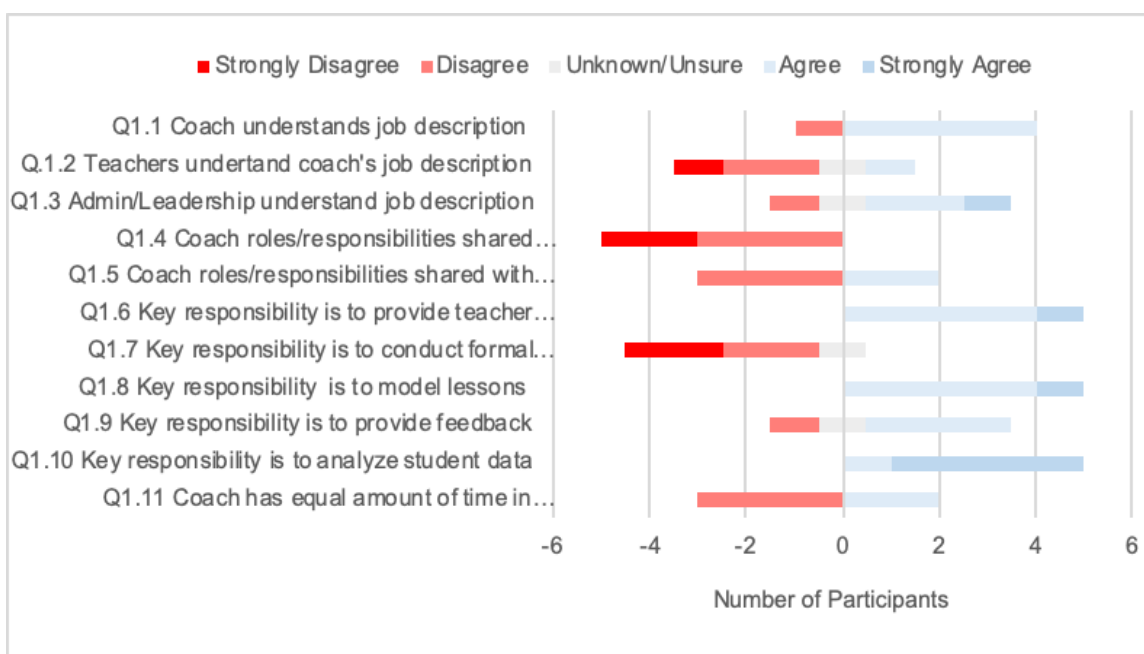
the success of this international school's initiative. The most salient issue is the fact that the data collected might simply relate to a respondents' awareness of an indicator as either present or absent at School B, rather than perceiving a given indicator as facilitating the success of School B's coaching initiative. In some cases, factors were referenced that possibly speak more clearly to those that inhibit program success or to those that were deemed important for future development of the program, even if these were not necessarily present at the time of the interviews. In these instances, a connection could be made between the perceptions of the key stakeholders at School B and the significance of indicators as determining successful implementation of a coaching initiative. In any case, the findings presented below should not elicit a comparison to the findings from School A, as the scope and scale of the programs and the difference in localized contexts is too great to warrant any sufficient or just comparison. Rather, School B's data should be understood from a lens that considers a smaller-scale or *emerging* program – a point that will be revisited throughout the findings reported on for School B.

Likert Scale Data. The data presented in this section is organized to reflect the five categories of the interview protocol: coaching roles and responsibilities, coaching models, coaching qualifications and background, the teacher/coach relationship, and administrative and leadership support. As with School A, the information highlights the most noteworthy findings and will identify any areas that need further clarification, including those sections of the interview protocol that were not applicable to School B and were therefore omitted from the findings.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach. Responses from the eleven protocol statements referring to the roles and responsibilities of the coach are shown below in Figure 6. One area of significance that emerged from the data pertains to key stakeholders' understanding of the job description and to the related point concerning if and how information about the job description is shared with teachers. A second area of importance addresses the key responsibilities of a coach, specifically the activities of teacher observations, feedback, and evaluation.

Figure 6

School B Responses for Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach



The majority of the data in this category indicated that of those constituents involved with coaching, the coach was depicted as the person with a more comprehensive level of understanding about the job description. The results showed mixed agreement about leaderships' understanding of the job description (1.3) whereas participants were either unsure about, or disagreed with, statement (1.2) concerning teachers'

understanding of the job description. The lack of teachers' understanding of the coach's job description, as well as misunderstandings surrounding how information about the coach's job is shared with teachers (1.4 and 1.5), are two areas that need more attention to better understand how the role of the coach is shaped at School B.

The confusion about the responsibilities of the literacy coordinator (who fulfills the role of the coach) was addressed by Interviewee 2B who remarked:

It's not clear to [the teachers] what the literacy coordinator does a hundred percent and the coordinator mentioned that many times, and perhaps, it needs to be more explicit. It's also not clear to [the teachers] who to reach out to and when and the literacy coordinator has a part in that as well. That's why it's not clearly understood. I think the school can do a better job communicating that role.

This perspective is substantiated by Interviewee 1B who explained the teachers' lack of understanding in this way:

It's because we haven't talked to them about it. I've tried to have conversations but I'm worried that it comes across as 'this is my job and I'm all important' and I feel like that needed to come from admin. We had a training or a workshop and I just said, 'Here's how I can help' but that wasn't on their radar at the time. They were worried about other things.

This excerpt addresses two interrelated issues. First, a lack of communication about the role of the coach is most certainly one reason why teachers are unclear about the purpose and responsibilities of the coach. Second, the lack of communication derives, at least partly, from the coach's own uncertainty about how to position the role. Mangin and

Dunsmore (2015) argue that coaches hesitate to offer teachers direct support because they are concerned that by doing so, it would place them in the position of an evaluator.

Others (Day, 2015; Fisher, 2007) have linked coaches' reluctance to assert their role as an expert to their apprehension about how teachers might respond – particularly with regard to coaches' perceptions that teachers might adopt a critical stance toward a coach because of their assertion.

In the above excerpt, Interviewee 1B also identified a need for administration to be part of the process to clarify the coach's role for teachers. Although asserting that teachers currently understand the coach's role, Interviewee 5B also identified a similar gap in information-sharing: "Even though the school has recently done a lot of work on clarifying the job description, it has not gone so far as to share that job description per say to folks."

The lack of a clearly articulated job description and the corresponding uncertainty over who should share this information and how this information should be distributed, brings attention to the challenges of program implementation – in particular, to issues that may surface when conflicting roles are present (Calo et al., 2015; Knight & Fullan, 2011; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010). For the most part, respondents indicated that teachers did not understand the role, yet an awareness of efforts to clarify the role, along with the necessary support of leadership, were identified as important next steps for the school as it moves forward with the coaching initiative.

Another area of significance that emerged from a closer look at the roles and responsibilities of the coach is the issue of evaluation. The data from statement 1.7 shows

that a majority of participant responses agree with the suggestion offered in the literature declaring that a coach's role not be confused with that of an evaluator (Calo et al., 2015; Galluci et al., 2010; Knight, 2004; IRA, 2004; Rodgers, 2017, Toll, 2018). In the following excerpt, Interviewee 2B explains this position:

I don't think coaches are conducting formal evaluations. They can, but I think if we are strictly talking about coaching, it should be an observation embedded within a cycle. It's not an evaluation, it's an observation – in order to improve. I think you reach the evaluation component when you don't see growth from the teacher.

At first, and similar to the suggestions presented in the literature, Interviewee 2B distinguishes the role of a coach from that of an evaluator, but it is interesting to note that unlike the recommendations, the respondent then considers the utilization of evaluation under specific circumstances. This excerpt also reveals that, according to Interviewee 2B, the act of observing teachers is unequivocally accepted, mirroring the more general understanding of teacher observations in the literature (L'Allier et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2009; Mraz et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2012; Shanklin, 2006) rather than the research that qualified this activity as one to be considered in specific contexts or under certain conditions (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Wouflin & Rigby, 2017).

An understanding of the coach's role as separate from that of an evaluator was described by Interviewee 1B who also contributed important background information about how this distinction transpired. Interviewee 1B recalled a request by administration, made the previous year, for the coach to take on a more evaluative

position – a move that, according to 1B, “did not build rapport at all.” Administration’s request may have reflected what Desimone and Pak (2016) refer to as a unidimensional coaching approach, sometimes utilized when a coach “is tasked with ensuring the fidelity of a newly mandated teaching model” (p. 6). In the case of School B, the implementation of a new elementary phonics program may have contributed to administration’s encouragement of the coach to take on a more directive stance. Nevertheless, the following year, after attending one of Jim Knight’s instructional coaching trainings, Interviewee 1B requested that the evaluation component be removed from the position. Moreover, Interviewee 1B expressed a desire to change the official job description to explicitly state that the coach ‘does not do formal evaluations’ but ‘may observe’. According to Interviewee 1B, the outcome of this shift led to more frequent classroom visits and observations that, in turn, created more opportunities for “coaching conversations.”

The situation in which a coach veered toward evaluation in the first year of the role created tension between the coach and the elementary team, confirming the issues presented in the literature that may occur when a coach is placed in the ambiguous role of a “pseudo-administrator” (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012, p. 19). This particular trajectory of how evaluation was conceptualized in relation to the coaching role adds insight into the local context of School B and sheds light on the process of how the school defined, however loosely at first, the parameters of the coaching role. The shift in perception regarding the articulation of coaching responsibilities over the course of two years is

further evidence of an emerging initiative. A closer look at one last point regarding this category continues this line of inquiry.

Many respondents agreed that a key responsibility of the coach is to provide feedback (statement 1.9), but as with responses to other previously examined statements, the change from year one to year two was mentioned. Interviewee 1B spoke to this in the following explanation:

It's just because I went to Jim Knight's training. Feedback is important but it has to be initiated by the teacher so I don't know how to answer that one because my style is direct feedback and that's what I'm working on.

The move toward teacher-initiated feedback (Lynch & Ferguson, 2010) is important for two reasons. First, as with those responses described above, it speaks to the aspects of the initiative that have been recently put in place and provides further evidence that coaching at School B is characteristic of an emerging initiative. Second, the excerpt provides confirmation of the participant's perception of an indicator (teacher-driven coaching) identified in the literature as facilitating the success of a coaching program.

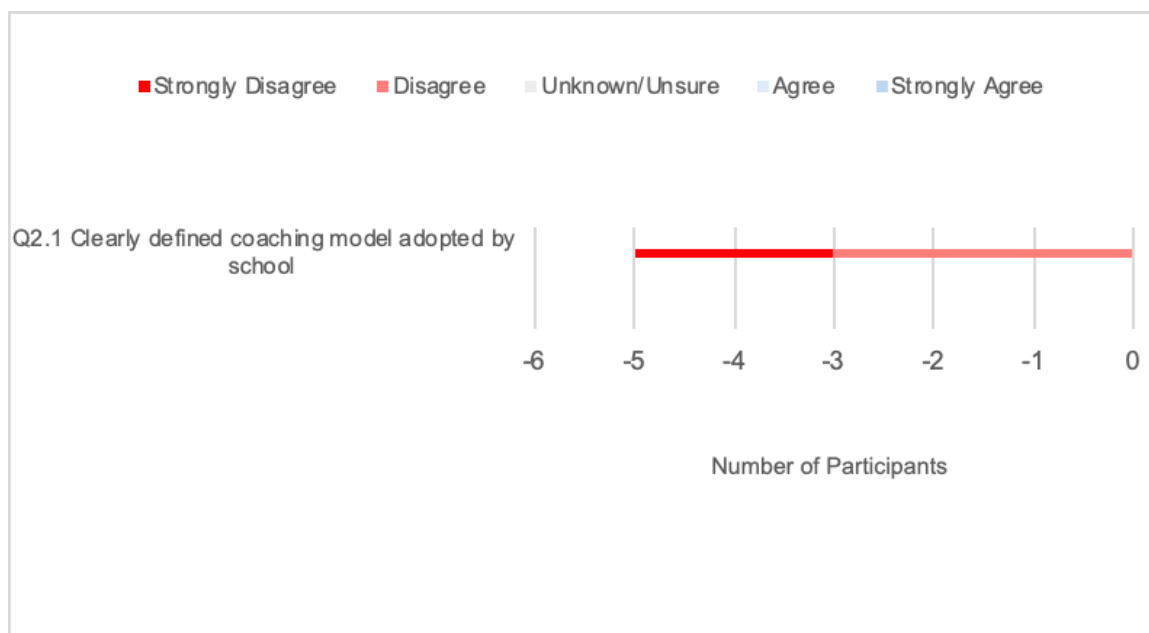
Overall, the responses to the statements about the roles and responsibilities of a coach revealed important insight into the local context of School B's coaching initiative. In particular, explanations about the job description and the degree to which this description is shared with teachers, along with the responses about coaching activities, provided perspectives on specific aspects of coaching at School B while illustrating the somewhat fluid conceptualization and articulation of the initiative as a whole. The data from this category confirmed that School B's coaching initiative is not yet clearly defined

and that it is simply too complicated at this early stage to tell if the indicators present are perceived as facilitating the success of this school's initiative. This position is reinforced by responses to statements from other categories.

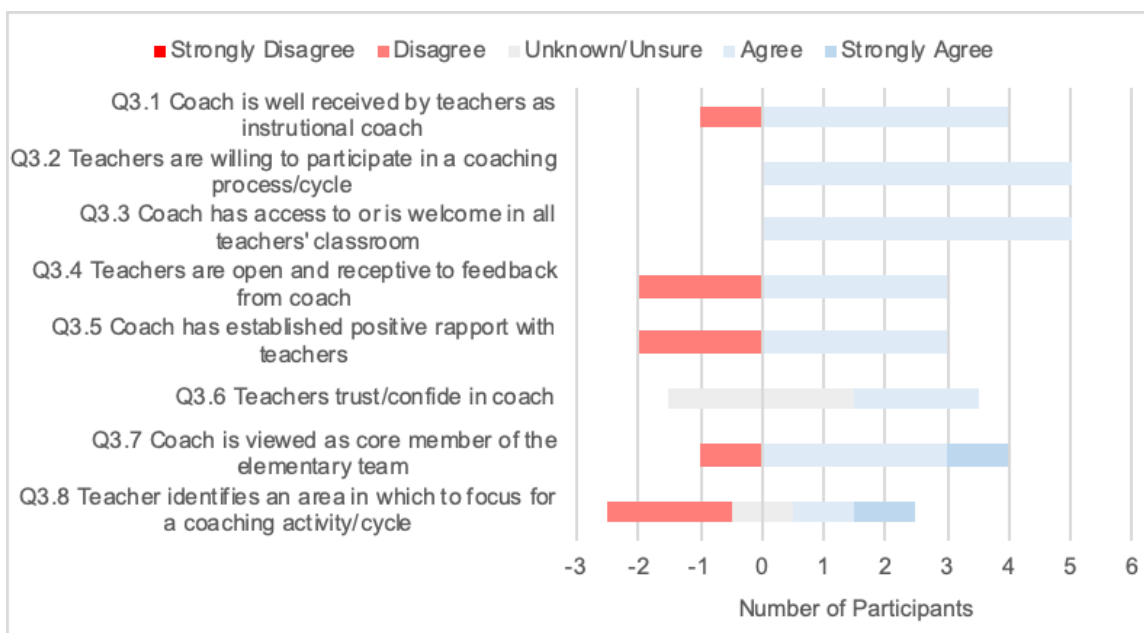
Coaching Model. Most of this section of the interview protocol was not applicable to School B. The results for statement 2.1 are shown in Figure 7 but statements 2.3-2.7 were omitted from the interviews once it became clear that School B lacked a formal coaching model. It should be noted that at the time of the interviews, efforts were underway to identify a model but it was unclear exactly how this would be done, especially given that one key stakeholder had recently attended a Jim Knight workshop while another had attended a training offered by the Principal Training Center (PTC). Although the PTC workshop included information about Knight's approach (as well as those of other leaders in the field), there did not yet appear to be consensus as to the coaching model that would be utilized.

Figure 7

School B Responses for Section 2: Coaching Model



Teacher/Coach Relationship. In Figure 8 below, responses from School B's participants about the teacher/coach relationship show mixed levels of agreement for many of the indicators.

Figure 8*School B Responses for Section 3: Teacher/Coach Relationship*

Although the data reveals that the coach is welcome in teachers' classrooms and that teachers are willing to participate in meetings with the coach (not full coaching cycles), it is necessary to review some of the explanations regarding rapport building and teachers' receptivity of the coach in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the local context of School B.

Statement 3.1 asked participants if a coach is well received by teachers, and again reference was made to more recent efforts at developing the coach's role. Interviewee 5B explained:

That's been a process over the last year whereby the literacy coach has had to develop those relationships. At the beginning – when that role, when that new person came into that role – it took some time to develop those relationships so

that some teachers were more receptive to that than others and she's had to win over other teachers along the way. [The coach] has done that through a lot of reflection and a lot of listening...a lot of reflection in terms of how to develop that relationship with specific people and there's personalities involved... [the coach] has gone out and done a tremendous amount of reading and PD to help build those relationships.

Interviewee 4B spoke about other teachers who questioned the coach's role and purpose: "I definitely know that [the coach] has been met with a lot of resistance when she's tried to meet with teachers" but 4B was also careful to note that one reason for this resistance might be because of teachers' confusion about the coach's role. This example mirrors the challenges described in the literature that arise when the person performing the coaching role is working under an unclear or poorly understood job description (Calo et al., 2015; Knight & Fullan, 2011; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010).

When responding to statement 3.3 about a teacher's willingness to participate in coaching and again, this refers to informal coaching meetings and not a full coaching cycle, Interviewee 5B responded: "I think that teachers are willing to participate at different levels depending on that relationship. I think it's much better this year. I think that we've made a lot of progress. They're more open to it overall."

This openness may have resulted from the coach's attempt to forge better relationships with teachers through day-to-day activities described by Interviewee 1B. Lowenhaupt et al.'s (2014) research on symbolic interactionism suggest that coaches'

responsibilities are shaped by the everyday realities of a school's culture – a perspective that mirrors the experiences described by Interviewee 1B:

There's one person who is kind of set in her ways but I know I can get to her if I say I'll make all of her copies...I don't make copies for her [anymore] but I still put in her DRA scores which is fine because that, for her, is how we built rapport and I was told by admin, 'don't make anybody's copies – that's not your job.'

This excerpt reveals how the coach employed necessary tactics for rapport-building through mundane activities such as copy-making and data-entry. This approach reflects Lowenhaupt et al.'s (2014) proposition that situates symbolic gestures – those activities performed outside of the coach's official job description – as critical to the establishment of rapport and the cultivation of trust.

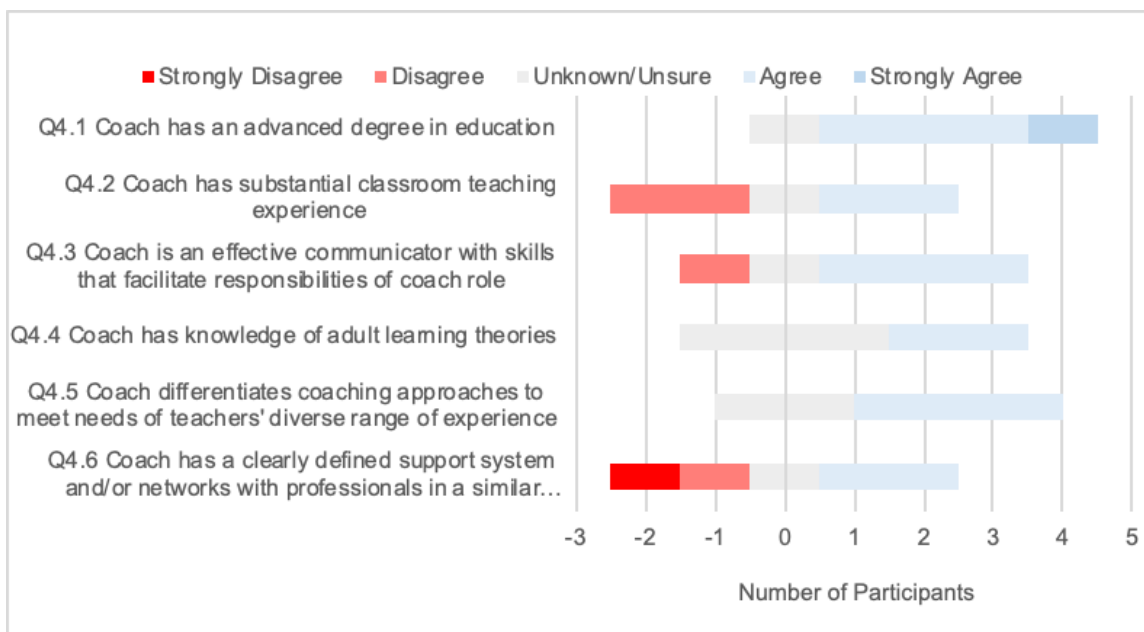
To summarize this category, the interview responses that emerged pointed to several indicators addressed by key stakeholders as those that are important for the future direction of School B's coaching initiative. Other information also emerged indicating factors that might hinder the success of a program. A discussion of potential barriers continues with regard to the coach's qualifications and background.

Coach's Qualification and Background. Figure 9 below shows that although most respondents agreed that the coach at School B had an advanced degree, more respondents disagreed about the coach's experience as a classroom teacher – a point that in some cases corresponded to the issue of credibility. A closer look at the background of the coach as well as teachers' perceptions of what constitutes 'classroom teaching

experience' should be considered for a more comprehensive understanding of the interview results.

Figure 9

School B Responses for Section 4: Qualifications and Background of the Coach



In the case of statements 4.1 and 4.2, regarding the education and experience of the coach, one particular issue emerged that warrants further exploration. School B's coach holds a bachelor of arts degree in special education with a master of arts in reading. Prior to this role, the coach had worked primarily as a special education teacher and taught in the context of small group instruction. The coach's lack of whole classroom teaching experience became an issue for elementary teachers, especially during the coach's first year in the position. Interviewee 2B described the teachers' position on this matter: "Well, that impacted views and opinions because one of the things that has been

emerging is, ‘I’ve been in the classroom twenty years. I’ve been in the classroom more than you.’”

The teachers’ position could relate to the findings reported by Jacobs et al. (2017) linking the resistance of tenured and experienced teachers to a general disinterest toward change. In the case of School B, however, it appeared that the resistance of veteran teachers was not uniquely linked to this type of wide-spread aversion to change. Rather, teachers framed a particular type of experience, reflective of their own background (whole classroom teaching at the elementary level) in opposition to the experience (small group and individual instruction) that mirrored the background of the coach. These issues are explained by Interviewee 5B:

I think perhaps people felt threatened by it or felt like they had a lot more experience. I think there was a differential – I think some people perceived or saw a difference in experience and background and age and whatever it is – number of years of experience in the classroom – and perhaps didn’t see the credibility in the work that she was doing.

Teachers found it difficult to accept knowledge gained from experience outside the parameters of whole classroom teaching:

You’ve got to understand that I am a thirty-year veteran and my current literacy coach has less than five years and I’m not at all trying to say that somebody without as much experience as me can’t possibly give me any information. That is not true. I think I can learn from every human being but it does come into play (Interviewee 3B).

The resistance that some teachers displayed toward acceptance of the coach is most likely not solely due to a perceived lack of experience of the coach. The root causes of the tensions that emerged between the coach and the teachers are multifaceted and almost certainly originate from the absence of other indicators in the different categories. One area contributing to this tension has already been discussed – the uncertainty that surfaced about the specific role of the coach. In addition, the coach’s own admission of the unsuccessful communication style utilized in initial interactions with teachers is also a likely factor contributing to these tensions at School B. The communication skills utilized by the coach, evident in the responses to statement 4.3, are discussed next.

The difference in how the coach embodied the role between year one and at the time of the interviews, at the start of year two, has already been addressed. Although participant responses to statement 4.3 are somewhat varied, the distinction between these two years emerged as an important consideration for understanding the data.

The coach’s participation in Knight’s instructional coaching workshop after the first year in the position, was instrumental in providing the coach with necessary tools to more effectively communicate and interact with teachers. The coach referenced a particular goal-setting activity from Knight’s training as an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of her communication skills. In doing so, she addressed an effort to become “more non-judgmental in conversations” and not, as she put it, “I know better or, let me fix it for you.” The coach also discussed the more assertive approach she initially relied on as a leader, a style she described as “the wrong philosophy” of putting forth her own areas of expertise rather than seeking the counsel of other stakeholders. Following the

summer workshop and reflecting a new understanding of the knowledge and skills that the teaching team had to offer, the coach shifted her leadership approach: “Now I see that I don’t know everything and as a group, they know way more than I do and I’ve accepted that.”

Interviewee 5B also spoke to the progression of the coach’s communication style as having “improved over time” and referenced this in regard to the new early elementary phonics program:

For example, with the phonics approach, we had some teachers who felt like there were some things that they did really well that weren’t necessarily the same exact steps that she had laid out so she was able to go back and kind of revise the steps to be taken and those things were going to be implemented based on their experience and their strengths. So, it was a give and take, it was a back and forth – that wasn’t always smooth sailing at the beginning but then it became more so.

This response raises two interesting points. First, it offers an outsider’s perspective that substantiates the deliberate changes that the coach was attempting to make in her interactions with teachers. Second, it brings attention to the effect this particular phonics project had on establishing a more positive tone in interactions between teacher and coach. In a synthesis of coaching research, Day (2015) found that when coaches focus work on a specific strategy, skill, or tool (rather than providing in-class support or feedback about an individual teacher’s practice), teachers were less resistant and tended to perceive this support as safer and less threatening. The focus on the phonics program and the coach’s newfound recognition of teachers as experts were most likely concurrent

influences that lessened tension and created a space for bridging barriers between the coach and the teachers.

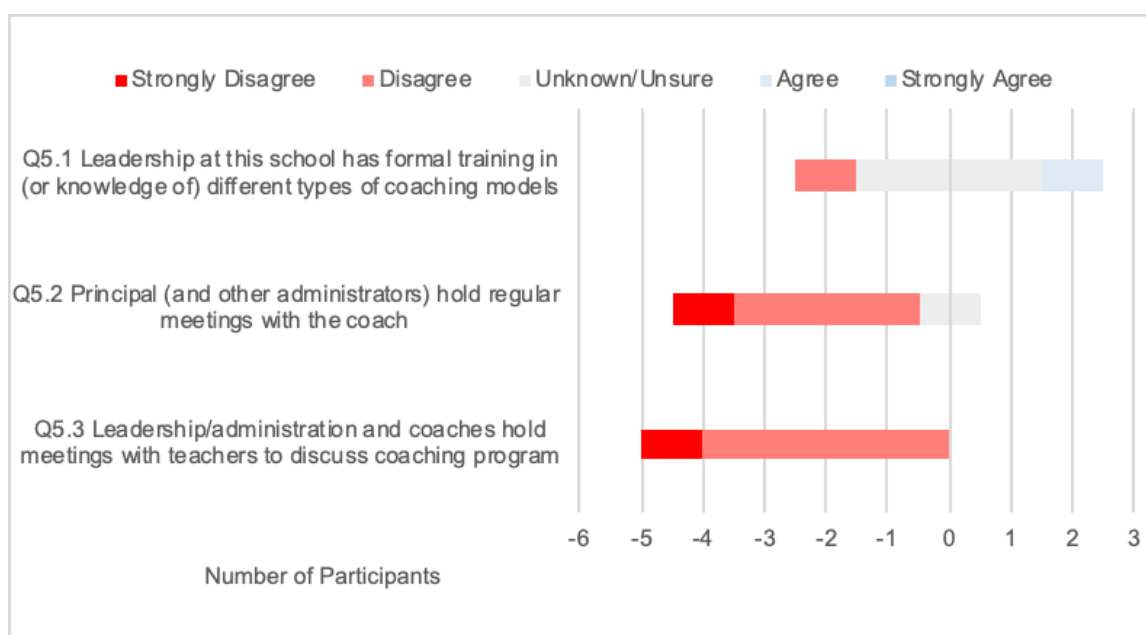
To conclude this category, multiple factors regarding the background and qualifications of the coach at School B surfaced as facilitating or hindering the effectiveness of the coaching initiative. The indicator regarding ‘substantial teaching experience’ was deconstructed by teachers to identify what specifically qualified as such. The coach had training as a Reading Specialist with particular knowledge about targeted reading instruction but this experience may not have been valued because the coach’s experience did not resemble the expectations of elementary teachers. This issue, confounded by an initial approach to teacher/coach interactions that placed the coach as ‘expert’ created significant impediments for establishing rapport and credibility during that first year in the position. As Lynch and Ferguson (2010) point out, an evolving role can “create job confusion and result in difficulty for both coaches and school staff (p. 216). Interview data also revealed the impact that trainings can have on the coach. Participation in a coaching workshop resulted in knowledge and skills that enabled the coach to confidently revisit her communication and leadership style thereby adjusting her coaching approach to position *teachers* as experts.

Leadership and Administration Support. The data that emerged from the earlier category of statements about the roles and responsibilities of a coach referenced leadership and administration support specifically as this pertains to the creation and dissemination of the job description. An exploration of this last category that focuses specifically on the role of leadership in the coaching initiative, builds on this earlier

discussion. The data represented in Figure 10 below shows that most respondents were unsure about the leadership's knowledge concerning coaching models (statement 5.1); however, these results are not surprising given that School B does not employ a formal coaching model.

Figure 10

School B Responses for Section 5: Leadership and Administration Support



The more interesting data emerged from the statements about meetings. Most respondents disagreed with the statement (5.2) regarding the occurrence of regular meetings between leadership and the coach and all participants disagreed with the statement (5.3) about leadership and coaches holding meetings with teachers to discuss the coaching program.

According to Interviewee 1B, meetings between the coach and the principal were supposed to be held twice a month, yet often these did not occur. Interviewee 2B referred

to the current structure of these meetings as happening on a “needs-basis” but also referenced insight gained from participation in the PTC workshop and suggested that in the future regular meetings would take place between the coach and the principal. The fact that meetings about the coaching program were not held reflected the earlier discussion about the job description not yet being shared with the teaching staff in a formalized manner. The interesting point about the information elicited from this category is that respondents could not, or did not, provide in-depth explanations. Most respondents simply recounted that these types of meetings did not occur – a perspective that speaks to the informal nature of this coaching initiative.

Summary of School B’s Likert scale data. School B has had a person performing the role of a coach for four years, yet it is evident from the findings presented above that the coaching initiative is neither formalized nor clearly defined. Some of the interview data elicited primarily from the statements about the responsibilities of a coach (teacher observations, providing feedback) indicate that success factors identified in the literature are present to some degree at School B. The absence of indicators at School B, such as a coaching model and a clearly articulated and transparent job description, reflect the barriers outlined in the literature that present as challenges to effective implementation. Other factors, such as the type of teaching experience the coach had versus the kind of teaching experience valued by classroom teachers, emerged as barriers.

Because of the small scale and informal initiative, it continues to be too difficult and too early to ascertain if the indicators identified in the literature are actually perceived by key stakeholders as facilitating the success of the coaching initiative.

During the course of the interviews, however, it did become clear that certain factors were recognized by participants as important to consider for establishing a more solidified program in the future. This was perhaps most evident from the responses concerning how the coaching role would be defined, how the job description would be shared, how leadership would become more involved, and how meetings would be structured to allow for more fluid communication among and between the key stakeholders regarding the coaching initiative.

Even though the school's coach and leadership are in a period of flux and are currently refining how the role of the coach will be defined and envisioned, the interviews did establish interesting connections with the literature. For example, the data aligned with the indicators in the literature concerning a general understanding of coaching activities and also provided an interesting example of Lowenhaupt et al.'s (2014) research on symbolic interactionism. The Likert scale data also revealed important insights into the effects that a shift in a coach's behavior and approach to leadership can have on the relationships between the coach and teachers. The shift often focused on repositioning this relationship to acknowledge the adult learner and the expertise that teachers brought to the team which led to teacher buy-in – an important overarching theme that emerged from the interview data.

Interview Theme – Teacher Buy-In. School B's interview data was not as in-depth or complete as School A's for a variety of reasons. Due to the fact that School B's initiative was not grounded in a substantial structure, model or philosophy, only one conclusive theme emerged from the interview data – factors that contributed to teacher

buy-in. School B's initiative has proven to be a curious example of the impact that a move away from an approach that situates the coach as 'expert' can have on the effectiveness of the initiative. The effects of a transition toward one that values teacher expertise led to situations that created a greater degree of teacher buy-in. For example, when speaking about participation in Knight's instructional coaching workshop between the first and second year as a coach, Interviewee 1B mentioned that "teacher buy-in increased after owning up to mistakes from last year." She went on to explain:

Last year I was skittish and not confident and this year, I have the knowledge and I'm creating teacher buy-in. That's been the biggest change. I'm like, this is not a requirement – we are having a *conversation* about it...and that has made a huge difference.

When probed about the actions taken that led to teacher buy-in, the coach responded by pointing again to recent participation in Knight's training, "I've had conversations – better conversations. It's not been a one-sided conversation like it was in the past, like me telling them what to do. It's been two-ways. We talk about it and I take their input."

This input was evident from a recent interaction with a teacher whom the coach identified as being resistant the previous year. The new partnership approach motivated the coach to acknowledge the teachers' expertise about early literacy during the implementation of the phonics program. The coach recognized the ineffectiveness of her previous approach and noted that the inclusion of this teacher's input helped the coach change for the better. This example points to the correlation between the willingness to see teachers as experts and the application of a specific program, corresponding with

Bean's (2004) assertion that "without "teacher buy-in" and an understanding that the activities and experiences will help them develop professionally, there is less chance that the ideas being presented will be implemented thoroughly and appropriately" (2004, p. 13). The effort to ask teachers for more input on projects capitalized on their areas of expertise and created circumstance for a greater degree of teacher buy-in.

Other respondents spoke to the factors that contributed to the identification of teacher buy-in as an overarching theme, although not directly referencing this as such. Interviewee 2B remarked that teachers' greater sense of belonging was due to more opportunities for them to contribute their knowledge and expertise, allowing them to become more open and receptive to the coach. Interviewee 3B referenced the coach's partnership approach to goal-setting by saying, "She's never come in and then later said, 'Oh, I was watching this and I think you need this.' She seems to encourage me to decide, which I appreciate." This teacher-driven approach corresponded to the coach (in year two) stressing that participation in coaching was *voluntary* – a focus that helped establish much-needed rapport: "I'm trying this year to word everything as 'optional' and I'm kind of doing what Jim Knight does – you can do this or you don't have to – it's up to you."

School B's interview data was limited due to the less formal and less structured initiative, but the very fact that the school's coaching initiative was not so clearly defined contributed to important insights about coaching. Just one theme emerged from School B's interview data – teacher buy-in, yet the findings revealed an in-depth understanding of the influence that 'real-time' actions can have on the cultivation of teacher buy-in. The loose parameters of the initiative offered two varying perspectives concerning the how

the key stakeholders viewed the manner in which the coach embodied the role during year one compared to year two.

The coach's transformative experience revealed barriers to coaching during her first year in the role, as opposed to positive factors in year two that contributed to more effective implementation of the initiative. A voluntary and teacher-driven approach to coaching and the acknowledgement of teachers as experts had a considerable impact on the degree to which teachers "bought in" to the coaching initiative. The description of these factors as happening in 'real-time' is meant to simply emphasize the immediate effect the coach's change in leadership behavior had on this process. The results from School B's data would most likely not have emerged if the school's initiative had delineated firm parameters and expectations about how the position of the coach would be implemented. The loosely defined structure of coaching at School B allowed for this transformative shift and substantiated the evidence provided in the literature about the importance of certain indicators for successful implementation of coaching programs. The increase in teacher buy-in at School B, which undoubtedly lessened tensions between the teachers and the coach, was due to specific factors outlined in the literature – most notably, a teacher-driven approach, the use of a partnership mindset, acknowledgement of adult learners (teachers) as experts, and the qualifications of the coach that center on specific training for developing leadership and communication skills.

Conclusion

Chapter Four began by establishing the connection between the organization of the chapter and the methodology of the case study approach described in Chapter Three.

This discussion explained the motivation for presenting each school's results separately in order to prevent a direct comparison between the two and to emphasize the local context of each. An introductory section also described how specific terms would be used throughout the chapter and offered clarification about the inclusion of visual representations of the Likert scale responses. Each school's findings were then presented through an analysis of both the semi-structured Likert-scale statements and the open-ended interview questions. The main themes or patterns that emerged were then discussed.

Participants from School A provided in-depth responses and explanations to the interview questions. The richness of this data contributed to a more thorough understanding of the central research question by addressing the indicators identified in the literature as relevant or significant to the successful facilitation of this international school's coaching program. The depth and complexity of participant responses also unveiled a more nuanced understanding of these indicators. In doing so, other factors unique to the local context and organizational structure of School A emerged as more significant to the effective and sustainable implementation of School A's coaching program.

The program was shown to align with the organization's pedagogical paradigm, its teaching and learning principles, the overarching ethos of the school, and a capacity-driven and shared model of leadership. Given the depth and breadth of this approach, it is likely to assume that School A's program would have included coaching activities resembling the highest level of intensity proposed by Bean (as cited in Denton &

Hasbrouk, 2009) such as modeling instruction, co-teaching, observing teachers, and providing feedback (as opposed to less intense activities such as leading teacher study groups or assisting with student assessment). However, many of these coaching activities at School A were either not present or were positioned in a manner that challenged the way these responsibilities were articulated in the literature. In fact, the interviews showed that participants refuted some of these suggested indicators, revealing something quite interesting about the culture of the school and the structure of the coaching program.

First, as noted in the findings, the coaching program was deliberately crafted after much research and training on the part of leadership. The program was then implemented with leadership's unanimous approval of an internal cohort of coaches who were recruited because of their specialized pedagogical knowledge, personal attributes, and proven performance as exemplar practitioners. Second, the findings revealed that the activities discussed in the literature as contributing to the success of a program, such as teacher observations and feedback, were contrastively framed by School A's key stakeholders as actions that may actually cloud the role of the coach. This perspective considered these activities as potentially straying into the territory of evaluation, therefore inhibiting the cultivation of trust and the establishment of a strong *partnership* between coach and teacher. Many respondents even disagreed with some of the suggested indicators and qualified their responses to address first and foremost, an allegiance to the core tenets of their program including the careful articulation of a teacher-driven, pedagogically focused, and partnership approach to coaching. Respondents were quick to explain that the activities indicated in the literature as facilitating the success of a

program *could* take place, *but would only* take place if the parameters for these activities were initiated and defined by the teacher. Third, information from respondents also addressed another inquiry of this project – namely to understand if other factors were present that were more important for the success of a coaching program at an international school. Other success indicators not identified in the literature and unique to the context of School A did emerge (e.g., no walk-through observations and unanimous cross-divisional leadership approval for the hiring of coaches) and were significant, if not more important, for the success of School A’s program.

The well-articulated implementation plan for initializing School A’s coaching program was referenced by all participants as a driving factor in the success of the program. Likewise, a coaching model securely tethered to the tenets and principles of the organization was referred to as an influential factor that contributed to the effectiveness of the program. These findings support the conclusion that School A’s program is a clear example of how one international school developed and sustained a successful coaching program. These findings also contribute to the ideas advanced in Chapter Five concerning the broader implications of this research; School A’s program is also a design for how to invoke systemic change through the implementation of a clearly articulated *process*. School A’s program is clearly unique to the context of this particular international school’s culture and organization, yet ideas put forth in the next chapter suggest that it is possible to transfer this approach to other contexts.

Evidence from School B also provided important insight into the central research question for this thesis although it did so in a less direct manner. School B’s initiative

was, by all accounts, not considered to be a formal coaching program. The scale and scope of the initiative was limited; it was not schoolwide, it focused on the literacy needs of the elementary school, and it primarily concerned the interactions with one ‘coach’ who fulfilled the responsibilities of three overlapping roles.

Because of the informal, smaller scale, and more narrow scope of the program, explanations about the responses to statements were not in-depth and the indicators were not as clearly articulated participants as factors that either did or did not determine program success. At times, it was difficult to concretely connect indicators to the facilitation of effective implementation of an emerging coaching initiative; however, data did emerge that addressed the impact that the application of certain success indicators can have on an ‘in-process’ initiative. This data emerged from conversations about the transition from the coach’s first year in the role compared to the second year and revealed that teacher buy-in depended on an important shift that acknowledged a *partnership* approach to coaching which positioned teachers as experts. Information about School B’s initiative also corresponded to the barriers to program implementation that were identified in the literature. Conversations revealed underlying reasons for initial resistance on the part of teachers and substantiated the suggestion in the literature for the development of a clearly articulated job description, jointly constructed by leadership and the coach, and shared directly and transparently with teachers.

Although this thesis by no means set out to compare the two programs at the two schools, it is by looking at the local contexts of each school and the level of implementation of each program or initiative, that new understandings emerged. An

awareness of the difference in scale and scope of these programs can contribute to an understanding of how initial considerations for implementation might impact how and to what degree indicators are perceived by the key stakeholders. It is also worth noting that School A and School B represent two varying approaches to initial implementation with very different goals. School A's large-scale and formal program is more indicative of a *process* toward embedded systemic change whereas the goal of coaching at School B was representative of an isolated stand-alone initiative contained within a specific division and content area. These findings contribute to the conclusion of this thesis presented in the next in chapter. Chapter Five will first reflect on the research process and provide a discussion of the limitations of this study before drawing from the key findings presented in Chapter Four – primarily with regard to School A – to discuss the implications of this study and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis aimed to address an understudied context – international schools – by learning about the perceptions of key stakeholders toward indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of instructional coaching programs. The findings presented in Chapter Four described two very different settings – School A represented an organization with a formal and highly-structured coaching program while coaching at School B reflected a less structured informal initiative. The data from each school addressed, to varying degrees, the central research question of this thesis: *How do key stakeholders at international schools perceive success indicators as facilitating the success of their instructional coaching programs?* The purpose of Chapter Five is to explain how the findings from the previous chapter relate to the implications of this study, to new understandings gained from the inquiry process, and to suggestions for future research.

Chapter Five begins with a brief reflection about the professional learnings gained from this project, particularly as this knowledge relates to the methodological tool and to the experience of conducting fieldwork in a new international setting. The issues that surfaced from the interview protocol contributed to a better understanding of the

significance of a clear and concise research question while the unique challenges that emerged during fieldwork offered opportunities to grow as a researcher.

The chapter then moves to a description of the limitations of this study. Chapter Three discussed some of the constraints evident in the project's design when pointing out how the issues concerning site selection and participant recruitment shifted the focus of this thesis from one that centered on literacy coaching to one that considered instructional coaching more broadly. This section will continue this discussion while also addressing the issue of subjectivity with regard to the interview protocol and its impact on how the data is analyzed and interpreted.

The chapter then explores the implications of this thesis by first describing the outcomes of the research that concern the broader tenets of organizational reform and its connection to the literature review. The implications that pertain more specifically to the research question and the more grounded aspects of the coaching role and activities will follow. The first section revisits the sources from Chapter Two by addressing the aspects of the literature that inform Chapter Five's primary focus. Considerable attention has been given to the literature throughout this thesis. The key sources that were instrumental in the development of the methodological tool were detailed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four's findings included thorough reference to the literature and provided an in-depth and ongoing discussion of how the data that emerged either supported or refuted ideas posited in the research. Chapter Five's discussion will point to those sources that inform an understanding of the connection between the findings and the broader research on

organizational reform. This section also provides important background information that supports a later discussion of possible avenues for future research.

A discussion of the implications of the research offered in the next section, rather than concerning the broader tenets of organizational reform, will focus on how this study addresses a gap in the research on instructional coaching. This section revisits the central research question and provides evidence that coaching programs at international schools, at least in the case of School A, do not depend on the indicators identified in the literature for effective implementation. The factors suggested for U.S. public schools might not be as relevant to the international school context. This discussion will address a more nuanced and complex understanding of the indicators and suggest that the significance of indicators for this particular setting may vary depending on the scale and scope of a school's approach to instructional coaching.

The two sections regarding the implications of the research overlap with the suggestions for future research discussed next. This is a particularly salient topic for the conclusion of this project as it reexamines the concept of readiness presented in Chapter One that formed the foundation of inquiry for this thesis. The idea of 'readiness' resurfaced during the research process and, especially when viewed in light of the literature on systemic reform, is a relevant topic for future investigation.

The final sections of this chapter will first identify next steps for how the research findings will be communicated and will describe plans for possible publication and presentation of the findings. This section will be followed by a summary that concludes the main points of this chapter and provides closure for the project as a whole.

Project Reflection

The learnings gained from this thesis relate primarily to the project's methodology concerning both the development of the interview protocol and the actual process of conducting fieldwork in an international context.

First, the development of the research tool proved more challenging than anticipated as it required a thorough understanding of a broad range of literature on instructional coaching. While the indicators selected were not a complete representation of the literature, it was difficult to ascertain the most salient indicators of success from the large volume of research collected on the subject. Furthermore, although the protocol offered an opportunity to gather insightful information about the perceptions of School A's stakeholders regarding the success indicators presented in the literature, in the case of School B's emerging initiative, participant responses reflected a more ambiguous and less cohesive connection to the literature. This issue was pondered throughout much of the research process, and it is possible that the research question itself may have been the underlying issue.

The process of presupposing the specific characteristics of effective coaching programs for interviewees may have inadvertently limited the scope of the responses from School B's participants and therefore obscured a clear understanding of their perceptions of the components of effective coaching. This was not a concern for School A because through their in-depth explanations, respondents explicitly addressed whether or not they perceived a factor as an indicator of success. School B's participants, however, interacted with coaching in a less formal manner and tended to interpret the

statements from a more limited perspective that focused more on the mere presence or absence of an indicator. A revised research question may have guided these participants to muse on if and how an indicator may or may not drive the success of an initiative regardless of whether it was present, at the time of the interviews, in their own coaching initiative.

Since important information about the two schools' programs was not known when the research question and interview protocol were developed, this insight occurred after research was underway. The challenges that surfaced during the interviews offered an opportunity to reflect on the strength of the original research question and its importance in determining the overall clarity and coherence of the research design.

Second, professional insight was gained from the opportunity this project offered to explore fieldwork in the international context. Many of the logistical challenges were similar to those experienced during work on previous research projects in the U.S., but other challenges that surfaced during the data preparation and collection phases of this project necessitated a level of forethought, flexibility, and perseverance that was unique to this context.

One important consideration specific to this project was adherence to restrictions regarding the number of days that could be spent in the European Union. Visa protocols required an ability to manage complex travel arrangements within a precise time frame. The research process was somewhat characteristic of other qualitative research in that the level of activity vacillated between long stretches of waiting and more intense intervals that often included hastily scheduled appointments and the management of multiple

interviews within a short timeframe. The addition of the EU visa requirements exacerbated these fluctuations and added an element of complexity that was not experienced when working on U.S. research projects. Other challenges pertained more specifically to the international setting and involved simple tasks such as attempting to arrive on time to a field site using a public transportation system that was either delayed or required last-minute alternative routes.

Despite the challenges, this project provided an opportunity to transfer and refine research skills gained from previous academic and professional experiences to the field of education and to an international venue. The project also offered the opportunity to reconsider the overall research design. The challenges that arose from the use of the interview tool discussed in this section overlap with other limitations described in more detail next.

Limitations

This study utilized a qualitative case study in order to provide an in-depth analysis of a bounded system – in this case, instructional coaching programs. The case study approach was deliberately chosen to account for the use of multiple forms of data collection and the desired goal of providing an in-depth analysis of a specific *program* (Creswell, 2007). Because the scope of this study was somewhat narrow, any generalizing of the findings should be done with caution. Several issues involving the site selection, the sample of participants, and the data analysis procedure likely impacted the results.

Site Selection. The selection of the two international schools was based on an initial understanding that the schools represented a specific type of international school with a literacy coaching program in at least the second year of implementation. Due to challenges involved with gaining entry to international schools, the sites were ultimately selected based on their accessibility to the researcher (Creswell, 2007) and their inclusion of some form of coaching. Issues surfaced early on in the study regarding the type, scale, and scope of the coaching at the two sites.

As previously explained in Chapter Three, information gained from the initial contact visit to School A in the spring of 2019 determined that an exploration of *literacy* coaching was not possible. The coaching program was not contained within one division nor was it isolated to one content area. Instead, the coaching program occurred schoolwide and was pedagogically focused, requiring a considerable shift in the scope of this project.

The selection of School B presented other challenges. Although the school listed coaching as a role and responsibility of the Literacy and Assessment Coordinator – a position that had been in place at the school for four years – it became very clear during the interviews that none of the participants actually identified the school as having a *formal* literacy coaching *program*. This was a significant dilemma in that interviewees could only speak in a limited capacity to a coaching *role* and to an *emerging* initiative. As explained above in the personal reflection, there was some question of if and how the interview statements would be interpreted by the key stakeholders, but because the *role*

of a literacy coach was present, it was determined that the perceptions of the key stakeholders might still be relevant.

In the end, this project did not focus solely on *literacy* coaching programs but more generally on instructional coaching programs. Even though the original project did not set out to make comparisons between two programs, issues did arise because of the vast difference in scale and scope of how coaching was implemented at the two sites. These limitations were confounded by the participants selected during the recruitment phase.

Participant Selection. As explained in Chapter Three, the original sample for this study included several participants in the roles of leadership, coaching, and teaching. The school directors, an elementary principal, one additional leadership personnel with firsthand knowledge of the coaching initiative, and two teachers from each school would comprise the pool of key stakeholders at the two international schools. However, this sample was not secured and the findings must also consider the limitations involved with the actual representatives recruited for the study.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this project is the fact that teachers were not represented in the sample for School A. The findings represent the perspectives of just two categories of key stakeholders – coaches and leadership. The teachers who participated in a coaching cycle were unavailable for interviews and their insight would have added a critical perspective to the data. Although additional opportunities to interview other key stakeholders were presented at the time of the fieldwork and the interviews ultimately captured the invaluable perspectives of multiple leaders at the

school, School A's results reflect that the perspective of one essential stakeholder – the teacher – is not represented in the data.

School B presented other challenges that led to limitations of this project.

Although teachers were recruited for the interviews, it was sometimes unclear as to the amount of knowledge these stakeholders had about coaching due to the informal structure of the initiative. There was also some concern that the teachers were using the interview as an opportunity to address general concerns rather than speaking directly about the coaching initiative. Because of this, most of the data used for School B, similar to the sample for School A, represents the perspectives of the coach and leadership as these participants had the most knowledge about coaching and were therefore able to speak more directly about the school's initiative.

The results of this study were most likely impacted by a small sample of participants in a limited number of roles. Although the information gathered from the interviewees was insightful and useful in answering the central research question of this project, future research, if focusing on key stakeholders at international schools, would want to ensure the recruitment of teachers working firsthand with coaches.

Data Analysis. Chapter Three's earlier explanation of how the interview protocol was developed addressed a concern about the level of subjectivity involved in one researcher's assessment of the success indicators from the literature. The issue of subjectivity is also a limitation of this study when considering how the data was analyzed and interpreted.

Because of the small scope of a thesis project, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes and patterns by one individual. Although steps were taken (see Table 2) to provide transparency about how the codes were created and extrapolated in to themes, there is still a high degree of subjectivity involved in this process. In a more in-depth project, objectivity could be increased by having multiple researchers review the codes to verify for agreement.

The limitations of this study reflect issues that often surface in qualitative research pertaining to challenges that can arise from the selection of sites, the recruitment of participants, and the analysis of the data. The strength of the qualitative study was in its ability to capture subtleties of coaching programs that were elicited from the personal experiences of the key stakeholders but caution should be used when interpreting and generalizing the findings as the results are impacted by the aforementioned limitations. Despite these constraints, the data that was gathered, analyzed, and interpreted about instructional coaching in the international school setting led to important implications that are discussed next in the following two sections.

Implications of the Research and the Literature on Systemic Reform

The literature review presented in Chapter Two focused primarily on the characteristics of coaching that facilitated program effectiveness. These characteristics reflected five different categories that emerged from the literature as ‘indicators’ while also corresponding to the research on the barriers to effective coaching. This discussion, however, was first framed in Chapter Two within the broader research concerning the relationship between coaching, effective professional development, and large-scale

organizational reform. This section will revisit this scholarship and introduce related research by positioning the findings of this project, particularly from School A, within the literature concerning the broader context of systemic reform.

Chapter Two cited Fullan's distinction between earlier reform efforts that focused primarily on the content of a new program (innovations) and the characteristics of a new movement in reform that emphasized the development of an organization's capacity (innovativeness) to engage in these efforts (Fullan, 2016). Focusing on the topic of systemic PLCs (professional learning communities), DuFour and Fullan (2013) used a similar dichotomy to distinguish between the ineffective approaches and policies that amount to fragmented *programs* and those that facilitate the effective, sustainable, and cohesive *processes* of whole system reform. The distinction between 'programs' and 'processes' is useful for understanding the impact of the different scale and scope of the two coaching initiatives investigated in this thesis. Before delving deeper into this, however, a closer look at DuFour and Fullan's paradigm of systemic reform is helpful.

According to DuFour and Fullan, the "right drivers" for educational reform are those policies that focus on capacity building, instruction, systemness, and the development of social capital, or the emphasis on developing the qualities of a group (rather than an individual) (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 22). The focus here is on the implementation of successful and sustainable PLCs yet these policies are said to complement any type of systemwide improvement and are thereby applicable to instructional coaching. The 'drivers' of whole system reform ultimately lead to what the authors refer to as *collective coherence* or the shared mindset among individuals within

the system – a concept that is carefully distinguished from the *alignment* of policy and structures (2013, p. 23).

The concept of alignment corresponds to suggestions put forth by other authors who draw a correlation between coaching effectiveness and the degree to which coaching is embedded in other tenets of an organization. For example, Fisher (2007) posits that school’s decision-makers should identify and establish the guiding principles or the common theoretical approach on which the literacy coaching model will be structured. Similarly, Neufield and Roper (as cited in Peterson et al., 2009, p. 500) suggest that coaching has the potential to improve instruction and is therefore a powerful impetus for student achievement when it is focused on and aligns with the professional development goals and resources of the district. DuFour and Fullan (2013) acknowledge the importance of the alignment of policies and structures of an organization but emphasize the critical piece of *collective coherence* as having the most impact in cultivating whole system reform.

A discussion of one of the barriers to achieving collective coherence – the belief that “systemic reform means launching a program rather than implementing a process” – circles back to the dichotomy between *program* and *process* and is perhaps most useful for deconstructing the approaches to coaching used by the two schools investigated in this thesis (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 23). A *program* “represents an appendage to the existing structure or culture of a school” and is typically viewed as a short-term solution to compensate for educator deficiencies, while a *process* represents a focus on developing “individual and collective capacity to engage in ongoing processes of continuous

improvement” (2013, pp. 27-28). With educator deficiencies aside (as this was not a known conclusion of School B), this distinction can be useful for contextualizing the findings of this project in the literature on whole system reform.

Using Dufour and Fullan’s (2013) terms, School B’s informal and emerging initiative would most likely be characterized as a *program* in the way that the coaching role was somewhat haphazardly attached to existing roles and responsibilities. This approach corresponds to the claim put forth by Woulfin and Rigby (2017) that coaching programs are sometimes “loosely tied to existing structures of districts and schools and, as a result, may not be fully leveraged in service of instructional improvement” (p. 323). This is most likely what happened at School B where, at least in the early stages, the incongruity between coaching goals and practices and the misalignment of coaching with the overall tenets and practices of the wider organization challenged the efforts of the coach (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). It is also likely that the presence of collective coherence, or a shared mindset about coaching, would seem impossible if the alignment between policies and structures were also not established. Perhaps, the purpose of coaching at School B *was* to serve as an appendage or add-on to an existing structure and was never intended to yield whole system reform. With this in mind, it is still interesting to note the overlap between the scale and scope of School B’s coaching initiative with the characteristics of a *program* described by DuFour and Fullan (2013).

On the other hand, using the definition put forth by DuFour and Fullan (2013), School A’s formalized and highly structured approach to coaching, referred to throughout this thesis as a ‘program’ could instead, be better characterized as a systemic *process*.

This claim is further strengthened if also considering the qualities of School A's strategy for implementation that corresponds with DuFour and Fullan's (2013) suggested approach to reform.

The authors describe a range of reform approaches from assertive and top-down directives to the somewhat directionless approaches characterized by a high level of autonomy before settling on what they refer to as the "right balance" of the "loose-tight approach" (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 39). According to the authors (2013), this approach relies on the equal presence of explicit and strictly adhered to priorities and parameters *and* the space within these non-negotiables that would allow for discretion about how the priorities are met. A closer look at School A's non-negotiables and the opportunities for creative discretion or agency provides evidence of this balance and supports the argument that the school's approach to coaching is one example of a systemwide improvement *process* based on alignment (clarity of policies and structure) *and* collective coherence.

School A's first non-negotiable is the expectation that every teacher across divisions prescribes to the pedagogical approaches of inquiry-based learning, genre-based pedagogy, language for learning, and collaborative learning. These pedagogical principles are embedded in the professional learning of the school and are what Knight refers to as "high-leverage teaching practices that are proven and powerful" (2009, p. 512). The second non-negotiable is that every member of the organization adheres to the clear coaching agreements and to the responsibilities outlined in the job description of the coaching role. A third non-negotiable, relating specifically to the leadership team, is the

unanimous approval required for the hiring of a new coach. Adherence to these priorities undoubtedly work together to safeguard the position of both the coach and the teacher while also developing the capacities of these roles by providing the space to creatively engage with the priorities – a point discussed next.

The first example of creative empowerment is the voluntary nature of the coaching program itself and its reliance on a teacher-driven approach. Teachers are not required to enroll in a coaching cycle, but if they choose to participate, the goal and parameters of the cycle, although preferably couched in the pedagogical principles of the school, are determined by the teacher. In this case, the coaches and teacher, described by DuFour and Fullan as “those closest to the action” are also those who “have a lot of authority regarding decisions about how to achieve the goals” (p. 40). This is a particularly salient example of the balance of the ‘loose-tight’ approach evident at School A when considering that the goals identified for a coaching cycle would ideally reflect and derive from the non-negotiable approaches to pedagogy. Agency is also evident in the manner in which the coaching cohort is given both the power to manage information about coaching and the space to enact their own internal system of ongoing training and reflection. The role of the coach as a leader is dependent on what DuFour and Fullan (2013) refer to as ‘reciprocal accountability’; the strength of the coaching role at School A is most likely an outcome of leadership’s ability to “create the conditions that allow people to be successful at what they are being asked to do” (p. 51). Developing the capacity of coaches undoubtedly established the platform from which the coaches at School A could rise to the occasion as leaders in their own right to fulfill the position of

“change agent” – a role that “must be played out on a systems level to get wide-spread and sustainable improvement” (Knight & Fullan, 2011, p. 51).

The alignment of a deliberate plan and a clearly articulated structure, combined with the collective coherence derived from the ‘loose-tight’ balancing act of non-negotiable priorities and the creative space to meet these priorities, establishes School A’s coaching *process* as an effective model of systemic reform. This is a key implication of this research. On the ground level, in terms of how the coaching role was structured and how coaching activities were implemented, School A digressed from the indicators identified in the literature. As discussed in the next section, this was done by either abstaining from (or modifying) certain suggested indicators or by focusing on other factors altogether. Yet, or perhaps *because of* these deliberate choices, the school’s approach to coaching reflects the ideas embodied in the broader scholarship on organizational change and resembles a model of successful coaching as well as an effective approach to systemic reform.

It was necessary to revisit the literature on professional development and organizational reform to provide the necessary context for understanding this important connection. Other implications are addressed in the next section and primarily concern how important outcomes of the project relate back to the central research question concerning the relevancy of success indicators to the international school setting.

Implications Pertaining to the Research Question

There is an overwhelming call for more research on instructional coaching both in terms of investigating the causal relationship between coaching, improved classroom

instruction, and student achievement (Scott et al., 2012), and with regard to understanding how a coach's role is framed, the type of work involved in coaching activities, and the types of trainings that can support coaches to become more effective (Gallucci et al., 2010). This project specifically addressed the gap in the literature related to the components of coaching initiatives rather than those that concern the effects of coaching on student growth. The contribution of this research addresses the understudied context of international schools, offers a more nuanced understanding of the indicators in the literature, and suggests that other indicators, not yet identified in the literature, are important to driving the success of instructional coaching in international schools.

The findings revealed two different approaches to coaching – School A had a cohesive plan for implementing and sustaining a rigorous coaching process whereas School B relied on a more organic and evolving initiative for conceptualizing the role of a coach. The implications of these findings are significant.

First, considerable attention has been given to the information that emerged from School A because the school's approach, described above, is a clear example of effective coaching that interestingly, does not necessarily align with the suggested indicators from the literature. Although a teacher-driven approach to coaching is definitely a factor that contributes to the effectiveness of coaching at School A, evidence also suggests that the specific agreements and attitudes toward coaching activities fall outside of the suggestions in the literature to guide how effective coaching is achieved within this local context. Likewise, the school's leadership team took considerable measures during the initial planning stages to identify a clear path for coaching by considering the program

structure (cross-divisional, pedagogically-focused) and the position structure (part-time coach/part-time teacher). The unanimous approval required by leadership revealed practices unique to the organization that contributed to the success of coaching at School A. As noted above, the implications of this reveals that indicators other than those in the literature might be more important to effective coaching in the international school setting and, as evidenced in School A, these other factors might also contribute to coaching as a *process* that concurrently resembles effective systemic reform.

Second, the information gathered from School B's interviews, although limited because of the informal nature of the program, revealed how a less intentional approach to coaching might impact some of the key indicators identified in the literature – especially as these pertain to the roles and responsibilities of the coach and to the teacher/coach relationship. School B's data provided evidence that certain indicators from the literature are equally significant to U.S. public school settings as they are to the international school setting, but other factors that were not specifically addressed in the interview protocol emerged to contribute to an understanding of how the scale and scope of the initial 'launch' of an initiative might impact coaching effectiveness.

One indicator identified in the literature as essential to the success of any coaching initiative is a clear job description; not surprisingly, School B's participants described the absence of such as a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the coaching initiative. The lack of a clear job description resulted in conditions, also addressed in the literature, where teachers might become confused or even resistant to coaches because of a lack of understanding about their responsibilities. In the case of School B, an unclear

job description may also have contributed to the coach taking on non-coaching related tasks (Knight, 2006) that fell under what Lowenhaupt et al. (2014) refer to as symbolic interactionism; the coach relied on symbolic gestures such as making copies to cultivate trust and establish rapport with teachers. This research (Lowenhaupt et al., 2014) attributes important meaning to everyday coaching activities that fall outside the parameters of a formal job description and raises questions about the root causes of these tactics.

The interview protocol focused on the coaching activities that correlated with the majority of the literature on coaching – teacher observations, feedback, modeling, and data analysis. Although Lowenhaupt et al.'s (2014) research was included in the literature review, the protocol did not specifically ask about coaching activities that fell outside of what one would expect from an official job description. One implication of the findings that did emerge from School B regarding symbolic interactionism (Lowenhaupt et al., 2014) is the possible correlation between the lack of a highly structured 'launch' and how coaching is enacted 'on the ground' where intended coaching activities might be compromised. The coach at School B used valuable time and energy on administrative tasks in order to develop rapport with teachers, rather than leverage time and resources toward instructionally-focused coaching activities in a setting where trusting relationships had already been established. This raises the question about the impact that other contextual factors (Matsumura et al., 2010b) of an organization, discussed in more detail below, might have on the effectiveness of a coaching initiative.

The research findings revealed that some indicators identified in the literature are significant to effective implementation of coaching in the international setting; however other more relevant indicators fell outside of the literature. It was noted above that School B may have intentionally sought a *program* approach rather than an approach that considered alignment and collective coherence, yet the findings from this school raised important questions about how the initial scale and scope of implementation efforts might impact the success and sustainability of the initiative. School A, on the other hand, deliberately implemented a highly structured coaching program that exemplified a clear coaching model indicative of systemic reform. An understanding of the difference in scope and scale of these two approaches has implications for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Chapter One outlined the rationale for this study as well as the personal motivation for pursuing the topic of instructional coaching. Within this discussion, there was mention of a previously conducted research project that examined the readiness of communities in rural Minnesota to successfully participate in a long-term poverty-reduction development program. The study analyzed the strength of a community's leadership and social networks and addressed how these factors influence a community's capacity for determining (or inhibiting) the successful completion of this program. This project, along with the influence of participation at a Jim Knight instructional coaching workshop, was instrumental in shaping the idea for this thesis.

At the time of writing Chapter One, it was thought that an inquiry into readiness as it relates to instructional coaching would have been too complex for the scope of a

thesis. It is only in retrospect that the limitations involved with an exploration into this topic are more clearly understood; before an inquiry into factors that might determine if an organization is 'ready' for large-scale reform, general knowledge about the topic must first be gathered. This thesis contributed to this understanding by examining more closely how key stakeholders at two international schools perceive success indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of their coaching programs. Future research that could continue this line of inquiry might expand on this research to explore the idea of readiness. Interestingly, the concept of readiness surfaced during the research for this thesis both from the literature on coaching and from two participants from School A.

Matsumura et al. (2010b) went beyond naming components of a successful coaching programs to explore the "contextual factors that influence the enactment of literacy coaching in schools" (p. 251). Similar to DuFour and Fullan's (2013) concept of collective coherence, their study provided insight into how factors of social resources, such as social relationships, leadership perception, and motivation for change, either promote or hinder the initial implementation of a coaching program. The authors suggest that further research draw from the field of the social sciences to utilize a *readiness* (my emphasis) assessment to gauge these contextual factors in order to determine if a school environment is essentially prepared for a (literacy) coaching program. Interestingly enough, Interviewee 5A addressed this point when discussing School A's initial steps to program implementation:

We felt a readiness here because we had a good culture of professional dialogue and professional growth and we wanted to enhance what was available to our

immediate staff. So, we would have spent some time as a learning leadership team discussing how we could leverage this sort of initiative best and assessing our own readiness for it. I think we all felt like it could be a great next step for us in supporting continuous improvement and professional growth for ourselves and we decided to start relatively small. How did we want to define instructional coaching here? What was our driving purpose? What was it? What was it *not*? How did we want to form that initial cohort? What would be their relationship with our broader organizational structures? What role, what impact did we see [coaches] having?

This participant identified the reasons the school was prepared for coaching – reasons that overlap with the preferred “loose-tight” approach put forth by DuFour and Fullan (2013) – including alignment (clarity of coaching role, program purpose, and coaching structure) and collective coherence (the presence of a culture of professional dialogue and professional growth). Future research could draw on the literature from the social sciences, such as the community development project cited above, to assess the readiness of educational organizations to “bolster more effective implementation of coaching programs in the early stages” (Matsumura, et. al, 2010b, p. 268). A tool could be developed to “facilitate the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in new practices” (Mangin, 2014, p. 1) by helping schools discuss, understand, and determine their own readiness for program implementation. This could alleviate the pressure faced by schools that might not have the individual or organizational capacity to adopt reform efforts (Fullan, p. 6) – an issue acknowledged by Interviewee 4A here:

I went and did some investigation around models because I think that any program that's going to be successful usually is fairly well-defined before it starts because I think vagueness and ambiguity at the beginning of something really doesn't serve anything well and I've seen things not working out at schools because they've done that. I have witnessed coaching programs that flopped because they started with 'ok, here you go – you guys are coaches. Go do it.' And I didn't want that to happen here so I chose to go with a very pure Jim Knight model.

The deliberate choices taken by School A, to implement a model in a systemic way, could act as reference points for other international schools when developing their own program. Although School A clearly implemented a program to reflect its localized culture by aligning the coaching program to pedagogical approaches, teaching and learning principles, professional development practices, recruitment procedures, and the structuring of its organizations' roles the tenets of the model and the related indicators that facilitate the success of its coaching program could be used by other international schools to assess their own readiness. School A's indicators differed slightly or altogether from those factors identified in the literature that aligned more significantly with schools that resemble those in large U.S. districts. School A represents a different type of organization and therefore a different model of coaching that might be appropriate for other international schools. Ideally, a future research project could also include an examination of other international schools with *formal* coaching programs to ascertain if

other factors or components might correspond to or differ from those represented at School A.

Next Steps

The findings from this project serve as a platform for further inquiry into the topic on instructional coaching but before other research is conducted, the results from this study will be shared in two ways. A summary of the findings will be written in a concise report to be shared with the key stakeholders. Additionally, the findings that relate specifically to School A will be rewritten and condensed for submission to scholarly journals in the hopes to contribute to the larger scholarship on instructional coaching.

Summary

This chapter began by addressing the new learnings that emerged from the research process including a better understanding of the central importance of a carefully designed research question and the repertoire of skills needed to successfully conduct fieldwork in a new context. The limitations of the study were discussed next by explaining how a small sample size, a limited number of participants, and a subjective lens impacts the overall interpretation of findings. Chapter Five then moved to the implications of this research – these related to both broader ideas presented in the literature on systemic reform and to the outcomes of the study that more concretely addressed how key stakeholders perceive success indicators as facilitating the effectiveness of their instructional coaching programs. The discussion first examined DuFour and Fullan's (2013) distinction between implementation of a new initiative as a *program* and implementation of a new initiative as a *process* with particular attention to

the tenets of alignment and collective coherence that drive the latter. School A's approach to coaching was presented as one example of both a successful model of instructional coaching and an effective 'loose-tight' approach to effective systemic reform. The implications concerning the more grounded application of some of the indicators in the literature were also described, especially as these concerned School B. It was suggested that the scale and scope of a school's approach to initial implementation will partially determine how the coach will utilize energy and resources which might, in turn, determine the overall effectiveness of the program. This discussion raised important questions about the impact that other contextual factors of an organization might have on establishing a foundation on which a *process* can be fully leveraged and provided the transition to outline ideas for future research discussed in the next section. The suggestions for future research revisited ideas introduced in Chapter One and substantiated by Matsumura et al. calling for a readiness assessment tool to be created for schools to help identify the components needed in an organization to facilitate new and large-scale changes such as the implementation of instructional coaching. Another point addressed the importance of gathering more information about coaching in the international setting by examining another formal and highly structured instructional coaching initiative in order to gauge whether this operates in a similar manner to School A. Next steps were outlined about how the information would be shared with the key constituents of this project and perhaps published in a journal to reach a wider audience.

This thesis set out to explore how key stakeholders at international schools perceived indicators identified in the literature as facilitating the success of their literacy

coaching programs but the scope of this project necessitated a shift in scope to capture perceptions about instructional coaching. The results shed light on the degree to which the indicators suggested in the literature were relevant to the international school setting and offered insight that would not have emerged if the focus would have been solely on literacy coaching. The more interesting findings showed how one international school either discounted or modified these indicators to meet the particular needs of their localized context and did so in such a way that coaching not only served as a successful model but also as an effective approach to systemic reform. This was an invaluable and unexpected outcome that was possible only with the shift in perspective to consider instructional coaching more broadly. The results of this study have the potential to impact how other international schools, that may not have the same resources as U.S. public schools, decide how to develop capacity to create collective coherence and alignment between policies and structures that will drive the success of their instructional coaching endeavors and ultimately impact positive teacher development and student achievement.

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Appendix

Table A1
Interview Protocol

Part A: Coaching Program Implementation Background Question
<i>Before we discuss the specific success indicators, I would like to gain some background information about your involvement with the development and implementation of the coaching program at your school. For example, when did your school begin to think about implementing a coaching program, what were the steps to implementation, and what was your role in the development of the program? (administrators)</i>
<i>Before we discuss the specific success indicators, I would like to gain some background knowledge about your involvement with the development and implementation of the coaching program at your school. For example, were you part of the conversations about a coaching program and what, if any, was your role in the development of the program? (coaches/teachers)</i>
Part B: Indicator Statements
<i>For each statement, state your level of agreement from 1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree. Please explain your response to each statement.</i>
Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities
<p>1.1 The coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by the coach</i>.</p> <p>1.2 The coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by elementary teachers</i>.</p> <p>1.3 The coach's job description is clearly understood <i>by administration and leadership</i>.</p> <p>1.4 The roles and responsibilities of the coach have been shared with the teaching staff <i>by administration</i>.</p> <p>1.5 The roles and responsibilities of the coach have been shared with the teaching staff <i>by the coach</i>.</p> <p>1.6 The coach's role is reflective of ongoing professional development initiatives at this school.</p> <p>1.7 A key responsibility of the coach is to conduct formal evaluations on teaching</p>

performance.

1.8 A key responsibility of the coach is to model lessons for a teacher.

1.9 A key responsibility of the coach is to provide feedback on a lesson given by a teacher.

1.10 A responsibility of the coach is to analyze student data with the teacher.

1.11 The coach has an equal amount of time in his/her schedule allocated between providing student support and teacher support.

Section 2: Coaching Model

2.1 There is a clearly defined coaching model adopted by this school.

2.2 The coaching model adopted by this school has been explicitly shared with the school's teaching staff *by administration*.

2.3 The coaching model adopted by this school has been explicitly shared with the school's teaching staff *by the coach*.

Ask 2.4 – 2.6 only if a model in 2.1 is not explained.

2.4 The coaching model adopted by this school is best described as teacher-based (the coach models for and collaborates with teachers)

2.5 The coaching model adopted by this school is best described as resource-based (the coach researches instructional strategies, and locates and chooses materials for the teacher)

2.6 The coaching model adopted by this school is best described as administrative-based (the coach collects, aggregates, and analyzes data)

2.7 Coaching models should reflect an egalitarian relationship between teachers and coaches.

Section 3: Teacher/Coach Relationship

3.1 The coach is well received as instructional support by the teachers here.

3.2 Teachers are willing to participate in a coaching meeting or coaching cycle.

3.3 The coach has access to all teachers' classrooms and/or is welcome in teachers' classrooms.

3.4 Teachers are open and receptive to feedback from the coach.

3.5 The coach has developed a positive rapport with teachers.

3.6 Teachers trust/confide in the coach.

3.7 The coach is viewed by the teaching staff as a core member of the team.

Section 4: Coach's Qualifications and Background

4.1 The coach has an advanced degree in education.

4.2 The coach has substantial classroom teaching experience.

<p>4.3 The coach is an effective communicator with skills that facilitate the responsibilities of the coaching role.</p> <p>4.4 The coach has knowledge of adult learning theories.</p> <p>4.5 The coach differentiates coaching approaches to meet the needs of teachers' diverse experiences and background.</p> <p>4.6 The coach has a clearly defined support system and/or is involved in networking with professionals in a similar position.</p>
<p>Section 5: Leadership/Administrative Support</p>
<p>5.1 Leadership at this school has formal training in (or knowledge of) different types of coaching models.</p> <p>5.2 The principal (and other administration, if applicable) hold regular meetings with the coach.</p> <p>5.3 Leadership, administration, and coaches hold meetings with teachers to discuss coaching program</p>
<p>Part C: Professional Background Information and Follow-Up Questions</p>
<p>Professional Background Information</p>
<p><i>How long have you been an administrator/teacher/coach at this school? (all roles)</i></p> <p><i>How many years of teaching experience do you have? In what context/grade level? (coach)</i></p> <p><i>Do you have an advanced degree in education? (coach)</i></p>
<p>Follow-Up Questions</p>
<p><i>As an administrator/coach/teacher, can you give me an example of a coaching moment that went well and what you think may have contributed to this success?</i></p>